

“PANDARAYA” AS SIN: A CONTEXTUAL INTERPRETATION

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INTRODUCTION:

THE CONTEXTUAL APPROACH IN THEOLOGY

Contextual theologizing focuses on certain thematic issues which arise from reading the situation. It comprehends and articulates experience thematically, organizing and assessing data as themes with the intention of allowing a reasonable grasp of experience while providing interpretative flexibility for its dynamic character. Themes are like umbrella concepts which organize into a coherent whole various related elements and analyze these with a unified perspective. Far from being arbitrary, deciding on the thematic issue to be analyzed is an informed choice based on its importance and urgency. Themes in theology are chosen in view of their relevance. “Our contemporary world of experience,” remarks German theologian Hans Küng, “must be reflected in theology but not necessarily in the form of a comprehensive economic, political, sociological or philosophic analysis, but rather as a recurrent theme touching upon our contemporary experience and sense of life and current concern.”¹ Even when theology partners with one or more disciplines to analyze and critique experiences more sharply in a detailed fashion, it is still mainly thematic in its approach to reality.²

A. THE THEMATIC ISSUE OF “PANDARAYA”

In a country where the vast majority are poor and where there ought to be the wisest use of meager resources available to transform

1. Hans Küng, “Toward a New Consensus in Catholic (And Ecumenical) Theology,” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* XVII 1 (Winter, 1980): 15.

2. The development of particular strands of *teología de liberación* is a good illustration of the basic approach of theology to Latin America’s experience of *dominación* or *opresión* coupled with the use of historical and structural analysis derived from Marxist thought.

this unacceptable social situation, there appears to be a most serious stumbling block within and arising mainly from the national government itself: graft and corruption.³ Locally recognized and formulated as *pandaraya*,⁴ it simply means the diverting of public funds for interests other than public good and quite often for personal aggrandizement. While *pandaraya* is a possible offense of anyone, it is also undeniable that power is a significant element in doing it. Rank and file employees in government agencies are not exempt from it. But those in powerful positions in such institutions may be more culpable not only because of the possible extent of their own *pandaraya* but also because they have a conditioning influence that set the tone and create “systems” that lead to the perpetration of *pandaraya* among their subordinates. The root word *daya* in the

3. In the understanding of Virgilio S. Almario, ed., *UP Diksiyonaryong Filipino* (Quezon City: Sentro ng Wikang Filipino, 2001), “graft” is “ilegal na pagpapayaman ng isang nasa tungkulin; katiwalian.” One who is “corrupt” is “bulok,” “tiwali,” “tumatanggap ng suhol; masama; makasalanan.” See Ganizani Gwai, “Definitions of Corruption,” in <http://philippines.takingitglobal.org/express/article.html?cid=380> (access 21.07.2005). The World Bank Economic Development Institute in its National Integrity System country studies defined corruption as, “an abuse of entrusted power by politicians or civil servants for personal gain.” Eric Batalla defines it as “the misuse or abuse of public office for private gain...It involves members of government and the private sector. It comes in several forms or as Klitgaard puts it, ‘a wide array of illicit behaviors including bribery, extortion, fraud, nepotism, graft, speed money, pilferage, theft, embezzlement, falsification of records, kickbacks, influence-peddling, and campaign contributions.’ A report of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) identifies two types of corruption, petty and grand.” His preferred categories are based on the pervasiveness of corruption in society; that is, “spontaneous and institutionalized (or systemic). The spontaneous type can be found in societies observing generally strong ethics and morals in public service. Individual acts of corruption are minimal although they can be both petty and grand. When corrupt behaviors are perennially extensive or pervasive in society, it can be said that corruption has been institutionalized. It has become a way of life, a goal, and an outlook towards the public office.” Eric C. Batalla, “De-Institutionalizing Corruption in the Philippines,” in <http://www.tag.org.ph/references/PDFfiles/batalla.pdf> (access 21.07.2005).

4. “*Daya*” means cheating, committing fraud, trickery, deceit. José Villa Panganiban, *Diksiyonaryo-Tesaurus Pilipino-Ingles* (Lungsod Quezon: Manlapaz Publishing Co., 1973). The 1914 *Diccionario Tagalo-Hispano* (Madrid: Ediciones Cultura Hispanica, 1965) of Pedro Serrano Laktaw gave *daya* the meaning of *engaño*. *Pandaraya* is the deliberate act of perpetrating *daya*.

vernacular refers to any deceitful action (*gawang panlilinlang*); it is obscuring or distorting the truth in order to deceive (*pagtatago o pagpiliipit sa katotohanan sa layuning manligaw*). Hence, a person is regarded as *madaya* if his or her behavior and words deliberately present falsehood as truth; he makes one believe what is really not the situation and so leads him astray out of self-interest. So any action or means intended to deliberately deceive for self- advantage is considered *pandaraya*.⁵

1. Forms of *Pandaraya*

Pandaraya has many cultural faces, crossing over boundaries of age, gender, profession, as well as socio-economic and political status. Kids at play are aware that what is done secretly in order to have an edge is such. That small children have a sense of *pandaraya* suggests some of sort of “innate” sense of what is ethical even at so young an age. Dirty play and “fixed” games in sports competitions like basketball are manifestations of *pandaraya*. When featured artists in a “live concert” do a lip-synch performance instead of singing “live”, the audience feels violated, cheated or short-changed. Such violations of what is considered just or fair are met with protests of *pandaraya*. Media is likewise capable of *pandaraya* when journalists succumb to the temptation of being celebrity as one journalist points out.⁶ There is *pandaraya* when something is purchased but the quality, amount or weight is short of what has been paid for. It is common to hear stories of people buying rice, meat, fish, fruit or a tank of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) for cooking and not getting the right measure for their purchase. “*Nadaya kami!*,” they normally remark upon discovering the anomaly in question. Wine dealers sell wine that has deteriorated to unsuspecting people.⁷ Building contractors have been known for using inferior quality of materials for construction

5. *Diksyunaryo ng Wikang Filipino* (Manila: Linangan ng Mga Wika sa Pilipinas, 1989); Leo James English, C.Ss.R., *Tagalog-English Dictionary* (Metro Manila: Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, 1986).

6. Teodoro L. Locsin, “Media and the morality of averages,” *Today*, 03 August 2003, 11.

7. Constatino C. Tejero, “Noble are His Wines,” *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 28 December 2000, C1, C4.

to increase profit at the expense of the safety of their clients. Those victimized feel duped, cheated, made to feel like a fool or taken advantage of.⁸ Those who were responsible for *pandaraya* know that they have perpetrated such a deed. In short, people experience being shortchanged in situations where certain personal, communal or social expectations are intentionally frustrated by perpetrators of *pandaraya*.

Pandaraya also happens during elections when the results of the official tally of votes are altered as in the infamous “*dagdag-bawas*” scheme – adding votes to one’s candidates while subtracting from one’s opponent. Although not dealt with here specifically, one can discuss the role that power plays in *dayaan*. In *pandaraya* the powerless are victimized, taken advantage of by those who have power whether arising from wealth, status or influence. What more of government officials and personnel who are supposed to be the servants of the people but are in fact making use of their position to enrich themselves. They claim to be rendering service; but they only dupe the people into believing that they are serving. In reality they are working for self-benefit. *Pandaraya* manifests itself as well in workers not getting justly paid for their labor⁹ and among workers who shortchange those who hired them for particular tasks. Clearly, those engaging in *pandaraya* benefit to the detriment of those they have deceived or cheated.

2. *Pandaraya* as an Ethical Issue

Pandaraya is a culturally recognized ethical issue.¹⁰ Filipinos “spontaneously” recognize it as evil deliberately entered into. On the whole, both the *mandaraya* and *nadadaya* recognize such reality when known. The perpetrator(s) who may be in a position of power and

8. A columnist of a local daily thinks that the practice of getting even among Filipinos stems from perception that someone is “getting one over them.” In local parlance, *nadadaya sila* (they are victims of *pandaraya*). Tessa Salazar, “Would you run amok over ‘injured self-esteem?’,” *Philippine Daily Inquirer* 16 August 2001, B4.

9. We note the protest of the prophet Jeremiah against this practice: “Woe to him who builds his house by unrighteousness, and his upper rooms by injustice; who makes his neighbors work for nothing, and does not give them their wages; who says, ‘I will build myself a spacious house with large upper rooms,’ and who cuts out windows for it, paneling with cedar, and painting it with vermilion.” (Jer. 22:13).

10. Teodoro L. Locsin, “Media and the morality of averages,” *Today* 3455 (3 August 2003), 11.

the victimized who may be powerless both acknowledge *daya*. It may even be that *daya* is a cry of protest of the helpless victim against the unjust dealings of its perpetrator.¹¹ In general, *daya* is conscious and intentional in contrast to *kasalanan* (wrongdoing, fault, sin) which may be accidentally committed. It can be viewed as a purposeful violation of our humanity – that of the one shortchanged and that of the person deceiving. The importance of this point can be seen in the Filipino notion of *utang na loob* (literally, debt of the inner self) which posits a *debt of solidarity* arising from one's *loob*, one's true personhood and most authentic self in relationship with others and from where feelings, thoughts and behaviors arise.¹² Because of a common *loob*¹³ all people owe one another respect as human beings. Such commonality requires that every person respects and fosters and, in situations of threat, defends the other's dignity. It is for this reason that Filipinos invoke this *utang* (debt) when they have no other claim on another except common humanity (*loob*). They preface their appeal with the phrase “*utang na loob!*” This also explains why, when a beggar asks for alms and they cannot oblige, they say, “*Pataawarin po!*” (“Please, forgive me!). They implore the beggar's forgiveness for their inability to render their debt of solidarity by helping him in his predicament. Mutual acknowledgment and promotion of human dignity is a Filipino value not just a personal philosophical conviction. The relational nature of *loob* also prevents us from seeing *pandaraya* as merely a personal or inter-personal affair. This belief of a common humanity bonded together through a common *loob* suggests the body metaphor of St. Paul that “if one

11. In this sense it may be worthwhile exploring further a liberational perspective inherent in the recognition of *pandaraya*.

12. José M. de Mesa, “‘Utang na Loob’ and Marriage,” in *In Solidarity with the Culture: Studies in Theological Re-rooting* (Quezon City: Maryhill School of Theology, 1987), 69-71. The Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP), “Pahayag Pastoral ukol sa Pulitika sa Pilipinas” (16 September 1997) notes that a misunderstood *utang na loob* is one of the causes of *pandaraya* during elections. See <http://members.tripod.com/~chapelnet/cbcp.html> (access 21.07.2005).

13. For an explanation of the importance of “loob” as a fundamental experience and concept of the Filipino person, see Albert E. Alejo, *Tao Po! Tuloy!: Isang Landas ng Pag-unawa sa Loob ng Tao* (Quezon City: Office of Research and Publications, Ateneo de Manila University, 1990).

member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it” (1 Cor. 12:26).

Such dignity is being trampled upon or ignored in a situation of *pandaraya* instead of recognizing the dignity of the other as a person and, therefore, deserving of respect. In our failure to render our *utang na loob*, we are even more indebted. Instead of “paying,” as it were, our debt, we default on it. Or to put it more in accord with *daya*, the person deserving of such respect and getting it is shortchanged. Not only does he not get what is rightfully his or hers, s/he also is taken advantaged of through deceitful action. In *pandaraya* we refuse to be equal to the other person; we want the upperhand. In other words, we are unjust. This we do by showing this person a false face which hides the real. The person who is *madaya* is culturally looked upon as a person of “*dalawang-mukhâ*” or “*doble kara*,” (two faces), one real, the other false with the latter shown in order to have the advantage. But it is not only the humanity of the one shortchanged that is violated. The deceiver’s humanity is also cheapened because s/he becomes less human by engaging in *pandaraya*. We may even say that in so doing s/he is corrupted. The person is no longer deemed as a *mabuting tao* (a good person) because he can no longer be trusted; his *loob* is evil (*masama*). The significance of such desecration is heightened when we factor in values derived from the Judaeo-Christian tradition such as humanity being made in the image and likeness of the Creator (Gen. 1:26-27). No doubt the personal dimension of *pandaraya* militates against human dignity. But what happens when such injustice takes on social and structural proportions?

3. Institutional Pandaraya

Though *pandaraya*¹⁴ is not only found within government institutions, that is where it has shown its ugliest face in such a massive scale.¹⁵ The tandem of graft and corruption is rightly a serious national

14. A vernacular word commonly associated with *pandaraya* is “*kurakot*,” which means “getting money or things without permission; stealing public funds in an illegal manner.” See Linangan ng mga Wika sa Pilipinas, *Diksyunaryo ng Wikang Filipino* (Manila: National Book Store, Inc., 1989); R. David Zorc and Rachel San Miguel, *Tagalog Slang Dictionary* (Manila: De La Salle University Press, 1993).

15. Eric C. Batalla, “De-Institutionalizing Corruption in the Philippines,” 3-

concern and is a frequent subject of many studies. As early as 1983, the Ibon Databank Philippines, a non-governmental body noting and documenting social trends of relevance to church and society, had already alerted Filipinos regarding the extent of graft and corruption in the country.¹⁶ In its analysis of the practice particularly in government circles, it cites causes and suggests ways of controlling it.¹⁷ That the situation has not abated is attested to by more recent data. The World Bank has already considered the Philippines as the third most corrupt government in its list. Transparency International regards the Philippines as the 54th among the most corrupt countries in the world. Over 70% of the government institution is reputed to be corrupt.¹⁸ In July 1999 the Office of the Ombudsman declared that 100 million pesos is lost daily to corruption and that 600 billion pesos had been lost since 1995. In May 2001 the Quezon City Regional Court sentenced to two life terms a cashier of the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) for two counts of plunder. She had opened two bank accounts where she diverted and withdrew more than P260 million in withholding tax payments of government and private employees from 1996-1997.¹⁹ 92% of the cases submitted to the Ombudsman are related to diversion of public funds and falsification of public documents.²⁰ So rampant is corruption that “it can be said that abuse of public office for personal gain has been the rule of the

4, provides interesting facts about corruption in the government during the Spanish and American colonial times.

16. Ibon Databank Philippines, “Graft and Corruption,” *Ibon Facts and Figures* 117 (30 June 1983): 3, 6-7.

17. See also Annabelle B. Rosell, *Corruption Prevention Strategy for the Philippines: Incorporating Ethical Norms in the Performance Appraisal System*, Working Papers, Asian Pacific School of Economics and Management (Australia: Asia Pacific Press, 1999), <http://ncdsnet.anu.edu.au> (access 21.07.2005); Vinay Bhargava, “Combating Corruption in the Philippines,” <http://www.worldbank.org/capsocial/library/corruption.pdf>, (access 21.07.2005).

18. Center for Social Concern and Action, “Corruption - An Age-Old Malady in Philippine Society,” *Palasô* I no. 2 (July 2003): 5.

19 “1st Plunder Conviction, Ex-BIR Cashier Gets 2 Life Terms,” *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 05 May 2001, A1, A5.

20. Albert Alejo, S.J., “Daya at Laya: Pagmumuni sa Etika ng Pagkakatotoo,” *Tinig Loyola* II: 2 (February, 2001): 4.

game in the Philippines.”²¹ In a preliminary World Bank Report in 1999, reasons were given why corruption should be combated (see box below):²²

Why a Stronger Anti-Corruption Program Now?

From an international perspective, a vigorous and credible program to combat corruption in the Philippines is vital for three reasons:

- The Philippines is cited with increasing frequency (by business surveys, the media, and anticorruption watchdog agencies) as a country where corruption is a factor that inhibits foreign and domestic investment and which may be eroding the country’s competitive position. Such investment is vital to economic growth and social well-being.
- Because corruption undeniably saps resources available for development, distorts access to services for poor communities, and undermines public confidence in the government’s will and capacity to serve the poor, an anticorruption strategy is an essential complement to the Estrada administration’s pro-poor and pro-growth stance.
- Corruption has emerged as a pivotal international criterion for allocating scarce development aid resources, and countries will increasingly be judged by their actions in combating corruption.

Given the considerations above, it does not come as a surprise that “the continued failure of the Philippine economy to attain success, achieved elsewhere in the region, has turned the spotlight onto governance factors and corruption, especially after former President Estrada’s downfall in 2000-01.”²³ To date the public perception of

21. Eric C. Batalla, “De-Institutionalizing Corruption in the Philippines,” 21-22.

22. Vinay Bhargava, “Combating Corruption in the Philippines,” <http://www.worldbank.org/eapsocial/library/corruption.pdf> (access 21.07.2005).

23. See http://www.usaid.gov/policy/budget/cbj2004/asia_near_east/Philippines.pdf (access 21.07.2005).

the continuing grip of corruption on government institutions has resulted in a negative 30 rating for the anti-corruption campaign of the Arroyo administration in a Social Weather Station survey.²⁴

4. *Pandaraya* and the Church

In 1997 the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) spoke against *pandaraya* in local politics especially during elections. It denounced methodical cheating within the entire electoral process beginning with the way campaigns are carried out up until its conclusion in the counting of votes.²⁵ In 1998 the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism exposed the many facets of corruption in the Philippines and pinpointed those responsible by publishing nine well-documented case studies explaining why corruption persists and what is being done to stop it.²⁶ The Philippine Province of the Jesuits did a study in 2002 entitled, "Cross-Sectoral Study of Corruption in the Philippines," which noted that the poverty in the country is "inextricably linked" to deeply rooted corrupt practices. Combating it requires addressing the Filipino culture itself for "evangelization in the Philippines is flawed if in this Christian culture there persists so much corruption." For this reason, what Jesuit anthropologist, Albert Alejo, says is most pertinent. "Why don't we just talk about inculturation, or mission, or Trinity? Why *daya*? Because this is where we have to live out our faith."²⁷

As a concrete step towards fighting corruption considered as a "tremendous evil," Alejo prepared a "reflection and action" manual aimed at sensitizing people about corruption-related issues.²⁸

24. *The Philippine Star*, June 3, 2005, 1.

25. Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP), "Pahayag Pastoral ukol sa Pulitika sa Pilipinas" (16 September 1997), in <http://members.tripod.com/~chapelnet/cbcp.html> (access 21.07.2005).

26. Sheila S. Coronel, *Pork and Other Perks: Corruption and Governance in the Philippines* (Quezon City: Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism, 1998).

27. Albert Alejo, S.J., "Daya at Laya: Pagmumuni sa Etika ng Pagkakatotoo," *Tinig Loyola II*: 2 (February, 2001): 4. Translation mine.

28. Philippine Province of the Society of Jesus, *Ehem! A Self-Check Manual for Combating Corruption* (Davao City: Research and Publication Office, Ateneo de Davao University, 2005).

The manual points a significant facet of the problem. Ombudsman Simeon Marcelo states: "Right now, there seems to be no outrage and repulsion when the [general public] see a blatant violation of law, and the absence of commitment and passion to work against it."²⁹ In commenting on how corruption is destructive in several ways, Batalla says, "Perhaps, most important, institutionalized corruption damages the national psyche. It miseducates and tells people that there is nothing wrong in being corrupt. Wealth and power have become the prime measures of individual Filipino success."³⁰ In other words, it erodes the very sense of values of the Filipino people. Dutch theologian Piet Schoonenberg explains how such a situation can lead to moral blindness: "The persistent absence of a positive testimony to a value and the persistent display of evil example can weaken and quench the appeal of a value. The grasp of the value can become so obscure that a real blindness to the value can occur."³¹

The institutional church has not been spared of corruption within its ranks, including the clergy. Of late ecclesiastical *pandaraya* in the domain of sexuality has been uncovered, sensationalized in the media and has become the trigger for church reform.³² The seemingly physical display of concern and affection of some pastors for unsuspecting laity were in reality or, at least suspected, sexual abuse. Seen from the understanding of *daya*, proven sexual abuse would be a deliberate obfuscation of wrongdoing by perpetrating it in the guise of solicitousness. It is also a manifestation, from another perspective, of the abuse of power. We can say again that the victims have been deceived and shortchanged; *utang na loob* has not been

29. CyberDyaryo, http://www.cyberdyaryo.com/features/f2002_1204_01.htm (access 21.07.2005).

30. Eric C. Batalla, "De-Institutionalizing Corruption in the Philippines," 8-9.

31. See Piet Schoonenberg, "Sin," in *Sacramentum Mundi*, Vol. VI, eds. Karl Rahner et al. (London: Burns & Oates, 1970), 90. One of the words for sin in the New Testament is *skotos*, blindness.

32. Movement of the Catholic laity in the US. See <http://www.votf.org/> (access 21.05.2006).

honored. Or, if you wish, justice has been denied. While there have been more charges and prosecutions of such cases in the church in the United States, the Philippine church has not been exempt from this scourge.

While there has been no official church investigation on this matter, we know from history that the church had succumbed to corruption in other ways. The church should at least not overlook the lessons of history. In the sixteenth century, no less than Pope Adrian VI admitted pervasive ecclesiastical corruption. On January 3, 1523 Adrian spoke of abuses among the clergy and especially those of the Holy See and the Roman Curia as responsible for the outbreak of the Reformation:³³

...We admit frankly that God allows the sins of men, particularly those of the priests and prelates of the Church to bring this persecution on the Church. We know that in this holy city there have been for some years now many abominable abuses in spiritual matters, unrestrained demands made, and everything finally corrupted. It is not to be wondered at if this sickness percolates through from the head to the members, i.e., from the supreme pontiffs to the other lower grades of prelates. All of us, that is to say, all we prelates and clergy have gone astray, everyone in his own way...

As corruption began from the clergy, Adrian had no doubts that “it is evident from the Scriptures that the sins of the people are derived from the sins of the priests: on account of which (says Chrysostom), our Savior, when about to attend to the sickness of the city of Jerusalem, entered first the Temple that he might chastise the sins of the priests, after the fashion of any good doctor who deals with the malady at its very roots.” His suggestion flows from this admission: “Wherefore it is necessary that we should all give glory to God and humble our souls before him; let each of us see

33. *Deutsche Reichstagsakten unter Kaiser Karl V*, Vol. III, Adolf Wrede, ed., 2nd ed. (a photographic reprint of the edition of 1901), Gottingen, 1963, 397 as cited in Karel Blockx, “More Than Merely Names,” *Louvain Studies* 5, No. 3 (Spring 1975): 282-283.

where he has fallen, and judge himself, rather than allow himself to be judged by God with the rod of his anger.” The reform of the Church, as far as Adrian was concerned, meant that “we will do everything within our power to ensure that first the Curia may be reformed, which is likely the source of all this evil; and that just as it was from the Curia that the corruption has spread to all those below her, so in the same way she may be the source of everyone’s health and the origin of their reform.” The task of ensuring such reform was for him a serious obligation when considering “the whole world hungrily seeking after a reform of this sort...” This is no less relevant today than it was during his time.³⁴

5. A Cultural Analysis of *Pandaraya*

No doubt, *pandaraya* is about deliberate wrongdoing, harming other people and, within the purview of the Filipino Catholicism, offending God.³⁵ *Pandaraya* for Filipinos is intentional and malicious. No one gets involved in it passively or accidentally. The gravity of *pandaraya* lies in this. It is bad enough when we shortchange or mislead others involuntarily. People are hurt but they are not as angered as when they know that the action which affected them has been a calculated one. In this case, “their attitude is not just sorrowful... our victims face us indignantly. For they know we have

34. Eric Batalla states in his study that “in order to control corruption, monopoly power of public officials should be leavened, discretion be clarified and circumscribed, and accountability enhanced. This prescription is based on the metaphorical problem he advances as follows: $C=M+D-A$, where C is corruption, M is monopoly power, D is discretion, and A is accountability. Accordingly, “Officials will have the opportunity to garner corrupt benefits as a function of their degree of monopoly over a service or activity, their discretion in deciding who should get how much, and the degree to which their activities are accountable.” Batalla, “De-Institutionalizing Corruption in the Philippines,” 23. It seems to me that the above formula can be profitably used to analyze the ecclesiastical corruption Adrian VI spoke against.

35. The separation of the secular from the religious, which is an important factor in the context of the Euro-North American West, does not really apply to the Filipino context where the reality of God is part of life. The expressions, “*ipasa-Diyos na lang*,” (let God take care of it) and “*hindi natutulog ang Diyos*” (God does not sleep), for instance, indicate this.

violated them with something powerfully and peculiarly personal. We have willingly hurt them. We have done it in purpose.”³⁶ Is this not suggested by people who call others who have shortchanged them as “*madaya*”? As suggested earlier, one can deal with *pandaraya* as an issue of the use of power. Obviously, someone who perpetrates *pandaraya* has, in more ways than one, some power over the other who has been shortchanged (*nadaya*).

Such is the situation regarding *pandaraya*. Unlike *kasalanan* which can be involuntary, *pandaraya* or *daya* is inexcusable. In the local imagination and parlance, *napadaya* (unintentionally made to commit *daya*) is not possible. How can it be otherwise, if it is intentionally malicious? People know it is evil; it is wrong. It harms people victimized by such deed and corrupts the perpetrators. To my mind, this may be a distinct advantage in using *daya* as a contextual interpretation of what “sin” is,³⁷ not to mention the fact that “*gaua mong di matouid*” (unrighteous deed) is considered by the *Pasiong Mahal*, the popular local narrative on the passion of Jesus, as “*daya nang demoniong ganid*” (the *daya* of the ravenous devil).³⁸

In addition, when one looks for an embracing theme for what is concretely evil and dehumanizing and may be expressive of what “sin” is in the Filipino setting today, one which suggests itself is *pandaraya*. To commit it is to lack integrity, to be disrespectful of human dignity and destructive of well-being. *Pandaraya* is being untruthful in terms of what is genuinely human and unfaithful in terms of justice-filled relationships and which undoes life, ruining what gladdens the heart. Life-giving relationships are eroded or even destroyed by *pandaraya*, eroding trust which is essential not only in personal relationships, but also in building community among people and ordering a society worthy of human beings. Religiously, *pandaraya*

36. Cornelius Platinga, Jr., *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin* (Leicester: Apollon, 1995), 2-3.

37. The English term “sin” is derived from the Middle English *sinne*, from the Old English *synn*; akin to Old High German, *sunta*. See *Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary* (1976).

38. René B. Javellana, S.J., ed., *Casaysayan nang Pasiong Mahal ni Jesucristong Panginoon Natin na Sucat Ipag-alab nang Pusong Sinomang Babasa* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1988), 112, 219.

is a betrayal of who we really are, of our *loob*, which the Filipino culture acknowledges as somehow reflective of God.³⁹

Pandaraya, however, calls forth its opposite. When seen as deception, opposed to it is integrity, *katapatan*. Interpreted as shortchanging the other, its contrast is goodness without malice, *kabutihang walang daya*. Viewed as deliberate malicious action for one’s self-benefit, it is rivaled by gracious, benevolent goodness, *pagmamagandang-loob* (deliberate benevolent action for the well-being of the other). When one examines the characteristics of *kagandahang-loob*, this value, attitude or behavior as a whole, stands in direct contrast to what *pandaraya* stands for.⁴⁰

On the basis of our discussion of *pandaraya*, we may characterize the Filipino experience and concept of it in the following manner:

1. *Pandaraya* presupposes relationships. One may say that *daya*, albeit negatively, presupposes a relational concept. There is someone perpetrating *pandaraya* which shortchanges and harms the one victimized by it, *ang nadadaya*. The relational way of thinking, which is part of the Filipino culture, is based on the commonality of the human *loob*.
2. *Pandaraya* is gauged against a relational norm, *loob*, expressed either as *utang na loob* (debt of human solidarity), made manifest as solidarity or respect for human dignity or justice or as *kagandahang-loob*, a supreme Filipino value, the gracious goodness of the *loob* aimed at the well-being of others. In fact, within the context of voluntarily giving up one’s right

39. Alejo, *Tao Po! Tuloy!*, 29-33.

40. The following are the characteristics of *kagandahang-loob*: 1) It is a relational concept; it cannot be known or demonstrated in isolation from fellow human beings; 2) It arises from free personal initiative; 3) It is directed towards the well-being of the other; 4) It is not self-seeking and does not look for the “return of the favor”; 5) It has a tendency to an “excessive” manifestation of goodness and generosity which goes beyond what is considered usual, proper or just; 6) The discernment and discovery of whether a person is truly of *magandang-loob* or otherwise takes time. See José M. de Mesa, *Following the Way of the Disciples: A Guidebook for Doing Christology in a Cultural Context* (Quezon City: East Asian Pastoral Institute, 1996), 80-83.

or advantage for the sake of the other, the term manifests a positive turn. “*Paraya*” is “to allow some advantage which has been taken by other, to go unnoticed; to forego something in favor of others; to be forbearing.”⁴¹

3. *Pandaraya* is not just an ambiguous external act; it arises from within (*loob*) and is expressed and embodied externally. What corrupts is from within, not something from the outside. In the words of the gospel according to Mark, “It is what comes out of a person that defiles. For it is within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come: fornication, theft, murder, adultery, avarice, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, and folly. All these evil things come from within, and they defile the person.” (Mk. 7:20-23)
4. *Pandaraya*, being a chosen attitude and a deliberate act, assumes that one is free to do so or to avoid it. In the Filipino context, this intentionality is understood to emanate from the *loob*. Engaging in it results in a guilty awareness of it: one knows he/she/they are *madaya*.⁴²
5. *Pandaraya* is destructive and harmful to both victim and perpetrator, the former being deceived, shortchanged and unjustly treated; while the latter is corrupted by profit and power (*dinaya ang sarili at naging madaya*), becoming in character what he has been doing. *Pandaraya* is evil: it incorporates the sense of evil as *masama* as well as of *hamartia* because it fails to honor the standard of *utang na loob*.
6. *Pandaraya* involves and affects the intra-personal, inter-personal, as well as the social dimensions of life. Perhaps, it can be applied by extension to the cosmic dimension as well.
7. *Pandaraya* is eminently a justice issue. Culturally, this refers to the fundamental equality of human beings. Theologically, in the sense of *dikaiousyne*, it is conduct in harmony with God’s will.⁴³ While the term *katarungan* correctly renders the first

41. Leo English, *Tagalog-English Dictionary*.

42. “What makes sin really sin is guilt. Guilt is the free decision to evil, evil with regard to God and man.” See Schoonenberg, “Sin,” 89.

43. See Cleon L. Rogers, Jr. and Cleon L. Rogers III, *The New Linguistic and*

meaning,⁴⁴ it is *kagandahang-loob* as *kabutihang walang daya* that adequately translates the second.⁴⁵

B. THE QUESTION OF “SIN”

Within the religious mindset of Filipino Catholicism, the ethical consideration quickly steps into religious judgment, if these have not already simultaneously arisen. After all, “sin,” as T. O’Connell points out, “is the believer’s word for something not right in our world.”⁴⁶ Wrongdoing in the religious domain, however, has customarily been named as “*kasalanan*,” the usual term for “sin.”⁴⁷ The first catechism published in the Philippines, the *Doctrina Christiana* (1593), used this term to render “sin.”⁴⁸ On the basis of the accompanying Spanish text, *kasalanan* is a translation of the Spanish *peccado*. If we argue that the *Doctrina Christiana* is a Tridentine catechism, given not only the date of publication but also its structure and contents, then *peccado* most likely meant something like “any willful thought, desire, word, action or omission forbidden by the law of

Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998), 15. It is important to bear in mind that “will” is not just a part of God; God’s will is the GodSelf willing and is clearly rendered in the Filipino concept of *loob*.

44. Leo English, *Tagalog-English Dictionary*.

45. “The justice of God, which man attains through faith, ultimately coincides with His mercy; and like the divine mercy, designates at times a divine attribute, at other times the concrete gifts of salvation which this mercy dispenses.” See Albert Descamps, “Justice,” in *Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. Léon-Dufour, 282.

46. Timothy E. O’Connell, *Principles for a Catholic Morality* (San Francisco: Harper, 1990), 80.

47. Basically, *sala* is fault or error, and through Christian usage, sin. See Panganiban, *Diksiyunaryo-Tesaurus Pilipino-Ingles*. The most recent Filipino dictionary, *UP Diksiyunaryong Filipino* (Pasig: Anvil Publishing Inc., 2001) defines *kasalanan* in present-day usage as “*anumang gawa na labag sa isang kautusan, batas, at kaugalian ng isang pamayanan, lahi o bansa*” (any action against an order, law and custom of a community, race or country, translation mine). See also José C. Abriol, *Pananampalataya at Katuwiran* (Maynila: Basilika ng Nazareno, 1988).

48. Facsimile published by the US Library of Congress, February 1947.

God.”⁴⁹ Why the Church opted to use *kasalanan* rather than another term like *masamá* is open to speculation given the absence of direct explanation of the choice. We may conjecture that the picture-word *salà* (to fall short of the goal), the root word of *kasalanan*, approximates relatively well the Greek word and imagery for “sin,” “*hamartia* (•: “DJ4”, to miss the mark) in the New Testament.⁵⁰ Just as the archer misses the mark or a thrown spear its target (*hamartia*)⁵¹, so does a basketball player, to use a contemporary Filipino imagery, misses to shoot the ball into the goal (*salà*).⁵² *Hamartia* suggests moral activity that is off target. But while the approximation may be valid, *kasalanan* in the local setting is often used also for faults or accidental actions which have none of the seriousness or deliberateness inherent in real sinfulness as understood in Catholic doctrine.⁵³ Whether the matter considered undesirable is light or weighty, trivial or of importance, it is referred to by the same term. Following the results of a research done on this matter, M. Maggay remarked: “within the indigenous conceptual system... *salà* does not quite carry the serious overtones of the English word ‘sin.’ To miss the mark or to fail to live up to certain moral standards is only human...”⁵⁴ One finds confusion here about *kasalanan* rather than clarity and suspects that

49. Louis LaRavoire Morrow, *My Catholic Faith* (Manila: The Catholic Truth Society, 1941), 144.

50. Gottfried Quell, “Sin in the OT,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. I, ed. Gerhard Kittel (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), 271.

51. See Alan J. Avery-Peck, “Sin,” in Jacob Neusner, Alan J. Avery-Peck and William Scott Green, eds., *The Encyclopedia of Judaism*, III (New York: Continuum, 1999), 1322-1323. See also “Hamartia and Hamartanein,” in William Barclay, *New Testament Words* (London: SCM Press, 1964), 118-125.

52. In Keith Y. Jainga, *Diksyunaryong Griego-Filipino ng Bagong Tipan* (Parañaque: Church Strengthening Ministry, 1996). *v*: “DJ4” is rendered as “*ang pagkakasala, ang paggawa ng masama; kasalanan, kamalian.*”

53. When one analyzes the various Hebrew and Greek terms which were summarized and harmonized into “*hamartia*,” it will be noted that the element of the accidental is not totally absent.

54. Melba Padilla Maggay, *Filipino Religious Consciousness: Some Implications to Missions* (Quezon City: Institute for Studies in Asian Church and Culture, 1999), 26.

the usage, most likely unintended, may somehow have contributed to the trivialization of real sin as one of its effects.

1. The Need for Rethinking the Concept of “*Kasalanan*”

Kasalanan no longer has the religious import that it is meant to have. Perhaps, it represents the lessening of the sense of sin; so many of human *kasalanan* are, in fact, not real *kasalanan* in the moral and religious senses of the term within Christianity. The realization of this by more Filipinos may be a reason why the popularity which confession had before is no longer the same. It seems that the “bite”⁵⁵ or impact of this local religious word for sin has considerably weakened even if it was strong in a different context. Whatever the reasons are for this new situation, one thing is clear: the social context in which “sin” is to be understood has somehow changed.⁵⁶ At least this is clear for the situation of graft and corruption in the country.⁵⁷ Doctrinal clarity as to what constitutes *kasalanan* may not be a problem to those initiated in the subtleties of theology. For the majority who do not have this kind of understanding, the cultural meanings of *kasalanan* may constitute the dominant perception. For this reason, it has been suggested that the better word to utilize for any bad action is *masamá* (evil) for the term connotes that whatever is committed is

55. The Filipino expression would be “*mahina ang dating*” (literally, weak affective impact).

56. It is probably the reason why it has been suggested that “the Christian doctrine of sin is clearly one on which much work is needed at present.” James Wm. McClendon, Jr., “Sin,” in *A New Handbook of Christian Theology*, eds. Donald W. Musser and Joseph L. Price (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992), 446.

57. “The Marcos government has often been regarded as the most systematically corrupt of all government administrations in the Philippines. This is somewhat justified by the concentration of state powers in the President. Unlike in previous administrations that more or less observed the independence of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government, the late president effectively controlled these three branches. Eventually, crony-capitalism in the country reached its zenith with the centralization of political power and the realignment of concentrated economic power from the old elites to favored associates. Batalla, *De-Institutionalizing Corruption in the Philippines*, 5.

serious and weighty.⁵⁸ The warning to refrain from doing something wrong expressed as “*masamá ‘yan*” (that is evil or wrong) carries more cultural weight than “*kasalanan ‘yan*” (that is a sin).

It is interesting to note that there is some similarity between *kasalanan* and the meaning of *hamartia* in classical Greek which basically means a “failure” such as “missing a road or failure in one’s plan or hope or purpose.”⁵⁹ But while the meaning in classical Greek refers to “some kind of negative failure rather than some kind of positive transgression,” we are rightly warned that in the New Testament it denotes something much more serious.⁶⁰ For “at the heart of sin is...the attitude of turning away from God in resentment and revolt.”⁶¹ From this attitude come actual sins. It is true that in the Filipino setting, the line dividing the secular and the religious is not that distinct. Nevertheless, one can suggest that *masamá* appears to be the more secular usage to pinpoint something morally wrong, while *kasalanan* seems to be the preferred word of Christian churches in the Philippines. Clearly, the understanding of “sin” needs to be rethought in the local context.⁶²

This situation is not confined to the rethinking of “sin.” Theological language as a whole, which we have inherited from other cultures, needs to be reassessed. It is, after all, cultural language

58. Niels Mulder, “Appreciating Lowland Christian Filipino Culture,” *Working Paper* 141 (September, 1990), Sociology of Development Research Center, University of Bielefeld, Germany, 15.

59. According to Neil Douglas-Klotz in *Prayers of the Cosmos: Meditations on the Aramaic Words of Jesus* (New York: HarperCollins, 1990), 31: “From the Aramaic, [sin] could also be rendered as ‘failures,’ ‘mistakes,’ ‘accidental offenses,’ ‘frustrated hopes,’ or ‘tangled threads’ – the latter implying that some mending or restoration is needed.”

60. Barclay, *New Testament Words*, 119.

61. John McRay, “Sin,” in William H. Gentz, ed., *The Dictionary of Bible and Religion* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1986), 981.

62. See Mark Strand, “Explaining Sin in a Chinese Context,” *Missiology* XXVII 4 (October 2000) for an example of such rethinking in a cultural context. Dionisio Miranda, in a related subject matter, states that there is yet “no developed speculation in Filipino, whether philosophical, theological or otherwise, from which such a reflection [on evil] can be launched.” See D. Miranda, “Ang Hirap sa Pinoy (Filipino Indices to Evil),” in *Roots of Filipino Spirituality*, ed. Teresita Obusan (Manila: Mamamathala, Inc./ Logos Publications, 1998), 255.

harnessed and utilized for a theological purpose: to understand and express our relationship with God and what this implies. The call for inculturation made by Vatican II for the Church as a whole and by the Second Plenary Council for the Philippines in particular gives evidence to this need for theological reinterpretation.⁶³ Present formulation of the Christian faith has become problematic even among its followers. Vatican II had recognized this condition, saw it as a stimulus to “a more accurate and penetrating grasp of the faith” and as a demand for “new theological investigations.” Hence, the extending of invitation to theologians to engage in the rethinking and in the search for “more suitable ways” of communicating the faith (*Gaudium et Spes* 62). After all, “from the beginning of her history, [the Church] has learned to express the message of Christ with the help of the *ideas and terminology of various peoples*, and has tried to clarify it with the wisdom of philosophers, too.” (*Lumen Gentium* 44, emphasis supplied).

What is at stake is the present inability of the church “to translate the fullness of the Christian gospel into the concrete experience of its contemporary communities.”⁶⁴ The insight of *Evangelii Nuntiandi* about the gospel losing its force if the questions people are asking are not answered is worth recalling here.⁶⁵ This was true for the nineteenth century in Western Europe when modern thought had no place for “sin” in its thinking.⁶⁶ The Church did rethink the notion of “sin” for “our entire human condition is unintelligible until we understand sin and its effects, claims Ronald Lawler. “A world that denies sin loses its grip on God. It cannot believe that a world burdened with so many evils could have been

63. *Lumen Gentium* 44. The Second Plenary Council of the Philippines held in 1991 insisted that: “faith must take root in the matrix of our Filipino being so that we may truly believe and love as Filipinos. But for this to happen, the Gospel must be presented with tools, methods and expressions coming from the culture itself.” *Acts and Decrees of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines* (Manila: Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines, 1992), #72.

64. Charles E. Winquist, *The Community of Possibility* (Chico: New Horizons Press, 1975), 18.

65. Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (Pasay City: St. Paul Publications, 1975), #63.

66. Schoonenberg, “Sin,” 87.

made by and ruled by a God of boundless love, wisdom and power.”⁶⁷ This, however, does not suggest that sin be the overarching theological perspective of our discussion here. To tackle the matter of sin does not mean sin is such as in an Augustinian redemption-centered theology. As will be pointed out later, sin is neither the first nor the last word in the Tradition but the gracious goodness of God. This is an orientation as well as emphasis more in accord with a creation-centered doing of theology, one that undergirds the treatment of sin here.⁶⁸

If the only response the Church can give, particularly in its theology, to the serious problem of graft and corruption specifically the structural or institutionalized type, is to merely repeat, though perhaps more insistently, that this is “*kasalanan*,” then the sense of sin is just imposed from the outside. The term is merely applied extraneously. It would be different if the sense of “sinfulness” would be triggered precisely by the specific, albeit prevalent, experience of *pandaraya* and which the word *pandaraya* embodies and expresses. In this case *pandaraya* need not be declared a “sin” because it is “sin!” It may well be that the use of *daya* would be a good pedagogical way to sensitize people again regarding what “sin” really is. For not only is the term *kasalanan* ambiguous in the sense of meaning both fault and deliberate commission of evil, it is also a word that lacks impact. “*Mahinà ang dating*,” as a contemporary expression would put it, denotes that its affective resonance within the Filipino psyche is weak. This point is not to be underestimated given the Filipino cultural propensity towards what is *felt* rather than just what is thought. It may, perhaps, be in this way that the concept of *kasalanan* has led to some obscuration of what “sin” really is about. If the term *kasalanan* has contributed to the taking of “sin” lightly, then it is, perhaps, the time to consider another, namely *dayà*. One gets a hint at how weighty the notion of *dayà* is when we substitute this for *salà* or *kasalanan* in the Lord’s Prayer: “*Patawarin mo kami sa aming pandaraya, tulad ng pagpapatawad namin sa mga nandaraya sa amin*” (“Forgive us our *pandaraya* as we forgive those who commit *pandaraya* against us”).

67. Ronald Lawler, OFMCap., “Sin,” in *Our Sunday Visitor’s Encyclopedia of Catholic Doctrine*, ed. Russel Shaw (Huntington: Our Sunday Visitor, 1997), 627.

68. See distinction made by Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, 21-22.

2. Towards a Contextual Interpretation of “Sin”

Consistent with the manner of doing contextual theology, it is not the intent of this proposal to use the concept and word *dayà* and its cognates as an overall replacement of the general term *kasalanan*. The theology of “sin” being undertaken here is *a*, not *the*, theology of “sin.” It embodies only *an* understanding of what “sin” is in the specific context of the question or concern we are discussing. There is, therefore, no claim or even a proposal that this be the term for “sin” in the Filipino situation from now on. The aim of this reflection is modest: to have a contextual interpretation of “sin,” which hopefully would be relevant to what is actually going on in society; namely, the phenomenon of *pandaraya*. Such rethinking is conscious of its limited significance but it is also significant in its own way. I would like to suggest that what is being undertaken is not unlike the time prior to the systematization of the notion of “sin” under one umbrella concept when there were varied terms for it: *het* (missing the mark or specified goal), *pesha* (rebellion, intentional breach of responsibility), *avon* (iniquity, guilt) in Hebrew⁶⁹ as well as *hamartia* (missing the mark), *anomia* (lawlessness), *adikia* (injustice), *pseudos* (falsehood), *skotos* (darkness) in Greek.⁷⁰

Het, whose roots connote “missing the mark or specified goal,” pictures the performance of an archer (Judges 20:16) or an individual following a wrong road (Prov. 19:2). Such failure may be intentional or unintentional. Occurring 595 times in the Hebrew Bible, its most frequent use refers to “a person’s being mistaken or at fault, in the sense of having missed a specified goal or failed to carry out a duty.” This means “a failure in mutual relations, that is, to one

69. Avery-Peck, “Sin,” 1323. He says that while there are differences in the meanings of the terms, “it must be clear that in later biblical and post-biblical texts these terms are frequently used to refer to sin in general. The distinctive connotations attributed to their root meanings and to their original uses often times appear to have been lost, so that in later contexts, the words simply function as synonyms.” The same point is made in Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhort and Tremper Longman III, eds., *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 792-793.

70. May, “Sin,” 955.

individual's failing to treat another appropriately either by showing the proper courtesy or by meeting a social or economic obligation." The term is then appropriated and utilized religiously to describe "a failed relationship with God."⁷¹

Related to *het*, but in a way unlike it, is *peshā*, a term which refers to "an intentional breach of responsibility" or "willful rebellion." While its secular use indicates the transgression of a treaty (e.g., 2 Kgs. 1:1), *peshā* theologically points to Israel's breach of its covenant with God. Judaism regards any violation of the stipulations of the covenant with God as "sin." It must be noted, therefore, that within Judaism "sin" includes not only religious or ritual offenses which are commonly thought of as "sins" today but also other crimes against individuals or the community which are considered in the Torah as a whole.⁷²

A third term for "sin" is *avon*. It signifies "an error or iniquity committed when one acts contrary to the will of God" and is associated with crookedness.⁷³ Unlike *het* and *peshā*, which can refer to transgressions against people and God, *avon* is specifically iniquity committed against the divine. As with many related terms, the three came to be used interchangeably and functioned merely as synonyms.⁷⁴

Two things need to be noted in the New Testament (NT) understanding of "sin." First is the tendency "to shift focus from individual sinful acts (the plural *hamartiai*, *hamartemata*) to sin itself (the singular *he hamartia*, *he adikia*)" especially in Johannine and Pauline literature.⁷⁵ Here "sin" is "much more the unitary reality of one's single state of alienation from God than the multiple reality of an individual's many wicked deeds. Sins are sins because they give rise

71. Avery-Peck, "Sin," 1322.

72. *Ibid.*, 1320.

73. *Ibid.* "Sin" is seen as "a perverse revolt against God." From the perspective of the covenant between God and people, "sin is recognized as an act of unfaithfulness and adultery (Is. 24:5; 48:8; Jer. 3:20; 9:1; Ez. 16:59; Hos. 3:1)." May, "Sin," 955.

74. "The Old Testament has no general word for sin like the NT. Its theological reflection on sin is not so fully developed as, for example, in Paul. Yet sin, over and above the guilt of the individual, was clearly recognized as a reality separating [people] and nation from God." W. Günther, "U: 'DJ4'," in Colin Brown, ed., *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology III* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1971), 577-578.

75. May, "Sin," 956.

to and prolong life apart from God."⁷⁶ Second, while there are obviously a variety of words indicating "sin" in Christian scriptures, one term came to the fore to represent what "sin" is: *hamartia*. "Following the prominent use of *hamartanó* and its cognates in the LXX," notes W. Günther, "the NT uses them as the comprehensive expression of everything opposed to God...All the other concepts and synonyms are overshadowed by *hamartia* and are to be understood in the light of this concept."⁷⁷

Understandably then, the Synoptic Gospels and Acts speaks of Jesus' awareness of the reality of "sin" and his being victor over it. Johannine literature deepens this thought by presenting Jesus as "the One who takes sin to Himself and bears it away." Paul, for his part, witnesses to Christ's coming to sinful humankind, rescuing and reconstituting it.⁷⁸ Because of these it can be said that "the most significant feature in the NT *kerygma* is that Christ is the Victor over sin, the final cause of eternal ruin."⁷⁹ One surmises that this kind of interpretation of "sin" would somehow be both logical and called for. Logical because there was no need to repeat the understanding gained in Hebrew scriptures arising from the Jewish heritage of the first disciples. Called for because communities who regarded Jesus the Christ as the very reason for their existence needed to articulate his relationship to "sin." For them evil did not have the last word; Jesus did. Discipleship meant rejection of "sin" and its grip on human life. As far as they were concerned, a new situation had dawned. Thus, more than just an ethical issue, "sin" was primarily regarded as a theological one vis-à-vis Jesus Christ.

Cultural contextual factors were still present even with such systematization. A clear example of this is the term for "sin" used by Matthew and Luke in the Lord's Prayer. Whereas Matthew speaks of the forgiveness of debts (*opheilemata*), Luke refers to it as sins

76. *Ibid.*, 956-957.

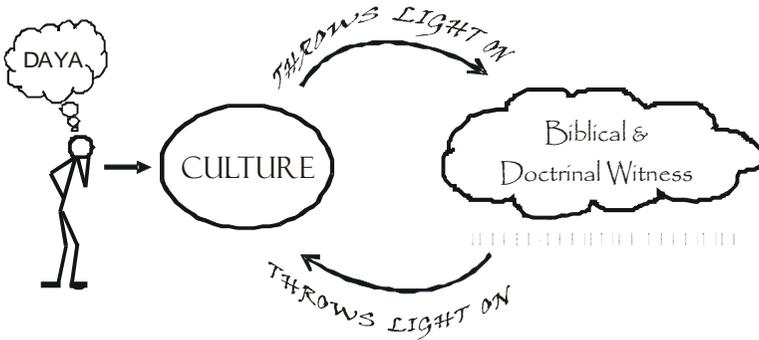
77. *Hamartia* occurs 173 times, of which 64 instances are in Paul (including 48 in Rom.), 25 in Heb. and 17 each in Jn. and the Johannine epistles. *Hamartano* occurs 42 times (including 7 each in Rom. and 1 Cor., 10 times in the Johannine epistles and 3 times in Jn.). See W. Günther, "σ: "DJ4"" 579.

78. Grundmann, "Sin in the NT," in Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* I, 303-309.

79. *Ibid.*, 315.

(*hamartias*). “Matthew’s debts show a more Semitic usage” in utilizing the Aramaic word whose “primary analogue [was] financial debts.” “To the Greek gentile Christians of Luke’s community, however, sins would be more understandable. The Greeks knew sin or *hamartia*, as literally a missing of the mark, an arrow gone astray, an error or mistake, a falsity of some kind.”⁸⁰

This systematization was not the starting point; it was the end result of contextual reflections on the concrete reality and experience of “sin.” The numerous specific words in scripture for “sin” give more hints at this. We shall follow the same process by beginning our reflection on the reality of “sin” on the basis of our experience of it today in the Philippines, i.e., a contextual understanding of it.



C. THE INHERITED THEOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING OF “SIN”

Evangelized by missionaries from the West, Filipinos were earlier taught that “sin”⁸¹ was “a deliberate transgression of the law of God.”⁸² The contextual approach we are following requires that

80. Nicholas Ayo, CSC, *The Lord’s Prayer: A Survey Theological and Literary* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992), 72.

81. The word “sin” is in quotation marks to indicate that using this term is a way of culturally interpreting a reality expressed by it. This reality can be formulated in a different cultural way.

82. Piet Schoonenberg, “Sin,” 887.

we understand not only the content of this statement but also its historical and cultural context and in particular how these factors affect such content. This view of “sin” is representative of the so-called “classicist approach”⁸³ to morality. Two developments, one philosophical and the other commercial, combined to create this particular orientation of moral theology “*ad normam juris canonici*” (according to the norm of canon law): Nominalism and middle class commerce.⁸⁴ The former tended towards ethical individualism while the latter demanded the determination of what justice minimally required. Both provoked the imposition of order “through dominative power”⁸⁵ and recourse to legal requirements during the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries. These paved the way for the celebration of law “as central to moral thinking and living and was seen as a tool for expressing the necessary minimum, for establishing rights and duties in such a way as to regulate the rapidly multiplying relationships within the European community.”⁸⁶

1. “Sin” from a Legal Perspective

This legal way of looking at Christian life in general and to “sin” in particular, eventually led to a predominance of a legalistic mentality. We need to bear in the mind that the influence of Western European Christianity on the Philippines started in the sixteenth century through the efforts of Spanish missionaries.⁸⁷ As an illustration, the priest hearing confession was regarded as a judge. The popular catechism of the 1940’s, *My Catholic Faith*, presents the following comparison: “Even in a civil court, the judge makes no decision

83. Richard McBrien, *Catholicism*, II (Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1980), 936.

84. Even liturgy was affected by this development; it became “a science of the correct, of the valid and licit, of rubrical propriety,” having become associated with canon law. Timothy E. O’Connell, *Principles for a Catholic Morality* (San Francisco: Harper, 1990), 16-19, 220.

85. *Ibid.*, 17.

86. *Ibid.*

87. Systematic evangelization efforts only began in 1565 even though there was an initial contact since 1521.

without knowing the facts of the case, a trial conducted with accusers and witnesses against the accused. The priest is *the judge* and he must learn from the penitent himself whether he should give absolution and what would be a just penance to impose.”⁸⁸

Prior to the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), the study of moral theology was aimed at preparing those who would hear the confessions of the faithful. Describing the situation in summary form, Richard McBrien writes:

The emphasis [in moral theology] was on the individual act to determine whether or not it fell into the category of sin, and, if so, whether it was mortal or venial. Stress was...placed on obedience to law: divine law, natural law, human law. The “good” is what is commanded by law. Therefore, conformity with law is the fulfillment of the good.⁸⁹

This law-oriented cultural interpretation at that time presented “God on the analogy of a civil or ecclesiastical lawgiver and thinks of God’s law on the analogy of a positive law, as contingent and imposed from the outside.”⁹⁰ The catechism defined actual, mortal and venial sins in legal terms.⁹¹

The sense of “sin” within this point of view was centered on “sin” as an act. It was something that people did. When it referred to “original sin,” it meant the actual sin of Adam and Eve which led to the fact of sinfulness of humankind but which we ourselves did not commit.⁹² Apart from “sin” being an act and a fact, it was also a reference to a state or a condition of being in “sin” which was the result of an act of mortal “sin.” This was a state of being cut off from God’s grace. Led by this act-oriented understanding of “sin,”

88. Louis LaRavoire Morrow, *My Catholic Faith*, 324.

89. Richard McBrien, *Catholicism*, II, 936.

90. Schoonenberg, “Sin,” 88.

91. “Actual sin is any willful thought, desire, word, action or omission forbidden by the law of God”; “Mortal sin is a grievous offense against the law of God”; and “Venial sin is a less serious offense against the law of God.” See Alfredo S. Reyes, Jaime P. Socias and Luis Esteban Latorre, *Catechism of Catholic Doctrine* (Quezon City: Vera-Reyes, Inc., 1982), 193.

92. Contemporary exegetes and theologians have questioned this interpretation

the Council of Trent in the sixteenth century obligated Catholics to confess their mortal sins by species and number. Admitting oneself to be a sinner was not enough as if after one proclaimed oneself to be dead (the sin was mortal), the penitent started stating how dead he or she had become!⁹³ O'Connell suggests that we start instead from our experience of "sin," an experience that perceives "sin" as a fact of life. A tragic dimension of life is there and we experience it as evil whether as believers or not. For believers, however, the explanation is eminently religious and it is called "sin." It is "sin" as a reality that triggers sinful acts and which eventually leads to a sinful state or orientation in life.⁹⁴

We may be tempted to think that it was just the historical and cultural situation in the European west that was responsible for the legal notion of "sin." But since every theological articulation is an attempt to synthesize data from both human experience and the Judaeo-Christian Tradition, we must point out that this understanding of "sin" derives also from something found in the Tradition, particularly a Jewish element. It is not only the perspective of the covenant between God and Israel that is at work.⁹⁵ Covenant in the cultural world of Israel was an imagery of an international political treaty which uses the language of rights and obligations. One might say that the understanding of "sin" in this context is "the negative reverse side of the idea of the covenant, and hence is often expressed in legal terms."⁹⁶ There is also the fact that "the concept of sin in Judaism is determined by the law."⁹⁷ Violation of the commands stipulated in the Torah, the revelation of the divine will, was "sin." All transgressions, whether specifically religious or merely secular in our terms, have a religious character as rebellion against God. In

of "original sin". See for example, Herbert Haag, *Is Original Sin in the Bible?* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1969), and Neil Ormerod, *Grace and Disgrace: A Theology of Self-Esteem, Society and History* (New South Wales: E.J. Dwyer, 1992).

93. O'Connell, *Principles for a Catholic Morality*, 80-82.

94. *Ibid.*, 84-87.

95. For an explanation of the use of this imagery, see Walter Brueggemann, *What Are Christians For?* (Dayton: Pflaum, 1971).

96. W. Günther, "U: "DJ4", 577-578.

97. Stählin and Grundmann, "The Concept of Sin in Judaism," in *Theological*

other words, we have in this legal reading of “sin” a contextual understanding of “sin” which combines the historical and culture of western Europe as well as factors emanating from the Tradition.

In the absence of the imagery of covenant as part of the indigenous culture, “sin” can still be seen as a violation or transgression of a culturally established norm which can be expressive of God’s will. Covenant is a cultural metaphor utilized to interpret Israel’s relationship with Yahweh in terms of following God’s stipulations for life.⁹⁸ For Filipinos who do not have the experience of covenant with powerful kings and princes, the debt of human solidarity may express God’s will. The key is the trespassing, transgressing or violating a norm, which is derived from our relationship to God. This perspective is similar to the interpretation that sin is the violation of God’s *shalom* which shows how “sin” is basically a disruption of such harmony intended by God.⁹⁹ Could we not say, by the same token, that human solidarity as articulated by *utang na loob* is in accord with the spirit of the covenant, especially when we consider the new command given by Jesus that specifically stipulates love of neighbor and is regarded as the sure sign of discipleship?

2. “Sin” from a Personalist Perspective

Then around the time of Vatican II, classicism in the West gave way to historical consciousness, passing from “a rather static concept of reality to a more dynamic, evolutionary one” (*Gaudium et Spes*, 5). At the same time, the biblical roots of moral theology were being emphasized. This shift provided a different perspective on moral theology and consequently led to a change in the interpretation of “sin.” Historical consciousness underscores the role and freedom of the human person and sees the moral life of the Christian “as one

97. Stählin and Grundmann, “The Concept of Sin in Judaism,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, I, ed. Kittel (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), 289.

98. Walter Brueggemann, *What Are Christians For?* (Dayton: Pflaum, 1971).

99. “Sin is disruption of created harmony and then resistance to divine restoration of that harmony.” Platinga, Jr., *Not the Way It’s Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin*, 5.

of personal responsibility within changing historical conditions...to God, to oneself, to the Church, and to the wider human community.”¹⁰⁰ Within this point of view “sin” was interpreted in relational, particularly personalist, terms as an “infidelity to the covenantal relationship with God” or as “acting against who we are, and against God who is within us.”¹⁰¹ With the emergence of a more personalist view, the relational, rather than the legal aspect of the covenant, has gained relevance and significance. Is not the God of the covenant the God of people rather than of law: “I shall be your God and you shall be My people”? As a result, the imagery of personal relationship which is found in the scripture has been rediscovered (Hos 2; Jer. 3:10; Lk. 15) for theological usage. From this standpoint the loving intimacy that God wills to share with humankind, particularly in the New Testament, is highlighted. From the perspective of contextual theologizing, we glean, in this interpretation of “sin”, the attention to both the situation and the Tradition.

3. “Sin” from a Social Perspective

This change from a legalistic and individualistic comprehension to a more personalist understanding of “sin” is also reflected in recent thought of the Philippine Church. This is definitely a theological gain. No longer is sin viewed mainly as breaking the law of God. Rather, it is understood relationally as the failure to love due of selfishness, that is, the failure to do good as well as the failure to avoid evil. However, because of the massive structural evils the local Church is confronted with today in the country, primary attention must be rightly given to the social dimensions of “sin.”¹⁰² Given such a situation, a sense of social and communal sin is really called for. Theologizing from experience, from a specific historical context, has been realized. The Second Plenary Council of the Philippines (PCP II) in 1991 first points out that “sin” is externalized

100. McBrien, *Catholicism*, 941-942.

101. *Ibid.*, 1006.

102. *Acts and Decrees of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines*, #81-82.

through patterns of human interaction. When these patterns become habitual and are infected by “sin,” they result into “sinful social structures”. Such sinful social structures “can harden into institutions, and result in a network or environment that effectively hinders growth in the Christian life.” PCP II considers these structures and institutions as forces that “perpetuate disvalues,” induce people to sin and have terrible consequential social effects that cause much suffering.¹⁰³ It is not a surprise when it prophetically regards “sin” as the root cause of the Philippines’ socio-economic and political problems, and singles out two typical sinful attitudes which lead to structures of sin: “the all-consuming desire for profit, and...the thirst for power, with the intention of imposing one’s will upon others.”¹⁰⁴ One is reminded here of the importance of the transformation of social processes and structures that liberation theologies insist on. Domination arising from wealth, status and power ought to give way to liberation for sharing, humility and powerlessness.

But while the Church has rightly emphasized the social dimension of evil and sin arising from the local historical situation, it has yet to enter into the cultural world of understanding them profoundly and broadly. In no way does this intend to negate the gains of the other perspectives and approaches to the situation. But context is not only historical but also cultural. It is not only what is happening; it also perceives the significance of what is happening.

What seems to obstruct this path to the cultural? One major factor is the continuing practice of the local Church to theologize in cultural categories represented by the English language other than the indigenous ones.¹⁰⁵ The *lingua franca* of theology in the country has formerly been Spanish before shifting to English in the present. If we consider that language is the voice of the culture speaking in its own terms, then the use of the vernacular harnesses the resources

103. PCP II explicitly names “the pervasiveness of graft and corruption” as an effect of sinful structures.

104. Ibid., #266, 270. As we will see later, these two attitudes are reflected in *pandaraya*, the deliberate and deceitful short-changing of another for self-benefit.

105. A lecturer in pastoral theology narrated a parallel example to help show the importance of the vernacular. She wrote that in a symposium on corruption, a participant remarked, “there’s nothing new about this topic. What I can’t understand is the indifference of people towards it. How can we instill shame on

of the culture. So even if the very important social aspect of “sin” has been given attention, there is still something still missing in its articulation of what “sin” is today.

4. “Sin” from a Specifically Cultural Perspective

This realization of the social dimension of sin is a substantial gain in local theology. But even while theology has begun to touch the lives of the majority poor in this manner, it has yet to enter into the majority’s cultural world of meaning. This is the same aspect which Latin American liberation theology recognizes as significantly absent in its theologizing. According to one theologian, who thinks that “it is necessary to reincorporate the symbolic”, “the problem with liberation theology was not being infiltrated by Marxism, but its inability to infiltrate grassroots logic” so that, though liberation theologians were talking about the poor and liberation, the discourse was “like a stranger to the people.” He reckons that there is a “need to abandon excessive rationality and recover the subjective, which has profound dimensions in human existence.”¹⁰⁶

Symptomatic of this lack of a cultural sense is the continued dependence on English language rather than on the vernacular to articulate theological understanding. Translations into the vernacular, if they are made, take their cue from English concepts, meanings and connotations. When “sin” is rendered as “*kasalanan*,” its reference point appears to be the western European understanding of it, whether pre- or post-Vatican II.

those who commit it? How can we ignite anger so that people would rise up against it.” Her reaction to this was: “Sa tatlong oras na karirinig ng salitang ‘corruption,’ alam ko *cognitively* na mali ito pero walang dating sa akin (affectively). Pero pag binanggit ang salitang ‘DAYA’ (Ang daya mo! Mga mandaraya!), parang sumisilakbo sa aking damdamin ang galit, hiya, gustong gumanti, dapat parusahan, atbp.” (After three hours of hearing about corruption, I knew *cognitively* that this was wrong, but it did not have an *affective* impact on me. But when the word ‘*daya*’ is mentioned (You are guilty of *daya*! You perpetrators of *daya*!) it is as if strong feelings burst forth from within – anger, shame, urge to get even, desire to punish, etc.).

106. A. Echeverry, “Liberation Theology: A Necessary Revision,” *Euntes* 29 (1966): 184-185.

D. CONSTANT THEMES IN THEOLOGIES OF “SIN”

Rather than translate a theology of “sin” from the bible or from official church teaching, contextual theology suggests a discernment of constant themes¹⁰⁷ in the various theologies encountered in the Tradition, precisely to reinterpret “sin” from a different historical and cultural perspective. The process presupposes diversity rather than uniformity in understanding and living out of the Tradition. It is precisely because diversity of understanding is a fact that constant themes or elements become a useful way to gauge theological unity. There are constant elements which are present in each of these theologies and which can be compared. In this way, we are able to check whether our cultural reformulation of the Christian understanding of “sin” is faithful to the Judaeo-Christian Tradition. It is worth noting that this approach in ensuring rootedness in the Tradition assumes that the stimulus which the experience of the Good News brings engenders a variety of historical and cultural expressions.

After seeing how both in scripture and western medieval theology the understanding of “sin” was conditioned by historical and cultural factors, we are now in a position to inquire whether there are similar theological elements in the theologies of “sin” in the bible, particularly the New Testament, and in the theology of “sin” which was taught to us by missionaries from the West. What are the *theological* constants in these formulations, those themes or elements which need to be taken into account when articulating a different contextual interpretation of “sin”?

First, the reality of “sin” assumes the relational reality existing between God and humanity. This constant takes into account both the personal and social aspects of being and becoming human. As persons, no one lives disconnected to or in isolation from others. The constant is neither about God nor the human being on his own. In this relationship God takes the initiative to offer life and love

107. For a further explanation of my use of constant themes or elements, see José M. de Mesa, “Theological Constants and Theological Reflections,” in *The Pastoral Circle Revisited: A Critical Quest for Truth and Transformation* Frans Wijzen, eds. Peter Henriot and Redrigo Mejía (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2005), 89-107.

(salvation) and human beings freely respond to this initiative either by acceptance or refusal. In contrast to a positive response, “sin” is something that happens negatively in the relationship, whether this is interpreted within a legalist or a personalist framework. God is a lawgiver and people are law-abiders in the former. In a theology of “sin,” there is always the awareness that something has gone wrong with the relationship; evil has been wrought. Instead of a relationship of grace, the interaction has become sinful through human failure. Sinful situations incite sinful decisions and behavior, which may well result in a sinful orientation in life.¹⁰⁸

Second, the understanding of “sin” includes a norm against which “sin” is assessed and weighed, whether this is conceived as the person or the nature of the GodSelf, God’s love, Jesus Christ, Covenant, Kingdom of God, *Shalom*, Divine Friendship, the Divine Will, or God’s Law. This element can be expressed as a faith response, a responsibility, an obligation, a relationship or even as a debt.

The third constant is the God-given freedom to live by this norm or not. A person is free to turn towards God or to move away from God: to opt for life or to choose death. In a legal framework, there is a deliberate refusal to obey God’s law; the personalist viewpoint regards it as intentional breaking of the relationship with God or alienation from God.

Fourth is the culpable human failure to live up to this norm by violating, transgressing or rebelling against it and the consequent knowledge of this condition: the awareness of having done evil, the sense of guilt or the consciousness of having “sinned.” This is the sense of the intentional wrongdoing, deliberate engagement in what is evil or consciousness in “sinning.” One does not really “sin” unknowingly.¹⁰⁹ Such sinning leads to sinfulness, one’s becoming a sinner.

108. O’Connell, *Principles for a Catholic Morality*, 80-88.

109. “The term ‘to sin’ usually denotes a deliberate transgression...In this usage, therefore, it is distinct from inadvertent acts contrary to what ought to be done, and from transgressions committed in ignorance.” Calvin Linton, “Sin,” in *Baker’s Dictionary of Christian Ethics*, ed. Henry Carl (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1973), 620.

Finally, Christian talk about “sin” cannot end in “sin.” This is the subject of the fifth constant: God’s enduring love and forgiveness. Jesus Christ is the experience and the proclamation that “where sin abounded, grace abounded all the more” (Rom. 5:20-21). It arises from the conviction that death no longer has its sting (cf. 1Cor. 15:54-57). Forgiveness may be expressed as a declaration of not being condemned, if seen in legal terms and reconciliation, when viewed from the personalist stance.

**The Theological Constant Themes
in a Theology of “Sin”**

1. **A relational existing between God and humanity.**
2. **A norm against which “sin” is assessed and weighed.**
3. **A God-given freedom to live by this norm or not.**
4. **The culpable human failure to live up to this norm and becoming a sinner.**
5. **God’s forgiveness in which grace is victorious over “sin.”**

David’s famous prayer of repentance, the *Miserere*, illustrates these five constant themes in a theology of “sin”: “Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight” (Ps. 51:1-4).¹¹⁰ Here we find David’s relationship with the divine where God’s “unfailing love” is normative. The former’s consciousness of sinfulness presupposes

110. “While sin is regarded essentially as an offense against God, sin does not hurt or harm God in his inner being, for God as the wholly transcendent One can in no way be harmed by the actions of his creatures... Nonetheless, sin does wound God in his ‘image,’ i.e., in the human person he has made to share in his life.” See May, “Sin,” 956.

consciousness of wrongdoing and of his freedom in engaging in such “transgressions.” And yet, there is also the conviction of God’s power and willingness to “wash away all...iniquity” and to “cleanse...sin.”

E. THEOLOGICAL CONSTANT THEMES AND “DAYA”

Is the experience and concept of *daya* capable of embodying and expressing the above constant themes? I believe it is. *Daya* assumes a relationship, the bond which exists among all human persons in general as well as the relationship between the *nandadaya* (perpetrator of *daya*) and the *dinadaya* (the one victimized by *daya*) in particular. These meanings could be applied both to human relationships as well as to the relationship between God and people. Based on the cultural understanding of *daya* in society where people experience *pandaraya*, we can analogically speak of human beings shortchanging God by not rendering to God what is due the GodSelf.

1. The First Constant: Relationship between God and People

A theology of “sin” necessarily posits a relationship between God and human beings. Filipinos are culturally conscious that life is a gift from God: *ang buhay ay kaloob ng Diyos* (life is a graciously free gift of God). This is indirectly acknowledged by the phrase for someone who had died: *binawian siya ng buhay* (God took back this life). Filipinos deem it right and appropriate to express gratitude to God: *tumanaw ng utang na loob* (to gratefully acknowledge this “debt” of a gift). One can rightly interpret this theologically as God’s initiative to offer life and love. Moreover, God is culturally seen to be a benevolent deity, although there are indeed ambiguous elements mixed with this understanding due to the belief in *suwerte* (luck) and *kapalaran* (fate).¹¹¹ But from a Christian perspective, this relationship between God and people ought to be viewed from the standpoint that God is a God of *kagandahang-loob*.

111. Cf. José M. de Mesa, *And God Said, “Bahala Na!”: The Theme of Providence in the Lowland Filipino Context* (Quezon City: Maryhill School of Theology, 1979).

“*Loob*”, literally meaning “the within”, refers to the core of one’s personhood and the most authentic inner self of the Filipino which is essentially related to other selves. It is, moreover, regarded as the wellspring of feeling, thought and behavior. So characterizing this “*loob*” as “*maganda*” (good) or “*masama*” (evil) describes not only specific instances of human intent and behavior, but indicates the overall quality of a person’s character. *Pandaraya*, then, emanates from the very depths of one’s personhood for *loob* is the truth of one’s personhood.

In asking what God’s “*loob*” is, therefore, we are inquiring about what God wants for humanity and who this God is in relation to people. So what is God’s “*loob*”? In the light of the Tradition’s conviction that our God has been decisively revealed by Jesus who “went around doing good” (cf. Acts 10:38), God must be one of “*kagandahang-loob*” (cf. 1 Jn. 4:8,16). “*Ganda*” is literally beauty. But it denotes in the notion of “*kagandahang-loob*” that which is not only ethically good but also winsomely good. For Filipinos “*kagandahang-loob*” is primarily pure goodness or positivity that captivates and wins people over. It refers to a goodness that is not cold but warm: a kindness not enslaving but liberating. *Kagandahang-loob* is not something which one would casually attribute to a person one does not know well; the determination of whether he or she is of *magandang kalooban* or not takes time and is experientially founded on perceptive knowledge. *Kagandahang-loob* connotes all that is good in someone, which is, in fact, an ideal among Filipinos. It is a quality of being which has its roots in the very heart of a person and which is given expression in the totality of one’s life of interrelationship.

This culturally formulated “definition” of who God is and what God wants would lead us further into the inner sanctum of the culture. For the essentially relational concept, “*kagandahang-loob*”, while obviously referring to kindheartedness, benevolence, beneficence, goodness (as a specific act), the term “*loob*” when probed more deeply yields a meaning equivalent to “nature”, the quality not just of a particular relationship but the quality of one’s personhood considered within a relational way of thinking. “*Kagandahang-loob*” then is not merely a positive act in relating to others; it is the manifestation of what the person truly is deeply as shown in a specific act in a given relationship. Negatively, it is not enlightened self-interest,

doing good in order to ensure self-benefit. Positively, it is unconditional and is aimed at the well-being of the other.¹¹² In the context of our discussion of “sin” as *daya*, God for us is *kagandahang-loob*, a kind of gracious goodness that does not shortchange us in any way. *Kagandahang-loob* is “*kabutihang walang daya*”, goodness without deceit.¹¹³ *Pandaraya*, then, is a situation of deceiving or shortchanging people and God under the guise of goodness. It is contrary to and a betrayal of God’s *kagandahang-loob*. It is doubly evil for not only is it perpetrating an evil deed, it also covers wrongdoing by a cloak of “goodness.” People are both harmed and deceived.

2. The Second Constant: Norm from the “*Loob*”

The concept of *daya* presupposes a norm which arises from *loob*, the wellspring of feeling, thought, and behavior and, therefore, of values. On the level of human relationships, the specific normativity of *loob*¹¹⁴ is expressed as *utang na loob* or the debt of human solidarity as explained earlier. Quite often interpreted as the debt of gratitude for a favor received, *utang na loob* exhibits a more primary obligation: the “debt” to respect, enhance and even defend, when necessary, the dignity of a fellow human being. Because we all owe our *loob* to God, we are bonded to one another. It is the Filipino’s recognition of the truth that “God did not create man as a solitary...for by his innermost nature man is a social being, and unless he relates himself to others he can neither live nor develop his potential” (*Lumen Gentium* 12). This sense of *utang na loob* presupposes a belief in human equality. I still clearly recall one jeepney driver

112. The term “*magparaya*,” which is derived from the root word “*daya*,” means either “to be tolerant of the act, desires or opinion of another or others”; or “to forego something graciously in favor of another or others.” The latter meaning appears to contain an element of *kagandahang-loob*; namely, favoring the good of the other rather than the self. See Vito C. Santos, *Pilipino-English Dictionary*.

113. Albert E. Alejo, S.J., *Tao Po! Tuloy!*, 138.

114. In the *Doctrina Christiana en Idioma Tagalog* by Juan de Oliver, we find an acknowledgment that real “sin” is in the *loob*: “Ang ycapapacasama nang caloloua, ang casalanan... siyang totoong masama yaon sa loob ng tauo, at ycamamatay niya...” (What is evil for the soul, sin...this is real evil within (*loob*) every person, and which brings death...). Fray Juan de Oliver, OFM, *Doctrina Christiana en Idioma Tagalog*, ed. Jose M. Cruz, S.J., (Quezon City: PULONG: Sources for Philippine Studies, Ateneo de Manila University, 1995), 15, translation mine.

lambasting the driver of a private care who cursed him: “*Akala mo puwede mo akong murahim porke naka-kotse ka? Tao rin ako... may damdamin din ako!*” (“Do you think you can curse me just because you are driving a car? I’m also a human being... I also have feelings”). This is similar to what I overheard in a conversation when one sipped more of a softdrink which was meant to be equally shared. It elicited a half-jest, half serious remark, “*Ang daya-daya mo naman!*” (“You are committing *daya!*”). It was seen as a violation of the value of “*hating-kapatid,*” the practice of fair sharing as though they were sisters and brothers. *Utang na loob* is considered as a norm or standard in human relationships. As human beings, there should be mutual respect and solidarity; getting one over another is to be shunned. To deceive, take advantage of or shortchange a fellow human being (*pandaraya*) is tantamount to disregarding or refusing to recognize this “debt” of human solidarity of all humans to one another, *utang na loob*. *Pandaraya*, in a sense, is the omission of what ought “to be paid” to another. But it is, in another sense, a commission of evil because it is deliberately carried out (*sinadya*). It is a serious failure in relationships.

Utang na loob as debt of human solidarity can easily be associated with the Matthean use of “debts” (*opheilemata*) which, it is claimed, carries “a wider connotation than sins. To be indebted to someone is often to owe a debt that cannot be paid back.”¹¹⁵ We ask God to forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. The condition of humankind, from this point of view, is one of indebtedness.

If we cannot pay our innumerable debts then we live in default. We thus stand in need of continual mercy. Debts capture the idea of sins not only of commission, but also all our sins of omission. Think of all the good we might have done, and the debt to others who must put up with a world that might have been a better place had we been more generous. We are indebted to one another for our shortcomings as well as for our crimes, for what we are as well as for what we do... Either we have contributed to

115. Ayo, *The Lord's Prayer*, 74. It is interesting to note that the official text of the Lord's Prayer in Filipino which earlier rendered *opheilemata* as “*utang*” (debt), now uses the term “*sala/nagkakasala*” (sins). See text of the Mass in *Paglilibing sa Yumaong Kristiyano* (Manila: Panayam ng mga Katolikong Obispo sa Pilipinas, 1983), 78.

the welfare of others or we have been part of their general impoverishment.¹¹⁶

A specifically cultural analysis of *hamartia* interestingly reveals that “missing the mark” means that “a person...has failed to meet cultural expectations in relationship with another person.”¹¹⁷ Whether done intentionally or accidentally, the result is the same: shame. Shaming another human being is “missing the mark,” *hamartia* — sin (cf. Mt. 18:15, 21) when considered within the Mediterranean culture where every person is honorable and is expected “to maintain and safeguard the honor that derives from birth into a specific family that for generations has accumulated a praiseworthy reputation.”¹¹⁸ One can easily see some similarities here between *hamartia* and *daya*. Both are failures to meet cultural expectations in relationship with another person. A relational norm, applicable to the personal, communal and social domains of life, is recognized. Where *hamartia* ostensibly brings shame on the victim, *daya* suggests it. The person who has been cheated feels duped, i.e., *naloko*, which somehow brings shame for not being intelligent enough to see the *pandaraya* as it was being done.

In the Judaeo-Christian Tradition our relationship with God is not divorced from our human relationships with one another. Love of God without love of neighbor is unthinkable. Any claim to the contrary is considered a lie: “Those who say, ‘I love God,’ and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars” (1 Jn. 4:20). Moreover, the inspiration, power and model for such love of the neighbor comes from the way God loves us (cf. Jn. 13:34-35). From this standpoint, *loob* as (relational) norm is expressed as *kagandahang-loob*. If *loob* is the very “nature” of the person within the Filipino culture, God’s is *kagandahang-loob* (1 Jn. 4:7, 16). This is not an ontological statement about God in Himself/Herself. It is a relational way of understanding God: the Divine in relation to us. The Gospel exhorts us to “seek above all the Kingdom of God and its righteousness,” that is, to align our lives to the very manner God relates with us. God’s *loob*

116. Ayo, *The Lord’s Prayer*, 74-75.

117. John Pilch, *The Cultural Dictionary of the Bible* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1999), 59.

118. *Ibid.*

should be ours in faith, a *pagsasaloob*, an interiorizing of God's *kagandahang-loob* and making it our own. Put in indigenous cultural terms, we are asked to ensure that God's *kagandahang-loob* triumphs in our lives through the praxis of *pagmamagandang-loob*¹¹⁹ in our relationships with others as well as with our world. This is what *pagsasaloob ng kagandahang-loob* really means, the making of God's very *loob* ("nature") ours.

The realization that "*loob*" is our most authentic inner self where our true worth as a person lies leads us to pay greater attention to God's "*kagandahang-loob*" in the petition in the Lord's Prayer: "Your will ("*loob*") be done." This is not merely a matter of obeying what God wants in a definite situation. More than that it is the interiorization of who God is; making God's "*kagandahang-loob*" as our "*loob*": "Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect (Mt. 5:48); be merciful as your heavenly Father is merciful (Lk. 6:36)." It is participation in God's *loob*, in the very "nature" of God being God. A rejection of this is tantamount to un-faith, a matter that can never be taken lightly.

3. The Third Constant: Human Freedom

The third constant is human freedom. *Pandaraya* is conscious and deliberate. As indicated above, no one accidentally "falls" into it. "*Napadaya*" (to unintentionally commit "*daya*") is culturally inconceivable. *Daya* is perpetrated intentionally. Since the *loob* has its own volition, *kusa* or initiative, a person can opt to follow the path of *kabutihang walang daya* or the way of *daya*, to engage in *pagmamagandang-loob* or to be involved in *pandaraya*. We take note that scripture images "sin" as a deliberate going astray, turning away from a good path, or turning to one's own way (Is. 53:6; cf. Dan. 9:11). Sinners "rush into sin" (Prov. 1:16; Is. 59:7) and "each pursues his own course like a horse charing into battle" (Jer. 8:6).¹²⁰

119. This is the verbal form of *kagandahang-loob*. The aim of *kagandahang-loob* is the well-being of the other. When utilized to describe God, we are implying that God intends total human well-being, life, salvation, heaven, bliss, peace. See Hans Küng, *On Being a Christian* (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1976), 251.

120. Ryken, Wilhoit and Longmann III, eds., *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, s.v. "Sin," 792-793.

Local discussion of human freedom cannot bypass the widespread belief in *suwerte* (predestined luck) and *kapalaran* (fate). These are symbolized in the value of *bahala na*. *Bahala na*, which is often translated as "let come what may," "never mind," or "it's up to God" when what is meant is roughly something similar to the English idiom, "what the hell!," is used as an encompassing concept to characterize the so-called Filipino fatalistic attitude or resigned acceptance of his lot in life.¹²¹ It has been faulted as a manifestation of the so-called Filipino fatalistic attitude. So widespread is its use that *bahala na* is said to be the best Filipino symbol of the defeatist worldview in which fixed or preordained fortunes in life are taken for granted. Is the Filipino not free to make decisions for which he would be responsible?

While it may at times indicate a shirking of responsibility, *bahala na* is really much more than that. Its root already suggests a positive stance: responsibility, concern, management and trust. In actual usage it expresses a refusal to be defeated by discouraging situations. Filipino anthropologist F. Landa Jocano has noted, "...As long as we can say '*bahala na!*' – the whole world appears to be a challenge; the steps we take are risks worth taking..." In a very positive way, *bahala na* is what makes people move, take risks and plan for the future. When understood as "we'll consider what to do when the time comes", undue anxiety or worrying about something is put aside.¹²² As an attitude of trust in God's providence in the sense of leaving everything into God's hands when nothing more can be humanly done, *bahala na* is expressed as *bahala na ang Diyos*: "let God take care of the matter." Trust in God's continuing care provides the strength in such situations. It also gives the motivational push where the limits of the humanly possible have yet to be explored.

Even the aspect of seeming resignation is in fact a manifestation of strength in very trying circumstances, an adaptive strategy in order to continue and not to lose hope. *Bahala na* gives people the capacity to laugh at themselves and the situations they are

121. de Mesa, *And God Said, "Bahala Na!"*, 84-116.

122. I cannot help but recall the words of Jesus in the Gospel: "So do not worry about tomorrow; it will have enough worries of its own. There is no need to add to the troubles each day brings" (Mt. 6:34).

in. It reflects, in addition, the oriental philosophy to be in harmony with nature. While it may appear passive, it is nevertheless dynamic without being coercive. Jocano's study of slum dwellers mentions that many of them believe and frequently stress that in the end they will have a break in life – if not them, the old people, at least their children. Even in their state of economic want, hope is amazingly present. Furthermore, this optimism and hope is buttressed by their faith in God.¹²³ *Bahala na*, therefore, is “a reservoir of psychic energy, a strong psychological prop which a person can lean upon in time of need.” Further analysis of *bahala na* reveals three positive elements: the daring and courage to take risks, the hope that the Filipino has, and the freedom that is inherent in risking and hoping.

This analysis of *bahala na* shows that when a Filipino perpetrates *pandaraya*, he is freely doing so. He is not helplessly conditioned by fate or luck to engage in it. It is a *kusa* (volition, decision) emanating from his *loob*.¹²⁴ *Daya*, as we have noted earlier, is one experience of wrongdoing that even small children without instruction are aware of. It is already clear from the efforts to rid the government of *pandaraya* that it is not inevitable. The situation can be changed. The call for transparency is the call for authenticity, one that arises from the true self, *loob*.

4. The Fourth Constant: Consciousness of Intentional Wrongdoing Leading a Self that is *Madayaín*.

The sense of being *madaya* (perpetrator of *pandaraya*) accompanies the act of *pandaraya*. This parallels the sinner being aware of having sinned, which is the fourth constant in a theology of “sin.” Someone who has engaged in *pandaraya* knows that what he has done is wrong. He has shortchanged and harmed a fellow human being who deserves to be respected and treated with dignity. There is no escaping this consciousness of being *madaya* for this is known

123. F. Landa Jocano, *Slum As A Way of Life* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1975), 194.

124. An interesting graffiti in a jeepney says as much: “*Pandaraya ay nasa kanyang puso; siya’y laging kumakatha ng kasamaan.*” (*Pandaraya* is in his heart; he is always crafting evil.)

in one’s *loob*. It is not an external judgment imposed on a person or a group; it is a verdict which their *loob* has passed on itself! In this sense, *loob* is conscience. It is in the *loob* that a person *knows* what he has really done. *Loob*, however, can also be regarded as conscience in a second sense. It can be formed. Whatever is interiorized to become part of the *loob* (*isinasaloo*b) is formative of the whole self. Finally, *loob* is conscience also because decisions are made within it: *nabuo ang loob* (literally, the *loob* has become complete).¹²⁵

Pandaraya is sanctioned by culture. Those found to be involved in such actions are ostracized and are no longer trusted. Whether these are in simple children’s games, professional competition like basketball tournaments, business transactions, or in holding positions of trust, individuals and the community view the *madaya* with suspicion. This is, perhaps, the culture’s moral sense of refusing *pandaraya*. But this externally imposed punishment for *pandaraya* is not the worst consequence of such evil doing. The person engaging in such corruption is himself corrupted. It is no longer just wrong behavior, namely, *pandaraya*. Such person becomes *madaya*. His continuous involvement in acts of *pandaraya* conditions his *loob* and effects within this very self the “state” or life-orientation of *pandaraya*. One makes oneself to be what one is by the choices one makes. He is now *madayaín*, his true self as strongly biased in favor of *pandaraya* which easily leads to many other acts of *pandaraya*. When the culture labels him as *madaya*, it only expresses what he has in fact become, corrupted by *pandaraya*.

Pervasive collective *pandaraya* produces what may be called analogously, a “culture of *daya*,” a corrupted way of thinking and behaving built around practice of *dayaan* (mutual *pandaraya*). This “culture” is created by individual acts of *pandaraya* which are tolerated and accepted by society. All who come under the influence of this “culture” are somehow “contaminated” by its influence. Attracted by its widespread hold on people and institutions, one may be persuaded that there is nothing wrong with *daya*. It has become regarded as a “custom” of the place which everyone must follow in

125. See discussion of conscience as characteristic, process and event in O’Connell, *Principles for a Catholic Morality*, 110-114.

order to get things done. The pattern seeps little by little into institutions and becomes part of social structures. A person, especially one born in this situation and unconsciously being conditioned by this social climate, begins to think, “If so many are doing it, it must be ‘normal.’ If it is common, maybe that’s the way things are.” We recall that this is the same way we are socialized or enculturated. The condition or state of *dayaan* influences people negatively, making it painfully difficult to do otherwise. Seen in this way, *daya* may be of help to understand the truth in “original sin,” but without making the two as identical. Born in a situation of “sinfulness” all are affected by it.

Thanks to biblical scholarship we have come to realize that the story of Adam and Eve’s commission of “sin” in the book of Genesis, without detracting from its message, is not meant to be taken literally. It is not meant to describe historical facts but to be symbol “in which the kernel of human history is described, including that which is still to come.”¹²⁶ Confronted by evil we cannot fully fathom nor escape and not wanting to attribute it to God, we speak not only of general human responsibility for this mess but, more importantly, of our dependence on God for salvation and grace.

The biblical story of “the Fall” is basically a message about humankind in the world: how it stands before God. This was expressed through a narrative that presupposed a static world where “things persisted the way they first existed.”¹²⁷ So if one wanted to say something about the basic elements of existence like the experience of evil or sin, the way to do it following this pattern of thought was to show how things were in the beginning. In other words, if the

126. Herbert Haag, *Is Original Sin in Scripture?* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1969), 106. “The idea that Adam’s descendants are automatically sinners because of the sin of their ancestor, and that they are already sinners when they enter the world, is foreign to Holy Scripture. The well-known verse from the psalms, ‘Behold I was born in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me’ (Ps. 51:7; 50:7) merely means that everyone born of woman becomes a sinner in this world, without fail. The Bible often uses the device of attributing a man’s later deeds or achievements to him from the time of his conception and birth. (See, for example, Jeremiah 1:5, where Jeremiah is made a prophet in his mother’s womb).” See also *A New Catechism: Catholic Faith for Adults* (London: Burns & Oates, 1967), 261-262; McBrien, *Catholicism*, I, 162-167.

127. *A New Catechism*, 263.

point we wish to make is that we all today experience sinfulness or that we all sin, we have to say that this was also the case at the beginning of time. Hence, the logic of calling such sinfulness as "original," that is, at the origin. The term began to be used at the time of Augustine around the 5th century. With the Dutch catechism we can say that "original sin is the sin of [mankind] as a whole (including myself) in so far as it affects every man. In every personal sin, the original sin of man is basically present and active and contributory."¹²⁸ The existence of sin was explained by the fact that people do sin.

Scholars today point out how misunderstanding of scripture led to the popular notion of "original sin" as a "sin" inherited from the disobedience of Adam and Eve and for which we are not responsible. In the Latin translation of Romans 5:12-13, it says "through one man sin entered into the world and through sin death, and thus death has passed into all men, *in quo omnes peccaverunt*." Although *in quo* can be rendered as "in whom," the Greek original "*epi ho pantes hemarton*" makes it clear that what is meant is "because." Thus "death spread to all *because* all have sinned..." (NRSV). Augustine unfortunately concluded otherwise as he was dependent on the Latin text. His interpretation found its way into the canons of the Councils of Carthage (418), Orange (529) and Trent (1546) as a proof text.¹²⁹

"Original sin," says Karl Rahner, is also "the abbreviated Christian formula for the fundamental truth of a theology of history, namely, that the situation of death, concupiscence, law, futility which guilt contributes to create and of the empirical inseparability of good and evil which concupiscence imposes on us, cannot be abolished in history, because it permanently belongs to the constitutive features of all history, even of the future, because it belongs to the beginning."¹³⁰ Although it is true that "original sin" has "in an *analogous*

128. Ibid., 267. I did not correct the non-inclusive language utilized by the catechism.

129. Neil Ormerod, *Grace and Disgrace: A Theology of Self-Esteem, Society and History* (Newtown, NSW: E.J. Dwyer, 1992), 109-111. It is the Latin text of Romans 5:12 which the Council of Trent quoted.

130. Karl Rahner, "Original Sin," in *Sacramentum Mundi*, Vol. IV, eds. Karl Rahner et al (London: Burns & Oates, 1970), 333.

sense the character of sin: It is very much *like* sin, in that it is contrary to the will of God, but it is at the same time *unlike* sin, in that it does not involve a free decision against God's will."¹³¹ Something more ought to be said to take the universality of sin seriously. "Original sin" takes concrete form in our personal sins. Our culpability consists in our personal decisions by which we ratify "original sin," so to speak, and stood over it.¹³² In terms of *dayaan* (the state of *daya*), *pandaraya* (our deliberate decision to shortchange God and people) is the expression of *pakikidaya* (our preference for *pandaraya* by participating in it).

The above considerations surely more than suggest reasons why the imagery of tyranny and bondage has often been employed to describe "sin." The sinner is like being ensnared and bound by strong cords (Prov. 5:22), and entangled (Heb. 12:1). Cain is warned not to let "sin" have mastery (Gen. 4:7) for sin is like a slave driver. The psalmist prayed that "sin" would not rule over him (Ps 119:133). For Jesus "everyone who sins is a slave to sin" (Jn. 8:34). Likewise Paul could speak about the slavery and imprisonment which sin brings about (Rom. 7:14, 23; cf. Rom 6). The universality of sin is referred to as "the whole world is a prisoner of sin" (Gal 3:22).¹³³

5. The Fifth Constant: God's Love and Forgiveness

From the perspective of the Judaeo-Christian scriptures, a person who takes advantage of another and breaches human relationship "dies." The wages of "sin," says Paul, "is death" (Rom. 6:23). To be a sinner is to be "dead in your transgressions and sins" (Eph. 2:1; cf. Col. 2:13). It is for this reason that the father in the parable of the merciful father spoke of his son as "dead" only to come back to "life" when forgiveness is offered and accepted and reconciliation occurs. New life is possible. If *daya* is to be utilized in interpreting "sin" contextually in the Filipino setting, then the fifth theological constant must be honored. As "sin" does not have the

131. McBrien, *Catholicism*, I, 166.

132. *A New Catechism*, 267.

133. See Ryken, Wilhoit and Longman III, eds., *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, s.v. "sin," 792-793.

final say in Christian life, so *daya* cannot have the last word. Do we not pray so in the Lord’s Prayer? “*Patawarin mo kami sa aming pandaraya, tulad ng pagpapatawad namin sa mga nandaraya sa amin*” (“Forgive us our *pandaraya* as we forgive those who commit *pandaraya* against us”).¹³⁴ Forgiveness is the triumph of love in the situation of sinfulness.

This fifth constant brings us back to the first one particularly about God’s relationship with us as experienced and proclaimed in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. In “doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil” (Acts 10:38) he is the incarnation of God’s *kagandahang-loob*, the unconditional love of God towards us. In being victorious over sin and death, he has given us the capacity to “be merciful as our heavenly Father is merciful.” We can forgive *pandaraya* not only because we realize that we too as *mandaraya* need forgiveness but also and more so because God, the *kabutihang walang daya* (*kagandahang-loob*), has forgiven our *pandaraya*. This point presupposes the divine initiative and the priority of grace over sin which must be emphasized in a theology of “sin.” *Kagandahang-loob* is the *alpha* and the *omega*, first and last word in life and in the world. If *pandaraya* is a refusal to render the debt of human solidarity which humanizes people, *kagandahang-loob* honors and promotes it, thus humanizing people: *tinatao sila*, that is, they are regarded and treated as human beings with dignity.

The need to be forgiven as well as to forgive needs to be stressed in the situation of widespread and deeply rooted *pandaraya* in society. To be forgiven presupposes an admission of *pandaraya*, a most difficult thing to do. But if a climate of *kagandahang-loob*, a *kabutihang walang daya* can be gradually created, first of all, by the believers of the God of Jesus, this will perhaps help break the “learned helplessness” described as “a culture of crippling submissiveness of socially reinforced incapacity to do anything about

134. The introduction of the English word “trespasses” as a translation of “sins” may, perhaps, be seen as an example of contextualization within the English speaking world which values privacy more than Asian countries. “A trespass is a violation of what is owed to someone or something...Accordingly, to trespass implies an invasion of the space of another in a careless and irreverent way. To forgive trespasses is therefore to forgive offenses of a wide and inclusive range.” See Ayo, *The Lord’s Prayer*, 73.

corruption.” That there are already small but significant examples of such realization¹³⁵ offer partial yet genuine hope that *pandaraya* will not be the last word in Philippine society, just as “sin” has not triumphed over grace. In faith we are confident that “where sin increased, grace abounded all the more...” (Rom. 5:20). In fact from within the very condition and structure of *daya* as sin, divine *kagandahang-loob* as manifested in Jesus overturns and transforms *pandaraya*: “But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8). *Nagparaya siya para sa ating kapakanan! Pagpaparaya*, the positive twist in the ordinarily negative situation of *pandaraya* we mentioned earlier turns out to be the face of God’s *kagandahang-loob* in a sinful world in Christ Jesus.

We may recall how the first disciples of Jesus were changed after experiencing forgiveness. This was their experience of the resurrection of Jesus: they were forgiven! In the theology of the New Testament there is a recognizable association of “resurrection” with “forgiveness of sins.” The forgiveness of sins is a gracious Easter gift. After their Easter experiences the disciples preach “the forgiveness of sins” (Lk. 24:47; Acts 26). Paul says, “If Christ has not been raised...you are still in your sins” (1 Cor. 15:17-18); elsewhere “[Jesus] was raised for our justification” (Rom. 4:25b).¹³⁶

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Contextual theologizing does not begin with a scriptural or doctrinal understanding of “sin.” Moving away from this neo-scholastic mindset in terms of theological approach and

135. Despite the existence of a culture of corruption, the researchers found in the participants of the focused group discussions sponsored by the Jesuits of the Philippines an “espoused belief” that intervention is happening in almost all sectors “even among high ranking government officials,” which warranted “great hope” that corruption can be effectively combated. See CyberDyaryo at http://www.cyberdyaryo.com/features/f2002_1204_01.htm (access 21.05.2006). It has been suggested that the tendency of *pandaraya* is inherent in our being human as a survival impulse. It implies that being true regardless of the situation is an ethical issue that needs further discussion.

136. See John Linskens, *The Foundational Experience of the Early Christian Movement* (Quezon City: East Asian Pastoral Institute, 1977).

methodology, it deliberately begins by raising a question to be answered or an issue to be discussed. Such is the case of the phenomenon of *pandaraya* that has been elaborated to a certain extent. Conscious of factors arising from the context and which impinge on the way a theological reality is understood, this manner of doing theology took into serious account local cultural elements. These it correlated with the Judaeo-Christian Tradition, allowing for a genuine mutual interaction. After citing concretely various specific examples of *daya* in Philippine culture and society, we sorted its characteristics for the purpose of eventually correlating them with the set of theological constant elements in a given theology of "sin." We made use of the constant themes to guide our elaboration of *daya* as "sin," synthesizing in this part insights from both culture and the Tradition. The result is a proposed contextual theology of *daya* as "sin." Whether this endeavor has been a successful undertaking will be left to the judgment of the reader, a presupposition that inevitably accompanies any theological reflection whether it is verbalized or not.

The aim of this contextual interpretation of "sin" is, first of all, historical relevance. Rather than a general re-presentation of *kasalanan* in indigenous categories, it opted for a more historically connected attempt to understand what "sin" may mean today when *pandaraya* is a major social concern which affects the poor and the powerless most acutely. Secondly, the attempt wanted to ensure cultural intelligibility as much as possible. Since the usual general term for "sin," *kasalanan*, lacks specificity, it does not necessarily denote or connote what is evil and intent of evildoing, which "sin" is. *Daya*, however, does. It is a culturally perceived evil deed not only in personal dealings but also in social interactions and it is presumed intentional. Thirdly, this reflection on "sin" also contemplated theological responsiveness. Rather than have a broad and unspecific treatment of "sin" customary in the theology which regarded itself as *theologia perennis*, the theology of "sin" explored here focused precisely on the correlation of *daya* and "sin," or more accurately, *daya* as "sin." It is a theology which tries to answer the questions arising from the issue of *pandaraya* in the present-day Philippine context. It is worth noting that the "trigger" for this discussion of sin is the seriousness of *pandaraya* as a social phenomenon particularly in the use of public funds intended for the common good but diverted to private interests.

But we pointed out that *pandaraya* is not only “horizontally spread” in society because it is rampant but it is also “vertically inserted” within the very *loob* of persons, affecting the very personhood of people.

In this way, this proposed theology of *daya* as “sin” follows the way of the many theologies of “sin” in scripture as well as in our theological tradition. Theological diversity regarding the interpretation of this theme is a fact and no apology is expressed for its focused and limited character. Why should there be when the way of all theology is contextual?

