

Don Isabelo de los Reyes (1864-1938): Forerunner of Filipino Theology

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This paper is aimed to address three primary concerns: first, to make an impartial assessment on the contributions of Don Isabelo De los Reyes to Filipino theology; second, to stretch the history of Filipino theology some eight decades backward so as to enrich and diversify its tradition; and third, to give modern Filipino theology the chance of reflecting and learning from the positive and negative aspects of De los Reyes' incursion into theology and religious studies. To attain such goals, this paper contains three substantive sections, namely: 1) an intellectual biography of De los Reyes as a religious thinker; 2) an attempt at giving a more conventional organization to the contents of De los Reyes' forays into religion and theology, which would focus on the more specific areas of folk religion and comparative theology, biblical translation, ecclesiology, dogmatic theology and moral theology; and 3) a critique of De los Reyes' religious and theological thoughts.

Keywords: *Isabelo De los Reyes, Iglesia Filipina Independiente, Filipino Theology, Ilocano Bible, Religion of the Katipunan, Early Doctrines of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente, Doctrina y Reglas de la Iglesia Filipina Independiente, Catequesis de la Iglesia Filipina Independiente, Novenary of the Motherland*

Introduction

Presently, when we hear the words "Filipino theology," we commonly associate it with the Post-Vatican II musings of such brilliant theological writers as Carlos Abesamis, Catalino Arrevalo, Leonardo Mercado, Vitaliano Gorospe, Jose De Mesa, Jaime Bulatao, Anscar Chupungco,

Luis Antonio Tagle, and the other thinkers who more or less belong to their cohort and who devoted themselves to such themes as inculturation, liberation theology, basic ecclesial communities, Filipino axiology, ethno-theology and other similar topics. This general tendency would frame Filipino theology as a discourse with just barely half a century of tradition behind it. This paper proposes that such tradition can be stretched back for another eight decades by considering the religious speculations of a restless polymath as a significant sign post of Filipino theology. This restless polymath was no other than Don Isabelo de los Reyes (1864-1938), journalist, lawyer, entrepreneur, essayist, politician, rebel, father of Philippine folklore, father of Philippine labor movement, one of the pioneers in Philippine Studies, bible translator, religious organizer, theologian, seminary professor and catechist.

Filipino Catholic theologians, on one hand, seem to have conveniently ignored him due to his being an untrained layman and his schismatic involvement; while Aglipayan theologians, the thinkers of the church that he himself founded in 1902, on the other hand, seem to have ignored him also due to his brashness, his eventual falling out with the first Obispo Maximo Gregorio Aglipay (1860-1940), and his retraction from the same church about two years before his death. Furthermore, the bulk of his writings remained un-translated in their original Spanish, making them difficult to access for the majority of present day Filipino theologians.

This paper isolates the religious and theological thinking of de los Reyes from the mass of his other writings, and subjects them to a thorough critique in order to reveal its hidden pitfalls and valuable insights for the benefit of Filipino theology's further development. To attain such goals, this paper contains three substantive sections, namely: 1) an intellectual biography of De los Reyes as a religious thinker; 2) an attempt at giving a more conventional organization to the contents of De los Reyes' forays into religion and theology, which would focus on the more specific areas of folk religion and comparative theology, biblical translation, ecclesiology, dogmatic theology and moral theology; and 3) a critique of De los Reyes' religious and theological thoughts.

An Intellectual Biography of De Los Reyes as a Religious Thinker

This brief intellectual biography of De los Reyes is intended to explain three things, namely: 1) the circumstances that mentally prepared De los Reyes for the task of discoursing in religion and theology, 2) the circumstances that goaded

him to actually engage in such discourses, and 3) the nature and extent of his engagement in the same discourses.

The complex and colorful life of De los Reyes, in as far as the aims of this intellectual biography are concerned, may be represented in the following timeline, where the upper portion chronicles the highlights of his personal life, and the lower portion shows the highlights of Philippine's political history as well as his involvement in the clerical movement that was started by Gregorio Aglipay:

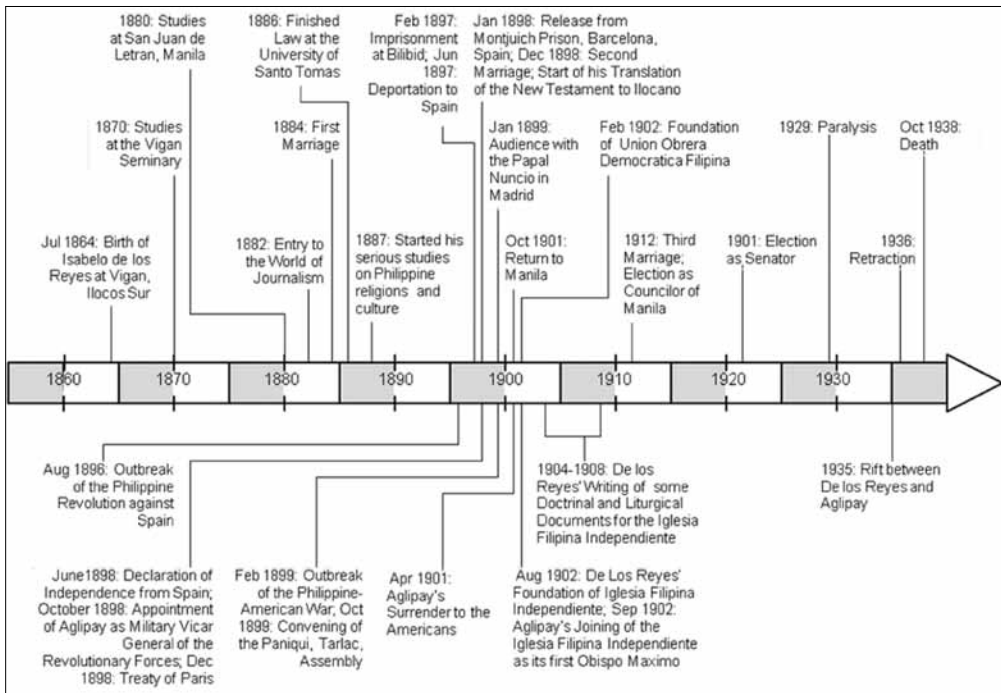


Figure 1: Timeline of Isabelo de los Reyes' Intellectual Biography as a Religious Thinker

In addressing the first concern of this intellectual biography, namely the identification of the circumstances that mentally prepared De los Reyes for the task of discoursing in religion and theology, the timeline shows at least six important dates:

- 1870, when he started his seminary formation at Vigan, Ilocos Sur, where he showed special interest in the study of the bible and manifested early signs of his disappointment with the behavior and lifestyle of the friars as well as with the fanaticism of the laity (Cf. Mojares, "Brother of the Wild," 257);

- 1880 and 1886, when he started working on his bachelor's degree at San Juan de Letran College, and when he finished his legal studies at the University of Santo Tomas, where the religious and theological rudiments that he gleaned from his minor seminary were further enriched by the heavily religious and orthodox education given under the directions of the Dominican friars;
- 1882, when he started to venture into the world of journalism where the research, reading and writing requirements made his mind ready to move through disciplines that are based on the art of study, interpretation and criticism, and where he started to build his reputation as an autodidact expert in the Ilocano language and linguistics, something that sixteen years later would bring him an important project with the British and Foreign Bible Society in Madrid, Spain;
- 1887, when he started to systematically write on the native and folk religions of the country as part of his general interest in Philippine history as well as of his more specific interest in the Philippine folklore, where he accumulated so much materials for his later speculations on comparative theology; and
- December of 1898, when he started to translate the New Testament from Spanish to Ilocano for the British and Foreign Bible Society, where he had the opportunity of reading more closely and reflecting on the biblical texts, under the guidance of the Society's officer in Spain R.O. Walker who meticulously counterchecked the output against the original Greek texts (Cf. Mojares, "Brother of the Wild," 270).

In addressing the second concern of this intellectual biography, namely the identification of the circumstances that goaded de los Reyes to actually engage in the discourse of religion and theology, the timeline shows at least eight important dates:

- 1882, when he started to venture into the world of journalism and eventually wrote scathing criticisms against the abuses of friars and the ignorance and fanaticism of the Philippine laity;
- February of 1897, when he was imprisoned for complicity in the Revolution against Spain, where his commitment for the emerging nation as well as his abhorrence against the abuses of the friars were forged, and where he got the chance of researching on the religious beliefs of the detained Katipuneros;

- June of 1897, when he was deported to Spain to be imprisoned at the dreaded Montjuich Castle in Barcelona where he had the opportunity to mingle with the detained anarchists and socialists that gave him lasting lessons on socialism and labor movement which five years later would be instrumental to his establishment of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente;
- January of 1899, when, a year after his release from the Montjuich Castle, he represented a Filipino delegation in Europe in an audience with the Papal Nuncio in Madrid, Guiseppe Francica-Nava di Bontife (1846-1928), where he relayed the concern of the Malolos Government over the conflict between the ongoing revolution and the Spanish hierarchy in the country, and where for the first time he directly thrust himself into the raging ecclesiastical controversy;
- October of 1899, when Aglipay, as the Military Vicar of the Malolos Government, convened a clerical assembly in Paniqui, Tarlac, where it was decided that the Philippine Catholic Church should be independent from the Spanish hierarchy while remaining in full communion with Rome, and where de los Reyes was officially requested to represent the assembly to the Vatican;
- October of 1901, when De los Reyes returned to Manila from Spain and started to brainstorm with Aglipay on the possibility of establishing an independent church and when they initially sought the advice and guidance of some Protestant missionaries from the American Bible Society of Manila;
- February of 1902, when De los Reyes organized a group of over a hundred printers, lithographers and other workers into a labor union, named, Union Obrera Democratica, the first labor union in the country, and in line with the lessons he learned from his anarchist and socialist co-detainees at the Montjuich Castle; and
- August of 1902, when De los Reyes, during a gathering of the Union Obrera Democratica in Quiapo, established the Iglesia Filipina Independiente, where the hesitant Aglipay was named Obispo Maximo. Aglipay eventually joined the schismatic church after more than a month of soul searching and named De los Reyes the Executive President of the new church.

In addressing the third concern of this intellectual biography, namely the identification of the nature and extent of De los Reyes' engagement in the discourse of religion and theology, the timeline shows an important range of dates:

- 1904-1908, when De los Reyes practically assumed the role of the principal theologian of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente by writing the five fundamental books of this new church: the *Doctrina y Reglas Constitucionales de la Iglesia Filipina Independiente* of 1904, the *Catequesis de la Iglesia Filipina Independiente* of 1905, the *Lectural de Cuaresma para la Iglesia Filipina Independiente* of 1906, the *Oficio Divino de la Iglesia Filipina Independiente* of 1906, and the *Biblia Filipina* of 1908 (Cf. Mojares, "Deploying Local Knowledge," 327).

This was also the time when he traveled around the country to help spread the doctrines of the new church, as well as the time when he set up a temporary seminary at his residence at Padre Rada Street, and when he assumed the role of a seminary professor for the Iglesia Filipina Independiente (Cf. Mojares, "Brother of the Wild," 283). Thus the historians Pedro De Achutegui and Miguel Bernad, in their book *Religious Revolution in the Philippines*, wrote: "Aglipay remained the rallying figure, but it was Isabelo de los Reyes who organized the movement into a schism and who gave to the new church its doctrinal direction by writing its liturgical and doctrinal books and formularies" (De Achutegui & Bernad, Volume 4, 4).

The Contents of De Los Reyes' Incursions Into Religious and Theological Discourses

Aside from being a layman with a largely informal training in religion and theology, De los Reyes needed to work very hard in business and journalism in order to support himself and his growing family. He had six children from his first marriage and during the time of his intense involvement with the Iglesia Filipina Independiente he was already in his second marriage. It might be helpful to know that he married three times in his lifetime, as his wives died relatively young, and had a total of twenty-eight legitimate children. Hence, Resil Mojares, in his book *Brains of the Nation* said: "Denizen of an urban, mercantile environment, Isabelo combined commerce, the letters, and politics. He did it as an Indio and provinciano working in race-conscious, socially conservative, and politically repressive Manila. His performance is not always coherent but it is a remarkable performance nevertheless" (Mojares, "Brother of the Wild," 260). While de De Achutegui and Bernad mentioned: "during his writing years before and after the Revolution, his output was amazing. He wrote

on almost every subject imaginable: folklore, ethnology, religion, geography, politics and philology” (De Achutegui & Bernad, Volume 1, 171).

There is therefore a need to give a more conventional presentation and organization of the contents of De los Reyes’ forays into religion and theology, and this section does this by focusing its discussion on his thoughts on the more specific areas of folk religion and comparative theology, biblical translation, ecclesiology, dogmatic theology and moral theology.

Studies of Folk Religion and Comparative Theology

His discourses on folk religion and comparative theology are primarily found in his *Mitologia Ilocana* of 1888, *Las Islas Visayas en la epoca de la Conquista* of 1889, *Historia de Ilocos* of 1890, *Prehistoria de Filipinas* of 1890, *Apuntes para un Ensayo de Teodicea Filipina* of 1899, and *La Religion antigua de los Filipinos* of 1909. This subsection is based on a detailed study on his more comprehensive and more mature works, the *Apuntes para un Ensayo de Teodicea Filipina*, which was translated as *The Religion of the Katipunan* by Joseph Martin Yap in 2002, and *La Religion antiqua de los Filipinos*, which was translated as *The Ancient Religion of the Filipinos* by a group of anthropology students of the University of the Philippines, Gregorio Dimaano, Matilde de Guzman, Tarcila Malabanan, et al., in between 1916 and 1920, a microfilm copy of which can be found among the Otley Beyer Papers of the National Library of the Philippines.

In the *Apuntes para un Ensayo de Teodicea Filipina* De los Reyes’ overarching project appeared to be twofold. In its extreme end was the search for an alternative religion where Filipinos who were repulsed by the seemingly hopelessly Hispanized Catholicism of the friars can take shelter. He wrote, “the truth opened a path for the Filipinos to go back to Bathala who is the same God of the Christians, but is worshipped with the purest of the heart” (De los Reyes, *The Religion of the Katipunan*, 81). In its moderate end was the identification of a more contextualized discourse that could serve as his Archimedian point in critiquing the shortcomings of the same Catholicism, so as to lead the faithful in leaping “forward from the shadow of frailocracy” (De los Reyes, *The Religion of the Katipunan*, 81). It must be noted that this work was written in a revolutionary epoch, when the question of what to do with the friars and their religion was bogging the revolutionary government. Although the *La Religion Antigua de los Filipinos*, written at a time when the American rule was already well established in the Philippines and when the Iglesia Filipina Independiente was

already in existence for more or less seven years, is more comprehensive and detailed than the *Apuntes para un Ensayo de Teodicea*, its overarching project is less clear.

In order to be able to retrieve the ancient and pristine religion of the Filipinos, De los Reyes revealed three important methodological pointers. First, only Filipinos have the privileged position in engaging in such project, for the reason that “a foreign writer who would write on the matter using verbal questions and answers which may have been clear or unclear will only incur imprecision and will get lost in the intricate labyrinth of contradictions” (De los Reyes, *The Religion of the Katipunan*, 5). Second, Filipino scholars should be very careful in dealing with Spanish and Western documentary sources, not only because of the reason stated in the first methodological pointer, but more so of the tendency of the colonizing mind to denigrate and demonize the colonized culture while glorifying and exulting its own Spanish/Western culture. Furthermore, De los Reyes invited our attention to the possibility that at the time when these Spanish and Western writers/chroniclers were interviewing the natives, the natives themselves “tried so hard to conceal their real selves before the eyes of the strangers/foreigners so that the latter would not ridicule their sacred beliefs” (De los Reyes, *The Religion of the Katipunan*, 30). Third, De los Reyes made the warning that the purity of the ancient religion is not the same in all regions of the country. In the *Apuntes para un Ensayo de Teodicea* he talked about his position that the religion of the lowland Filipinos are purer than the religion of the mountain tribes, as the latter were admixed with superstitions (Cf. De los Reyes, *The Religion of the Katipunan*, 29). In the *La Religion Antigua de los Filipinos* he talked about another position that the religion of the northern tribes are purer than those of the southern tribes, as the latter were admixed with the theological elements from Hinduism and Islam (Cf. De los Reyes, *The Ancient Religion of the Filipinos*, 22). Thus, he gave the following advice to the scholars who would study the ancient Filipino religion: “eliminate the historical inaccuracies and superstitious beliefs that this religion has absorbed” (De los Reyes, *The Religion of the Katipunan*, 30).

One of the most discernible themes in the two works on Filipino folk religion was De los Reyes’ effort in presenting to his readers that there is such a thing as ancient Filipino monotheism. But such a task moved against the powerful stream of a fairly documented ancient Filipino polytheism. In the *Apuntes para un Ensayo de Teodicea*, he explained that the animism and nature worship of the ancient Filipinos were actually some sort of liturgy in honor of the power and omnipresence on a one true God, Bathala (Cf. De los Reyes, *The Religion of the Katipunan*, 9 & 31). In the *La Religion Antigua de los Filipinos*, he elaborated further that whereas the worship of anitos, or souls of the dead ancestors, constituted the most primitive phase of the

evolution of Filipino religion, such religion, at the time of the influx of theological influences from Hinduism, had already developed into the worship of diwatas among the Visayans, and of Bathala, or Bathala, among the Tagalogs (Cf. De los Reyes, *The Ancient Religion of the Filipinos*, 21). He deemphasized the persistence of a multiplicity of Visayan diwatas, as well as of other Tagalog deities, by framing them as analogues of the Catholic saints (Cf. De los Reyes, *The Religion of the Katipunan*, 27). Hence, De los Reyes arrived at a juncture where he could logically affirm the existence of an ancient Filipino monotheism, which he called “Bathalismo.”

De los Reyes used the insights of the Dutch Ethnologist George Alexander Wilken (1847-1891), a good friend of the more familiar Czech scholar Ferdinand Blumentritt (1853-1913), in order to dig deeper into the identity of Bathala. “Bathala” is a derivative of the Sanskrit “bhattacha,” meaning “venerable” or “sir.” De los Reyes elaborated further: “A lot of Malayan tribes. . . call their God ‘Bhattacha Guru’ which was also a higher name of the known God ‘Cira’ of the Hindus. . . . The ‘Dayaks’ of Borneo call their superior God ‘Mahattacha’ which is contraction of ‘Maha’ (big) and ‘Bhattacha’ (Senor/Sir). The ‘Afuros’ of Buru worship a God of the sea called ‘Opo Lahattacha’ which is broken down into ‘Opo’ (Senor/Sir) corresponding to ‘Apo’ of the Ilocanos, and ‘Lattacha’ which is the same God ‘Mahattacha’” (De los Reyes, *The Religion of the Katipunan*, 10). He asserted that “Bathala” is simply the Sanskrit influenced name of the Visayan “Laon,” “Dia,” “Sidipa,” and “Abba,” as well as of the Ilocano “Boni,” and Igorot “Kabunian” (Cf. De los Reyes, *The Religion of the Katipunan*, 11). He clarified that the Tagalog “Maykapal” is not actually a name of Bathala but only a description of one of his attributes, because it simply means “creator” (Cf. De los Reyes, *The Religion of the Katipunan*, 10).

In line with the emancipative ideology of the Revolution, He toned down the lordship of Bathala by emphasizing that such does not connote tyranny or enslavement. “Instead, ‘Bathala’ is a term that carries with it an idea of kindness; a term that can be regarded to mean God, the creator or the Heavenly Father” (De los Reyes, *The Religion of the Katipunan*, 43). To prove his point that Bathalismo is a spiritual and respectable religion he stretched his documentary evidence and started to talk about the foreshadowing of the idea of Sacred Trinity in such an ancient religion. He claimed that Bathala has three supreme attributes, namely “Eternal Love,” “Omnipotent Creator,” and “All-Knowing Providence,” and that these trinity of attributes corresponds with the trinity of persons of the Roman Catholic dogma (Cf. De los Reyes, *The Religion of the Katipunan*, 10).

Based on an assumption that religion and morality are intimately connected—“religion is the rule of conduct with respect to our relationship with God, while

morality is the rule of conduct that governs our actions as human beings”—De los Reyes reconstructed the moral code of Bathalismo as something summarized by three precepts: 1) “always love and never harm anyone,” 2) “be always fair and never abuse,” and 3) “work hard towards perfection and the universal law of progress” (De los Reyes, *The Religion of the Katipunan*, 97, 13 & 14).

As religion involved liturgy and rituals, he did not fail to write something about the priesthood of Bathalismo, which consisted of male and female katalona, beglan and babailan, who were all immersed in the works of evangelization, teaching religion and morality, and even serving as the ancient people’s medicine men and women (De los Reyes, *The Religion of the Katipunan*, 34). He emphasized that these male and female priests were unlike the Spanish nuns and friars who delighted themselves and spent all their lives “in seclusion and inactivity” (De los Reyes, *The Religion of the Katipunan*, 34).

Biblical Translation

In order for us to see the full significance of De los Rey’s involvement in the huge project of translating the Bible into the major Philippine languages at the turn of the previous century, we should look at it in its historical context. Frank Charles Laubach (1884-1970), Christian Evangelical missionary, Protestant theologian, advocate of literacy, and Philippinologist in his own right, made a revealing account of the status of the Bible in the Philippines during the last years of the Spanish regime in his work *The People of the Philippines: their Religious Progress and Preparation for Spiritual Leadership in the Far East*. He documented how the Spanish friars had forbidden the laymen from reading the sacred book based the alleged reasons that: 1) the contents of such book could appear contrary to the faith that the friars had been propagating; 2) the insights that would gained by the laymen would undermine the friars’ monopoly of religious knowledge; 3) the book will make the laymen realize the shortcomings of the friars; 4) the paranoia that the book would make a favorable ground for Protestantism to spread in the country; and 5) the reservation of the friars’ that the inaccurate representation of Biblical doctrines in their catechism would be discovered by the laymen (Cf. Laubach, 159-160). Hence, both the friars and the Spanish Codigo Penal had collaborated in prohibiting the layman from independently reading these sacred texts.

We have to be very clear that the Bible referred to by Laubach was the Spanish translations of the Bible. An average Filipino, at that time, even if he will be given such a Bible would still be unable to comprehend its content, since it is generally estimated that at the turn of the previous century only about five percent (5%) of

the country's population were functionally literate in the Spanish language. Hence, the British and Foreign Bible Society's efforts of smuggling Spanish Bibles in 1838 and 1853, were able to have an impact on a very small fraction of the Filipino people.

The first translation of the Bible into a Filipino language was done by a renegade Spanish Dominican friar Manrique Alonzo Lallave (1839-1889), who rendered parts of the New Testament into Pangasinense in 1873. Laubach suspected that because of such a feat, Lallave was fatally poisoned in his hotel room during his return to the Philippines in 1888, preventing the circulation of his translated texts (Cf. Laubach, 162). Even if Pope Leo XIII, in 1898, and Pope Pius X, in 1914, instructed the Catholics to develop the habit of reading the Bible, the friars' attitude of hiding this text from the laity persisted even up to the first quarter of the preceding century (Cf. Laubach, 159). According to Laubach, God spoke only through a native Filipino language on 06 September 1898, when the American Customs allowed the entry of a shipment by the Singapore Agent of the British and Foreign Bible Society, C.B. Randall, which contained Lallave's Pangasinense translation, Don Pascual Poblete's (1858-1921) Tagalog translation, and Don Cayetano Lukban's (1866-circa 1940) Bicolano translation, and other Spanish translations of the Bible and its parts (Cf. Laubach, 163.).

Poblete and Cayetano were part of the group of Filipinos in Madrid that was commissioned by the British and Foreign Bible Society to translate the Bible into some of the major Filipino languages to make its sacred texts fully accessible to a bigger number of Filipinos. To this same group belonged De los Reyes, who after his release from the Montjuich Castle in January of 1898 was approached by the Reverend Robert Walker, the Spain agent of the British and Foreign Bible Society, sometime in October of that same year in order to translate some portions of the New Testament into the Ilocano language (Cf. Mojares, "Brother of the Wild," 270).

The British and Foreign Bible Society had a strict translation protocol that demanded that Biblical translations should be based on the original Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek texts. But because of their felt urgency of the bringing God's word to the Philippines and because of the obvious lack of professional translators who are fluent in the major Filipino languages, the British and Foreign Bible Society decided to tone down their translation protocol by designing a system where non-professional translators work from a Spanish Bible under the guidance of a professional translator who would meticulously countercheck their output against the Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek texts (Cf. Philippine Bible Society). Hence, De los Reyes, the non-professional translator, had to translate some selected books from the New Testament of C. de Balera's Spanish Bible into Ilocano, and since Walker,

the professional translator, could not understand this Filipino language, the former had to literally translate back to Spanish his Ilocano output to facilitate the latter's counterchecking against the Greek texts (Cf. Mojares, "Brother of the Wild," 270). With this tedious process of double translation, De los Reyes successfully rendered into Ilocano the Gospel of Luke in 1899, the Gospel of John and the Acts of the Apostles in 1900.

When De los Reyes returned to the Philippines in 1901, the American Bible Society commissioned him to continue with his translation project. He stated in his 18 June 1928 letter to Miguel Saderra Maso, S.J., Director of Manila Observatory and Weather Bureau, that in 1902, he finished translating the whole New Testament into Ilocano under the guidance of the Reverend Jay Goodrich (Quoted by De Achutequi & Bernad, Volume 1, 267-269). After seven more years and with the assistance of many other Ilocano translators, such as Don Irineo Javier, Don Simplicio Mendoza, Don Ignacio Villamor, and Don Eduardo Benitez, who apparently focused on the books of the Old Testament, the whole Ilocano Bible was finally published in 1909 as *Ti Santa Biblia*. Being the second Bible to be fully published in a Filipino language, as the Tagalog *Ang Biblia* was published in 1905, the pioneering efforts of De los Reyes was certainly a milestone in the process of Christianizing the Philippines. He commented that his work was "one way by which" he "could contribute to the liberalization of dogmatic religion" (Quoted by Mojares, "Brother of the Wild," 282).

Ecclesiology

This paper's discussion on De los Reyes' ecclesiology, or his theology about the church that he founded, is primarily based on the following documents: his *La Sensacional Memoria de Isabelo de los Reyes sobre la Revolucion Filipina de 1896-1897* of 1899, his launching speech for the Iglesia Filipina Independiente of 1902, the six fundamental epistles that he wrote for Aglipay from September of 1902 to August of 1903, his *Doctrina y Reglas Constitucionales de la Iglesia Filipina Independiente* of 1904, and his *Catequesis de la Iglesia Filipina Independiente* of 1905. *La Sensacional Memoria de Isabelo de los Reyes sobre la Revolucion Filipina de 1896-1897* was translated into Filipino by Teresita Alcantara in 2001 as *Memoria: ang Madamdaming Alaala ni Isabelo de los Reyes Hinggil sa Rebolusyong Filipino ng 1896-97*. His launching speech was paraphrased in English by De Achutequi and Bernad in their book *Religious Revolution in the Philippines* of 1960 (De Achutequi & Bernad, 183). The six fundamental epistles are appended in their original Spanish text in the *Catequesis de la Iglesia Filipina Independiente*, but the first one was paraphrased in English by

Lewis Whittmore, while the rest were translated into English also by Whittmore in his book *Struggle for Freedom* of 1961 (Whittmore, 113-123). The *Doctrina y Reglas Constitucionales de la Iglesia Filipina Independiente* and the *Catequesis de la Iglesia Filipina Independiente* exist in their original Spanish text in many libraries in Metro Manila, but the latter has an online version that can be accessed from the archives of the University of Michigan.

De los Reyes' ecclesiology was hinged on a critique of the complex web of power that bound together the Roman Catholic Church, the Spanish friars and the Spanish colonial government. During the Spanish regime, the Roman Catholic Church in the Philippines had been an institution that was manned by Spanish friars and supported by the Spanish government through the patronato real. Since the friars were more widespread, more visible, and more permanent than most of the other Spanish officials, it was inevitable that for many Filipinos, their faces stood as the faces of colonization.

De los Reyes began his critique of the Spanish friars long before his plunge into the controversy between such friars and the Filipino priests when he represented the latter in front of the Madrid Papal Nuncio, Nava di Bontife, in January of 1899. In his *La Sensacional Memoria*, which he wrote while still in Bilibid Prison, he listed fifteen misconducts and abuses of the friars: (1) their arbitrary increase of rental rates for their vast agricultural lands, (2) their demand for unreasonable extra charges for the same use of such lands, (3) their dishonest measurements for the goods paid to them by their tenants, (4) their unfair price assessment of the goods paid to them by their tenants, (5) their involvement in land grabbing, (6) their vindictive policy against individuals who attempted to defend their rights, (7) their refusal to bury the dead of poor people who are unable to pay the exact church fees, (8) their intrusion into the affairs of the family and communities that poisoned the people's mind, (9) their inhuman treatment of the native clergy, (10) the partiality of friar bishops towards their co-friars and against the native clergy in as far as the distribution of parishes was concerned, (11) their manipulation of the training and assignments of the native clergy to make the latter appear incompetent and unworthy of their sacred duties, (12) their covert efforts in undermining developmental and progressive policies of the colonial government, (13) their demeaning attitude towards the ilustrados and other Filipinos who could not speak Spanish, (14) their scandalous lifestyle, and (15) their anti-progressive and anti-developmental attitude (Cf. De los Reyes, *Memoria*, 6-9).

His strategy in *La Sensacional Memoria* was to untangle the web of power relations that bound together the Spanish friars and the Spanish government by

presenting the former to the latter as the root of the socio-political and economic malaise of the colony. However, while he was living as an exile in Madrid, dramatic events unfolded in the Philippines that made this initial strategy moot and academic, as the Filipino revolutionaries declared independence from Spain in June of 1898, and as the Treaty of Paris was forged in December of that same year. With the Spanish colonial government removed from the picture, the formidable power triad that was composed of the Roman Catholic Church, the Spanish friars and the Spanish government, was suddenly reduced to a vulnerable power dyad that was composed of the Roman Catholic Church and the Spanish friars. The presence of the new colonial power, the United States of America, which in theory was supposed to be a secular government, but in practice turned out to be predominantly Protestant, only made the power dyad even more vulnerable.

De los Reyes had to change his strategy and aimed at the untangling of the web of power relations that bound together the new dyad. This was the time when he joined the older controversy that brewed between the Spanish friars and the Filipino clergy. In the mind of De los Reyes and of many Filipinos at that time, it is but logical that the Spanish friars, who for so many years stood as the faces of colonization, should have no more place in the post-Hispanic Philippines. But when Rome failed to see the urgency and cogency of such logic, De los Reyes finally focused his critique on the Roman Catholic Church itself.

In his 03 August 1902 speech that launched the Iglesia Filipina Independiente, he tagged the Pope as the greatest defenders of the Spanish friars, and was therefore the greatest enemy of the Filipino people (Cf. De Achutequi & Bernad, Volume 1, 183). The schism that was created by such speech was in some ways meant to be something temporary, because De los Reyes left a window for the Pope to reconsider his refusal to act on question concerning the Spanish friars. "If the Pope acknowledges his errors and grants canonical appointment to the bishops thus designated (Aglipay and others), they will make peace with him; otherwise they will have to go without him" (De Achutequi & Bernad, Volume 1, 183). Unfortunately the Pope, Leo XIII (1810-1903), manifested a hardliner stand with the publication of the apostolic constitution *Quae mari Sinico*, that was released in Rome on 17 September 1902, but promulgated in the Philippines only on 08 December 1902. This document opted to lay down a long ranged solution for the question concerning the Spanish friars, instead of addressing the problem immediately.

In the fourth fundamental epistle, De los Reyes wrote for Aglipay: "the first step of separation came from the cumulus of forces pent up for many centuries; but the second step, the creation of new organization, needs greater inner strength, constancy, intelligence, and good will" (De los Reyes, "Fourth Fundamental Epistle,"

118-119). It was in this context where De los Reyes constructed the ecclesiology of the church that he founded. This was not a very difficult task for him, because having conflated the identities of the Roman Catholic Church and the Spanish friars he thought he already had a comprehensive critique of the old church, the conceptual rectification of which would already amount to a road map on how to formulate a better ecclesiastical institution.

De los Reyes envisioned the *Iglesia Filipina Independiente* as a congregation of the Pauline new men, or the men and women who have abandoned the religious errors of the old church, who are educated in the teachings of Jesus, who seek God through the help of modern science, and who worship God in spirit and in truth (Cf. De los Reyes, *Catequesis*, 2-3). A careful reading of the *Doctrina y Reglas Constitucionales de la Iglesia Filipina Independiente* and the *Catequesis de la Iglesia Filipina Independiente* would reveal at least five defining characteristics of this new church: its ecclesiastical purity, its emphasis on deeds and progress, its emphasis on modern science and learning, its nationalism, and its catholicity. These defining characteristics will be tackled in detail in the succeeding paragraphs.

With his piled up frustrations with the Spanish friars and the Roman Catholic Church that was colored with the anti-clerical sentiments, liberal ideology, and Protestant thinking that he imbibed in Spain, De los Reyes saw the old church as something degenerate and decadent. His new church, therefore, should seek to recapture the pristine essence of religion. Both in the *Doctrina y Reglas Constitucionales de la Iglesia Filipina Independiente* and in the *Catequesis de la Iglesia Filipina Independiente*, he emphasized that one of the main reasons why this new church was founded was the establishment “in all its splendor the worship of the only God and the purity of truth which under the reign of obscurantism have been contaminated and disfigured in a manner most discouraging to any Christian” (De los Reyes, *Doctrina y Reglas*, 5; *Catequesis*, 100). If the abuses of the colonial church had made God repulsive to many Filipinos, he highlighted in the new church’s version of the Lord’s prayer that God’s kingdom is a “kingdom of love, justice, virtue and well being” (De los Reyes, *Catequesis*, 2). He further claimed that independent archbishops in Paris, Antioquia, Switzerland, the priests in Spain, Italy, America, and the publications from Spain Belgium, Germany, Cuba and America had all praised the new church’s efforts in combating the errors and prejudices of the old church (Cf. De los Reyes, *Catequesis*, 40-41).

Clearly battling the anti-progressive attitude of the Spanish friars and the tendency of the colonial church to base salvation on the sacraments and indulgence,

and maybe reacting to the scathing critique of Marx on religion that he most probably learned while imprisoned at Montjuich Castle with some Spanish radicals, De los Reyes made it a point that worshiping God in spirit and in truth means worshiping him through “good works and humanitarian feelings,” and that such worship should in no way amount to hindering the progress of humanity (De los Reyes, *Catequesis*, 3). The doctrine on good works was dramatized in the new church version of the Lord’s prayer where instead of just saying “we sanctify your holy name,” he wrote “we sanctify your holy name, not with words, but with good deeds” (De los Reyes, *Catequesis*, 2). Work and good deeds are not only things that would give material comfort to humanity, more importantly they are things that would uplift the well-being of their agents (Cf. De los Reyes, *Doctrina y Reglas Constitucionales*, 20). The doctrine on progress was elaborated in his discussion on dogmatic change where he argued that dogmas should flow together with the general progress of humanity (Cf. De los Reyes, *Catequesis*, 40). Furthermore, the Creed of the new church made it explicit that “God made man to contribute with his virtues and activities to the general well-being and progress for which we should be ever useful and seek with our own labor the remedy for our necessities” (De los Reyes, *Catequesis*, 39).

Jose Rizal (1861-1896) had already documented how the Spanish friars and the Spanish colonial government as a whole had managed the circulation of knowledge in the islands for fear of sowing the seeds of heresy and rebellion. This same observation was noted by De los Reyes in as far as the Spanish friars’ manipulation of the doctrinal training of the native clergy, as well as their scheme of hiding the Bible from the Filipinos, are concerned. In reaction to these sinister forces, the new church was envisioned to be an institution that is not afraid of modern science and learning, in fact this new church should do all it can to propagate these modern intellectual systems. For De los Reyes, one of the reasons why this new church was founded was “to liberate the conscience of all error, exaggeration, and unscientific scruples and from anything that may be contrary to the laws of nature and sound reason” (De los Reyes, *Catequesis*, 100). This was beautifully rendered in the third fundamental epistle with the exhortation: “let us shake off the obscurantism of four centuries and have the strength to think with the reason God has given us” (De los Reyes, “Third Fundamental Epistle, 118; Cf. *Doctrina y Reglas Constitucionales*, 9). In its efforts to rectify the old church’s paranoia for modern science, the new church went to the extreme of enshrining this body of knowledge over and above the Bible (Cf. De los Reyes, *Catequesis*, 40).

The bigger context why De los Reyes plunged himself into the wrangling controversy between the Spanish friars and the Filipino clergy, was the discourses of

revolution and nationalism. The obviously racialized oppression and marginalization of the Filipino clergy by the Spanish friars which already kindled the revolution through the execution of the Filipino priests Mariano Gomez (1799-1872), Jose Burgos (1837-1872) and Jacinto Zamora (1835-1872), could be very easily framed in such bigger discourses. Hence it is not surprising that the new church retained such nationalistic hue. De los Reyes stated that one of the main reasons for the foundation of the new church is “to form and dignify a Filipino clergy re-conquering all its rights and prerogatives which it lost by the exploitation and degradation of which it has been and still is the object” (De los Reyes, *Catequesis*, 100). Intimately connected with such nationalism is the new church’s exaltation of liberty. In the *Doctrina y Reglas Constitucionales de la Iglesia Filipina Independiente*, De los Reyes wrote: “liberty and the lofty ambitions that it wakes up are the essential elements and the powerful drivers for our glorification, for progress, for science, for civilization, and in a word, for our general perfection” (De los Reyes, *Doctrina y Reglas Constitucionales*, 20).

Although the new church is highly nationalistic and in fact proudly carried the qualification “Filipina” in its official name, De los Reyes also made it clear that such a new church is catholic and universal. The name “Filipina” only pointed to the fact that the new church was founded by a group of Filipino free men who are determined not to be subordinated by any foreign power (Cf. De los Reyes, *Doctrina y Reglas Constitucionales*, 10). Its catholicity and universality are based on the fundamental principle that “it considers all men without distinction children of God” (De los Reyes, *Catequesis*, 100). As a consequence of this catholic and universal belief, De los Reyes made the exhortation to the members of the new church to study the best doctrines and practices of the other religions (Cf. De los Reyes, *Catequesis*, 100-101).

One of the most controversial themes in De los Reyes’ ecclesiology is his theology on the episcopate. Although there was no priest involved during the launching of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente on 03 August 1902, as it was supposed to be an affair of the Union Obrera Democratica, the new church was able to attract between one hundred to three hundred validly ordained priests from the Roman Catholic Church. This was a dramatic number, considering there were less than a thousand Filipino priests at that time. But in order for the new church to continue ordaining priests, it needed bishops. But all of the four bishops in the Philippines at that time were Spanish friars, Archbishop Bernardino Nozaleda, O.P. (1844-1927) of Manila, Bishop Jose Hevia de Campomanes, O.P. (1841-1904) of Nueva Segovia, Bishop Martin Garcia Alcocer, O.F.M. (1842-1926) of Cebu, and Bishop Andres Ferrero, O.R.S.A. (1846-1909) of Jaro, who definitely were not about to join the new church. The new church needed just one bishop to enable it to replicate its

priests. But a bishop can only be consecrated by a previous bishop who can trace his episcopal lineage back to the holy apostles.

De los Reyes wiggled out from this difficult situation by stipulating, in the first fundamental epistle, that it is valid for a group of priests to consecrate a bishop based on the following reasons: (1) there is no biblical formula on how a bishop is to be consecrated; (2) Jesus was the one who consecrated the apostles as bishops, but a priest is a true representative of Jesus, hence such priest too can consecrate a qualified priest to become a bishop; 3) there is no essential difference between bishops and priests; 4) if a layman can baptize in emergency cases, a priest too can consecrate in emergency cases; 5) the new church is following the new Pauline order, hence it can do away with the nitty-gritty of the old order of things (Cf. De los Reyes, "First fundamental Epistle," 114). It is with this theology of the episcopate that the first Bishop of the new church, Pedro Brillantes, was consecrated on October 1902.

Conscious that Roman Catholicism is deeply ingrained on the Filipino sensibility, De los Reyes tried as much as possible to make the new church similar to the old one. Hence he wrote in the *Doctrina y Reglas Constitucionales de la Iglesia Filipina Independiente*: "in everything else, which is not contrary to the pure Word of God, nature, science and right reason, we follow the same beliefs as the Romanists" (De los Reyes, *Doctrina y Reglas Constitucionales*, 9).

Dogmatic Theology

This paper's discussion on De los Reyes' dogmatic theology is primarily based on his *Doctrina y Reglas Constitucionales de la Iglesia Filipina Independiente* and his *Catequesis de la Iglesia Filipina Independiente* that are both already mentioned in the preceding sub-section. But in order to put a more logically organized presentation of De los Reyes' dogmatic theology, this paper followed the suggestion of Francis Gealogo, in his paper "Time, Identity and Nation in the Aglipayan *Novenario ng Balintawak* and *Calendariong Maanghang*," that most of the theological writings of De los Reyes were meant for the elite leadership of the new church, and that the masses accessed such doctrines only through the more popular works such as Aglipay's *Novenario ng Balintawak* and De los Reyes' *Calendariong Maanghang* (Cf. Gealogo, "Time, Identity and Nation," 154). Hence this paper used Aglipay's *Novenario ng Balintawak* of 1926 as an inter-text in order to determine what dogmatic themes the then twenty-four year old church deemed important for them to be known by the larger segment of their ecclesiastical organization. After such themes were identified, this paper went back to De los Reyes *Doctrina y Reglas Constitucionales de la Iglesia*

Filipina Independiente and his *Catequesis de la Iglesia Filipina Independiente* for fuller study and discussion. Aglipay's *Novenario ng Balintawak* has an English translation, entitled *Novenary of the Motherland*, which is accessible online from the archives of the University of Michigan.

The novenary, dedicated to the lady and child who appeared in a dream to Andres Bonifacio (1863-1897) while in Balintawak, contains three readings for each of the nine days of prayer sessions. The following figure (figure 2) shows the themes expounded in the novenary's twenty-seven readings:

Day	Reading	Theme	Page
1	First	Trinity	3-4
	Second	Idea of God	4-5
	Third	Charity and Labor	5
2	Fourth	Creation, Birth of the Cosmos and Evolution	6-10
	Fifth		
	Sixth		
3	Seventh	Soul	10-11
	Eighth	Hell, Limbo and Purgatory	11-13
	Ninth		
4	Tenth	Divine Justice	13-14
	Eleventh	Death	14-15
	Twelfth		
5	Thirteenth	End of the World	16-17
	Fourteenth		
	Fifteenth		
6	Sixteenth	Christology	17-19
	Seventeenth		
	Eighteenth	Miracles	19-20
7	Nineteenth	Science and the Bible	20-21
	Twentieth	Jose Rizal	21-25
	Twenty-First		
8	Twenty-Second		
	Twenty-Third		
	Twenty-Fourth		
9	Twenty-Fifth	Apolinario Mabini	26-27
	Twenty-Sixth	Katipunan	27-28
	Twenty-Seventh	Commandments of the Iglesia Filipinia Independiente	28-29

Figure 2: Thematic Outline of the Readings of Aglipay's *Novenary of the Motherland*

Figure 2 shows that the twenty-seven reading of the novenary dwell on at least sixteen themes. The following figure (figure 3) shows how this paper was able to extract six dogmatic themes from the novenary's sixteen themes by eliminating

some as either part of the preceding section (De los Reyes' ecclesiology) or of the succeeding sub-section (De los Reyes' moral theology), and by clustering the others:

Day	Reading	Theme	Dogmatic Theme
1	First	Trinity	God and Trinity
	Second	Idea of God	
	Third	Charity and Labor	None (To be discussed in the sub-section on Moral Theology)
2	Fourth	Creation, Birth of the Cosmos and Evolution	Theology of Creation
	Fifth		
	Sixth		
3	Seventh	Soul	Thanatology and Divine Justice
	Eighth	Hell, Limbo and Purgatory	
	Ninth		
4	Tenth	Divine Justice	
	Eleventh	Death	
	Twelfth		
5	Thirteenth	End of the World	Eschatology
	Fourteenth		
	Fifteenth		
6	Sixteenth	Christology	Christology
	Seventeenth		
	Eighteenth	Miracles	
7	Nineteenth	Science and the Bible	Theology on Divine Revelation
	Twentieth	Jose Rizal	None (the theme on nationalism was already discussed in the sub-section on Ecclesiology)
	Twenty-First		
8	Twenty-Second		
	Twenty-Third		
	Twenty-Fourth		
9	Twenty-Fifth	Apolinario Mabini	
	Twenty-Sixth	Katipunan	
	Twenty-Seventh	Commandments of the Iglesia Filipinia Independiente	None (To be discussed in the sub-section on Moral Theology)

Figure 3: Dogmatic Themes contained in Aglipay's *Novenary of the Motherland*

Following the more conventional *reditus-exitus* schema of Catholic theology, this paper sequenced the six dogmatic themes extracted from the novenary as: (1) theology on divine revelation; (2) God and the Trinity; (3) theology of creation; (4) Christology; (5) thanatology, or theology of death, and divine justice; and (6) eschatology, or theology of the end of the world. But before dealing with more

details on each of these dogmatic themes in the succeeding paragraphs, it would be advantageous to have a clear idea of what De los Reyes meant by dogma.

In the *Catequesis de la Iglesia Filipina Independiente*, he revealed that dogma is not something that is permanent and immutable (Cf. De los Reyes, *Catequesis*, 40). Since God is the only infallible being in this universe, the new church is left without any option but to swallow its pride and admit that its doctrines are time-bound and should therefore follow the general march of progress of humanity. But in order to stem the tide of doctrinal anarchy within the new church, he proffered that a consensus building process in front of a supreme council be established, and whatever doctrines are ruled as orthodox or unorthodox by this procedure should be accepted as such by the faithful until such time the supreme council, through the same consensus building process, declare them otherwise (Cf. De los Reyes, *Catequesis*, 40).

The first dogmatic theme in the above-mentioned sequence is De los Reyes' theology of divine revelation which focuses on the tension between the Bible and modern reason. Based on his extensive readings on Biblical scholarship, he did not accept that the majority of the books of the Bible were written by the personalities who are traditionally recognized as their respective authors. But he did not discount the possibility that these actual writers may have been inspired by God, in the sense that good and faithful thoughts are often emanating from divine inspiration (Cf. De los Reyes, *Catequesis*, 18). He stated that the Bible contains old traditions, important notices and sacred doctrines, but woven with these useful things are also dangerous errors and doctrinal contradictions (Cf. De los Reyes, *Catequesis*, 45). Hence for him, reading the Bible means using learned reason to wrestle out the sacred book's pure teachings (Cf. De los Reyes, *Doctrina y Reglas Constitucionales*, 9). Despite this seeming downgrading of the sacred book, De los Reyes maintained the Bible as the immortal and only book of God that is capable of giving man the knowledge on how to worship and glorify him and how to lead a proper Christian life (Cf. De los Reyes, *Doctrina y Reglas Constitucionales*, 8).

The second dogmatic theme in the above-mentioned sequence is De los Reyes' theology on God and the Trinity. Based on his readings on the sociology of religion, he discounted the Biblical story that man attained the knowledge of God's existence through a direct theophany. Instead, he argued that man most probably attained the idea of divinity from his own bewilderment on what causes the awesome forces of nature. Hence, primitive religions are generally animists and revolved around anthropomorphic gods and goddesses (Cf. De los Reyes, *Catequesis*, 7). But based on the fairly advanced monotheistic traditions of Judaism and Christianity, the

new church holds a metaphysical understanding of God as the “universal, intelligent, eternal, supreme, and mysterious force, who produces, vitalizes, directs, moves, and conserves all beings; is the soul of the universe, the beginning of all life and movement” (De los Reyes, *Catequesis*, 39). De los Reyes’ sustained and philosophical discourse on the attributes of God could easily amaze any catholic theologian. But his speculations on the Trinity would be an entirely different story.

He gave so much emphasis on monotheism, and summoned Biblical passages to prove his point. Apparently not satisfied with the Biblical quotations, he further buttressed this monotheism with a philosophical argument that pointed out the absurdity of having more than one supreme being. He reasoned out that if there were two supreme beings who planned and designed the universe, instead of attaining harmony and precision, chaos would have reigned (Cf. De los Reyes, *Catequesis*, 3). Standing on a non-negotiable monotheism, and seeing the apparent contradictions of the Catholic doctrine on the Trinity, De los Reyes rejected the orthodox idea of trinity of persons, and instead pursued the controversial Unitarian idea of trinity of attributes. The Unitarian discourse on the trinity was something that he already touched when he argued in *The Religion of the Katipunan* that the ancient Filipinos already had a preconception of the trinity in their Bathalismo (Cf. De los Reyes, *The Religion of the Katipunan*, 10). This discourse was also something that was legitimized by the hovering presence of William Howard Taft (1857-1930), the first American Governor-General of the Philippines, who happened to be a Unitarian and who allegedly flooded both De los Reyes and Aglipay with Unitarian literature.

In order to strengthen his unorthodox position, De los Reyes attempted to reconstruct the discourse on the trinity of persons as a sheer resurgence of an ancient religious tendency to worship triads of gods and goddesses, just as what happened to the Indians with their Brahma-Shiva-Vishnu triad, to the Egyptians with their Osiris-Isis-Horos triad, and to the Babylonians with their Bel-Semiramis-Ninos triad (Cf. De los Reyes, *Catequesis*, 8). He blamed the Platonism of the Gospel of John that identified Jesus as the logos as the starting point of the Trinitarian movement that eventually deified Jesus and declared that the Holy Spirit is something separate from God (Cf. *Catequesis*, 13). De los Reyes did not fail to highlight that the iconography of the Trinitarian Holy Spirit has an uncanny resemblance with the Assyrian dove that represented goddess Semiramis.

The third dogmatic theme in the above-mentioned sequence is De los Reyes’ theology of creation that attempted to remedy the brewing contradiction between the doctrine of creation that is literally implied by the book of Genesis and the robustly growing scientific literature on the origins of the universe and life, and of the evolution of species, including man. At a time when most Catholic theologians would

conveniently ignore these scientific materials as purely speculative and insist on the literal reading of the book of Genesis, De los Reyes' efforts in squarely confronting them is impressive. His theology of creation is his own way of Christianizing, or giving some theistic twist to, the otherwise agnostic discourses of modern cosmology. He did this by accepting the developmental and evolutionary processes proposed by such eminent scientists as the German-British astronomer William Herschel (1738-1822), the French astronomer Pierre-Simon Laplace (1749-1827), the English naturalist Charles Darwin (1809-1882), the German naturalist Ernst Haeckel (1834-1919), and the English biologist Thomas Henry Huxley (1825-1895), but with the insistence that such physical and material processes are in fact part of the underlying spiritual and immaterial divine plan.

The fourth dogmatic theme in the above-mentioned sequence is De los Reyes' Christology, a theme that is intimately bound with his Unitarian theology. After denying the possibility of the trinity of persons, he took God and the Holy Spirit as one entity, and relegated Jesus Christ to the status of a prophet, the greatest prophet of the New Testament (Cf. De los Reyes, *Catequesis*, 49). De los Reyes argued that if the New Testament itself described Jesus as a man or a son of man, he is therefore truly a man. He added "the great teacher was born of a woman, grew up in intelligence and stature, cried, felt hunger, thirst, fatigue, irritation, fear, sadness, drowsiness, lived with men, preached, reprimanded others, whipped the money changers at the temple, and died" (De los Reyes, *Catequesis*, 56).

Even if Jesus was truly a man, De los Reyes saw no problem in calling him a divine human being, considering that Jesus was indeed a perfect human being, and considering, following the thinking of Pythagoreans and Platonists, that all our souls are fragments of the divine soul, and it could be that Jesus' soul happened to be proportionately more divine than the average human being's soul (Cf. De los Reyes, *Catequesis*, 56-57). He further believed that mission of Jesus is not to save us from the absurd idea of original sin, but to preach repentance and sincere adherence to God's words (Cf. De los Reyes, *Catequesis*, 52). With Jesus seen as a true human being, De los Reyes ruled that the miracles described in the New Testament were not historical facts. Miracles for him are impossibilities because they would contradict both the laws of nature and the laws of God (Cf. De los Reyes, *Catequesis*, 55).

The fifth dogmatic theme in the above-mentioned sequence is De los Reyes' thanatology and his theology on divine justice. Since he framed his discourse on the soul in the language of chemistry and physics of his time, his thanatology would appear strange to Catholic theologians who adhere to the radical difference between matter and spirit. He took the soul as some sort of a material entity that is therefore covered by the principles of the natural sciences. Thus, death for him is nothing but a

sheer transformation. If chemistry and physics guarantee the conservation of matter and energy, then something must also guarantee the conservation of the soul because it is definitely more noble than matter or energy (Cf. De los Reyes, *Catequesis*, 30-31). De los Reyes' conceded that man cannot really fathom what would actually happen to him after death. In the end he relied on the fact that God is good and can will only goodness for man, and thought that it is most possible that he will indeed preserve the human soul (Cf. De los Reyes, *Catequesis*, 31). Hence, for the new church's creed, De los Reyes wrote: "I believe that the maker who protects me now as a loving Father, likewise, shall protect me in death as proven in modern science and that I shall never disappear but shall only be transformed" (De los Reyes, *Catequesis*, 40).

As to his theology on divine justice, De los Reyes asserted that God indeed rewards the good men and punishes the evil ones. Otherwise, the concepts of justice and of God would be undermined (Cf. De los Reyes, *Catequesis*, 30). At this point his theology on divine justice still seemed orthodox, but a drastic departure happened when he asserted that the divine rewards and punishments are things that will happen here on earth. In the creed of the new church, he wrote: "to think and to labor well because God rewards the good and punishes in this life bad intentions not with infernal absurdities but that the inexorable justice of God is perfected by His infinite mercy" (De los Reyes, *Catequesis*, 40). Having asserted such an alarming theology on divine justice, he immediately defended himself against the common observation why there seems to be many evil persons who are prosperous, just as there are many good persons who wallow in poverty. He explained that riches and the lack of it are not the only forms of divine rewards and punishment, for an extremely rich person can turn out to be very miserable just as a poor person can turn out to be blissfully contended with his life (Cf. De los Reyes, *Catequesis*, 30).

The sixth and the last dogmatic theme in the above-mentioned sequence is De los Reyes' eschatology. Just as he framed his theology of creation and thanatology using the discourse of modern sciences, he also elaborated his eschatology using the astronomic concepts of the implosion and rebirth of solar systems and galaxies in the universe. He suggested that speculations about the immediate end of the world should not worry man for the time being. Quoting the Irish physicist William Thomson (1824-1907) and the French astronomer Camille Flammarion (1842-1925), he estimated that the earth and the solar system will continue to exist for the next seventeen to thirty million years (Cf. De los Reyes, *Catequesis*, 32). De los Reyes explained that the new heaven and the new earth that were mentioned in the Book of Revelation simply referred to the rebirth of solar systems and galaxies (Cf. De los Reyes, *Catequesis*, 34).

Moral Theology

This paper's discussion on De los Reyes' moral theology followed the strategy that this paper did on his dogmatic theology: the use of Aglipay's *Novenario ng Balintawak* as an inter-text of the *Doctrina y Reglas Constitucionales de la Iglesia Filipina Independiente* and the *Catequesis de la Iglesia Filipina Independiente*, so as to filter out the moral theological themes that the then twenty-four year old church deemed very important for them to be known by the larger segment of their ecclesiastical organization. Figure 3, entitled "Dogmatic Themes contained in Aglipay's *Novenary of the Motherland*," charted down two readings that are related to moral theology: day one's third reading on charity and labor, and day nine's twenty-seventh reading on the commandments of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente (Cf. Aglipay, 5 & 28-29).

The third reading of the novenary briefly tackled charity and labor as corollary duties of man that are theologically based on the idea of divine goodness and perfection. To a large extent this can be connected with the new church's creed that stated: "I believe that God made man to contribute with his virtues and activities to the general well-being and progress for which we should be ever useful and seek with own labor the remedy for our necessities; to think and to labor well because God rewards the good and punishes in this life bad intentions. . ." (De los Reyes, *Catequesis*, 39).

The twenty-seventh reading of the novenary is actually a chapter that is extracted from the *Catequesis de la Iglesia Filipina Independiente*, which is originally entitled "The Duties of Man" (Cf. De los Reyes, *Catequesis*, 96-98), and which in return is based on two sections from the fourth chapter of the *Doctrinas y Reglas Constitucionales de la Iglesia Filipina Independiente*, which are originally entitled "Recommendations of our Church," and "Our Morality." For the sake of linguistic convenience, this sub-section on De los Reyes' moral theology is based on the analysis of the English translation of the twenty-seventh reading of the novenary, instead of the original Spanish texts from De los Reyes's two above-mentioned works.

As expected, the contents of De los Reyes' moral code are intimately bound with his ecclesiology and dogmatic theology. The first item of his moral code enjoined the members of the new church to love God by means of good intentions and humanitarian actions. Loving God meant worshiping him, not just on Sundays, but all of the time, and avoiding sin. He defined sin as action with ill will, ill intent and evil end (Cf. Aglipay, 28). The second item of his moral code enjoined the members of the new church to love their neighbor, with an emphasis on looking after the welfare of the poor and the unfortunate (Cf. Aglipay, 29). The stress on the option for the

poor appears to be an effort to rectify the Spanish friars' anti-poor attitude as De los Reyes' recorded in his *Memoria*. It is obvious that he based the first and the second items of his moral code on the greatest commandments of the New Testament that focused on loving God and loving one's neighbors.

The third element item of De los Reyes' moral code exhorted the members of the new church to be good, to be just, and to avoid committing excesses. He did not elaborate on these things, but the themes of goodness, justice and the golden mean sounded like the central concerns of Socratic philosophy. The fourth item of his moral code exhorted the members of the new church to be honorable, because being so is one of the few defining characteristics that differentiate man from the beasts (Cf. Aglipay, 29). The third and the fourth items of De los Reyes' moral code are his attempts to develop and strengthen the individuality and personhood of the members of the new church.

The fifth item of De los Reyes' moral code encouraged the members of the new church to be industrious and to appreciate labor. He appears to be fighting here the stereotype held by the colonizers about the Filipino indolence, as well as the scathing critique of Marx against religion as anti-progressive and anti-developmental. The sixth item of his moral code encouraged the members of the new church to avoid gambling, wasting of money, and the indulgence in vices. The fifth and the sixth items of De los Reyes' moral code are his attempts to develop the economic welfare and productivity of the individuals and families. It would not be an over-reading if one would see the Ilocano values of hard work and thrift underlying such items.

The seventh item of De los Reyes' moral code invited the members of the new church to develop their minds through the learning of the sciences. This item is related to the fifth and the sixth items in the sense that it also aims towards developing the material and financial welfare of the believers, but it surpasses the other two items in the sense that De los Reyes saw knowledge as the royal road towards collective progress and development. It is for this reason that the seventh item should be considered as the logical partner of the tenth item of the same moral code that allowed the members of the new church to read any book, "whatever may be the ideas or religion of its authors," as long as the new church see to it that "obscene works must not fall into the hands of indecent persons" (Aglipay, 29). It must be remembered that during the last years of the Spanish regime, the Catholic Church and the Codigo Penal had connived in banning several reading materials, including the Bible. For the seventh and the tenth items, De los Reyes was definitely theologizing as an ilustrado who desired to share the light that he gained from knowledge to the other Filipinos.

The eighth item of De los Reyes moral code inculcated on the minds and hearts of the members of the new church that loving and serving their neighbors

should also mean “seeking their well being and defending it, their independence, their liberty, and their rights and interests” (Aglipay, 29). This item is a political elaboration of the second item of the same code, which simply focused on loving one’s neighbors. It is a subtle call as well for the Filipino people to be vigilant about safeguarding their interests from the threats of the colonizers. The ninth item of this moral code inculcated on the mind and heart of each member of the new church the value liberty as “one of the most precious gifts which the Creator has favored us with” (Aglipay, 29). The eighth and the ninth items of De los Reyes’ moral code are clear manifestations of the new church revolutionary and nationalistic origins.

A Critique of De Los Reyes’ Religious and Theological Thoughts

This last substantive portion of the paper is the critique of De los Reyes’ religious and theological thoughts which is organized in accordance to same five thematic areas that were explored in the preceding section, namely: his studies on folk religion and comparative theology, his engagement in biblical translation, his ecclesiology, his dogmatic theology, and his moral theology.

The particular aspect that Filipino theology should benchmark on in De los Reyes’ studies on folk religion and comparative theology should be the intensity and thoroughness of his textual and field investigations on Philippine folk religions. The present day Filipino theologian may not share De los Reyes’ intention of reconstructing the ancient Filipino religions as a discourse that is comparable in richness and spirituality to that of Christianity, but the bulk of data and information that he amassed about these ancient religions can definitely help the present day Filipino theologian in his concern of expressing Christian spirituality and theology using native Filipino concepts and categories within the over-arching discourse of theology of inculturation. One viable agenda for Filipino theology is to thoroughly study the works of De los Reyes on folk religion, perhaps translate his original Spanish texts into more accessible English or Filipino versions, and pursue deeper the pathways that he opened in this field. De los Reyes’ methodological principle about the privileged position of the Filipino scholar in such intellectual endeavor is something that is not only useful for Filipino theology but to the other branches of knowledge as well that are engaged in humanistic and cultural investigations.

De los Reyes’ engagement with biblical translation should not be dramatically construed as a proof of his religious commitment. This paper has more accurately revealed that he was just one cog in a much bigger gear box of intentions harbored by the British and Foreign Bible Society and of the American Bible Society to bring God’s word to the nations in Africa, Asia and the remote corners of Europe and

America. His engagement with this multinational biblical translation project was a product of a serendipitous moment triggered by his being an Ilocano in Madrid with a sufficient facility in both Ilocano and Spanish languages and a certain level of interest in religion and religious matters. Instead, this engagement should be realistically construed as the moment for De los Reyes to become more knowledgeable and conscious about the teachings of the New Testament, remembering especially the tedious double translation protocol that he observed under the watchful eyes of Walker and Goodrich.

Nevertheless, the overall story of De los Reyes contribution to the translation of the Bible into the various Filipino languages should open the eyes of the modern Filipino theology to the ugly truth that during the first four hundred years of Christianity in the Philippines, the faithful had been systematically prohibited from directly engaging themselves with the word of God. The present day notoriety of Filipino Catholics' low biblical literacy could be something that is deeply rooted in such a Spanish colonial prohibition. Understanding and redressing the historically rooted low biblical literacy is something that Filipino theology can focus on.

On the other hand, a negative lesson can also be gleaned from De los Reyes' engagement with biblical translation. Filipino theology should take note of the danger of theologizing freely on biblical texts and without the benefit of solid theological training. When De los Reyes encountered the difficult passages of the Bible, he opted the easy way out of denying their truth and insisting on his extra-biblical rationalizations. While Filipino theology should encourage the faithful to read the Bible, it should also find ways and means to equip them with the fundamental concepts and doctrines on how to read and reflect on the words of God within the parameters of orthodoxy.

The particular aspects that Filipino theology should benchmark on in De los Reyes' ecclesiology should be his courage to deal with progress and the modern science. The modern Filipino theology should not shudder in front of the idea of progress for fear that rapid development would weaken the people's faith. Filipino theology should be there to encourage such progress, to guide such progress, to make sense out of the new things unveiled by such progress, and to address the problems and dilemmas brought about by such progress. The modern Filipino theologian should also open himself to the concepts, theories, and issues of modern science. The mysteries and doctrines of Christianity can be effectively contextualized using the language of modern science. Again, a negative lesson can be gleaned from De los Reyes' stand on science and modern learning. Filipino theology should not follow De los Reyes' prioritization of secular knowledge over and above the Bible itself. Instead, it should maintain a healthy dialogical relationship with modern knowledge.

Modern Filipino theology should be cautious in dealing with nationalism. By taking nationalism as a commitment for the welfare and development of the country, or as a commitment to pursue further the theology of inculturation, De los Reyes emphasis on such ideology could be an aspect of his ecclesiology that Filipino theology can benchmark on. But basing the foundations on one's theology and spirituality on such ideology that is highly susceptible to politicization can be risky to any ecclesiastical institution. De Achutegui and Bernad had noted how such practice had become the boon and the bane of the new church (Cf. De Achutegui & Bernad, Volume 1, 374-375). The first few years after the establishment of the Iglesia Filipina independiente, which coincided with the first few years after the revolution against Spain and height of the Filipinos' nationalist sentiments, the population of the new church reached an impressive quarter of the whole population of the country. But as the nationalist sentiments subsided, the population of the new church started to decline in comparison with the total population of the country. At present, the members of the new church would only constitute about four percent of the total population of the country.

De los Reyes' theology of the episcopate should give Modern Filipino theology the negative lesson that rationalization should never substitute sound theology. His theology of the episcopate, although adapted by the new church, failed to convince even Aglipay himself. De Achutegui and Bernad pointed out that dissatisfied with the episcopal consecration that he got from his twelve priests, Aglipay negotiated with Bishop Charles Brent (1862-1929) of the Episcopal Church of the United States for a possible re-consecration and affiliation for the new church in 1904 (Cf. De Achutegui & Bernad, Volume 1, 381-391). He likewise negotiated with Bishop Eduard Herzog (1841-1924) of the Swiss National Church for the same ends on that same year, as well as with the Greek Orthodox Church (Cf. De Achutegui & Bernad, Volume 1, 391, 403-404).

The particular aspect that Filipino theology should benchmark on in De los Reyes' dogmatic theology should be his remarkable ability to immerse himself in the concepts and theories of sociology of religion, the natural sciences, and biblical scholarship and in boldly using them in weaving an up to date discourse on the dogmas of his new church. Instead of leaving the faithful baffled with unfathomable mysteries, he was certain that there should be no contradictions between divine truths and natural reason. Another detail that Modern Filipino theology should take notice of is De los Reyes proposed procedure in formulating dogma. His emphasis on intellectual openness, mutual respect and thoroughness is something that foreshadowed the discourse theology that was perfected by the German philosopher and social theorist, Jurgen Habermas, several decades later. Whereas De los Reyes'

proposed procedure may not be totally appropriate for dogmatic theology, it is a good model for collective theologizing in general and for ecclesiastical consensus building in particular.

A negative lesson can be gleaned from De los Reyes' theology on divine revelation. By stating that the Bible contains the word of God that is unfortunately infected with dangerous errors and doctrinal contradictions, and without a solid doctrinal tradition to serve him as his mechanism in filtering out orthodoxy, he was left to rely on reason and the sciences. By prioritizing reason and the sciences over and above the Bible, De los Reyes drove his theologizing to the dangerous path where doctrinal and Biblical difficulties would be immediately branded as outdated irrationalities.

Another negative lesson can be gleaned from De los Reyes' brash rejection of the trinity of persons and the divinity of Jesus Christ. These are themes that are deeply embedded on mainstream Christian theology and cannot be easily set aside. The history of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente would tell us that the new church eventually renewed its faith in the trinity of persons and in the divinity of Jesus Christ. Hence, in the present declaration of faith of the new church, we can read: "the Father who is made of none, neither created nor begotten; the Son who is of the Father alone, not made nor created, but begotten, the Holy Ghost who is of the Father and the Son, neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding," and "Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, the second Person of the Trinity, very and eternal God, of one substance with the Father, took man's nature in the womb of the Blessed Virgin, after she conceived by the Holy Ghost."

Still another negative lesson can be gleaned from De los Reyes' thanatology and theology on divine justice. His emphasis on the earthly rewards for the good persons and earthly punishments for the evil ones turned out to be a theology that is more appealing to the strong and the powerful, but as one grows weak and powerless one would long for the traditional rewards and punishments in the afterlife. At the peak of his strength and power, De los Reyes proudly stood by his church as its foremost theological thinker. He even insisted on naming the children from his third marriage with names that were counter-hegemonic to the well entrenched tradition of giving infants Christian names. Hence, his sons were named Angalo (from a giant in Ilocano mythology), Kayamanan (wealth), Puso (heart) and Vigan (De los Reyes' birthplace); and his daughters were named Matibay (strong/durable) and Manila (De los Reyes' second home). But later on, these children were baptized in the Catholic Church and given Christian names, Fausto, Enrique, Leon, Estandisao, Nieves and Cresencia, respectively (Cf. De Achutegui & Bernad, Volume 1, 502-

503). Eventually, De los Reyes himself abandoned the new church that he founded and returned to the fold of the Catholic Church for the obvious fear of eternal damnation. His biography would tell us that he himself was not really convinced by his own thanatology and theology on divine justice.

Modern Filipino theology should also take note that expressing Christian eschatology with the concepts and theories of modern astrophysics would subdue its religious and spiritual dimensions as the attentions of the faithful will only be drawn away from the mystery of the second coming. Whereas science can be utilized by theology, science can never be a substitute for theology.

This paper's study on De los Reyes' moral theology had shown how this theological area is the least developed among the theological and religious areas that he touched. Contextualizing this underdevelopment in the history of the new church, this would become understandable as De los Reyes was more preoccupied with the task of differentiating the new church from the Catholic Church, a task that is more focused in the areas of ecclesiology and dogma. Furthermore the liberalism of De los Reyes had most probably made him a thinker that is not truly at home with the nitty-gritty of moral theology. In *Doctrinas y Reglas Constitucionales de la Iglesia Filipina Independiente*, he beautifully summarized this tendency: "Once we have shaken valiantly our heavy slavery in four centuries of religious obscurantism, we also think about the power of our sole discretion, that God in his abundant mercy has deigned to grant us. Do not think with others, they can be misleading, but the reason is the natural light that we have received directly from the generous hands of God" (De los Reyes, *Docrina y Reglas Constitucionales*, 9).

However, in his almost laconic moral theology, there are important pathways that he cleared which are promising for modern Filipino theology to pursue: his theology on labor and work, his theology on knowledge, and his theology on freedom. A scholar who carefully studied De los Reyes' biography and writings would only sigh at the unutilized theological opportunities that these themes represent. His knowledge on Marxism, his direct involvement with the labor movement and the revolution, and his sustained interest in theology could have elaborated these themes into fuller theological discourses.

Conclusion

This paper has explored the intellectual biography of De los Reyes; presented his involvement and thoughts on folk religion and comparative theology, biblical

translation, ecclesiology, dogmatic theology and moral theology; and critiqued the positive and negative aspects of his religious and theological musings. Although he was a layman, theologically an autodidact, and a person who had been deeply entrenched in the mundane concerns of his being a journalist, lawyer, entrepreneur, essayist, politician, rebel, folklorist, and labor leader, he was able to weave an impressive and interesting body of works in theology and religious studies. This paper ends with the hope that by considering this restless polymath as one of the early signposts of Filipino theology, modern Filipino theologians can draw inspirations, methods, themes and even negative lessons from him that would eventually further enrich the development of modern Filipino theology.

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