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## Si Jesus na taga-Nazareth

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dryness at this stage in our spiritual pilgrimage takes on a new meaning. This the author discusses in chapters three, four, and five. The dryness, the darkness, and the aridity are not due to distance or absence but precisely due to closeness and intimacy. One who is accustomed to the dark is blinded when suddenly exposed to the brilliance of the Lord. The darkness is due to the presence of the overpowering light rather than to its absence. Dryness then is healing, for it is in and through this dryness and darkness which means intimacy, that the Lord accomplishes the major part of the work of transforming us. When we have accepted this dryness in faith and surrender to the Lord, we have allowed him to transform us. We have surrendered ourselves as clay to be shaped in the hands of the potter.

But what about the goal of the interior life? Where is it all leading to? The author suggests that perhaps this is not the question that should preoccupy us. To illustrate the point, the image of floating is introduced (chapter six and the epilogue). God is the sea, and the major decision that each one has to make for himself is whether he should chart his own course, or whether he should allow the tide to bring him where it wills. If one decides to chart his own course, then he must swim. If he opts for the latter possibility, then he must float, and let the tide bring him where it wills. The floater yields and surrenders to the flow of the water. He is going some place but that is the concern of God. The major decision is to trust the tide. In this sense, the floater is poor in spirit. In a supreme act of freedom he yields his self-determination to the God of love that He may bring him where He wills.

Thus, prayer is like the four ways of drawing water, for at each succeeding stage of the interior life, we do less and less, and God more and more. To pray is to be the clay in the Potter's hands. We must allow the Lord to be Lord. We must let him form us as he wills. Prayer is also floating, for we should let God lead us and bring us where he wishes. As we progress in our interior journey, we discover that we do not experience the joy and the consolation we used to. The well has become dry as it was bound to be. What then? The author explains this and suggests to the pray-er that it is in the moments of dryness and darkness that he should hang on with greater determination, for it is then that the Lord accomplishes the work of transformation.

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SI JESUS NA TAGA-NAZARETH. By Pedro C. Sevilla, S.J. Lungsod ng Quezon: Dalubhasaang Panteyolohiya ng Loyola, Pamantasang Ateneo de Manila, 1979. 180 pages.

Time and again the cry has been raised in the Philippines and in other so-called Third World countries to develop a more "contextualized" ("indi-

genized," "inculturated") theology. The final statement of the Ecumenical Dialogue of Third World Theologians held in Tanzania (1976) declared: "We must, in order to be faithful to the gospel and to our peoples, reflect on the realities of our own situations and interpret the word of God in relation to these realities." In turn, the dialogue held in Sri Lanka in 1979 affirmed: "Theology to be authentically Asian must be immersed in our historico-cultural situation and grow out of it." As a third instance among many others, the Consultation on the Intellectual Formation of Seminarians held in Tagaytay City in 1979 concurred by saying: "Asia, Africa and Latin America have realized in our time the need to do theology from their own specific context. It is with their own perspectives and culture, with their own problems and aspirations that their theological activity must interact. They must reflect on what the Christian gospel has to say about their own experience of life, about their religious heritage and the simple faith of their people, about the poverty which afflicts them and the justice that is denied them."

If the need is strongly felt to construct a theology that responds to the context of the local church, it should be remembered that the task will not be the work of a day. The process requires time and patience. There will be basic steps, intermediate steps, and culminating steps in the process of construction. One of these steps will undoubtedly have to be the production of textbooks more contextualized than the current ones in use (often enough textbooks are even nonexistent). If these textbooks are written in the vernacular, their value for contextualization will be all the greater.

It is from such a perspective that one heartily welcomes the publication of Fr. Pedro C. Sevilla's *Si Jesus na Taga-Nazareth*, a textbook in christology written in Pilipino. It is an unassuming but significant contribution to the process of constructing a more inculturated theology in the Philippines. Many talk about inculturation; others make resolutions about it; only a few take concrete steps to promote it. In writing *Si Jesus na Taga-Nazareth*, Fr. Sevilla has taken the concrete step of facilitating local theological reflection on the meaning of Jesus for the Filipino believer. Because we now have this local textbook it will be possible for generations of students to theologize about the meaning of Christ in the language most connatural to them. Their deepest reflections and insights on the topic will be pursued and achieved in a medium they feel more at home with.

That is no mean service to the cause of local theology. For language is not merely a vehicle for conceptual formulation and communication. It is the articulation of a particular way of being human. Imagery, symbolism, sensitivity, culture — all these have something to do with language. It should not be difficult to see, then, how crucial is one's choice of the language of theological reflection.

Of course, the mere fact that a book is written in the vernacular does not mean straightway that it responds to the local context. Nor does the use of a textbook written in the language of the place necessarily give birth to an inculturated theology. But there seems to be no doubt that no authentic inculturation is finally possible except through the medium of the language of one's land and one's people. A shift to the vernacular seems, therefore, to be a necessary transition in the development of a contextualized theology. In the language of Scholasticism one would say that the use of Pilipino is not a sufficient but a necessary factor in the construction of an inculturated theology in the Philippines.

In his foreword, Fr. Sevilla explicitly disclaims any originality in his work. To be sure, *Si Jesus* draws heavily on the abundant sources of christological literature currently available and follows basically the division of material found in Walter Kasper's *Jesus the Christ*. But it must be acknowledged that Fr. Sevilla's choice of approach and content is most judicious. *Si Jesus* parts ways with that overly metaphysical christology whose main preoccupation is to investigate the two natures according to the Chalcedonian formula and whose starting-point is the incarnation (understood in an insufficiently historical way). Rather the book starts off from the kerygmatic emphasis on the death and resurrection of Jesus and from there develops the soteriological meaning of the Christ-event. In that way, the author makes available the best fruits of contemporary christological reflection in one handy Pilipino textbook.

Perhaps one would have wanted to see a section devoted to the theological significance of Jesus' historical ministry. Upon inquiry the author explained the absence of such a topic by recalling that it is already treated in the theology of revelation. Another feature whose presence would have improved the already high quality of the textbook is a fuller development of the centrality of the Abba-experience in the life of Jesus.

In these days of diminishing English language skills and increasing theological pluralism, the importance of a textbook in the theology classroom cannot be overestimated. For the basics of a science must be learned before creativity can flourish and there is nothing like a good solid textbook to help in learning the fundamentals. Thus, Fr. Sevilla has rendered great service to theological formation in the Philippine context by his publication of *Si Jesus na Taga-Nazareth*. And it is with added satisfaction that we also take note of his earlier publication *Ang Salita ng Dios at Tugon ng Tao*, a textbook on the theology of faith and inspiration. May others soon follow the fine example that Fr. Sevilla has set.

*Antonio B. Lambino, S.J.*