Introduction and Acknowledgments

IN HIS MESSAGE to the international "Bridges of Peace" gathering in Rome on October 14, 2018, Pope Francis writes: "If religions do not pursue avenues of peace, they contradict themselves. They can only build bridges in the name of the one who does not tire of joining heaven and earth."* Religious differences, divergent beliefs, theologies and practices are most seen to divide us, to pit us one against the other. But "the heart of a true believer," the pope continues, "seeks to open paths of communion always and everywhere." But such desire does not always translate itself to praxis on the ground. On the one hand, violence and conflict have always marred human history and religions are most often implicated in them. On the other hand, inclusive visions of different religions have also been responsible for fostering their adherents' imagination toward hopeful peacebuilding practices. Such ambivalence needs close examination and reflection.

This book is a collection of conversations among Catholic theologians engaged in peace studies from different continents and contexts on the theme, "Theology, Conflict and Peacebuilding." The first part consists of methodological reflections on the relationship between peace and symbolic violence, ecclesiology and peacebuilding, ethic of self-determination, the healing of perpetrators, and humility as political virtue. The second part focuses on strategies for peacebuilding on the ground and what we can learn from these experiences: spirituality of resistance in East Timor, sexual violence in the US military establishment, Catholic cooptation of a Marian shrine in multi-religious Zamboanga, active women peacekeepers

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* "Religions that do not pursue peace are a contradiction," https://www.ncronline.org/news/vatican/francis-chronicles/religions-do-not-pursue-peace-are-contradiction-pope-says (accessed 03.11.2019).

in an indigenous community in Bukidnon, and an examination of online interfaith dialogue platforms in Mindanao.

To present the terrain of this book's theme, Daniel Franklin Pilario from St. Vincent School of Theology of Adamson University (Quezon City) maps out the ambivalent relationship between religion and violence in contemporary philosophical and sociological discourses. First, the primordial approach posits that religions are violent in themselves. Reminiscent of Eagleton's "holy terror" or Huntington's "clash of civilizations," this perspective is also quite prevalent in popular media. Critiquing this, the second view's instrumentalist approach places the source of violence on economic and political causes, for instance, political marginalization in the case of Rwanda and Mindanao or globalization in world terrorism. The third approach is the symbolic-constructivist approach which considers people as active agents in the social reproduction of symbolic power. By using Bourdieu's sociological framework, Pilario reveals the ambivalence and "double truth" of religious practices in the context of peacebuilding.

Bringing the discussion into theological discourse proper, William Cavanaugh, the director of the Center for World Catholicism and Intercultural Theology (CWCIT) of DePaul University, Chicago, deals with the relationship between ecclesiology and peacebuilding. His chapter responds to Daniel Philpott's book, *Just and Unjust Peace: An Ethic of Political Reconciliation* (2012). Cavanaugh acknowledges the role religions provide to the State in its peacebuilding efforts, i.e., as a "ground for ethic" of political reconciliation, a "source for conceptual resources" for the political process, a "potent medicine" for societies with troubled pasts. In Cavanaugh's view, however, the Church should be seen as a subversive political body—not divorced from politics—which has the power and responsibility to tell the excluded that a different world is possible, more than what the elite-driven States can do. Pope Francis's image of the Church is as a "field hospital after battle"—not just a carrier of doctrinal and pastoral remedies, but active spaces of healing; not permanent, stable institutional spaces, but in the field, "mobile, willing to go outside of itself to bind wounds and sow seeds of hope."

Gerard Powers, director of Catholic peacebuilding studies at the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, asks: Is there a Catholic approach to self-determination? Self-determination as a way out of conflict exists in at least three forms in the Catholic moral discourse and experience. In this chapter, Powers argues for the "remedial right to self-determination/secession" not as a primary right, but an alternative of last resort. In the light of Catholic Social Teaching principles, he thinks that self-determination is a moral right, though a qualified one. Secession, however, is not a right, but a last-resort remedy in response to long-standing experience of oppression and injustice.

Much has been written about the care and healing of the victims of violence. On a different note, Robert Schreiter of the Catholic Theological Union (CTU–Chicago) tackles the question of the healing of perpetrators, a theme rarely discussed in conflict and peace studies. There has been much talk about victims, but not about perpetrators who want to mend their ways and wish to once again "rejoin the human family." What does Christian ethics offer toward this end? Fear and anxiety tend to prevail: the fear of contamination with the stigma; revulsion about the crime; fear of being seen as condoning the heinous acts; and concern about one's trauma being triggered all over again. Though transgressions by sociopaths and victims-becoming-perpetrators abound, heinous crimes on a mass scale are mostly committed by "ordinary people." Schreiter provides several factors that lead to this direction. But the most precious contribution of this work is to offer tentative pathways to this hitherto untrodden field in peacebuilding. All throughout, Schreiter emphasizes the role of ritual and search for spiritual resources both from the Christian tradition and experience of indigenous communities on how those who violated the social body can "enter home once again."

Theologian Dennis Gonzalez argues for humility as a political virtue quite valuable to the work of conflict resolution and peacebuilding. With the help of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, the story of Abigail in the Old Testament, and Raimon Panikkar's aphorisms, he contends that humility is beneficial "especially for communities in which people have felt humiliated by their poverty or have been dehumanized by violence."

The next chapters aim to learn from concrete resistance and peacebuilding practices on the ground. Theologian Joel Hodge alerts us to the emergence of a "spirituality of resistance" in East Timor during the difficult years of persecution under the Indonesian occupation (1975–1999). This resistance was largely founded on the Catholic faith's option for active non-violence, with the victims voluntary taking upon themselves their experience of "suffering through self-giving solidarity." The non-retaliation policy of the local independence movement took its inspiration from the life of Jesus. "At the heart of the Timorese 'spirituality of resistance,'" Hodge explains, "seemed to be a God who shared the sufferings of the people as loving victim, enabling existential resistance to the sacred violence of the regime."

Meghan Clark of St. John University (New York) examines intra-military sexual violence or "sexual violence against one's fellow soldiers" which she diagnoses as an epidemic within the US military establishment, posing itself as a serious ethical concern. Although there are sexual attacks against men, the chapter centers on sexual violence against women in the military service. Beyond attributing it to misogynism, military sexual violence is to be seen as political, that is, as a concrete instance of structural sin. From the view of the hermeneutic of violence, it puts into question the morality of the US military service and in effect the mainstream Catholic ethical discourse which on the whole is silent about the issue. In the end, the author concretely asks a rhetorical question: "If sexual assault can be considered *incidental to military service*, can participation in that military be morally justified?"

The next chapter on a Marian shrine shows how a hegemonic religion—Catholicism—can promote violent exclusion from an otherwise shared multi-religious space. Antonio de Castro, professor of history at the Loyola School of Theology (Quezon City), revisits an article on the same subject, "La Virgen del Pilar Ten Years After," published earlier about the Shrine of Our Lady of Pilar in Zamboanga City, Southern Philippines. He reexamines it from the lens of new developments like the Zamboanga Siege, and the observed "Catholicization" of the shrine, once a common neutral ground for

prayer and pilgrimage for both Muslims and Christians who share the locale. De Castro argues that the "reduction of the shrine to an exclusive and exclusionary Catholic site" does violence to the multi-ethnic context of Zamboanga. Such "exclusion carries within itself the seeds of religious violence," setting the stage for all other forms of separation and marginalization.

Geraldine Villaluz, a religious educator from University of San Carlos (Cebu), did her research among the indigenous women of Talaandig in Bukidnon, Southern Mindanao. Her work recovers the hidden voices of the active peacekeeping tradition in these indigenous communities whose main agents are women—mothers, daughters, storytellers, painters, ritual leaders, community healers, etc. For the Talaandig, peacemaking is not restricted to solving issues of war and conflict. Peace also means "food on the table for the children," ecological sustainability, health, indigenous education, living out of community traditions, and just partnership in leadership. Peacebuilding strategies also come from their time-tested indigenous processes among mothers in these communities: sharing stories, listening to the other, discerning, among others.

Agnes Brazal of De La Salle University (Manila) examines online interfaith dialogue platforms as sites for conflict resolution. Comparing a Mindanao-based multi-religious and multi-cultural yahoo group, Kusog Mindanaw, to other faith-based online groupings, she observes that while the Internet does not promote dialogue in itself, Kusog is used effectively as a conversation platform for peace. Further, while online presence can be used to hide one's identity, Kusog's active participants consider their revealed identities as a sign of authenticity and accountability. Thus their online exchanges sometimes extend to face-to-face encounters and groupings. While the chapter points to an apparent under-participation of women and indigenous peoples in the online platform, it gives credence to the words of John Paul II about the Internet providing "enormous potential for promoting peace and building bridges between peoples."

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