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Magellan's Circling of the World and its Historical Imponderables: The Shattering of the Medieval Worldview and the Birth of Christianity in the Philippines

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Abstract

This paper is a historico-philosophical appraisal of Magellan's first circumnavigation of the world. Two historical events attended this momentous episode: the shattering of the Medieval *Weltanschauung* and the birth of the Christian Faith of the Filipino nation. The main insight elucidated in this paper is that events of historical turning points usually eventuate in a most imperceptible manner and in a long stretch of time—beyond the control and expectations of historical agents. Magellan's circling of the earth is one such an event—a historical watershed that shattered the mindset of a civilization and changed the course of human history. Another is the birth of the Christian Faith of the Filipino nation. From the historico-philosophical point of view, the Christianization of the Philippines is a historical imponderable. In fact, there was *nothing* noble or laudable in its inception. Philosophically, the event may only be considered as a vicissitude of fate or fortune. Only from the historico-theological point of view that the Christianization of the Philippines gains some sense, meaning, and purpose.

Key words: *Historical Imponderables, Medieval Mind, History, Lord of History*

The First Circumnavigation of the World

When the ragtag band of 18 mariners—what remained of the 265-strong motley crew of Ferdinand Magellan who circumnavigated the earth—anchored

off Santiago in Cabo Verde Islands (Africa) on their way back to Spain, the shore party sent to get supplies got involved in what seemed to be a petty argument with the Portuguese at the port. They disagreed over which day of the week it was. The Portuguese at the port claimed it was Thursday, July 10, 1522 and thought that the returning navigators erred. But the latter refused to concede, insisting it was Wednesday, July 9, 1522.¹

The dispute on the date was *not* resolved at the time.

When the *Victoria*—the last surviving ship of the *Armada de Molucca* commanded by Sebastián de Elcano, the Basque Captain—finally docked at the port of Sanlúcar de Barrameda (Spain), the disagreement on the date of the day was rekindled.

Antonio Pigafetta of Vicenza (Italy) thought it was Saturday, the 6th of September 1522. But the Spanish authorities who welcomed them insisted that it was Sunday, the 7th of September. Pigafetta was deeply puzzled. For he did not miss a single day in recording the day-to-day occurrences of the voyage in his chronicle. He had a valid reason. Since the global expedition began, Pigafetta faithfully dated the accounts of his diary beginning with the first entry: “Tuesday, September 20, 1519.” The diurnal dating in Pigafetta’s account basically matched those of the ship log kept by Francisco Albo, a Portuguese sailor, who was instructed by Magellan to set down in writing the activities of daily occurrence respecting the navigation of the fleet.²

The riddle was eventually solved.

¹ Laurence Bergreen, *Over the Edge of the World: Magellan's Terrifying Circumnavigation of the Globe* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2003), 386.

² Bergreen, *Over the Edge of the World*, x. Pigafetta’s account sometimes differs by one day from Albo’s ship log. This may be explained by the fact that the latter’s recording of the day began at noontime—as was the custom among the navigators and ship pilots in those days. Pigafetta used a nonnautical way of reckoning the events of the day. Thus, an event that happened early in the morning would be recorded in Albo’s log as an occurrence of the day before.

Having sailed westward—in opposite direction to the eastward rotation of the earth—Magellan and his crew gained a full day in the course of the most terrifying 39,300-mile circling of the earth.³

Two events of historic importance attended the first circumnavigation of the globe: the shattering of the Medieval worldview and the birth of the Christian Faith of the Filipino nation. This paper attempts to understand both these historic occurrences from the historico-philosophical point of view.

The Shattering of the Medieval Weltanschauung

During the Medieval Age—roughly from 500 AD to 1500 A.D.—the cosmological postulate that dominated the thinking of ordinary people in the West was the invincible presupposition that the earth was a flat, floating, and fixed dish.⁴ It was also assumed that the earth was the center of the universe (geocentricism).

Note the phrase “ordinary people” in the previous paragraph.

The lengthiest timeline of the Medieval Age was the Age of Faith, an epoch presided by the absolute sway of Christendom. What the Church said, taught, and preached to the Christian faithful (the “ordinary people”) was accepted as the unquestionable truth. To have a sense of how irresistibly the Church exerted its authority on the minds of peoples at the time—and how geocentricism as a cosmological thesis became so entrenched in the collective consciousness of Western civilization—we may recall that incident in 1533, in which Martin Luther, outraged by what he thought were monstrous claims of the Copernican theory, censured its author in the most scathing terms:

People give ear to an upstart astrologer who strove to show that the earth revolves, not the heavens or the firmament, the sun and the moon . . . This fool wishes to reverse the entire scheme

³ Ibid., 386.

⁴ William Manchester, *A World Lit Only with Fire: The Medieval Mind and the Renaissance; Portrait of an Age* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1992), 232.

of astrology; but sacred Scripture tells us that Joshua commanded the sun to stand still, not the earth.⁵

John Calvin was also aghast at Copernicus. Quoting Psalm 93, he vehemently argued: “The world also is stabilized, that it cannot be moved . . . Who will venture to place the authority of Copernicus above that of the Holy Spirit?”⁶ During the Age of Faith, the Church ruled with unchallenged power over the religious, cultural, political, and intellectual life of the Western civilization. No single group or individual—howsoever mighty, charismatic, and brilliant—was able to challenge the Church on matters respecting religious precepts, ethical principles, political policies, and even scientific postulates. Even the great Galileo Galilei buckled under the severe pressure coming from the powerful members of the Inquisition who threatened him with excommunication and torture. He was left with no choice but to recant his scientific findings on the revolving earth. Under duress, he signed the following prescribed formulary of abjuration:

I, Galileo, son of the late Vincenzo Galilei of Florence, seventy years of age . . . abandon completely the false opinion that the sun is at the center of the world and does not move and that the earth is not the center of the world and moves . . .⁷

But Galileo was able to pull a fast one on the members of the Inquisition. As he left the Roman Inquisitorial court, he was reportedly heard muttering: “*Epur si muove*” (“And yet it does move”).⁸ His words became a famous byword in history. But Galileo’s notarized retraction was not even enough concession for the Roman Inquisition. He spent the remainder of his splendid life in house arrest in his villa in Arcetri.

⁵ Quoted in Jerome J. Langford, *Galileo, Science and the Church*, 3rd ed. (Michigan, USA: Michigan University Press, 2003), 35.

⁶ Quoted in Thomas Kuhn, *The Copernican Revolution: Planetary Astronomy in the Development of Western Thought* (Massachusetts, USA: Harvard University Press, 1957), 192.

⁷ Quoted in Peter Machamer’s *Introduction to The Cambridge Companion to Galileo*, ed. Peter Machamer (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 23.

⁸ It is asserted that Galileo did not actually utter the memorable line. Some fertile mind imagined Galileo saying those suitable words to himself as he was leaving the trial chamber. Jose Wudka, *Space-Time, Relativity, and Cosmology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 139, ft. 21.

It is noteworthy that Galileo was summoned to Rome to stand trial before the Roman Inquisition in 1633—one-hundred eleven years after Magellan’s voyage around the world. Copernicus completed his *De Revolutionibus Orbium Coelestium* (On the Revolutions of the Celestial Spheres) in 1530—eight years after the circumnavigation. And Luther uttered his condemnation of Copernicus 1533—twelve years after Magellan commenced his naval exploration.

From the historico-philosophical perspective, what *this* fact meant was that the breakdown of the Medieval worldview took a long time to eventuate. This is scarcely unexpected. For great turning points in history usually happen in an extended period. The indestructible law of change which is at work at all levels of human life and the material world always operates imperceptibly like the movement of sliding glaciers.

Before Magellan’s circumnavigation, the view that the earth was an orb was only held as a theory within a small circle of enlightened medieval scholars and thinkers. Of course, the ancients had already postulated that the earth as a celestial orb was spherical. They did not, however, proffer conclusive empirical proof to validate the theory. They only based the cosmological hypothesis on the plotted positions of the stars, the moons, and the planets; on the strength of geometric calculations; on the cool exercise of logical deductions; and, oftentimes, on the flight of fancy. For instance, Diogenes Laërtius, the historian who wrote *The Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, tells us that, according to Pythagoras, the “world . . . which is . . . *spherical*, and inhabited all over in its centre, results from a combination of these elements (i.e., fire, water, earth, air), and derives its motion from them . . .”⁹ The Pythagoreans also theorized that at the center of the cosmos was a huge ball of fire around which the heavenly bodies revolved with flawless grace and precision.¹⁰

In the Dialogue *Phaedo*, Plato writes that “the earth, looked at from above, looks like those spherical balls made up of twelve pieces of leather.”¹¹ This depiction of the earth as a sphere is the oldest text extant on the subject

⁹ Diogenes Laërtius, *The Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, trans. C. D. Yonge, (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1853), 8.19 [additions and italics mine].

¹⁰ Arnold Hermann, *To Think Like God: Pythagoras and Parmenides; The Origins of Philosophy* (Las Vegas, USA: Parmenides Publishing, 2004), 112.

¹¹ Plato *Phaedo* 1110b.

matter.¹² Aristotle also asserts in *De caelo* (*On the Heavens*) that the earth is spherical. His explanation is simple but shrewd. He points out that during lunar eclipses one observes that the silhouetted form of the moon is curled like a crescent. This suggests that the earth which shades the moon from the gleam of the sun is globular in shape.¹³

The historical significance of Magellan's circumnavigation of the world was that the circuit of the earth furnished us with irrefutable, empirical evidence that the world was indeed a sphere. Thus, Copernicus and Galileo were right in asserting that the earth was not just a sphere but also turning on its own axis as it circled the sun.

Aristotle was only partly correct. He accurately posited that our planet was a sphere; but he was wrong to maintain in his cosmology that the sun, the stars, and the planets were revolving around the earth.

Overall, Magellan's circling of the globe pulled the linchpin of scientific truth that exploded the medieval cosmological outlook—although, as we have remarked, it took a long period of time for that paradigm to be discredited and dislodged.

In his blockbuster *A World Lit Only by Fire*, William Manchester writes about the historical import of Magellan's circling of the world:

Philosophers, scholars, and even learned men in the Church had begun to challenge stolid medieval assumptions, among them pontifical dogma on the shape of the earth, its size, and its position and movement in the universe. Magellan gave men a realistic perception of the globe's dimensions, of its enormous seas, of how its landmasses were distributed.¹⁴

Viewed from the standpoint of the present, the eventual realization that the earth was a sphere brought forth the profoundest repercussions. Like a

¹² W.K.C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy: The Earlier Presocratics and the Pythagoreans*, vol. 1 (London: Cambridge University Press, 1962), 295.

¹³ Aristotle *On the Heavens* 297b25-29.

¹⁴ Manchester, *A World Lit Only with Fire*, 33.

strong temblor, it ultimately shattered the hardened glass of geocentrism, shook the Catholic Church to its very foundation, upended the network of the Medieval mindset, and laid the groundwork for the full flowering of the Renaissance.

The tremors were felt at every level of the shared life of the men and women of the time. In fine, they subsequently overturned the entire structure of the Medieval *Weltanschauung* which was built on the dominant cosmology of geocentrism, the unquestioned certitude of religious faith, and the total sway of the Catholic Church.

The shattering did not only in due course change our understanding of the external world; it also altered the manner we regard ourselves as fleeting creatures, and the way we consider our place which is so ridiculously insignificant in the frightening expanse of the universe. And, for the Christian believers, the destabilization and the subsequent dismantling of what people thought to be an unshakeable web of unquestioned presuppositions could not have been more shocking. For it did not only dislodge the ascendancy of the Church as a crucial hinge around which the entire medieval life turned; it also put into question the authority of the Holy Scripture itself and eventually paved the way for the great movement of Reformation.

Parenthetically, the philosophical significance of Copernicus' theory of heliocentrism which displaced the geocentric cosmology is lost on many thinkers—even today. It is generally assumed that heliocentrism dethroned the earth from its putative privileged position in the natural order of things, and that human beings were chastened to realize that they were merely miniscule particles in the seashore of lights of the universe.¹⁵

The deeper import of heliocentrism is philosophical—that is, the universe does *not* have a center at all.¹⁶ In the immeasurable scope, scale, and stretch of space, *any* point may be regarded as the midpoint. That Copernicus picked the sun as the center owed itself to the fact that it was expedient for him to assign a

¹⁵ R.G. Collingwood, *The Idea of Nature*, ed. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1945), 96.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 97.

point of reference for the purpose of observing and studying the orbital bearings of celestial bodies.¹⁷

In brief, the philosophical significance of heliocentrism was that it scuttled the ancient and medieval theory that posited the cosmos as a celestial organism with differentiated parts—with the earth ensconced right at its center. Now, if the universe has no center, then the model of the material world as an organism which consists of different components is obliterated.

Copernicus' theory also proved that the scientific laws formulated in this corner of the universe will also apply everywhere and anywhere, since the earth is of the same substance—subject to the same invisible set of laws—as the most faraway stars in limitless space.¹⁸ In essence, the collapse of geocentrism as an astrophysical outlook is a classic example of what Thomas Kuhn calls scientific paradigm shift.¹⁹

The First Circler of the World

It was conventionally assumed that the 18 emaciated mariners who made it back to Spain aboard the limping *Victoria* were the first circumnavigators of the world. Sebastián de Elcano was widely applauded as the *Capitán* of the first circumnavigation and feted by King Carlos of Spain.

There is merit in the argument that de Elcano and the other 17 returning voyagers were the first circumnavigators of the world. For they were members of the original crew of Magellan's *Armada de Molucca*, who left Spain in September 1519 and managed to return to Spain two years later in 1522 after circling the earth.²⁰

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid., 97-8.

¹⁹ See Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 4th ed. (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2012).

²⁰ See Bradley Thomas Angle, *Sebastián de Elcano: You Encircled Me* (USA: Dirty Sailor Company: 2019).

But there is *another* side to the story respecting the question as to who really the first circumnavigator(s) of the world was. That *other* story is the story of Magellan's servant and interpreter named Enrique, who was considered by some historians as the real first circler of the world. A linguist who spoke fluent Spanish and Portuguese, Enrique was with Magellan when the latter went to Sevilla to offer his loyalty and services to the Spanish Crown.

Magellan totally trusted Enrique. The greatest explorer of all time took Enrique with him—along with his illegitimate son Cristóvão Rebêlo—on what turned out to be the most terrifying voyage in history in search of the Spice Islands. Enrique, Cristóvão, and Pigafetta were among Magellan's sixty-strong armed contingent who fought in the famous battle of Mactan, where the Captain of the *Armada de Molucca* was killed in action on the 27th of April (Saturday) 1521. Magellan's son was also slain. Enrique and Pigafetta were wounded but managed to stagger their way back to the ship.

The question whether Enrique was the first circler of the globe hinged on the consideration regarding his place of origin. Some historians allege that he was originally from Sumatra.²¹ In his signed last will, Magellan refers to Enrique as “a native of the city of Malacca.”²² If it was true, then the latter was short of about 1000 nautical miles of full circumnavigation, since he stayed behind in Cebu after Magellan's tragic death.²³

Other historians maintain, however, that Enrique was born in one of the Visayan Islands, seized by marauding pirates when he was a boy, sold as a slave in Sumatra, and shipped to Malacca where Magellan bought him in the slave market.²⁴ Even Magellan's last will states that he was “captured” presumably by slave raiders as a young kid.²⁵

There is, of course, no definitive evidence to support either the theory that Enrique was originally from Malacca, or the supposition he was born in one of

²¹ Angle, *Sebastián de Elcano*, 17-8.

²² Bergreen, *Over the Edge of the World*, 65.

²³ Angle, *Sebastián de Elcano*, 18.

²⁴ Manchester, *A World Lit Only with Fire*, 269; Bergreen, *Over the Edge of the World*, 65, 242-3.

²⁵ Bergreen, *Over the Edge of the World*, 65.

the islands of the Visayas. An astute historian should therefore hold in mind David Hume's wise counsel that a prudent person should judiciously proportion his/her belief to the strength of available evidence.²⁶

Although the extant evidence which sanctions the hypothesis that Enrique was a Visayan may be regarded circumstantial at best, it is, nevertheless, a sound inference grounded in actual textual testimony. To explain the hypothesis, we have to review the compelling circumstances that attended the birth of Christianity in the Philippines—an event which is a coefficient of Magellan's circumnavigation. As we shall see shortly, the person of Enrique is a crucial link that connects the two momentous events. In the person of Enrique are embodied both the historic significance of the first circumnavigation of the world and the Christianization of the Filipino nation.

To grasp how these two momentous events fortuitously converge at the crossroads of history in the fascinating figure of Enrique—as well as the causes and conditions that gave rise to such a convergence—is the subject of this and the following sections.

On the 17th of March 1521, five hundred years ago, Magellan and the crew of the *Armada de Molucca* laid anchor and waded to the shore of the island of Homonhon in the Philippines. Here is Antonio Pigafetta's account of that most memorable day:

Saturday, the 16th of March 1521, we arrived at daybreak in sight of a high island, three hundred leagues distant from the before-mentioned Thieves' island. This isle is named Zamal (present-day Samar). The *next day* (March 17th) the captain-general wished to land at another *uninhabited island* near the first (Homonhon Island), to be in greater security and to take water, also to repose there a few days [additions and italics mine].²⁷

²⁶ David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter Millican (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2007), 10. 4.

²⁷ Antonio Pigafetta, *The First Voyage Around the World: 1519-1522: An Account of Magellan's Expedition*, ed. Theodore J. Cachey Jr. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 71.

Eleven days later, on the 28th of March (Holy Thursday), Magellan's fleet anchored off the Limasawa island. An outrigger bearing eight warriors cautiously approached the flagship but stopped at some distance.²⁸

What happened next was astonishing.

From the deck of the ship, Enrique the interpreter addressed the men in the *Boloto* and spoke to them in a language unknown to Magellan's crew.

The rowers answered Enrique back!

Magellan was astounded but certainly delighted.²⁹ For the communication between Enrique and the Limasawans carried out in their native dialect meant that a friendly rapport with the islanders had been established, and that they were now in a familiar territory.

That Enrique spoke to the islanders in their dialect is an intriguing fact to any aspiring historian. In those times, the Malayan culture and language dominated the entire region of Southeast Asia. Like any other great language, the Malay tongue, which was spoken by a vast confederation of nations living in *tens of thousands* of islands, was splintered into innumerable dialects and overlapping vernaculars. Although this medley of exotic tongues derived its wherewithal from one linguistic wellspring, the individual dialects developed its own singularities and cadencies—in such a way that the inhabitants in one island may sufficiently understand the spoken locutions of the people in another island but unable to speak it in a conversation.³⁰

It is remarkable that Enrique was able to communicate with the islanders in Waray or in some earlier version of it. Magellan did not know *how* his servant was able to converse with the Limasawans.³¹ The plausible inference to be

²⁸ Ibid., 76.

²⁹ Bergreen, *Over the Edge of the World*, 242; Manchester, *A World Lit Only with Fire*, 257.

³⁰ This author, for example, hails from an island at the heart of the Philippine archipelago where various distinct dialects are spoken. The people of his town speak a unique dialect. He can understand the dialect of the people in the next town but cannot speak it.

³¹ Bergreen, *Over the Edge of the World*, 242; Manchester, *A World Lit Only with Fire*, 257.

deduced from this encounter was that the islanders' dialect was Enrique's mother tongue, or that he spoke a vernacular cognate to it. Later on, when Magellan with his party went ashore, he was intrigued to see and hear Enrique happily conversing with the Limasawans.³²

What transpired in the island of Limasawa fairly proved that Enrique was back in the region where he came from, and that he could reasonably stake a claim to being the first circumnavigator of the world.³³

Since Enrique spoke the native dialect, he served as an interpreter doing simultaneous translations for the Europeans and the Limasawans—and later on with the Cebuanos. Enrique's role as translator bore great impact on the unravelling of succeeding events that led to Magellan's defeat in Mactan and the tragic beginning of Christianity in the Philippines.

On the 29th of March [Good Friday]—the day after the first encounter with islanders—Magellan sent Enrique, who was styled by Pigafetta in his chronicle as “the interpreter,” on a special and delicate mission. Magellan commissioned him as an ambassador of peace to negotiate in good faith with the chieftain of Limasawa, Raja Kolambu³⁴—that is, “to beg [Limasawa's ruler] to give [Magellan] provisions for his ships [and to assure the Raja] that he had not come to his country as an enemy, but as a friend.”³⁵

Raja Kolambu put his trust in the ambassador's word and graciously accepted Magellan's overture of friendship. Upon invitation, Limasawa's chieftain with his entourage of six or eight men boarded the Armada's flagship and were warmly welcomed by the *Capitán* General.

Right then and there on the deck of the Commander's flagship, Raja Kolambu and Magellan—after some diplomatic preliminaries—made a blood compact (*cassi cassi*)³⁶ by slitting “their chests and the blood was poured in a vessel and mixed together with wine, and each of them drank one half of

³² Manchester, *A World Lit Only with Fire*, 268.

³³ *Ibid.*, 269; Bergreen, *Over the Edge of the World*, 65, 242-3.

³⁴ Bergreen, *Over the Edge of the World*, 244.

³⁵ Pigafetta, *First Voyage Around the World*, 76-7.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 77.

it.”³⁷ Magellan then asked Raja Kolambu if he would allow two of his men to go along with him back to “the places where they lived, to see some of the things of his country.”³⁸ The latter cordially granted the request. Pigafetta the diplomat and another sailor went ashore with the chief and his men. The Raja’s guests were treated to a lavish meal of “fish roast in pieces, and ginger fresh gathered that moment, and some wine.”³⁹ Pigafetta and his companion enjoyed so much the local food and wine that the latter got drunk.

They spent the night in the island as royal guests.

On the following day, Pigafetta was astonished to observe that Raja Kolambu’s realm abounded in silk and gold. “All the vessels which he makes use of are made of [gold], and also some parts of his house, which was well fitted up according to the custom of the country, and he was the handsomest man that we saw among these nations,” Pigafetta writes in his journal.⁴⁰

Magellan’s chronicler was also awed by the regal visage and stately outfit of the dashing Raja Kolambu. “He had very black hair coming down to his shoulders, with a silk cloth on his head, and two large gold rings hanging from his ears[;] he had a cloth of cotton worked with silk, which covered him from the waist to the knees, at his side he wore a dagger, with a long handle which was all of gold, its sheath was of carved wood,” notes Pigafetta.⁴¹

One important episode happened two days later—on the 31st of March 1521. It was Easter Sunday in the Christian calendar, the highest solemnity commemorating Jesus Christ’s Resurrection. Magellan sent Pedro de Valderrama the chaplain to the island to prepare for the Easter Mass. He was accompanied by Enrique the interpreter who asked Raja Kolambu for authorization for the Captain and his men to come ashore.⁴² Two local kings, Raja Kolambu and Raja Siagu, welcomed the Captain and his party. During the Easter celebration of the Mass, the two Rajas, who attended the religious feast, kissed

³⁷ Bergreen, *Over the Edge of the World*, 245.

³⁸ Pigafetta, *First Voyage Around the World*, 77-8.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 79.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* [addition mine].

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 79-80.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 80.

the Holy Cross at the offertory and genuflected in homage at the elevation of Corpus Christi.⁴³

From historico-religious perspective, the incident in Limasawa marked the moment when the first seeds of Christian Faith were, in fact, sown in the gentle heart of the Filipino nation—symbolized by the Holy Cross which was planted on the highest point of Limasawa at the request of the Portuguese navigator who, brimming with evangelical fervour, dabbled as Christendom's most improbable proselytizer in the same audacious manner of Paulus of Tarsus.⁴⁴

The Comedy in Cebu and the Tragedy in Mactan

It was on the 7th of April (Sunday) at noontime when Magellan's fleet dropped anchor at the port of Zzubu (Cebu). It was here in Cebu where the tide of fortune turned against Magellan and his navigators. According to Pigafetta's account, the main purpose of their layover in the island was to obtain provisions and victuals for the *Armada* on the final leg of the voyage to Spice Islands.⁴⁵

But after setting foot on land, they inevitably engaged in trading activities with the Cebuanos in the barter of merchandise. Pigafetta writes:

For metal, iron, and other big-goods they gave us gold, and for the other small and sundry goods they gave us rice, pigs, goats, and other provisions. They gave us ten weights of gold for fourteen pounds of iron: each weight is a ducat and a half.⁴⁶

Besides the logistical and commercial transactions with the Cebuanos, two crucial circumstances attended the *Armada's* stopover in Cebu: the hasty baptism of the Cebuanos in the Christian faith and the Europeans' entanglement in the local politics.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 81.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 82, 85.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 91.

The nature of this twofold incident in Cebu *radically* departed from the primary purpose of Magellan's mission—i.e., to reach the Spice Islands—and *unnecessarily* detained the global explorers in the Visayas with deadly consequences. Viewed in historical hindsight, these intertwining events were the mainspring that precipitated the unravelling of events that culminated in Magellan's tragic debacle in Mactan.

Let us discuss the first episode: the mass baptism of the Cebuanos. The critical incident that laid the ground for the initiation of the Cebuanos to the Christian religion was one of those historical quirks—or imponderables—that oftentimes determined the inscrutable course of history and the destinies of nations.

The affair happened on the 9th of April, Tuesday. Raja Humabon sent his nephew accompanied by another chieftain—"King of Mazzava," as Pigafetta described him—a Moorish merchant, Cebu's "governor," chief of police (*Il bargello maggiore*), and eight other men, to Magellan's flagship in order to negotiate the terms of peace agreement between the chieftain of Cebu and the European explorers.

Magellan, a master showman, received Humabon's party with all the pomp and power of a conquistador. "The captain-general was sitting in a chair of red velvet, and near him were the principal men of the ships sitting in leather chairs, and the others on the ground on mats," writes Pigafetta.⁴⁷

The display of magnificence was obviously intended to impress the Humabon's men—and they were.

Then the most curious thing happened. Suddenly and apparently endowed with the spiritual gift of tongues, Magellan began haranguing his guests with the same fire and confidence as John the Baptist— expatiating on the sublime topics of peace, God's creation of heaven and earth, the filial virtue of obedience and devotion to parents, eternal fire in hell, the dignity of Christian Faith etc., etc.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Ibid., 87.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 87-88

Since Pigafetta made no mention that Enrique translated Magellan's words to his awed listeners—and since Magellan spoke in rapid-fire manner, no simultaneous interpreter could keep up with his pontification—it might be reasonably presumed that he spoke in Castilian or Portuguese.

Of course, Magellan's act was, if we borrow President Joe Biden's favourite word, pure “malarkey”—or nonsense. Humabon's party did not understand anything at all. But Magellan's expostulation had a profound and mysterious effect on his guests. They were deeply moved. “[T]hey had *never heard such words as these* which the captain had spoken to them, and they took great pleasure in hearing them,” Pigafetta notes.⁴⁹ Seizing the precious moment, Magellan went on injecting more dose of catechetical ardour to his preachifying, “[blabbering] a great many more good things to induce them to become Christians.”⁵⁰ Pigafetta writes:

[Raja Humabon's peace negotiators] heard these things willingly, and besought the captain to leave them two men to teach . . . them the Christian faith . . . To this the captain answered that for the moment he could not leave them any of his people, but that if they wished to be Christians that his priest would baptise them, and that another time he would bring priests and preachers to teach them the faith. They then answered that they wished first to speak to their king, and then would become Christians.⁵¹

The comedy highlighted Magellan's awesome skill in proselytizing—or rather, theatrics—that sealed the fate of the Filipinos to become a Christian nation. Sincere tears abundantly flowed from the eyes of the Europeans after witnessing this extraordinary moment. “Then the captain, with tears in his eyes, embraced them, and, taking the hand of the prince and that of the king, said to him that by the faith he had in God, and to his master the emperor, and by the habit of St. James which he wore, he promised them to cause them to have

⁴⁹ Ibid., 87 [italics mine].

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid., 88.

perpetual peace with the King of Spain, at which the prince and the others promised him the same,” observes Pigafetta.⁵²

Indeed, God works in mysterious ways and writes history in crooked lines as Christian historians, theologians, and mystics swear. History’s crooked lines usually take the various forms of comedy, coincidence, tragedy, and serendipity.

But viewed through the lens of a philosopher, history’s curved trails usually take the various colors of comedy, coincidence, tragedy, and serendipity. The Christianization of the Filipino nation was a case in which the course of history took a most surprising and ridiculous turn—an event remarkable for its drollery and absurdity.

On the 14th of April 1521 (Sunday), Raja Humabon, his wife Hara Humamay, and his tribe were solemnly baptized by Padre Valderrama with all the circumstances of gravity and grandeur which the important occasion required. The baptizing spree went on for another week in the entire island of Cebu and the neighbouring isles. According to an estimate, some twenty-two hundred (22,000) souls were saved from eternal damnation⁵³—no small feat at all for a neophyte evangelizer who might have equalled, or perhaps even eclipsed, the performance of St. Paul in terms of intensity and panache.

There is also every reason to assert that Fr. Valderrama holds the all-time record of having baptized the greatest number of bipeds in a given period of time, which obviously exceeded—in numerical proportion—the three thousand [3000] souls christened by the apostles during the Pentecost [cf. Acts 2: 41].

Let us now tackle the second circumstance of Magellan’s stay in Cebu: the Europeans’ meddling in the local geopolitics. After the wholesale baptism of Raja Humabon and his tribe, a strategic coalition was cemented between Cebu’s chieftain and Magellan. This alliance propelled Magellan and his crew headlong into the abyss of intrigues and squabbles among the native rulers. Raja Humabon was one of the top kingpins in the Visayas. He had both friends and foes. As Raja Humabon’s ally, Magellan became a formidable adversary to the enemies of the

⁵² Ibid., 89.

⁵³ Manchester, *A World Lit Only with Fire*, 273.

former. Raja Humabon and other Visayan chieftains pledged allegiance to the Spanish King and agreed to pay him (Magellan) tribute.⁵⁴

One chieftain, however, refused to render tribute and swear fealty to the Spanish crown or, at least, form an alliance with the Europeans: the overlord of Mactan, Raja Lapu-Lapu, the sworn enemy of Raja Humabon. The recalcitrant behaviour of Raja Lapu-Lapu was the main trigger that led to the furious battle in Mactan.

Angered by Raja Lapu-Lapu's resistance, Magellan resolved to chastise this pipsqueak who defied the splendour of the Spanish Crown and dared his majesty's explorer, lieutenant, and self-appointed evangelizer. The recently baptized Raja Humabon and Raja Zula, the other chief of Mactan, offered help to Magellan in subduing their rival Lapu-Lapu. But Magellan boldly declined their offer, assuring them that he and his men alone would do the fighting.

Magellan was so confident of victory that he even invited Humabon and his warriors to watch the battle in real time. His confidence was not without some basis. After all, he once boasted to Raja Kolambu that one fighter of his (Magellan) in full battle armour was worth a hundred of Kolambu's men.⁵⁵

Before the start of the battle, Raja Lapu-Lapu sent Magellan a very curious request: "Don't attack us at night."⁵⁶ His alleged reason? His forces were not yet ready; and that they were still waiting and expecting for reinforcements.

Raja Lapu-Lapu's entreaty baffled and amused the Europeans.⁵⁷ But it showed Mactan's Raja as a master-tactician well-acquainted with the art of psychological warfare. For, indeed, if Magellan launched an attack that night, they would have fallen into the spiked ditches which Lapu-Lapu's men dug between the shoreline and the villages.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Pigafetta, *First Voyage Around the World*, 100.

⁵⁵ Pigafetta, *First Voyage Around the World*, 100.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Bergreen, *Over the Edge of the World*, 278; Manchester, *A World Lit Only with Fire*, 278.

⁵⁸ Pigafetta, *First Voyage Around the World*, 100.

That Magellan did not sound the assault at nighttime also showed him as an equally astute commander who knew from experience—from the experiences of the Spanish and Portuguese Conquistadores in the New World—that the peoples of other lands were not stupid; and that they were not destitute of strategic sense and tactical skill.

Thus, thinking it was a ruse to trick him into striking the enemy under cover of darkness—and perhaps sensing he would expose himself to ridicule for taking seriously Raja Lapu-Lapu's absurd request if he attacked at daytime⁵⁹—Magellan launched the assault at dawn.

It was a fatal mistake.

Considered from the standpoint of the aftermath, Magellan and his men *did* fall into a trap. For Raja Lapu-Lapu knew that the enemy would not attack him at nighttime because he was sure that Magellan would surely read his ridiculous request as a crafty ruse. But Raja Lapu-Lapu was counting on another advantage in his calculus: the ebbing of sea tide. Magellan did not know that Lapu-Lapu's stratagem was two-edged. If Magellan and his men invaded at nighttime, some of the attackers would certainly fall into the pits and be forced to fight in unfamiliar grounds; but if they attacked in the morning, they would find themselves under the extreme disadvantage of fighting in the shallow water and soft sands of Mactan.

And that was exactly what happened.

Three longboats bristling with small cannons left the flagship and carried Magellan and his men to the scene of battle—around three hours before dawn. After a brief rowing, the cutters ran aground on the Mactan reef—far away from the surf line. Pigafetta writes:

We . . . waited for daylight; we then leaped into the water up to our thighs, for on account of the shallow water and the rocks the boats could not come close to the beach, and we had to cross

⁵⁹ Manuel F. Martinez, *The Grand Collision: Aquino vs. Marcos* (Hong Kong: A P & G Resources Company, 1984), 18.

two good crossbow shots through the water before reaching it [italics mine].⁶⁰

Forced by the contingencies of the moment, Magellan stationed eleven fighters to guard the beached vessels and ordered the rest of his men to wade to the shore and wage the battle following his lead. As a consequence, three circumstantial drawbacks adversely worked against Magellan: first, his forces were significantly reduced in number (from 60 to 49 fighters); second, the portable cannons of the longboats were useless, as their intended targets were far beyond their range; and third, he and his men—wearing the cumbersome protective body armor—had to negotiate what Pigafetta calculated to be about two-crossbow-shot-distance to reach the place of action.

Even before arriving at the beach, Magellan and his men were already exhausted; and Raja Lapu-Lapu's warriors were waiting for them—well-prepared to give them a hot and murderous welcome. Raja Lapu-Lapu deployed his forces in three defensive and offensive lines forming a crescent meant to entice the advancing troops to the center and encircle them in a pincer movement.

Then the battle commenced. “[T]hey came down upon us with terrible shouts, two squadrons attacking us on the flanks, and the third in front,” Pigafetta recalls the action in his chronicle.⁶¹ The Europeans were easily overwhelmed by Mactan's defenders. “[T]hey . . . drew nearer to us, throwing arrows, javelins, spears hardened in fire, stones, and even mud, so that we could hardly defend ourselves,” Pigafetta writes.⁶²

It might have seemed to the attackers that the Mactanese wanted to engage them directly. But it was only a part of Raja Lapu-Lapu's strategy; he wanted to lure them into a trap.⁶³ Realizing this, Magellan ordered some of his men to burn a few huts of the villagers to terrify the enemy and draw those in hiding to the open.

⁶⁰ Pigafetta, *First Voyage Around the World*, 100.

⁶¹ Pigafetta, *First Voyage Around the World*, 100.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 100-1

⁶³ Manchester, *A World Lit Only with Fire*, 280.

But it caused the opposite effect, as the Mactanese became more ferocious.

Ginés de Mafra, one of the combatants, recalls that fifty of Lapu-Lapu's warriors, seeing the burning houses, sprung from their lairs, and charged upon the arsonists, "striking them with their swords." One Mactanese hacked with a cutlass the thigh of a Galician sailor who later perished. "Our men, wanting to avenge this, charged against the heathens, who beat a retreat, and as our men were chasing them, they came out of a path at the backs of our men, as if it had all been planned as an ambush, and, with earsplitting shouts, pounced on our men and began to kill them," Mafra recollects the ambushade.⁶⁴

At some point, Magellan, after being hit by a poisoned arrow in the right leg, wisely ordered full retreat, instructing his men to dash to the cutters on a staggered basis while fighting a rearguard action. It was a good tactical decision; but it was in vain. The battle went on for another hour with Raja Lapu-Lapu's men particularly aiming their projectiles at the exposed legs of the fleeing invaders. Magellan's men panicked and fled in disarray leaving him, Pigafetta, and a few others to do the fighting.

The final phase of the battle came. Magellan was hit in the face with a cane spear. He slew the assailant with his own lance, but it got stuck in the falling body and slipped from his grip. He tried to draw his sword but couldn't lift it halfway. His right arm sustained a debilitating wound from a javelin.⁶⁵ Then Raja Lapu-Lapu's men closed in on Magellan. In his account, Pigafetta describes the moment when the Portuguese Captain fell:

The enemies seeing this all rushed against him, and one of them with a great sword, like a great scimeter (sic) gave him a great blow on the left leg, which brought the captain down on his face, then [Lapu-Lapu's fighters] threw themselves upon him and ran him through with lances and scimeters (sic), . . . so that they deprived of life our mirror, light, comfort, and true guide.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Bergreen, *Over the Edge of the World*, 280.

⁶⁵ Pigafetta, *First Voyage Around the World*, 101.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 101-2.

The tragic fate of Magellan put his entire expedition in jeopardy. Owing to his imprudent meddling and entanglement in the local geopolitics, he and his troops antagonized the Visayans by their arrogance, misbehavior, and presumptuousness. The humiliating defeat of the Europeans in Mactan ignited the fire of distrust and disgust of the local people respecting the true nature and intention of their unexpected presence in the Islands.

The resentment and wrath of Raja Humabon and his people (the Cebuanos)—who watched the battle unfold and end in ignominy and defeat—were also provoked after the debacle in Mactan.

But the real reason why the Cebuanos turned against the Europeans was the simple fact that they overstayed their welcome due to their disrepute, debauchery, and dissoluteness.⁶⁷ The sense of revulsion and animosity towards the Europeans pervaded all the aspects of the communal life of the Cebuanos.⁶⁸

The Imponderables of History and the Lord of History

The gory end of the entire Mactan affair brought into sharp relief the person of Enrique. Before the circumnavigation, Magellan stipulated in his last will the terms of Enrique's manumission:

I declare and ordain as free and quit of every obligation of captivity, subjection, and slavery, my captured slave Enrique . . . of the age of twenty-six years more or less, that *from the day of my death thenceforward forever the said Enrique may be free and manumitted*, and quit, exempt, and relieved of every obligation of slavery and subjection, and that *he may act as he desires and thinks fit* [italics mine].⁶⁹

Enrique's manumission, however, did not happen after Magellan's death.

⁶⁷ Bergreen, *Over the Edge of the World*, 294.

⁶⁸ Manchester, *A World Lit Only with Fire*, 282.

⁶⁹ Bergreen, *Over the Edge of the World*, 65.

Enrique fought alongside with Magellan in the battle of Mactan and was wounded in the process. In all respects, he proved himself to be a loyal, gracious, and faithful servant to Magellan—a young, perceptive, and intelligent man. It may be reasonably supposed that after Magellan’s death, Enrique must have contemplated with satisfaction the future spent in the enjoyment of felicity and freedom.

But that prospect was soon darkly clouded when Duarte Barbosa, Magellan’s brother-in-law who succeeded Magellan as one of the two commanders of the flagship—the other elected commander was the Spanish Captain Juan Serrano—“found fault with [Enrique], and told him that though his master was dead, he had not become free on that account, but that when we returned to Spain he would return him to Dona Beatrice, the widow of the captain-general,” Pigafetta reminisces.⁷⁰

Sebastián de Elcano had a different version of that episode. It was Serrano, not Barbosa, who bullied Enrique and made threats of flogging him.⁷¹

The reason why Barbosa or Serrano verbally abused and threatened Enrique was because the latter refused to go ashore and do the usual errands for the sailors after the fiasco in Mactan. Indeed, without the services of Enrique as interpreter, the Europeans were unable to communicate and transact business with the local people. Under the threat of whipping, Enrique grudgingly obeyed and went ashore. But he was deeply offended and enraged by the bullying.

Something ominous must have happened during the interval between the time Enrique spent on shore—presumably with Raja Humabon—and the time he went back to the flagship. According to Pigafetta, Enrique sold them out to Raja Humabon. Enrique went to Raja Humabon, Pigafetta writes, to inform the latter “that we were thinking of going away soon, but that if he would follow his advice, he might become master of all our goods and of the ships themselves.”⁷²

For once, Pigafetta deviated from his usually perceptive and objective manner of writing the events of daily incidence. His charge that Enrique betrayed

⁷⁰ Pigafetta, *First Voyage Around the World*, 103.

⁷¹ Bergreen, *Over the Edge of the World*, 293.

⁷² Pigafetta, *First Voyage Around the World*, 103.

them was a pure hearsay and speculation—although the possibility was reasonably real.

Firstly, Pigafetta was not physically present to witness the alleged private transactions that transpired between Enrique and Raja Humabon. And if he was there, he would not understand the conversation anyway.

Secondly, since Pigafetta was not there as an eyewitness, he could only have received the intelligence from Enrique himself, which was a remote possibility because Magellan's interpreter never came back to the flagship *after* the massacre of the Europeans by Raja Humabon's warriors.

When Enrique returned to the flagship after he was compelled to go ashore by either Barbosa or Serrano, he conveyed to the fleet's commanders the invitation of Raja Humabon to a sumptuous banquet, telling them "that the jewels prepared as presents for the King of Spain were ready . . . would give them over to them."⁷³

Urged by greed and the prospect of another round of dissipation, Captains Barbosa and Serrano and twenty-five others—the finest officers and most skillful navigators, including the astrologer San Martín of Seville and Fr. Valderrama—went ashore with Enrique. *All* the invitees—excluding the two sailors who slipped away during the feast and managed to return to the ship—were cruelly slain by the Cebuanos during the feast of blood and death.

From the decks of *Trinidad*, *Victoria*, and *Concepción*, Pigafetta and the rest of the crew saw the horrific slaughter. Terrified to the bone, they immediately weighed anchor and beat a hasty retreat. As the three dark ships of the Armada pulled away, Pigafetta and the surviving crew saw that the beautiful Cross which they had "hoisted on a tree was hurled to the ground and kicked to pieces by the (Cebuanos) with great fury."⁷⁴ Enrique, safe and unscathed, stayed behind in Cebu.

That was the tragic beginning of Philippine Christianization.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 104.

⁷⁴ This incidence is culled from the account of M. Giovanni Battista Ramusio in Pigafetta, *First Voyage Around the World*, 201.

It is most difficult to reconstruct with some measure of accuracy the facts that surround the antecedent and the aftermath of what happened in the course of the bloody banquet tendered by Cebu's chief to the abusive Europeans. The only available recorded accounts of the circumnavigation and the tragedy that happened in Mactan and Cebu are the narratives of Pigafetta and the mariners who made it back to Spain.

We do not have any written version of the events from Enrique and the islanders. Pigafetta and the other crew of the fleet accused Raja Humabon and Enrique of treachery and murder. That judgment, however, was slanted, since it was fashioned from the perspective of the Europeans who suffered death and humiliation at the hands of the Mactanese and the Cebuanos. From the high viewpoint of history, we know that the circumstances and conditions that contrived the terrible occurrences in Cebu were so complex and elusive in their unveiling that a contemporary historian cannot reasonably ascribe them to one single motive or cause.

From Pigafetta's chronicle and other eyewitnesses' accounts, we read that Magellan and his men wore out their welcome as guests by arrogantly overstepping the bounds of prudence and abusing the laws of hospitality and civility. The most likely explanation of Raja Humabon's conduct was that he, as the chief of Cebu, had some good reasons to deem it justified to avenge some grievous insult or injury inflicted on the honor and dignity of the Cebuanos in a manner which he thought proportional to the gravity of the offense.

Of course, we do not discount the possibility that local geopolitics also formed a dominant part in Raja Humabon's political calculation, intention, and conduct.

Enrique's situation was singularly precarious. After the death of Magellan—and after being verbally browbeaten by one of the commanders of the flagship—the prospect of going back to Spain or Portugal was, for all intents and purposes, closed to the Visayan interpreter. What would be his future in a foreign land, anyway—without Magellan's benefaction and protection?

Now, he was back home with his own people.

But Enrique had to contend with one worrying personal concern. He fought alongside the Europeans in the furious battle of Mactan. If he stayed behind, the Mactanese would certainly get wind of his participation in the attack against them and his curious presence in Cebu. He was vulnerable to acts of revenge and even assassination. He had only one logical option, a coefficient in the calculation of his future: seek Raja Humabon's protection and guardianship.

That almost certainly must have happened. For it is not implausible to imagine that the chieftain of Cebu took the solitary Enrique to his confidence and care; and that the first circumnavigator of the world happily spent the rest of his life in Cebu with a family of his own.

Enrique must have told Raja Humabon, his beautiful and regal wife Hara Humamay, and the Cebuanos about his life and travels in Europe and the greatest and the most exhilarating adventure in the history of navigation. He must have also maintained a very friendly connection with Hara Humamay who, perhaps, played the role of matriarch and patroness to Enrique. We say this because we could imagine that Enrique, who was surely a baptized Catholic in Portugal, served as a freelance catechist to Hara Humamay—teaching and explaining to her the depth and beauty of the Christian Faith, in the sublime fold of which she and her tribe were baptized.

We may recall that Pigafetta writes in his chronicle that the statue of the *Sto. Niño* was given as a gift to Hara Humamay: “The Captain on that occasion (the baptism of Hara Humamay and her retinue of damsels) approved of the gift which I had made to the queen of *the image of the Infant Jesus . . . She promised . . . to keep it with much care.*”⁷⁵ Here is Pigafetta's character description of the dignified Queen Hara Humamay during her baptism:

She came with forty ladies, and we conducted them on to the scaffolding; then made her sit down on a cushion, and her women around her, until the priest was ready. During that time[,] they showed her an image of our Lady, of wood, holding her little child, which was very well made, and a cross. *When she saw it, she had a greater desire to be a Christian, and . . . she was baptised*

⁷⁵ Pigafetta, *First Voyage Around the World*, 94 [additions and italics mine].

and named Jehanne (Juana) . . . *The Queen was young and handsome, covered with a black and white sheet; she had the mouth and nails very red, and wore on her head a large hat made of leaves of palm . . .*⁷⁶

It is most noteworthy that when the Spanish missionaries returned to the Philippines in 1598—about 76 years later—they found the wooden statue of the *Sto. Niño* not only unharmed but adorned and adored by the Cebuanos—despite the tragic beginnings of Christianity there.⁷⁷

Did Enrique play a vital role in the preservation of the *Sto. Niño* and the cultivation of the Christian Faith among the Cebuanos?

If so, then, in the real sense, Filipinos do not owe their Christian Faith to Magellan and his crew. They owe it firstly to the *Sto. Niño*; secondly, to Enrique and to their mother of faith: the lovely Hara Humamay, who kept her *promise* to take care of the *Sto. Niño* despite the treachery and impudence of the European navigators.

At this point, it is incumbent on us to clarify that the above personal musings about Enrique's fate and his probable associations with Raja Humabon and his wife ought to remain in the realm of speculation.

This author entertains neither the intention nor the wish to elevate his subjective ponderings to the level of historical facts. For, in matters of history, any assertion of knowledge must ground itself in the foundation of available evidence.

What strikes us, however, in the preceding discussions is that the hiddenness of events eludes the grasp of historical agents—as they unravel with inexorable force. The individuals who sailed around the world—Magellan, Enrique, Pigafetta, Albo, and the rest of the crew of the *Armada de Molucca*—as well as the persons whom they encountered in the Philippine archipelago—such as Raja Kolambu, Raja Humabon, and Raja Lapulapu—did not have any clue

⁷⁶ Ibid., 93 [additions and italics mine].

⁷⁷ Ibid., 93, ft. 1

whatsoever that they were participants in a most momentous event in human history.

That we now know they were part of that historic episode is because we have already gained an illuminating perspective and understanding of what happened 500 years ago.

This fact is philosophically fascinating.

Under ordinary circumstances, nations and human individuals can neither perceive the present drift—nor predict the future significance—of the unfolding of events in which they are oblivious participants. They are ordinarily unaware of the hidden forces or laws that steer the course of human history—unseen powers and potencies “work[ing] in darkness, the light of consciousness never falling on them.”⁷⁸

The book of *Ecclesiastes* explains the crux of the matter most suitably: “[I]ndeed, a person does *not* know his time: like fish that are *caught in a treacherous net* and birds *caught in a snare*, so the [children] of [humankind] are ensnared at an evil time when it suddenly falls on them.”⁷⁹

The hidden forces that “ensnare” men and women in the torrent of history are resistant to empirical investigation and analysis. Their inner bearings and tendencies are completely concealed from us. Whether they are products of some conscious thought or blind power, or random collision of things is beyond the range of anyone’s rational vision and mathematical calculation—or logical permutation.

There was nothing honorable or laudable in the inception of Christianity in the Philippines. In fact, its beginning was characterized by ignominy, infamy, carnage, and moral depravity. That the seeds of Christianity sprouted *despite* the tragic events eludes, in fact, the grasp of a philosopher or historian. What happened 500 years ago in the Philippines—when the first seeds of Christian

⁷⁸ R. G. Collingwood, *An Essay on Metaphysics*, ed. Rex Martin, rev. ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 43.

⁷⁹ *Ecclesiastes* 9: 12 [additions and italics mine].

faith were sown—makes sense only when viewed from the Christian historico-theological prism.

From *that* perspective, the Christianization of the Philippines was not a random occurrence in time devoid of purpose and significance. For there is the *Lord of History* who governs the unfolding of things and events and brings universal history to its end. Divine providence is both the origin and the telos of all things and events—the be-all and end-all of time, creation, and human life. Fr. Florencio Lagura, SVD, in his recent book *Histories and HIStory*, aptly sums up the Christian view of history:

When all has been said, done and written, the outcome of the story will be and has to be in accordance with what the sublime storyteller had in mind and had planned all the while. Since all the elements of a story are found in the essence of history, we venture to say that there is [an] . . . ultimate principle which explains why we have a story. By means of the logically accepted syllogism *modus tollendo tollens* we . . . prove that as the *conditio sine que non* the supreme storyteller has to be that there.⁸⁰

That “supreme storyteller” is the *Lord of History*.

⁸⁰ Florencio Lagura, *Histories and HIStory: Ideas and Theories Concerning the Historical Narrative* (Manila: Logos, 2019), 276.