

# Does Rielo's Binitarian Conception of the Absolute Constitute a Novel Form of the *Preambulata Fidei* that Pointing to Christ Resolves the Impasse of Reason vis a vis Human Suffering?

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*This paper is dedicated to a young lady who heroically lives since childhood with chronic pains*

Though there is an understanding of reason and faith as largely complementary, in view, say, of natural reason's probative arguments for the existence of God, yet an existential impasse emerges when one considers the existence of God, the conclusion of rational argument, in the light of the visceral concreteness of human suffering in its multifarious forms, then God, who, by definition, is omniscient, omnipotent and infinitely merciful, before the tribunal of reason, emerges as monstrously merciless and uncaring, for, despite his unlimited divine knowledge and power, God has not and does not put an end to the suffering of countless human beings, foremost among these: the innocent. I read Fernando Rielo's conception of the metaphysical absolute as providing a novel form of the *preambulata fidei* in the direction of a *binity*, rather than *identity*, conception of the absolute that points to Jesus Christ as the second term of the stated binity, who, as such, transforms the paradox of reason in the light human suffering into meritorious redemptive suffering.<sup>1</sup> This paper will succinctly consider these issues with a view toward resolving the stated impasse in three parts: first, an articulation of the radical and insoluble incompatibility between faith and reason when considering human suffering solely from the optic of reason; two, Rielo's binitarian conception of the absolute, understood in this paper, as constituting a novel form of the *preambulata fidei* pointing to Christ as a divine person, i.e., as the second personal being constitutive of binitarian metaphysical absolute within his genetic metaphysics, who, as God, three, in view of his humanism, elevates human suffering to the level of the divinity, thereby rendering all human suffering *de facto* meritorious, while providing the *donum fidei* by which the human being can proactively embrace human suffering in imitation of Christ's suffering and death.

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<sup>1</sup>This defense will draw largely from three of Rielo's works: "The Mystical Definition of the Human Person and the Meaning of Pain," in *The Genetic Model in My Thought*, trans. David G. Murray (Madrid: Fernando Rielo Foundation, 2004) henceforth "Mystical Definition"; and *Cristo hoy: El criterio de credibilidad y el don de la fe* (Madrid: Fundación Fernando Rielo, 2009; henceforth "Don de la Fe" (translations mine); and "On Human Suffering," unpublished manuscript (Identite School, Rome); henceforth: "On Human Suffering."

## Radical Incompatibility between Faith and Reason in the Light of Human Suffering

Regarding the purported relationship between faith and reason, historically, there have been two mutually exclusive camps: those who hold to a complementary relationship and those for which no such complementarity is possible. With respect to those in the former camp, who foster complementary relationships between faith and reason, we have two ways of understanding the purported complementarity. On the one hand, there are those who do not engage in discursive reasoning in order to believe but in order to understand what they already believe in a way in which reason does not pass judgment on matters of faith but is limited to explicating its content (St. Augustine, St. Anselm). On the other hand, in the second group of this first camp, we have St. Justin Martyr and Clement of Alexandria who uphold that the Book of Nature provides the first stage of divine revelation. St. Thomas Aquinas, likewise, sees reason as preceding faith, as the *preambulata fidei* (preamble of faith), by which any rational being can reason with logic and experience and conclude that there is one and only one “generic” God that purportedly prepares the intellect for the gift of supernatural faith in one or another monotheistic religion. Now, for the other extreme camp, that argues for the radical incompatibility between faith and reason, there are thinkers such as Tertullian who questions what Athens has to do with Jerusalem, asserting that there is no possible reconciliation between faith and reason. In this camp St. Peter Damian aggressively sets reason aside in favor of revelation, and William of Ockham accentuates the opposition between faith and reason.

In this respect Riello’s position neither falls into the fideism of those rejecting reason any role in the light of faith, but neither does it underscore the complementary view of those who understand faith and reason as compatible within the strictures of a conception of reality affected by the malady of the so-called principle of identity as the next section shows. For Riello, when we consider the cosmic weight of human suffering in the light of the assertion in favor of the existence of a God, who by definition is omniscient, omnipotent as well as infinitely merciful, one has the grounds for arguing—what Riello terms the *vitalist argument*<sup>2</sup>—that, if God indeed exists, this affirmation arises as infested with the immense weight of human suffering expressive of “an ineffable, universal groan.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Riello, “Don de la fe,” p. 67.

<sup>3</sup>Riello, “Don de la fe,” p. 69.

This view is squarely expressed in a recent article titled, “The Five Best Reasons Not to Believe in God,” by Jarred Cinman, who articulates the dilemma in an interview with British comedian Stephen Fry, who delivered a “vicious, scathing attack on the Judeo-Christian God,” when asked, what if it turned out, after he died, that God did in fact exist.

[Fry] called this God a “maniac,” pointing to the large amount of unnecessary suffering in the world which he, by definition, created and allows. The existence of suffering is an impossible problem for believers in an all-good, caring God to solve. Even if they use the wiggle room to argue that without some suffering there can be no charity; or that people who do wrong are punished, they cannot account for the suffering of innocent children and animals, or worse, the devout believers in their faith. What kind of God ... has created a world in which children die in floods, starve to death, perish in agony from TB and malaria? What kind of God allows people who worship and adore him to be murdered, raped, tortured and come to countless other hideous ends?

Cinman however is not thereby taking the position that there is no God: “This does not preclude the existence of any God., God might be, as Fry has it, a maniac.... But a God who was benevolent and loving, as we are told the Christian God is, would never create the world we live in. Believing in him requires either shuttering yourself off from the carnage all around you; or crafting frankly ridiculous excuses (God works in mysterious ways?).”<sup>4</sup>

In the light of the foregoing, the question emerges as to whether the Judaeo-Christian conception of God, indeed, notably for this paper, the Christian conception of God, can be defended in the light of reason’s radically stark protestation against conceiving God as genuinely merciful. For one St. John Paul II articulates the view that it is in Jesus Christ where the solution to the apparently insoluble dilemma resides.<sup>5</sup> The Pontiff puts it this way in *Ratio et Fides*:

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<sup>4</sup>See Jarred Cinman, <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/opinionista/2015-02-26-the-five-best-reasons-not-to-believe-in-god/#.WrMPkIjwZdg>.

<sup>5</sup>Cf John Paul II in *Salvifici Doloris*: “One can say that with the Passion of Christ all human suffering has found itself in a new situation. And it is as though Job has foreseen this when he said: “I know that my Redeemer lives ...”, and as though he had directed towards it his own suffering, which without the Redemption could not have revealed to him the fullness of its meaning. In the Cross of Christ not only is the Redemption accomplished through suffering, but *also human suffering itself has been redeemed*, Christ, - without any fault of his own - took on himself “the total evil of sin”. The experience of this evil determined the incomparable extent of Christ’s suffering, which became *the price of the Redemption*. The Song of the Suffering Servant in Isaiah speaks of this. In later times, the witnesses of the New Covenant, sealed in the Blood of Christ, will speak of this” (19).

Seen in any other terms, the mystery of personal existence remains an insoluble riddle. Where might the human being seek the answer to dramatic questions such as pain, the suffering of the innocent and death, if not in the light streaming from the mystery of Christ's Passion, Death and Resurrection? (#12)

In the direction of such a defense, we turn to Riello's novel and penetrating *apologia*.

### **First Stage in Overcoming the Impasse: Riello's Binitarian Conception of the Absolute with Jesus Christ as the Second Person**

In what is considered the first written book of the Bible, the Book of Job, underscores the question at the heart of this paper: How is it that a just and merciful God allows the innocent, say, Job, to suffer, so that it is not only the wicked who undergo chastisement but even the guiltless. Though alleged prophets accuse Job of wrongdoing and therefore meriting punishment, he contends that he is not aware of personal transgression. Indeed, God severely corrects those who accuse Job of transgression such that it does indeed appear that God does inflict punishment on the innocent (Job 42:7) without providing a satisfactory answer as to why this happens. Christ, for his part, endorses Job's view: "Or do you suppose that those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, were *worse* culprits than all the men who live in Jerusalem?" (Lk 13:4), indicating thereby that those who perished did not deserve to die in that tragic way any more than anyone else.

Now Riello masterfully considers this question of human suffering in the light of Christ's redemptive suffering. Yet what is novel in Riello is that he furnishes a nontautological conception of the metaphysical absolute in which the absolute is constituted by two personal beings at a dianoetic or intellectual level, i.e., a level open to reason without the infusion of supernatural faith, which he terms the *Binity*, the proper subject of metaphysics; and by three personal beings, i.e., the Trinity,<sup>6</sup> at a hypernoetic level, or the revealed level of infused faith, the proper subject of theology. Said another way, Riello's novel proposal may be understood, as I read it, as providing a novel *preambulata fidei* in which he argues for a binitarian conception of the absolute rather than the hermetically-enclosed absolute of traditional metaphysics. I say "novel *preambulata fidei*" given that such a preamble is not the result of *a posteriori* reasoning, as traditionally construed, with information derived

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<sup>6</sup>See n. 12 below.

from the senses but proceeds in the light of intellectual activity that, grasping the sterility of an identity-laden conception of an a-relational absolute, comprehends the fecundity of a binitarian conception of the same absolute. This, in turn, points to Christ, as will be developed, who provides the wherewithal by means of his transcendent humanism for resolving the rational paradox in question.

*Riello's Genetic Metaphysics in favor of the Binity*

Put succinctly, Riello provides a critique of the traditional conception of metaphysics as consisting in the elevation of a single term, such as *being*, *existence*, *separate substance*, *consciousness*, to absolute as a function of what he calls the pseudoprinciple of identity [A is A and nothing more than A],<sup>7</sup> that applied to the metaphysical absolute conceives of the same absolute as a being that is wholly and solely *in* itself, *with* itself, *for* itself, *about* itself and *by* itself, a veritable *solus ipse*, if conceived religiously, a unipersonalist monism that would, if such an absolute were possible, implode in itself. Such identity-laden conceptions of the absolute are generative of hermetically-sealed absolutes *having no* exigency other than to be *utterly themselves* and that *absolutely*, hence incurring in the fallacy of the *petitio principii*, for such “absolutes” emerge as wholly self-certifying and self-grounding. For Riello such an absolute emerges as an egotistical being bereft of internal and external relation such that such an alleged being is unable to serve as the agent of creation.

Riello instead contends that the metaphysical Absolute is constituted on the intellectual level by at the very least two beings, and not less than two without reverting to the pseudoprinciple of identity,<sup>8</sup> where the two beings must be personal beings because the person, for Riello, is the supreme expression of being, yielding the genetic principle<sup>9</sup> as Being +, meaning every Being is itself and something more than itself.<sup>10</sup> The two divine persons serve as the ground of the other such that the

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<sup>7</sup>Fernando Riello: *Dialogue with Three Voices*, trans. by David G. Murray (Madrid: F.F.R., 2000), pp. 128ff; henceforth *Dialogue*. The absurdity entailed by the pseudo-principle of identity may be illustrated by the paradox of the reduplication of the subject and the predicate; see José María López Sevillano, “La nueva metafísica de Fernando Riello” in *Aportaciones de filósofos españoles contemporáneos* (Seville: E.F.F.R., 1991), pp. 76-77, n. 11.

<sup>8</sup>See Riello, *Dialogue*, pp. 132ff. The metaphysical positions of each of the personal beings are not interchangeable, for if A is B and B is A, then A is A, reintroducing the pseudoprinciple of identity. (Cf. José M. López Sevillano, Introduction, in Fernando Riello, *The Genetic Model in My Thought*, trans. by David G. Murray (Madrid: E.F.R., 2004), p. 29.

<sup>9</sup>Or more technically: [P1 complementary to P2], see Riello, *Dialogue*, pp. 132ff. The metaphysical positions of each of the personal beings are not interchangeable, for if A is B and B is A, then A is A, reintroducing the pseudoprinciple of identity. (Cf. José M. López Sevillano, Introduction, in Fernando Riello, *The Genetic Model in My Thought*, trans. by David G. Murray (Madrid: E.F.R., 2004), p. 29.

<sup>10</sup>See Riello, *Dialogue*, pp. 132ff. The metaphysical positions of each of the personal beings are not interchangeable, for if A is B and B is A, then A is A, reintroducing the pseudoprinciple of identity. (Cf. José M.

principle does not incur in the fallacy of the *petitio principii* as occurs with identity conceptions of the metaphysical absolute. Moreover, to overcome the potential charge of the paradox of the double absolute when raising two terms to absolute, the two personal beings mutually indwell each other intrinsically constituting thereby one sole absolute. Further, since it is not possible for the two being/persons to be absolutely identical because in this case identity would be introduced or absolutely different for in this case contradiction would be introduced, the two beings/persons must be somewhat the same and somewhat different. This Rielo resolves incisively in conceiving the first person [P<sub>1</sub>] as Agent Action that transmits its genetic patrimony to [P<sub>2</sub>], and [P<sub>2</sub>] that receives as Receptive Action this patrimony from [P<sub>1</sub>], such that the two personal beings are the same because they have the same patrimony, yet they are different insofar as one *transmits* the patrimony while the other *receives* the same. Rielo terms the two divine persons the *Binity*,<sup>11</sup> the *unum geneticum*, accessible to reason without theological faith. Rielo provides a theological transcription of the genetic principle: "... the absolute congenitude of [P<sub>1</sub>] and [P<sub>2</sub>] is a Binity constituted by two personal beings: the first one is named Father; the second one is named Son..."<sup>12</sup>

### *Christ as P<sub>2</sub> of the Binitarian Absolute*

Now, although for Rielo, the question—*Who the second person [P<sub>2</sub>] of the genetic principle is?*—cannot be resolved on the level of reason alone, yet in maintaining a binitarian conception of the divinity—constituted by a progenitor and an engendered one—and oriented towards the Trinity,<sup>13</sup> he provides intellectual endorsement for Christ's revelation and Christ's revelation, in turn, provides confirmation to Rielo's proposal, such that his binitarian conception of the absolute provides the *preamble* for faith in Jesus Christ as the second term of the Binity. This is to say that whereas a binitarian conception of the absolute proffers a conception of the absolute constituted by a progenitor and an engendered one, Christ confirms this openly when he declares: "*Ego et Pater unum sumus*" (Jn 10:30). He also reveals that the two persons are not related extrinsically but by an indwelling relationship: "Do you not believe that *I am in the Father and the Father is in me?*" (Jn 14:10,

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López Sevillano, Introduction, in Fernando Rielo, *The Genetic Model in My Thought*, trans. by David G. Murray (Madrid: E.F.R., 2004), p. 29.

<sup>11</sup>Rielo, *Dialogue*, p. 133.

<sup>12</sup>Rielo, *Dialogue*, p. 133.

<sup>13</sup>Christ reveals the existence of a third divine person [P<sub>3</sub>], the Holy Spirit: "*The Spirit of truth, that proceeds from the Father, and that I will send you...*" (Jn 15:26). Rielo argues for an *intellectual index* supporting the existence of such a person [P<sub>3</sub>] given the functions it fulfills. Rielo, "Hacia...", p. 123.

italics mine),<sup>14</sup> thereby overcoming the charge of the paradox of the double absolute. For Riello, when Christ states that he and the Father are one, he is stating the metaphysical expression of the absolute, open to reason, that consists of a nontautological understanding of the absolute. In the second citation Christ is declaring that the two personal beings, the Father and the Son, are not in relation to each other as self-same identities juxtaposed to each other but rather that they indwell each other.

### *Defining the Human Person as Homo Mysticus*

Further, within the context of a binitarian or relational conception of the divinity, it is equally important to underscore the relational nature of the Absolute with the human being, who cannot be defined as a being *in* a being but rather as being *more*, the more referring to the *divine constitutive presence* of the Absolute Subject in the created element of the human subject, defining the human person as a finite being open to its more, i.e., the divine presence. The divine constitutive presence does not mean that humans are created in a state of sanctifying grace but signifies what is required for human beings *to be persons* in the *imago Dei*, a *constitutive* presence that renders impossible the hermetical identity of human persons with themselves. Indeed Riello finds a scriptural warrant for his definition of human persons as *homo mysticus*, as beings both open to and formed by the indwelling presence of the Absolute in Christ's declaration: "I am in my Father, and you are in me and I in you" (Jn 14:20). In virtue of this indwelling human persons are capable of personal communication with the divinity and are structured to act theandrically, i.e., to respond to the action of God *in* the human person *with* the human person. Whenever human persons reject such an action, they act, in the language of Riello, dysgenetically (or sinfully theologically) to the divine formative influence. The importance of theandric action will come to the foreground when considering the possibility of human persons to cooperate with the reception of the *donum fidei* or thwarting its conferral. It should also be noted that, for Riello, the constitutive presence is elevated to the divine sanctifying presence at baptism conferred while on earth or post-mortem.

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<sup>14</sup>López Sevillano, "Pure Metaphysics in Fernando Riello," trans. by R.P. Badillo, in *Poet and Philosopher* (Seville: E.F.R., 1991), pp. 208-209.

## Second Stage in Overcoming the Impasse: Rielo's Defense of the Mercy of God In View of Christ's Humanism

For Riello, Christ's transcendent humanism furnishes the human being with a number of supernal endowments, the first of which is that he resolves the contradiction affecting reason—God as both merciful and outrageously merciless. Christ does this by, first, embracing the effects of the sin of Adam and Eve, viz., universal suffering and death, and elevating all human suffering—be it physical, psychological, spiritual, social—meritorious, however slight, penetrating and debilitating, regardless if human beings do or do not understand God's mercy, accept or do not accept it, thank God or protest, believe or do not believe in God's existence; indeed, their pain from a toothache or headache to the most extreme forms of human woe, regardless of time and place and condition, has been rendered meritorious and guarantees to the sufferer a weight of future glory.

Christ Himself offered up all his divine love as a holocaust for the sake of humanity, making our pain “mystical pain of his divine pain.” In this way, our pain has been rendered consubstantialized with the pain of our Divine Brother: a wayfaring pain open to love, a wayfaring love open to pain.<sup>15</sup>

Secondly, Jesus Christ furnishes human beings, not groundlessly opposed to its reception by prejudice or malice, with the *donum fidei*, whereby they are empowered to acquiesce to Christ as God and, likewise, to embrace their own personal suffering in imitation of Christ. Accordingly, human persons have to allow “that the *donum fidei* elevate and transform our reason that, by itself, cannot perceive the celestial.”<sup>16</sup> From the perspective of this gift, Riello proposes to elaborate arguments of faith, that—not the fruit of natural reason though not without reason, i.e., not irrational but suprarational arguments—consists in a reasoning as a function of the *donum fidei*.<sup>17</sup> Herein they discover “a new mystical element”:

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<sup>15</sup>Fernando Riello, “Mystical Definition,” p. 197.

<sup>16</sup>Riello, “Don de la Fe,” p. 99. Accordingly St. John Paul II states, “Seen in this light, reason is valued without being overvalued. The results of reasoning may in fact be true, but these results acquire their true meaning only if they are set within the larger horizon of faith: “All man's steps are ordered by the Lord: how then can man understand his own ways?” (Prov 20:24). For the Old Testament, then, faith liberates reason in so far as it allows reason to attain correctly what it seeks to know and to place it within the ultimate order of things, in which everything acquires true meaning. In brief, human beings attain truth by way of reason because, enlightened by faith, they discover the deeper meaning of all things and most especially of their own existence. Rightly, therefore, the sacred author identifies the fear of God as the beginning of true knowledge: “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge” (Prov 1:7; cf. Sir 1:14) (*Fides et Ratio* #20).

<sup>17</sup>Riello, “Don de la Fe,” p. 98.



Mystical thought is not of reason, although it is not without reason; it does not pertain to reason, it does not emerge from reason. And, if it is possible that we can get out of reason we have a superior power to reason itself. This is to say that we are not our reason. . . . It is a *donum* that leads me to “something +” that, transcendently, defines me.<sup>18</sup>

The conferral of the *donum fidei* can be intuited in the following passage from the Gospel of John:

The Jews gathered round him and said, “How much longer are you going to keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us openly.”

Jesus replied: “I have told you, but you do not believe. The works I do in my Father's name are my witness; but you do not believe, because you are no sheep of mine. The sheep that belong to me listen to my voice; I know them and they follow me. I give them eternal life; they will never be lost and no one will ever steal them from my hand. The Father, . . . , is greater than anyone, and no one can steal anything from the Father's hand. *The Father and I are one*” (Jn 10:24-30; italics mine).

In this passage we learn that Christ, given his divine authority as Son of the Father and Messiah, had already on an earlier occasion disclosed his identity as Messiah. We must also assume that since there is no way that these Jews could have believed in Christ as Messiah simply by him saying it, given that the Jews, in this case, would only have before them a man, like any man, albeit an exceptional and mysterious one, yet a man at the end. Since Jesus is unwilling to repeat himself, the implication here is that when Christ disclosed his identity the first time, it was sufficient for his hearers to know who he was given that, together with his open declaration, he, as God and Messiah, would have had to transmit to them the *conviction* that he was indeed the Messiah, for without this transmission, he could never expect anyone to believe that he was the Messiah since, for example, others, like Jesus, had performed miracles. Hence, the fact that he is not willing to disclose his identity again derives from the fact that the first time the disclosure was made they proved themselves unworthy of the *donum fidei*, the gift of faith, because, at the very least, of the malice of prejudice that they harbored towards him. Here we evince the failure of theandric action, i.e., the action of God in the human person with the human person, insofar as although Christ was willing to reveal his identity as Messiah to his hearers, these

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<sup>18</sup>Rielo, “Don de la Fe,” p. 98

were not willing to allow themselves to be influenced by this action and, instead, shunned the divine action.

Thirdly, with the reception of the *donum fidei*, the faithful are structured to accept Jesus Christ as both God and Messiah and, in virtue of this supernatural perspective, He “has given us the mystical power to make all human pain mystical loving pain of the divine loving pain.”<sup>19</sup> Hence the human person comes to understand that, “Only in this manner is the holocaust transformed—once pain and death are overcome—into heavenly glory, for behind every pain offered up there is concealed as an inheritance an increase in glory, as St. Paul testifies: “We are heirs of the Father and coheirs of Christ, since we suffer with Him, in order to be glorified with Him as well” (Rm 8:17).<sup>20</sup>

Christ’s transcendent humanism consists in that, instead of doing away with human suffering—physical, psychological, and moral—to give evidence of his omnipotence and mercy, he chose rather to make manifest the “supernatural form of his mercy” by elevating human suffering to the supernatural order, wherein death provides the occasion for giving the greatest testimony of love. For Rielo, Christ gives meaning to the meaninglessness of a human pain by opening it to the highest consideration of love: “There is no greater witness to love than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends’ (Jn 15:13). Human personality or lordliness consists of this power to lay down one’s life.”<sup>21</sup> Christ then empowers good-will humanity with a way toward increasing their glory precisely by embracing the suffering conferred in this life as an expression of the greatest testimony of love.<sup>22</sup> Christ furnishes human pain with two supernatural values:

- *ex opere operato*: pain has a value in itself, signifying that by the very fact that the human being suffers there is a merit or glory attached to it such that pain in whatever form is meritorious; here no one is more or less virtuous;
- *ex opere operantis*: pain has a value in view of the merit one gives to it as a function of the love that inspires one’s offering. Here some grow more and others less; the saints are the masters in giving the greatest testimony of love for God and their fellows.<sup>23</sup> They, with filial fervor, proactively

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<sup>19</sup>Fernando Rielo, “Mystical Definition,” p. 197.

<sup>20</sup> Rielo, “Mystical Definition,” p. 197.

<sup>21</sup>Fernando Rielo, “Mystical Definition,” p. 197.

<sup>22</sup> Rielo, “On Human Suffering”

<sup>23</sup>Rielo, “On Human Suffering”

embrace their form of suffering becoming holocausts in the image and likeness of Christ's own holocaust.

Among those who, as a function of the *donum fidei*, and without an iota of masochist tendency, accept Christ's resolution to the paradox of a merciful God before human suffering, and accept his elevation of human suffering to the supernatural order and the merit that ensues, there will be those, the mediocre, who, with resignation, passively accept their suffering. Others, the saints, are those who, not without a certain filial fervor, proactively embrace their form of suffering becoming holocausts in the image and likeness of Christ's own holocaust. For Rielo these are the martyrs under all the aspects, in all the degrees since the early Church until now, and those born before Christ or who have known of Christ *ante prevista merita*.<sup>24</sup> Indeed once their pain and death end at death, the holocaust of one's life is transformed into heavenly glory. For Rielo the degree of one's pain and suffering (physical, psychological, spiritual, etc.), is indicative of the form of one's eternal glory. The person who accepts this view of God's mercy—overcoming the impasse—has his thought illuminated *supra*-rationally.

As to the question as to why Christ did not simply do away with suffering and death in view of the merits of his copious redemption, as to why suffering and death remained, Rielo provides an incisive interpretation of the Christ's words on the cross, viz., "Father, why have you abandoned me?" (Mt 27:46). In this utterance directed to his Father, Christ, according to Rielo, is expressing his desire that his death be the last, that his death put an end to all suffering and death, yet the Father cannot concede to his request. Why? For Rielo the Father is listening in the "perspective of existence" to all the saints who would not allow that Christ's death be the last. They, too, make their claim that their divine brother's death be not the last but that they too have a right as sons and daughters of the Father to die for the same reason as Jesus, their brother, i.e., for the glory of the Father and the good of all humanity. Their united cry to the Father is as follows: "If Jesus Christ, our brother, dies, then so do we."<sup>25</sup>

And, moreover, as to the question of how will those who are not Christian come to be so? Rielo responds by quoting Christ: "This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (Jn 13:35). This means that if a Christian lives this state of love, concern, tenderness, self-sacrifice for others, in imitation of Christ, the one who is not Christian can be supernaturally enlightened

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<sup>24</sup>Rielo, "On Human Suffering"

<sup>25</sup>Rielo, "Don de la Fe," pp. 124-26.

by Christ so that they may embrace Christ and receive the *donum fidei*, his baptism and the supernatural perspective he offers all humanity, including the value and future rewards of human suffering.<sup>26</sup>

Finally, regarding the justice of God for those whose sufferings in this life are of such a magnitude that they constitute limit cases, such as those who were not even given the chance to be born or those who have died in the greatest ignorance, Rielo turns to Christ and finds in his words the answer, viz., “the last will be first,” meaning that the criterion of glorification is contained in the word “last.” Only God possesses the key to evaluate, say, the degree to which one has been last in this life.<sup>27</sup> Said another way, to know how “last” a person has lived is an indication of their future glory, the more last, the more the glory.

## Concluding Words

It would remain until the time of Christ, according to Rielo, for a judicious reply to the age-old paradox of reason in defense of the goodness and mercy of God notwithstanding human suffering. Rielo’s resolution begins with his genetic metaphysics that argues not for a hermetically-enclosed identity absolute but, rather, as underscored within the context of this paper, for the truest expression of the *preambulata fidei*, i.e., a binitarian conception of the Absolute, where, on the one hand, the second person of the genetic relation is an engendered one, thereby endorsing Christ’s Gospel where Jesus declares himself to be Son of the Father, whereas in his Gospel, on the other hand, he confirms Rielo’s view. With the plausibility of understanding Christ as the Son of the Father, he supernaturally elevates all human suffering to the level of his divinity thereby rendering all suffering meritorious; he further grants, assuming there is no malice or ill will towards it reception, the provision of the *donum fidei* to human beings who are then empowered to cooperate theandrically to his action in them and with them according to two subvalues: *ex opera operato* and *ex opera operantis*.

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<sup>26</sup> Rielo, “On Human Suffering”

<sup>27</sup> An Addendum is attached to this paper with the written testimonies of four persons who have embraced suffering as a way of giving the greatest testimony of love in imitation of Christ.

## ADDENDUM

### **Texts from Persons who have embraced human suffering in union with Christ's sufferings for the good of humankind**

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**St. Faustina Kowalska**, from her *Diary*: “Sufferings, adversities, humiliations, failures and suspicions that have come my way are splinters that keep alive the fire of my love for You, O Jesus....Suffering is a great grace; through suffering the soul becomes like the Savior; in suffering love becomes crystallized; the greater the suffering, the purer the love” (57).

“I feel tremendous pain when I see the sufferings of my neighbors. All my neighbors' sufferings reverberate in my own heart; I carry their anguish in my heart in such a way that it even physically destroys me. I would like all their sorrows to fall upon me, in order to relieve my neighbor” (1039).

**St. Padre Pio**, from *Secrets of a Soul*: “But I do not feel I can be deprived of suffering--for this I lack strength. [...] Perhaps I have not yet expressed myself clearly with regards to the secret of this suffering. Jesus, the Man of Sorrows, wants all Christians to imitate Him; He has offered this chalice to me yet again, and I have accepted it. That is why He does not spare me. My humble sufferings are worth nothing, but Jesus delights in them because He loved [suffering] on earth...Now shouldn't this alone be enough to humiliate me, to make me seek to be hidden from the eyes of men, since I was made worthy of suffering with Jesus and as Jesus? Ah, my father! I feel too keenly my ingratitude toward God's majesty.”

**Fernando Rielo**, from *Dialogue with Three Voices*: “My emblem comes down to this mystical reality: *dolor meus, gloria mea* [my pain is my glory]. The saints are characterized by their tender love for Christ Crucified and even inflict upon themselves heavy penances so as to share in his redemption to some degree. St. Bernard of Clairvaux—whom I call the “mystic of pure love”—exclaimed, “My philosophy is to know Jesus Crucified.” St. John of the Cross adopts this when citing the degrees of prayer in his *Ascent of Mount Carmel*. If I had to give myself a name in religion, I would choose the nickname “Fernando of Christ Crucified”—though this might seem presumptuous. I have in fact spent my life wishing to be a cross of his cross in such fashion that my existence has become bloodstained on a constant basis. I feel so tenderly joined to Him, with such a fraternal consciousness, which it is impossible to express, that I have the permanent impression that, once my life cycle is completed as decreed by his will, I will go straight to eternal life in his arms.”

“The consubstantiality of Christ's human nature with ours includes his lovingly sharing his pain with our pain in such fashion that He Himself, in taking on each and every kind of suffering of the human being, transforms the original punishment of pain and death into a mystical holocaust of love for the sake of the glory of the Father concelebrated by the Son and the Holy Spirit. Christ's painful passion has been transformed by Himself into heavenly glory for human beings; in this sense, human pain, joined to Christ's pain, is a source of heavenly glory.”

**Young lady who lives since childhood with chronic pains:** “Life ended for me before it even began. Not in the literal sense of course, but my best years are recalled only by my parents. A blessing in disguise I’d say. Instead of mourning over what had been, I had to deal with the colossal task of mourning what never came to be. I remember instead, in stark detail, my first step on Cavalry. I took that first step at the age of six, my fate appearing before me in a whirlwind of pain and exhaustion, of deprivation and heartache. I remember waking up on the second day of first grade, seized over to an electric bolt of pain in my stomach. Not only was I kept out of school a lot, the reason for my condition unknown, but as I grew, my illness grew too.

“It grew into a mass of crippling, debilitating pain, one that radiates and radiates in an endless sea of pain, my life a loss of endless opportunities...I cannot imagine what it’s like to live a moment without pain, to complete a day’s work without feeling exhausted within the first few minutes of the day. I can’t imagine what it would have been like to have been able to freely run and play as a child, to draw a single breath without breathing out air laced with pain. My mind becomes hazy and unfocused; my concentration fails quickly as I cross this never ending desert of difficulty.

“Over a lifetime of treatments and side effects, one of which included excessive weight gain which many saw as a reflection of a hearty appetite when it was really the opposite. I was told what my condition was more than a decade after my sickness started, I was granted my diagnosis, of which I had long suspected based on some of my symptoms. It was to be a life sentence.

“God had been elusive and mysterious to me as I was going through this ordeal. I was mystified by Him, as I was of people who pined away for their youth. I lived my life convinced it was a curse or possibly karma and, in an odd way, it gave me comfort in a way to think I was suffering indescribable pain, day after day, month by month, year by year because if it was the latter, then I was simply paying off what needed to be paid off. With that perspective in mind, my sickness was just.

“It was in this time of darkness and suffering that I came across St. Therese of Lisieux. She was much older than I at the time, but I was moved by her unwavering trust and faith in the Lord even as tuberculosis slowly ate away at her. She became my angel, one I would send up questions to, such as, “Is there a heaven?” to pleas for intercessions on a loved one’s behalf. I knew she would hear me, care about me even if God did not... So I thought if that was the case, and if God wouldn’t hear me or just didn’t care, then I would have to make it without Him. Lots of people did.

“Did you create me so all that I would know was hurt?” I asked God. “Let me be, if you won’t allow anything but pain into my life.” But He wouldn’t let me be. Time passed, and more and more of my dreams were shattered right in front of my eyes. I existed but my spirit was dead. Totally defeated, my future dark, I could not carry on this way. Feeling the walls closing in on me, being unable to breathe in the dark, I needed a way out. A way to cope.

“Oddly, enough that became Christ Himself. He knew of my desperation, took note of my outstretched hand and He grasped it. He placed in my path, Fr. Robert Badillo, the author of this essay himself. I met Fr. Robert in the most extraordinary of ways, one that could be described as

nothing short of miraculous. He kept inviting me to events that I could not attend, and eventually I had to tell him why. As he came to understand my situation better, he became my counselor, my spiritual father. He taught me to see the Scripture in ways I have never thought of before. To find parallels between my life and Christ's, demonstrating for me how this suffering was for sure, in imitation of Jesus, a poignant participation in Jesus's holy Cross, that I was making up for what was lacking in the sufferings of Christ (Col 1:24) for the glory of my eternal Father and the good of needy humanity, such that my life was not a waste at all.

“Fr. Robert explained to me that my life is a mystery of divine love, that I received a singular vocation to offer all the sufferings that I may experience in my body, soul and spirit. Sometimes when the pains grip me and I can't even breathe from the intensity of it all, and I wonder if this is when God is finally going to call me home, I manage to unwind a bit from that struggle, and I offer up to God what I could not do in the midst of my storm. At the beginning, Fr. Robert taught me to offer all pain in the intimacy of my heart saying, “For you, Jesus,” which I practiced as best I could, sometimes in the throes of suffering, I could only utter “For” and nothing else, my tongue tied, my mind completely exhausted. I mentioned this to Fr. Robert and he told me that sentiment alone is enough, and this was remarkable to me. Once I was told when discussing spirituality, that I was too hard on myself, and at that time I thought I wasn't. My point of view was that Jesus didn't attempt to take the cross, He really did. In my eyes, attempts counted for nothing, until I was told in the midst of my ordeal, that the attempt really did make a difference, and I began to think otherwise from the day on. Even on my toughest days, when I couldn't muster the inner strength to even say it, it was enough to have tried. ...until one day I was inspired to say, “Thank you, Jesus.”