

## RESPONSE #2

### Malayo Pa Ang Umaga

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Marhay na aga sa indong gabos na uragon na yaon ngunyan digdi. Maraming salamat po sa ating panauhing pandangal sa pagtitipong ito. Lubos ang aming kagalakan sa inyong pagpapaunlak sa aming imbitasyon na kayo'y pumarito at makipagtalastasan patungkol sa isang isyu na relevant at significant sa pangkalahatang churches dito sa Pilipinas.

Una sa lahat ang ating tagapagsalita at punong presenter ay bihasa at batikan sa larangan ng teolohiya. Kaya naman, isang ganap na karangalan ang maatasang magbasa ng kanyang sulatin, at magbigay ng angkop na tugon dito, bagamat may kaakibat na mabigat na responsibilidad ang pagbibigay tugon na ito.

Ikalawa, ang paksa natin ngayon ay mayroon ding kabigatan. Ano nga ba ang alam ko personally sa dalahamhati? Kaya ko nga ba talagang ipaliwanag kung ano ang luwalhati? Kagaya ng karamihang Filipino, I have my own shares of grief and suffering. Ako po ay lumaki sa angkang anak-pawis, sa sektor ng mga manggagawa. Naranasan ko pong ma-look down ng mga kaklase at kapitbahay dahil sa antas ng aming pamumuhay: isang kahig, isang tuka. Nasa bingit kami ng poverty line. Kaya naman, sa larangan ng pagdadalamhati, pighati, at walang katapusang dalita, pwede kong sabihin na ידעתי הדברים (*yada'ti hadevarim*): I “know” these things.

Yun lang, parang di ko pa ata nararanasan ever ang luwalhati. O masyado lang mataas ang aking mga expectations? Kaya nung binabasa ko na ang isinulat ng ating butihing dalubhasa sa teolohiya, naging alerto po ako sa mga bagay na makakapagpalawig pa sa aking personal na pananaw patungkol sa paksang dalamhati at luwalhati. At pagkatapos kong basahin at pagnilay-nilayan ang angkop na kasagutan sa kanyang papel, napagdesisyunan kong i-entitle ang aking response na: MALAYO PA ANG UMAGA.

Ito po ay hango sa komposisyon ni Ka Rey Valera,<sup>1</sup> isang pinoy na makata na ang appeal ay pang-masa. Ang awitin pong ito ay muling sumikat dahil sa isa pang hapong soap opera na pinamagatang “Ula,” na pinagagnapan ni Judy Ann Santos noong 1988.

I would like to respond to Dr. Villanueva’s paper in sections. At first, I was contemplating on arranging it thematically: the good, the bad, and the ugly. But then, after reading it, I feel like some categories might be left blank. Overall, the paper

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<sup>1</sup>For more information on the artist, please see his biographical sketch here, IMDB, “Rey Valera,” Biography, accessed <https://www.imdb.com/name/nm1311586/bio/>

falls into the first category: the good. And there are portions that could be labeled as: “not-so-bad,” and still the other concepts could fall into the: “nice-try-but-no-thank-you” category. Nothing is really bad nor ugly. In fact, I was so pleased reading this paper. Instead of a dense and boring paper, Dr. Villanueva’s is quite the opposite. After printing it the first time and seeing that it was 16 pages long, my initial reaction was OMG. This gave me assurance that Dr. Villanueva’s paper is thorough and well researched and that in turn, it demands a thorough response as well.

So, I hardened my will and set my mind to a grueling task of reading it. But to my surprise, it wasn’t a bad experience at all. In fact, I was so pleased reading this paper. Just reading about a parrot uttering expletives in my own heart language made my day.

### **Outline of the Paper**

Dr. Villanueva’s paper is organized in this way:

First, he talked about the importance of language and its role in doing theology.

Second, he worked on developing a “contextually” sensitive way of developing an understanding of grief/lament and glory.

And finally, utilizing what we have in our language and culture, he presented an understanding of the concepts that can be understood well in our context that is faithful to the biblical picture of lament and glory.

In my response, I will be utilizing my own understanding as a Filipino and as a teacher of Biblical Hebrew and the Old Testament.

### **Language and Doing Theology**

The first section is the springboard to the entire paper. It discussed the importance of language in doing theology. More so, the use of one’s own language in developing a contextually sensitive theology that is relevant and yet still faithful to the Bible. I agree wholeheartedly with the author’s lament that this is a need for us today. And he explained in his paper why he thinks this is the case. It is indeed lamentable that after centuries of Christian presence in the Philippines, the gospel is still yet to take hold in the hearts of individual Filipinos in particular, and the society in general. His observation why this may be true is due to the failure of translating the gospel at its deepest level: cultural translation. He used the words, “hindi naisa-kultura ang mensahe sa Filipino.”

Dr. Villanueva asserts that language is the window that we can use to peek into the inner workings of a culture. He has painstakingly built up a solid array of arguments that supports this theory. The impression I got from his arguments is that, this lamentable reason for not being able to Filipinize the gospel is that we are not

using our own language in doing theology. We are still tied up to the West, in terms of theological expressions, by using the English language.

Thus, he proposes the utilization of our own language in doing theology for Filipinos. I agree with him in these assessments. In fact, I tell my students that their jobs as theologians is to find culturally sensitive and relevant expressions of the gospel in their own contexts. I also have challenged our Theology professors to make “Contextual Theology” and “Doing Asian Theology” as the main courses in their department to address this need.

Although I would humbly disagree with his assertion that “ang problema, panay tayo Ingles.” This is true up to a point and only while holding certain assumptions in mind. However, translating the gospel into the vernacular is not enough. As the band Extreme sang during the 90s: It is “*more than words.*”

As much as I love the Filipino languages, and as much as I wanted to do theology in those languages, I don’t want to demonize the English language. I would like to offer that: It is still very much possible to do Filipino/Asian theology using the English language. Of course, nothing beats expressing the truths about God in our own language. However, making this as the ultimate metric of true contextualization is fanciful at best. I have read books written in the English language, but Asian at heart. *Water Buffalo Theology* by Kosuke Koyama immediately comes to mind. Ka Jose de Mesa has also produced books written in English and yet the concepts he explored are very much localized.

As a side note: I find it amusing to read in Dr. Villanueva’s paper Melba Maggay’s comment about not going to theological schools because she does not want to be colonized twice. Maybe she has not yet heard of ATS or PBTS who are bent on doing Filipino/Asian theology. As both members of the ATESEA, our seminaries are evaluated in terms of providing contextually-sensitive and Independent-from-the-West-in-terms-of-Finances-and-Influence theological education in our local/regional spheres.

Indeed, there is a lack of theological expressions in our own language and it is a noble cause to address this issue and make efforts to rectify it. However, I am proposing that the transformation of the deep structures within our culture should be our ultimate goal. Yes, this can be achieved by utilizing the heart language. NGEM, itadta ket there is a great lack in this area. What we have are ideas expressed in another language that needed experts to make it palatable and consumable by the common people. It is highly desirable if these expressions are rooted in our culture and easily accessible by all. But we are not there yet. But we are striving forward to get there.

The next section of the paper is an excellent example of doing theology in the vernacular. I really appreciate reading biblical concepts in my heart language. And I really find his exposition and translation of the concept into our Filipino culture. Yun lang, meron lamang akong kaunting agam-agam sa obserbasyon na ginawa niya sa papel na ito. Ito ay ang claim niya na hindi tayo marunong magdalamat. Paano ito nasabi ng ating tagapagsalita?

Ikinumpara niya na sa Bibliya ay may proseso o progression from grief to glory,

from lament to praise. Pagkatapos ay inobserbahan niya ang ating kultura na kung saan ay direktong agad tayo sa praise. Dahil dito, ang naging konklusyon ay di naman talaga tayo marunong magdalamhati.

Nais ko ngayon ibalik ang katanungang, talaga nga bang hindi? Para kasing na-deconstruct<sup>2</sup> ni Dr. Villanueva ang kanyang sariling argumento nung sinaliksik niya ang ating wika patungkol sa pagdadalahamhati at ginamit niya itong patunay na nasa “deep structure of our culture” (sarili kong mga salita) ay matatagpuan ang konsepto ng dalamhati. Kung totoo nga na di tayo marunong magdalamhati, paano nangyari na sandamakmak at sangkatutak ang nailistang salita para sa konseptong ito?

Marahil ang gustong patukuyan ng ating tagapagsalita ay, hindi tayo dumadaan sa tamang proseso ng pagdadalahamhati. Kung ganyan naman, kaninong konsepto ba ng pagdadalamhati ang gagamitin nating batayan o sukatan para malaman kung tayo nga ay marunong magdalamhati o hindi? Hindi ba’t ang ating mga teksto sa sikolohiya ay nanggaling din sa kanluran? Hindi kaya na ang kanluraning proseso ng pagdadalamhati ang ating ginagamit na batayan?

Paano nga ba magdalamhati ang mga Pinoy? Mayroon akong isang proposal. Tayong mga Pilipino, dulot ng daang taong pagkakasakop ng mga dayuhan, ay natutong magdalamhati in our own way: either individually or as a group. Para sa akin, isang virtue ang nadevelop natin as a nation whenever we face dire circumstances. Naturingan na tayong resilient sa mga trahedyang. Sanay na, wika nga nila. Saan ka makakakita ng mga taong binaha, binagyo, nilindol, ninakawan, ay nakukuha pa ring mag-selfie at ngumiti. Kung papakinggan natin ang Kanluraning pananaw, sasabihin nila na tayo ay in denial or at its worst, dapat nasa mental hospital. In denial nga ba? Ang isa pang maaring paliwanag dito ay nakapag develop na tayo ng sarili nating coping mechanism sa gitna ng matinding hinagpis at pasakit. Ano naman ang mali sa coping mechanism? Hindi ba’t yan ay defense mechanism ng ating kaisipan para manatili ang ating katinuan?

May isa lamang akong dagdag sa paggamit ng aklat ng Salmo sa papel na ito. Napakaganda kasi ng diskusyon patungkol sa gamit ng Salmo sa pagsamba ng mga Israelita kay Yahweh. Ayon sa ating tagapagsalita, ay makakakita ka ng malaking pagbabago sa tono ng mga salmo. Mula sa hinagpis, nagpalit ito kaagad ng pagpupuri. Maliban sa iilang mga salmo, ang overall movement of the Psalms is from grief to rejoicing; lament to praise. Ibig bagang sabihin ay habang nagpapatuloy ka mula unang salmo hanggang sa ika-isandaan at limampu, mapapansin mo na ang pagtungo sa pagpupuri ay ang kanyang natural progression. At sa lahat ng ito, mapapansin mo na kahit nasaan ka sa “seasons of life”<sup>3</sup> (ayon kay Brueggemann), ang focus ng

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<sup>2</sup>For an in-depth discussion on deconstructionism, please see this article at Britannica, s. v. “deconstruction,” <https://www.britannica.com/topic/deconstruction>.

<sup>3</sup>Walter Brueggemann, *Spirituality of the Psalms* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2002), 8. Ang punto ni Brueggemann dito sa kanyang discussion ng seasons of life ay binabalot ng Psalms of orientation, psalms of disorientation, and psalm of new orientation. Ang season of life in the psalms of orientation ay ang panahon kung saan tayo ay nasa maayos na kalagayan kung saan tayo ay punong-puno ng pasasalamat. Sabi pa nya, ito ay ang variety ng “joy, delight, goodness, coherence and reliability

mga mananampalataya ay na kay Yahweh lamang. Ito ay isang back-and-forth swing mula sa Sheol patungong Shalom. Anong klaseng conjunction ba ang naikabit natin sa “Dalamhati AT Luwalhati”? Di ba ang salitang “at”? Sa isipan natin, ito ba ay magkasabay na nararanasan o magkahiwalay? Maari kayang ito ay sabay maranasan? Na sa gitna ng ating pagdadalahamhati, ay may kaakibat na din na luwalhati? O ang luwalhati ay mararanasan lamang matapos na “mai-luwal” ang hati? Kung dating nasa “dalam”, ang hati, ang pagka-luwal naman ng hati ay ang natural consequence nito? Ang kompartmentalisasyon ba ay Asian or Western? Ano ba ang Asian framework? Differentiation or Integration?

Sa Hebrew bible, ang *VAV* ay napaka versatile. Pwede siyang conjunctive, disjunctive, shows progression, consequence, and concurrence. So, ang gamit ng conjunction na ito ay pwedeng sa proseso ng pagdadalam ng ating hati, sa presensya ng Diyos ito ay nailuluwal na din.

### Bitin

Finally, nabitin ako sa papel. Nag-enjoy ako sa talakayan ng dalamhati. Nabitin ako sa diskusyon ng luwalhati. Maaaring ito ay parating pa lamang. Gaya nga ng sabi ni Kuya Rey:

Malayo pa ang umaga.  
 Kahit sa dilim, naghihintay pa rin.  
 Umaasang, bukas ay may liwanag sa aking buhay,  
 umaga ko’y aking hinihintay.  
 Sadya kayang ang buhay sa mundo  
 Ay kay pait, walang kasing lupit  
 Kailan kaya ako’y ‘di na luluha?  
 At ang aking pangarap ay unti-unting matutupad  
 Malayo pa ang umaga  
 ‘Di matanaw ang pag-asa  
 Hanggang kailan matitiis ang paghihirap ko?

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of God, God’s creation, and God’s governing law.” (8) kasunod daw ng season of life sa psalm of disorientation kung saan andoon ang anguished seasons of hurt, alienation, suffering, and death. These evokes rage, resentment, self-pity, and hatred. Ang huli ay ang psalm of new orientation kung saan nag-uumpaw ang mga bagong kaloob ng Dios, ang may kagalakang naghahati sa kawalang pag-asa; kung saan bumubulaga ang liwanag sa gitna ng pusikit na kadiliman. (8) Para kay Brueggemann, ito ang sorpresa ng Magandang Balita. Ang Dios ang naglilipat sa atin sa bagong kaganapan. Ginagawa nyang bago ang lahat, “fresh intrusion”. Ang pagbabagong ito ay transformational at hindi developmental: kaya nga hindi sya masyadong halata o agaw-pansin. Ito ay malumanay at natural. Mula sa mga pasakit at mga pagkakataong hindi inaakala doon nagaganap ang pagbabago. May bago at may luma, may pagbabago at may binabago, pinipilit nating yakapin ang luma at nananaghiling manatili doon ngunit ang paanyaya ng Salmo ay ang “decisive moves of faith.” (9)

At sa dilim hinahanap ang pag-asa na walang landas  
Kailan ba darating ang bukas para sa 'kin?  
Malayo pa ang umaga...

Pero sana lumapit na.

**Michael Janapin** was born again during his college years in Intramuros, Manila through the ministry of Darrel Seale at Joy Student Center. In 1993, he received his call from God to be in full time ministry. He was advised to finish his studies in engineering first. So while studying full time, he also worked as volunteer staff of Joy Student Center, and part of the pastoral team of the church. After graduating college, he worked for a while as an engineer, then he proceeded to follow his call. He finished his Master of Divinity at the Philippine Baptist Theological Seminary and Doctor of Theology at Asia Baptist Graduate Theological Seminary. He serves as an Old Testament professor and Academic Dean of PBTS. He is happily married to Elizabeth Rodis for 22 years. God blessed them with two children, Calvin, 18 years old, and Violet, 8 years old.