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**NARRATIVES AND REPRESENTATIONS
OF SUFFERING, FAILURE,
AND MARTYRDOM
EARLY MODERN CATHOLICISM CONFRONTING
THE ADVERSITIES OF HISTORY**

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INTRODUCTION

The problem of theodicy

This collection of twelve essays aims to contribute to the study of the concept of martyrdom and the assessment of suffering during the early Modern Age. The articles explore, from various perspectives, how post-Tridentine Catholicism faced diverse forms of grief resulting from disappointment and disillusionment over harsh confrontations with adverse realities. Trent's triumphalist attitude was subject to constant setbacks in the two centuries that followed. What are the common denominators underlying the modes of understanding of suffering, pain, disappointment, and frustration in the religious experience of missionaries and exiles in Europe and overseas? Evidently, legitimizing mechanisms were necessary in order to adapt to a reality that revealed itself fully, against all previous expectations. Thus, this volume presents various historical examples from several different regions, providing a comprehensive overview of the multiple forms of expression for the experiences of defeat and grief in post-Tridentine Catholicism.

In all cultures, and particularly those that are institutionalized, disappointment or "frustration" with normative hopes always occurs when expectations are too high. To avoid the consequences of social and personal disintegration, problems such as "meaningless suffering", and the "existence and triumph of evil" are interpreted so as to mitigate unfulfilled expectations, while, at the same time, serving as a palliative for emotional anxiety.¹

In what Peter Berger calls the irrational pole of a typological continuum of theodicy lies the simple and theoretically underdeveloped transcendence emanating from total identification with the collectivity. In his perception, the most profound aspect of the individual is kinship with a collectivity. Identification with others through meaningful interactions is important in both happiness and misfortune. Thus, the individual's misadventures, including the misfortune of

¹ Rene König – *Sociología*. Ed. and Prol. by Francisco Ayala. Trans. Adolfo Von Ritter-Zahony. Buenos Aires: Compañía General Fabril Editora, 1963, p. 257.

death, are mitigated through understanding them as mere episodes in the general history of a collectivity: “the stronger the identification, the weaker will be the threat of anomic arising from misfortunes in individual biography.”²

As such, diverse religious and missionary communities may be immortalized through the genealogy of martyrdom. Personal misfortunes are interpreted as mere episodes within a long history. In many of the missionaries’ lives described in this volume, misfortunes were clearly conceived along these lines, extending in time and space towards Christian martyrdom. For Catholics, martyrdom was only an option for a few select individuals, rather than a general feature of “simply being a Christian” and continually living in mortal danger, as with the continuously persecuted Anabaptists, for example.

What is the meaning of history, or the entire human experience, including fatalities, in different geographical locations, social structures, or political circumstances? Theodicy projects compensation for future anomic phenomena in mundane terms: when the right moment comes, often as the result of divine intervention, sufferers will be consoled and the unrighteous chastened.

In other words, suffering and injustice are explicable in terms of their future *nomization*. Manifestations of messianism, millenarism, and scatology fall into this category. Therefore, present suffering and injustice become relative in terms of their reconversion at some glorious point in the future. This kind of theodicy, which is most vulnerable to contradiction by experience, might involve compensation in terms of life after death, when the sufferer would be comforted: the righteous are rewarded and the unrighteous are punished.

Thus, the unequal distribution of fortune is due to the sinfulness and injustice of the privileged, against whom divine retribution would eventually be unleashed. Moralism, then, serves this theodicy of the negatively privileged as a means of legitimizing the desire for revenge, either consciously or unconsciously. In what Max Weber calls “the religiosity of retribution” or “the faith in compensation”,³ grief may be considered as something of value, while carrying high expectations of retribution. However, the religiosity of suffering assumes the distinct characteristic of resentment only under very specific circumstances.

² Peter L. Berger – *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*. New York: Anchor Books, 1990, p. 60. Emile Durkheim – *Suicide. A Study in Sociology*. Trans. A. Spaulding and George Simpson. London: Routledge, 1968, pp. 241-76.

³ Max Weber – *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretative Sociology*. Vol. 1. Ed. by Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich. Trans. Efraim Fischhoff et al. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1978, p. 494.

Failure and grief

According to some researchers, the great merit of Christian vis-à-vis old Mediterranean morality is recognizing that suffering can transform grief from a negative status to an experience with positive spiritual content. This represents an effort to search for the salvational attributes of suffering.⁴

For such Christians, historical events become theophany, not only revealing Divine will, but also the personal relationships between God and His chosen ones. This view constituted the basis of the philosophy of history in Christian thought since Saint Augustine's time.⁵

The global expansion of Catholicism in the sixteenth century marked the beginning of great spiritual tension between high expectations associated with crucial religious events, and contradictory outcomes and desolate scenarios. Most Christians refused to be subjected to such tension. Religious and military defeats were only endured as long as they were considered necessary for final salvation. Was it more comforting to consider that there might be some compensation for accidents, magic spells and ritual negligence? The chapters in this volume describe various extreme situations in which religious men, nuns, and missionaries had to adapt to harsh realities.

Most of the protagonists in this book are Jesuit missionaries. However, in order to give a broader overview of such events in post-Tridentine Catholicism, two chapters on the Clarisian and Franciscan mendicant orders are included. The former deals with Irish nuns exiled to Spain in the wake of the Cromwellian conquest of Ireland; and the latter with the martyrdom of Capuchin monks who voluntarily joined the mission in the Kongo.

Nere Intxaustegi Jauregi relates how the Clarisian nuns were forced to abandon their convents.⁶ These documents are very austere regarding the experiences of grief and distress. They reflect loneliness, isolation, and anomie; the precariousness of exile; and the difficulty communicating in a foreign land. The text describes the complex situation to which the nuns were exposed, and the disruption of the meaningful existence they had established in the familiar and stable environment they came from. It is not clear which language they used to communicate with their Spanish coreligionists. Loss of status, physical separation, and alienation must have caused the exiled nuns great difficulty with their self-identity. Bereft of their social bonds, they experienced the "horror of aloneness".⁷

⁴ Mircea Eliade – *Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return*. Trans. Willard R. Trask. New York and Evanston: Harper & Row Publishers, 1959, p. 96.

⁵ Mircea Eliade – *Cosmos and History...*, pp. 110-11.

⁶ Leonardo Cohen, ed. – *Narratives of Suffering...*, p. 40.

⁷ Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann – *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1967, p. 102.

Their continued feelings of grief, particularly nostalgia, melancholy, and yearning for their homeland, are striking.⁸

Many chapters deal with the approach adopted by the Society of Jesus to such defeat and pain. As Päivi Räisänen-Schröder states at the beginning of her article, in the Early Modern Jesuit context, missions, martyrdom, and suffering are closely interlinked.⁹ The documents written by the Jesuits were particularly explicit about the details of suffering, failure, and defeat. In many of their writings, the Jesuit protagonists struggled to vindicate the Order, to dignify the suffering of those unable to achieve their life-long goal, and to exalt martyrdom.¹⁰ In such circumstances, grief seems to have been a tool for forging interpersonal communion. Indeed, the key to personal and collective mourning in defeat, and the endurance of grief, are both part of the general Catholic tradition: the attempt to reconcile God's wisdom with human misery.¹¹ Such a perception is even more explicit in the work of Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Society of Jesus. Ignatian literature clearly refers to supervening suffering that is not sought after; pain caused by the loss of honor, injury, humiliation, and failure; anguish as a result of difficulties, weariness, and apostolic frustration. Such unpursued suffering has the capacity to throw life into disarray.¹² The concept of martyrdom evolved over time. Although the martyrdom of the flesh is still the most common category, other models include the suffering of the heart, torture, voluntary

⁸ Leonardo Cohen, ed. – *Narratives of Suffering...*, p. 46.

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 141.

¹⁰ Through its establishment in 1588, the Congregation of Rites technically became the only entity allowed to define martyrdom (at least in its view and the Church's): that is, according to the Congregation, someone judged to be a martyr – through that very definition in its strictest sense – is also classified as blessed or as a saint. This tight definition did not stop some from deeming themselves martyrs. Such claims often flourished without Church oversight, and the Congregation ended up ratifying many of these cases as true martyrdoms (and sainthoods). The Congregation depended on these very reputations to instigate its own investigations and final judgments on reputed martyrs. In the present volume we deal with martyrdom in its widest sense, which includes popular conceptions of martyrdom, as well as the use of anthropological tools to uncover its presence among past groups or societies. These tools include (but are not limited to) technical martyrdoms; that is, those defined as such by the Church, and codified from 1588 through the Congregation of Rites.

¹¹ Leszek Kolakowski describes this idea: "This attempt to reconcile God's wisdom with human misery is especially characteristic of all those currents within Christianity – from Erigena to Theilard de Chardin – succumbed to the temptation of pantheistic belief in the total absorption, at the end of time, of whatever the history of the world has produced. From this standpoint evil is not ultimately evil at all: we only think of it as such because the complete history of salvation is beyond our reach, because we absolutize certain fragments of it without realizing that in the divine plan they serve the cause of good. Thus, the question of evil is not much solved as cancelled, since all the things we imagine to be evil are merely bricks for building a future perfection, and nothing is going to be wasted in the process". Leszek Kolakowski – *Religion: If There Is No God*. New York–Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, p. 35.

¹² José Antonio García Rodríguez – Dolor. In *Diccionario de Espiritualidad Ignaciana*. Ed. José García de Castro et al. Madrid: Mensajero-Sal Terrae, 2007, vol. 1, p. 659.

giving up, sacrifice of life, death sentences in *odium fidei*, sacrificial victims, and atonement of the soul.¹³

Many missionaries apparently resorted to Ignatian terminology and Christian paradigms to shape the grief engendered by such disappointments: God causes or allows grief for some good purpose and He is active and present in it. The challenge lies in not only enduring suffering but also preventing it from derailing individual life and group or community identity.

As loyal representatives of post-Tridentine Catholicism, the Jesuits confront the experience of suffering and failure with patience and equanimity.¹⁴ This approach is evident in the Catechism of the Council of Trent, which calls on the clergy not to feel pain when God does not hear their prayers, but “to refer all things to His will and pleasure, considering that what pleases God should be so, and not what may otherwise be agreeable to us, is useful and salutary”.¹⁵ This catechism also asks which advantages result from tribulations, answering as follows: “The pious listeners are to be taught that during this mortal career they should be prepared to bear all kind of inconveniences and calamities, not only with equanimity, but also with joy ... In contumely and torture we should imitate the blessed apostles, who having been scourged, rejoiced exceedingly that they were accounted worthy to suffer contumely for Christ Jesus”.¹⁶ Similarly, the Constitutions of the Society of Jesus call neophytes to suffer any such injuries, mockeries, and affronts with patience and the help of God’s grace.¹⁷

The sixteenth century witnessed a shift in the martyrdom motif. According to Brad S. Gregory, in the late Middle Ages martyrs were not needed as models of self-sacrifice. Imitating their deaths lacked relevance in the absence of active

¹³ Leonardo Cohen, ed. – *Narratives of Suffering...*, p. 285.

¹⁴ “If oppressed by poverty, if by sickness, if by persecutions, if by other troubles and afflictions, we must be firmly convinced, that none of these things can befall us without the will of God, which is the supreme reason of all things; and that therefore we ought not to be grievously disturbed by them, but to bear them with unconquered mind, having always in our lips that [of the Apostles], ‘The will of the Lord will be done’ (Acts. Xxi.14); and that of holy Job, ‘As it hath pleased the Lord; so is it done: blessed by the name of the Lord’ (Job i, 210)”. *Catechism of the Council of Trent*. Ed. and Trans. J. D. D. Donovan. Dublin: J.M. O’Toole & Son, 1867, p. 464.

¹⁵ *Catechism of the Council...*, p. 503.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 503.

¹⁷ See the English edition by John W. Padberg – *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus and their Complementary Norms: A Complete English Tradition of the Latin Texts*. St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996, p. 46 [102]. “Ignatius counseled: ‘in times of desolation, never move away, but stand firm and constant in the purposes and determinations you had made the day before the desolation, or in the determination you had made in the previous desolation’ (Ex. 318) when things seemed clear, for with the counsel of desolation ‘we cannot be on the right path.’” They are encouraged to consider desolation as a transitory state: “the Lord has given proof, through its natural powers, they should resist the agitations and temptations of the enemy, for it can be done with divine aid”, which is more important, although they clearly did not feel this (Ex. 320). While it may not be apparent, Ignatius suggests that the desolate always have the strength not to cower from the situation and to adapt to it (Ex. 320, 324, 325).

enemies of the Christian faith. However, the situation changed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In a world burdened with corporal and spiritual afflictions, Christians greatly needed the powers God granted to His heavenly friends.¹⁸ As the Catholics of Britain and the overseas missionaries began to die for their faith, Catholic enthusiasm for martyrdom as a tool for spiritual edification and the consolidation of Catholic identity grew.¹⁹ Afterwards, Jesuit missionaries were persecuted and executed in Japan. Such disastrous experience and the exaltation of Jesuit martyrdom that followed those events also seems to have solidified suffering as the fundamental path of many missionaries at that time.²⁰ Catholic narrative highlights it as a period of martyrdom: the sacrifice of blood for the sake of faith. For many believers, being a Catholic meant not only to live as one, but also to die as one. While this motif was consistently present in the missionaries' work, as in the history of Christianity, these personal examples are embedded within the larger narrative of the mission's failure and the attempt to give meaning to such sacrifice. Jesuit martyrdom clearly served to create a sense of cohesion in the Order.

As social psychologists explain, groups, like individuals, require a sense of connection through a temporary axis. The decision by Afonso Mendes, the defeated Catholic patriarch of Ethiopia, to write a calendar of the Martyrs of Ethiopia in the last years of his life reflects his support for cohesion in space and continuity in time for members of this group, who confronted rupture, disillusionment, and deterioration.²¹ According to Heinz Kohut, "If a group feels history-less, it lacks an important aspect of a live, vital group self."²² The group itself would not exist without support.²³

¹⁸ Brad S. Gregory – *Salvation at Stake: Christian Martyrdom in Early Modern Europe*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999, p. 34.

¹⁹ Leonardo Cohen, ed. – *Narratives of Suffering...*, p. 71.

²⁰ The Jesuit Manuel de Almeida associates the Ethiopians' return to their ancient heresies with the Catholic Church's failures in the world, including that involving the Japanese. See Camillo Beccari (ed.) – *Rerum Aethiopicarum Scriptores Occidentales Inediti a Saeculo XVI ad XIX*. Roma: C. de Luigi, 1903-1917, vol. VII, p. 133. See also George Elison – *Deus Destroyed. The Image of Christianity in Early Modern Japan*. Cambridge, MA: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1988.

²¹ Camillo Beccari (ed.) – *Rerum Aethiopicarum...*, vol. XIII, pp. 399-407.

²² Heinz Kohut – *Self Psychology and the Humanities: Reflections on a New Psychoanalytic Approach*. Ed. by Charles B. Strozier. New York: W.W. Norton, 1985, p. 236.

²³ *Ibidem*, p. 237. Julia Kristeva also points out the relationship between sense of self, experience of trauma and suffering, and creative symbolic expression in both art and religion. Her main work, *Black Sun*, focuses on traumatic, disruptive and disintegrating dimensions of psychological experience, and how symbolic and aesthetic creation is a response to suffering, melancholia and loss of meaning. See Julia Kristeva – *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia*. Trans. Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia University Press, 1989. See also James Dicenso – *New Approaches to Psychoanalysis and Religion: Julia Kristeva's Black Sun. Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses*. 24 (1995) 279-95.

As the religious order faced frustration due to unfulfilled objectives, a possible alternative was contrived prejudice against their opponents. The missionaries' failure generated significant levels of frustration and, in turn, prejudice that was aimed at their rivals and other surrounding groups.²⁴ A recurring reaction in such cases was the excommunication of adversaries, as carried out by the Capuchins in the Kingdom of Kongo. Under evidently tense circumstances, Capuchin missionaries recurrently excommunicated the rulers and other high dignitaries of Soyo.²⁵ As Räisänen-Schröder points out, the slow and difficult progress of the missionary undertaking was usually due to the "lack of consistency" and "stupidity" of the natives.²⁶ In Ethiopia, the Catholic patriarch accused local leaders of ingratitude and, in later testimonies, referred to the Ethiopians' lack of consistency and backbone, in which, he said, they were similar to Muslims.²⁷

Oh ungrateful and strange land, ingrate to God and strange to the Roman Pontiff, his vicar on earth, ingrate and strange to the King of Portugal, to its true patriarch the bishop and to the fathers, you are not worthy of having our feet carry your dust; hence I shake it off. Here I leave everything I took from thee.²⁸

However, on some occasions, the failure or defeat of the missionary project turned into a motif for tensions among members of the same religious order. In such difficult situations, textual canon and tradition entered into conflict with new experiences in foreign lands and missionaries tried to justify their way of proceeding, on the back of their rivals' failure. On the one hand, such a situation is very clearly depicted by Linda Zampol d'Ortia in her article on the missionary enterprise in Japan, addressing the controversy between the Portuguese Jesuit, Francisco Cabral, and the "Visitor", Alessandro Valignano. According to Cabral, the expulsion of the Jesuit fathers from the Asiatic country was not persecution *in odium fidei*, but simply the consequence of Valignano's mistaken policies and the liberality of his proceedings.²⁹

Because until now we lived in poverty and need, as it was a necessity, for both the inner and outer man and for the growth of conversion. But now since three or four years ago we proceed with more liberality, and expenses, and with

²⁴ On the link between prejudice and frustration, see the references presented by James Vivian and Rupert Brown – Prejudice and Intergroup Conflict. In *Companion Encyclopedia of Psychology*. Ed. by Andrew M. Colman. London, New York: Routledge, 1994, vol. 2, pp. 831-851, specifically p. 836.

²⁵ Leonardo Cohen, ed. – *Narratives of Suffering...*, p. 57.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 156.

²⁷ Camillo Beccari (ed.) – *Rerum Aethiopicarum...*, vol. XIII, p. 302.

²⁸ Leonardo Cohen, ed. – *Narratives of Suffering...*, p. 204.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 173.

people who are not very used to the works and necessities of the land, and to its many temptations and freedoms. So that as it were from a watchtower, I foresee the coming storm.³⁰

On the other hand, Sabina Pavone shows that the suppression of the Society of Jesus in the second half of the eighteenth century was seen as a punishment to the Marquis of Pombal, who scattered the Order.³¹ In such cases, martyrdom would vindicate true Christian suffering through the pain inflicted by his rival, who was not an idolater but a powerful Portuguese ruler. Many years later, such suppression would still be considered a form of martyrdom and, therefore, according to Eleonora Rai, also became a privileged way of “access to sainthood after the Restoration of the Society of Jesus”.³² This was spiritual martyrdom: exile, mental and physical isolation from the religious community, and not being allowed to continue in the Order’s spiritual framework. The rebirth of the Society of Jesus in 1814 would vindicate these virtues as heroic.³³

Another option for confronting failure is based on suffering as a shared experience, creating communion in time and space. As Julia Kristeva puts it: “This is the first way in which Christianity has effected a revolution in the approach to suffering. Sharable between humans and Christ, who, in assuming it, confers upon it an extraordinary dignity”.³⁴ The chapters presented in this volume show suffering-to-suffering communication, sometimes as a compassionate contagion (to suffer with others), interpreted as an unavoidable path to salvation: pain makes existence meaningful. In this sense, as suggested by John Steckley, the martyrdom narrative was used in New France to shed a more positive light on the double tragedy of the Wendats and the Jesuits. This narrative gave rise to the saints who would intercede for the Wendats, and allowed the Jesuits to reach the highest level of spirituality: eternal life beyond death.³⁵ “Considering the glory that redounds to God from the constancy of the Martyrs, with whose blood all the rest of the earth has been so lately drenched, it would be a sort of curse if this quarter of the world should not participate in the happiness of having contributed to the splendor of this glory”.³⁶

“Failure, then, failure! So the world marks us at every turn”. On this issue, William James asks: “What single-handed man was ever on the whole as successful

³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 172.

³¹ *Ibidem*, p. 257.

³² *Ibidem*, p. 266.

³³ *Ibidem*, p. 269.

³⁴ Julia Kristeva – *The Incredible Need to Believe*. Translated by Beverley Bie Brahic. New York: Columbia University Press, 2009, pp. 90-91

³⁵ Leonardo Cohen, ed. – *Narratives of Suffering...*, p. 129.

³⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 135.

as Luther? Yet, when he grew old, he looked back on his life as if it had been an absolute failure”.³⁷ This could be reaffirmed at any time by errors, faults, and lost opportunities, and measured in terms of the expectations previously generated: for example, disappointment due to failure in longed-for processes of conversion, and rejection of the Gospel by infidels and schismatics. As he faced exile from his residence in Ethiopia, the Catholic patriarch Afonso Mendes was forced to confront the debacle: “[Ethiopia] crucifies the Son of God again; she is not worthy anymore of looking upon the cross that the Roman Pontiff entrusted me to carry forth”.³⁸

Culture shock and the significant alienation experienced within the environment carried a great potential for willful martyrdom. As Päivi Räisänen-Schröder shows, German missionaries in the Amazon and Orinoco regions faced a twofold culture shock: they experienced alienation from their Portuguese and Spanish colleagues, on the one hand, and from the native peoples on the other. Under such circumstances, solitude and the eremitical life led the missionaries to express nostalgia and yearning for their loved ones and their homeland,³⁹ which provided them with many opportunities to exalt suffering and martyrdom.⁴⁰ Also, as noted by Jesse Sargent, Jesuit missionaries at King Akbar’s court experienced daily difficulties and frustrations with various interpreters who did not understand their ideas. Not only was frustration great regarding the technicalities of language, but also regarding the minority status assigned to the missionaries in all the prominent Muslim circles, which significantly affected the Jesuits in the Mughal Empire.⁴¹

However, the extent of the alienation within the environment is indicated by the suppression of the Jesuit Order in 1773. This shock and their alienation from the surrounding reality derived in some cases from their relationship to the Mother Church. Sabina Pavone’s article in this volume presents the perception of martyrdom caused by the painful experience of exile. For that generation of Jesuits, martyrdom helped to create an effective community and set the foundations for the Order’s collective memory.⁴² The Jesuits who experienced the crucial event of suppression also invoked martyrdom and considered their experience as a form of *Imitatio Christi*.⁴³ Indeed, as compared to Christ’s suffering, theirs always

³⁷ William James – *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. London and Glasgow: The Fontana Library, 1960, p. 146.

³⁸ Camillo Beccari (ed.) – *Rerum Aethiopicarum...*, vol. VII, pp. 234-35.

³⁹ Leonardo Cohen, ed. – *Narratives of Suffering...*, p. 147.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 142.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, p. 197.

⁴² *Ibidem*, p. 264.

⁴³ *Ibidem*, p. 272.

seemed to be insufficient, as in the case of Bohemian father Karel Přikryl, who wrote: "I am ashamed to suffer so little for my God".⁴⁴

However, missionaries also experience failure as a consequence of everyday events that may become tedious, and generate hopelessness and meaninglessness. As Päivi Räisänen-Schröder vividly points out, the disappointment of missionaries who became absorbed in unattractive tasks, such as supervising cooks, as compared to the motivation and fervor that led them to engage in missionary work, was marked.⁴⁵ Jesuit Father Anton Sepp wrote about this very eloquently: "Who in Europe would have thought that a missionary has to consider such things? I would not have believed it, and still cannot believe it, although I see it with my own eyes, and feel it with my own hands".⁴⁶

There was disappointment in the face of banality: Is this all there is? The crisis of failure based on a growing sense of dissatisfaction with ordinary life was sometimes quite dramatic. In many cases, missionaries did not look at their lives with sufficient force and criticism. Such discrepancy between the imagined ideal and the surrounding circumstances was in many cases the trigger for conversion processes.⁴⁷ As John Steckley points out in this volume: "At some point, martyrdom was a solution to the frustrations of the mission,⁴⁸ a blessing,⁴⁹ [or] a victory".⁵⁰ Moreover, the desire for martyrdom was certainly considered praiseworthy in overseas missions, although renouncing it, and learning the local language and carrying out pastoral and missionary work, was considered preferable in Jesuit circles.⁵¹

For many Jesuits, martyrdom, considered the most heroic way to die, served as a moral example, stimulating future generations to join the mission project. As Camilla Russell rightly points out, in the sixteenth century, while heretics were excluded from the Church and executed, martyrs were included upon their death.⁵² Texts written by the missionaries not only aimed to console and edify, but also to provide moral stimulation.⁵³ The dissemination of such writings in

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 263.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 154.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 155.

⁴⁷ John Lofland and Rodney Starck – Becoming a World-Saver: A Theory of Conversion to a Deviant Perspective. *American Sociological Review*. 30: 6 (1965) 862-875.

⁴⁸ Leonardo Cohen, ed. – *Narratives of Suffering...*, p. 147.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 138.

⁵¹ *Ibidem*, p. 152.

⁵² *Ibidem*, pp. 76-77.

⁵³ Markus Friedrich – Circulating and Compiling the *Litterae Annuae*. Towards a Jesuit System of Communication. *Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu*, 77 (2008) 10; p. 71.

printed form contributed to the creation of new saints in a global age,⁵⁴ and to the tales of the Capuchin monks. As Robert Piętek shows, the Capuchin missionaries' descriptions highlighting sacrifice and martyrdom in the Kingdom of Kongo inspired new candidates in Europe to apply to go and serve in spreading the faith, representing a possible way of achieving sainthood.⁵⁵ Thus, the dissemination of these stories in Europe had an edifying purpose, intended to engender shared devotion aimed at giving rise to the desire for sacrifice and martyrdom as forms of redemption.

Procured suffering

Beyond explaining and legitimizing failure and defeat, this volume discusses the forms in which pain is expressed in various contexts during early modernity. Among these is procured pain: it is not only about tears that come as a surprise, but also those that are sought after. Many stories about young men in this volume express the desire for eternal reward, which cannot be achieved without personal sacrifice.⁵⁶

Camilla Russell gives various examples of how personal crisis evolved into an intense longing for a glorious death:⁵⁷ "We come to a candidate who deals directly with the prospect of death, not accidental, but that of a martyr. He declared that not only was he prepared to go to India and Japan, but if in those parts, there is a country that opens the road with my blood". Martyrdom was a way of paying for past sins and faults,⁵⁸ a tool for self-amendment.⁵⁹

Asceticism is based on the conviction that suffering is a virtue in itself. Bernard Shaw derided such a state of mind: "thinking you are moral when you are uncomfortable".⁶⁰ The *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius of Loyola give the fundamental guidelines for welcoming pain and even physical suffering: "I will imagine myself a great sinner in chains".⁶¹ Indeed, Ignatius came up with a perception of moderate asceticism. Chastisement of the flesh⁶² is not absent

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 144.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 55-63.

⁵⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 88.

⁵⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 78. See also p. 136.

⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 82.

⁵⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 84.

⁶⁰ O. Hardman – *The Ideal of Asceticism. An Essay in the Comparative Study of Religion*. New York and Toronto: The Macmillan Co., 1924, p. 14.

⁶¹ Leonardo Cohen, ed. – *Narratives of Suffering...*, p. 78.

⁶² The exercises define punishment of the flesh as: "Inflicting sensible pain, by taking spikes or flails or iron bars to the flesh, scourging oneself, and other manner of roughness". Ignacio de Loyola – *Spiritual Exercises*, 85.

from the Spiritual Exercises as a form of penance, but he suggested doing it in moderation, so that pain is sensitive to the flesh and does not enter the bones, giving only pain and not infirmity. Thus, he recommended as more suitable, flagellation with thin cords, which give pain on the outside, but not noticeable malady.⁶³ Therefore, the sixteenth-century guidelines in the Spiritual Exercises and Ignatian piety attempted to break with medieval asceticism. Even so, under adverse circumstances, the spiritual value of the faithful's dedication to suffering was recognized. Consequently, the Constitutions of the Society of Jesus vindicated the privilege of shedding the blood of this fleeting life for the sake of preaching the Gospel among infidels.⁶⁴

There is no doubt that renewal of the martyrdom phenomenon during the Reformation took on a particular form in the Catholic context. Suffering was not looked upon as an apocalyptic struggle, as in some Protestant circles. To Catholics, martyrdom was an option only destined for select circles, not a general religious experience.⁶⁵ According to Päivi Räisänen-Schröder, the Jesuits' work in securing the salvation of other souls constituted the path to their own salvation. In this process, their own suffering in reaching the goal emulated the model pre-established by the old saints and martyrs.⁶⁶ Some missionaries showed keen awareness of human nature's attraction to comfort, as well as the suffering and numerous hardships involved in serving in missions in faraway lands: travel by sea and many changes in climate, food and customs.⁶⁷

This zealous wish to die among barbarians, emulating the old martyrs,⁶⁸ is the result of tales about Jesuits who gave their lives for the sake of the faith. It is a kind of "baptism of blood", one of the highest forms of *Imitatio Christi*.⁶⁹ However, it is highly probable that such motivation was an integral part of early self-perception by the Society of Jesus, which became more prominent with the increase of violent deaths among missionaries in various parts of the world.⁷⁰ There are many stories of missionaries martyred as soldiers, who gave their lives in

⁶³ *Spiritual Exercises...*, cit., 86. After leaving Loyola, Ignatius did penance by scourging himself once a day. At Manresa, following strict discipline, he survived for several months on a diet of bread and water. According to Laínez, his successor, he believed that man could achieve sanctity before God through austerity and hard penance. In the *Spiritual Exercises* there are the elements of this basic Ignatian conduct, transformed as the product of internal grief and followed by a call to moderation. See Terrence O'Reilly – *The Spiritual Exercises and the Crisis of Medieval Piety. The Way Supplement. 70* (1991) pp. 105, 109.

⁶⁴ Leonardo Cohen, ed. – *Narratives of Suffering...*, p. 79.

⁶⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 148-149.

⁶⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 149.

⁶⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 115.

⁶⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 135-138.

⁶⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 106.

⁷⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 67 and 85.

religious wars, achieving a notable victory through their harrowing deaths.⁷¹ The first Jesuit to embody the renewed martyr model was Antonio Criminale, in 1549, at Fishery Coast in India. Since this foundational event, martyrdom increasingly assumed a dominant place in the awareness and expectations of the Society of Jesus's mission. As mentioned by Russell, the lists compiled and published in 1950, *Synopsis Historiae Societatis Jesu*, include 907 Jesuits who suffered violent deaths between 1540 and 1773.⁷² The purpose of these stories was twofold: to inform, instruct, and attract new candidates to the Order and the mission, and to obtain material and moral support from possible benefactors.⁷³ Thus, in Italy, after the Restoration of the Society of Jesus, many Jesuits expressed their desire to take part in and shed their blood in missions. As Eleonora Rai explains: "The memory of the Suppression was still fresh, and the idea that martyrdom (especially in mission territory) was part of the life of every Jesuit, was quite diffused as indicated by the *Litterae Indipetae*."⁷⁴

Camilla Russell and Elisa Frei present various detailed examples in which candidates for the mission were eager to serve God in the most difficult situations. In this context, India, Japan, and China were the preferred destinations, mostly because they were considered dangerous.⁷⁵ Hunger for martyrdom is recurrent in the *Litterae Indipetae* petitions submitted by candidates to leave for the missions, even though only a few managed to be accepted.⁷⁶ Several articles vividly show the passion with which applicants described such aspirations: they repeatedly stressed their desire for martyrdom, torture, suffering, and a life of hardship for the sake of Evangelical poverty.⁷⁷

The particular social and family context of candidates to the missions is certainly relevant in understanding their leanings. Getting away from home, family and friends by means of voluntary exile are possible motives in many cases. As the postulant Domenico Arcolino put it: "I would go to lands alien and barbarous to submerge myself in an ocean of suffering."⁷⁸ Disappointment and frustration were evident among many of them, who felt tormented by superiors and relatives who tried to persuade them to abandon their most desired vocation.⁷⁹

Enthusiasm for martyrdom strengthened the vocation and devotion to the missionary enterprise; meanwhile, it also carried the risk of leading to dysfunction.

⁷¹ *Ibidem*, p. 153.

⁷² *Ibidem*, p. 89.

⁷³ *Ibidem*, p. 84.

⁷⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 287.

⁷⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 97 and 106.

⁷⁶ See various examples in pp. 114-119.

⁷⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 113.

⁷⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 96.

⁷⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 110-111.

Therefore, the Society's Generals, as Acquaviva in 1580, claimed that "Jesuits were in England to help in the salvation of souls as much, if not more, as for securing the salvation of the missionaries' own souls"⁸⁰ Enthusiasm was welcome, but not in excess, since the Order was governed by the duty of obedience above all. Excessive enthusiasm had to be tempered, as it could easily turn into disorderly and antisocial behavior, leading missionaries to neglect their duties.

Even within the scope of the applicants to the missions, there were traces of failure and disappointment when longed-for aspirations were found wanting. Elisa Frei gives various examples of candidates, who, although keen to join missions, saw their wishes unfulfilled and openly expressed their mistrust when others were elected. Many confessed their envy in letters, complaining of suffering terribly at hearing that others had been elected. Others explain their feeling of "holy envy" as a motivation for reaching their objectives.⁸¹ However, such failure led many to abandon their missionary vocation and even the Society of Jesus altogether.⁸²

Ceremonies and representation around defeat, suffering, and martyrdom

In this context, Christianity should be examined not only as an ideology, but also as symbolic practice. As Alfredo Fierro put it: "The motor and origin of practice is suffering exacted by the constraint of reality. Its determined ending and quieting can only lie in removing the yoke of such constraint through the creation of a different reality"⁸³

The transformation of the social environment, economic practice, and the natural order are self-transforming practices, beyond political practice. These cover all types of linguistic and communication systems: artistic and aesthetic, scientific and theoretical, ludic and sporting, and symbolic (ritual, ceremonies, symbolic gestures, etc.).

Symbolization responds to a deeply human need: the development of symbols and their corresponding meanings. Symbolic systems addressing the need for meaning, in turn, create frameworks to put the world in order, give a place to each person and thing, integrate limiting situations reflecting the dark side of life (death, suffering, solitude, and failure), bestow identity on an individual or group, and make it possible to continue living without the constant feeling of vertigo on the edge of anomic chaos. Symbolic practice has a transformative purpose: to create symbolic universes in which man can live a meaningful existence.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 91.

⁸¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 116-119.

⁸² *Ibidem*, pp. 119-125.

⁸³ Alfredo Fierro – *Sobre la religión. Descripción y teoría*. Madrid: Taurus, 1979, p. 184.

⁸⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 194.

In this context, after the Council of Trent, baroque art allowed the articulation and sublimation of suffering experiences. Painting, drama, and music became instruments for breathing fresh air into the Catholic experience of pain, by allowing worshippers to look at defeat and disappointment from a new perspective. Russell and Dann Cazés note the role of Jesuits in the promotion of martyrdom through visual culture.⁸⁵ Moreover, Cohen refers to the importance of aesthetic experience in the ceremony destined to become the path to exile for the Jesuits of Ethiopia.

In his essay, Cazés highlights the importance of theater as one of the most effective means by which communication strengthens devotion and inculcates moral behavior in the faithful. In this sense, dramatic representations of saints and martyrs constituted a more effective educational platform than sermons or even paintings.⁸⁶ This analysis clearly applies to the image of the baroque man, who preferred nature transformed by art over simple nature, as presented by José Antonio Maravall.⁸⁷ Thus, novelty also serves traditional interests. Poetic games, theatrical staging resources, and literary devices are equally used to pass on doctrine, and non-innovative and conservative ideologies.⁸⁸ Although Renaissance heritage is certainly not dead, it has strayed and is subject to strong control.⁸⁹ As Maravall points out, in the Spanish mind of the baroque age, the general trend was to gain satisfaction from every artifice and ingenious invention of human art.⁹⁰ For this reason, he explains, the role of theater in seventeenth-century society was fundamental.⁹¹ Its character as artifice made it easily adaptable to the objectives of the baroque age. In the same vein, Cazés shows how all aspects of the saints' lives linked to the miraculous and supernatural "required the use of theatrical machinery that served to astonish and marvel the audiences."⁹² Various visual compositions showed bloody and beheaded bodies. Such violent images were intended to impact the audience on an emotional level and indeed had a religious impact on those watching.⁹³ Jesuit letters also provide many examples of plays used to celebrate all kinds of events. Such representations achieved the expected effect: edification, crying fits, etc.

⁸⁵ Leonardo Cohen, ed. – *Narratives of Suffering...*, p. 73 and 222. For more on the importance of the Jesuit contribution to dramaturgy and theater during the Spanish Golden Century, see José Ramón Alcántara Mejía et al. (eds.) – *Dramaturgia y teatralidad en el Siglo de Oro: la presencia jesuita*. México: Universidad Iberoamericana, 2014.

⁸⁶ Leonardo Cohen, ed. – *Narratives of Suffering...*, p. 209-211.

⁸⁷ José Antonio Maravall – *La cultura del Barroco. Análisis de una estructura histórica*. Barcelona, Caracas, México: Editorial Ariel, 1981, pp. 467-68.

⁸⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 457.

⁸⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 468.

⁹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 470.

⁹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 471.

⁹² Leonardo Cohen, ed. – *Narratives of Suffering...*, p. 220-221.

⁹³ *Ibidem*, p. 223.

Baroque theatrical plays focus on greatness, dazzle, and power, working at a psychological level. Technical resources enable actors to represent Divine characters, saints, kings, and their allegories, and superior beings inhabiting the heavenly space, seemingly confirming their superiority.⁹⁴ Dramatizations of the stories of saints were thus presented to various audiences, exalting and vindicating the resistance to martyrs and their persecutors,⁹⁵ promoting the cult of saints⁹⁶ with great emotional impact and fostering Catholic devotion.⁹⁷

“The Jesuits used mechanical artifice to wrest strong emotions such as when in the middle of a sermon, a curtain unexpectedly opened showing a dramatic religious scene which caused audiences to burst into crying and wailing”.⁹⁸ No less impressive is Cazés’s description of the staging of *The Wonder-Working Magician* by Calderón de la Barca: “As the curtain of the discovery space in the middle of the *vestuario* suddenly opens, it presents a visual composition of beheaded bodies and bloodied severed heads”.⁹⁹ Spectators would be aware that the characters have become martyred saints because this was implied in the dialogue, so this impressively violent image would be perceived to be in keeping with its religious significance. The unveiled visual composition presented the characters in a way that led to their identification as martyred saints: the *fachada del teatro* niches were normally used to introduce Divine characters, such as angels, Christ, the Virgin, and other saints. The elements shown in that area were, to some degree, associated by convention with the Divine and supernatural, or other aspects identified with the sacred. As mentioned above, these niches were also used to display paintings of sacred images, *tableaux vivants*, or to depict scenes from sacred history, hagiographies, and religious activities. Showing the bodies of executed heroes in that area established a relationship between the visual composition, and the portrayal of other saints and martyrs depicted in artistic representations. Even “framing” the composition inside the borders of the discovery space might suggest association with paintings of hagiographical subjects, reminding the audience of images in church altarpieces.¹⁰⁰

As Maravall explains, ostentatious baroque feasts were meant to inspire admiration.¹⁰¹ Dann Cazés provides a detailed description rich in visual elements: “Visual arts were used to create attractive backgrounds representing mountains, clouds, the sea; images painted on canvases were occasionally shown as aids in

⁹⁴ José Antonio Maravall – *La cultura del Barroco...*, p. 477.

⁹⁵ Leonardo Cohen, ed. – *Narratives of Suffering...*, p. 241.

⁹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 219.

⁹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 221.

⁹⁸ José Antonio Maravall – *La cultura del Barroco...*, p. 482.

⁹⁹ Leonardo Cohen, ed. – *Narratives of Suffering...*, p. 231.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibidem*.

¹⁰¹ José Antonio Maravall – *La cultura del Barroco...*, p. 487.

establishing fictional space. Portraits and paintings, even statues, would often be presented on stage or in one of the niches of the *fachada* for dramatic as well as spectacle purposes. In the staging of devout dramas, the presence of religious images was obvious and expected, and not only because of the impact attributed to visual representations in post-Tridentine times, but also because the pious value of such images could transcend the theatrical fiction and move the audience at a personal level related to their beliefs.”¹⁰²

As Cazés points out, some of these representations aimed to contribute to the sanctification and canonization of recent church martyrs, such as Fray Alonso Navarrete in Japan. Thus, we see the dramatization of the martyrdom of the mendicant friars in Japan, in 1617, as shown in Lope de Vega’s *The Martyrs of Japan*.

The play contributed to the portrayal of missionaries as virtuous men, who were prepared to sacrifice their lives for the salvation of the souls of others, and who confronted the dangers posed by their persecutors.¹⁰³ In this way, the play intended to honor the sanctification of the last hero in the Catholic Church, and exalt Navarrete’s preaching of the Gospel and martyrdom as a kind of moral teaching.¹⁰⁴

Ceremony and rite representing aesthetic value was of the utmost importance during the transition from great emotional disappointment and pain. It is interesting to frame this type of aesthetic/spiritual experience within the scheme presented by Mircea Eliade, who sees the historiographical passion in modern culture as a harbinger of its impending demise. Like the folkloristic belief that, at the moment of death, human beings remember their past in the minutest detail, historiographical consciousness is considered to precede and herald death. Modern man’s anguish is obscurely linked to the awareness of historicity and, in turn, to the anxiety of confronting “Death and Non-Being.”¹⁰⁵ Facing this alternative, the rite of passage leading to another mode of existence soothes the anguish associated with death, which is represented as reaching a new plane of being. This volume shows how remarkably the Jesuits detail this debacle of their difficult experiences. To dramatize and bestow meaning on the painful moment of rupture and expulsion of the Jesuits, Afonso Mendes removed his shoes, knelt down, dusted his shoes, cursed Ethiopia for forsaking him, recited verses from the New Testament, gave a sermon, and arranged choral accompaniment by his congregation. The impromptu ceremony symbolically sealed off the history of the

¹⁰² Leonardo Cohen, ed. – *Narratives of Suffering...*, p. 223.

¹⁰³ *Ibidem*, p. 241.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 239.

¹⁰⁵ Mircea Eliade – *Myths, Dreams and Mysteries. The Encounter Between Contemporary Faiths and Archaic Realities*. Translated by Philip Maire. New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1960, p. 235.

Jesuit mission, representing the raw pain caused by the end of what appeared to be a success story with significant accomplishments.

Ceremony and theatrical representation therefore have an important common denominator. In portraying human activity, a theater stage represents the human space. As a mental image, such space is featured in all the contemplative exercises.¹⁰⁶ Together with spatial positioning, the text of the play suggests inscription in time. Like scenic and extra-scenic spaces, there are also two temporalities: representation and represented action. The story or event that took place over ten years was staged in two hours. But the temporal can also be expressed by spatial, objectual, and scenic elements.

The unique characteristic of time in theater lies in the creation of a relationship with the here-and-now of the plot or its representation, consistent with the spectator's here-and-now. In this sense, theater as a genre surpasses the division between past, present, and future, allowing their coexistence.

Emotional aspects of defeat, failure, and exile

The martyrdom of the main protagonists in this volume is understood in the light of biblical models and the patterns of Christian literature proper, shedding light on events in the Modern Age as a continuation of a long historical process. The beginnings of biblical monotheism lie in the destruction by the patriarch Abraham of the idols in his own home, forcing him to flee into exile (Genesis 11, 28). The ancient Church martyrs developed similar patterns of personal sacrifice for destroying false gods. Theatrical plays and representations of the lives of ancient martyrs in the seventeenth century are an obvious example of this trend.¹⁰⁷ The motif is repeated in the narratives of the early Modern Age. Missionaries in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries held similar attitudes towards the early apostles and ancient martyrs regarding the symbolic embodiment of the powers of the Evil One. These motifs serve as an important point of reference for many characters in this book. The destruction of pagan cult centers occupied a prominent place in the reports sent by the Capuchins from the Kongo.¹⁰⁸ Indeed, Friar Joris Van Gheel was beaten to death for opposing a pagan celebration and destroying idols.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ Rogelio García Mateo – *Ignacio de Loyola: su espiritualidad y su mundo cultural*. Bilbao: Ediciones Mensajero, 2000, p. 294.

¹⁰⁷ Leonardo Cohen, ed. – *Narratives of Suffering...*, p. 217.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 61.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 52. This example agrees with primitive models of martyrs as people killed or punished for struggling against paganism. See the examples of Laurentius and Cyprianus in Daniel Ruiz Bueno (ed.) – *Actas de los mártires*. Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1987, pp. 476-597, 665-685.

Imitatio Christi (or *sequela Christi*) appears recurrently in various articles in this volume. As noted by Jesse Sargent, the Jesuit Rodolfo Acquaviva used the idea of God comforting a martyred Christ to soothe the pain he experienced in the Mughal Empire.¹¹⁰ Another example is the suppression of the Society of Jesus: “the most emotional and painful moment in the history of the Society”.¹¹¹ To express the suffering to which they were exposed, the Jesuits resorted to the expression “We were crucified ... our lives were placed on crosses and made to suffer”.¹¹² Exile and suppression represented a further chance to follow Jesus (the “captain” of the Society, to adopt a military term frequently used by the Jesuits) in his sufferings.¹¹³ Thus the Jesuits followed the model of a soldier, as presented in Ignatius’s biography, as a paradigm for understanding sacrifice for a particular purpose.¹¹⁴

Under these circumstances, suppression of the Society of Jesus may also be understood as a sacrificial offering. According to the narrative suggested by General Superior Jan Roothaan (1785-1853), the Order offered itself as a sacrificial lamb to allow the Roman Church to survive in a period of internal and external accusations.¹¹⁵ In this context, like Christ, the Order died and rose again. From this perspective, explains Eleonora Rai, suppression would become a great achievement of Jesuit spirituality.¹¹⁶ Martyrdom had its own reward, as shown by the subsequent sanctification of the Jesuits who suffered during the suppression.¹¹⁷ Against this backdrop and after the Restoration of the Order, José Pignatelli (1737-1811) used his correspondence to create a spiritual community emotionally linked to the glorious past.¹¹⁸

Within the latter narrative of sanctification of martyrdom, metaphorical and/or allegorical views of the staunch and stoic suffering of the Jesuits were initiated. Pope Pius XI wrote in 1954 about Pignatelli’s sanctification as a “rock that stands in the middle of a storm, meaning the conspiracy of governments and sects against God and the Church”.¹¹⁹ The symbol of a storm as an overwhelming depiction of the coming failure also applies in the case of Francisco Cabral, quoted by Zampol d’Ortia. Anticipating the defeat of the missionary enterprise in Japan, Cabral placed himself as the watchman on a watchtower, forecasting disasters that

¹¹⁰ Leonardo Cohen, ed. – *Narratives of Suffering...*, p. 195.

¹¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 280.

¹¹² *Ibidem*, p. 260.

¹¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 272.

¹¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 153.

¹¹⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 270-271.

¹¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 273.

¹¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 278.

¹¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 280.

¹¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 284.

would shake the missionary enterprise due to his coreligionists' excessive lack of prudence.¹²⁰

The interpretation of these narratives sheds light on the missionaries' motives in confronting various challenges, and provides a crucial framework for understanding their own choices and impending fate.

However, several articles in this volume go beyond the mere legitimization of the events under consideration. They deal with the analysis of various forms of expression associated with exhausting efforts, misfortunes, and martyrdom, which are essential elements in a long-winded redemption process.

It is also possible to discern specific patterns in the descriptions of emotional expressions. As Päivi Räisänen-Schröder notes, emotions may be understood as social and relational constructs that bind or divide people.¹²¹ While emotions are felt in the human body, they can also be experienced and expressed in relation to both the self and others, or within "emotional communities."¹²² In this sense, public suffering confirms the existence of a social boundary between two or more people.¹²³

Cultural context is the key to understanding expressions of failure, pain, and suffering, as well as the nature of the source. As Sabina Pavone correctly points out, the letters addressed to close relatives generally contain information with greater emotional content. However, letters written to those in charge of the Order and the Church may have been censored or manipulated *post factum* by the source's editor.¹²⁴

With respect to cultural context, tears were evidently a recurrent reaction in the face of failure and grief. Even so, specific societies prescribe different types of weeping, as well as when each form should be used. This volume describes how tears were usually shed in situations involving great devotional turmoil, and in such contexts, were usually linked to male stereotypes. In some cases of separation, frustration, and failure, the Jesuit missionaries accredited the tears to the faithful, rather than to themselves.

From the articles in this volume, it is evident that candidates applying to the mission describe their desire to be recruited with intense emotion and passion.¹²⁵

¹²⁰ *Ibidem*, pp. 174-175.

¹²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 145.

¹²² A concept coined by Barbara Rosenwein. Susan Broomhall – Emotions in the Household. In *Emotions in the Household, 1200-1900*. Ed. by Susan Broomhall. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, pp. 10; 13; Barbara H. Rosenwein – Problems and Methods in the History of Emotions. *Passions in Context*. 1 (2010) 11-12; Id. – Worrying about Emotions in History. *The American Historical Review*. 107 (2002) 842-844.

¹²³ Radcliffe Brown quoted by Ad Vingerhoets – *Why Only Humans Weep*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 146.

¹²⁴ Leonardo Cohen, ed. – *Narratives of Suffering...*, p. 254.

¹²⁵ *Ibidem*, p.112.

There are recurrent reminders of the importance of shedding blood as a way of highlighting the ideal image of the martyr. Some mission candidates wrote their petitions with blood instead of ink.¹²⁶ Others resorted to the metaphorical use of tears as a substitute for ink for this purpose.¹²⁷

Indeed, tears, and weeping are paradigms used to establish cultural figures of great transcendence. Ignatius of Loyola shed copious tears (there are some 175 recorded episodes of weeping in his spiritual diary), with reports that he cried every day during prayers as proof of his great devotion, and that he sought to bring tears to the readers' eyes. Ignatius's tears expressed his grief over his sins and his devotion to God. He also admitted that weeping was not always a spontaneous act, but could be learned and perfected in order to promote love and devotion for God. Tears were gifts, blessings from God designed to show grief and move others to compassion. As Elisa Frei suggests, in the early Modern Age, weeping embodied "a truly masculine ability in terms of its new definition of clerical manhood" in the Society of Jesus.¹²⁸

However, comparing drops of blood from penance to the drops of water from tears, Ignatius advised Francisco Borja to distinguish between times of ascetic struggle, which require few specific weapons to vanquish the enemy, and periods of mystical unity, in which the Lord or His grace are urgently sought.¹²⁹ Thus, in the Ignatian view, tears announce Divine encounters.

Yet, in the various articles presented, tears clearly express various emotions. Modes of weeping to show suffering differ considerably and can be distinguished from one another.¹³⁰ As Camilla Russell points out in her chapter, tears are sometimes a consequence of despair and not the holy man's obstinacy.¹³¹ At other times, tears expressed the disappointment of candidates who saw how their colleagues managed to join the overseas missions, while they remained behind.¹³²

Sadness and pain also appear as expressions of defeat and meaninglessness. As noted by Pavone in her chapter, the testimonies on the expulsion of the Jesuits from India, Brazil, and China in Marquis de Pombal's time, described old Jesuit fathers dying of grief after abandoning the mission and losing their *raison d'être*.¹³³ While confined in the São Julião prison in Lisbon, the Jesuit Giovan Franco Filippi eloquently wrote: "Our regular diet was the bread of sorrow and the water of

¹²⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 195.

¹²⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 111.

¹²⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 110.

¹²⁹ Santiago Thío – Lágrimas. In *Diccionario de Espiritualidad Ignaciana*. Ed. by José García de Castro et al. Madrid: Mensajero-Sal Terrae, 2007, vol. 2, p. 1104.

¹³⁰ Ad Vingerhoets – *Why Only Humans Weep*, p. 143.

¹³¹ Leonardo Cohen, ed. – *Narratives of Suffering...*, p. 86.

¹³² *Ibidem*, p. 113.

¹³³ *Ibidem*, p. 259.

tears”.¹³⁴ The Jesuit’s nourishment was grief, drink, and tears. Moreover, in addition to tears, emotional expressions, such as anxiety, sadness, and insomnia, were common under suppression. As the German Jesuit missionary Anselm Eckart wrote after his arrest: “We were moving from Purgatory to Hell”.¹³⁵

As pointed out by Sargent, indifference was another way of confronting pain and failure among the Jesuits. Ignatius of Loyola stated in one of his letters that indifference allowed the religious to become detached from both the positive and negative aspects of experience: “To attain this it is necessary to make ourselves indifferent to all created things, in regard to everything which is left to our free will and is not forbidden. Consequently, on our own part we ought not to seek health rather than sickness, wealth rather than poverty, honor rather than dishonor, a long life rather than a short one, and so on in all other matters”.¹³⁶ As Sargent shows in his article, Ignatius’s concept of indifference elucidates how missionaries concealed their disappointment, as in the case of Rodolfo Acquaviva, who, after his lack of success at the court of King Akbar, finally decided not to become a Christian despite having left the circle of Islam. In line with the Ignatian instructions, Acquaviva stated: “I am indifferent, and the suspense of not knowing what God has in store for this mission, adds to my indifference”.¹³⁷

Thus, the expression of defeat, pain, failure, and exile in the context of Catholicism in the early Modern Age follows criteria established by mid-sixteenth-century reformers. Hence, the term *disappointment* is absent from the original texts written by the missionaries; rather, its causes and effects are described as a loss of comfort, trust, and hope for improvement. They do not relate to the mission’s slow progress, the desolate material conditions, and the natives’ hostility. As to whether tears should be shed in public or considered a sign of weakness, this volume confirms the great variation of these emotional experiences in terms of the addressee, the prevailing religious norms, and the philosophy in particular periods and geographical spaces.

This book seeks to contribute to the historical reconstruction of the subjective phenomena of grief, disappointment, suffering, and failure. It also endeavors to shed light on both how missionaries and devout Catholics gave meaning to these disconsolate experiences and the modes of expression reflecting unfulfilled expectations.

Leonardo Cohen

¹³⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 262.

¹³⁵ *Ibidem*.

¹³⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 196.

¹³⁷ *Ibidem*.