Zeal and Listlessness at the Culion Leprosarium in the Philippines: Medieval, Early Modern, and Colonial Themes

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In 1906, the first group of some three hundred and seventy lepers arrived at the Culion leper colony. Segregated by the newly established American colonial government (ostensibly both for their own good and for the good of the healthy), they were forcibly removed from their communities and deposited on a very remote island, in many cases simply to die, though in some cases to be cured and returned to whatever life they might be able to reestablish. (The island itself, at the western edge of the Philippine archipelago, had served primarily as a Spanish out-post against Muslim raiders from the south). Upon their arrival, the lepers entered a world regulated by medical and religious authorities. Their sores were treated by the Sisters of St. Paul de Chartres; their disease was subjected to experimental, often painful, treatments by pathologists; and, they received the sacraments and other ministrations from Jesuit chaplains.

Through their service on the island, these doctors, government administrators, priests, and nuns became deeply interested in the fundamental questions of human “doing,” of the capacities for activity, and of the biological, cultural, and religious factors for energetic work and human worth. In describing the behavior of a leper or the activities of a priest or doctor, their written records reveal a keen interest in the basic

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dynamics of human energy, and, more particularly, in the contrasting
dynamics of zeal and listlessness, and the ways each of these provided
indications of spiritual, physical, and social health.

The institutional and intellectual contexts which helped make these
themes such crucial problems were largely the product of the evolution
of medieval discussions of acedia (essentially spiritual torpor or sloth)
and zeal. Over the last millennium, many different terms dealing with
inactivity have been employed and analyzed by theologians, counselors,
scientists, doctors, overseers, and poets in order to understand what in
the Middle Ages was regarded as one of the chief causes of the many
forms of vice, otherwise known as the Seven Deadly Sins. The Jesuit
chaplains at Culion were trained to recognize the dangers of idleness
(or otium as the Constitutions of the Society call it in Latin), and the
American administrators and medical personnel, who were eager to see
the lepers busily at work, were bringing to Culion a tradition of view-
ing lazy inactivity as a sign of deep moral and spiritual failure. This
essay's exploration of zeal and listlessness, therefore, utilizes the history
of such discourses, ranging from medieval discussions of acedia to their
early modern transformations and colonial adaptations, as a central
conceptual device for examining the problematics of human energy at
Culion. These rich historical discussions serve as an important reminder
of the roles of sloth and related terms — such as laziness, melancholy,
and sorrow — in human history, particularly in the history of the poor
and the diseased.

But as the fervent struggles of many of the lepers themselves indi-
cate, the history of human energy at Culion is also a history of power-
ful, zealous activity. "Zeal," despite appearing frequently in historical
monographs, has rarely evoked specific investigation as an important

^This essay is itself part of a larger study I am currently researching on the for-
mulations and experiences of human inactivity or listlessness across the centuries.
Works that address some of these themes from differing perspectives include Reinhard
Kuhn, The Demon of Noon tide: Emnui in Western Literature (Princeton: Princeton Uni-
versity Press, 1976); Juliana Schiesari, The Gendering of Melancholia: Feminism, Psy-
choanalysis, and the Symbols of Loss in Renaissance Literature (Ithaca: Cornell Uni-
versity Press, 1992); and Patricia Meyer Spacks, Boredom: The Literary History of a State
and the Spirit of Capitalism is, of course, the most familiar study which examines the
opposite of laziness — the cultural and religious formation of energetic work habits. 
historical force, perhaps because the term itself smacks of fanaticism or enthusiasm, sensibilities in religion that, since the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, have been under suspicion for their extravagance, vanity, subjectivism, and even violence. As theologians themselves have warned over the centuries, people can be zealous in the pursuit of their vices. At the same time, however, there is a longstanding theological tradition that views zeal as a sign of authentic faith. Particularly in the devotional and pastoral literature of the Middle Ages, when *acedia* was held to be such a grievous sin, writers and counselors advised religious, priests, and laypeople alike of the importance of devotional fervor as a sign of the true love for God. In a Calvinist world or even in a non-theological, colonial context, fervent dedication to work could be seen as a sign of fulfilling a vocation. More particularly in the case of Culion, colonial administrators and medical personnel came to demonstrate the nobility and legitimacy of their work in part through their vigorous pursuit of their tasks. At Culion, zeal in both religious and secular contexts was a crucial response to the listlessness of the lepers, and fostering in the lepers themselves an energetic spirit became one of the tests of the success or failure of the entire colony.

Leprosy itself is the one disease which has become so interwoven with Christianity that its history has become inseparable from the history of Christianity itself.⁶ Also required, therefore, for understanding the history of the Culion leprosarium is a consideration of medieval, early modern, and colonial experiences of leprosy. This essay, then, allows medical, colonial, and religious texts from different contexts and time periods, but all dealing with the question of human energy and effort, to inform one another in the effort to interpret the dynamics of leprosy, zeal, and listlessness in Culion. What initially will be provided is a very brief consideration of the medical aspects of leprosy. Attention will then be paid to the relationships between leprosy and Christianity in the medieval, early modern, and colonial periods. Following that will be an overview of the founding and history of Culion. The subject of listlessness and activity at the colony will be treated from biological and colonial perspectives in order to see how the problematics of the lepers’ inactivity were formulated. The role of energy in the

⁶See *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, “Leprosy (In the Bible).”
island's Catholic religious life is examined next through a consideration of the zealous ministries of the Jesuits and the nuns and their impact on the leper colonists. As members of religious orders, these men and women clearly recognized the dangers of listlessness, and they actively cultivated zeal in their members. Such efforts helped transform the leprosarium into a viable, purposeful home for many, though certainly not all, of the lepers sent to Culion. Finally, ways will be suggested in which the historical concerns of this remote island highlight two often overlooked historical factors — the broader importance of human energy as a historical question, and the role of religious belief in fostering human capacities for vigorous action.

Hansen's Disease

Leprosy is a contagious, chronic disease caused by the *Microbacterium leprae* with an unpredictable, though often lengthy incubation period. There are, generally speaking, two major forms of the disease, a mild form characterized as tubercular, and the more infamous form, lepromatous. The former primarily entails a loss of sensation; the latter has produced the more familiar image of gruesomely deformed hands and faces. Notwithstanding the over 130 years since the bacillus was discovered, during the period 1871-75, by Armauer Hansen, to more recent times which find the World Health Organization seeking to declare leprosy no longer a public health problem (owing to the success of multi-drug therapy in the 1980s, the number of people with the disease has dropped dramatically from a high of perhaps 15,000,000), the workings of the disease, now called Hansen's Disease, still remain a mystery. Contemporary leprologists avoid the term “leper” because those suffering from the disease have fought long and hard to be designated as “Hansenites” or “patients of leprosy.” They, better than anyone else,

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5 If you ask ten different leprologists the same ten questions about the etiology, microbacteriology, and transmission of the disease, you will be given responses representing one hundred different theories about Hansen's Disease.
realize that even today the term "leper" separates a person from the rest of humanity. I use the term "leper" in this paper not out of disrespect for patients with Hansen's Disease but because the men and women sent to Culion were precisely that: "lepers," people who were outcasts and feared.

While, today, the segregation of lepers occurs in only the most extreme cases, in 1901, when the decision was made to establish a leper colony in the Philippines, leprologists differed as to the efficacy of segregation as a preventive health measure. Clearly, the disease was not as contagious as other deadly, widespread diseases such as tuberculosis — but it was contagious, and many were afraid. Hawai'i had witnessed a startling epidemic during the nineteenth century, and the establishment of the famous lepersarium in Molokai in the 1860s as well as the colonial lepersaria throughout the world in the late nineteenth century was due in large part to the fear that Europeans going into tropical regions where leprosy was endemic would now themselves be exposed to a loathsome disease (and might even bring it back home to London or New York). The many unknown aspects of leprosy's transmission and the conflicting evidence about contracting the disease heightened this fear. Segregation seemed to provide the only certain form of protection, as no vaccine was available and as there were no intermediaries of transmission, such as water or mosquitoes, which could be treated or eliminated. Moreover, providing a home for the "unfortunates" (as they were often called) seemed for many to be the proper response of Christian charity.

Leprosy and Christianity

If one checks the entries for various African or Asian countries in the Catholic Encyclopedia, published during the early years of Culion's existence (1907-1914), alongside of statistics concerning the number of priests, religious, laypeople, church buildings, hospitals, and schools, one finds discussions of numbers of lepers being treated. Indeed, for the late nineteenth and early-twentieth century Church, setting up lepersaria in tropical countries was a defining feature of Catholic (and Protestant) missionology. This accounts for the enthusiastic response on the part of many Sisters of St. Paul de Chartres and many Jesuits eagerly to episcopal calls for volunteers to serve at Culion. However, the
modern traditions of segregation as well as the particular religious responses and constructions of this disease were developed mainly in the medieval period. The modern use of the term “unfortunates” for lepers illustrates the importance of this legacy quite well; the term directly translates the Latin term used during the Middle Ages, *miselli*.

Fundamentally, there was a paradox about leprosy in medieval Europe, an acute ambivalence which derived from biblical sources and which reappeared in various ways at Culion. On the one hand, following the injunctions of *Leviticus* 13, the disease could render a person vile and unclean, and force him or her to walk about with a noisy clapper to maintain distance from the healthy. On the other hand, the stories of the encounters between Jesus and lepers (including the parable of Dives and Lazarus, whose sores tradition came to regard as leprous), guaranteed that many medieval Christians would see that they had a special obligation to minister to those suffering from the disease. Modern workers in leprosaria were well aware of this dual heritage, viewing themselves as being more humane than many of their preursors while being in continuity with the proper Christian attitude towards the unfortunates.

While local practices varied enormously and while these changed for a variety of complex reasons during the course of the Middle Ages, the image of the medieval leper carrying a clapper and the rituals separating this person from the community were the most infamous. During a solemn ceremony which imitated rites for the dead, the priest would warn the leper to remain apart from the rest of humanity; not to touch others; not to touch any items for sale except with a stick; to stay downwind from people while talking; to keep off narrow roads; and to avoid public water supplies. Many were expected to remain in secluded institutions. Medieval leprosaria, or lazar houses, were often modeled on monastic houses, and the lives of lepers were regulated to

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restrict their movements (often to prevent sexual intercourse) and to
direct their lives towards prayers to atone for the sins for which leprosy
was considered the just punishment.

A number of factors contributed to such social responses to leprosy
and leprosaria: among them, mistranslations and misappropriations of
Levitical terminology (the Hebrew zara 'ath was almost certainly not
Hansen's disease), a habit of reading leprosy allegorically for heresy (and
the concomitant need to purify society), the awful smell and horrible
physical conditions of what was probably an increasing number of
people with lepromatous leprosy, fear of contagion, Christian charity,
and the need to provide some basic care for the disabled. Some argue,
however, that social and political factors predominated. R.I. Moore
speculates that the development of leprosaria in the twelfth century was
an integral part of the formation of a "persecuting society" in the pe-
riod. Lepers, Jews, heretics, homosexuals: these were all outside of a
Christendom which was struggling to redefine itself in the anxious, tur-
bulent world of the twelfth century, and attacks against these people
and the justification of such violence became a central element of me-
dieval society's capacity to control its members. The socially-accepted
regimes by which accusations of leprosy could lead to the persecutions
of any number of undesirables (such as vagrants) were quite useful be-
cause the diagnosis of leprosy might be applied to people with any num-
ber of skin ailments. Moore asserts that even if evidence suggests that
it was

possible to distinguish Hansen's disease with a fair degree of con-
sistency from other disabling and disfiguring conditions, includ-
ing venereal ones... it is also easy to see how the suspicion of lep-
rosy might fall on those who incurred the displeasure or disap-
approval of neighbors, or became a burden to them. Every account
of the leper makes him a repository of fear and suspicion.7

7R.I. Moore, The Formation of a Persecuting Society: Power and Deviance in Western
Europe, 950-1250 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987), p. 79. Moore acknowledges that the prob-
lem of leprosy in the Middle Ages is a highly complex one, and at the current state of
research, both textual and archaeological, it is difficult to go beyond hypothesis and
guesswork. His juxtaposition of leprosy and other persecuted groups perhaps leads him
to take less interest in the ways in which lepers were also important for Christian char-
ity and the ways in which they might be distinct from these other minorities.
Though they would adopt the emblem of Saint George in imitation of the Knights of Saint George who treated lepers in the Middle Ages, leprologists of the twentieth century also consciously contrasted themselves with this sorrowful history of the exclusion and oppression of lepers. Still, the idea that lepers were being justly punished persisted well into the modern period. The belief that leprosy was a result of sin found its counterpart in the suspicion that many whites who contracted leprosy (such as the handful of American soldiers who ended up at Culion or, more famously, Father Damien of Molokai in Hawai‘i) contracted the disease from having sex with a leper. As with AIDS today, leprosy was not easily separated from suspicions about the behavior of its victims. Similarly, the power of simply accusing someone of leprosy was utilized in both medieval Europe and in the Philippines. Medieval historians would not be surprised by a 1914 denunciation in a Manila newspaper of the nameless abuses and arbitrary actions which are committed in the examination of lepers, or persons thought to be lepers. This weapon has been a powerful weapon for vengeance in the hands of some little caciques, especially in the provinces where a denunciation, the slightest suspicion, or the smallest indication which might be considered as an apparent symptom of leprosy, is enough, and more than enough, for an individual to be molested, detained and shut up among suspects and persons known to have that terrible disease.

The rigorous policies of the “American sanitary order” and the extremes to which legislation sought to promote the identification and detention of those suspected to carry the disease enabled some Filipinos to dominate their neighbors perhaps in ways similar to those which

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8 On the adoption of the emblem, which appeared on the cover of the *International Journal of Leprosy* (hereafter *IJL*), originally published at Culion, see IJL 3 (1935), pp. 337-8.

9 For a discussion of the accusation by the Rev. C. McE. Hyde that “He was not a pure man in his relations with women, and the leprosy of which he died should be attributed to his vice and carelessness” as well as Robert Louis Stevenson’s vigorous defense of Father Damien, see John Farrow, *Damien the Leper* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1937), pp. 207-220.
may have prevailed in the Middle Ages.  

It would be a mistake, however, to overlook the crucial ways in which Christians in the Middle Ages also saw potential sources of spiritual power and meaning in embracing leprosy and lepers. The death to the world necessitated by the leprous condition (and which was legally instituted in various ways), brought a person closer, in a sense, to the next. For some medieval ascetics, the physical suffering involved prepared one for future glory insofar as it constituted both punishment and expiation for the sins of this life. The response of Father Tarragó, one of the Jesuits at Culion, to his diagnosis of leprosy was "God has granted me the grace of being a leper." (He was subsequently declared negative, but fear of the disease among even some of his fellow Jesuits required that he change his name and accept reassignment to China.)  

Leprosaria were also thought to be able to provide the members of their constituencies with a purposeful existence — that is, if they could be made to live like cloistered monks, subject to a similarly powerful and heavily regulated prayer and devotional life. Such a dedicated life could have brought both monks and lepers closer to God than nobles, merchants, or peasants. By contrast, at Culion, American officials were stymied by their inability to provide a genuine purpose for the lepers other than waiting and dying. Amusements and diversions were touted — especially the provisions for music and drama — but one senses in the colonial records the unstated problem that there was really no meaningful purpose the administration could offer them, particularly if they were no longer able to work.

Specific medieval religious orders, such as the Knights of Saint Lazarus, dedicated themselves to the treatment of the sick, especially

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lepers (whom they numbered amongst themselves), and the traditions which these men and women fostered were to be vital for leprosaria in the modern era. The first leprosarium in the Philippines, San Lazaro outside Manila, was established by the Franciscans in 1631, partly in response to Saint Francis' own call to his men to work with lepers. The Sisters of the Third Order of Saint Francis who served as nurses at Molokai similarly followed in his footsteps. The ceiling of the church in Culion prominently displays the Maltese Cross. As part of their own continuing ministry to "be a serf and slave of our lords the sick" (as their medieval vow stated) the Sovereign Military Order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem, of Rhodes, and of Malta, formerly the crusading order known as the Knights Hospitaller, donated large sums of money to the church and community of Culion. Similarly, in the 1920s, priests from the Benedictines or Augustinian Recoletos journeyed to Culion not to play out a distinctive corporate effort but to participate in this long tradition of ministry to lepers. The sponsorship of a leprosarium was thought to bring great spiritual and even political benefits. Queen Matilda, wife of Henry I of England, was one among many medieval women to do works of mercy and demonstrate their charity by personally cleansing, even kissing, lepers or by founding a home for them. Whether securing prayers from lepers, earning rewards in heaven, or establishing status in a region, the endowment of a leprosarium provided an important occasion for Christians to exercise their beliefs and obtain significant rewards.

In the early modern period, leprosy remained an important theological topic even if it was no longer a pervasive medical problem. (In the course of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the thousands of leprosaria in Europe came to contain fewer and fewer lepers; the institutions were closed, or more frequently, monarchs reestablished them as hospitals for other diseases or utilized them (and their revenues) for


13 Kealey, Medieval, p. 91.
other purposes). Luther, for example, addresses the question familiar to medieval canon lawyers as to whether contracting leprosy invalidates a marriage. (As shall be seen, at Culion the lepers, administrators, and religious all fought over whether lepers could marry, whether divorce should be allowed, and what would happen to spouses and children of lepers). He argues that if one party hides the disease from the other before the betrothal, then the other person can nullify the partnership. If both parties were aware of the disease beforehand, then there is no grounds for separation. “[I]f one or two such defects [such as leprosy, deafness, or blindness] should strike a person after the betrothal, the parties shall not separate, but shall suffer together what God has inflicted upon them and bear it together.” Moreover, the simple fact that Jesus healed lepers guaranteed that divines would be able to find in the biblical narratives ample resources for preaching and exegesis. Thus, Luther illustrates the importance of Christians performing benevolent deeds even if they receive little benefit or thanks: “The fact that our kindness has not been completely wasted should be sufficient for us; and if among ten lepers one returns and acknowledges the kindness, this is enough (Luke 17:18).” Significantly, Luther opposes sloth to Christian zeal when he uses this same passage to encourage Christians to provide hospitality even to those who are idle and slothful. “[W]e should not give up this eagerness to do good to others. . . . Christ heals ten lepers and He knew that only one would be grateful (Luke 17:11-19).” Jesus Himself provides a model for zealous Christian service, and the stories of his cleansing of lepers remained latently powerful, ready to

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14 Michel Foucault thus begins his *Madness and Civilization* with the late medieval transference of the moral, scapegoated categories of the “leper” to the mentally ill. The reasons for the decline in leprosy remain obscure — possibly the plague of the mid-fourteenth century and its decimation of the population made it impossible for lepers to remain in endowed institutions. Perhaps the segregation of lepers actually decreased the incidence of the disease (archaeological evidence suggests the majority of lepers in leprosaria had the lepromatous form of the disease, the more contagious form of leprosy).


16 Martin Luther, *Lectures on Genesis*, LW vol. 3, pp. 50 and 183.
be reappropriated by Christians centuries later. Thus, through biblical continuity and traditional themes as well as figurative uses of the disease (Shakespeare describes the poison for Hamlet’s father in terms of its leprous qualities), the construction of leprosy remained an important part of Western religion and society even when leprosaria no longer covered the landscape.

Luther’s reading of Deuteronomy 24:8, however, suggests an important shift in the Christian treatment of leprosy away from its interpretation as a form of divine punishment, towards a purely medical interpretation, which was more likely to evoke compassion. He retains the link between the disease and religious danger in his explicitly allegorical reading of the text: “It is self-evident that leprosy denotes the spiritual contagion of godlessness. Therefore it must be carefully avoided, according to the judgment and ministry of the Levites.” His literal reading, however, affirms the importance of separating the leper from society, but it does so for non-theological purposes. “That is, the lepers are to be set apart from common association with citizens, since leprosy is contagious and the commonwealth needs a clean and strong people. An example is Miriam, the sister of Moses, who was shut out by the command of the Lord (Numbers 12-14). “If she was not spared to remain in the camp, no one is to be spared.”17 Thus, as the allegorical reading of biblical texts became less common (Protestants and many reforming Catholics were highly critical of allegorical exegesis), the reading of “lepers” for “heretics” which had been so devastating in the Middle Ages was to become less and less important in shaping Christian attitudes towards leprosy. Instead, the literal readings of Jesus’ cleansing lepers could increase in prominence. Indeed, in the Middle Ages, Francis’s acceptance of a vocation with lepers was itself part of his own recovery of the literal Jesus of the gospels. Whereas other Christians of the late twelfth century would see a majestically-enthroned, detached Lord of judgment before Whom one should tremble, Francis would see a man and His followers whose ministries called out to be emulated. As shall be seen subsequently, the Jesuits’ emphasis on the imitation of the lives of Jesus and the apostles likewise would contribute decisively to their ministry with lepers at Culion.

17 Martin Luther, Lectures on Deuteronomy, LW vol. 9, pp. 245 and 242.
When Europeans began to spread across the globe in the early modern period, they encountered significant numbers of real lepers once again. If the founding of San Lazaro in Manila by the Franciscans was in continuity with Francis's preaching about the importance of ministering to lepers in the thirteenth century, the occasion for the founding of that institution was decidedly part of the early modern world, for in 1631, the Japanese expelled one hundred and thirty Japanese lepers and forced them onto a boat for the Philippines, challenging the unwelcome Christian missionaries who had come recently to Japan to practice what they preached. When that ship arrived in Manila, the Spanish governor, Don Juan Niño de Tavora, in concert with the "council of state" decreed that the lepers be "taken straight to the church; and that they should be welcomed, entertained, and supported with the alms which [the Spaniards of Manila] desired to apportion."18 Not only did the Spaniards and Portuguese encounter lepers in Africa and Asia, they themselves helped transmit the disease to what were probably unexposed populations in the Americas. Leprosy had remained relatively more prominent in the Iberian peninsula than in the rest of Europe, and its presence in the Iberians and the transatlantic shipments of slaves bearing disease probably account for much of this transmission to the New World. Thus, whereas continental Europe had seen the closing of leprosaria in the early modern period, the colonies of Europeans in this era would see leprosaria opening.19

But it was only in the nineteenth century with widespread colonial expansion and imperial rule that westerners from many countries once again had to confront and assume responsibility for great numbers of people actually suffering from Hansen's disease. From the 1870s, with the advent of worldwide steamship transportation and with the ultimate acceptance of the germ theory of disease, the control, treatment,

18 See Tavora's letter to Philip IV in Emma Blair and James Alexander Robertson, eds., The Philippine Islands (Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark, 1903-09), vol. 24, p. 206. Leprosy probably existed in the Philippines well before this event (due to the long-standing commercial ties between China where leprosy had existed for centuries and various Philippine communities), but this was the event which dates the separate treatment of lepers by the Franciscans.

and eradication of diseases was becoming a global phenomenon, indeed a global necessity (it is possible that the increase of leprosy in Norway in the nineteenth century was the result of returning seamen bringing the disease back from their voyages). Thus, the English Protestant Mission to Lepers was founded in 1874 (initially concerned primarily with India), and many other organizations, most with religious origins, soon followed. For many Christians, particularly Protestants, leprosy work came to represent an important fusion of biblical identity and modern science. A person working as a missionary or doctor (in many cases as both) in a lepersarium could see himself (they were mostly male) right alongside Jesus being “moved with pity” and bestowing a healing touch (Mark 1:40-45). And this leprologist-missionary simultaneously could see himself as an enlightened, benevolent promoter of progress. Not surprisingly, this passage from Mark was frequently quoted by the fundraising brochures of the American Mission to the Lepers. Thus, the diverse entries for Asian countries in the Catholic Encyclopedia referred to above were bearing witness to a contemporary global phenomenon not only in Asia but also in Africa and Latin America, and the religious who served at Culion were likewise part of a polymorphous international community of Christians serving in leprosaria.


21Photography has helped to sustain this link between modern and biblical “leprosy.” If you look in illustrated Bible dictionaries you may well see photographs of lepers along a wall, begging for alms or, less frequently, photos of helpless lepers who have lost digits from hands and feet. The disease we see is the disease Christ healed. These images of listless, helpless beggars, by the way, themselves speak to the constellation of issues surrounding leprosy, energy, inactivity and helplessness with which the Culion texts are so concerned.
Culion: From the Last Spot in Christendom to the World’s Largest Leprosarium

For much of the Spanish era in the Philippines (1565-1898), Culion was the remotest spot in Christendom. An island southwest of Manila in the South China Sea, it was used for well over two centuries by the Spanish as a frontier outpost against Muslim slave raiders from Borneo and the southern, non-Hispanized parts of the Philippines, much as a crusading castle might have been used against Islam in the Middle Ages. Located at the extreme western portion of the Hispanized Philippines, its fort and church marked, in a very real sense, the edge of Spanish power, of the Patronato Real, and thus of the Church’s support for Spanish colonization and the spread of Christendom. By the early 1890s, however, a single Spanish officer presided over a garrison of nine soldiers sent there to protect local Filipinos, not so much from Moros, as from bandits.22

In the view of those Americans who came to expel the Spanish from the Philippines, Spanish rule, and the Spanish Church in particular, was medieval in the worst senses of the word.23 In contrast to the well-respected early friars who were known for their zealous ministrations and activities (such as learning local languages and underwriting the defense of Filipino rights before the Crown), their counterparts during the time of the Spanish-American War, were perceived to be parasitical and lazy (not to mention lecherous), content to live off the vast revenues of their haciendas. They appeared to be living examples of the villainous friar described so cunningly in Chaucer’s Prologue to his Canterbury Tales. Not surprisingly, one of the central goals of the Philippine Revolution, which began in 1896 and led to a very brief alliance between Filipinos and Americans (particularly those who thought poorly of the Catholic Church) prior to the outbreak of the Philippine-American War in 1898, was to expel the friars.

22 Dean C. Worcester, The Philippine Islands and Their People (London: MacMillan, 1899), p. 484-5. Copies of this text and many other materials used for this essay were found in the American Historical Collection at the Ateneo de Manila University. I would like to thank Lewis E. Gleeck Jr., Sara Collins Medina, and the staff of the collection for their assistance.

Even the most cursory glance at official American reports of the American colonial regime which established itself on the islands in the first years of the twentieth century would make it quite clear that the new administration, as it viewed the pitiable condition of the islands, wanted to clean the place up. The Yankees were appalled at the lack of sanitation and the horrendous state of public health. In particular, they were shocked by lepers who “wandered through the towns at will, spreading the disease broadcast,” threatening the well-being of American and Filipino alike.24 While the initial estimates provided by Church authorities for the total numbers of lepers in the country turned out to be grossly exaggerated (the 1902 survey by the Bureau of Health soon estimated five thousand, not twenty-five thousand nationwide), the pre-war capacity of San Lazaro and the smaller leprosaria in the country was only four hundred. San Lazaro itself had been abandoned both by Franciscans and lepers during the war, as had been a smaller facility in southeastern Luzon. Because they feared that leprosy might be on the increase, colonial officials followed contemporary colonial practice in India and elsewhere in Asia, and decided on segregation as the best response. Americans had accomplished this at Molokai in Hawai‘i and at Carville in Louisiana, on the premise that a proper American institution could provide better housing and food than the badly disfigured lepers would have otherwise received.25


25Forbes notes (Philippine Islands, vol. I, p. 343) that in the Spanish period, “It is said that in some of the cities instances occurred of revolts against the poor food and treatment, when the lepers rushed the markets and fingered the food which was held there for sale.” As Forbes’ report is not free from distortion, this record needs independent confirmation, although its inclusion is representative of the American disdain for the treatment of the diseased in the Spanish era. On the racial elements in the decisions to segregate lepers, particularly those in Louisiana, see Zachary Gussow,
The task of choosing an appropriate location— one suitably remote but close enough to allow for visitors and to make the transportation of lepers easier— was given to Dean C. Worcester, a former zoologist turned colonial commissioner, who had traveled widely in the Philippines. When he had visited Culion in the early 1890s, he described it as "a very healthful place," and he must have been optimistic that the island where he hunted deer and pythons would prove to be an appropriate place for a leprosarium.26 (That one of his visits there was in the cooler, wetter month of December may have contributed to his error in judgment; the lepers were to be quite concerned with lack of adequate water supplies, particularly during the very harsh droughts of 1912, 1914, and 1915.)27 The local residents of the town were bought out (Worcester suggests that the leading citizens were two wealthy, exploitative mestizos, a few Chinese mestizos running "wretched Chinese shops", and a greedy, autocratic, drunkard of a priest).28 They, for their part, petitioned their bishop that they be allowed to take the images and other ecclesiastical objects from their church at Culion to their new home on a neighboring island. When the religious and lepers arrived, therefore, there were to be few existing material resources and no parochial habits to direct their behavior. Even before the coming of the lepers, Bishop Rooker had declared, "This is perhaps the most miserable diocese in the islands."29 More than the usual amount of priestly energy would be required for the new community.

In part because of complications arising from the Spanish crown's ownership of much Church property throughout the Patronato Real,
the transference of ecclesiastical lands and holdings during the transition from Spanish to American rule was vexing both to the Catholic hierarchy and to the new administration. It is a rather accurate sign of Catholic concerns in the Philippines at this time that Bishop Rooker, in whose diocese Culion was, struggled to defend the church's ownership not only of the church building itself but also of the fortifications which surrounded it. The predominant mood among Catholics in the first half of this century in the Philippines was of being besieged. Masons, Protestants, and members of the schismatic Philippine Independent Church were threatening the faith from all sides, and an ecclesiastical hierarchy which had been trained under the Spanish system of royal patronage, and which had been depleted by flight during the war, was poorly equipped to deal with anti-Catholic Americans noisily demanding the separation of Church and State. The Catholics at Culion were to find themselves fighting the same kinds of battles and employing much the same rhetoric as Catholics throughout the rest of the country. If Culion had been a frontier against the marauding Muslims, it now served as a frontier against proselytizing Protestants, even if the bishop did end up losing the fort.30

In 1906, with great fanfare and many photographs of lepers living in a well-ordered, clean community with a modern septic system, Director of Health Victor G. Heiser stated that it was his "very pleasant duty" to announce the opening of Culion light of the government's hopes of finding a treatment for these "unfortunates."31 The first funeral on the island, however, was held two days after the first shipment of lepers arrived. Within a few years, the colony's first doctor was pressured to leave on account of neglect of duty and financial misconduct. From the medical and colonial points of view, an inadequate budget, a variety of unforeseen problems such as epidemics and an inadequate

30 The problem took until January 1912 to resolve. By then, Bishop Rooker had died of heart failure and the parishes of the Calamian islands, where Culion was located, had been transferred to the newly-created Apostolic Prefecture of Palawan. That this part of the Philippines was (and still is) considered ready not for an episcopal diocese but for such a prefecture suggests how remote the area has been from the rest of the country. On the early struggles over church buildings, see "Culion Leper Colony and the Catholic Church," undated, unsigned typescript, ASJPP VI.6.007.

water supply, and a genuine uncertainty about what to do about leprosy, combined to make the colony little more than a place for lepers to go to and die in the first decade and a half of its existence. As shall be seen, it was precisely during this period that the Catholic Church was most active in its efforts to empower the colonists.

From the outset, colonial officials sought to create as much space as possible for the lepers to exercise what freedom, duties, and energies they had. Within six months, the lepers had established a school for the younger colonists. The police force was composed entirely of lepers (the first chief of which was a real scoundrel in the eyes of the nuns), and the colonists themselves established many of the rules and regulations governing daily life there. In 1914, the Culion Advisory Board was formed, and all men and women between eighteen and sixty were allowed to vote for representatives to this body. (This seems to represent the first time that women had ever been allowed to vote for a formal governing body in the Philippines; like the American constitution at the time, the colonial constitution for the Philippine government did not enfranchise women). The Chief of the Colony, however, retained great discretionary powers over a community in which barbed wire and guard posts, as well as the liberal use of disinfectant, impressed upon all the fact that this was a community driven by medical authority.

In addition to isolation and physical disability, the two most important problems facing lepers at Culion were the prohibition of leper marriages and the practice of separating newborns from their families. Initially, marriages were disallowed because colonial medical officials did not want to see children born to lepers. There was some speculation at the time that the disease might be hereditary, and even if it was not, the fact that children seemed to be more susceptible to the disease meant that there was a high likelihood that they would contract leprosy. (Sterilization of males desiring marriage was considered in the 1930s, but this option was opposed by the religious on the island). When, in response to the lepers’ demands and to the fact that they were engaged in widespread concubinage anyway, marriages were finally allowed (from 1910 to the late 1920s, and again from the early 1930s on), the colony took newborns away from their parents, placed them in the care of the nuns, and arranged for their adoption (by relatives whenever possible), or at least for their transfer to an orphanage in Manila. Many lepers thus had to endure not only an initial separation from their
previous life and community, but also a second separation, which turned their efforts to create a new life into a cruel reminder of their outcast status.

The major turning point in Culion's history came with the appointment of General Leonard Wood as Governor-General of the Philippines in 1921. Wood, a Harvard-educated doctor who had participated in the pursuit of Geronimo in the southwestern United States; was commander of Roosevelt's Rough Riders in Cuba; became the military governor of that island; commanded the American forces in Mindanao (later defending Pershing's harsh campaign there); rose to chief of staff of the U.S. Army and prepared it for entry into World War I; almost won the Republican nomination for president in 1920, was governor-general of the Philippines until his death in 1927. His biographers depict him as a man of great energy, one who believed "in the importance of the visibility of authority" and who "traveled incessantly."32 Inspired by American self-confidence and his own experience in stamping out yellow fever in Cuba, Wood dedicated approximately one-third of the nation's budget for the department of health to Culion because he decided that it was time for America to stamp out leprosy. (In addition, it seems that he felt personally energized by the need to reestablish a proper American administration in the Philippines after the previous governor-general's attempt to Filipinize the government; to Wood, Harrison's era resulted in laxity, corruption, and inefficiency, and he sensed a need to reinvigorate the administration of the country). Some contemporary observers believed that Wood's support for Culion was part of the coming 1924 campaign for the presidency; as with Henry I of England in the Middle Ages, support for lepers could be intimately connected to political legitimacy and power.33 Wood also inaugurated an international fundraising campaign for Culion and the eradication of leprosy. Immediately after his death, those who had been energized


by his leadership established the Leonard Wood Memorial for the Eradication of Leprosy, an institution which today continues the work of treatment and research. So important was he in the life of Culion (his determination transformed the island from a place to die to a place for treatment and hope) that, on their own initiative, the colonists erected a statue to him.

As more lepers were sent to Culion, and as more money poured into the place, the colony became by the 1930s the largest leprosarium in the world, reaching a leper population upwards of seven thousand. The work of chief pathologist H. Windsor Wade and the publication of the *International Journal of Leprosy*, which he edited, became integral parts of the international effort to respond to leprosy. The large numbers of lepers there enabled researchers to clarify the basic differences between major types of leprosy and to recognize borderline cases. During World War II, however, most of the lepers starved to death or died from lack of medical care because the Japanese had cut off food and medical supplies. Japan’s valuable resources (and the Pacific war was very much a war of resources and materiel) clearly were not to be wasted on lepers. With Philippine Independence in 1946, the Philippine government decided to address leprosy by establishing regional treatment centers in several places throughout the archipelago and by sending to Culion only those afflicted with the most advanced forms of the disease. Following the emergence of multi-drug therapies in the 1980s, leprosy became a treatable disease, and the island which once was home to thousands of lepers lists only about twenty-five Hansenites in isolated wards, on top of about three hundred clinically negative people still on the island. Currently, the main problem of the town and of thousands of its non-Hansenites is how to adjust to being a “normal” Filipino community, following its removal from the jurisdiction of the Department of Health and elevation to the status of a regular municipality.

*Human Energy and Activity as a Biological and Colonial Problem*

As might be expected, the medical, colonial, and religious discussions of Culion shared a concern for the basic problems of motivation and purpose at a place that seemed more like a prison than a normal community. Why should any of the lepers do anything at all? Why should they not be left to their own to be active or listless as they pleased? Is
listlessness not a kind of death? What should the medical, political, and religious authorities be doing to provide activities or goals for the colony? While this was a recurring set of questions for everyone, each of the different communities involved at Culion approached these issues from their own perspectives, be they the biological, colonial, or religious. While the issues seem straightforward, reconstructing them in their historical context is not so easy. William McNeill describes the difficulty involved in getting people today to grasp the long-term historical effects of diseases. No less than "an act of imagination," is required, he tells us, for us to be able "to understand what infectious disease formerly meant to humankind." Discussing listlessness at Culion similarly requires entering into an unfamiliar world, a landscape of horribly smelling diseased flesh where tuberculosis, nephritis, malaria, unknown fevers, beriberi (to which illnesses lepers were particularly susceptible), and, occasionally, experimental treatments for leprosy meant both a swift death and the enervation of the survivors. Moreover, broadly speaking, history is about movers — not even necessarily about "the movers and shakers" of the world but, more generally, about those who simply move in the world, those capable of acting and of doing things. The whole problematic of inactivity is consequently not familiar to historical narratives, compounding the problem of writing a history of disease and listlessness at Culion. Nevertheless, it is clear that such was the reality at Culion and a central concern of those who were there.

Doctors, administrators, and religious writing at Culion all foreground the biological restrictions of life as a leper colonist. The basic issue of health, naturally, pervades reports, letters, and brochures, and the conscious attempt to construct a viable, meaningful life for lepers led to concerns for fundamental questions about nutrition (how many calories, or how much energy, does the average diet of the colonists provide?); about various diseases (how can malaria best be treated, and how can its powerfully debilitating effects be overcome?); and about climate (how does climate and the "climate stimulation index" of a region affect leprosy and resistance to the disease? will tropical heat sap the energies of Americans living there?). Vivid portrayals of the effects of

34 McNeill, Plagues, p. 254.
35 For a discussion of the "climactic stimulation index," see Clarence A. Mills,
leprosy made it quite clear to Americans who had never seen lepers that the victims of this disease could not be expected to be normally engaged in energetic activity. Heiser writes, "The disease soon produces contractions of the limbs, destruction of tissue, loss of fingers and toes, nervous involvements which result in loss of muscular power, and general debility. Only a small portion of them are capable of performing sufficient manual labor necessary to supply food for themselves." Ex-lepers released from the island who suffered from "physical deformity" and the consequent inability to earn a living on their own sometimes asked to be returned to the more supportive conditions of the colony.  

Not all lepers were incapacitated, however, and administrators, both American and Filipino, expressed frequent disappointment over the "indolent lives" of the able-bodied lepers on Culion. Some of these people, they argued, simply preferred to avoid hard work, as all the necessities of life such as food and housing had been provided for them. Later in the colony's existence, hopes for release were so high that some chose not to begin farms, anticipating that an early return to society would not warrant "arduous labor." But the "institutional mentality" could prevail even in those who were cured or declared to be negative. They might find themselves unable to find a home outside of Culion, in part because of prejudices against lepers and in part because they might, in the language of a government report, be "handicapped by the moral attitude so engendered when it comes to standing alone on [their] own feet." Such failures frustrated officials; the goal of all their own hard work and sacrifices was, after all, to make the lepers "self-supporting, self-respecting normal citizens."  

Some colonists, however, did undertake farming or small cottage industries. Indeed, as Culion expanded, it offered lepers greater hope for earning income than other, smaller leprosy treatment centers.  

"World Leprosy in Relation to Climactic Stimulation and Bodily Vigor," IJL 4, no. 3 (1936), 295-314. As the author notes in footnote one, he had the opportunity to research climate and leprosy thanks to the Leonard Wood Memorial. As the IJL was edited by H. Windsor Wade at this time, this article would have been edited on Culion or in Cebu.  


island used its own metal currency as a way of providing for a segregated leper economy; lepers could use this money at the Culion post office to send money orders to their relatives.) In 1929, for example, attracted by the internal dynamics of the colony's economics (the stigma of leprosy precluded the export of handicrafts), a group of lepers from Cebu volunteered to go to Culion "in order to take advantage of the opportunities of earning money that exist in the large colony of Culion." 38 (As shall be seen in the next section, one form of the Catholic response to the listlessness of the lepers was to encourage small business ventures such as an ice plant and a power plant). Some of these economic opportunities entailed significant costs for the colonists. Those lepers who decided to live further from the colony proper in order to tend small farms on the island tended to be more afflicted by gangrene and were less able to come in for general medical assistance or for treatments involving chaulmoogra oil, the most widely used form of medication in the first half of this century.

Life on Culion would have been challenging even for those with no physical disabilities. The land itself was not very fertile, which would have made the effort to work it daunting indeed. One study of the energy expenditure of farmers in a more fertile part of the country indicates that during the seasons of the most intensive labor, farmers on a typical diet might well expend more calories than they consume, relying on fat stored in the body to make up the difference. In addition, the food that was consumed on the island was probably not as beneficial as it might have been; in the early years of the American colonial government, medical personnel noted "the almost universal infection of the whole population of the Philippines with intestinal parasites." 39 When Worcester visited Culion in the late nineteenth century, there were no forests on the island, and indeed wood was so scarce that during the isolation of World War II, some buildings were torn apart for firewood.

Lack of adequate water supplies was an endemic problem, on the one hand, and typhoons would ravage the area periodically on the other. Simply put, this was not an island blessed with the natural resources to support a colony of any kind. The environmental history of Culion—the history of people interacting with the landscape—is thus a history of suffering.\(^{40}\)

This environmental suffering, of course, was compounded by the anguish of separation and a life of regulations and restrictions, as well as by the effects of the disease itself. But while many poets and novelists in the Western literary tradition have chosen to document their melancholy or ennui in great detail and, at times, to salute it as a source of their peculiar genius, the lepers of Culion have left few records of their anguish and sorrows.\(^{41}\) It may be instructive here to consider the better documented reflections on sorrow in another type of segregated community, the monastery. Monastic advisors of the Middle Ages wrote extensively on the role of *tristia*, sorrow, in the lives of their spiritual wards, and these analyses of the dangers of sorrow serve as important reminders of the ways in which sadness penetrates a person's will and deprives him or her of the capacity to act purposefully. *The Rule of Saint Benedict* carefully directed life in a monastery so that every moment was oriented towards important goods such as manual work or contemplation. A monk overcome with *tristia* was, in effect, no longer able to share the prayer life which ordered the community. Consequently, such a person could also be quite dead to the secular world which sought the intercession of monastic prayers. Feelings such as sadness, therefore were hardly private matters since they could greatly affect the person's role in the corporate prayer life of the monastery. The parallels observed earlier in this essay between a monastic regimen and life in a medieval leprosarium may not directly apply to twentieth-century Culion, but that island, like a monastery, was its own world. Thus the monastic recognition of the power of sorrow to enervate human beings does apply suggestively to a historical understanding of the listlessness of lepers at

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\(^{40}\) This simple but accurate formulation comes from Peter Walpole, SJ of Environmental Science for Social Change. While he applies it more generally to the Philippines as a whole, it seems particularly apt for this leprosarium.

\(^{41}\) For discussions of the roles of melancholy and ennui in the lives of artists, see, for example, Schiesari, *Gendering* and Kuhn, *Demon*. 
Culion, just as it underscores its utter seriousness. At Culion, the historian encounters a community many of whose members were overcome with and zapped of their energies and capacities by great sorrows.

This question of Filipino energy and activity had important, though somewhat contrasting, ideological implications for Spanish and American colonialism in the Philippines. In the late nineteenth century, the country’s national hero, Dr. Jose Rizal, wrote his famous series of articles “Sobre la Indolencia de los Filipinos” as a direct response to the Spanish argument that Filipinos needed Spanish masters because they were naturally lazy. This Spanish claim was itself part of a larger discourse of colonial powers in southeast Asia concerning indolent natives and the benefits of colonial rule. Rizal acknowledged that Filipinos were lazy, but he argued this was due to the effects of Spanish colonization, particularly to their deprivation of incentives for work and the fact that Filipinos were simply imitating lazy Spanish officials. (In many respects, this essay is a precursor to James Scott’s Weapons of the Weak and the important notion of “passive resistance”).

As for the American regime, one senses, for Culion and elsewhere, that Americans justified their colonial administration in part by their desire to invigorate the Filipinos. The language of vigorous action pervades early American colonial documents. Whereas the Spanish colonial administration justified its rule with allegations of the natural laziness of the Filipino, its American successor did so by reference to the Filipino’s Hispanized laziness. America was there to, in the words of Kipling, “Take up the white man’s burden,” (the Spanish never quite seemed white enough to northern Europeans) and to bring the benefits of American enterprise to the poor Filipinos whose Catholicism, many believed, also contributed to their indolence. In many ways, of course, Americans were simply exporting themselves and their habits. Alexis de Tocqueville had observed that “busy-ness” was a characteristic of the new country of America he had come to witness in the 1830s,

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and this same sense of activity and energy was something Americans quite consciously brought with them to the Philippines at the turn of the twentieth century. Americans hoped that Filipinos would imitate them, so that even at Culion, a Filipino could be "encouraged to live a clean, brisk, pleasant, and profitable existence." Filipinos were to learn the disciplined work habits that American and British laborers developed earlier during the industrial revolution through the "transforming power of the cross." While few believed that Methodist preachers would denounce idleness and foster industrious spirits all across the nation as they had a century earlier in Britain, many Americans did hope that the Protestant colonial presence would stimulate and transform a lethargic nation.

Active Filipinos demonstrated America's worth to the Philippines, and, similarly, active Americans demonstrated their worth to the world. That an American was zealous in the pursuit of his or her mission was a clear sign of the mission's legitimacy and the person's integrity. Thus, the *National Almanac and Guide of the Philippine Islands 1926* declares that "Governor-General Wood has been tireless in his efforts to give great comforts and better housing facilities to the lepers." Similarly, the *Saturday Evening Post* (in an article in support of Wood's fundraising efforts) portrays chief pathologist H. Windsor Wade as a man exhibiting the "energies of five able-bodied men," given to "overtime hours," someone who took his lunch to the laboratory "to preserve the precious noon hour" for work. In response to the question whether Americans would contribute to the worthy cause of Culion, the writer of the article echoed familiar biblical language and promised that "We have put our hand to the plow in the Philippines, and the American people are not quitters; they don't lie down on the job." That this description appeared in the *Saturday Evening Post* suggests the extent to which

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44 *The Literary Digest* 49, no. 5 (August 1, 1914), "Where Lepers are Made Happy."


47 Elizabeth Frazer, "Valor: The Personal Record of a Woman's Life on a Leper Isle," *The Saturday Evening Post*, 198, no. 9 (August 29, 1925), pp. 120, 123.
stories about Culion and the noble work there were capable of working their way into America's living rooms, though unfortunately, the American people did not prove to be as generous as Wood had hoped.

In their own ways, Wood and Wade exemplify the arguments of Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (which was published in its original form as a two-part article in 1904-1905, the years in which the original facilities at Culion were being built). While neither of them was seeking to acquire wealth, both viewed an industrious soul as a confirmation of the nobility of its chosen task, as a sign of a person fulfilling a providentially ordained role, a sign of election and, ultimately of the certainty of grace. They inherited the complex combination of theological, economic, and moral dynamics which Weber had identified in his study. Wood in particular, a regular Episcopalian communicant, seems to have sensed what Weber called the "danger of relaxation."\(^{48}\) He was filled with too strong a sense of obligation and Christian purpose to allow himself to become slothful, and personal recollections of those who knew him are, without exception, of a man of energy. While he was not overt in his evangelical zeal, he did hope that, "If we can build up here a strong well-trained, well-disciplined people who are Christians [meaning, possibly, Protestants], we shall have established a most powerful instrumentality for the extension of Christianity in the Orient."\(^{49}\) Wood, Wade, and the institutions they served thus had a special role to play in the world. What is more, they drew their energy in part from the certainty of their place and vocation. As Protestants, they would sing the hymn "Rock of Ages" and the words "could my zeal no languor know" would have resonated with their lives.

As for Wade and Wood, so for the rest of the American enterprise in the Philippines — simply "doing things" was crucial. The extensive

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\(^{49}\) Letter to Hermann Hagedorn, quoted in Chapman, *Leonard Wood*, p. 141. Note that the title of the chapter in which this quotation appears is "Leonard Wood's Puritan Heritage: Purposeful Action Upon the External World."
administrative reports on building projects at Culion and all the effort needed to level the grounds, establish the plumbing system, and build the roads, served to document this vast enterprise of American activity in the Philippines just as the white stones which from 1929 prominently formed the seal of the United States colonial administration on the hillside above Culion indicated that America was at work here. Indeed, if their efforts were successful, it might be under those rocks that Americans would win the race with the British in India to "stamp out leprosy." A sense of national competition with other medical-colonial powers thus also helped to energize the doctors on Culion, and Filipinos would likewise come to take pride in the efforts of Filipino doctors working on leprosy.

But the question soon arose: would Americans be able to maintain this level of energetic service in the Philippines? There were some significant questions as to the possibility of deleterious effects of the tropics on Caucasians, an issue which was seen by some to have serious consequences. In 1915, for example, Ellsworth Huntington published his *Civilization and Climate* which argued that climactic conditions were crucial for determining the degree to which races could maintain the level of activity needed to produce vigorous civilizations. (As of April 1948, the book was in the sixth printing of its third edition). As Warwick Anderson has demonstrated, American officials were deeply concerned about the possibilities of breakdowns in the Philippines. Whether such things were caused by tropical heat, depletion of racial nervous force, overwork, or rays from the sun, they represented a danger, and medical personnel (including Leonard Wood, who had been a physician) sought to regulate American habits of hygiene, diet, and exercise in order to prevent "philipinitis," "neurasthenia," or any number of other manifestations of physical and/or nervous breakdown.

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50 Frazer, "Valor," p. 123.
51 See, for example, Jose P. Bantug, *A Short History of Medicine in the Philippines During the Spanish Regime 1565-1898* (Manila: Colegio Medico-Farmacéutico de Filipinas, 1953), pp. 70-1 and 167 for his praise of Dr. Eloydoro Mercado who worked on early intramuscular injections of chaulmoogra oil.
As Anderson notes, exhaustion in the tropics and its concomitant ill effects could also be taken as a necessary sacrifice that the heroic white man might need to undergo in the tropics. *The Saturday Evening Post* article discussed above centered not on Leonard Wood or on H. Windsor Wade but on Wade's wife, Dorothy Paul Wade, and in her discussions with the author, she describes the listlessness and even futility of her life on the island. "[T]he climate gets you... it slacks your vitality, your purpose, your desire, your will.... I haven't the vitality, the enthusiasm that I have in the States." Her own creative energies have dissipated as she is not able to write to her friends despite being known as a writer. "It's hard for me to concentrate. The futility of it somehow overcomes me, stops my pen." Still, amid such personal languor and languishing, she perseveres in her support of her husband because "the scientific-investigation work... is worth investing these years in."53

Given the importance of being energetic to American colonials, it is not surprising that fear of the loss of will, motivation, and energy due to leprosy also affected popular presentations of leprosy in America and helped shape fundraising efforts. (Fundraising brochures reminded potential donors that their idle money was wasted money). Perry Burgess' famous historical novel, *Who Walk Alone*, the somewhat biographical story of an American soldier who contracted leprosy while fighting in the Philippines and ended up being sent to Culion, was an important vehicle for soliciting donations for the leprosarium.54 A central theme of the novel is the emasculation of the previously vigorous protagonist due to leprosy. Becoming a leper meant losing one's manhood, and losing one's manhood meant a loss of energy and a life of passivity and resignation. Thus, brochures distributed by various leprosy missions in both ecclesiastical and secular contexts would depict two types of lepers: the helpless, listless leper in need of your help, and the smiling, marching, musical-instrument-playing leper whose institution is well-funded. The message concerning the importance of donations in fighting the war against apathy and leprosy was clear.

Legitimation was important not only for Culion's fundraising but also because of various forms of opposition to the colonial enterprise.

53Frazer, "Valor," pp. 121, 123.
From the beginning, American colonial officials and supporters of American overseas expansion had to contend with Democrats and various agricultural interests in the States who were against the colonization of the Philippines and regularly sought to discredit the whole enterprise. Americans were also concerned with Filipino public opinion about Culion, both because of the consequences of political opposition (the Philippine legislature could and did withhold or restrict funds for the colony) and because medical officials needed to generate a positive impression of their leprosy work if potential lepers were to be willing to come forward for treatment. The report to the Philippine Assembly of the 1914 Comité Especial on Culion, led by Filipinos who actually visited the island in February of that year, was highly critical of medical and social conditions there, as were numerous newspaper reports both in the Philippines and in America. Thus, it is of no small concern to Victor Heiser when he notes in his diary that the "lepers were apparently not taking as much interest as they might in the planting of flowers and shrubs about the premises." By contrast, Governor-General Wood seems to have been behind the writing of a Manila newspaper article in which Culion was portrayed as a "lively" institution where "the greater part of the people [are] actively engaged cheerfully in some ordinary work." Listlessness or happy activity — these were the terms of the success or failure of the institution in a Protestant colonial context.

55 For the report to the legislature, see El Ramo de Sanidad en Filipinas (Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1914), pp. 158-64.

56 See Victor Heiser, Diaries, vol. 3, Diaries of Various Leper and Other Trips in the Philippine Islands, "Memorandum of Leper Collecting Trip," (beginning 6/28/13). While Wood receives much of the credit for the development of Culion, Heiser himself was quite actively involved in the institution and closely supervised the inspection and collection of lepers in the island. The diaries are held in the American Philosophical Society Library in Philadelphia. I am grateful for the assistance provided by the staff of this institution. A translation of the newspaper article, "Conditions of the Leper Colony at Culion Described in Detail," (which indicates that it is from an article in El Ideal Manila, 3/6/22) can be found in the US National Archives, RG 350.1972-A.22. A typed note from the translator attached to the translation suggests that Wood was responsible for the article, perhaps even writing it himself.
Jesuits, Zeal, and the Impact of Catholic Energies at Culion

It is within these biological and cultural contexts concerning human activity and listlessness that Catholic zeal becomes so important for Culion. If American colonial administrators inherited a legitimating rhetoric of American energy and Philippine laziness, the Catholic religious inherited a tradition of the importance of pious fervor in the Philippines. The historical record is clear — and it needs examination here — that in part because they were imitating directly Christ’s work with the lepers; in part because they saw themselves in a missionary context (fighting off Protestants and converting the Muslim lepers who were there); and in part because of the simple need for leadership which they saw when they arrived, many of the Jesuits (though certainly not all) and the Sisters of St. Paul de Chartres (as will be discussed later) displayed phenomenal dedication and zeal on what once was, and could still seem, the last place in Christendom.

At the time of their founding in the sixteenth century, the Jesuits inherited and extended medieval traditions both about the dangers of inactivity and about the crucial role of zeal in the life of the Christian and the health of Christendom. When Ignatius of Loyola, writing in the Constitutions of the Society, declares in a parenthetical remark that “idleness” is the “origin of all evils” (otium, malorum omnium origo), the text is drawing on a long medieval tradition concerning the sin of acedia, or sloth.57 Originating as part of the spiritual advice for monks in the desert, discussions of acedia became central to medieval spiritual life and ethics. This vice was seen to be a form of spiritual torpor which manifested itself in an inability to concentrate during prayers, a desire to wander, and indulge in the pleasures of the flesh. For Aquinas and other scholastics, the sin was a sign that a person was opposed to the joy of charity and of good works, and as such it fundamentally inhibited a person from rightly-directed action. Sloth also signified a rejection of the providential ordering of the cosmos and one’s role in it; though such a belief had been profoundly important for the vigorous

Leonard Wood, the lepers may not have been able to share such confidence in the world. Because such a condition could lead to many different forms of sin as the affected person sought comfort or distraction in the illusory joys of the flesh (many vices were called the daughters of acedia), acedia or sloth became one of the Seven Deadly Sins. That Dante placed the cornice of sloth in the center of Mt. Purgatory, in the middle of the entire Divine Comedy, provides a clear indication of how central this category was for medieval ethical reflection. While acedia properly speaking denoted a spiritual apathy, many writers conflated acedia with listless inactivity so that a constellation of these terms could be used interchangeably in any number of contexts.

For a religious order dedicated to an extraordinary mission, sloth or idleness represented one of the greatest dangers to the Society of Jesus. Any such group depends upon maintaining a disciplined elan or esprit de corps, and, as the long history of monastic concern for acedia demonstrates, a community which did not maintain its mission with vigor could give itself over to laxity, sloth, and apathy. In the fourth week of The Spiritual Exercises, the Jesuits would have regularly contemplated the dangers of sloth as part of the meditations on the capital sins (this topos of the Seven Deadly Sins would remain a part of Catholic catechisms into the twentieth century). More dramatically, in 1600, Claudius Acquaviva, then General of the Society, sent his Industrie ad Curandos Animae Morbos to all the superiors of the Society; this manual for the leaders of the Jesuits provides therapies for curing spiritual aridity, apathy, disobedience, laxity, melancholy, and their related phenomena. As he notes in his preface, zeal, energy, and dedication will be required on the part of the superiors as they guided the priests, brothers, and novices in their care. Such qualities would be needed at Culion, too, if the lepers were to avoid the “origin of all evils.”

The Jesuits thus inherited an emphasis on the importance of fervent, holy desires and works. The early Jesuits, following habits dating at least to the end of the tenth century, identified their vocation in terms of the apostles of the New Testament and the vita apostolica (according to Matthew 10:8, a text used in the fourth week of the Exercises, this vocation included a command to “cleanse lepers.”) As with Francis, the pursuit of this life led them to a great respect for the literal, historical meaning of the biblical narratives. John W. O’Malley observes that, “like so many of their contemporaries, they were inspired by a sense of the
immediacy of the New Testament and by the direct relevance of biblical realities and events for their lives and their age.... [T]he contemplations in the Exercises encouraged them to transport themselves in their imaginations back to the biblical events and then to interpret their lives as in some sense a reenactment of them – or, better, as their continuation." Simply put, the early Jesuits — as many Christians before and after — recognized that something extraordinary was at work in the life, teachings, sufferings, death, and resurrection of Jesus, and they realized that such a recognition entails an extraordinary response from those who would follow Christ. To be energetic, fervent, dedicated — to be zealous in the best senses of the word — was indeed the proper response to the gift and revelation of God in Christ.

Given the importance of fervent action to the Society, it is hardly surprising that a striking feature of sixteenth and seventeenth-century missionary accounts of the Philippines is the repeated references to the "zeal" of the missionary friars. Pedro Chirino's Relacion de las Islas Filipinas written at the turn of the seventeenth century, contains many references to the successful conversions of natives brought about through the pious zeal of the Jesuits. Thus, as a historical factor, the pious energy of the missionaries was deemed to be one of the more important factors in the success of the evangelization of the islands. The Jesuits priests and brothers who succeeded Chirino in the Philippines and who volunteered or found themselves at Culion brought with them a recognition of the importance of their pious energy at Culion. Following the Constitutions promulgated by Ignatius, the members of the society were to display a zelum animarum. The frequent use of the word "zeal" in Jesuit accounts of their Culion mission may be hagiographical or simply a traditional narrative device, but such conventions themselves bear witness to the importance of zeal on the island.

One sign of their fervent efforts is the simple physical exhaustion of the priests which is frequently recorded in Jesuit records. Statistics give some idea of how they kept themselves so busy. In 1909, for a colony of about two thousand, each of the two chaplains at Culion would have averaged on a weekly basis 40.6 confessions, 44.8 communions, 4.9 ex-

treme unctions, 5.6 burials, and 12.6 special visits to the sick (not including extreme unctions and regular hospital visits).\textsuperscript{59} The life of a Jesuit there was depicted as being of constant activity: “Every day they go from bed to bed, hearing confessions, conducting sodalities, teaching catechism, consoling, comforting... walking up and down hills in this hot country.”\textsuperscript{60} The lepers themselves recognized the fruit of the Society’s formation in the case of Father Rello. After his departure due to exhaustion and poor health, they sent public letters to newspapers commending his zealous ministries. The official government commendation of the late Father Millan (who, in continuity with medieval traditions had requested service at the leprosarium), described him as “inspired with the teachings of his Master... a power for good in the Colony... a zealous worker and a devoted servant of God.”\textsuperscript{61} Even a reporter for a Protestant newspaper would commend the religious for their persevering, energetic work at Culion.\textsuperscript{62}

The rigorous training of the Jesuits, however, prepared them well for this work. That they had, during their relatively long novitiates, been disciplined to a life of regular work, prayer, action, and contemplation, meant that they were bringing habits of a regulated life to a leprosarium and that they were prepared to use these habits to shape others and give them an ordered purpose (similarly, perhaps, to the way in which medieval lepers were to be shaped by the regulations of their leprosaria).\textsuperscript{63} Likewise, it may be supposed that repeated Ignatian meditations on the visceral and tactile dimensions to the passion and death of Christ prepared them well for working with diseased and deformed bodies and possibly even for seeing in the lepers themselves a Man who was quasi leprosum.

Jesuit promoters of their work at Culion would contrast the environmental and biological conditions of the island (where “the winds

\textsuperscript{59}These statistics are taken from Carl Hausman, SJ, “The Culion Leper Colony,” typescript (no date), ASJPP VI.6.003, p. 18.
\textsuperscript{60}Cullum, “Trip,” pp. 4-5.
\textsuperscript{61}Monthly Bulletin of the Philippine Health Service 6, no. 10 (October, 1926), p. 485.
\textsuperscript{63}On the training of the Jesuits, particularly of American Jesuits, see Peter McDonough, Men Astutely Trained: A History of the Jesuits in the American Century (New York: Free Press, 1992), chapter 5.
always mourn”) with the revivifying effect of their mission. Dying itself was described in terms of its languor as a “death that creeps slowly, so slowly, like a snail, leaving a path of slime and rottenness.” But the transformative power of the consecrated host, the very body of Christ, could change everything. A leper would be “slow, sluggish, fantastic, a swollen bleeding misshapen man [who] pulled his leprous body to the door of the little chapel” so that his body might be “united with “its Maker in the Blessed Eucharist…. In the purity of Holy Communion, Eduard [a former medical student who became a leper] saw that he was clean, wholly clean.”

The narrative of Eduard’s energetic, fervent reception of the Eucharist echoes important themes from the Middle Ages. The Eucharistic devotion witnessed on Culion was a product of the development of medieval Eucharistic piety, a piety which, as seen in the classic *Imitation of Christ*, emphasized the importance of fervor in receiving the body and blood of Christ. Moreover, there is a clear sense in the Jesuit’s narration of this story that, just as in the Middle Ages, Christians were called upon to recognize that the glory of God could be revealed in lepers who lead a devout life of prayer and sacramental participation.

But the priests and the nuns certainly did not limit themselves to basic sacramental functions and daily visitations; they were also dedicated organizers. By 1915, the religious landscape of Culion included the Apostleship of Prayer, the Sodality of Our Lady, congregations for both boys and girls under the patronage of their guardian angels, the *Cincos Llagas* honoring the five wounds of Christ (an organization especially meaningful for older women as it allowed them to live together in houses designated for their use), and the *Congregacion Mariana*. Similarly, daily rosary recitations in the various hospital wards for men and women were introduced. Because marriages were forbidden during the early years of the colony, the temptation for immoral cohabitation was quite strong. Much to the regret of many young men, the sisters sought to inculcate what a later writer characterized as the “virile spirit of piety” in the young women so that they could resist the advances of the men.

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65Carl Hausmann, SJ, “Notes on Culion Mission, Taken from Diaries of Sisters of...
ous faith was the only way to control lust and the recurring problem of concubinage. One sign of the sisters’ success in this area is the fact that there were not only repeated petitions for the colonial administrators to remove the sisters, their watchful eyes, and their devotional leadership, but also demonstrations by young women calling for the sisters to stay. It should also be recalled that the sisters were dedicated nurses, and their duties (which included cleansing sores, amputations, and dental work) could be dramatically increased if several of their number fell ill, as they did during the influenza epidemic of 1918. They, too, would receive numerous commendations for their “unflagging devotion.”

Given their order’s history, it is not surprising that the sisters undertook their multiple tasks with such zeal. The order traces its origin to the Tridentine and post-Tridentine evangelization of Europe under the leadership of French priests and nuns who vigorously promoted Catholicism by working with children, the poor, and the sick. While distinct from the Daughters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul, they claim to be a part of their spirit, and the religious institutions and habits which they and the Jesuits sought to inculcate on Culion derived from this transformation of Catholicism during the early modern period into a religion powerfully responsive to the devotional needs and pieties of the poor. The Sodality of Our Lady, for example, which was so important for Culion was first established by John Leunis, SJ, in the sixteenth century. That such organizations as well as various Eucharistic practices and feasts (such as the feast-day of the Sacred Heart) sought “the complete transformation of the individual and his everyday conduct” served the religious at Culion extremely well. They were able to promote the kind of total purposeful existence which had also been characteristic of medieval leperhospitals and which many of the men and women on Culion decidedly embraced.

Saint Paul. – Also from Conversation with Sister Damien here since 1909,” transcript, ASJPP VI.6.053 (no date), p. 23.

66 On the epidemic, see Hausmann, “Notes,” p. 4. The commendation is from the Monthly Bulletin of the Philippine Health Service 3, no. 3 (March, 1923), p. 102.

67 For a history of the order (which indicates its self-understanding), see Mother Marie Paul Bord, SPC, trans. by Sister Theresina of Jesus Santiago, SPC, Three Centuries of Life (Sisters of Saint Paul of Chartres, 1993).

The energy of the religious at Culion came out of their own beliefs and practices, but an awareness of the need to inspire zeal in laypeople stimulated some religious by fostering their own sense of the power of serving as living imitations of Christ. Thus, when Father Pedro Vigano, a former bishop in India, came to Culion near the end of this days (following biblical and medieval traditions, he had requested service with the lepers of Culion and entry into the Jesuits at the same time), “He,” in the words of an American Jesuit, “embarked upon a plan of saying Mass, one day in this home, one day in another, using his portable altar, and thus having the more abandoned lepers willy-nilly enjoy the holy sacrifice of the Mass right in their poor hearths. No doubt blessings were brought down upon hovels thus honored, faith must have been enkindled in many hearts that had about lost it, and even the determinedly wayward sheep are not likely to have viewed unimpressed the spectacle of an old man who had stepped down from a bishop’s dignity and was entering, after long walks under a hot sun, into their lowly abodes which ordinarily non-lepers might condescendingly and sympathetically look at, but from somewhat afar.”69 A priest imitating Christ could hope to inspire zeal just as Christ had inspired him.

In addition, the presence of Protestantism in Culion seems to have helped energize the Catholic religious. While Jesuits would admit that no more than ten percent of the colony was Protestant, they worried continually about the “heretics” (as they were often called) both because the heretics were well-funded and because they were militantly anti-Catholic. A spirit of vigorous competition seized the Jesuits, particularly the American Jesuits who came to dominant the mission in the 1930s. (In a sense, they brought pugnacious, anti-American-establishment habits from the U.S.). While a Jesuit could conceded that the Protestant chapel was on higher ground in the colony, he also declared that the Catholic church occupied the more prominent position. Fundraising letters and speeches would talk about the need to outfit the Catholic Boy Scout uniforms as splendidly as the Protestant troop’s. This religious competition motivated priests, just as the international competition “to stamp out leprosy” motivated American administrators and doctors.

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The question needs to be asked, however, did the zeal of the priests and nuns make any real difference to the lepers of Culion? The energetic efforts of Father Damien in Molokai have received commendation for their amelioration of the conditions of lepers there, but what can be said about the religious at Culion? A number of sources help provide answers. An American Jesuit visiting the colony in 1926 observed that the Filipino Catholics on Culion, unlike those in "other Filipino towns," were "devout" because of "the untiring efforts of the two Spanish Jesuits stationed there . . . and the noble example of self-sacrifice shown by the French Sisters of Charity [sic] in the hospitals of the island." Another observed the "flourishing condition" of "our holy Faith . . . that prevails at the Culion colony" and attributed it to the "zealous pastors, Spanish Jesuits, and by the self-sacrificing Sisters of Saint Paul of Chartres."70 Perry Burgess recalled a mass he attended on the island: "I watched the eager faces of the congregation as they came to the altar, and the unmistakable peace on their countenances as they departed would have convinced the most skeptical of what an important part religion played in their lives."71

In addition to their presence at mass, many of the Catholic lepers would have participated in the sodalities and other organizations organized by the religious. The spiritual, social, and economic effects of these were distinct (though not universal). As Carl Hausmann, SJ writes, "The Apostleship of prayer . . . did much to create an atmosphere of fervor amongst at least a nucleus of good living Colonists."72 By 1930, when there were about 5200 lepers on the island, there were 1,676 members of the Apostleship of Prayer, 851 young males enrolled as sodalists as well as 382 Daughters of Mary, and 432 women members of Cinco Llagas.73 Thus, anywhere from forty to fifty percent of the colonists

71Perry Burgess, Born of Those Years: An Autobiography (New York: Henry Holt, 1951), p. 76. It should be noted that as a fundraiser, Burgess was not averse to putting the best possible interpretation on events. Nevertheless, his account agrees with what was a widespread sense among observers of the importance of the church at Culion.
73The statistics are taken from Hausmann, "Culion," p. 39.
would be active members of Catholic sodalities (presumably some lepers were in more than one organization). It was through such voluntary institutions that small business enterprises such as a general store, bakery, and bus line were established (Catholic women could also learn needlework from the sisters). In addition, capital was raised through these organizations for larger enterprises such as the Culion Fish, Ice, and Electric Company.

Other effects of religious zeal can be gleaned from the sources. The persistence of the sisters seems to have been crucial in persuading "the less afflicted lepers" to overcome their "considerable repugnance" at the idea of treating the "more gravely afflicted" and to developing a core of leper nurses to care for others.74 Many lepers, of course, rejected the efforts of the church, and they often found few opportunities for purposeful action. As they were provided with food and shelter, they had, in the words of a government report on crime in the colony, "plenty of idle time, and naturally [they must] find some use for this idle time and the most easy and available are gambling and sex indulgence."75 Nevertheless, Catholic organizations provided vigorous programs of sacraments, devotions, and business enterprises (as well as music and Boy Scout activities) for many colonists.

All such activities incorporated prayer, and this work as well as daily recitations of the rosary thus provided purpose and literally empowered the listless. When a thanksgiving Te Deum was sung in their new church on August 27, 1933, the Catholic community was celebrating the success of a lengthy process of construction to which both their prayers and their financial gifts had contributed. In the music of that festive moment and the joys of the accompanying procession and speeches, it can be seen that the Apostleship of Prayer and other sodalities were instrumental in transforming Culion from a cemetery for the shambling to a colony which, with all its isolation and chemicals, engendered meaningful lives for thousands of Hansenites. Prayer, then, is not only about the dedication of energy but also the creation of energy. The Jesuits and sisters of Culion were thus, like the colonial adminis-

trators, bringing their energies to their mission to Culion's lepers. But much more effectively than the government officials, they were also generating energy within the colonists themselves.

**Coda: History, Energy, and the Body of Christ**

The lepers on Culion were quite removed from the traditional topics of history. They were separated from their country, their families, and the developing global economy. They had no opportunity to participate in the great struggles of the Philippines, and as many of them had no children, they would not be remembered lovingly by future generations. Indeed, many of their children were treated as orphans as they were shipped off to Manila, their mothers wailing at the pier, for care and eventual adoption by total strangers. Being on an island of the living dead, as it was sometimes called by its critics, these lepers were in many ways dead to the world and to history.

On the other hand, as was suggested earlier, it may be that the men and women of Culion have something rare to offer to the study of the past precisely because of these circumstances. Culion distills in a peculiar and suggestive way the importance of the multifaceted dynamics of human energy for history. As the repeated appeal to medieval, early modern, and colonial traditions throughout this essay indicates, sloth, sorrow, idleness, laziness, vigor, and fervor are central causes and effects for the history of Culion. And if, indeed, conditions similar to those which these men and women experienced are to be found in varying degrees in other human communities — and certainly such biological, colonial, and/or religious conditions do appear elsewhere — then the same holds for human history as a whole. The importance of these issues can be seen perhaps more clearly at an intimate level, when one imagines, for example, how parents would react if someone, particularly a medical authority, said that their child seemed "inactive."^{76}

It may be possible, then, to describe one crucial element of the historical enterprise as an interrogation of the ways in which men and women in particular contexts have succumbed to listlessness or have been able to be energetic. How have biological, economic, political,
cultural, and religious factors combined to produce vigorous people? How do certain conditions generate the opposite, those who often bear the label "the marginalized"? Note, however, how the historical problem changes when the categories of "center" and "margins" give way to questions of energy and activity. Those who are on the margins — and if anyone was on the margins, it was the lepers of Culion — may be vigorously at prayer or singing with all their might, and those who are at the heart of a nation's political economy may be slothful landlords. In this view of history, the fundamental questions become, do people have energy? how do they express it if they do? Energetic activity in itself can be in the service of good or ill, of neither, or both, but the simple capacity for vigorous effort cannot be presumed, and the conditions contributing to it as well as its ideological importance need analysis.

Such work will require developing broad, multifaceted synthetic approaches to the human body as well as the spirit. But contemporary approaches to "the body" may not perceive all the issues involved. The "body" certainly was for many colonial medical officials the field upon which they exercised vast powers by rendering it the object of investigation (by tissue scraping and blood, urine, and semen tests), and the forcible relocation of men and women by the medical apparatus of a colonial power because of skin blemishes would seem to call for foregrounding questions of power, surveillance, and control over bodies. This would make Culion, therefore, an ideal case of a "total institution" which the developing field of cultural studies regularly explores. But as this study has suggested, the bodies of lepers were much more than political representations manipulated for the sake of supporting a colonial regime. By making colonialism the primary context for studying the body, many topics which were crucial for the lives of the lepers in their diverse contexts might be too easily overlooked. A broader interpretive vision may be needed, one which incorporates other traditions and discourses which helped mold the lepers' understandings of their own bodies.

This study's investigation of religious life on a leprosarium suggests that the body of Christ in its many senses — as a historical body, as a sacrament, as the church — may serve as such a broad heuristic vehicle for studying the history of human energy, particularly in Catholic communities. The suffering, redemptive historical Jesus possessed hands which labored, touched, healed, fed, and suffered, underscoring the basic
problems of work, compassion, disease, nutrition, and pain which the lepers of Culion knew all too well. The consecrated host was the physical presence of a loving God on an island of outcasts, and it offered communicants hopes for a resurrected body, clean of disease. The Church organized and guided communities of work and prayer as it sought to recreate a worshipping body of Christ. In each of these senses, the body of Christ represented something which could provide important sources of energy for the lepers. The ecclesiastically-informed identities of Catholic colonists, therefore, endowed them with diverse resources for invigorating their lives. Their bodies need to be understood as part of the body of Christ, and their zeal and listlessness — their own capacities for dedicated work and joy — call out to be interpreted theologically as well as politically and socially. ☞