

The Effects of Colonial Mentality on the Religious Consciousness of Filipinos

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GENARO D. DIESTO, JR., Ph.D. (1951-2006):

Global Filipino Mission Theologian

David S. Lim, Ph.D.

It is with great pride that I commend this book. It is the magnum opus of my fellow alumnus from Fuller Theological Seminary, who was also my closest campus friend when I was finishing my doctorate there from 1983-1987 and with whom I have kept close touch until he succumbed to stomach cancer in 2006. In this Preface, may I introduce you to the man who wrote this book.

Following the trails blazed by our departed Filipino Christian forebears, Dr. Genaro D. Diesto, Jr., popularly known as “Totik,” gave us a rich legacy of being a truly faithful disciple of our Lord Jesus, in three aspects: He was fully committed to God and His kingdom, to his vocation and ministries, as well as to his family and friends.

Within a few months of his untimely death, he had been given three posthumous awards. In August 17-18, 2006, he was one of two honorees at the First Asian American Baptist Convention (Seattle, Washington, U.S.A.), co-sponsored by the Association of Baptist Churches-USA National and International Ministries and the Asian American Baptist Caucus. He had been offered to serve as the president of the latter many times, but he humbly declined, most probably due to ill health. And in May 6, 2007, he was one of the honorees at the Centennial Celebration of the Los Angeles Baptist Mission Society, when several people who made significant contributions in the last 100 years were recognized. In June 2007, he was also awarded “Outstanding

Alumnus Award” by his alma mater Central Philippine University (CPU), Iloilo City, Philippines.

I met Totik for the first time in 1983, when he and his family had just moved to Pasadena so that he could pursue his doctorate at Fuller. I was also new at Fuller, but perhaps due to being fellow Ilonggos, we became friends. Within a few days, he became my best friend (though I know I am just one of his many “best friends”). He invited me to visit his house and I got to know his wife and son at that time immediately then. He supported the activities that I led as the chairman of the Fuller’s International Students’ Council, and it was in his house that I learned how to use a computer. I left him in June 1987 after I finished my doctorate, when he was getting his thesis proposal approved. He would finish his Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Inter-Cultural Studies at Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California in 1998. His doctoral dissertation, “The Effects of Colonial Mentality on the Religious Consciousness of Filipinos,” earned him the 1998 *Contextualization Award* given by Fuller’s School of World Mission. This thesis is the publication that is now in your hands.

Commitment to God and His kingdom. I think the best compliment I can give him is that he was a faithful disciple of Jesus. Above all, he was committed to God and His kingdom, and God proved faithful to supply all his needs and more (cf. Matt. 6:33)! He inherited the passion and calling of his father, in serving God through itinerant evangelism that resulted in churches planted. While I was at Fuller, I witnessed Totik’s compassion to reach out to the many Filipinos in Los Angeles. He started his ministry with a prayer meeting and Bible study with just one family at first. But with lots of love and patience, more families joined his Bible study groups until they became

large enough to rent a space for a church of their own at the former venue of Temple Baptist Church in 1986. Their congregation was first called Filipino Evangelical Church of Los Angeles (FECLA). It was later changed to Temple Baptist Church (TBC) when FECLA and the Temple Baptist Church congregations merged into one unified church, where he served as a Co-Pastor (1999-2004) and later Senior Pastor (2004-2006). He also helped start two other congregations in Southern California and one in Houston, Texas.

In addition to his pastoring and church-planting ministries, Totik also served as the Director of the American Baptists in Higher Education at University of Southern California (1999-2002) and their Asian Ministries Coordinator. He also served the wider Asian American Baptist family as their regional caucus coordinator (1998-2005) and member of the National Ministries' Asian Ministries Team (1994-1998). These included reaching out and working with the Christian Artists Network at USC, and serving as the region's mentor and resource for Asian pastors. He could always be found helping people in whatever capacity he could.

His passion for evangelism was also evident in his regular participation at annual evangelism and world mission conferences at Green Lake, Wisconsin, as workshop leader on topics of evangelism and intercultural ministries. In all these, his view to "building God's kingdom on earth" went beyond his father's legacy: Totik also added and integrated the socio-political activist dimension to his mission!

In this aspect I am most indebted to him for helping me in this area through his life example and our discussion times together. It was for his political activism that he was imprisoned

and had to flee to the USA. He showed me that we can advocate for the poor (to be “the voice of the voiceless”) without claiming to be one of them. He shared with me the “theology of struggle” materials that were being produced by Filipino Ecumenical theologians (linked to the National Council of Churches in the Philippines, NCCP), as I was forming my “theology of transformation” for Filipino Evangelicals (linked to Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches, PCEC). We worked together to denounce the evils of Martial Law at Fuller (1983-86); in fact, we led a protest team to the Philippine consulate in Los Angeles at the height of EDSA People Power I in February 1986! (Hence I was prepared to be the speaker at the Convention Baptist’s pastoral conference in Iloilo in 1991 to expound on the biblical basis for getting rid of U.S. bases from our country)!

I know that in the ensuing years, he added his advocacy to Asian American concerns also, representing the Filipino voice in faith-based caucuses. Asian Americans have to deal with the struggles and depressions of migrant communities which are being treated as second class citizens in the land of our former colonizer!

Commitment to his vocation and ministries. Secondly, like all disciples of Jesus, he had to find his vocation or calling, and Totik found it in being a global Filipino “doctor of the church,” a theologian and theological educator. He delivered lectures and sermons both in the USA and in the Philippines because of his expertise in the fields of mission and contextualization. As one of the inaugural lecturers of the Theodore A. Keaton Annual Lectures at the American Baptist Seminary of the West and co-sponsored by its Asian American Center in February, 2002, he challenged Asian American Christians to find their own

theological voice rather than remain captive to the persisting legacy of western superiority.

He was gifted by God with high I.Q., which he used in critical and scholarly pursuits. Many graduate scholars were helped as he served as teaching assistant to Dr. Dean Gilliland, the Professor of Contextualization and African Studies at Fuller. In spite of many obstacles, esp. his poor health, he breezed through his papers and exams. It is reported that his Ph.D. dissertation broke a record: it was the first time that an oral defense panel at Fuller's School of World Mission accepted a first draft without any revision at all!

Knowing this calling, he persevered to finish his doctorate after 11 long years (1987-98), perhaps another record! Besides having to earn a living and raise a family of three children, he was beset with all kinds of illnesses, which surely interfered with his normal functions! Whenever I saw him during our time together (1983-87), he was in constant pain: he would be having a fever, a headache or a limp, at different times due to conflicting medication! Yet he did make it to an excellent doctoral work, which I am sure will be referred to repeatedly by mission scholars!

This kind of patience and stamina in his vocation is reflected also in his other ministries. In pain and sickness, even with cancer afflicting his body, he carried on his calling with great faith in Him who called him to this scholarly and teaching profession! Nowadays we call his type as "mission theologians" and "reflective practitioners" – theologians who practice what they teach!

Commitment to his family and friends. And lastly, as a true disciple, he was a loving husband, father, brother and friend. He was a loving and responsible family man. He really loved Jean – his right choice! – a chief nurse, who must have carried much of the burdens of his poor health, growing family and full schedules, who became an excellent pastor’s wife! They truly loved each other. I recall that the first time I entered their simple house, I saw a huge portrait of Jean in a Filipina costume overshadowing the entire sala. I soon learned that he painted it himself (he was artistically-gifted also!). I saw how beautifully they teamed up as a couple. The decency and good behavior of their three children testify to their effective care and concern for their family. And for this, we should honor Jean and their three children, too!

He was super-friendly. He had lots of friends: he took initiative to be helpful when he saw friends, students and parishioners in need. He exemplified self-denying love early on. During his college days at CPU, he stood against an oppressive government, which resulted in his arrest and sufferings in jail (which most probably contributed lots to his many illnesses!) and eventual “exile” in the U.S.A. (he remained a Filipino, and never took American citizenship nor even a “green card”). As pastor he spent long hours with his Bible study groups and in counseling people. Once a teenage son of one of his parishioners got mixed up with a Filipino gang and was given death threats by a rival gang. The boy and his friends went into hiding for weeks. Yet undaunted by the thought of getting involved in such a dangerous situation, he brought groceries to them every week and had Bible studies with them. Eventually the gang dispersed and some of its members became members of his church!

His genuine love and friendship for those whose lives he touched were evident in the way his friends cared and rallied for him and behind him during his many illnesses, especially in his last years on earth. His funeral service lasted three hours in endless testimonials, and there were 105 cars in his funeral procession!

Totik has gone ahead to get his eternal reward, but his life example of love for everyone linger on in our hearts and in our minds. This book is a testimony to his scholarly giftedness and academic integrity. Truly a super-disciple and theological genius of our Lord Jesus has given us as legacy to appreciate and emulate. May each reader of this book learn and enjoy from the research and analysis of this global Filipino mission theologian – Totik Diesto!

FOREWORD

Dr. Domingo J. Diel, Jr.

When asked to write a Foreword to this book, the reply was not an easy yes! There are a few others who could also do the same, if not better. And besides, the subject which is dealt with in the book, as far as I know, has been discussed in theological circles, in seminars and conferences here and abroad for awhile now – so, why then still a book with the same subject matter?

It is perhaps true that the word “contextualization” was not used in the early discussion on subjects like ‘Gospel and Culture,’ ‘Message and Messenger,’ ‘Gospel and Language’ or even ‘Gospel and Communication.’ Nevertheless, it is also true that one common concern or problematic that came out in the treatment of these themes has to do with how – how to convey and communicate meaningfully the One Good News, the Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ to all nations and peoples in their various cultures, language and contexts.

One objection – there could be several – against “contextualization,” I learned and read about, is that, it sort of distorts the ‘universal’ nature of the Gospel because of its emphasis on the ‘particular,’ that is to say, taking seriously the “addressee” – its culture, language and context – of the Gospel.

The nature of the Gospel as universal, is not the same or identical as to the way or manner it is to be taught, to be proclaimed or to be applied to/with peoples and nations, if the primary purpose of such acts has to do with the meaning and the ultimate question of life offered by it. On the other hand, the Gospel should be so understood, so that it may become “one’s

own," individually and corporately as life-giving foundation. Elsewhere is the proper venue for an exhaustive discussion of the subject matter.

This book (a Ph.D. Dissertation at Fuller, Pasadena, California) of the late Dr. Genaro D. Diesto Jr. could provide us more materials and insights on the question of "Contextualization." Concrete and very helpful is his treatment of the Filipino 'classical' character traits. Going beyond the usual sociological assessment of selected character traits of Filipino society and people, he tried to evaluate them from the Biblico-theological perspective.

The author, well-known as "Totik" to family, colleagues and friends, (he is no longer with us this side of heaven) had left a valuable and scholarly Printed Legacy on the subject "Contextualization," not only to the Baptist Christians in particular, but to the Christians in general – to all Christians, who are keen to know more meaningfully the Good News, the Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ, in their own context, and how the Begotten, yet Incarnate Son of God could be truly with and among them!

FOREWORD

Ms. Sharon Rose Ruiz-Duremdes

Theology, for me, did not start in the awesome halls of Seminary. It did not begin with the voluminous books of Barth, Tillich, Pannenberg which I was required to plough through and make sense of. Theology, for me, began when I asked the question about why the Filipino peasants, workers, women, children, national minorities, students are suffering and what possible means are available in removing that suffering.

In the hallowed halls of the Seminary, we played around with “interesting” formulations on the nature of God. I was required to write papers upon papers on the question, “Who is God?” The more I wrote about the Omnipresent, Omniscient, Omnipotent God...the “already and the not yet” ... the Ground of all being, the more disappointed I became because all those theological treatises, while fetching high marks, did not change the plight of the poor.

Theology, as I understand and live it now, started after living with a very poor fisherman’s family who would come home from the high seas after being away for a whole night with virtually no catch at all, hearing the painful cry of hunger of his three-year-old son and seeing the sad look on his wife’s face. Immersing in the objective reality of the poor, my question changed from “Who is God?” to “Where is God?” A shift from the nature of God to the locus of God. Is God in some ethereal space somewhere? Is God down here in the slums, in the prostitution houses, in the countryside? My initial answer to the question led me to the streets where God’s people were. There to live my faith in the “daily barrage of obscenities...beyond

cathedral walls and above heavenly music..." in the streets where I was arrested and subsequently jailed by forces of the Dictator Ferdinand Marcos.

I have returned to the Seminary and the church without leaving the streets. I find myself engaged in an apostolate of "peopling theology" ...endeavoring to read and live the Bible through the eyes of the excluded in obedience to the Word-Become-Flesh.

Could this have been part of what Dr. Totik Diesto meant by "contextualization"?

FOREWORD
Dr. Dean Gilliland

ABSTRACT

This dissertation describes and analyzes the effects of Filipino colonial mentality on the religious consciousness of the Filipino people in general, and on the constituency of the Convention of Philippine Baptist Churches (CPBC) in particular. The research shows how the low self-image that results from colonial mentality continues to exert a negative influence on Philippine society and culture as a whole, and, more specifically, on the theology and practice of Filipino Christians.

The study outlines the historical factors that were responsible for the emergence of this colonial mentality. It points out that the emergence of said mentality is a direct result of the interplay of the divergent cultural systems that, by historical accident, have become part of the socio-historical milieu of the Philippines. Utilizing the perspectives of cultural anthropology and worldview theory, the study examines the interaction between those cultures and the resultant changes on the Filipino worldview.

The dissertation describes the role of Christian missions as agents of colonial policy. It shows that the Filipino churches, as products of those missions, still perpetuate colonial attitudes and practices that reinforce such mentality to the present. The result is Christianity that remains alien to the Filipino culture.

Using insights gained from post-colonial studies and ethnohistory, the dissertation develops a critique of colonialism and the various missionary enterprises in the country. It proposes historical demystification, decolonization, and re-education as conceptual tools for the development of a Filipino counter-consciousness that would serve as a corrective to the colonial captivity of the Filipino mind.

Constructively, the dissertation suggests that by using traditional Filipino values to communicate the Christian gospel, the obstacle of colonial mentality can be more effectively dealt with in the process of elaborating a contextualized Filipino expression of the Christian faith.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My journey towards achieving the goal of a Ph.D. degree has been one of constant struggle characterized by recurrent episodes of illness of varying kinds and severity, instances of intense trials and tribulations, periods of despair and deep anxieties, and the daily pressures of pastoral ministry and family responsibilities. Through it all, God's truly amazing grace was more than sufficient for all my needs. Especially during those times of severe testing where, at day's end, giving up seemed to be the only option left, the Lord's faithfulness was proven again and again, in that "morning by morning, new mercies" I did see. It is but fitting then that all gratitude and praise be given to him first.

God's loving care is often manifested to us in the flesh through the ministry of his faithful servants. Through my mentor, Dean Gilliland, God's lovingkindness to me was clearly evident. As his Teaching Assistant, I called Gilliland my "boss," but he was more like a father to me. A scholar and a "gentle man," he was a most able mentor who constantly challenged my biases and presuppositions, deepening my perceptions and broadening my horizons. I would be remiss not to mention his wife, Lois, who always welcomed me to their home with a big smile and a sympathetic ear.

My committee members, Charles Kraft and Paul Pierson, proved to be God-sent. Kraft's work was the eye-opener that sent me on my way in search of the elusive Filipino soul. That search brought me back into the history of my people. Pierson's experiences in Latin America gave him deep insights into Filipino history, politics, culture and religion. His sharing of those insights with me sharpened my own understanding of the same. My outside reader, David Lim, remains a special friend.

The prayers and support of my congregation, the Filipino Evangelical Church in Los Angeles, especially Vera Artry, Narciso Tan, Michael Haney, and Johnny Ching, my colleagues in the pastoral staff of Temple Baptist Church, and of various friends and relatives, have added to my strength and endurance, enabling me to finish the task.

Siang Yang Tan's counsel that "good enough is good enough," and his suggestion of "chunking" the material made the writing of the dissertation more manageable. His firm belief that I would be able to get my degree, especially during my times of deep self-doubt, was of tremendous encouragement. He also helped deepen my understanding of God's grace, and through his prayers, ministered the same to me.

To my mother, Ruth, and sisters, Mara and Omega, I owe a debt of gratitude for their love, never-ceasing prayers, and advice. To my brother Isaias, sisters Evangelica and Lerna, for their encouragement and support. To my deceased father, Genaro Sr., minister and evangelist, who with my mother fervently prayed for a son to follow in his footsteps of faithfully serving the Lord, my eternal gratitude. May his tribe increase.

To my wife, Jean, faithful partner and dearest friend, for her understanding, patience, unconditional love and selfless support, and to my beloved children, Chaim, Asher and Iana, the pride and joy of their father's life, for putting up with the shortcomings and eccentricities of a would-be scholar of a father, I give my love and deepest appreciation.

INTRODUCTION

Christianity first came to the Philippine Islands during the early part of the sixteenth century. The first Catholic mass, attended by the natives, was celebrated on the island of Limasawa on March 31, 1521. Seven days later, Rajah Humabon, his wife and eight hundred subjects, were baptized on Cebu island. Christianity in the Philippines has flourished since then, giving the Philippines the commonly referred to distinction of being “the only Christian country in Asia.”

The advent of Christianity in the Philippines also marks the beginning of the long history of Western domination in the country. Four hundred years of Spanish and thirty-five years of American colonial rule has left indelible marks on the culture of the people. One such mark is generally referred to as “colonial mentality.” This is a popular term, used in a variety of ways. I want to use it as narrowly as possible. Kenton J. Clymer has used this term with reference to the Philippines in his writings, specifically in his book, *Protestant Missionaries to the Philippines, 1898-1916* (1986).

Filipino colonial mentality has had a negative influence on Philippine society. As a vestige of cultural imperialism which, like economic imperialism, goes hand in hand with colonial rule, it serves as a witness to the continuing subservience of the Filipino to its colonial past.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study is to describe and analyze the effects of the Filipino colonial mentality on the religious consciousness of the Filipino people in general, and on the constituency of the Convention of Philippine Baptist Churches

(henceforth referred to as CPBC) in particular. It will endeavor to show how colonial mentality continues to exert a negative influence on Philippine society and culture as a whole, and, more specifically, on theology and practice in the CPBC.

The study will outline the historical factors that were responsible for the emergence of this colonial mentality. Since the emergence of said mentality is a direct result of the interplay of the divergent cultural systems that, by historical accident, have become part of the socio-historical milieu of the Philippines, this project will focus on the interaction between those cultures and the resultant changes on the Filipino worldview and culture. It will also describe the role of Christian missions as agents of colonial policy. It will show how the Filipino churches, specifically the CPBC, as products of those missions, still perpetuate colonial attitudes and practices that reinforce such mentality to the present. Constructively, the study will suggest how this obstacle can be more effectively dealt with in the process of elaborating a contextualized Filipino expression of the Christian faith.

The Problem

Filipino colonial mentality has taken many forms. Culturally, it has produced a people who look down upon their own culture as inferior and to be rejected, while looking up to the foreign culture of the colonizer as superior and to be desired.

This mind set has many ramifications. Economically for example, this mentality has produced a consumer society which, in its mindless desire to ape the culture of its colonial master, prefers foreign goods to local commodities.

The problem to be addressed in this study is the effect colonial mentality has had on the religious consciousness of the Filipino, specifically those belonging to the CPBC. After almost

five centuries of Christian presence in the Philippines, Christianity remains largely a foreign import. It is an alien religious superstructure superimposed upon an animistic substructure which, by its nature and design, has failed to address the deepest concerns of the people.

My intention is to demonstrate how Filipino colonial mentality poses a major obstacle to the contextualization of the Christian Gospel and Theology in the Philippines in general, and in the CPBC in particular. Therefore, contextualization for Christianity in the Philippines demands that the colonial mentality be recognized and dealt with critically.

Presuppositions

1. Two main streams of culture, the oriental and occidental, exist side by side within Filipino culture in an antithetical relationship that has not been resolved into a new cultural synthesis.

2. This dichotomous cultural environment has resulted in what might be called a cultural schizophrenia manifested in many areas of the Filipino society, most notably in religion where Christianity is, at the same time, both syncretistic and alien.

3. Filipino colonial mentality is the outward manifestation of this cultural schizophrenia. Dealing with this mentality is necessary in any attempt to resolve the occidental/oriental tension cited above.

4. Christianity, in particular the Protestant Church, has done much to promote and maintain colonial attitudes that are inimical to the contextualization of the Gospel. Confronting the implications of these attitudes to the interpretation of the Gospel could hopefully pave the way towards a more authentic

contextualization of the Christian Gospel and Theology in the Philippines.

Goals of the Study

The primary goal of this study, then, is to demonstrate how Filipino colonial mentality serves as an obstacle in the contextualization of the Christian Gospel and Theology in the Philippines, particularly in churches belonging to the CPBC. Other goals include:

1. Suggesting ways and means of dealing with the contradictory cultural elements that result in a warped consciousness and a schizophrenic self-identity.

2. Pointing out possibilities of minimizing some of the harmful effects of the colonial mentality that have become obstacles to effective contextualization.

3. Attempting to suggest an approach towards a more contextualized Filipino theology that takes into account the modern Filipino identity and reflects the deepest longings, desires and aspirations of the Filipino people.

Significance of the Study

It is my belief that only by touching base with the deepest concerns of a people can the Christian faith become rooted in the culture, and thus be truly relevant and meaningful.

The Philippines is the only country that is predominantly Christian in the Asian Continent. And yet despite its Christian trappings, what is commonly referred to as Filipino Christianity is, in actuality, a syncretized form of Christianity, a folk religion whose roots go back to the animistic religion of the pre-colonial period.

Four hundred years of Roman Catholicism and more than seventy years of Protestant missions have so far produced a superficially imposed Christian conscience in the country. Hispanic friars endeavored to Christianize the animistic natives by accommodation. Native folkways and traditions that were not in direct conflict with the teachings of the Church were kept. In the attempt to make Catholicism relevant, animistic beliefs and practices were absorbed into Church doctrine and ritual. The result was an awkward blend of a foreign religious superstructure superimposed on a native animistic substructure. Latourette called this form of syncretism “folk Catholicism.”

Thus, according to Filipino priest and theologian, Vitaliano Gorospe,

even today, especially in the rural areas, we find merely the external trappings of Catholic belief and practice super-imposed on the original pattern of pre-Christian superstitions and rituals (1966:42).

Another Roman Catholic priest has this to say about folk Catholicism which he calls “Split-level Christianity”:

Split-level Christianity may be described as the coexistence within the same person of two or more thought-and-behavior systems which are inconsistent with each other (Bulatao 1966:2).

These two theologians reflect the presenting problem that Filipino culture is composed of two antithetical cultural streams. Catholicism as practiced in the Philippines is also an amalgam of two religious systems which have never been synthesized in a satisfactory way.

Thus the Filipino Catholic also operates on two levels of religious consciousness. On the conscious, intellectual level, the Filipino Catholic professes to believe in the Roman Catholic

doctrine. On the subconscious level of ultimate concerns where faith relates to life and death, the animistic worldview dominates. So despite the obvious syncretism which has resulted, Roman Catholic Christianity remains an alien religion to Filipinos at the deep level.

American Protestantism did not do much to correct this religious dichotomy. Protestant missionary methods were in direct contrast to those of the Catholic friars. Whereas the Catholics were more permissive in allowing beliefs and practices not in direct conflict with church dogma, Protestant missionaries were almost totally prohibitive, insisting that the Church allow only what the Bible explicitly permits. Culture did not enter into the hermeneutic. The result was a near total rejection of cultural values.

This attitude of rejection of the traditional world view resulted in a theology that was *alatrocephalous* in nature, that is, a theology that appealed to the head but not to the heart and soul of the Filipino. Generally devoid of Filipino characteristics, it was incapable of addressing the deep-seated needs of the people. Protestantism evolved into an alien faith espousing a belief in a strange God who spoke an unfamiliar language and taught a foreign ideology largely irrelevant to Filipino culture and society. Because of its western orientation, Protestant Christianity is something Filipinos can accept and discuss intellectually. But its application to daily living remains superficial.

Insights gained into the culture and identity of the modern day Filipino must assist in paving the way for the communication of a contextualized Christian Gospel in the Philippines. Furthermore, knowledge of the role that missions has played in the colonial history of the Philippines can help modern day foreign missionaries to distinguish between their

calling as ministers of the Gospel and their role as citizens of a foreign country.

As the writer of this study, I accept the fact that I am, myself, a victim of colonial mentality. Therefore, as a developing Filipino theologian, this study will enrich my own personal search for that elusive Filipino soul from which a truly contextualized theology for Filipinos can emerge.

Delimitations

This study will venture to historically analyze the socio-economic and religio-political factors that directly affected the development of the Filipino culture and introduced colonial mentality. The discussion on the effects of colonial mentality on the religious consciousness of the people will be mainly socio-cultural and phenomenological in substance.

While both Spanish and American colonialism, as will be demonstrated, were largely responsible for the existence of the Filipino colonial mentality, more emphasis will be placed on the discussion of the American colonial experience. The reason for this is two-fold. First, while Spanish colonialism paved the way for its emergence, American colonialism restructured, developed and completed the process of remolding the Filipino consciousness. Second, with the end of the Spanish colonialism in the Philippines, the relationship between Spain and the Philippines became more and more distant, to the point that there is very little intercourse between both countries at the present. The same is not true with the relationship between the Philippines and the United States. Close, if uneven, relationships between these two countries remained even after the United States granted independence to the Philippines, so much so that the United States has often been criticized of perpetrating neo-

colonialism in the Philippines.¹ Those ties endure to the present, and the American influence remains strong politically, economically, and stronger still, culturally. It can be said, then, that the Filipino colonial mentality is mainly American in orientation, which justifies the emphasis of this paper.

For the same reason, the discussion on the interaction of cultures, on worldview and worldview change will deal primarily with American culture and worldview.

Furthermore, the discussion will essentially focus on the Filipino Protestant church, in particular, the CPBC. The Protestant faith came to the Philippines by way of the American missionaries who arrived at the outset of American colonialism in the country. The concepts of “divine providence” and “Manifest Destiny” set the colonial tone of the American missionary endeavors, resulting in different “Filipino” Protestant denominations that, with their Western orientation, clearly demonstrate the effects of colonial mentality on the religious consciousness of the Filipino. Since this study’s main focus is the CPBC, the constant references to these other denominations and to the Roman Catholic Church in the Philippines will serve only as part of the historical material which constitutes the contextual framework of the CPBC.

Finally, while to a certain extent true of Filipinos in general, “colonial mentality,” as a term, applies specifically to lowland Filipinos whose cultures have been drastically affected by their interaction with the Western colonial powers. Many of the tribal groups in the Mountain provinces in the North and the Muslim provinces in the South have successfully resisted the military and political onslaughts of the colonizers. As a result, the socio-

¹Examples of major works on neo-colonialism in the Philippines are: William Pomeroy, *American Neo-colonialism: Its Emergence in the Philippines and Asia* (1980); Daniel Schirmer and Stephen Roskamm Shalom, *The Philippines Reader: A History of Colonialism, Neocolonialism, Dictatorship, and Resistance* (1987); Shirley Jenkins, *American Economic Policy Toward the Philippines* (1954); Renato Constantino, *The Philippines: A Past Revisited* (1975) and *The Philippines: A Continuing Past* (1976).

cultural influences of the colonizers' invasive culture has had very little effect on their cultures. Thus the terminology does not apply to them.

The recommendations will consist of suggestions towards a contextualized reading and presentation of the Gospel to Filipinos. The recommendations will be tentative at best, designed stimulate more serious attempts at contextualized theological and missiological reflections in the future.

Definitions

“Colonial mentality” may be understood as a negative consciousness characteristic of societies who have experienced the oppression of colonial rule. In the case of the Philippines, its main characteristic is the tendency of the people to consider themselves and their culture as inferior to their former colonial masters and their culture. Consequently, indigenous culture becomes undesirable and needs to be abandoned in favor of the perceived superior culture.

“Consciousness” refers to the totality of the image by which a people, society or culture views itself in relation to other people, society or cultures. Akin to worldview as defined by Charles H. Kraft (1979:53), consciousness, as used in this study, is less comprehensive in scope. It is limited to a social self-conceptualization relative to other cultures and peoples. It does not comprise, as does worldview, the systematized totality of the conceptions of a culture but simply how the given society views itself in relation to another.

“Dissent” refers to the right of a people to reject a particular status quo in whatever form it may take, be it social, economic, political, or religious. Dissent in itself is useless and ultimately meaningless unless occasioned and directed by a developing

counter-consciousness. Without a counter-consciousness to guide it, dissent easily results in anarchy.

“Counter-consciousness” is an alternative way of viewing reality that is diametrically opposed to the dominant view. By its nature and essence, counter-consciousness is necessarily subversive to the status quo. In dialectical language, counter-consciousness serves as the antithesis to the dominant view.

Methodological Considerations

The primary historical context of the study is the American colonial period in the Philippines beginning with Admiral Dewey’s defeat of the Spanish Armada at the “Battle of Manila Bay” on May 1, 1898, to the granting of Philippine independence in 1935. Much of the historical data during this period however, can be understood only against the backdrop of an earlier and much longer period of Western colonialism in the Philippines, that is, the Spanish colonial period from 1521-1898. A historical examination of Spanish colonialism will thus serve as background and introduction to the American colonial epoch. The analysis of both periods will utilize the methodology of traditional historiography and will include a discussion of how people do history in light of modern historical theories.

Much has been written about these two periods, mostly by historians who, coming out of the Western colonial milieu, wrote history reflecting the Western colonial ideology. Colonial history, written as such, was therefore “foreign” history, that is, history seen through the eyes of foreigners. Such “histories” did not represent the Filipino people’s view of themselves. A reinterpretation and rewriting of history is thus necessary.

The literature and methodology of post-colonial scholarship will be utilized to elaborate a critique of colonial historiography. The critique will form the basis for suggestions in reconstructing

the history of colonialism from the standpoint of the Filipino people themselves, that is, a people's history of colonialism.

The historical analyses and discussion are designed to facilitate the extraction of pertinent data as to the emergence of the Filipino colonial mentality which is the key to the understanding of the religious consciousness of the Filipino people in general and of the constituency of the CPBC in particular.

The effort to understand the colonial mentality and the religious consciousness of the Filipino people necessitates a comprehension of their deep-level cultural perceptions. A discussion of the Filipino worldview, utilizing the insights provided by worldview theory is requisite to such comprehension.

Furthermore, the discussion regarding the emergence and influence of colonial mentality on the consciousness of the Filipino presupposes changes in the people's worldview. The changes in the Filipino worldview will be accounted for by the application of the ethnohistorical method. The methodology is also useful as a tool to compensate for the inadequacies of post-colonial historiography in understanding history from the standpoint of the people.

CHAPTER 1

A SYNTHETIC CULTURE

Our national culture did not develop, as did the culture of the Chinese, in isolation, by the cultivation and elaboration of resources for the most part autochthonous. Rather, the original capital with which we began kept being added to from many sources outside our borders, from far and near, from Europe as well as Asia (de la Costa, 1967:176).

Filipino culture, as we see it now, is a complex mixture of native and assimilated external cultural influences resulting from a long historical process of contact between the Filipino people and various other cultures. The earliest external cultural influence came from the ancestors of present day Indonesians who came as the first and second wave of immigrants to the islands. They brought with them a way of life influenced by Indian culture, evidenced by the proliferation of words derived from the *Sanskrit* in the different Filipino languages. Muslim-Arabic influence came through the Malays. Constituting the third wave of immigrants, the Malays carried with them a syllabary of Indian origins (Agoncillo 1974:11). These two earliest influences form the basic Indo-Malayan cultural matrix of pre-colonial Philippines. Chinese culture came by way of Chinese traders in the early ninth century. It is obvious that, as one writer put it, the pre-colonial Filipinos were not a “primitive” people waiting to be “civilized” by European culture (Gowing 1967:20). The islands came in contact with Europe

initially through the Dutch and Portuguese traders. Permanent contact was established with the arrival of the Spanish *conquistadores*, who named the country after their king. The Spanish entry also marked the beginning of the long history of Western oppression in the Philippines which continued through the American colonial occupation. The effects of this extensive history of Western colonization are still felt to the present.

Cultural borrowings from these social intrusions have produced a culture that is both similar to and yet strikingly different from its Asian neighbors. This characteristic of contrariness is evident even within Filipino culture itself. Internally, Filipino culture is far from monolithic. The original wave of Indonesian and Malayan immigrants who scattered into the different islands developed diverse variations on the basic Indo-Malayan cultural matrix, resulting into the various ethno-linguistic groups which, though distinctively different, yet have discernible similarities to one another. Furthermore, the process of acculturation of the external influences varied among these ethno-linguistic groups and the various social classes that have since emerged, resulting in differences that represent distinctive configurations of "trait complexes and ideas 'selected' from a stream of external influences . . . locally elaborated and developed" (Fox 1971:6). This, according to de la Costa, means that,

our nation is vastly more complex than at first glance. It is complex not only because of the multiplicity of its components, not only because of the diversity of origin of these components, but also because of the variety and delicacy of their articulation with each other and with the whole (1967:177).

Yet, while the differences are significant, they fall within a recognizable common culture. These common patterns of behavior among the various groups, according to Robert B. Fox of the National Museum in Manila, are what people identify and describe as "Filipino" (1971:6).

Such contrariness is even more conspicuous externally, in the obvious contradictions between the unmistakably Asian characteristics of, and the recognizably Western influences in, Filipino culture.

In a very humorous but biting satire, Renato Constantino alludes to the Western influence on Filipino culture by his farcical description of the Filipino race. He might as well have been describing Filipinos of today:

The Filipino race is the is the greatest answer to anthropologists who arbitrarily and unfairly classify peoples as white, black, brown, red, or yellow. The Filipinos may truly be called a super race for, as a people, they show such varied physical characteristics that they defy categorization. . . . The men belong to the brown race; the women are definitely Caucasoid of the Hollywood type, for, by means of modern cosmetology, their skins are bleached, their hair is brunette, red, or even blonde. The female physical dimensions are 35-24-35, true or false. . . . The Negritos, along with certain Filipinas sporting P1.50 permanents, may be classified under the black race because of their characteristic kinky hair. There is a sprinkling of reds . . . who, . . . may be easily recognized by their incorrigible tendency to . . . criticize American domination in this country. The yellow race is represented by those who are descended from Chinese ancestors and

other yellow individuals . . . who cower before diplomatic and military representatives of foreign powers (1966:2-3).

Despite the humor, or perhaps precisely because of it, the writer's pungent critique of Filipino colonial mentality is unmistakable.

A Land of a Thousand Contrasts

It has been pointed out that the basic matrix of Filipino culture is Indo-Malayan. As such, Filipino culture is basically Asian and is readily recognizable as such. Nevertheless, four hundred years of Spanish and thirty-five years of American colonial rule has left indelible marks on the culture of the people. Thus, to a visitor, the Philippines may look like a land that does not belong in Southeast Asia.

Unlike its neighbors, it is the only predominantly Christian country in Asia. A traveler, for instance, can see no traces of Hindu temples and carvings, nor gilded statues of Buddha and lofty *dagobas* as are found in neighboring Asian countries. Only in some parts of the South can minarets be found and the calls to prayer of the *muezzin* be heard, attesting to the Islamic influence in the islands. One discovers instead an abundance of Christian churches reflecting Western influences in the architecture and the baroque style decorations.

The same can be said of the food. Fiery *curries* and spicy *satays* characterizing the cuisine of its neighbors are conspicuous by their absence. Instead, the Filipino cuisine is a strangely sedate mixture of Chinese, Spanish, and American diet.

This observation is even more true with the people. Filipinos seem to be the least oriental of all oriental people. With its experience of Spanish and American colonial rule, Filipinos

exhibit certain cultural traits that are definitely occidental. These traits will be discussed in detail later in this paper.

The languages spoken exhibit the same characteristics of contrariness. While there is a national language called *Pilipino*, eighty-six other languages and dialects belonging to the Malayo-Polynesian family of tongues are spoken. The continued use of English as the primary medium of instruction in education, and, together with Pilipino, as the official language of the country has given it the status of second language. The *lingua franca*, however, is a mixture of Pilipino, Spanish, and English words.

Especially noticeable are the American influences that attest to the country's singular experience of American colonialism. The American journalist, Stanley Karnow, after having spent some time in the Philippines, observes:

as a foreign correspondent, I first began to report from Asia. My vast territory included the Philippines, a country that for me differed drastically from any other in the region - or, indeed, from any I have previously covered in Europe, Africa or the Middle East. Here I was, in a former U.S. possession, immediately familiar to an American. Most of the people I initially met spoke Americanized English, and many had been educated in the United States or in American schools. They knew far more about the United States than I knew about the Philippines, as if they were some kind of lost American tribe that somehow became detached from the U.S. mainland and floated across the Pacific (Karnow 1989:ii).

The cultural influences of the West are so pervasive in the country that, as alluded by Karnow's and many other similar

statements, they have given the country an unmistakably Western, or to be more precise, American, *facade*. Such *facade* is readily manifest among lowland Filipinos, especially with the more educated sectors of the population.

The Myth of the Cultural Melting Pot

To all external appearances then, the Philippines would look like a true “melting pot” of the oriental and occidental influences found in its culture. It is not uncommon to hear visitors comment that the Filipino looks, talks, thinks and acts more like a Westerner than any other Asian. This seems especially true with the more educated segment of the population.

A keen observer will readily notice the existence of two main streams of culture—the Oriental and the Occidental, within Filipino culture. On the surface, both streams seem to have converged into one cultural river, merging into the so called “modern Filipino culture.” It has been pointed out, for instance, that the existing religious syncretism, commonly called “folk Catholicism,”¹ is but one proof of the convergence of the different cultural influences into a synthesis of a new and different culture (Nacpil 1978:57-58). This new culture exhibits certain characteristics similar to those found in the donor cultures. Nevertheless, it is argued, despite the similarities, the resulting cultural characteristics are uniquely different. As two Filipino authors, writing about the effects of colonialism on Filipino culture put it, “That colonial experience, popularly described as ‘four hundred years in a convent followed by fifty in Hollywood,’ has left its mark, but the result is uniquely Filipino” (Mayuga and Yuson 1979:13).

It is my contention, on the contrary, that a deeper analysis of modern Filipino worldview and culture will reveal that the two

¹See Latourette (1943:93) for the definition of the term.

streams of culture, the oriental and the occidental, have continued to exist side by side within Filipino society in an antithetical relationship that has not been resolved into a new cultural synthesis.

Stanley Karnow's initial observation about the Filipino people being like "some kind of lost American tribe that had somehow become detached from the U.S. mainland and floated across the Pacific" points to the common impression that the Filipino society is thoroughly westernized. However, after spending more time in the country, Karnow's observations take a different turn: "But with each successive visit I perceived that their values and traditions, though frequently concealed under an American veneer, were their own—and often antithetical to the American model" (Karnow 1989:ii).

Karnow seems to support my thesis of two different cultural streams existing in an unresolved antithetical relationship. These cultural streams exist as two different levels of consciousness in the Filipino mind. On the intellectual level, Filipinos are very much products of their colonial past. Here, the negative effects of colonial mentality is a reality that must be contended with. On the deeper life-and-death level of "ultimate concerns" the traditional, pre-colonial worldview exerts a primary influence on the Filipino. These antithetical levels of consciousness have produced a cultural schizophrenia that has resulted in a mentality of marginalism and, consequently, the loss of the Filipino identity.

This cultural schizophrenia is unmistakably present in the religious consciousness of the Filipino. Four hundred years of Roman Catholic and almost a hundred years of Protestant missions has produced a superficially imposed Christian consciousness in the country. Philippine historian Teodoro Agoncillo makes this observation:

The masses who belong to the Catholic Church are superficial Catholics. . . . The Catholics, it is true, go to church on Sundays and holidays, but they do so not because they understand and appreciate the mysticism and poetry of the Catholic rites, but because it is the fashion to be seen in the church on such days. And so, while statistics show that Catholics comprise 83 percent of the total population, actually the genuine Catholics do not probably comprise 0.5 percent of the whole population (1974:34).

This same artificially imposed consciousness is even more apparent in Filipino Protestantism, especially in its theology with its a clearly *altrocephalous* characteristic (i.e., a theology that appeals to the head but not to the heart and soul of the Filipino). Generally devoid of Filipino characteristics, Protestant theology in the Philippines has proven itself to be largely irrelevant to Filipino culture and society and thus incapable of addressing the deep-seated needs of the people. Clearly Western in its orientation, it serves as a glaring example of the colonial captivity of the Filipino mind.¹

Given the fact that Christianity, both Catholic and Protestant, came into the country as a by-product of the Spanish and American colonial conquests respectively, and, furthermore, that the impetus for said conquests clearly included missionary motivations, it is easy to see that Christianity in the Philippines today cannot be understood apart from the country's colonial past. It is important, then, that the problem of colonialism and its effects on the society and culture of the Filipino in general, and on the religious consciousness of the Filipino in particular, be

¹ Some scholars have argued that Christianity in the Philippines is only a veneer. See for instance, Phelan (1951:78-81); Cushner (1971:93); (Bulatao 1965:5-6).

addressed if the Christian gospel is to finally take roots in Philippine soil.

How did Filipino culture evolve from its decidedly oriental origins into its manifestly occidental modern orientation? What historical factors contributed to the evolution? What cultures bequeathed their influences on Filipino culture, and how? How did the people respond to the different cultures they came in contact with? What kind of changes occurred with each contact? How rapid did the changes occur, and how deeply did they influence the native culture? How can these changes be explained or accounted for? These are some of the questions which this project will seek answers to. It should be noted that whatever answers may result from this study will at best be initial attempts to explain the complexities involved in the shaping of modern Filipino culture.

Colonial Mentality: A Phenomenological Description of the General Concept

It should be noted that the problem of colonial mentality is not limited to Filipino society alone but is common to societies and cultures who have experienced the oppression of colonialism. As a mentality, it may be seen as a contrary aspect of a people's worldview, that is, a consciousness that induces people to place a negative valuation on its own society and culture. Because of its pervasive influence on culture, it often characterizes the way people look at themselves within society (self-identity) and the way societies see themselves in relation to other societies. As a facet of worldview, it functions in a way that is similar to worldview, but is not as comprehensive in scope as the latter, which deals with the systematic totality of a people's conceptualizations.

A vestige of Western colonialism, Filipino colonial mentality has taken many forms. Culturally, it has produced a people who look down upon their own culture as inferior, and is therefore to be rejected. At the same time, the foreign culture of its oppressor is looked up to as superior and thus to be desired. Kraft alludes to this in writing about “the presumed superiority” of western culture where he observes that when such presumption is “exported, then, as has been widely done through western schools, such western perspectives have led many non-westerners to look up to western societies and to look down on their own” (1996:5). Kraft’s observation agrees with my contention, which I discuss later in this project, that western colonial education in the Philippines was a major contributing factor in the development of the Filipino colonial mentality.

Economically, it has created a consumer society which, in its mindless efforts to ape the culture of its oppressors, prefers foreign goods to local commodities.

Intellectually, it has yielded an elitist scholarship that unquestioningly accepts the intellectual framework and the historico-philosophical formulations of the West, while at the same time, denigrating and summarily rejecting the intellectual conceptualizations of its neighbors from the East (e.g., China and India).

In terms of religion, the Roman Catholicism introduced by Spain has produced a superstitious, syncretistic form of Christianity that has largely accommodated itself to the native pagan culture. As syncretistic, it is superficial in that it has altered the forms but barely touched the deep-level meanings of the belief-system of the people. Similarly, the Protestant faith that came with American colonialism has produced an evangelical Christianity that remains largely a foreign religion—an alien religious superstructure superimposed upon an animistic substructure which, by its nature and design, has failed

to address the ultimate concerns of the people. Rooted historically in American colonialism, evangelical Christianity in the Philippines exhibits the characteristics of colonial mentality. By and large *altrocephalic* in nature, it exists largely in the mind of the Filipino. Thus, Filipino Christianity is a by-product of colonial mentality, a religious consciousness that is part and parcel of the occidental stream of culture that exists in antithetical relationship to the oriental stream of subconscious, gut-level realities of Filipino existence.

As a socio-cultural phenomenon, the complexities of the Filipino colonial mentality cannot be fathomed apart from a discussion of the traditional Filipino worldview and the worldview changes that transpired resulting from its exposure to the cultural imperialism of the West. Therefore, a discussion of the traditional Filipino worldview will immediately proceed, followed by a brief look into Philippine colonial history to trace the emergence and describe the effects of this negative mentality on the Filipino religious consciousness.

CHAPTER 2

THE FILIPINO WORLDVIEW

Despite the thick layers of foreign cultural accretions heaped upon Filipino culture, the core values that distinguish it from others are still very much evident. Writing in a collaborative effort to produce a textbook on sociology, and using the Philippines as their setting, a group of scholars made the following observation regarding Filipino values:

Philippine value-orientations are still predominantly those of a traditionally rural society: personalism, nonrationalism, particularism. Harmony with nature and with people is more important than mastery. Conflicts are avoided rather than resolved. Loyalty to one's group, unquestioning obedience to authority, resignation in the face of difficulty, reliance on supernatural forces or fate are valued more than self-reliance, autonomy, systematic planning, and scientific experimentation. Personalism attaches great importance on the warmth and closeness of reciprocal ties, loyalty to persons, family and kinship obligations, and smoothness of interpersonal relations (Espiritu et al. 1976:72).

To elaborate, same group of scholars presented the following framework of Philippine culture, patterned after Frank

Lynch's outline of lowland Filipino values,¹ to point out the value orientations and major themes generally operating in Philippine society today.

¹ Here, Lynch focuses on the theme of social acceptance as the most important and basic aim motivating Filipino behavior. See Frank Lynch, "Social Acceptance Reconsidered," in *Four Readings on Philippine Values* (1973:37).

TABLE 1: PHILIPPINE VALUE-SYSTEM

(Espiritu et al. 1976:71)

<i>Aims, Goals, and Assumptions</i>	<i>Beliefs and Convictions</i>	<i>Norms and Principles</i>
<p>A. Social acceptance acceptance of the person for what s/he is</p> <p>1. <i>Smooth Interpersonal Relationship (SIR)</i> desire to please</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; border-top: 1px solid black; border-bottom: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <div style="width: 45%; text-align: left;"> <p><i>pakikisama</i> agreement conformity</p> </div> <div style="width: 45%; text-align: left;"> <p>use of go-between indirectness</p> </div> </div> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">euphemism pleasantness tact</p> <p>2. <i>AMOR PROPRIO</i> self-esteem keen sense of personal worth</p> <p>3. <i>HIYA</i> shame embarrassment shyness</p> <p>B. Economic Security</p> <p>C. Social Mobility</p> <p>HARMONY with people</p>	<p>A. Personalistic worldview</p> <p>B. Supernaturalistic explanation of events</p> <p>1. Success (or failure) is undeserved <i>bahala na</i> <i>suerte</i> <i>gaba</i> <i>panalangin</i></p> <p>2. Good is limited</p> <p>3. Personalistic cyclic time orientation</p> <p>HARMONY with nature</p>	<p>A. Structural</p> <p>1. Segmentation (in-group centeredness) family and kin age-grading and generation system status & power locality language religion</p> <p>2. Ranking in-group vs. out-group super-ordinate subordinate relationship authority</p> <p>C. Operational</p> <p>1. Equivalence and solidarity</p> <p>2. Reciprocity <i>utang-na-loob</i></p> <p>3. Compassion (<i>awa</i>)</p> <p>4. Patience, endurance resignation</p>

The following discussion of cultural values constituting the Filipino worldview¹ will be based on the framework above and will follow the discussion given by Espiritu et al. Because the discussion by the authors is in outline form, I will be interacting with, paraphrasing and expanding their points where necessary to make them more intelligible. Where appropriate, Kraft's theoretical formulations on worldview and worldview functions (1996) will be applied in order to situate the discussion within the wider context of the scholarly research and discussion on worldview themes.

Aims, Goals, and Aspirations

Cultural values are not the same in terms of their importance to the people in a culture. The following is a list of some of the more prominent Filipino values identified and ranked by the authors according to the degree of influence they have on the people.

Social Acceptance

Social acceptance, according to Espiritu et al., ranks at the top of all Filipino cultural values. They point out that

Social acceptance is enjoyed when one is taken by one's fellows for what he is or believes he is, and is treated in accordance to his status. It is the desire to be accepted as a person by the significant others—that is, by the people who mean something to him—to be treated as a subject and not an object, and to be recognized more for what

¹ As culturally structured assumptions, these values are descriptive of the Filipino perception of reality or worldview. For more discussion on these and other values, see Gorospe (1966), Bulatao (1962, 1965a), and Hollnsteiner (1958).

he is than for what he can do or contribute
(Espiritu et al. 1976:72).

Thus assurances of acceptance and approval are constantly sought after and, when given, are highly appreciated.

The primary goals or values of social acceptance are supported by secondary values such as pleasantness and smooth interpersonal relationships (commonly referred to as SIR). SIR implies the “art of getting along, the avoidance of disagreement and outward signs of conflict, the ability to keep silent when in opposition, to remain agreeable even under difficult circumstances, and to be sensitive and sympathetic to what people feel or think” (Espiritu et al. 1976:72).

There are several cultural mechanisms and instrumental values that work together to maintain SIR. Some of these are the use of euphemistic language, *pakikisama*, and the use of the go-between.

Filipinos are sensitive to feelings, not only to their own but to those of others as well. As such, Filipinos would go to great lengths to avoid conflict, and work hard to please others. Thus,

The Filipino desire to please and to avoid hurting others explains his euphemistic expressions, oblique language, the indirectness of his answers, his inability to say no, his silence when he disagrees, and his tendency toward overt approval, especially in front of persons in authority (Espiritu et al. 1976:72).

Agreeableness is preferred to accuracy; tact is more important than fact. Both agreeableness and tact are necessary for *pakikisama*, which is described as,

the willingness to be one with the group in its opinions and decisions, to conform to group

standards and expectations, to put oneself in the other's place, to concede to the wishes of others, to extend help in times of need and sympathy in times of grief. Helpfulness is extended to outsiders as hospitality and congeniality (Espiritu et al. 1976:72).

Pakikisama engenders a sense of belonging which includes being a good sport. To avoid *pakikisama* is to be considered *mayabang* (haughty) and would be considered as *nakakahiya* (shameful).

Go-betweens are usually persons of importance and influence, who, by virtue of his/her position or standing, cannot be refused or denied. They are often used to

conduct difficult transactions, to act as an intermediary when asking for a favor, to negotiate between two parties as in a marriage proposal . . . to avoid open confrontation or the risk of a refusal or suffering *hiya* (shame) as well as to ensure the success of a negotiation . . ." (Espiritu et al. 1976:72, parenthesis mine).

Accompanying the desire for social acceptance is *amor-propio* or self esteem, expressed as a keen sense of personal dignity, or negatively as the fear of personal rejection and a high sensitivity to personal affront, insult, or criticism. *Amor-propio* "is the individual's highly emotional reaction to protect his honor and dignity when these are threatened or questioned and to retaliate" when they are violated (Espiritu, et al., 1976:72). It is enhanced by signs of acceptance, wounded by marks of rejection and accompanied by the uncomfortable feeling of *hiya* (shame) and embarrassment. Hence,

Amor-propio and *hiya* act as social sanctions guarding against the loss of social acceptance and

harmonious relationships. Undesirable behavior is avoided lest it incurs *hiya* and hurt another's *amor-propio*. Politeness, deference, courtesy, and tact become essential qualities (Espiritu et al. 1976:72).

Economic Security

Economic security as a goal . . . is the desire to possess the essentials for a decent human life and the opportunities for improving oneself. It implies the economic ability to satisfy one's material needs with the fruits of one's own effort without borrowing from others. It suggests enough self-sufficiency to maintain one's dignity (Espiritu et al. 1976:73).

While I basically agree with the definition, I do not hold to the individualistic tone it implies. Economic security for the Filipino is never directed simply towards the self. Efforts at economic improvement are almost always seen in the context of the family and expands to the *sakop* (distant relatives, affinal and ritual kin, i.e., the bilaterally extended family). Thus, the economic ability to satisfy needs are to be seen in the context of the family working together and pooling all their resources together, which often means sacrificing for other, but also benefiting together.¹ As such, self-sufficiency and dignity here cannot be divorced from the sufficiency and dignity of the family as a whole.

¹ Older siblings would, for instance, forego their own schooling to help the family, including sending the younger siblings to school. Often, it also means postponing their plans for the future, like marriage, until the younger siblings get their degrees and land good jobs to take their turn helping the family. The younger ones, in turn, are expected to help the older siblings send their children to school.

Social Mobility

Social mobility, or advancement to a higher social class or position, is sought for the improvement of one's own lot and that of one's family, as well as for the enjoyment of accompanying rewards, influence, power, and prestige (Espiritu et al. 1976:73).

The importance of family here should be noted. For the Filipino, improvement of social status includes the improvement of the family's status. A member of the family who improves his standing and does nothing to improve that of his/her family (and *sakop*) is said to be without *utang na loob* (does not recognize his/her debt of gratitude) and therefore *nakakahiya* (shameful). Here, it is implied that whatever success an individual has achieved is owed to the *sakop*, especially the immediate family. The individual then has the obligation to pay that debt of gratitude by sharing what he has with the rest.

Upward mobility for most Filipinos is often through education that makes possible the acquisition of a good job, with its corollary benefits of a good salary and the capability to acquire material things. A higher social status is achieved, which benefits not only the individual but also the whole to whom the individual's success is owed. The important thing to note here is that social mobility is not simply individual but usually involves the family and the *sakop*.

The values outlined above illustrate the Filipino patterns of relating which fall under "patterning response to meaning" that Kraft says is one function of worldview. The high degree of value placed on relationships not only between individuals but also on how individuals relate to their in-group and to society at-large point to the centrality of social acceptance to the Filipino

worldview. Thus a Filipino would rather lose money than be *mapahiya* (put to shame), or would often sacrifice truth in the altar of SIR.

The same values also relate to Filipino patterns of pledging allegiance, which again fall under the rubric of the worldview function mentioned above. To a Filipino, the highest object of allegiance is not oneself but one's family or in-group. Thus, smooth interpersonal relationships must be maintained at all costs, even at the expense of the self.

Beliefs and Convictions

The beliefs and convictions discussed here furnish clues as to how Filipinos assign meanings and thus provide a basis on which they interpret and evaluate their world. As such, they also point to Filipino patterns of explaining why things are or what they are supposed to be, corresponding to what Kraft calls the cosmological or existential postulates or assumptions.

Westernization and modernization notwithstanding, Filipinos, especially those in the rural areas, still look at the world and nature as populated by spirits or beings other than human, and governed by mysterious forces above and beyond themselves. Personalistic in worldview, Filipinos explain reality in religious or metaphysical terms:

The way important events like success or failure, health or sickness, life or death, a good or bad harvest are interpreted reveals a belief in the supernatural and a trust in and reliance on a Divine Providence. The farmer prays for rain but is not interested in building irrigation ditches. He carefully follows rituals of planting but is not inclined to experiment on a new type of seed or fertilizer. His attitude is reflected in a belief

expressed in the term *suerte* (luck or fate) and in the oft-repeated phrase, *bahala na*. His approach to truth is intuitive rather than rational or scientific (Espiritu et al. 1976:73).

Since success is due to *suerte* (luck), *panalangin* (God's mercy) or the help of others, the Filipino shares it with others. Failure is similarly explained and shared. A failure or misfortune is due to *malas* (bad luck) or *gaba* (punishment by either God or a spirit). Because human events are beyond human control, the Filipino learns to,

submit to uncertainty, to take a *bahala na (que sera sera, I don't care)* attitude, and develop traits of patience, endurance (*pagtitiis*), and resignation. Moreover, since good is limited, not everyone is expected to enjoy success and happiness at the same time. There is a time and place for everything, and if one is patient one's time will come (Espiritu et al. 1976:74, parentheses mine).

Here, time is cyclic, not linear, psychological, not mathematical, relative, not exact. The person is not governed or regulated by time, rather, time is for the person and there is always another day (time) to do what cannot be done today. "Time fits everything harmoniously into the scheme of life and nature. It is easy to accept all events because all things come in their own good time" (Espiritu et al. 1976:74).

Norms and Principles

The discussion of norms and principles that follow correspond to Kraft's concept of patterns of pledging allegiance and of relating under the worldview function of patterning of response to meaning.

Structural

The high value placed on social acceptance indicates that Filipinos do not like to be alone. A Filipino, from the time of birth to until after burial, is seldom alone. Thus, belonging to a group is very important to Filipinos.¹

Philippine society is markedly segmented into subgroups whose members find identification within their group to the exclusion of others. The existence of two distinct personal possessive pronouns in Philippine languages (*amin* and *atin*, *amo* and *ato*, *amon* and *aton*, etc.) compared to only one English term, "our," serves to denote the distinction between the in-group and the out-group. Individual interests are subordinated to those of the in-group; loyalties are strong but limited and particularistic (Espiritu et al. 1976:74).

Of the different subgroups in Philippine society, the most important is the family and the extended relationships of the kinship (*sakop*) system. One's duties and obligations to one's family are of utmost importance. But they do not stop there. They extend into a wider network of an alliance system "which consists of relatives, friends, or followers (where) status, age-grading, generation, authority, and power differentials are ranked and observed" (Espiritu et al. 1976:74). Region, language, and religious affiliation also constitute groupings with corresponding ties and allegiances.

¹ Babies, even when asleep in a room, or older children in the house, are never without companions. Adults, wherever they go and whatever they do will, if possible, get someone to go with them—be it to the principal's office for a high school kid, or to go shopping with a friend. Even the dead are not left alone in a funeral home but lie in state in their own homes with all the relatives and friends who come at all hours of the day until at least ten days after the funeral.

Operational

Operationally, segments or groupings are defined in terms of how members view themselves in relation to each other, and also as to how members are viewed by those who do not belong to their group. By equivalence, “individual members are equated with the whole segment or with others” in the group. Individuals are seen as representing each other or their whole group in gatherings or social affairs. Solidarity refers to the group members viewing themselves as united into a solid group against other groupings. Therefore, whatever happens to one member of the group applies to all: a kindness or injury to one is a kindness or injury to the whole; the success of one brings honor to the whole, while the embarrassment of one also brings shame to all.

Equivalence and solidarity serve as effective mechanisms of control. Improper or anti-social behavior by an individual brings stern censure since it discredits the whole family, and the individual will think twice before doing anything that will bring the family shame. Combined with *amor-proprio*, solidarity can also lead to serious conflicts with outsiders who are perceived to be a threat to family or group members.

Utang-na-loob is a debt of gratitude. It is “a feeling of indebtedness which is incurred when one receives a favor, service or goods . . .” (Espiritu et al. 1976:74) It carries with it a deep sense of obligation to reciprocate. A Filipino proverb expresses its importance: “A financial debt once paid is paid; a debt of gratitude paid remains a debt.”

The nature of the favor, the circumstances under which it is given, the relationship between, and the social status of, the giver and receiver determine the degree of gratitude. Set in the context of a society that puts a premium on social acceptance, reciprocity in *utang-na-loob* is an operating principle that is

central to interpersonal relationships. In such a society, individualism and self-sufficiency are frowned upon. The desire for acceptance makes it difficult for a Filipino to refuse doing a favor to anyone who asks. The one who receives favor in turn is expected to recognize his indebtedness to others and must be willing to repay them when capable of doing so or when the need arises.

The nature of reciprocity in *utang-na-loob* differs according to the degree of intimacy in the subgroups. Reciprocity within the nuclear family is primarily that of sacrificing (*pagmalasakit*) for each other for the good of the whole. Here, the feeling of obligation to help is as intense as the obligation to reciprocate. In the *sakop* reciprocity takes the form of bestowing favors and incurring obligations to each other. Here, the pressure or obligation to help is not as intense, and the feeling of obligation to reciprocate varies in the degree of intensity relative to a variety of factors alluded to earlier.

Awa (compassion) "is a sentiment of sympathy, mercy or pity aroused when someone suffers a misfortune or injustice"; in short, "it is the willingness to identify with the victim of fate or human cruelty" (Espiritu et al. 1976:74). However, viewed in the context of equivalence and solidarity where what happens to one is shared by all, solidarity with the victim in *awa* would often involve more than the sentimental or emotional identification and include material, physical and any such consequences of the misfortune.

When all of the above is taken into consideration, there emerges a recurrent theme or a pervading principle that permeates the value-system of the Filipino, a kind of cultural ethos: harmony. A Filipino strives for harmony rather than mastery, and is at peace with him/herself only as he/she is in harmony with nature and with other people.

Of central interest to this study are the effects of colonial mentality on the religious consciousness of the Filipino. Religious consciousness is used in this study to refer to the system of beliefs pertaining to the supernatural. As such, it is an element of the religious subsystem which, in turn, is a component of a people's worldview. To understand the religious consciousness of the present-day Filipino, it is important to look at the traditional Filipino religious belief system.

Filipino Traditional Religion

It is commonly believed that before the advent of the white man, the inhabitants of what was later to be known as the Philippine Islands had no powerful and ancient civilization to oppose the Gospel. Implicit in the statement is the absence of a strong, institutionally established, religious belief system that is often characteristic of powerful ancient civilizations. Indeed, such was the assumption of many of the earliest Roman Catholic missionaries who landed on the islands.

Luis Balquiedra, in an analysis of how the early Spanish missionaries applied the "principle of substitution" in the Spanish-Philippine church points out that,

The general Spanish missionary approach was to adopt and adapt the customs and usages of the people accepting Christianity for the first time; all those elements that did not contradict the Christian faith. However, when they came *vis-à-vis* the Filipino indigenous religion, the unanimous decision of the missionaries in general was all-out condemnation. It must be substituted by Christian form of worship entirely! In view of this unworthiness of the Filipino indigenous religion, the liturgical principle of substitution in the

Philippines coincided with the all-embracing Spanish missionary axiom: *Prius evellant, deinde plantent* (Pluck out first, then plant) (1995:32)

The reason, says Balquiedra, was that “the missionaries found the Philippines to be inhabited by . . . varied ethnic groups who were deprived of a civilized way of living.” Thus, “the Filipino indigenous social customs and traditions certainly did not measure up very well to the missionaries’ humanitarian and Christian standards” (1995:31).

This negative impression, Balquiedra observes, seemed to have been occasioned by several things:

1. The pre-Christian Filipinos did not have temples. This seemed to indicate that the Filipinos had no established religious system of beliefs, there being no permanent buildings reserved for religious functions as can be found in other civilizations. What the natives had instead were simply makeshift sheds called *simbahan*.¹

2. The pre-Hispanic Filipinos neither had holy scriptures nor calendars of feasts, further strengthening the impression that they did not have an organized religious system.

3. The only form of sacrifice they performed was—according to the Spanish missionaries’ assessment—not sacrifice at all because they said it was *sin altar y sin Dios a quien ofrecerlo* (without an altar and not offered to any God).

4. Because the *Nonos* (dead ancestors) were ubiquitous, pre-Christian Filipinos consulted auguries in order to avoid misfortune and escape the trappings of neglected or offended (turned to evil) ancestors’ spirits. As a degeneration of the conceptualization of these evil spirits, the pre-Christian Filipino

¹ The term *simbahan* was later applied by missionaries to the Christian church building and retains that meaning to the present. It is akin to the Javanese *sembahjang* or *sembajang* derived from *sembah* which means “respectful salute.” Similarly, the Filipino *simba* (Visayan) or *samba* (Tagalog) has taken the meaning of “worship.”

world also became populated by witches, sorcerers and charmers. Since beliefs in these spirits differed from tribe to tribe or from place to place, they were seen as disjointed and were thus judged as not constituting a coherent system of beliefs characteristic of organized religious systems.

Statements from some of the missionaries themselves support Balquiedra's assessment of the negative value attached to the native religiosity of pre-colonial Filipinos by the early Spanish missionaries. One Friar, after two years of mission work in the Philippines, reported to Pope Gregory in 1580 that "what is more amazing is the fact that that these people did not have any vestiges of religion, knew no Temples nor manifested any sacrifices at all."¹ One Fray Juan de Concepcion described the religion of the Filipinos—"if religion it could be called"—as simply "superstitious and false, ridiculous and abominable." Fray Juan Pobre de Zamora noted that, compared to the Indios in Mexico, the Filipino Indios were "*tamquan tabula rasa*" (like a clean sheet) because "what these (Filipino) Indios had were superstitions, auguries and deceits which the devil works on them." Thus, they had to be taught what worship is and how, whereas in Mexico, they simply had to change the object of worship. Fray Valentin Marin wrote that the religion of the Filipinos did not merit that name because it was only "a disorganized ensemble of superstitions and of the most infantile beliefs."² Thus, on the simple assessment that the religious culture of the Filipinos was false and silly, the early missionaries saw fit to merely wipe it away.

¹ From a letter written by Fray Pablo de Jesus addressed to Pope Gregory XIII, dated June 1580, as recorded in *Archivo Ibero-Americano* 31 (1929:255) in Balquiedra (1995:36).

² See Balquiedra (1955:37).

While the statement is generally accurate in reference to the absence of a powerful ancient civilization, it is, nevertheless, untenable to assume that there was no strong religious belief system opposing the Gospel. The continued presence of pre-colonial religious beliefs and practices in the Philippines to this day belies that assumption. Thus, a closer look at the pre-colonial Filipino religious culture is called for.

An Animistic Legacy: Pre-Colonial Filipino Beliefs

The major outline of the pre-colonial Filipino belief system was a strong link to nature. Nature itself was the “visible manifestation of an invisible but strongly palpable power” (Mayuga and Yuzon 1979:55). As animists, they lived according to the cycle of nature. Catastrophes and calamities such as pestilence, disease, crop failures, destruction wrought by nature (e.g., storms, floods, earthquakes) were attributed to such powers. Predictably, the forces of nature easily became objects of worship. The sun, the moon and stars, the sea, the earth, the mountains and rivers, the lakes and forests, and some trees like the bamboo and *balete* were divinized. The universe functioned through the agency of a theistic and/or spiritual hierarchy. The people existed in a world alive with spirits: spirits of departed ancestors, of the rock, the stream, the mountain, and what have you. Special trees were sacred to the spirits; special places were inhabited by the dear departed. With the aid of magical formulas, objects (*anting-anting*) and incantations (*oraciones*), they sought the aid of the benevolent spirits (*enkantos*) and appeased the malevolent ones (*malignos*). It was an enchanted spirit world cohabited by human and spirit beings.

It is true that when the Spanish first came, the archipelago was fragmented not only geographically. Additionally, there

was no social, political, cultural, linguistic and religious unity amongst the natives.

The most basic unit of government, called the *barangay*, was based on kinship and blood relationships. Different social classes were found within the *barangay*. At the apex stood the *datus* or chieftains. The Spaniards called them *reyezuelos* or “kinglets.” Immediately under them were the *maharlika* or nobles. Still lower were the *timawas* or freemen. At the lowest level were the *alipin* or the slaves, also called the “dependency” class by some historians (de Loarca 1973:143-144). This class was subdivided into two distinct classes: the *aliping namamahay* or servant class, and the *aliping saguiguilir*, or the chattel slave class.

Predictably, there was no central government, neither kings nor princes. However, in spite of the fragmentation, there were some common trends found everywhere in the country. In terms of religious beliefs, for instance, the following common traits among the pre-colonial natives emerge.

The people believed in the existence of an essential being, a supreme god, called *Bathala* or *Bathalang Maykapal* (God the Creator) by the Tagalogs, *Laon* (the Most Ancient of Days) by the Bisayans, *Dian Masalanta* (the Invincible One) and *Cabunian* by the Ilocanos and the people of Cordillera Central. *Bathala* was the great god, creator of heaven and earth, legislator, and judge of the living and the dead. He lived in a place called *langit* (heaven), but people knew little as to the nature of that place. *Bathala* was so infinite and powerful that mortal people could not address their prayers to him. He was not a provident god. The great *Bathala* lived in his world, in isolation and without any concern for the people. Like the ancient Jews, the early Filipinos did not dare pronounce his name. If ever they did it was with tremendous fear and a sense of reverence and awe.

Thus the people did not address their prayers to the *Bathala*. The Filipino equivalent to the Greek Olympus was filled with

many secondary gods and deities, existing as spirits called *anitos* by the Tagalogs and *diwatas* by the Bisayans. In the strictest sense, the word *anito*¹ denotes the spirits of the dead who served as intermediaries between the great *Bathala* and the people. Ritual observances involving these spirits were geared to making the will of the gods, which had to do with personal well being and earthly fortunes, intelligible to the people.

Plascencia gives the following specific reasons for cultic worship: “for recovery of a sick person, a prosperous voyage for those embarking on the sea, a good harvest in the sowed lands, propitious result in wars, successful delivery in childbirth, and a happy outcome in married life” (1973:191). The cult devoted to the worship of these spirits was called *nagaanito* or *maganito*.

Regarded as household guardians, images in honor of these *anitos* were crafted by every family whenever a relative died. The first missionaries found these *anitos* by the thousands. Passed on from generation to generation, a missionary reported seeing as many as two hundred *anitos* in one household.² Carved by the family members themselves, some were made of ivory or gold, but most of stones and wood. These images were themselves called *anitos*,³ and it is to them that prayers were addressed.

It is at this level of the belief in the existence of the *anitos* and other minor deities where the battle between Christianity and paganism took place. So zealous were the Spanish missionaries to be rid of these idols that they conducted “search and destroy” operations all over the country, thoroughly combing mountains and valleys for huts and bamboo groves dedicated to these idols.

¹ The word *anito* was traced by H. Pardo de Tavera to the Javanese word *antu* which generally denotes spirits. *Antu*, in turn, finds its origin in the Sanskrit *hantu*, meaning death, a connotation that was carried and expanded in the Javanese as it was in the Malay, losing the “h” sound in the process. The Tagalog changed the word even more radically, adding an “i” but retaining the Javanese meaning (de Tavera 1887:16).

² Cf. Antonio de Morga, *Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas* in Blair and Robertson (1973:132).

³ Other terms used to refer to these idols were *taotao* (image of man), *likha* (creation) and *larawan* (likeness), all of which clearly demonstrate their representational and reated nature as symbols.

Their campaign was so successful that hardly any of these idols, including the ritual vessels associated with the worship, escaped.

As to the absence of temples, pre-colonial Filipinos did not find it necessary to build temples to their deities. The Spanish historian, Plasencia, observed that:

In all the villages, or in other parts of the Filipinas Islands, there are no temples consecrated to the performing of sacrifices, the adoration of their idols, or the general practices of idolatry. It is true that they have the name *simbahan*, which means temple or place of adoration; but this is because, formerly, when they wished to celebrate a festival, which they called *pandot*, or "worship," they celebrated it in the large house of the chief. There they constructed for the purpose of sheltering the assembled people, a temporary shed on each side of the house, with a roof, called *sibi*, to protect the people from the wet when it rained. . . . On the post of the house they set small lamps, called *sorihile*; in the center of the house they placed one large lamp, adorned with leaves of the white palm, wrought into many designs. They also brought together many grains, large and small, which they beat successively while the feast lasted, which was usually four days. During this time the whole *barangay*, or family, united and joined in the worship they call *nagaanitos*. The house, for the above-mentioned period of time, was called a temple.(1973:185-186).

The reason for the absence of temples is found in the fact that worship was done to the spirits of nature anywhere it was

felt the spirits resided. As a result, there was a kind of impermanence in everything that the people built pertaining to worship. Worship was done, sometimes in the river, at times in the mountain, or it was done along the shoreline, or in the thicket of the forest.

However, while there were no temples in which to adore their deities, there was a priestly class, generally women, called *catalonans* by the Tagalogs and *baylans* or *Babaylans* by the Bisayans. There were very few male priests. In line with the general nature of the people's religious beliefs, the priestesses exercised their "ministry" for a limited period of time, or simply when they were called to.

Furthermore, and again because of nature of their beliefs, the early Filipinos, like the native American Indians whose religion was also characterized by its closeness and strong link to nature, lacked a code like the Bible or the Koran. They simply prayed when they had a need. There were no times or seasons pre-established to worship the deities. Thus there was no religious calendar fixed in advance.

The first Filipinos offered sacrifices to their gods or spirits in the form of animals, mainly goats and chicken. Their religion shocked the first missionaries who came into contact with them, but they were not as horrified as they were with the sanguinary and bloody sacrifices of the Aztecs of Mexico. In the Philippines, unlike in Mexico, the gods did not demand human blood; hence there were no human sacrifices.

Accustomed to the religion of the *Indios* in the New World, the missionaries were puzzled by the kind of religion they observed among the pre-colonial Filipinos, dismissing it as of no consequence. However, this did not mean that the missionaries did not have to contend with the influences of the indigenous religion, as can be seen by the fact that they did not hesitate to make use of another missionary axiom: *Compelle eos intrare*

("force them to enter the fold"). That they often had to appeal to the axiom is proof positive of the strong influence the native religion had on the people.

The Emergence of Syncretistic Religion

The white race came to the islands in the form of the 16th century Spaniards who brought with them an ancient, powerful and angry God who imposed his will upon the natives. Whole tribes tried to escape this foreign God. Only a few who fled to the mountains and hinterlands succeeded. Those who remained in the plains could not evade his influence.¹

Yet, the power of the spirits persisted. Consequently, even while the natives were Christianized, their traditional worldview of the spirits remained strong. They would pass this worldview on to their descendants, many of whom, to this day, retain their animistic souls.²

Commenting on the effects of the encounter between animistic Filipino beliefs and the Catholicism introduced by the Spanish missionary friars, Gatbonton observes:

The Filipinos never rejected totally their ancient beliefs and customs. Rather, their encounter with the Western faith gave rise to . . . "syncretistic Catholicism" — a commingling of many aspects of folk-belief with the new religion. Though the rituals may have varied and the priest's vestments and prayer chants changed, the same concept of *Bathala* remained, the same idea of intermediary *anito* prevailed (1979:20).

¹ John Leddy Phelan claims that after two generations of mission work, all lowland Filipinos except those in Muslim Mindanao and Sulu had been baptized (1959:56).

² Father Jaime Bulatao, in a keynote address delivered to the Philippine Psychological Society in 1985, argued that the Filipino is still an animist at heart (later published in *Philippine Studies* 33:10-21).

Syncretism can occur either in terms of the form or in terms of the meaning, substance, or function. An example of syncretism of the form is the Western celebration of Christmas during the winter season. Coinciding with the ancient pagan celebration of the winter solstice, the traditional form was given Christian meanings and function. This reinterpretation in terms of Christian thought gradually took over until the form itself became Christianized to the point that most present-day Christians in the West no longer remember its pagan origins.

More insidious is the second type where the meaning is syncretized. The danger here is in the manifestation of the form which is apparently Christian, but the meaning attached to the form is definitely not. A good example of this in the Philippines is the wearing of a necklace with a cross or crucifix, not so much as a symbol of one's faith as it is an *anting-anting* (amulet) to ward off the *maligno* or evil spirits.

Syncretism as found in Folk-Catholicism in the Philippines includes both types, often with both contributing to the resultant syncretism. A classification of the beliefs and practices under each type would be valuable, but the limitations of this project in terms of time and scope prohibit such academic exercise. An attempt, however, will be made to describe some of these beliefs and practices and to show what factors in both the native religion and Roman Catholicism have contributed to their emergence.

There is a plethora of beliefs and practices in the Catholicism brought in by the Spanish missionaries to the Philippines that paralleled those in the belief system of the animistic natives. These parallels probably account for the easy accommodation of the new Catholic beliefs into the traditional animistic structure. Thus, according to Gatbonton, "Parallelism helped create a favorable psychological conditioning for the acceptance of Catholicism" (1979:40). Indeed, such parallels may have paved

the way to the syncretism that is characteristic of folk-Catholicism in the Philippines.

The following comparison of some of the similarities between the native and Roman Catholic belief systems is based on a section of Esperanza Bunag Gatbonton's book on Spanish colonial saints which I have summarized, added to and reworked here into a side-by-side comparative table.¹ These similarities served as natural "bridges" between these systems, making adaptation of either one to the other relatively easy. It must be noted, however, that had the Catholic missionaries been inclined to do so, a sensitive, careful, critical, selective adaptation could have just as easily led to a positive, contextualized Christianity rather than to the negative, syncretistic folk Catholicism that has resulted. The desire to convert more Filipinos into Catholicism by making it easy for the people to accept the alien faith resulted in the many accommodations that ended in the syncretistic Catholicism that is so popular in the Philippines today.

¹ These examples of the similarities between Spanish Catholic and the pre-colonial Filipino belief systems served as "natural bridges" between the two which, I believe, made it easier for syncretism to emerge (see Gatbonton 1979:17-46).

TABLE 2: ROMAN CATHOLIC AND FOLK RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

Native Religion	Roman Catholicism
The ritual included wearing of ceremonial garments, ringing of bells, burning of aromatic incense and chanting. Flowers, libation cups and flat dishes featured.	The mass featured priests in ceremonial garments, incense burning, ringing of bells, antiphonal, memorized prayers chanted in Latin. Flowers, libation cups, and flat dishes were also present
The most significant aspect in the ceremony involved the sacrificial offering and the ritual drinking of wine. Here the blood of a sacrificial victim—an animal—was actually spilled.	In the Mass, blood is consecrated in the guise of wine, and so is flesh (body), in the guise of bread, as a symbolic re-enactment of the sacrificial death of Christ.
Primitive fervor results in a frenzy.	In the Mass, the experience is mystical.
In the ancient practice of erecting wooden beams in the fields, it was believed that the beams attracted the spirits of the dead, who used them as a resting-place, so placing the fields under their protection.	The popular Catholic practice of planting crosses in fields supplanted the older form but conveys the same purpose of ensuring the protection of the field.
Filipinos believe that on the third day after death, the spirit of the deceased returns to its own home; hence, the folk gathered every evening in the house of the dead one to await its return.* This “wake” lasted for ten days after which the spirit goes into the spirit world.	The resurrection in Catholic dogma carries the belief that Christ’s physical body returns to life in the third day and folk gathered in church to celebrate.
The <i>indio</i> practice of ritual observances in times of famine, droughts and calamity, and with special offerings to bring about a turn in their fortunes.	The Christian practice of observing special days for chanting the litany of the saints, and the lighting of candles during such times for identical purposes.

*According to popular belief, tangible proofs of the presence of the unseen spirits of the dead can be verified, for instance, by the footprints that the spirit of the deceased would leave on the ashes spread by the mourners outside the house. A water jar would be placed at the entrance of the house for the spirit to wash its feet. Rosaries would be recited by the mourners while waiting for the spirit to come. Gatbonton argues that this was not so much to pray as to “disarm the suspicions of the local missionary,” observing that the present practice of “the *padasal*, or prayer meeting for nine evenings after a burial . . . probably originated from this pagan practice” (1979:38).

Native Religion

The early Filipino concept of a Supreme Being, *Bathala*, Creator of the Universe, the lofty God who, after Creation was no longer concerned with petty human affairs. Instead, he delegated powers to other deities who performed special functions and, like the *anitos* or ancestor-spirits) often acted as intermediaries between God and humans.

Apart from being incarnations of gods and goddesses, the *anitos* were also spirits of human beings who had performed exemplary deeds or whose relatives made sacrifices and offerings to redeem them from the region of the dead. Admitted in the realm of *Bathala*, they became intermediaries between God and humans. Thus the conciliatory offerings made to ancestral spirits.

Pantheon of gods or goddesses.

Roman Catholicism

In Catholicism, the intermediary role between God as the *totaliter aliter* (wholly other) and the believer belong to the saints. Here, the veneration of saints paralleled the ancient devotion to the *anito*, and may explain the Filipino Catholic's devotion to specific saints and their attachment to devotional novenas.

The Catholic practice of praying for the release of souls in purgatory by means of sacrifice and prayers, expressed in regular Monday devotions conducted by the missionaries was very similar to the traditional practice of freeing the spirits from the region of death. Here, money and candles lighted in honor of saints took the place of instead of conciliatory offerings.

Hierarchy of saints.

At the heart of the traditional Filipino animistic beliefs was the worship and veneration of the *anitos*, who, rescued from the region of the dead and acting as intermediaries, interacted with the people on a daily basis. Knowing this, the Spanish missionaries focused much of their efforts at eradicating the idols that served as visual representations of the *anitos*.

Their efforts, it appears, succeeded mainly in replacing the forms and did not go deep enough to substantially change the essence or content of the traditional beliefs. In their zeal to evangelize the Filipinos, the friars sought to destroy all visible signs of idol worship and forced the people to abandon their faith in *Bathala* and the *anitos*. This created a religious vacuum which they filled and replaced with faith in the Christian God and the veneration of the saints.

I concur with Gatbonton that the parallelism between the traditional religion and the new faith did much to create a favorable psychological conditioning for the acceptance of the latter. Predictably, popular acceptance was easier where the parallels were more pronounced, and nowhere was it more pronounced than in the area of the intermediaries, that is, the *anitos* on one hand, the saints on the other. In addition, the central position that the *anitos* occupied in the traditional belief system made the acceptance of the saints all the more compelling.

The quick spread of popular devotion to saints in the seventeenth century attests to the impact they made on the people. Gatbonton asks, "Was it a simple act of transference from one object of devotion to another? Or did the *Indio* mind perceive the profundity of actual differences and similarities between the two beliefs?" (1979:40).

My suspicion is that the non-dualistic Filipino mind did not bother try to perceive the similarities and differences between the two beliefs, and that it is therefore a case of transference, a syncretism of meaning where the form taken is Christian but the essence or substance remains animistic. The following table of examples may help drive home this point.

**TABLE 3: ROMAN CATHOLIC
ACCOMODATION OF FOLK BELIEFS**

Native Religion	Roman Catholicism
The <i>anito</i> patron of good voyage and undertakings is called <i>Maguayen</i> , described as a boatman who ferried the dead to the other world. Those going on sea voyages make votive offerings to him to ask for safe journey.	Catholic devotions to “The Virgin of Antipolo” as the Patroness of Peace and Good Voyages, or of the legendary St. Christopher as the patron of safe journeys. Candles are lighted by the petitioner asking for safety in voyages.
Leaving food offerings out in the fields or by the roadside for the spirits to eat, spilling beer or rice wine on the ground before drinking it are religiously observed in some rural areas, since neglecting this will give one a stomachache, or get one drunk.	Household saints are given wine and food offerings called <i>atang</i> placed before the family altar. Illnesses attributed to saint’s displeasure for things like inappropriate behavior or inadequate offering results in <i>pagtatampo</i> (being aggrieved) which necessitates appeasement.
Votive offerings were given as a token of thanksgiving for favors done by <i>anitos</i> . The likeness of the person giving thanks or, in some cases, replicas or substitutes of the cured bodily organs are fashioned and given as an offering to the <i>anito</i> .	<i>Ex votos</i> given to saints consisting of pictures of the person or replicas of cured bodily organs are cut out in silver and given as an offering to the saint by pinning them on the saint’s dress.

The preoccupation with the saints as objects of devotion points to the people’s felt needs—protection, well-being, blessings—a devotion strikingly similar to the *pagaanito* (devotion/worship of *anitos*) of the native cult. Filipino Folk-Catholic practices during planting and harvest seasons, at fiestas, when embarking on journeys, or even at crossing the plaza in front of a church to avoid bad luck— all these go back to the beginnings of folk culture, when the traveler found it necessary to ask leave of the *Nuno sa punso* (ancestor spirit of the molehill) when passing before a molehill. The *Indio* had long acknowledged “territorial imperative,” showing respect and veneration towards the spirits and beings who populated the world around him—respect and veneration now directed to the

saints who perform much of the *anitos'* functions but have not totally replaced them.

Thus it is no surprise that, for instance, the reaction of modern-day Catholic devotees to the Virgin of Antipolo is expressed in the same material terms as those by which the *Indios* acknowledged their gods. Furthermore, it is easy to understand why devotions to St. Christopher continue, though Rome has withdrawn him from its list of saints. People still honor and venerate him because of his importance to travelers looking for protection in their journeys. Such religious devotions have found sanction in the hearts of the Filipino Catholics, for behind them lurk the shadows of the *anitos* in the people's religious consciousness—traditional idols for which the saints were found to be ready substitutes. Gatbonton puts it this way:

Tradition-bound Filipinos, who may have balked at being disloyal to their own idols, must have experienced soul-racking agonies when confronted with the ecclesiastical condemnation of their native worship. In many ways, fear and ignorance determined the Filipino conversion, factors, which the missionaries exploited to prove the superiority of the Christian God. It must have been truly traumatic for the *Indios* to witness the desecration of their idols—burnt, destroyed and, in few instances, debased with excreta. . . . That their gods failed to avenge such humiliations appeared reasonable proof of the Christian God's might. In this way, the religious campaign to eradicate idolatry succeeded in extirpating the likenesses of these idols from the folk memory. But where the mind could not be reached, where certain fixations remained lodged, only the external values had altered at

the drastic displacement of sensibilities. The meaning and purpose of the ritual clung strongly to traditional beliefs (1979:43).

This condition remains true of contemporary Philippine society, particularly in areas remote from metropolitan Manila. In the *barrios* and villages, in small towns and *poblaciones*, animistic beliefs, now clothed in Catholic trappings, still pervade the lives of Filipinos. Various efforts by the Catholic Church to dispel what it considers little more than superstition have had little effect. The reason, according to Gatbonton,

perhaps, is that these beliefs are based on universal truths basic to the peoples' lives. They acknowledge the power of nature, compared to puny man. They make less uncertain man's fate in the face of typhoon, drought, locust swarms, hunger and death. For Christ the Redeemer may have come to save all men from hell but not, it appears, from drought or typhoons. *Bathala* may have created man and the universe, but he does not send the rain to make their plants grow. Yet, it is the same Divine Providence that they invoke, though they may use *Apo Baket*, San Isidro or ancestor spirits to intercede for them (1979:46).

It must be pointed out, though, that especially in the more educated sectors of the population living in Westernized urban centers, the confrontation between Filipino and Western cultures has produced a mentality predisposed to accept the Western scientific worldview and, at least *intellectually*, reject the more "magical" and blatantly superstitious elements of the animistic worldview. Here, in the identifiably secular routine of daily living, the differences between the scientific and animistic

worldviews are more easily delineated, and animistic influences, dismissed as superstition, recede into the background while Western-oriented lifestyles take over.

But behind the Western-oriented intellectual/secular facade lurks an animistic system of beliefs and values that, in cases of life and death situations,¹ or in the realm of religion or ultimate concerns, readily surface.

The religion that came from the West was the kind that “excluded the middle level of supernatural but this worldly beings and forces” (Hiebert 1982:43). It denied the existence of the spirit-world as the Filipinos knew and experienced it. This was true especially with Protestantism, which taught the existence of God and Satan, heaven and hell, sin and salvation, forgiveness and condemnation, and to some extent, with the early Catholic missionaries who condemned and tried to stamp out the native religion. This resulted in a Christianity called “split-level” (see Bulatao 1966) described as the belief in two different (sometimes diametrically opposed) systems of explanation, in this case, animism and Christianity. Thus, depending on the nature of the problem, Filipinos even today, would consult either the pastor or priest, or a traditional shaman. Rodney Henry described it this way:

Filipino church members (both Catholic and Protestant) see no real conflict in going to their in-church practitioners for ultimate concerns and to

¹ In cases of sickness and healing for instance, the scientific explanation is openly believed. Western allopathic medicine would first be consulted, and the physical causes of disease would be explored with Western-oriented, scientifically trained medical doctors, who would prescribe the necessary medicine reflective of their orientation. Those who could not afford this kind of treatment go to the *albulario* or the *hilot* who, using centuries-old wisdom would diagnose the physical causes of the disease, and would then apply strictly herbal medicines (*albulario*), or accupressure (*hilot*). Those who cannot find any apparent physical cause for the disease, or do not get the relief they expect from the above-mentioned methods, would not hesitate to consult the *siruhano* or *mananambal*, who would mix native medicines with spirit-world powers, or the *espiritista*, who consulting their “spirit-guides,” would then prescribe the necessary ritual to cure the illness.

their out-of-church practitioners for everyday concerns. The issue is simply one of specialization. If the problem is sin, then it is necessary to go to an in-church practitioner (pastor or priest) who specializes in ultimate concerns. But if the problem is perceived to be *da-ot* (a curse), then it is necessary to go to an out-of-church practitioner who specializes in a this worldly spirit world. In the same way, if the problem is a broken watch it should be taken to one who specializes in watch repair. There is no perceived conflict because each category is separate and specialized. The in-church practitioners . . . have little or no teaching on the subject of the this worldly spirit world, so members assume that this does not fall under the concern of the church (1984:49).

Henry's observation is to some extent accurate, depicting a situation that Filipinos have been forced into by dint of circumstance resulting from their colonial past. Where their world, before their forcible exposure to the Western worldview, was one where no dichotomy between the secular and the spiritual, between the this-worldly and the other-worldly existed, they now find themselves separating the two realms as distinct and in many ways unrelated. Where the non-conflict described above was due then to non-distinction between the two realms, it is now seen in terms of non-related specialized categories.

To the Filipino non-dualistic mind, such distinctions, artificially imposed as they are, have caused a lot of confusion, misunderstanding, and unnecessary guilt— especially amongst Filipino evangelicals. To confess belief in Christianity, and then sneak behind the pastor's back to consult what Henry calls "out-

of-church practitioners” is deceitful. Yet, because the church has failed to address areas in their lives they consider important, they are forced to consult such people, knowing fully well that their church condemns such actions. This has been one of the main stumbling blocks to a more popular acceptance of the evangelical faith in the Philippines.

It is here that the strength of Roman Catholicism and the popularity of Folk Catholicism in the Philippines reside. Their non-condemnatory stance towards animistic beliefs and practices¹ fit the non-dualistic, non-exclusive attitudes of Filipinos better. By not altogether negating the old ways, as the Protestant missionaries who came later did, they allowed a common denominator between the Catholic faith and the native belief system—that there is a God—to surface and be reasserted in many ways. This common denominator paved the way for an easier acceptance of the new faith by the Filipinos.

The reason for this is that the acceptance of a Divine Being who created and sustains all things, and of intermediaries between the “Wholly or Totally Other” and the people is never far from folk beliefs. The presence of intermediaries, be it in the form of idols or carved images of saints, provides a physical presence that assures people that God is present in their daily lives, in their eating, drinking and merrymaking, in their toils, struggles and in the vicissitudes of life.

But therein also lies the weakness of Folk-Catholicism in the Philippines. For in its recognizing as valid the clearly animistic elements of the native religion, it has diluted the Gospel and has allowed the insidious presence of a grievous sin that constantly plagued the history of Israel as God’s chosen people and which, ironically, the early Spanish missionaries sought to completely stamp out—idolatry. Thus it is that instead of proclaiming a faith

¹ The evolution from the condemnatory attitude of the early Catholic missionaries to the more accepting stance of present-day Catholicism will be discussed at length later.

that claims victory over the powers and principalities on earth, Filipino Folk-Catholicism has instead perpetuated a religion where the people still remain in ignorance, in fear and at the mercy of capricious spirit-beings in the guise of saints, whose goodwill must constantly be sought and whose ire must be placated by sacrifices.

Are Filipinos immersed in Folk-Catholicism today any better spiritually than their predecessors who lived in their pre-colonial, animistic, spirit-pervaded world?

Apparently not, at least not substantially. As seen earlier, the world that they now live in, and the religious consciousness they exhibit are, to a large extent, similar to that of their ancestors. This makes the task of evangelization even more difficult. For like an inoculation of weak bacteria to immunize the body from disease, so the admixture of Christian forms superimposed on a stratum of deep-seated animistic beliefs is like the inoculation of a weak germ of Christianity into a people's religious consciousness—not enough to truly convict, but just enough to give it a semblance of the “disease” (in this case, the Christian facade), making it more resistant to evangelistic efforts. Where, indeed, is there a need for conversion for one who already considers oneself a Christian?

And what of the charge that the popularity of Folk-Catholicism in the Philippines points to a weak culture that was not powerful enough to withstand or oppose the gospel? I would argue to the contrary. What it indicates is cultural strength—the wisdom of selective perception that guided people's responses to a seemingly irresistible intrusion—a resilience that showed not weakness but rather strength of character under pressure. It is much like the bamboo weathering a storm, swaying with the wind, seemingly at its mercy. Yet, when the tempest has spent its fury, uprooting stronger, taller, larger trees, there alone stands the pliant bamboo, deceptively

strong in its facade of weakness. That selective wisdom and resiliency can be seen in the fact that those areas of the intrusive faith that approximated traditional practices—as the belief in a Supreme Creator Being, or in life after death—the early Filipinos found no problems accepting. Those that were more contrary and tended to negate tradition, they still accepted but somehow found a way wherein the deeper stratum of their culture containing their basic assumptions (i.e., their worldview) could be incorporated. The result, as we see it now, is a religion that is ostensibly Christian, universally Catholic, essentially animistic, and peculiarly Filipino.

The onus of guilt pertinent to syncretism in Filipino Folk-Catholicism has also been raised before. Should it primarily lie on the shoulders of those who brought the message of Christianity, and were responsible for its propagation in the islands, or should it be on the shoulders of those who received it? True, the Filipino culture it was passed on to was not simply a passive recipient of the Gospel. Nevertheless the content of and manner by which it was presented leaves a lot to be desired.

The cultural themes discussed in the first part of this chapter constitute the core values or assumptions of the Filipino worldview. As worldview assumptions, people did not question nor even think about them. They were simply taken as the way things are and ought to be. As such, they were accepted as normative, and thus, right and proper.

Much of the religious beliefs found in the religious subsystem of the traditional Filipino worldview exhibit some of the characteristics of worldview as core assumption. These beliefs were handed down from generation to generation, and were also assumed to be true, thus accepted without question.¹

¹ Perhaps this is one reason why religion was previously seen by anthropologists as “the heart of culture,” thereby equating it with worldview itself. Kraft cautions against the confusion this can cause, and carefully distinguishes between worldview and religion, with religion seen as a subsystem of worldview (1996:53).

In the course of their history as a people however, Filipinos were exposed to cultures and situations that deeply affected their way of life and forced them to question, and eventually, attach a negative valuation on the cultural assumptions that they for long have taken for granted. This negative valuation of their own culture characterizes the Filipino colonial mentality. We will now turn our attention to those historical conditions that led to the emergence of this Filipino colonial mentality.

CHAPTER 3

REMOLDING THE MIND: THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE FILIPINO COLONIAL MENTALITY

The Filipino people have had the misfortune of being “liberated.” First came the Spaniards who “liberated” them from the ‘enslavement to the devil.’ Next came the Americans who “liberated” them from the Spanish oppression; then the Japanese who “liberated” them from American imperialism; then the Americans again who “liberated” them from Japanese fascists. After every liberation, they found their country occupied by foreign benefactors (Constantino 1975:12).

Colonialism and the Unholy Trinity: Military Rule, Religion, and Education

The problem of colonial mentality in the Philippines is the outcome of a complex of factors that are attendant to colonialism. I have grouped these factors into three main categories: military rule, religion, and education. Due to their negative, insidiously evil influence in the hands of governments and individuals who wielded them as tools for colonial conquest and to advance their selfish interests, I have called them the “Unholy Trinity” of Philippine colonialism. I have purposely ignored a focused discussion of a fourth and most important category, that of economics, mainly because, as the obvious

underlying factor of colonialism, it is constantly referred to in connection with and in the discussions of the other three categories. I will now analyze the nature of each of these three categories as they occurred in both the Spanish and American colonial eras.

The Spanish Colonial Era

Spanish rule came to Philippines by way of the Portuguese explorer, Ferdinand Magellan, who, having been commissioned by King Charles of Spain, went out in search of the island of Moluccas (then known as the Spice Island) to trade for spices. Coming upon a group of islands on March 17, 1521, he ordered his men to land in order to take care of the sick and to rest. Thus, Magellan is credited with having “discovered” the Philippines, despite the fact that the inhabitants had previous contacts with Chinese traders as early as the 9th century (Gowing 1967:20), and with the Dutch and Portuguese long before he set foot on the islands. On Easter Sunday, March 31, Magellan ordered a cross erected on one of the islands, and after a mass was said, claimed the islands in the name of God and the King of Spain. So began almost four hundred years of the conjugal reign of the Spanish sword and the Roman Catholic cross in the Philippines.

Military Rule: The Enforcer of Oppression

Oppression and the threat of force go hand in hand. No person in his/her right mind likes to be oppressed. When a person becomes aware that he/she is being subjected to an oppressive situation, the natural tendency would be to resist. Thus, force, or at least the threat of it, becomes necessary. What is true in the individual level is also true, perhaps even more so, with governments. No authoritarian regime or repressive

government can survive without the threat of force to back it up, and Spanish colonialism in the Philippines was no exception. The military force of Spain was always there to back its policies up and to impose its will on the people. Those who dared question the laws and edicts of the colonial government, or disobey the wishes of the priests, were considered subversives and were in danger of incarceration or worse, execution. In fact it took less than that to be considered a threat to the *status quo*. Jose Rizal, the national hero of the Philippines, who was executed by the Spaniards, wrote that:

In the Philippines, all those are *filibusteros* (subversives) in the towns who do not take off their hats on meeting a Spaniard, be the weather what it may; those who greet a friar and do not kiss his sweaty hand, if he is a priest, or his habit, if he is a lay-brother; those who manifest displeasure addressed by the familiar *tu* by anyone and everyone accustomed as they are to show respect and to receive it; those who are subscribers to some periodical of Spain or of Europe, even if it treat of literature, the sciences, or the Fine Arts; those who read books other than the novenas and fairy-tale stories of miracles of the girdle, the cord, or the scapular; those who in the elections of the *gobernadorcillos* vote for one who is not the candidate of the Spanish priest; all those, in a word, who among the normal civilized people are considered good citizens, friends of progress and enlightenment, in the Philippines are *filibusteros*, enemies of order, and like lightning rods, attract on stormy days wrath and calamities (in Schumacher 1973:42).

Any form of rebellion, and there were many,¹ was immediately crushed, the leaders, and sometimes whole villages, executed.² Here, the strategy of “divide and rule” was employed, with the Spanish authorities using Filipino militiamen from one island or region to smash the rebellion in another, thereby deflecting the anger of the Filipinos from themselves (Spaniards) and directing it towards each other. Such ill-will towards each other reinforced the tribalism that already divided the people, which is why it was so difficult for Filipinos to unite and fight their oppressor as one people and also explains the strong regionalistic loyalties that continue to divide Filipinos to the present.

Religion: A Tool for Pacification

The Philippine colonial experience has shown that religion can be a potent weapon in wars of colonial conquest. The implantation of the cross in the islands also marked the beginning of the rule of the sword, and since then, the cross and the sword have played the leading roles in the history of the subjugation of its inhabitants. In many ways, the success in the implementation of the policies of the Spanish colonial regime was largely due to the activities of the Roman Catholic friars who became the primary agents of colonization in the country.

When the Spaniards first came to the islands, they immediately discovered that the natives did not enjoy the unity and organizational stability that people living in the neighboring countries and kingdoms had. Scattered amongst the different

¹The Filipino fight for freedom began as soon as the Spaniards set foot in the islands. Ferdinand Magellan the Philippines, was the first invader to shed his blood on Philippine soil. Sporadic rebellions erupted during the course of the Spanish rule, many of which were religious in orientation (cf. Reynaldo C. Ileto, *Pasyon and Revolution: Popular Movements in the Philippines, 1840-1910* [1979]).

²See Austin Craig, *The Filipinos' Fight for Freedom: The True History of the Filipino People During Their 400 Years' Struggle* (1933).

islands, the inhabitants lived in small, dispersed, kinship-based communities, and relied on fishing and subsistence agriculture for sustenance. Led by village or clan *datus* (chieftains), no common ruler reigned over them, and no common kingdom circumscribed their political existence. Furthermore, no common laws governed them, nor was there a philosophical or religious tradition that they shared in common.

This proved advantageous to the *conquistador's* efforts to conquer and keep the people in servitude. Without the necessary elements of a common identity and consciousness, they were not in a position to confront their oppressors as a single people. Consequently, it was easy for the Spaniards to establish military and psychological control over the people. By using the old and tested tactic of "divide and rule," it required only a small occupational army to maintain their rule. Latourette refers to this in his comments about the Spanish occupation of the Philippines: "The Filipinos, docile and with neither a high culture nor an advanced religion to offer resistance, quickly conformed to the wishes of their masters" (1975:1936).

Religion was a primary tool employed by the Spaniards to subjugate and control the natives, and the Friars were the artisans that shaped and molded the minds of the people into subservience. From the very beginning of the Spanish colonial reign, the colonizers relied more on religion than they did on military force in dealing with their subjects. Thus the priests became the strongest pillars to hold up the colonial edifice. Their influence was so pervasive and their power so complete that it came to be said that in each friar in the Philippines, the King had a Captain General and a whole army.

The friar exercised power through a staggering panoply of functions. He audited the parish budget, conducted the census, registered the residents, directed the tax board, managed the

health and public-works projects, screened recruits for military service, presided over the police and reviewed conditions at the local jail. As censor, he could ban any publication or play he deemed politically or morally reprehensible. He could banish people without trial and veto the decisions of the cosmetic native administration, which in any case would not act without his assent. Most of all, he oversaw education and religion (Karnow 1989:52).

Control over the natives was established and easily maintained through the policy of *reduccion*, or the forcible resettlement of small, scattered kinship groups into larger communities, which was instituted by the colonial government for easy administration and proselytization. This forced urbanization had profound effects on native consciousness because it enabled their rulers to closely scrutinize, control and direct every aspect of their lives.

More insidious though, were the efforts of the friars to proselytize the people into Catholicism. This, according to Constantino, had the effect of making God the powerful ally of their rulers. "The Friars enlisted God on the side of colonialism. To the fear of physical punishment was added the infinitely more potent fear of supernatural retribution" (1974:5).

Since the priest was considered as representing God on earth and as intermediary of souls after death, it was easy for the priest to assume the prerogatives of a ruler. Rebellion against the priest was equated to rebellion against God, inevitably resulting in eternal damnation. The will of the priest became the standard of conduct for the people. A new set of values was impregnated on the consciousness of the people, giving birth to a colonial mentality that made them into ideal subjects for colonial rule.

Consequently, one priest was usually enough to control a large community.¹

Because of the control that they exercised over the people, the priests became the principal architects of the Spanish colonial edifice in the Philippines. A theocratic society of some sort was established, where religion assumed political dimensions and vice-versa. By virtue of their tremendous authority, and, on behalf of the Roman Catholic Church, the clergy acquired large amounts of property in the colony. Therefore, they exercised their power and influence not only to serve Spanish colonialism but also to maintain their hold on the people and protect and enhance their stake in the economic life of the colony (see del Pilar 1898).

Education: A Purveyor of Ignorance and Superstition

In the discharge of their duties to Church and State, the Friars used education to advance the interests of Spanish colonialism. Primary education was limited to the “Three R’s”, (i.e., reading, writing and arithmetic) simply to enable the students to learn religion. To do this, they concentrated their attention on the children who were given just enough education to permit them to learn what the Friars wanted them to learn, but not enough to enable them to think for themselves (de Medina 1893:54). This can be seen in the fact that secondary education was accessible only to students of Spanish descent, and that there was no system of national education until 1863 (see Abella 1976). With their easily malleable minds, Filipino children grew up into adulthood so “thoroughly brainwashed that they became the foundation stone of a new colonial cultural establishment with the accompanying negative virtues that

¹For more discussion on the influence and power of the Catholic clergy during the Spanish era in the Philippines, see Renato Constantino, *Identity and Consciousness: The Philippine Experience* (1974).

supported stultification of the mind and spirit” (Constantino 1974:8).

Not only did religion circumscribe the limits of education, it also dictated what the general population was exposed to in terms of their intellectual, ethical and cultural life. Literary exposure was confined to religious, escapist and often irrational *romanzas* and *corridos*. Consequently, the most popular reading materials were novels about the lives of saints that encouraged superstitious dependence on the saints as intercessors who could change one’s fate.

By teaching the natives not to reason but to simply believe what they were taught and obey what they were told, the Friars became purveyors of ignorance and subservience that would instill, in the Filipino, a feeling of inferiority to the *conquistador*. By encouraging reliance on supernatural intervention which, the natives were led to believe, they could purchase, the same Friars became promoters of religious superstition that would plague folk Christianity to the present.

The economic benefits of encouraging these beliefs proved substantive. Masses, special prayers for both the living and the dead, indulgences, Papal bulls, religious items and icons, scapulars, and other things believed to save souls and protect the purchaser from earthly misfortune and from eternal damnation enjoyed brisk sales. As a Filipino writer, Graciano Lopez Jaena, put it, by “burying him in ignorance and fanaticism” the “friar . . . has found in the *indio* an inexhaustible mine of exploitation . . .” (quoted in Schumacher 1973:57).

The prohibition of the teaching of the Spanish language except in schools reserved for Spanish children was another method by which the Friars made sure the native population remained ignorant. In this way the rulers maintained distance from those they ruled, preventing the people from reading works in Spanish that would raise their level of literacy to equal

that of the Spaniard. But, more importantly, it limited their access to materials that talked about human freedom and revolution that was sweeping Europe by the end of the 16th century.

The Ignorance of Intellectualism

As a consequence of the Spanish colonial policies, Filipinos suffered from stunted intellectual growth and a deformed consciousness that resulted in the loss of cultural pride and a misdirected sense of values. Filipinos learned from their experiences in life, reinforced by their education, that they cannot take pride in themselves as a people. They discovered that to be respectable was to look, think, speak, act and live like a Spaniard as much as possible. The less Filipino they looked, the more admirable they felt.

Ignorance, which at the outset was seen as a relative lack of knowledge, took on new characteristics after a limited number of Filipinos were allowed access to higher education. Education came to be considered as the easiest means by which the Filipino could close the gap between themselves and their masters. At the same time, education became a way for the educated (who were now the Filipino elite) to put distance between themselves and their ignorant countrymen with whom they were now ashamed to be identified.

As such, Filipinos not only yearned to be educated like the Spaniards, they strived to be educated as Spaniards. Ignorance was no longer to be seen in terms of the relative lack of knowledge. It now took the form of, "the glorification of intellectual accomplishments that did not relate to a deepening perception of social reality but on the contrary, perpetuated peripheral thinking that concealed reality" (Constantino 1974:11).

Hence, education for the Filipino did not have anything to say about the plight of the country and its people. It was an education that ignored reality for the capricious, that turned its back to societal needs in order to cater to the selfish desires of individuals. Education did not free the Filipinos from colonial captivity. Instead, its outcome was a more serious intellectual bondage that caused them to sink deeper into a morass of cultural captivity from which the Filipino has yet to be free. This cultural captivity, manifested in the Filipino consciousness that emerged during the Spanish era, underwent further restructuring and development in the period of the American colonial rule.

Thus, the Unholy Trinity of a military force dedicated to crush any form of dissent, a dogmatic religion that wielded control by encouraging superstition, and a colonial education that discouraged the freedom to think, proved to be the biggest factors that kept the Filipino subjects of Spanish colonialism in a state of ignorance and fear that perpetuated their subjugation. It took more than three hundred years for the Filipinos to finally come together as one people in order to confront the diabolic effects of this Unholy Trinity, and thus rid themselves of the yoke of Spanish oppression. But before they were completely rid of that yoke, a new one was put in place, and the Unholy Trinity continued to wield its evil influence.

American Colonialism

The socio-political climate of the Philippines reached a critical stage towards the close of the 19th century and erupted into the Philippine Revolution of 1896. After almost four hundred years, the Filipino people finally developed a national consciousness that forged them into a unity so that they were able to confront their oppressor with strength. The triumph of

the revolution engendered a spirit of daring among the Filipinos who, on June 23, 1898, immediately set up a revolutionary government and drafted their own constitution. The people were well on their way towards self-determination.

The Filipino exercise of self-determination would prove to be short-lived. Across the Pacific, the United States reached a saturation point in its economic growth within its national boundaries. It had to expand abroad in order to maintain growth. One factor that gave special impetus to the American drive to increase control over the international economy was the outbreak of a severe economic crisis in 1893 that was largely blamed on overproduction in the domestic market. The result was the rise of a consensus within the ranks of the political and economic elite that the solution to the crisis lay in the expansion of foreign markets for American manufactured goods (Schirmer and Shalom 1987:7).

As the United States looked overseas for new foreign markets, the weakening power of imperial Spain over its colonies presented suitable opportunities not only for economic and political expansion but also for territorial acquisition. Here, territorial acquisition was seen as a corollary to economic and political expansion in that new military and naval positions abroad were needed to support the drive for trade. One such opportunity came when Cuban nationalists rose up in revolt against their Spanish colonial masters. Proclaiming its intention to help the Cuban people win their freedom, the Republican administration of William McKinley declared war against Spain.

The Spanish-American War was fought not only in Cuba but spread to other Spanish territories as well. A naval fleet commanded by Commodore George Dewey sailed to the Philippines and destroyed the Spanish fleet in the Battle of Manila Bay. At the time of Dewey's arrival, Philippine revolutionary forces were laying siege to the last and rapidly

weakening Spanish stronghold in Manila. These forces, fervent in their newly found nationalism, and buoyed by their successful revolutionary campaign against their erstwhile colonial masters, would later prove to be a formidable obstacle in the American expansionist drive. The inevitable confrontation between the American military troops that came after Dewey and the Philippine revolutionary army resulted in the outbreak of the Philippine-American War in February 1899.

According to Schirmer and Shalom, the proponents of the U.S. war effort pointed to two main aims: (1) "to secure the Philippines as a market and source of raw materials for U.S. industry, and (2) to secure the Philippines as a military strong-point from which to penetrate the markets of China." Other reasons were given, most notably the need to civilize and uplift the Filipinos, a motive which,

was closely related to feelings and theories of racial superiority that permeated the U.S. war effort. Racial prejudice seemed to have accentuated the cruel and brutal character of the U.S. war of conquest, marked as it was by the use of torture, the killing of prisoners, and genocidal tendencies (1987:7).

Further impetus for expansion was provided by the theological front through the concept of "Manifest Destiny," which promoted the idea that it was the "divine calling" of America to spread Protestantism and the American civilization to all the world. This concept exerted strong influence on American Protestant Churches at that time, who responded with widespread enthusiasm for foreign mission. Thus the theological messianism of American Protestantism proved to be an important factor in the rationale for the American expansionist policies. It was a rationale which, because of its religious

trappings, would prove an effective salve to the conscience of many Americans who called themselves Christians, who would otherwise have seen expansionism as unpalatable.¹

Military Rule: The Politics of the Gun

“War is a continuation of politics.” In this sense war is politics and war itself is political action; since ancient times there has never been a war that did not have a political character. . . . Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun (Mao Tse Tung 1976:58, 61).

As a result of the Philippine Revolution, Spanish colonial rule was on the brink of collapse when the United States declared war against Spain in 1898. The defeat of the Spanish Armada by the American naval force under Commodore George Dewey in the Battle of Manila Bay on May 1, 1898, signaled the end of the Spanish-American War and of Spanish colonialism in the Philippines. It also ushered in the American era and marked the beginning of Protestant missions in the country. When the Philippines was ceded by Spain to the United States by the Treaty of Paris on April 21, 1899, Protestant missions moved in at once.

It is not my intention to discuss the duplicities and betrayals involved in the relationships between the United States and the leaders of the Philippine Revolution who worked out an alliance to defeat a common enemy. Nor will I elaborate on the perfidies and deceptions that transpired in the negotiations between Spain and the United States at the Treaty of Paris, which resulted in the ceding of the Philippines to the United States. Suffice it to say

¹The concept of Manifest Destiny and its influence on American colonial expansion is discussed more fully in the section entitled “Religion: Manifest Destiny as a Theological Rationalization for Colonialism” of this chapter.

that despite a strong opposition to colonialism in the United States (see Storey and Lichauco 1926:20-86) and the agreements made between Commodore Dewey, representing the U.S. government, and the Philippine revolutionary leaders, the Filipino people suddenly found themselves being faced with the prospect of losing their freshly won independence to a new foreign invader.

The prospect was not a welcome one to Filipinos. The revolutionary fervor was still burning in their hearts, and the memory of their triumph as a people was still fresh in their minds. They were not about to surrender their freedom without a fight. Thus the Filipino-American War¹ broke out on February 4, 1899, with all the attendant brutalities and atrocities of military conflicts, costing the lives of hundreds of thousands of Filipinos. With the War, the major component of colonialism's Unholy Trinity, that of military force, began the ugly task of subjugating a newly independent people.

At the outset, American military force was directed primarily at the Philippine revolutionary army. However, it soon became apparent to the American military commanders that the reason why the Philippine Army was not routed so easily and did not surrender as readily as they predicted was that they enjoyed the support of the native population. As the war progressed, the Americans slowly realized that the real enemy was not the formally constituted Philippine Army. Rather, it was the Filipino people who, having just won their freedom from the Spaniards, proved implacable and unrelenting in their resistance to the American imperialist designs. Thus, barely two months

¹It is interesting to note that, in the majority of the historical literature written by Western authors, the Filipino-American War is simply referred to as a Filipino "insurrection," with the Filipino military commanders dismissed as opportunists, outlaws and brigands. This betrays a reluctance, on the part of said historians, to recognize the Filipino's violent resistance to American colonialism as a collective expression of their desire for freedom, thereby making imperialism, if not more palatable, less odious to the reader.

after the outbreak of the War, one General Shafter offered a morbid presage of the future conduct of the war: "It may be necessary to kill half of the Filipinos in order that the remaining half of the population may be advanced to a higher plane of life than their present semi-barbarous state affords" (quoted in Francisco 1987:11)

Because of the solid resistance of the people, the war took on a new character when the American forces mounted a "war of attrition against the population" (Constantino 1974:32). The Americans turned their mounting frustrations on the civilian population at large, considering "all niggers" as their enemies, whether they bore arms or not. The brutal techniques used against the Filipinos during the Filipino-American War were the same techniques that decades later would revolt world opinion when they were used in the Vietnam War.¹

As an example of the brutality of the American campaign, Constantino points out Brigadier General Jacob H. Smith's instruction that every Filipino above ten years of age who did not collaborate actively with the Americans should be regarded as an enemy, and his command that the island of Samar be turned into a "howling wilderness." These resulted in "an orgy of death and destruction" (1974:33) that cost hundreds of thousands of lives. I will not belabor the records of the scores of atrocities that the War inflicted on the population. Records show that it took 120,000 American troops to suppress violent

¹To name a few, the "water cure" and other tortures, the burning of entire villages, the massacre of entire communities, strategic hamleting, all of which were used in Vietnam, seem to have been inaugurated in the Philippines. On the conduct of the War, see *Senate Doc. 331*, "Hearings on affairs in the Philippine Islands," Vols. 1 and 2; also *Senate Doc. 213*, 57th Congress, 2nd Session, "Trials of courts martial in the Philippines in consequence of certain instructions," Washington, 1903. For a more comprehensive look on the subject of the conduct of War, see also Leon Wolff, *Little Brown Brother: How the United States purchased and pacified the Philippines* (1991). See also Luzviminda Francisco, "The Philippine-American War," in *The Philippines Reader* (1987).

resistance by the people, and when it ended in 1902, some 250,000 people, of whom 245,000 were Filipinos, perished.¹

The superior military might of the United States defeated the Philippine nationalists and turned the country into a colony of the United States. The goals of the war put forward by its proponents were thus accomplished: the Philippines became an important source of raw materials and dumping ground for the excess products of the American economy, and, in 1900, provided a base from which the U.S. launched its troops to quell the Boxer rebellion in China, which would have closed China to penetration from foreign capital and manufacture.

The American use of force in the Philippines did not end with the cessation of hostilities. The Sedition Law, which was passed in 1901, continued to be in force long after the end of the War. According to this law, anyone who advocated independence or separation from the United States was guilty of sedition, punishable by death or at least a long prison term. Here, any words, speeches, writings, publications against either the U.S. or the Insular government were considered seditious and were punishable by imprisonment or worse (Constantino 1974:34). The Sedition Law of 1901 was later on reinforced by two other laws, the Brigandage Act of 1902 and the Flag Law of

¹Figures of the Filipino casualties vary from source to source, but most of what I have seen put it at 250,000 which is at best a guess due to the absence of hard evidence. Records of the killings were not kept, and the Americans were not anxious to reveal the extent of the slaughter for fear of fueling the anti-imperialist movement in the United States. The figures do not include those who died of diseases in concentration camps. General Bell, in an interview with the *New York Times* in May, 1901, a year before the cessation of hostilities, estimates 600,000 killed in the island of Luzon alone. The estimate does not include the Panay and Samar campaigns, nor his own in Batangas (where at least 100,000 died), all of which happened after his interview. Nor does it include the “post-war” period (officially, the war was considered over in 1902, but actual hostilities continued until three years later) which saw the confinement of 300,000 people in Albay, the wanton slaughter in Mindanao, and the startling death rates in Bilibid Prison, which are just three of the many instances where the killing continued. Francisco (1987) suggests that an estimate of 1,000,000 killed might conceivably err on the side of understatement.

1907, both of which were, like the former, designed to crush the Filipino spirit of resistance.

Despite the sufferings that the war inflicted upon them, the headstrong resistance of the Filipino people made the Americans realize that for the campaign to subjugate the Filipinos to succeed, it had to be conducted on several fronts. Indeed, the military campaign would have taken longer had the war not been successfully waged on the religious and educational arenas. Thus, the two components of religion and education once again connected with military rule, completing the Unholy Trinity that would, as it had in the past, supply the necessary means for a new colonial invader to do its ignoble task of subjugating the Filipino people.

Religion: Manifest Destiny as a Theological Rationalization For Colonialism

Gerald H. Anderson, in his book *Studies in Philippine Church History*, quotes Edward Mcnall Burns as saying,

one of the principal clues to the knowledge of America is the sense of mission which has run like a golden thread through most of her history. To a greater extent than most other peoples, Americans have conceived of their nation as ordained in some extraordinary way to accomplish great things in the world (1969:279).

This sense of destiny was particularly strong among the Protestant clergy during the last quarter of the 19th century. The doctrine of providence served as the theological basis for this feeling of destiny which, according to Anderson, was expressed as “a conviction that God works through nations to accomplish his purpose” (1969:279). In consonance with this conviction was

the assumption that the United States was “the primary agent of God’s meaningful activity in history” (Smylie 1963:314).

This idea of a national mission, assigned by divine providence for America to accomplish, was commonly known as the American “Manifest Destiny,” an idea which began in the mid-1840’s. Anderson points out that this idea, which he calls “the gospel of Manifest Destiny,” was rooted in the concepts of “Anglo-Saxon racial superiority, of America as the center of civilization in the westward course of empires, the primacy of American political institutions, the purity of American Protestant Christianity, and the desirability of English to be the language of mankind” (1969:280).

Originally, the concept of Manifest Destiny was limited to continental expansion, that is, to the absorption of all of North America into the American Statehood. However, the nation had reached a saturation point in its continental growth in the 1890’s. Coupled with an economy that demanded a larger market for its excess products, America looked beyond its continental boundaries for expansion. Other reasons for the agitation to expand its borders included providing outposts for national defense, or, as an expression of the providential nature of Manifest Destiny—to make way for “the benevolent spread of American benefits to those less fortunate” in the world. Applied in the Philippines, this latter reason became what is known as the American “Benevolent Assimilation” of the Philippines.¹ Seen from a political standpoint, it would seem that the United States embarked on its imperialistic path not only as an economic necessity but also as a military strategy designed to pave the way for America’s entry into the international scene as a world power. Viewed from the concept of Manifest Destiny,

¹In 1898, President William McKinley issued the “Benevolent Assimilation Proclamation” outlining the reasons for his decision to retain the Philippines as a territory of the United States.

American expansionism became the natural outcome of America's providential mission in history.

When the Philippines was ceded to the United States as a result of the Treaty of Paris, the issue of whether or not the United States should keep the islands provoked an intense debate in America, with the majority favoring the retention of the islands, for commercial, diplomatic, military, humanitarian and religious reasons. It was felt that a new dimension of American destiny had become manifest and that to deny it would be both unfaithful and unpatriotic (Anderson 1969:284).

The opposition, though a minority, presented quite an impressive collection of individuals, who, according to Anderson, included such eloquent and influential personalities as "former presidents Harrison and Cleveland, William Jennings Bryan, Andrew Carnegie, Mark Twain, . . ." and many others, all of whom "joined in an anti-imperialist movement to oppose the acquisition of a colonial empire" (1969:283).

The burden of public opinion, however, swung heavily towards acquisition, undoubtedly strengthened by the support of the Protestant churches and clergy, resulting from their interpretation of divine providence. For instance, the complete triumph of American arms, as in the swift defeat of the Spanish Armada by Admiral Dewey in the Battle of Manila Bay, was seen as a confirmation of the approval of divine providence in the course of America's action to acquire the islands. Comparing American victories to those of Israel during Biblical times, the editor of *Christian Missionary Alliance* observed that the story of Dewey's victory "read almost like the ancient battles of the Lord in the times of Joshua, David and Jehoshaphat" (1898:468). Again, equating the Battle of Manila Bay to the biblical Battle of

Jericho, Alexander Blackburn maintained that the United States now had a duty “to throw its strong protecting arms around . . . the Philippine Islands” and to practice an “imperialism of righteousness” (1898:1913)

Despite the blatantly imperialistic designs of the McKinley administration, most Americans still shied away from the term “imperialism” to describe their government’s policies towards the Philippines. Euphemistic words like “benevolent assimilation” and “manifest destiny” were used instead and, whether they truly believed it or not, many subscribed to the view expressed by one Baptist missionary that “the attitude of our country is absolutely altruistic” (Clymer 1986:156). Others, especially the missionaries, had fewer compunctions. As Wallace Radcliffe put it:

Imperialism is in the air; but it has new definitions and better intentions. It is republicanism “writ large.” It is imperialism, not for domination but for civilization; not for absolutism but for self-government. American imperialism is enthusiastic and beneficial republicanism. Imperialism expresses itself by expansion. I believe in imperialism because I believe in foreign missions. Our Foreign Mission Board can teach Congress how to deal with remote dependencies. . . . The peal of the trumpet rings out over the Pacific. The church must go where America goes (Miller 1982:18).

Echoing identical sentiments, another rhetorically asked, “Has it ever occurred to you that Jesus was the most imperial of the imperialists?” Similarly, the Foreign Missionary Journal declared that anti-imperialism was “the invention of the devil to oppose foreign missions” (Brands 1992:73).

These sentiments were not lost on President William McKinley, on whom the decision whether or not to retain the islands rested. McKinley's speeches showed a remarkable awareness of the concept of divine providence and its interpretation in terms of the American Manifest Destiny. In his speeches in the mid-West in 1898, President McKinley declared:

(At Omaha) The faith of a Christian nation recognizes the hand of Almighty God in the ordeal through which we have passed. Divine favor seemed manifest everywhere. In fighting for humanity's sake we have been signally blessed. . . . Now, as then, we will do our duty.

(At Chicago) My countrymen, the currents of destiny flow through the hearts of the people. . . . And the movements of men planned and designed by the Master of men, will never be interrupted by the American people (quoted in Anderson 1969:292).

It came as no surprise, then, that McKinley decided for the retention of the Philippines as a sacred trust, as a mission of "benevolent assimilation." Later, in an interview recorded by James Rusling,¹ he described how he made his decision to a delegation from the general missionary committee of the Methodist Church that was:

The truth is I did not want the Philippines, and when they came to us as a gift from the gods, I did not know what to do with them. . . . I sought counsel from all sides—Democrats as well as Republicans—but got little help. . . . I walked the floor of the White House night after night until

¹The interview took place on November 21, 1899, but the account of it, written by one of the members of the delegation, General James F. Rusling, was not published until three years later. (See Schirmer and Shalom 1987:22 for more on this.)

midnight; . . . I went down on my knees and prayed Almighty God for light and guidance more than one night. And one night late it came to me this way . . . : (1) that we could not give them back to Spain—that would be cowardly and dishonorable; (2) that we could not turn them over to France and Germany—our commercial rivals in the orient—that would be bad business and discreditable; (3) that we could not leave them to themselves—they were unfit for self-government—and they would soon have anarchy and misrule over there worse than Spain’s was; and (4) that there was nothing left for us to do but to take them all, and to educate the Filipinos, and uplift and civilize and Christianize them, and by God’s grace do the very best we could by them, as our fellow-men for whom Christ died (1987:17).

As to whether or not McKinley’s decision really came from above can never be ascertained. However, it seems obvious that McKinley may have listened not only to the industrialists who favored commercial expansion, as can be seen in the blatantly imperialistic tones of his statement, but also to the clergy and to the religious press. Considering that McKinley once described himself as “a Methodist and nothing but a Methodist,” and that two of the strongest proponents for retention were Methodist Bishops Thoburn and Hurst, and, further, that the Methodist Church made frequent and powerful representations to his office, it would not be far from the truth to say that McKinley’s decision must have been influenced by ecclesiastical voices. Indeed, the ecclesiastical influence at that time was so strong that Kenneth McKenzie, in describing the influence of the Methodist Church in the rise of American imperialism, concludes:

While the Methodist Church did not in itself instigate American imperialism, either consciously or unconsciously, it did help to develop a *rationale* which would make this type of venture more palatable to individuals who might ordinarily have been exceedingly critical (quoted in Anderson 1969:284).

Evidently, the primary reason for the ecclesiastical support to retain the Philippines as a colony was in order to open missionary work there. Even McKinley's statement, quoted above, explaining his decision to retain the Philippines, carries with it an unmistakably missionary tone—not only did he want to educate, uplift and civilize the Filipinos, he also wanted to Christianize them. In his "evangelistic zeal," McKinley seemed to have conveniently forgotten the almost four hundred years of Roman Catholic Christianity in Philippines.

McKinley's statement betrays not only his feelings of cultural superiority, but also the anti-Roman Catholic sentiment prevalent among Protestants at that time. According to Anderson, this anti-Romanist sentiment "was a definite factor in arousing missionary concern among Protestants in the United States for work in the Philippines." Anderson further observes:

There was a predominant feeling that Anglo-Saxon, Protestant, republican America was God's measure and means for the establishment of His Kingdom on earth, and Protestants then generally viewed Roman Catholicism as sub-Christian, if not an anti-Christian, force (1969:297)

In all fairness, it should be stated that despite the unfortunate identification of Protestant missionary obligation with American patriotism and the Anglo-Saxon civilization,

there was, without doubt, an authentic compassion for the plight of the Filipino people, and a genuine concern for their spiritual condition. Clymer says this of the first generation of Protestant missionaries in the Philippines: "Drawn to missionary service through the Moody revivals, the YMCA, the Student Volunteer Movement, or other support missionary organizations, most believed intensely in the righteousness of their calling" (1986:191). Undoubtedly, this was largely due to the fact that "all missionary applicants professed to feel called by God" (1986:12). He further observes:

To some, the desire to save souls was so compelling that they felt duty bound to persist even when they met with entrenched resistance. "He may smite the hand that blesses him," wrote Bruce Kershner, a Disciples missionary, "but he must be blessed. We want to do it [even] if he doesn't want it done" (1986:15).

One of the ways in which the missionaries hoped to accomplish their task was through education. Brand points out that, "the missionaries were especially sensitive on the issue of schools, for they considered American-sponsored education their primary weapon in the struggle against the Philippines' papist legacy" (1992:74). One Baptist missionary put it this way, "Every public school can be counted an evangelical force in a Roman Catholic country" (Clymer 1986:163). According to Brands,

The situation of the Americans mirrored that of the Spanish: the secular and the religious arms of the ruling power were cooperating in the pacification of the Philippines and the connection of the colony to the metropolis. The missionaries did not usually forget their heavenly objective, but

in the meantime, they were happy enough to collaborate with Caesar (1992:74).

With the military and the religious components of the Unholy Trinity in place, education, the third, and most insidious, component completes the triangle and eventually result in the intellectual and cultural captivity of the Filipino.

Education: The Art of Remolding the Mind

According to Constantino, when used positively, “education is a vital weapon of a people striving for economic emancipation, political independence, and cultural renaissance” (1966:40). Negatively used, it can be an insidious tool for oppression. He further observes that,

The most effective means of subjugating a people is to capture their minds. Military victory does not necessarily signify conquest. As long as feelings of resistance remain in the heart of the vanquished, no conqueror is secure. . . . The molding of men’s mind is the best means of conquest. Education therefore, serves as a weapon in wars of colonial conquest (1966:40-41).

Appreciating this, General Otis directed in 1903 the re-opening of schools, selecting and ordering textbooks himself and detailing officers, many of them chaplains, as teachers and superintendents of the schools. General Arthur McArthur recommended a large appropriation for education, seeing it as “an adjunct to military operations calculated to pacify the people and to procure and expedite the restoration of tranquillity throughout the archipelago” (quoted in Constantino 1966:42).

To further hasten the process of reopening the schools, an appeal was made in the United States for volunteer teachers to the Philippines. The appeals were made to local churches, denominational groups and mission societies who eagerly responded. Consequently, many of the first volunteers turned out to be dedicated Christians who saw in it an opportunity for missionary service. Most notable were the "Thomasites," a group of five hundred volunteers who sailed for Manila on July 23, 1901, on board a ship called the "Thomas" (hence, the name) who, *en route* were said to have been "organized along religious (denominational) lines" (Clifford 1969:312). Convinced of the theological soundness of the concept of the American Manifest Destiny, many of them came not only to teach and to preach the gospel, but also to spread American culture.

With the military government already in place, the coming of the Thomasites and other missionary-oriented teachers supplied the initial religious and educational components that would complete the Unholy Trinity and enable it to once again wreak its havoc on the Filipino people. The religio-cultural captivity that resulted from it is something that the Filipino people, to this day, is still trying to free itself from.

It seems obvious, then, that from its inception the American colonial system of education in the Philippines became a means to pacify a people trying to defend their newly-won freedom from Spain against a new invader: "The decision to reopen the schools was a military one aimed at pacification rather than an attempt to formulate an educational policy for the Philippines" (Clifford 1969:303). Once again, education, as was true with Spanish colonialism, became an instrument of colonial policy, to be put to use in order to transform the Filipino into the ideal colonial subject. Through education, the Filipino mind was to be shaped to conform to American ideas, while at the same time,

indigenous ideas eroded in order to remove the last vestiges of resistance.

Significant to the success of this endeavor was the decision to use the English language as the medium of instruction in schools. The development of colonial mentality is like a conditioning process where a person is induced to “forget his own culture and eventually makes him ape a supposedly superior model” (Mercado 1974a:7). The collusion between education and the imposition of the English language as the medium of instruction (which persists to the present) were important factors in that conditioning process and proved crucial to the success of American colonialism in the Philippines.

According to Gonzalez, in the instructions drawn up by the Secretary of War, Elihu Root, and issued by President McKinley, the principles of governance for the territory stated that the medium of instruction for primary education was to be in the language of the people (1980:25). Nevertheless, because of the lack of mutual comprehensibility (owing to the plethora of languages and dialects spoken in the country) it was decided that a common medium of communication be established. That common medium, as it turned out, was English, which, without doubt, was advantageous to the conquerors in the implementation of their colonial policies. So it was that, having lost their short-lived independence to a new imperialist power, and, after many years of struggle, having won the inherent right to a language of wider communication (i.e., Spanish), the Filipino people now found themselves being forced to learn yet another language of wider communication, English.

One redeeming factor in the imposition of the English language as medium of instruction is that it made education more accessible to the less affluent Filipinos than ever before. But it would also prove crucial in the shaping of the colonial minded Filipino. Furthermore, it would have lasting effects in

Filipino culture and society, and in the socio-economic and political relationships between the two countries. Since I believe that the American colonial education is the most important factor in the development of the Filipino colonial mentality, a closer look at it is called for.

Colonial Education and the Captive Mentality

Every culture provides a learning process by which its members are equipped to function in the manner prescribed by that culture and enables individuals to take their places as adult members of society. Such learning process may be termed as "education" in its broadest sense, and may be thought of as part of the experience of enculturation. In a more restricted sense, the word "education" refers specifically to the formal type of schooling where the "processes of teaching and learning (are) carried on at specific times, in particular places outside the home, for definite periods, by persons especially prepared or trained for the task" (Herskovits 1969:98). In this discussion, the term "education," is used in the more restricted sense.

This distinction has led some scholars to think of education, in the sense of schooling, as representing a particular subculture clearly distinguishable from the culture-at-large, and of the school as a specific cultural system. Anthropologist John Chilcott points out for instance, that "in many cases, the school-grounds are separated from the neighborhood by a high fence—symbolic perhaps, of the cultural isolation of the school." Furthermore, a first-time observer

may not find the language of the school to be obviously different from that of the major culture, but a closer examination will show him that the school has developed its own grammatical usage and vocabulary. . . . As the child progresses

through school, he learns speech patterns unique to a variety of school situations. Thus he will use different space patterns to communicate with his teacher, his peers, and his athletic coach (1969:145).

In most cases however, though the school as a subculture may have developed unique social norms, it is obvious that it also mirrors and shares many of the characteristics of the surrounding dominant culture.

The education as schooling of the Filipino however, is different in that the cultural system of the school had little or nothing in common with the culture of the society-at-large. Far from being a subculture sharing many of the characteristics of Filipino culture, colonial education brought with it an entirely new culture exhibiting a worldview that was altogether foreign, thus producing a singular mentality that separated all Filipinos from their cultural heritage, and isolated the educated from the masses. The more available education for Filipinos also meant a more massive amount of miseducation designed to keep them contented and happy in the midst of colonial oppression. Constantino observes that Filipinos were taught to learn as good colonials, and thus became the intellectual and cultural carbon copies of their conquerors, the unquestioning followers of the new dispensation. According to him,

A more widespread education such as the Americans desired would have been a real blessing had their educational program not been the handmaiden of their colonial policy. Unfortunately for us, the success of education as a colonial weapon was complete and permanent. In exchange for a smattering of English, we yielded our souls. The stories of George Washington and

Abraham Lincoln made us forget our own nationalism. The American view of our history turned our heroes into brigands in our own eyes, distorted our vision of our future. The surrender of the *Katipuneros* (i.e., the Filipino revolutionaries against the Spaniards) was nothing compared to this final surrender, this leveling down of our final defenses (1966:44, parentheses mine).

Consistent as it was with the broad purposes of American imperialism, American colonial education became the single most important factor for the cultural domination of the Filipino. The imposition of English as the medium of instruction and the employment of American textbooks paved the way for the remolding of the people's mind. Their newly acquired knowledge of English enabled Filipino children to read and understand American textbooks that introduced them to a new way of thinking, uncovered vistas they have never before seen or imagined, and attracted them to the American way of life.

With English as the medium of instruction, our young people fell under the spell of America. With the language barrier disposed of and the system of education oriented to American practices, American standards and values became an important part of our intellectual make-up. . . . With the language . . . came a veritable flood of written materials. American press services and periodicals have generously fed us with information gathered by Americans and evaluated by them in terms of their standards, their scale of values, and their interests. So effective and all-inclusive is this avalanche of information that, without hardly being aware of it, we have been

seeing the world through American eyes
(Constantino 1966:71-72).

A by-product of the Filipino facility with the English language that has largely contributed to the cultural captivity of the Filipino is the influence of Hollywood. To a people bent on parroting what they perceived to be a more superior way of life, the electronic media proved to be a goldmine of information and resources that, with their knowledge of English, they easily understood and imitated. American movies and television soap operas taught Filipinos American values and attitudes right in their homes, supplying what the American textbooks and magazines could not furnish about the American way of life. American fads in music, dances, food, drink and dress, were avidly followed by Filipinos. American attitudes and behavior observed in movies and television programs were imitated, the basic assumptions and allegiances behind them gradually accepted, thereby subtly but surely remolding the Filipino worldview.¹

The confusion wrought by this remodeling of the Filipino worldview on the behavior of modern-day students is easily observable. For instance, Western pedagogics encourage discussions where students take contradictory opinions, even to the extent of arguing with the teacher. In contrast, Filipino culture stresses respect for elders and for authority. In the classroom, the teacher represents both. Consequently, to disagree with a teacher is considered impolite. However, to please the teacher and get a good grade, students are forced to learn the values of independent, contradictory thinking, only to find themselves in trouble when they try out those new values

¹ It should be noted here that the “Hollywood culture” does not necessarily reflect the values nor accurately portray the American way of life. But to a people whose minds were already shaped by their education to highly value the American way of life, the glitter and tinsel portrayal of Hollywood made it even more attractive and desirable.

with their parents at home or with recognized authority figures in society. Tension, confusion and rebellion results from this contradiction between values learned at school and those learned at home.

The consequences of these contradictory values, instilled by Filipino culture on the one hand, and by the colonial system of education on the other, proved tragic to the Filipino struggle for national identity. First, Filipinos learned that values are relative, dependent on the situation one finds oneself in, whether at school or at home, or whether in company of Westerners or Westernized Filipinos, or of their elders and compatriots who, not having their kind of education, do not share their new-found values. If values are relative, it follows that morality, and ethics, must be relative, and thus, situational.

The presence of conflicting values is apparent in Filipino religious life, in what Jaime Bulatao calls "Split-level Christianity," described as "the coexistence within the same person of two or more thought and behavior patterns which are inconsistent with each other" (1966:2). This is one reason why the Filipino of today continues to operate on two levels of consciousness, and patterns his/her behavior according to whatever level of consciousness happens to be appropriate at a given time, place or company.

Second, there came the awareness of a cultural chasm that existed between them and their colonial masters. Their positional disadvantage as the "conquered" engendered a feeling that the cultural chasm consisted not so much with the differences between two divergent but equally valid and vital cultures, but rather, between the more "advanced" culture of their conquerors and their more "primitive" culture of the vanquished.

Hence history comes full circle and repeats itself. As in the Spanish colonial era, Filipinos once again found that they cannot

take pride in themselves as a people. Once more, they would strive to become like their oppressors in order to feel respectable, whom they saw to be their cultural, thus intellectual and moral, superiors. And, as in the past, they perceived that the best way to bridge that chasm was through education. But once again, education proved to be an insidious tool that sank them deeper into the slough of intellectual and cultural captivity.

Colonial education was so successful and so pervasive was its influence that it touched every important aspect of Filipino life, both individually¹ and institutionally. In many instances, such influence ended up in institutional control.

Basic to colonialism is the control of the economic life of the colony. In contrast to the harsher methods of the Spaniards, the American way was more subtle but more effective. American colonial education resulted in the Filipino colonial mentality that perceived the American way of life as the ideal life. But to live the American way of life necessitated the consumption of American goods. Because the American way of life was considered superior, American goods that enabled a person to live the American way of life came to be regarded as inherently superior to native or any other foreign products. Thus colonial education not only shaped the Filipino outlook, it also shaped their economic appetites. Consequently, the Philippines became, for America, both a rich resource of raw materials for its industries, and an ideal dumping ground for its excess products.

¹ A personal anecdote may help illustrate how deep that influence is on myself. While studying at Northern Baptist Seminary in Illinois, I attended an “orientation” party given to international students by the school. An American student from the mid-West taught us international students some American folk-songs, after a few of which he ran out. The foreign students wanted more, and since none of the American students present knew any more songs, I volunteered to share some that I knew. I ended up leading the singing after everyone realized that I, a foreign student, knew more American folk songs than the Americans attending the party, including some faculty and staff. Those songs I mostly learned from school in the Philippines, and from listening to radio programs and watching Western movies!

Having thus shaped the economic appetites of the Filipinos, economic control came easily. The establishment of a civil government in the Philippines led by William Howard Taft served as the starting point for the development of American neo-colonial policies whose effects are still very much evident in the overwhelming presence and control of American multinational corporations. Taft's statement defending his policies in the Philippines underscores the subtlety of neo-colonialism. Taft saw that it was

entirely possible to permit the lucrative investment of American capital here (i.e., the Philippines) without outraging the feelings of the Filipinos and without giving them the impression that we are here merely to exploit their country without respect to their welfare . . . (quoted in Schirmer and Shalom 1987:43; parentheses mine).

Commenting on Taft's program, Schirmer observes:

Taft's program was such as to encourage a threefold economic dependence of the Philippines on the United States: first as a market for Philippine export goods, then as a source of manufactured goods, and finally as a source of investment capital. Moreover under the policies Taft inaugurated these economic ties were to grow at the same time that participation of Filipinos in their government was to grow. A firm economic base for the indirect exercise of U.S. political control was to be established at the same time that formal and direct U.S. rule was being minimized (Schirmer and Shalom 1987:43).

Another characteristic basic to colonialism is military control. Military rule, however, went against the ideals of American democracy and was deemed contrary to the altruistic posturing of American colonialism in the Philippines.¹ Furthermore, blatantly open and prolonged military rule invited resentment and rebellion. If it had to be maintained, military rule had to take on another form and evoke new meanings that would make it palatable both to the pretensions of the ruler and the sentiments of the ruled. The neo-colonial form it took was that of the military bases, and the meaning it conveyed was the defense of democracy, not only in the Philippines but in the world as well. Here again, colonial education proved to be an invaluable tool.

Having been taught that the Americans were in their country for benevolent and providential purposes, and, furthermore, that the military bases were there primarily to defend democracy, Filipinos embraced the American presence as God-sent, and those of the bases as for their own protection. Thus it was that, long after the Philippines was granted independence in 1935, the military bases remained—but not, as Filipinos were led to believe, primarily for their protection, since it made the country a principal target for attacks by the enemies of the United States. Nor were they there essentially to defend world democracy. They were there basically to protect American assets in the Philippines and to serve as strategic outposts for the defense of American vested interests in the Far East.² It would take Filipinos more than three quarters of a century to realize that the presence of the bases in their soil was not for their best interests.³

¹ This posturing, designed by the McKinley administration to hide the harsh realities of American imperialism, was called the “Benevolent Assimilation” of the Philippines.

²In many cases, the bases were used not so much to defend democracy as to launch military aggression, as in the Boxer rebellion in China and more recently, the war in Vietnam.

³ For instance, in the midst of heightened Philippine nationalism, President Ferdinand Marcos is known to have drafted an Independence Day speech in 1966 stressing “that the

Politically, American education was the primary tool for the transplantation of American political ideals and institutions to the Philippines. One such ideal is that of democracy. Because of its vaunted commitment to democracy, the United States found itself in the difficult position of trying to justify its colonial presence in the Philippines. This difficulty became even more acute when the United States tried to teach and transplant their type of democracy to the Philippines, while at the same time luring the country into the state of captivity.

For the Americans to think that democracy only meant their type of democracy was understandable. It has worked very well with them, and there was no reason to think it would not work with other people as well. It was no surprise then that America not only taught its ideals to Filipinos, but also foisted its institutions on them. The irony should not be lost on any student of democracy. Filipinos were forced to learn and accept an alien type of democracy while being kept in the state of slavery. At the same time, they were effectively deprived of developing indigenous ideals and institutions into a democracy that suited their own temperament and culture. This is probably the reason why after three-quarters of a century of experimenting on the American type of democracy in the Philippines, the country still remains in political chaos and instability.

The success of education as a weapon for colonial expansion was complete and permanent, and the imposition of the English language as the medium of instruction in schools was central to that success. It is interesting to note that, on the one hand, the Spanish tried to keep the Filipinos in their place by depriving them of the Spanish language, thereby denying them access to better education. On the other hand, the Americans did the same

U.S. has been the perennial savior of the Philippines and that the Philippines ought to be eternally grateful to it." The emphasis was softened down by speech writers who, conscious of the nationalistic mood of the country convinced Marcos to tone it down. (See Amando Doronila, "Check and Balance," *The Daily Mirror* [Manila] June 9, 1966.)

by doing the opposite—by pressing the English language upon their colonial subjects, and providing them with widespread education. The American way proved to be more effective. The result was social, economic, political and cultural domination—the unconditional surrender of the Filipino soul to its conqueror.

Thus, the confluence of military rule, religion and education formed the Unholy Trinity that was responsible for the emergence of the Filipino colonial mentality, whose effects on the religious consciousness of the Filipino people can now be examined.

CHAPTER 4

COLONIAL MENTALITY AND THE CHRISTIAN GOSPEL

The concept of Manifest Destiny was central to the role of Protestant missions in contributing to the development and the perpetuation of the Filipino colonial mentality. One result of this concept, was the unfortunate confusing of identities, on the part of the missionary, as ambassadors for Christ and as representatives of the U.S. government in the Philippines. Kenton J. Clymer makes the observation that “many missionaries in the Philippines shared the belief, accepted by most Protestants since at least the Civil War, that the survival and expansion of the United States was part of the divine plan” (1986:153).¹

A good example can be seen in the life of an American Baptist leader, Helen Montgomery, who saw the work of the missionary in the Philippines as a supplement and help to the American government. She writes, “The Christian must not fail ‘Old Glory’ in her most lively experiment in national altruism that the world now holds” (Montgomery 1913:278). Writing about American Baptist mission in the Philippines, Torbet points out that “the role of the missionaries was to provide Christian influence and instruction wherever it was needed to complement the work of the government” (Torbet 1955:35).

¹ Clymer’s book, *Protestant Missionaries in the Philippines, 1898 - 1916: An Inquiry into the American Colonial Mentality* (1986), dealing with the relationships between the American Protestant Missionaries and the colonial government in the Philippines, is an excellent resource that scholars like Gerald Anderson think will be the definitive study on the subject.

At the outset of the American occupation of the Philippines, the different American churches, denominations and mission organizations sent many of their bright young men and women as volunteers to teach in the Philippine public schools, thereby initiating the role that Protestant missions would play in the education of the Filipinos. The missionaries who followed carried it a step further. Working hand in hand with the colonial government, they immediately established private missionary schools that provided not only primary and secondary instruction, but also trained their converts, young and old, to assist them in their work. There is no need to discuss the general methods, medium and content of education provided by these missionary schools since, with the exception of a more open and intentional religious instruction than that in the public schools, they commonly followed the curriculum and policies established by the colonial government.

For the purposes of this project, it is worth mentioning that these schools trained the majority of the pastors, church workers and laypersons who provided leadership to the churches that were being planted all over the country. The kind of education and training, both “secular” and “religious,” they received determined, to a large extent, the character, (i.e., the worldview, theology and practice) of the churches they served.

In general, what can be said of the colonial mentality characteristic of the population, as a product of American colonial education, can also be said of those who were trained in the missionary founded schools. My suspicion, based on my own experiences as a product of one of these schools, and my observation of others with similar backgrounds, is that this colonial mentality may even be more deeply ingrained in those trained in missionary founded schools. This is so, I suspect, because added to their decided attraction to American culture

engendered by their colonial education, is the unfortunate identification of Christianity with the American culture.

Such identification, as mentioned in the discussion of the concept of Manifest Destiny earlier, was passed on by the missionaries to their Filipino counterparts who accepted it without question. As such, the Filipino Christians, like their American mentors, likewise came to perceive American culture as having the sanction of Christianity, and consequently, of God, making it even more desirable and worthy of emulation. It follows that the most, if not the only, appropriate understanding and expression of the Christian faith must be that of the missionary. Truth must be as the missionary teaches it, and practice must be as the missionary models it. That truth and that practice, of course, was dressed in Western clothes.

In addition to the colonial curriculum found in the public schools, mission school students were taught Christian truths and values in Western trappings. They learned that “Jesus loves the little children . . . red and yellow, black and white” (though “brown” could have easily been substituted, it often was not). From Sunday school picture books they were introduced to a Jesus with blond hair, blue eyes and Anglo-Saxon features.¹

Worship services were conducted in English, where they sang hymns accompanied by an organ, or at least a piano, having learned that God would not be pleased if they sang the same with their native guitars or their *mandolinas*, because they were secular instruments. Preaching was also in English, using Western settings, stories, characters and themes for illustrations. Of course grape juice and *pan-amerikano* (American bread) had to be used for communion.²

¹ One of the most shocking realizations I had later on in life was to find out that Jesus was an Asian and, like me, could have been brown skinned.

² The examples given are based mainly on my experiences and observations of American Baptist Mission founded schools, but my research showed me they were common enough amongst mission schools in the Philippines to merit broader application. See especially Clymer (1986).

Hence, the colonial mentality that was the product of colonial education was reinforced even more in the mission schools, by giving it the holy writ of Christianity. Not only did the mission school student feel proud of his/her Western education and thinking. Now he/she could even feel holier because of it.

So, in a very real way, both the religious and academic education that the missionaries gave to Filipinos became an integral part of the colonial education that was largely responsible for the cultural imperialism that resulted into the colonial- minded Filipino. It also resulted in what I call the Filipino "colonial Christianity." In colonial Christianity, Christians exhibit attitudes that are characteristic of the colonial mind.

Looking at their own culture as inferior, colonial Christians refuse to consider the possibility of the genuine expression of the Christian faith through any culture, including their own, other than the culture of the missionary. For the Filipino colonial Christian, faith can be genuine only as it is seen through Western eyes, and expressed through the Western culture of the missionary. Any other interpretations are most likely to be seen as erroneous, or even worse, heretical, and any other expressions, possibly pagan.

The organization, structure and practice of the Filipino churches attest to this mentality. In many churches, English is used as the language of worship and as the medium of instruction in Christian education. This is true especially in urban and big town churches. The style of worship and manner of preaching is a carbon copy of those in American churches. Hymns are sung in English or are direct transliterations of English hymns. Sunday school materials, though often out of date, would be the same ones used in the United States, often taught without any attempt at contextual interpretation or

application. The conduct of business meetings reflects the Western democratic style of decision-making by vote, carefully observing "Robert's Rules of Order," rather than the Filipino manner of decision by consensus. It is clear that, as the students, and later, leaders, were taught, so did they think, and, consequently, act - as ideal colonial subjects, carbon copies of their intellectual, cultural, and spiritual mentors. The colonial mentality exhibited by Protestant Christianity in the Philippines can be seen more clearly in the thinking of its theologians.

Theology in Captivity

Much of the so-called Filipino theologies in the past have been criticized as simply a parroting of Western theology (Suarez 1986:50). Such criticisms point to the fact that Filipino theology is largely a product of Filipinos with Western educated minds, who reflect on an alien faith that espouses a foreign ideology and who theologize in a foreign tongue (English). Even present-day attempts to locate Filipino theology in the context of Philippine socio-political realities would succumb to the same criticism of "foreignness," as they are still written by Western educated theologians who reflect and write in English and, by and large, are still influenced by foreign ideologies.

Furthermore, these recent attempts to locate theology in the socio-economic and political realities of the Philippines have not allayed the suspicions regarding the "foreignness" of theology. While important, such attempts remain at surface level and do not go deep enough into the level of worldview and culture. Any theology that fails to address the particularities of a people's worldview and culture cannot but be viewed as foreign. For it is at the worldview level that the deepest and most meaningful questions of a people are encountered, and it is in their culture that such questions are expressed, and where answers are to be

found, tested and applied. It is at this level also, that questions go beyond the existential and empirical, and enter into the sphere of the ontological and spiritual. It is at the level of worldview and culture then, that Filipino theologians attempting to theologize as Filipinos, must find the *locus theologicus*.

It is imperative for Filipino theology to break its shackles of Western captivity if it hopes to speak to, be understood, and accepted by, the Filipino people as their own. Before it can do so, however, it must understand the nature and extent of such captivity, in order to determine how to best break its bonds and avoid its pitfalls. It is in this effort to understand that we now turn our attention to.

What has been said of the worship and practice of the church can also be said of Filipino theologizing, perhaps even more so. I have mentioned that much of the so-called "Filipino theologies" in the past have largely been a parroting of Western theologies. Filipino theologians have taken for granted that the only way of doing theology is the Western way, and so they simply took the problematics posed by Western theologians as their own. What has resulted from this is a theology that was generally devoid of Filipino characteristics, and, therefore, incapable of addressing the unique particularities of the Filipino situation. According to Taklin Reyes,

the Gospel has sadly been identified and confused with Western races and cultures. God came in the garments of missionaries, through gothic buildings and denominational structures, and the eternal truth of the Gospel narrated by way of the thought form and systematic theology of the West (1976:16).

Much of the blame for this has been placed on the kind of theological education Filipino ministers and church leaders have received from the various missionary-founded seminaries and Bible schools in the country. Commenting about this, one prominent Filipino theologian wrote almost twenty five years ago, "Up till now, theological education in the Philippines has been largely a transplant from the West" (Oracion 1971: 29). The sad thing about this comment is that it could have been made today and still be accurate. A contemporary Filipino theologian observed more recently,

What we call 'dominant theology' in the Philippines was born early in our colonial history— a theology shaped by the old European Catholic tradition and the influence of the Enlightenment faith . . . an imitation and parroting of Western models of religious discourse and God-talk (Suarez 1986:50).

The theological captivity of the Filipino Christian is but part of the bigger picture of the Western ideological captivity of the Filipino. The superimposed colonial *episteme* resulting from their subjugation made Filipinos into bearers of the so-called "culture of the center"—a colonial tradition where the history is not merely relegated to the past like a fading memory, but becomes an active reality in the present.

Colonial mentality is thus not merely a vestige of the Filipino colonial past, but an active manifestation of that colonial past in the present. It can then be said that Filipino theology, as a product of the culture of the center, not only exhibits the *episteme* of, but also finds its location in, this active historical past. Such a theology cannot be but inadequate in addressing the realities of Filipino society and culture. If Filipino theology must be relevant to Filipino realities, if it must speak to the Filipino in the context

of Filipino culture, it must liberate itself from the culture of the center that keeps it captive to its colonial past. It must break free from the chains of its Western colonial captivity.

Theological Discourse as a Problem of Location

While aimed at the whole theological enterprise, Sharon Welch's critique of the "conceptual inadequacy of Christian theology," which she describes as the fundamental crisis in the language, methodology and reality referent of theology, aptly describes Filipino theology (see Welch 1985:3). To be sure, the crisis in Filipino theology in all the categories described by Welch is nothing less than fundamental: it speaks in a foreign language, while at the same time using an alien methodology to reflect on problems not related to its own culture nor relevant to the struggles of its people.

One may argue that, since theology involves human effort in the process of its formulation or construction, and since the locus of theology is always *en viatorum*, then theology must always suffer from incompleteness and weakness, that is, the inadequacy of theology must be seen as both perennial and natural. While true, such inadequacy must not be seen as total but rather relative. For instance, David Tracy speaks of "a relative inadequacy of systematic theology" (1981:340), though he uses the phrase in a different context than Welch does.

If indeed, theology is only relatively inadequate, then how does one judge its relative adequacy or inadequacy? Welch points to Edward Farley's discussion of this problem in his book, *Ecclesial Man* and comments:

The crisis of theology is found in the problem beneath the problem of theological method. This problem concerns the reality referent of Christian faith and thus of Christian theology . . . if Christian

faith has no referent, then the problem of theological method is a meaningless one. The prior problem for any liberal theologian, the problem that must be addressed before one delves into the problem of theological method, is the identification of the locus of faith's reality, the delineation of the reality referent of this particular form of discourse (Welch 1985:1).

The concern that Welch, in her discussion of Farley, expressed about the need to identify the "reality referent" of the Christian faith seems to point to the notion of location. Without identifying the locale of Christianity, theology has no locus on which to ground itself, thus rendering its methodology meaningless.

The problem that both Welch and Farley raised about the reality referent or the locale of theology is crucial. Theology does not exist in a vacuum but is always located within a particular context. The context within which much of Christian theology as we know it today has flourished has been that of the Western historico/philosophical tradition. The modern day theologian who is concerned about the context or locale of theology cannot simply ignore this great body of theological tradition, lest he/she finds him/herself trying to reinvent the wheel. Numerous are the "truths" found in traditional Western theology that are basic to the Christian faith and thus transcend the particularities of history, thought and culture.

However, it must also be recognized that Western theology reflects the cultural values, thought patterns and historical necessities of the West—its own particular context. As such, it is contextualized theology in that it speaks from and seeks to speak to the Western church. It is when it goes beyond its own context and tries to carry over not only the universal truths it contains

but also its own particular understandings, methods and models into locales other than its own that it ceases to be contextual and becomes imperialistic.

Acknowledging the existence of transcendent, universal Christian truths within the body of traditional Western theology means that importation from that body of tradition cannot be avoided. What this paper is concerned about is the *uncritical* importation of Western theology and its consequences in much of the Two-Thirds world, in particular, the Philippines.

Foremost is its irrelevance to the society and culture of the country. Commenting on the irrelevance of Western models to Asia's unique and diversified cultural context, Bong Rin Ro writes:

Western evangelical theological schools emphasize the inerrancy of Scripture and orthodox theology versus liberal and neo-orthodox theologies. But these are not major issues in Asia. Rather, the prevalent areas of concern are poverty, suffering, injustice, communism and non-Christian religions (1990:55).

Despite its irrelevance to Asian realities, this uncritical importation of Western theology remains rampant amongst Asian theologians. According to Siew Yau-Man, a brief survey of the articles written in the *Asia Journal of Theology* during the past five years (1989-1994) reveals that, "apart from some articles on ecumenism, feminism, pluralism and Islamisation, there is little written about critical Asian issues of communalism and ethnic violence, poverty and suffering, corruption, materialism, urbanisation and modernisation" (1994:106).

I suspect that the reason for this continued uncritical importation of Western theology is not because Asian, and for that matter, Filipino, theologians are unaware of its irrelevance

to their socio-cultural context. Rather, the problem relates to Farley's concept of the reality referent, or what I call the context or locale of theology. What constitutes the *locus theologicus* is not merely the context from which the theologian writes, but also the audience to which the theology is addressed.

The context from which the theologian writes is not simply the geographical area within which the theologian writes. Quite often, what constitutes the immediate context of the theologian is the educational background and training which shapes the theologian's thinking. Because Asian theological schools often send their scholars to the West, they customarily take back with them Western problems which form the basis for their for their own theologizing. Jonathan Chao, president of Christ College in Taipei, after observing that one college in Taipei received all its missionary lecturers from and sent all its scholars to Asbury seminary, while another preferred Westminster and still another, Calvin, comments:

Such theological loyalty doubtlessly perpetuates conflicting branches of Western theological schools of thought and extends American and European battlefields to Taiwan. Is this not theological imperialism? When will our Western colonialist friends grant us theological freedom and independence? (1972: 23)

I do not agree with Chao's putting the blame solely on the West since much of it is the fault of the particular seminaries themselves who do have a choice where to send its scholars. But the problem is much deeper than merely choice of schools. Nor is it simply a question as to whether there really is a choice, considering that even faculties in Asian seminaries are usually staffed by Western missionary professors, or by Asians trained in the West. The problem, rather, can be traced back to the myth

of the cultural superiority of the West which stems from colonial mentality. This myth takes the form of the continuing desire by Christian scholars from the Two-Thirds World to get their training from the West, and the premium that Asian denominations and seminaries attach to Western degrees and diplomas. Paul Stevens, Academic Dean of Regent College, for instance, points out that “a western theological degree is for most aspiring Christian leaders in the developing world a *sine qua non* . . .” (1992:7). Though Steven’s statement here refers specifically to African churches, it may well apply to Asian churches also. Such attitudes not only reflect the colonial mentality that is prevalent in Asian seminaries, but also further encourage and perpetuate the mentality.

The target audience is also important in considering the context of theology. Again, for Asian theologians, the immediate context is not the Asian church but Western academia. In theory, theological reflection is to be done in the context of the church for the benefit of the church. Historically, theological institutions were built to train theologians to serve this purpose and, as such, were considered servants of the church. However, an ever-widening gap has developed between the two institutions, and the church now finds itself criticizing the theological institutions for having developed a theological agenda independent of the church.

In his criticism of the irrelevance of theological education, Michael Griffiths of Regent College points out that seminaries teach as though their main purpose is to produce scholars. He also criticizes the manner of choosing professors, where the criteria of experience in ministry is neglected and hiring is based solely in terms of academic standing. Thus, while students need what he calls “street credibility” to make an impact on the day to day ministries of the church, they are trained by highly intelligent scholars with “library credibility” who have little

knowledge of actual ministry and who relate better to books than to people (1990:11-12).

Given this situation, it is not surprising that seminary graduates not only find themselves inadequate in ministering in and to the church, but also unable to reflect and theologize for the church. Thus, theologizing becomes a matter for the academe—written by scholars whose immediate context is the academic world of the seminary, targeted for an audience of similar training and interest, for the purpose of professional advancement and academic standing. Theologizing for the church seldom comes into consideration, if ever. Christopher Walters-Bugbee notes:

little wonder, then, that theology has acquired such a sour reputation among the laity of late; held captive so long by academia, it now appears to many entirely superfluous to the common life of faith, an enterprise reserved exclusively for the few hardy souls who find pleasure in batting around words like “phenomenology” over breakfast (1981:157).

The result is that Asian scholars trained in the West are ill-equipped to theologize not only in the context of their society and culture, but for the Asian church as well. This is the bind that Filipino theologians find themselves in today.

Another result of uncritical importation, other than the perpetuation of the myth of the cultural superiority of the West, is dependency. In the Philippines, feelings of inferiority by the people, and the paternalistic stance of the United States resulted in an attitude of dependence by the Filipinos on America. The cultural dependency of the Philippines upon the United States has already been discussed, and the country’s socio-economic and political dependency on the same has not only been alluded

to above, but is also well documented,¹ so I will not take time to discuss them here. What is at issue here is the religio-theological dependency of Filipinos on the West.

The dependency of Filipino churches and seminaries on Western seminaries to train their scholars, and the corresponding dependence of Asian/Filipino scholars on their Western counterparts for academic status has also been discussed above. Yet another form of dependency needs to be mentioned, and that is the continuing dependence of Asian/Filipino theologians on their Western counterparts to stimulate their own thinking. The result, according to Latin American scholar Emilio Nunez, can be fatal to the indigenous theologian's initiative and creativity, ultimately producing decontextualized thinkers and theologians (1988:76).

Perhaps the biggest shortcoming of Western theology in terms of finding a "fit" in Filipino, or for that matter, most of the other Asian cultures is that it has taken on the individualistic orientation of its culture. As such, it does not reflect the Biblical model of community as the locus of faith and of theology. Faith is based solely on a concept of individual conversion and ministry on a theory of individual vocation that is unrelated to community. Ministerial calling is a matter between God and the individual, with little reference to or confirmation by the community of believers. Students are taken out and trained while isolated from their church and community contexts, and are then sent to congregations that do not know them, had nothing to do with their calling and training.

Such an individualistic approach is diametrically opposed to the training modeled by Christ with his disciples, who trained them as a community (the twelve) in the context of the larger community (the Jewish community), where they learned to

¹ See for instance, Stanley Karnow, *In Our Image: America's Empire in the Philippines* (1989). See also, Gunnar Myrdal, *Asian Drama: An Inquiry into the Poverty of Nations* (1968).

minister by actually doing ministry. Furthermore, it is foreign to the commissioned leadership modeled in Acts 6:3 and 13:1-3. Lastly, it is alien to Asian contexts, which put a premium on community and family, and where decisions are made not individually but by the consensus of the family or community.

CHAPTER 5

COLONIAL MENTALITY IN THE CONVENTION OF PHILIPPINE BAPTIST CHURCHES

Having seen the effects of colonial mentality on the religious consciousness of Filipino Protestants in general, we will now look at the effects of the same in more detail on a specific group of believers who are products of American Protestant missionary enterprise in the Philippines.

Background

I have chosen to focus on the Convention of Philippine Baptist Churches (CPBC) for several reasons. First, The CPBC is, as mentioned above, a direct result of the endeavors of the American Protestant missionary enterprise in the Philippines, specifically of the former American Baptist Foreign Missionary Society (henceforth, ABFMS), now the Board of International Ministries (BIM) of the American Baptist Churches, U. S. A. (ABCUSA).

Second, of all the denominations in the Philippines, the CPBC best qualifies as a control group for research. The vast majority of the membership of the CPBC come from just one place, the Visayan region, so named because the people speak dialects all classified under the Visayan language, one of the five major languages spoken in the Philippines. Visayans trace their origins to the second wave of Malay immigrants (Agoncillo

1974:9), in particular to a tribe called the *Sri Vidjaya* (from the Sanskrit, meaning “people of Vidjaya”).

Distinct from other inhabitants by origins and separated from the same by geography, the Visayans preserved and developed their own particular culture and language. The comity agreements between the different Protestant missionary organizations further added to their singularity, giving them a particular identity as Baptists. Thus, members of the CPBC can be said to be a distinct ethnic group in terms of culture (Visayan), dialect (Ilongo), geographic location (Western Visayas), religion (Protestant) and denomination (Baptist, of the American Baptist flavor).

Third, the church I grew up in, the University Church of Central Philippine University (an institution also founded by the ABFMS), where I still consider myself a member, is a constituent church of the CPBC. As my “home” church, this is the church I know most about, and where my own faith was nurtured, developed and matured. Furthermore, this is the church that most of the missionaries attended, with the missionary compound situated just a few blocks from it, also within the university campus. As such, this is where most of my experiences with American Baptist missionaries and their teachings happened.

My exposure to the American Baptist missions in the Philippines through the CPBC is quite considerable. Both my parents worked with the CPBC, my father as Promotional Secretary and Convention Evangelist, and my mother as Provincial Missionary. Both worked closely with ABFMS missionaries, counting many of them as close friends. I was born in an ABFMS founded mission hospital, with an ABFMS missionary doctor performing the caesarian operation. I grew up playing with missionary kids, and my Kindergarten teacher was an ABFMS missionary. All of my education before coming to the

United States, from Kindergarten through college and seminary, were from Central Philippine University, which, as I mentioned above, is an ABFMS founded institution. Many of my teachers were ABFMS missionaries, and my own pastor was an ABFMS missionary. As such, I am myself a product of the missions with which this project is concerned.

My interest in the subject matter, and in the CPBC, is obvious. Much of the characteristics of colonial mentality outlined in this study I find in myself, and much of the struggles of the Filipino churches, its leaders, and of students of theology and missions to be relevant to their own culture, I am myself experiencing. Thus the effort to find a synthesis between the two divergent streams of culture within Filipino society, in order to discover a more relevant expression of the Christian faith in Filipino culture, is also an effort to find a personal synthesis, a search for personal identity, and thus, a deeper meaning in my own personal faith.

A Brief History of the Convention of Philippine Baptist Churches

Protestant work in the Philippines began in an atmosphere of revolutionary change. The socio-economic, religio-political climate of the country reached a critical stage towards the close of the 19th century and erupted into the Philippine Revolution of 1896. The revolution carried with it negative attitudes towards both the Spanish colonial government and the Roman Catholic Church and her missionary-friar representatives. The triumph of the revolution engendered a spirit of daring among Filipinos who have endured more than three hundred years of domination by their colonial masters. Such spirit of daring was often expressed in the form of openness to the new.

Across the Pacific, the United States was looking to expand its economy to areas beyond its national boundaries. A young nation, it was eager to test its muscles against the older nations in the international community, anxious to get into the arena of international power politics. Coupled with the concept of “Manifest Destiny” which believed that it was the “divine calling” of America to spread Protestantism and the American civilization to all the world, the young nation was ready to spread its influence in the world.

The Cuban War offered provided the necessary opening, and the defeat of the Spanish Armada by the American naval force under Admiral Dewey in the Battle of Manila Bay in 1898 gave entry for the U. S. into world of power politics. In the Philippines, it signaled the end of Spanish colonial rule and ushered in the American era. It also marked the beginning of Protestant missions in the country.

The first American missionary to come was a Presbyterian, James B. Rogers (April 1899), followed by a Methodist, James Thoburn (March 1900). Eric Lund came on May 3, 1900 to start Baptist work in Iloilo, a province in the island of Panay (Torbet 1955:351). He was accompanied by a young Filipino named Braulio Manikan.

Before coming to the Philippines, Lund served in Spain where he befriended Manikan. A former Roman Catholic seminarian, Manikan was studying engineering in Barcelona when Lund converted him to Protestantism. There in 1899, they began to translate the Gospel into Hiligaynon, the native tongue of Manikan which was also the Visayan dialect spoken in Panay (Fridell 1956:50). Armed with portions of Scripture already translated, Lund and Manikan began evangelistic preaching and teaching.

The rapid influx of denominational mission organizations necessitated a system to avoid confusion and overlapping of

work. In 1901 the Evangelical Union was organized and adopted, during its first meeting a comity agreement dividing up the country and assigning sections to each of the participating mission agencies. The island of Panay, (except southern Iloilo and the province of Antique which were given to the Presbyterians) and the western part of Negros were assigned to the Baptists. In 1925, the Presbyterians gave up Antique and Southern Iloilo to the Baptists in favor of the island of Samar, which the Baptists never occupied, thus giving the Baptists charge of all the Hiligaynon speaking areas.

Gowing points out that “much of the credit for the efficient and rapid spread of Protestantism in the Archipelago” was due to the comity arrangements (1967:129) which did much to avoid irritations and enhanced cooperation. However, the most important factor in the early growth was the receptivity among Filipinos to the Gospel. In 1918 there were already 600 Protestant churches in the country with a total membership of 125,000 compared to 4000 members in 1900 (Gowing 1967:129). American Baptist work had excellent opportunities for growth during this first decade of missionary endeavor.

Early Missionary Activity

The first American Baptist missionaries set the pattern for the kind of missionary work that later missionaries sent by the ABFMS would more or less follow. Poverty, illiteracy and disease were much evident in the country during this time, and the missionaries sought to address these problems as they preached the Gospel. Since Jesus himself set the example in his earthly ministry of preaching, teaching, healing, and feeding multitudes, it was felt that a balanced mission program should correspond to Christ’s ministry.

Evangelistic preaching was greatly helped by the translation of the Bible or portions thereof and the colportage work by both missionaries and converts. Biblical teaching was done in Sunday schools and in bible study/prayer groups. Worship services were conducted in houses, in makeshift structures of bamboo and palm leaves that served as churches, or even in open air. Medical missionaries not only treated diseases but also preached and taught. Church-based social programs were engaged in. It was on this direction that the American Baptist mission in the Philippines progressed, giving rise to a variety of institutional ministries.

Lund and Manikan started mission work in the town of Jaro in May, 1900. They were reinforced by the arrival of Charles Briggs in November of the same year, who officiated the first recorded baptism in the Mission on February 3, 1901. A few days later, 30 more were baptized in Jaro by Lund. Among the early converts were some who distinguished themselves as “fighting evangelists,” advocating public preaching without written permission from government authorities, thus courting arrest and stoning by the public by the instigation of the local Catholic priest (see Masa 1990; Diel 1975:11).

These early converts, many of whom became pastors, were largely responsible for bringing the Gospel and planting churches in the rural areas. The first church was organized in Jaro in February, 1901. Worship services, regularly held in a bamboo chapel, were always crowded, the crowd often literally pushing out the walls. A house was built with room enough “around it” for about 300 persons to sleep overnight since people would walk two or three days journey and remained another two or three days to receive instruction on the Bible and learn the hymns (Fridell 1956:53). These same people would go back to their villages and plant the seeds of the Gospel that later grew and blossomed into people movements to Christ.

The church in Jaro was followed by many other churches that “within a period of ten years . . . practically all capital towns were covered and churches organized” (Masa 1990).

Protestantism came to the Philippines “in the fullness of time,” at a time when the country was undergoing a major process of transformation and the people were eager to try something new. Disillusionment with Roman Catholicism paved the way for the ready acceptance of the new faith. In the town of Jaro, a delegation of people from the interior presented Lund and Manikan a signed list of 7,989 persons, including 35 *tenientes del barrio* (barrio lieutenants) expressing the desire to convert to Protestantism. This number later grew to 13,000. A people movement for Christ was underway.

According to Munger, this remarkable incident can be traced back to the ministry of a Roman Catholic priest who, fifty years before, taught from a little book he called the “Word of God.” Padre Juan prophesied that some day, teachers from across the sea would come bringing Bibles and told his followers to follow their teachings rather than the priests. Padre Juan was arrested about 1870 and removed from public contact due to what the Roman Catholic hierarchy called “insanity.” But his teachings remained among his followers, and when the teachers from across the sea arrived with Bibles and a new message of salvation, they were welcomed with great expectations (1967:28-29).

Other examples of people movements deserve mention here. After hearing a missionary preach, people from a nearby village told their people about what they heard. They invited the mission to their village and when two Filipino preachers came, they found the whole village wanting to turn from Catholicism and become Protestants. After baptizing those who were ready, a church of 184 members was organized, with one of the

preachers serving as pastor. Membership increased to 400 within a year.

One missionary and a national pastor visited another village and were surprised to see a newly erected bamboo chapel, built in preparation for their visit by the villagers. Apparently, a few of them had visited the mission station, heard and approved the new message, and shared it with their village. After the worship service, 289 decided to follow Christ (Munger 1967:31-32). Other towns and villages responded *en masse*, and by 1904, there were already 11 congregations started with a total membership of 1600 (Torbet 1955:353).

Despite of the early translation of the Bible to *Hiligaynon* (the classical form of the *Ilongo* dialect), the language barrier remained an initial hindrance to the missionaries (except Lund who spoke Spanish, and Manikan who spoke the language). The low percentage of literacy was another problem. The new converts, seeing the centrality of the Bible in their new found faith, wanted to know how to read it. Literacy classes were held to combat this problem on a temporary basis, and a decision was made to start institutions of learning to meet the same in a more permanent basis. In cooperation with the American colonial government's program to educate Filipinos, educational institutions were established, with English as the medium of instruction.

The first was the Jaro Industrial School (1905) where boys learned to read and write in English and were taught arts and crafts. With the stated intention of becoming "the center of evangelical influence in the islands" (Torbet 1955:356), the school's high standard of education drew government approval and enrollment grew steadily. In 1923 it was granted college status, and became Central Philippine University in 1953.

A Bible School was opened in 1905 with twelve students taught by "missionaries who gave such time as they could spare

from other responsibilities” (Torbet 1955:355). The Bible School was developed into a seminary and is now called the College of Theology, Central Philippine University.

The following year, a combination orphanage/elementary and high school was started in Capiz on Panay island. Named Baptist Home School, it later developed into a junior college and is now called Filamer Christian College. In order to serve the needs of the students who flocked to these and other learning institutions, several hostels were opened this same year, which served both as student dormitories and Christian centers. These hostels initiated a method of student evangelism that was widely imitated by other missions in the country (Torbet 1955:357).

In a country where disease and epidemics were widespread at the time, medicine was of great importance as a ministry of missions. A hospital which was started by the Presbyterians in Iloilo in 1900 (Iloilo is the name of both the province and city in Panay where the town of Jaro is situated) became known as Union Hospital in 1907 when American Baptist missionaries agreed to join in its operation. The withdrawal of the Presbyterian mission from the island of Panay in 1925 left the hospital solely in the hands of the American Baptists who renamed it Iloilo Mission Hospital. Another hospital started in Capiz in 1908 later became known as Immanuel Hospital. Both hospitals provided much needed medical care and opened up opportunities for witness not only to the patients that came in but also to the people in areas reached by their rural health programs (Diesto 1984).

The initial success of the early endeavors of the American Baptist mission was not without difficulties. The newly introduced freedom of religion and the disgust that the people had with the priests still had to contend with the majority attitude that was shaped and nurtured by the beliefs and practices that had been imposed and nourished by many

centuries of Roman Catholicism. This attitude, concretized in the persecution of new converts, found its worst expression in the murder of Placido Mata, one of Lund's earliest converts and a collaborator in the translation of the Bible, in the town of Jaro on September 1900 (Diel 1975:10).

Jaro, where Lund and Manikan established the Baptist Mission, was also the locus of the Roman Catholic hierarchy and the center of conspiracy against Americans in general and Protestants in particular. Feelings against the missionaries and their converts were high in this as well as in other towns that in one location, believers wanting to protect themselves withdrew and settled a new village they named "Calvary." Here, believers lived together in community, inspiring other believers to form similar villages, often against the advice of the missionaries who warned against exclusivism. By 1904, nineteen such Protestant communities existed (Munger 1967:30). In the end, the experiment failed due to the problems arising from the coming together of families of diverse backgrounds. Even the initial purpose of protection was not achieved since they only succeeded in drawing more attention to themselves, thus intensifying persecutions.

Another serious problem was the shortage of missionaries. By 1912, there were twenty-six American Baptist missionaries serving in the Philippines who, according to Torbet, were greatly overworked and badly in need of reinforcements (1955:357). Coupled with limited financial support from the United States, the ABFMS Board recommended a holding action in regard to new mission work in the country, and focusing on consolidating the existing areas of work instead. Despite these and many other problems, the work continued to prosper that after about a quarter of a century, "most of the towns in the Western Visayas were touched by the Gospel" (Masa 1990).

The theological controversy that swept the United States in the late 1920s to the early 1930s tragically found its way into the Philippines, adversely affecting the Baptist work in the country. The main issue at stake was that of the “pure Gospel” versus the “social Gospel” (Diel 1975:11). In the Philippines, it took the form of the proper balance between evangelism on the one hand and the medical and educational ministries on the other. Added to the growing dissatisfaction of some of the missionaries on points of the comity agreement and of cooperative ecumenical connections, the controversy led to bitter disagreements and non-cooperation. Things came to a head in 1926 when R. C. Thomas, a medical missionary, refused to comply with certain field regulations and requested freedom to combine evangelistic work with his medical practice. While on furlough, not being able to agree with the mission board, he resigned. He later returned to the field and together with other missionaries who resigned from the ABFMS, began work in Manila under the Association of Baptists for World Evangelism.

A Convention is Born

The promise of full independence which the United States gave to the Philippine Commonwealth in 1934 gave impetus to the fast growing Filipino nationalism and underscored the urgent need for freedom and self-determination among Filipino churches. A reorganizational meeting gave birth to the Convention of Philippine Baptist Churches (henceforth referred to as CPBC) in May 23, 1935. The administrative Board was composed of six missionaries and nine Filipinos elected by the constituency. Except for the office of Associate General Secretary, the key leadership positions of President, Vice-president, General Secretary and Chairman of the Board of Trustees were held for the first time by Filipinos. The new Board

was given charge of all responsibilities previously handled by the now defunct Mission Conference, and the new structure gave complete control of the work to Filipino leadership, working side by side and in cooperation with their American Baptist missionary brothers and sisters (Gumban 1990).

One of the provisions for the organization of the CPBC was the cutting off of mission subsidy with a two year period of gradual decrease. The churches, most of whom were not so faithful with their stewardship responsibilities before, responded with increased giving that not only enabled them to support their local pastors but the CPBC as well (Dianala 1990). The willingness to undertake not only the leadership but also the responsibility to support the work evidenced a growing maturity on the part of Filipino Christians that they were not aware of before, and could not hope to realize until they themselves took charge.

The connection between the Philippines and the United States and its proximity to Japan made the latter a prime target for Japanese attack during World War II. The CPBC was barely five years old when the country was drawn into the conflict, and Filipinos found themselves under another foreign master. The war, which had caused incalculable devastation on the property and lives of the Filipino people, did not spare the churches. Sixty percent of the CPBC churches in Negros, and eighty percent in Panay were demolished. Twenty buildings of Central Philippine College, among many other institutions, were razed to the ground (Acosta 1985). "The destruction of the property of the Baptist Mission and the CPBC was almost total that the question of recovery or restoration seemed a wistful thought" (Diel 1975:12).

As if destruction of mission property were not enough, eleven American Baptist missionaries and a child were executed by the Japanese on December 21, 1943, in Tapaz, Capiz. A ten-

foot cross marks the site of the massacre of these Hopevale Martyrs—a “reminder both of the destruction of human lives because of the atrocities of war and of ‘sacrificed lives’ because of Jesus Christ, for whom and because of whom they have come to witness and serve” (Diel 1975:12).

The destruction wrought by the war on the lives and property of the missionaries and the Filipino Christians alike did not quench the spirit of evangelism and social action characteristic of Baptist work in the country since its inception. Immediately after the cessation of hostilities, work began to restore the Baptist witness and service that were hampered but not squelched by the devastation. Worship services and evangelistic rallies regained the momentum they temporarily lost during the war, educational and medical ministries were reopened in temporary structures, and with the generous financial grants by the Mission Board, burned and flattened buildings rose up again.

The reconstruction project not only rebuilt the material structures but also restored and strengthened the national leadership by the introduction of new leadership training programs patterned from and more suited to Filipino culture. Furthermore, the Mission Board began to increase the number of missionaries until there were forty-five of them working in the country in the 1950s (Diel 1975:12). The maximizing of the CPBC programs that resulted bore fruit in terms of increased growth.

The increased growth was due mainly to a renewed evangelistic fervor that swept the convention after the war. It was as if the spirit of evangelism, dammed up since the mission decided on a holding action in the early years, suddenly broke loose, flooding the churches. Evangelistic rallies held in cities and towns were well attended. Evangelistic teams went to rural and mountain areas to preach and train laypersons in evangelism. Students from the different educational institutions

formed gospel teams that went out during summers and semester breaks to witness through films, dramas, songs, and preaching (Diesto 1984).

These activities were in accordance with the plan that the CPBC adopted in 1952 calling for a ten percent annual membership increase for ten years. If successful, it would mean membership growth, and a chance for the Filipino leadership to see for itself if it has matured sufficiently to handle the job, and the CPBC to prove that it is no longer just a mission field but a missionary sending organization as well.

And well was it proven. By the end of 1961, membership totaled 20,013, almost one hundred percent up from the total membership of 10,237 in 1951. And the momentum continued well after 1961 as can be seen in the number of people who continued to swell the ranks of the local congregations to a total of 28,627 in 1967.

Another reason for rapid growth was the establishment of a Bible school in the vernacular language. The Convention Bible Institute (now called the Convention Baptist Bible College) was started in 1954 in Bacolod City in order to train laypersons, pastors and evangelists to work in unreached areas. The wisdom of this action is evident in the reports from the rural and mountain areas where between 1954 and 1955, 2,400 decisions for Christ were recorded, and 5,000 more added the following year.

The policy of non-subsidy to local churches that the mission took after the CPBC was established continued after the war but due to the poverty of the members, programs of assistance were developed. A stewardship campaign promoted among the churches was only partially successful due to the financial difficulties faced by the congregations. In 1960, roughly forty percent of the churches could not afford to support pastors and were without workers of any kind. To help remedy the situation,

circuit pastorates were formed where three to four churches were combined and served by one pastor or worker.

As the CPBC grew, the need for special ministries became more urgent. The shortage of pastors led to emphasis on the importance of laypersons in the total ministry of the church. Thus, departments and organizations led and staffed by lay ministers were formed to minister not only to the churches but to the larger community as well.

Many of the programs developed were geared to strengthen local congregations by targeting specific groups within the church that are often neglected. Community oriented programs were promoted, and churches worked with local governments in planning and implementing community projects. While such projects seldom resulted in converts, they were in line with the missionary emphasis of ministering to the whole person that the first American Baptist missionaries set a pattern to. Furthermore, they helped diffuse feelings of hostility that many Filipinos had towards Protestants in this predominantly catholic country, especially during the early years of Protestant work.

The growth of the CPBC went beyond the limits of the boundaries of the territory assigned to it in the comity agreement. Initially, expansion came not so much from intent as from necessity, resulting from migrations of its members to other parts of the country.

Beginning with the 1930s, a large number of CPBC members migrated to Mindanao where land and work opportunities were available. Since comity agreements did not allow the building of churches where members moved, it was assumed that they joined existing congregations there. A survey team sent to the area was surprised to see a number of Baptist congregations representing five different "non-cooperative Baptist groups" (Brown 1968:74) with many of the original members coming from CPBC. No longer able to deny the need for workers in the

area especially upon seeing great opportunities for evangelism and expansion, the CPBC finally sent missionaries in 1964.

Another area of expansion avoided by the CPBC from the beginning because of the existing work of other denominations was Manila. Being the hub of the business and political life of the country, it drew people from all over the Philippines.

In 1957, a group of CPBC members who have moved there from decided to form another congregation. Starting as a "house church," the group has grown into what is now called Faith Baptist Church, one of the biggest and most prosperous congregations of the CPBC. Missionary in orientation, the church has given birth to many other churches in Manila and the surrounding areas.

Expansion spread to several other islands and by 1969, CPBC churches were found in all the major islands of the country and the majority of the islands in the Visayan group. During that year also, its membership reached 30,000 in its 300 congregations all over the country.

CPBC activities were not limited to its member churches alone. One of its early significant moves was to join the Philippine Federation of Christian Churches. This allowed for the exposure its members to other denominations composed of Filipinos from other regions who spoke different languages and represented a variation of the Filipino culture. The exposure helped expand the horizons of its members and minimized the problem of regionalism. It also allowed the CPBC to participate in Christian programs and projects that were national in scope and significance. The Federation, which later became the National Council of Churches in the Philippines, also provided opportunities for Baptists to serve in national leadership capacities, further hastening the maturation of leadership in the convention.

Cooperation between the CPBC and the ABFMS was not without spot or wrinkle. But their common commitment to one Lord and to the mission of spreading the Gospel helped both parties to see beyond policy conflicts and personal differences towards not only acceptance but respect, trust, and love for each other.

These feelings towards each other were concretely expressed in a variety of ways. One of the most profound expressions of respect and trust the gradual turnover of ABFMS property to its Filipino counterpart which began in December 1969. The turnover was completed in May 1974 during the 39th Annual Convention of the CPBC in Jaro, where it all started, and where it is still centered.

The Martial Law Years: The CPBC in the Period of Philippine Constitutional Authoritarianism - 1972 to 1982

On September 21, 1972, Martial Law was declared in the Philippines, thrusting the country into the era of Constitutional Authoritarianism under the iron hand of Ferdinand Marcos, a period characterized by repression, oppression, abuse of power, and violence.

The declaration caught almost everyone by surprise, but it was generally greeted with cautious approval by the business and professional sectors of the population, with characteristic fatalism by the broad masses of the people who had endured a long history of oppression, and with disfavor by the students and other progressive groups.

These incipient reactions were reflected in the different denominations and church groups in the country. The immediate reaction by the Roman Catholic hierarchy which claims the following of eighty percent of the population, ranged from guarded approval to silent disapproval. A survey

conducted a year later by the major religious superiors of the church painted a generally dismal picture of the Philippines. It depicted the Roman Catholic Church “as going along with the present situation inspite of oppressions and injustices, with no plan of action, no clear stand . . .” (Salonga 1975:48).

But there were definite progressive elements in the church who readily voiced their opposition and engaged in prophetic ministry and leadership. Immediately after its declaration, sixteen bishops wrote a letter to President Marcos requesting that “it (Martial Law) be ended as soon as possible . . .” (Salonga 1975:49). Priests and nuns working with the poor who were already opposed to the Marcos government prior to Martial Law grew even bolder and were imprisoned, harassed, deported and killed.

On the Protestant side, the heads of the major denominations composing the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP) expressed their support for Martial Law and for Marcos’ “ efforts to stop lawlessness and the machinations of those who would destroy our government and deprive our people of their dignity and freedom” (Salonga 1975:50). Various other evangelical (as opposed to conciliar) groups followed suit, stating categorically their full support of the same.

However in December, 1973, after a group of young ministers made an analysis of Martial Law conditions, the NCCP passed resolutions contradicting its initial stance. Manifestos, letters of concern, protest and the like started to flow from it. In one year’s time, by the prodding of the young ministers, the atmosphere of the NCCP underwent tremendous change, which resulted in a military raid on June 27, 1974. The General Secretary, three foreign missionaries and three Filipino staff members were arrested, and the missionaries were required to leave the country.

The growing radicalization of the leadership of both the Roman Catholic Church and the mainline Protestant denominations was not normally shared by the grassroots membership at the outset. But the socio-economic and political conditions in the country proceeded to deteriorate, forcing the people to gradually awaken to the realities of their situation. Moreover, the consciousness of the country as a whole was rudely awakened by the assassination of former Senator Benigno Aquino in 1983, further fueling the fires of dissent. Protests, opposition rallies and demonstrations daily increased, resulting in even harsher reactions from the government. Subsequent elections, fraught with violence and fraud, deepened the disillusionment of the people towards the government, gradually turning it into an anger and a resolve expressed in a grassroots movement that resulted in the so-called "Parliament of the Streets."

This mass movement saw active participation by all sectors of the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches (including the evangelicals, traditionally identified as conservative and even pro-Martial Law), erupting into the well-known "February Revolution" of 1986, culminating in the ouster of Marcos his cronies, and their subsequent flight from the country. No doubt the participation of the religious sectors influenced the character and expression of dissent by the people, turning the revolution into a peaceful one.

Like its counterparts in the NCCP, the CPBC's initial reaction to Martial Law was one of guarded approval. However, the process of conscientization and politicalization that rapidly took place amongst the other denominational leaders in the NCCP resulting in their opposition to the Marcos dictatorship did not take place amongst the leadership of the CPBC. Thus while they ceased to openly support the Marcos regime after the first year of Martial Law, there was a silent but definite leaning

amongst said leaders towards endorsing it. A policy of non-involvement and a strategy of “wait and see” was taken, and things went on as before with the churches seemingly oblivious to the socio-economic and political ferment in the country.

Instead of socio-political action, the CPBC turned its attention to programs of expansion and growth. Evangelistic activity, which saw a resurgence beginning in 1954, continued into the 1970s. Missionaries were sent to islands previously not reached to start work and plant churches. Between 1976 and 1978 greater emphasis was placed on church planting resulting in sixty new churches in 1978. Growth was also seen in the giving of the churches to the convention (CPBC 1978 Annual Report).

The increasing hostility between the government forces and the fast growing communist insurgency, and the gradual but steady flight of the people, including some from the churches, into the ranks of the rebels forced a younger faction in the leadership to face up to the realities so long ignored. The stance of non-involvement in politics taken by the CPBC leadership was challenged by these younger leaders, causing disunity and dissension. The preponderance of the older generation amongst the leadership, and the traditional mantle of authority being vested on them gave the older generation power and the support of the churches and alienated the politically active younger leadership.

The growing politicalization of the Filipino population in general had very little influence on the membership of the CPBC. Churches continued to condemn and alienate members who became politically active, or even voice dissatisfaction with the regime.¹ Other than the ominous threat of government repression, an inordinate fear of communism engendered among

¹ As a student leader and political activist, I personally experienced the condemnation and alienation by the churches. My political involvement led to my arrest and incarceration when Martial Law was declared on September 21, 1972.

church members a distrust of any form of political activism, and causing them to lean towards supporting the repressive regime.

It should be pointed out that the inordinate fear of communism stems from several factors that directly relate to the colonial mentality of the members. Foremost is the unquestioned acceptance of American style democracy as the one true democracy that, since it worked quite well with the Americans, should also work with Filipinos— and therefore something they should also embrace. Tied up to the teaching of American democratic ideals was the anticommunist propaganda resulting in a “red scare” that had CPBC churches crying “red” at any form of dissent they encountered. That the Marcos government took the facade of anti-communism, and that it had the obvious support of the U. S. government that was dedicated to defend the world from godless communism, was reason enough for many of the churches to support the dictatorial government.

The tide of change long overdue finally came in the form of the “February Revolution.” People all over the country, including members of the CPBC, were swept by the tide of the peaceful revolution and the nationalism that came with it. The obvious religious characteristics of the revolution also made it easier for the churches to accept and even own, and for a while, sermons tinged with nationalism and Bible studies that sprouted all over and focusing on the need for the church’s active involvement in the socio-political arena were commonplace in the CPBC. For a while, too, the nationalistic pride felt by the people offered excellent opportunities for a more contextualized reading and presentation of the Gospel. People once again took pride in themselves as Filipinos, and the Gospel viewed from a Filipino standpoint would have been easily acceptable.

That the churches were unable to take advantage of the situation is indicative of a failing on their part to recognize the need for the contextualization of the Gospel amongst the

constituency of the CPBC. That there is a need for contextualization is evident, considering the obvious colonial mentality that its membership exhibits. However, knowing the contrariness of Filipino culture, that which may be obvious at first glance may be misleading. A clear demonstration of such mentality is needed. What follows immediately is a survey confirming the presence of colonial mentality amongst the membership of the CPBC.

Research Methodology

A survey questionnaire was and administered to answer the question of whether or not colonial mentality exists among the constituency of the CPBC. The survey was administered during the CPBC annual convention on the first week of May, 1996. Respondents were randomly chosen from delegates to the convention.

Findings

Of a total of 200 survey questionnaire distributed and 88 were completed and returned for an overall response rate of 44 percent. Forty or 45 percent of the respondents were male and 35 or 40 percent were female. Others were not identified. Of the 88 respondents, 41 or 47 percent were married, 35 or 40 percent were single and all others widowed or widower. Other demographic information of the respondents are:

TABLE 4: PROFILE OF CPBC SURVEY RESPONDENTS

	City	Town	Barrio	
Type of Church Attended	17	20	51	
	Pastor	Member	Officer	Others
Position in Church or the Convention	42	26	9	11
	College	Seminary	Bible School	P. G.
Educational Background	28	23	17	11

Results of the Survey

Respondents were asked questions in four areas, namely worship service, leadership, biblical and theological studies, and family life. The number of questions varied for each area.

Worship Service

Sixty one percent of the respondents said they use English or English with another language in their worship services. More than half (58 percent) prefer it that way.

Three-fourths (77 percent) claimed that English or English with another language are used regularly in sermons, and two-thirds (66 percent) prefer to hear them in English or English and another language.

Songs/hymns written in English, translated from English or written by Filipinos in English are regularly used in 86 percent of the churches, and 71 percent of the respondents said they want to hear songs/hymns either written in English or translated from English.

Leadership

Almost all (98 percent) of the respondents believe that the educational attainment (college graduate and above) of leaders for the national convention is important. The degrees importance vary from very important (69 percent) to important and somewhat important (29 percent). Similarly, an overwhelming 71 percent believe that their leaders be educated in a foreign country (like the United States), while 91 percent of the respondents think it important that their leaders be able to speak English fluently.

Results in the calling of pastors to local congregations are comparable. Ninety-seven percent of the respondents believe that the educational attainment (college graduate or above) of a pastor is important in calling them to serve in local churches. Sixty-four percent thought it important that their pastors be educated in a foreign country (like the United States) and an overwhelming 89 percent want their pastors to be fluent in English. This is very significant since of the 80 respondents, 51 or 58 percent come from rural (barrio) churches.

Biblical and Theological Studies

Sixty percent of the respondents claim they read biblical/theological/devotional books and articles written by foreign authors either all the time or most of the time, and 34 percent read them once in a while. Only 3 percent said they never read these types of books.

A large majority (91 percent) of the respondents said they also read biblical/ theological/devotional books/articles written by foreign authors but translated in Tagalog or Ilongo. Frequency of these vary from all the time to once in a while. Only 7 percent said they never read these kinds of books.

Similarly, 94 percent said they read books written by Filipino authors all the time or once in a while. Only 6 percent never read these types of books.

Family Life

Thirty-four percent of the respondents think they are either very willing or mostly willing to come to the United States to live and work. Forty-seven percent are not very sure, and only 15 percent said that this is something they definitely would not do. The same response was obtained from the respondents to the

question as to whether they would like their children to live and work in the United States. These responses can be explained by the fact that Filipino families are very closely knit and are thus very resistant to being separated. This is confirmed by their answers to the question as to whether they desire to have themselves or their children educated in the United States. More (45 percent) said it is desirable to have themselves or their children educated in the U.S., a more temporary arrangement than permanently living away from their families in the United States.

Other Evidences of Colonial Mentality in the CPBC

Evidences of the presence of colonial mentality are readily available by simply listening and watching the membership at work. At the annual convention for instance, all business meetings were conducted in English, with "Robert's Rules of Order" being strictly observed by the persons leading the meeting. This, despite the fact that the majority of the delegates spoke very little English. On the other hand, all the delegates spoke the same Filipino dialect fluently. Furthermore, group decisions among Filipinos are ordinarily made by consensus.

Thus the manner of conducting the business meetings did not fit the context. This can be seen in the fact that many of those who were very vocal with their opinions in informal discussions regarding the matters discussed in the business meetings did not speak out during the official meeting. Asked why, some said they were intimidated by their lack of understanding about the rules of order, and were afraid of being put to shame by their ignorance. Others said they did not understand much of what was happening because the meeting was conducted in English.

Worship and devotional services were also conducted mainly in English, and the majority of the hymns were taken

from English hymnbooks and sung in English. Three out of a total of seven sermons preached were done primarily in English, another three preached with about an equal amount of English and Ilongo spoken, and only one was preached with Ilongo as the predominant language.

All of the five major lectures were delivered in English (I delivered one of the sermons and two of the lectures—all in English) with the open forums following conducted with a mixture of Ilongo and English. Small group discussions following the major presentations were done with Ilongo principally spoken. However, English words and sentences were sprinkled liberally during the discussions, especially when delegates were expressing biblical or theological ideas.

Those who responded to the survey were invited to an informal group interview on the third day of the convention. Thirty-two of the 88 respondents showed up for the interview. Some of the explanations they gave regarding their responses to the survey were quite revealing. It should be noted here that when and where possible, the respondents were encouraged to reach a consensus regarding their answers.

1. Worship Service

Asked why services were conducted either in English or with a mixture of English and Ilongo in the churches they attended, all of the respondents said they did not know why. The consensus was that it has always been done that way as long as they can remember, and they never bothered to ask why. One ventured that it was probably because “the (American) missionaries did it before,” which earned some nods.

The same answer was given regarding the use of English hymns and those translated from English. As to why some of them would like to hear more hymns or songs written in

English, the answers given were: only English hymnals were available anyway; the wording in translated (more accurately, transliterated) hymns sounded weird; the translations were inaccurate. The answer that garnered the most assent was that the hymns sounded better sung in English because the words fit the music well.

2. Leadership

As to why some of them thought it important for their leaders to be educated in a place like the United States, the consensus was that education in the U.S. was of a higher quality than anywhere else. There was also general agreement that there was a lot of prestige attached to a degree from the U.S., no matter what school it came from.

Fluency in English is important for pastors and leaders not only because it means being able to read and understand books and articles written in English, but also because it would allow the pastors to attend important seminars and conferences and actively participate in business meetings. Asked one respondent: "How can the pastor participate in or lead church business meetings if he/she does not know Robert's Rules (of Order) because he/she is not fluent in English?" All agreed that pastors/leaders seem more intelligent and thus, respectable when they can speak fluent English.

3. Biblical/Theological Studies

Preference for books/articles written in English by foreign (American or European) authors was mainly due to the dearth of religious/theological/devotional materials written by Filipinos either in English or Filipino. Asked to compare materials written by Filipinos in English and those written by foreigners

(American or European), the consensus was although those written by Filipinos were often more relevant, those written by foreigners were qualitatively better and thus preferable.

4. Family

Questions relating to the respondents' families received the most ambivalent answers. The unwillingness to see themselves or their children either studying or working or living in the United States was attributed to their reluctance to see their families broken up for any reason. Although most believed they or their children can get better education and avail of more opportunities for personal advancement and material prosperity, they also believed they were not worth leaving/breaking up their families for.

The responses to both the survey questionnaire and the informal group interview clearly shows the pervasive influence of colonial mentality amongst the constituency of the CPBC.

CHAPTER 6

WORLDVIEW CHANGE: FROM TRADITIONAL TO SYNTHETIC FILIPINO CULTURE

The nature, characteristics, and influence of colonial mentality cannot be truly understood and adequately dealt with apart from the concept of worldview. To a certain extent, it is similar to worldview in that it is also a way in which people view or look at the world. But unlike worldview, which is the systematized totality of the conceptions of a culture, it is smaller in scope in that it is only a component of that totality—a negative consciousness in the form of a people’s self-conceptualization relative to other cultures and peoples.

Filipino colonial mentality reflects the changes in the way the Filipino people think as a result of their colonial history. Such changes are clearly indications of the worldview changes subsequent to the clash of the western and Filipino cultures. A short excursus into the theories of worldview and worldview change will help in getting a better grasp of this mentality.

Worldview Theory

The following discussion of the phenomena of worldview and worldview change will follow along the lines of theory primarily as conceived by Kraft. The works of different scholars will be referred to, where necessary, in order to compare with, corroborate, or offer a contrast to, the work of Kraft.

The Worldview Concept

Spradley and McCurdy see in every culture a way of viewing the world or a perspective through which human experience is interpreted. This perspective or way of looking at the world is called a people's worldview. Specifically, "Worldview is the way people characteristically look out on the universe" . . . which consists of "the most general and comprehensive concepts and unstated assumptions about life" (1975:465).

Robert Redfield defines worldview as "the way people characteristically look outward upon the universe." In other words, it is the structure of the universe as the people of a culture see it or "know it to be." It is how people see themselves in relation to all things and all things in relation to themselves (1957:85-86). Thus,

Of all that is connoted by "culture," "world view" attends especially to the way a man, in a particular society, sees himself in relation to all else. It is the properties of existence as distinguished from and related to the self. It is, in short, a man's idea of the universe. It is that organization of ideas that answers to a man with the questions: "Where am I? Among what do I move? What are my relations to these things?" (Hesselgrave 1978:126)

Norman L. Geisler likens a worldview to colored eyeglasses through which a person looks out upon the world. As such, everything is hued or tinted by the particular "world view glasses" a person happens to be wearing. Furthermore, since people, from the time they are born, are used to one pair of glasses, they will not likely take off those glasses (even if able to)

in order to view the world through another pair of glasses (1978:241).

According to Paul Hiebert, the different assumptions that people have about reality make them perceive the world differently:

Taken together, the basic assumptions about reality which lie behind the beliefs and behavior of a culture are sometimes called a world view. Because these assumptions are taken for granted, they are generally unexamined and therefore largely implicit. But they are reinforced by the deepest of feelings, and anyone who challenges them becomes the object of vehement attack. People believe that the world really is the way they see it. Rarely are they aware of the fact that the way they see it is molded by their world view (1985:45).

Hiebert sees three different dimensions of culture: the cognitive, the affective and the evaluative. The cognitive has to do with the shared knowledge of the members of a group or society; the affective, with how people feel about their world; and the evaluative, with the values by which people judge human relationships to be either moral or immoral (1985:30-34).

Underlying each of these three dimensions are basic assumptions that constitute a people's worldview. Cognitive or existential assumptions "provide a culture with the fundamental cognitive structures people use to explain reality," defining what things are "real." Moreover, they "furnish people with their concepts of time, space, and other worlds" (1985:45), and performing such other tasks as shaping the "mental categories people use for thinking . . . determining the kinds of authority people trust and the types of logic they use." Together, "these

assumptions give order and meaning to life and reality” (1985:46).

“Affective assumptions underlie the notions of beauty, style, and aesthetics found in a culture” (1985:46). Lastly, evaluative assumptions “provide the standards people use to make judgments, including their criteria for determining truth and error, likes and dislikes, and right and wrong . . .” including their cultural priorities, “and thereby shape the desires and allegiances of the people” (1985:47). Hiebert concludes: “Taken together, the assumptions underlying a culture provide people with a more or less coherent way of looking at the world” (1985:48).

Kraft sees worldview as an individual’s or a group’s perception of reality. Situated at the core of a culture, it serves as lens through which a people perceives reality while at the same time, providing guidelines for the people’s behavior as a response to the perceived reality (1985:59).

To be more precise, Kraft defines worldview as “the culturally structured assumptions, values and commitments/allegiances underlying a people’s perception of reality and their responses to those perceptions” (1985:62).

To explain, Kraft breaks down his definition of worldview: Worldview is “culturally structured,” meaning that it is part of culture and as such is not independent of culture but rather, is organized/structured by culture “according to principles that are themselves based on worldview assumptions.” It also consists of assumptions in terms of which meanings are assigned and responded to—assumptions “underlie a people’s perception of reality and their responses to it” (1996:52).

Having defined worldview, Kraft proceeds to discuss its characteristics. “Worldview assumptions or premises are not reasoned out, but assumed to be true without prior proof” (1996:55). Deeply imbedded in the structure of culture, they are

simply accepted without question. Each new generation is so compellingly taught these assumptions that they seem absolute and unquestionable, and thus proceed to interpret their life experiences in terms of these assumptions.

Furthermore, “a people’s worldview provides them with a lens, model or map in terms of which Reality is perceived and interpreted” (Kraft 1996:56). Because this lens is the means through which people see the world, most of the people in any given society will understand and interpret things in essentially the same way.

But worldviews as systems of explanations are “seldom (if ever) challenged, unless some of its assumptions are challenged by experiences that the people cannot interpret from within that framework” (Kraft 1996:56). When such a challenge occurs especially in areas deemed very important, people are either forced to change their assumption or to reinterpret the experience in such a way that it is not allowed to challenge the assumption.

Kraft observes that another situation where people may question some portion of their worldview is when they become “aware of alternative explanations or assumptions that both seem to work and cannot be explained away.” Under such conditions, assumptions may be “altered, replaced or otherwise accommodated” (1996:57).

Because people take their worldview assumptions for granted, it seldom occurs to them that others may not share their assumptions. When people of different societies come into contact with each other, problems inevitably happen and of all the problems that result, Kraft says that “those arising from differences in worldview are the most difficult to deal with” (1996:57). Because of the different assumptions, people from different societies most likely would not understand each other and misinterpret each other’s actions.

Functions of Worldview

Hiebert outlines five important functions of worldview. First, it “provides us with cognitive foundations on which to build our systems of explanation, supplying rational justification for belief in these systems (1985:48). In short, our beliefs and explanations make sense because of the worldview assumptions that we hold and take for granted to be true. Second, it “gives us emotional security” in that we turn to our worldview in times of crisis for comfort and assurance, which it does by “buttressing our fundamental beliefs with emotional reinforcements so that they are not easily destroyed.” Third, it “validates our deepest cultural norms, which we use to evaluate our experiences and choose courses of action. . . . It also provides us with a map of reality and also serves as a map for guiding our lives.” Fourth, it “integrates our culture. It organizes our ideas, feelings, and values into a single overall design,” giving us a fairly integrated view of reality bolstered by deep feelings and convictions. Finally, it “monitors culture change.” Confronted with the new, it aids in choosing those that are suitable to our culture and reject those that are not. Worldview redefines and translates those adopted to make them fit the overall cultural pattern. As such, it is resistant to change, serving to stabilize cultures and preserve the *status quo*. However, worldviews do change, and such changes are at the heart of what we call conversion (1985:48-49).

Kraft focuses on the way people use their worldview assumptions, extrapolating from his observations the functions of worldview.

1. Assigning of Meaning

a. Interpreting

Kraft maintains that people are taught to interpret. However, "interpretation is done according to social convention. And social convention is quite predictable because it follows worldview guidelines. Indeed, people would find it impossible to communicate if it were not for this predictability." For Kraft, then, the assignment of meaning "is a matter of personal interpretation based on social agreements concerning how to interpret cultural forms." And these social agreements are, "for the most part, quite predictable since they are based on the worldview structuring of assumptions that they have been taught" (1995:68).

b. Evaluating

Evaluation comes with interpretation. People also evaluate as they interpret. For Kraft, the evaluating, or what he calls the "feeling" of the meaning is an extremely important part of the assignment of meaning. People attach meanings to things not only in terms of how they *see* (interpret) things but also how they "feel" (evaluate) about them. Whatever the evaluation, it becomes a part of the way they assign meaning. The evaluational part of meaning assignment will differ from culture to culture because the basic worldview assumptions are different.

Evaluational assumptions provide the bases for judgments concerning what is good and what is not good. Typical areas in which these assumptions are applied are esthetics (e.g., judgments as to what is visually or aurally pleasing), ethics (e.g., judgments as to what is moral and what immoral), economics (e.g.,

judgments as to what ought to be more or less expensive), human character (e.g., judgments concerning proper versus improper or admirable versus criticizable conduct and/or character traits), and the like (Kraft 1996:60).

It is typical of a people, assigning evaluational meaning, to sanction the basic institutions, values, and goals of their particular society. The people's agreement to sanction or validate their way of life "gives them the impression that their approach is right, and any other approach is at least inferior, maybe even wrong," (Kraft 1995:69) and thus results in monoculturalism.

2. Patterning of Response to Meaning

Another function of worldview is to pattern how people respond to the meanings they assign. Kraft outlines four patterns of response: explaining, pledging allegiance, relating and adapting. Let us take a brief look at each.

a. Patterns of explaining

A people's worldview provides assumptions that explain the way things are or supposed to be. Technically referred to as "cosmological" or "existential" postulates, these explanatory assumptions include,

basic assumptions concerning God (e.g., God exists, or God does not exist), concerning the universe (e.g., the universe is like a machine; the universe is like a person; the universe is predictable; the universe is capricious and unpredictable; the universe is controllable by humans; the universe is to be submitted to by

humans; the universe is centered around the world; the universe is centered around the sun), concerning the nature of human beings (e.g., human nature is sinless, sinful, or neutral), and the like. The various assumptions concerning disease also fit in here (1996:61).

It should be noted that whether or not these assumptions can be proven is not important. What matters is that people assume them to be true and look to them to explain why things are the way they are or should be. As such they are an important part of a people's worldview.

b. Patterns of pledging allegiance

Not everything people assume, believe, value, do or commit ourselves to are equally important and they therefore relate to them in different ways. The degree of intensity that we commit ourselves to certain of our beliefs, values and actions differ from our commitment to others. Kraft points out that a worldview "provides a map in terms of which people develop and prioritize allegiances. It thus enables people to sort out, arrange, and make differential commitments to the things we assume, value, and do" (1996:61).

c. Patterns of relating

"A worldview provides assumptions concerning how people are to relate to one another," both within their particular group and those outside. Based on worldview patterns, people are taught how to relate with individuals and groups within their society, defines who belongs to the "in-group" and the "out-group" and how to relate to those outside. "Even our

relationships with animals, plants and other parts of the material universe are patterned by worldview assumptions." This function of worldview is important because "when the relationships between the potentially competing groups within society is not well-managed," that society is in trouble (1996:61-62).

d. Patterns of adapting

We are not always able to handle everything that comes their way by following the guidelines of their worldview. So there are within a worldview assumptions concerning what to do when we perceive that things are not as we believe they ought to be (1996:62).

Kraft says that the most frequent initial approach when this happens is to attempt to handle it without altering our assumptions. Things are interpreted in such a way that it is either conformed to the worldview or dismissed as unreal.

On occasion, however, either because of personal and/or group openness or because of the persistence of an uncongenial perception that we find ourselves unable to deny we may choose to make a change in some aspect of our worldview. . . . Or, under these kinds of pressure, persons and groups may attempt to retain two sets of mutually contradictory assumptions and thus to live their lives with (a) kind of worldview "split personality . . ." (1996:62).

This is where values and allegiances come strongly into play. When the commitment to certain things that are in

question is strong, people may choose to resist and close their eyes to other evidences in order to protect their assumptions. Where the allegiance is weak, people may think that change would be good, and do so. However,

If the challenges are too great and/or for some other reason the worldview assumptions are unable to handle the pressures for change, a people can lose confidence in their worldview. When this happens, . . . there is breakdown at the worldview level commonly issuing in demoralization. Such demoralization is manifested in symptoms such as psychological, social, and moral breakdown and, unless it is checked and reversed, in cultural disintegration (1996:62).

Kraft's above explanation of the patterns of worldview adaptation is further developed in his elaboration of his theory on how worldviews change.

Worldview Change

Kraft points out that worldviews are never static but are always in a state of flux, that is, they are constantly changing. As such, no cultures remain the same: "there is no such thing as a society that is not constantly changing its culture" (1996:359). Yet Kraft is also quick to point out that parallel to worldview or culture change is "persistence." What Kraft means is that while "many things may be changed from generation to generation, many things remain pretty much the same." Furthermore, "most of the changes are quite small" so despite the changes, the relationship of the new custom that emerges to the older custom from whence it comes is easily seen. Also, cultures have some kind of personality in which new or altered customs are

integrated, allowing for “the same distinctiveness in cultural structuring” to remain the same over the generations (1996:360-361).

Persistence may be seen as *general* when “members of a society are more or less successful in their attempts to resist change in all areas of their culture.” It is “sectional” when change is accepted in some areas but rejected in others. It is token when “things that once were important in a culture are retained, but only in a token way (Kraft 1996:364-365).

Kraft alludes to the inevitability of culture change for the following reasons he provides: 1) imperfect learning – children do not perfectly learn what is taught by the older generation, resulting in a certain number of changes; 2) mistakes – some mistakes are seen as clever, and are imitated. The cultural change is not in the mistake but in the imitation that led to its acceptance as custom; 3) creativity – people often find ways to do things differently; 4) borrowing – something from another group is liked and adopted by another (1996:361). Kraft adds that changes also often happens when people choose a different allowed alternative, or less often when people choose a more radical alternative.

What is most interesting, insofar as this project is concerned, is Kraft’s discussion of the locus of change. According to Kraft, the locus of change is in the mind:

All change in culture is initiated in the minds of people who live in that culture. So we say with Barnett (1953) and Luzbetak (1963), that the “locus” of change or the place where change originates is in the mind. . . . culture . . . does not change; it is changed, and when it is changed, it is changed by the people who change their behavior, sometimes following, sometimes preceding a

change of mind. . . . All culture change is rooted in mind change (1996:366).

This ties in with the historical analysis in Chapter 3 regarding the emergence of Filipino colonial mentality as a result of the “remolding of the mind” where it was argued that education was a primary tool used to reshape the thinking, thus the values/worldview, of the Filipino. It was also pointed out in passing that a prominent feature of the colonial educational policy geared to achieve that purpose was the use of the English language as the medium of scholastic instruction.

An in-depth analysis of how the use of how language relates to thinking, and thinking, to worldview, is thus in order.

Language, Culture, and Worldview Change

The problem of the relationship between language and worldview is an area of study that has occupied many prominent scholars. One such thinker is Maurice Merleau-Ponty, a disciple of the phenomenologist, Edmund Husserl. His book, *Phenomenology of Perception*, considered to be his most important work, will serve as the point of reference in the discussion of language as it relates to thought, and, in effect, to a people’s world view. The proceeding discussion follows Leonardo Mercado’s incisive analysis of Merleau-Ponty’s thought (see Mercado 1974a:18-46).

Perception

Basic to Merleau-Ponty’s thought is his rejection of the subject/object dichotomy, seeing it as leading to either idealism or materialism. Instead, he argues for a non-dualistic, “incarnational” view of perception. In substance, he agrees with

Gabriel Marcel that the human being does not have a body, but the human being is a body (1962:174).

I am not in front of my body, I am in it, or rather, I am it. Neither its variations nor their constant can ... be expressly posited. We do not merely behold as spectators the relations between the parts of our body, and the correlations between the visual and the tactile body: we are ourselves the unifier of these arms and legs, the person who both sees and touches them (1962:150).

Merleau-Ponty sees the body and its expressions (signs) as one. The body is compared to a work of art, for instance, to a picture or a piece of music, where the idea cannot be communicated other than by the display of colors and sound. In the same manner, bodily emotions and its signs (gestures) coincide:

The spectator does not look within himself into his personal experience for the meaning of the gestures which he is witnessing. Faced with an angry or threatening gesture, I have no need, in order to understand it, to recall the feelings which I myself experience when I used these gestures . . . The gesture does not make me think of anger, it is anger itself. (1962:184)

Language and Thought

Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of the body and perception applies to language as well.

Just as a man's body and 'soul' are but two aspects of his way of being in the world, so the word and the thought it indicates should not be considered two externally related terms: the word bears its

meaning in the same way that the body incarnates a manner of behavior (1964a:53).

Merleau-Ponty uses music as an example to illustrate the thought-language relationship. To the idealist, music is just a sign of the symbolism or idea that precedes it. Thus the pictures and symbols in Beethoven's "Pastoral Symphony" precede the music itself. The empiricist would dissect the symphony into notes and perhaps give a mathematical formula for the symbolisms. But for Merleau-Ponty,

The musical meaning of a sonata is inseparable from the sounds which are its vehicle: before we have heard it no analysis enables us to anticipate it; once the performance is over, we shall, in our intellectual analyses of the music, be unable to do anything but carry ourselves back to the moment of experiencing it (1962:182-183).

In essence, the idealist considers thought as prior to language which is just the envelope (sign) covering the letter inside (thought). The empiricist ideal reduces language to strict mathematical symbols. Merleau-Ponty sees language as "equally uncommunicative of anything other than itself, that its meaning is inseparable from it" (1962:188).

Just as bodily gestures as natural signs vary from culture to culture, so do languages.

Language can be treated as . . . capable of so many divergent expressions (*recoupments*) that the internal structure of an utterance can ultimately agree only with the mental situation to which it responds and of which it becomes an unequivocal sign. The meaning of language, like that of gestures, thus does not lie in the elements

composing it. The meaning is their common intention, and the spoken phrase is understood only if the hearer, following the 'verbal chain', goes beyond each of its links in the direction that they all designate together (Merleau-Ponty 1964b:8).

Language, then, is conventional just as gestures are in a given culture. "Language does not presuppose its table of correspondence; it unveils it as secrets itself. It teaches them to every child who comes into the world" (Merleau-Ponty 1964c:43).

What then is the relationship between language and thought? Situating the relationship between language and thought in his phenomenology of perception, Merleau-Ponty argues that language and thought are identical:

If speech presupposed thought . . . we could not understand why thought tends towards expression as towards its completion, why the most familiar things appear indeterminate as long as we have not recalled its name, why the thinking subject himself is in a kind of ignorance of his thoughts so long as he has not formulated them for himself, or even spoken and written them (1962:177).

As an example of the identity of language and thought, Merleau-Ponty points out that when confronted by a mysterious object in the dark, to give it a name is to recognize it. His contention is supported by Piaget's studies of infants: children do not know a thing until it is named. In short, to Merleau-Ponty, thought independent of language is as ridiculous as

music without sound. The same is true of the relationship between thought and society.

Language and Society

Merleau-Ponty describes the relationship between language and society as somewhat analogous to the relationship between what he calls *parole parlante* (the speaking word) and *parole parlee* (the spoken word). *Parole parlante* is

the one in which the significant intention is at the stage of coming into being. Here existence is polarized into a certain 'significance' [*sens*] which cannot be defined in terms of any natural object. It is somewhere at a point beyond that aims to catch up with itself again, and that is why it creates speech as an empirical support for its own not-being (1962:197).

Parole parlee or solidified thought, means the speaker's society or cultural group. Analogous to society, it represents the thoughts, values, philosophies, and culture of the speaking group. The child born in this society is unconsciously formed by the language he learns: "every language conveys its own teaching and carries its meaning to the listener's mind" (1962:179).

Merleau-Ponty describes how this process of formation affects the child's assimilation in his particular society.

In sum, the intellectual elaboration of our experience of the world is constantly supported by the affective elaboration of our inter-human relations. The use of certain linguistic tools is mastered in the play of forces that constitute the subject's relations to his human surroundings. The

linguistic usage achieved by the child depends strictly on the “position” (in psychoanalytic terms) that is taken by the child at every moment in the play of forces in his family and his human environment (1964b:112-113).

Thus one’s language is decisive. It is always the speaker’s measure of looking at things. This is apparent in learning a second language. No matter how fluent one becomes in the second language, one tends to understand that second language from the point of view of one’s primary language. Moreover, one language cannot be perfectly translated into another because it views things from a particular viewpoint:

the full meaning of a language is never translatable into another. We may speak several languages, but one of them always remains the one in which we live. In order to completely assimilate a language, it would be necessary to make the world which it expresses one’s own, and one never does belong to two worlds at once (Merleau-Ponty 1962:187).

The prerequisite for understanding another worldview, another culture, another people, therefore, is to learn their language.

Because of the identical relationship between language and thought, Merleau-Ponty argues that a perception, as encoded by a particular society, and its language categories unconsciously determine the speaker’s world view:

That general spirit which we all constitute by living our life in common, that intention already deposited in the given system of the language, preconscious because the speaking subject

espouses it before he becomes aware of it and elevates it to the level of knowledge . . . is indeed the equivalent of the psychologist's 'form,' equally alien to the objective existence of a natural process as to the mental existence of an idea (1964a:88).

Or, as he put it even clearer in another passage,

The consequences of speech, like those of perception, always exceed its premises. Even we who speak do not necessarily know better than those who listen to us what we are expressing. I say that I know an idea when the power to organize discourses which make coherent sense around it has been established in me; and this power itself [depends] on my having acquired a certain style of thinking . . . It is just this "coherent deformation" (Malraux) of available significations which arranges them in a new sense and takes not only the hearers *but the speaking subject as well* through a decisive step (1964c:91).

To summarize Merleau-Ponty's view: perception, which is "incarnational," is relative, and is encoded in language which, in turn, is also relative. Linguistic relativism and cultural relativism both exist and coincide in a given society. They in turn shape the thought patterns of persons brought up in that society. Thus a person's worldview is, to a great extent, determined by the linguistic categories of his/her culture or society (*parole parlee*).

Other Thinkers

Merleau-Ponty is not alone in his views regarding the relationship between language and thought (worldview). The following is a sampling of thinkers from various disciplines who express similar views. While a quotation or two cannot justify

nor fully represent the views of these scholars, they are given here to simply point to the direction of their thinking.

Long before Merleau-Ponty, Wilhelm Von Humboldt (1767-1835) taught that grammar is the unconscious of language (1963:237-238). Languages are unique, according to him, because what they encode are often perfectly untranslatable and because each language has a certain worldview (1963:245-251, 293-294).

Since languages or at least their elements . . . are transmitted from one epoch to the next . . . the relationship between the past and present leaves the deepest marks here. But the difference to a language by reason of its placement among other more familiar ones, is an infinitely strong one, . . . because language is also a way of looking at a nation's total thinking and feeling processes, and these, coming to a people from remote times, cannot operate without also being influential to the language (1963:271).

While I would not classify Martin Heidegger as a linguistic relativist, the latter Heidegger seems to arrive at a view similar to those mentioned above.

Only where there is language, is there a world. . . .
Only where world predominates, is there history.
Language is a possession in a more fundamental sense. It is good for the fact that (i.e., it affords guarantee that) man can exist historically.
Language is not a tool at his disposal, rather it is that even which disposes of the supreme possibility of human existence (1956:300).

Closer to home, Jose Rizal (1861-1896), the foremost patriot and national hero of the Philippines, expressed similar thought.

Considered a many sided genius and a master of several Western languages, he points out that the native language, which represents the people's identity is also its way of thinking. His novel, *El Filibusterismo* (The Subversive), was written during the height of the Propaganda Movement that led to the Philippine Revolution against the Spaniards. In the following quotation, the novel's main character argues against those who want to make Spanish the national language in the Philippines:

Spanish will never be the national language because the people will never speak it. That tongue cannot express their ideas and their emotions. Each people has its own way of speaking just as it has its own way of feeling. What will you do with Spanish, the few of you who will get to speak it? You will only kill your individual personality and subject your thoughts to other minds. Instead of making yourselves free, you will only make yourselves truly slaves. . . . While Russia compels the Poles to study Russian in order to enslave them, while Germany prohibits the use of French in the provinces she has conquered from France . . . you, on the other hand, . . . struggle to get rid of your national identity. . . . you forget that as long as a people keeps its own language, it keeps a pledge of liberty, just as a man is free as long as he can think for himself. Language is a people's way of thinking (1962:50).

More recently, Marshall McLuhan's thesis ("the medium is the message") that communication is an extension of human

beings and cannot be explained in terms of the sign, signification and the signified argues along the same lines.¹

The impetus for linguistic relativism in anthropological circles was provided by Edward Sapir. According to Sapir, Human beings do not live in the objective world alone, nor alone in the world of social activity as ordinarily understood, but are very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society. . . . The fact of the matter is that the real world is to a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group. No two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality. The worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not simply the same world with different labels attached (1929:209-214).

Sapir's disciple, Benjamin Whorf, claimed that a person's native language shapes his world view.

We dissect nature along lines laid down by our languages: . . . the world is presented in a kaleidoscopic flux of impressions which has to be organized by our minds - and this means largely by the linguistic systems in our minds. We cut nature up, organize into concepts, and ascribe significances as we do, largely because we are parties to an agreement to organize it in this way - an agreement that holds throughout our speech community and is codified in the patterns of our language. The agreement is, of course, an implicit

¹For more on McLuhan's thesis, see his work entitled *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (1964).

and unstated one, *but its terms are absolutely obligatory*; we cannot talk at all except by subscribing to the organization and classification of data which the agreement decrees (1956:213-214).

All the above points of view on the relationship of language to worldview and culture can be summarized thus: Perception is relative, and derives from a particular society or culture. Individuals are shaped by their social or cultural values. The values and perceptions (worldview) of the society or culture are encoded in its language. We have called this linguistic relativism. Language and thought are inseparable. A particular language encodes a particular aspect of reality which in turn motivates and influences the worldview of the native speaker.

It should be noted here that linguistic relativism is not without its own detractors. Many of the criticisms hurled against it have focused mainly on the so-called Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, which, critics point out, claims that human beings are virtual prisoners of language. Language is seen as a tyrant, and its tyranny “goes beyond mere influence on the way people relate to their experiences; it forces them to perceive the world in terms that are built into the language they speak” (Howard 1989:79). As such, it can be said that language “determines” a people’s way of looking at the world, that is, a people’s worldview.

The trouble with the hypothesis is that it presents us with a problem somewhat similar to that of the chicken and the egg, and Whorf’s later formulations about which came first, thinking and behavior or language, have been, to my judgment, justly criticized as both logically unsound and not amenable to any experimentation or proof.

The opposite point of view is that language is merely a reflection of reality. In this view, language mirrors cultural

reality, and as cultural reality changes, so too will language. I will not go into the discussion of this opposite view since much of what it says can be generally deduced by reversing the roles of language and culture as presented by linguistic relativism. Such view is just as suspect, and therefore, subject to the same criticisms that have been hurled against linguistic relativism.

The insights derived from the discussion of linguistic relativism are important for this project. One such insight is that language and worldview (and thus, culture) do influence¹ each other in many ways, both obvious and subtle. What Merleau-Ponty, Sapir, Whorf, and other linguistic relativists have successfully done is to show that language, worldview and culture always go hand in hand and are inseparable from each other. Or, as Hiebert puts it, “culture would be impossible without language” (1976:121).

Thus, while the determinism of linguistic relativism is highly suspect, its insights as to the relationships between language, thought, worldview and culture provide us with important clues as to how the imposition of the English language, as the medium of instruction in Philippine colonial education, contributed to the shaping of the colonial mind.

Basic to our discussion is the premise that Filipinos think differently from Americans. The differences in the way they think are, to a considerable extent, reflective of the differences in their world view, which in turn, are reflective of their cultural differences. If linguistic relativism is right in its assertion that language and world view not only reflect but also affect and influence each other, then it would be equally true that the imposition of a foreign language upon a people would be tantamount to the imposition of a foreign worldview, and, in

¹The term “influence” is here used in contradistinction to the term “determine” which linguistic relativism implies. To be sure, language and thought mutually influence each other, but neither can be said to exclusively determine the other.

effect, of a foreign culture, upon them. Such cultural imposition is what I would call “cultural imperialism.”

Implicit to the problem of cultural imperialism is the problem of the universal *vis-a-vis* the particular. Merleau-Ponty’s arguments present a cogent contemporary presentation of the old scholastic principle: “*quidquid recipatur secundum modum recipientes recipatur,*” which freely translated means, “whatever is perceived is perceived according to the measure or standard (*modum*)¹ of the perceiver.” As such, linguistic relativism poses a challenge to the concept of universals.

This is not to say that there are no universals, but to simply point out the dangers of cultural imperialism that often results from the ascendant ethnocentrism of a particular dominant culture or people. The danger of universals can be seen in the way that colonial powers, such as those that have ruled the Philippines, have imposed their own ideologies on the people.² Such imposition is a logical result of the colonial power’s ascendant ethnocentrism expressed in a perception of superiority that usually finds its beginnings in military power, but which, over a period of time, finds articulation as a perception of intellectual and cultural superiority. The rationale for such imposition, in the case of American colonialism, is that what is good for America must be good for the rest of the world; a rationale that found a theological expression in the concept of the American “Manifest Destiny.”

The Filipino colonial experience seems to prove the contentions of Merleau-Ponty and the other linguistic relativists as to the inherent relationships between language and worldview correct, in that language does indeed influence, if not shape, the worldview. If indeed, as they contend, the values and perceptions of a society is encoded in its language, then to learn

¹The Latin term could also mean “nature” which makes the case for Merleau-Ponty even stronger.

²For more on this, see Amado Guerrero, *Philippine Society and Revolution* (1971).

a new language is to learn the values and perceptions, that is to say, the worldview, encoded in that particular language. It follows that the imposition of the English language on Filipinos has to be seen as tantamount to the imposition of the Western (American) worldview on the people.

If, as further contended, it is true that language and thought are inseparable, then for the Filipino to speak in English is to think in English, to think no longer as Filipinos but to think as Americans, to perceive, interpret and evaluate the world not through the cultural grid of the Filipino but of the American. And, since a particular language encodes a particular aspect of reality, then to speak in English is to adapt that aspect of reality as part of one's own. Given a people whose minds have been conditioned to evaluate the American culture as superior to its own, where perceptions of reality clash (e.g., Filipino versus American), the reality encoded by the language of the perceived superior culture, in this case, English, tends to dominate.

To be sure, Filipinos were not simply passive recipients of American culture. This is where linguistic relativism falls short in its analysis of the relationship between language and culture. Whatever was received from Western culture has, to a certain extent, been reinterpreted, restructured and modified by Filipinos in the process of accepting it as their own that it is no longer completely foreign. Even English itself, as spoken by Filipinos, has undergone considerable modifications. Andrew Gonzalez reports that English is "rapidly developing a standardized local variety, a type of Philippine English" (1980:149), a "Filipino English" as Llamzon calls it (1969).

However, the fact that English itself has been modified in the process of reception and use by Filipinos does not invalidate the contention of linguistic positivism that language influences and motivates the outlook and behavior of people. In the Filipino experience, the influence ran so deep that one can argue

that the English language did, in fact, significantly shape and change the Filipino worldview.

English . . . became the medium of instruction at all levels of educational centers. As a result, Filipinos today compose their speeches and literature in English, formulate their concepts and theories in the colonial language. Thus, many of us regard the vernacular as the language of the illiterate and the ignorant, and greatly appreciate those who fluently speak the colonial tongue. Unconsciously we tend to look down at those who cannot construct their English sentences correctly and admire those who can parrot the American tongue with spontaneity and sophistication. We are easily fascinated by anything Western and regard even our own products and creative works as of secondary quality. This has lent heavily to the extreme success of the multinational corporations and other Western capitalist enterprises in the country. For we did not only welcome them with open arms, we have learned to shape our needs and wants according to what they produced for us. Thus also our captivity to the capitalist culture and ideology has drastically narrowed down our political perspective. Indeed, our people today feel somehow less secure without some attachment to the American system (Suarez 1986:48).

And this influence continues in force. Gonzalez predicts that by the end of the century, English will continue to be used by 78.7 percent of the population, "largely in urban areas and the educated elites of Philippine society" (1977:40).

The imposition of the English language as the instructional medium in schools made the task of reshaping the mind, and in effect, the worldview, of the Filipinos much easier. It can be said, then, that the historical reality of the Filipino colonial mentality proves Kraft's contention that the mind is indeed the locus of worldview change.

Patterns of Change in the Filipino Worldview

With the concepts of worldview and worldview change in mind, the process of change in the Filipino worldview and its results can now be looked at. Here, Kraft's model of the patterns of worldview change will be utilized in the analysis.

Kraft borrows a model suggested by Anthony Wallace to illustrate the process of worldview transformation. The model consists of three idealized conditions:

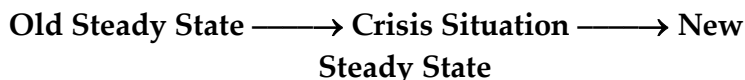


FIGURE 1
WORLDVIEW TRANSFORMATION PROCESS
(Kraft 1966:435)

Old Steady State denotes the idealized equilibrium where society operates “in a healthy manner, with these (worldview) functions carried out well and the entire society pervaded with equilibrium and cohesiveness” (Kraft 1996:435).

Applied to Filipino society, it represents pre-colonial Filipino culture, a steady state where, due to geographic isolation and the additional segregation of tribal villages from each other, and the slower pace of life, changes would have been relatively slow.

The next stage involves “the introduction of some radical challenge to a people’s steady state,” causing a *Crisis Situation*. This represents the Philippine colonial period where the people were successively introduced to new, aggressive cultures. Here, customs and worldview values imposed upon the people caused “an increasing number of traditional valuations and allegiances” being called into question (Kraft 1996:435).

The “survival of the society living within the formulation of a new steady state” (1996:435) represents the ideal resolution. This new steady state, which represents the third stage in the process of worldview transformation, takes a long time to achieve, or may not be achieved at all, but Kraft sees it as the goal that every society seeks to reach.

PATTERNS OF WORLDVIEW CHANGE

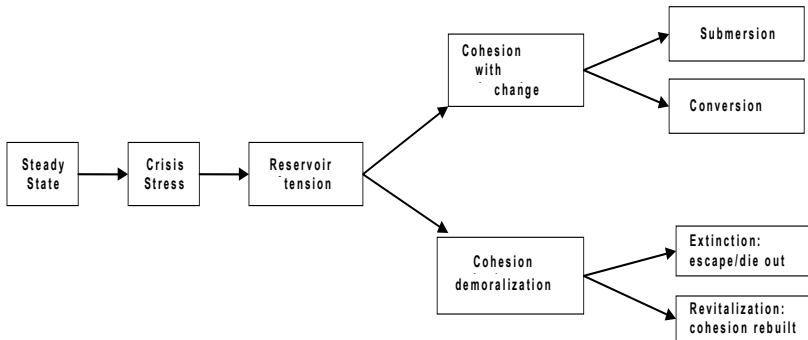


FIGURE 2
THE PROCESS AND RESULTS OF WORLDVIEW CHANGE
 (Kraft 1996:437)

In the diagram above, Kraft suggests four different possible outcomes of the process. The first two result from a situation where ethnic cohesion is preserved. The last two come out of what Kraft describes as demoralization, a condition where the ethnic cohesion has been broken (1996:437-438).

1. Submersion

In submersion, the traditional worldview configurations are sustained by pushing them beneath the cultural surface and covering them with the veneer of the new.

When traditional worldviews are threatened with sweeping external changes, their only hope for survival may be to submerge, to hide “behind” the changes, to adopt the external form of the change while maintaining essentially the same worldview within (1996:437).

Kraft points out that submersion is frequently a reaction to colonialism as a defense and coping mechanism on a cultural scale. As a survivalist reaction, it often leads to syncretism of worldview characteristics.

2. Conversion

Conversion . . . is the approach of those who convert to a new worldview allegiance, keeping the rest of the social structure pretty much intact. . . . It is . . . typical of “people movements” into Christianity When such a movement happens, far from westernizing to become Christian, people bring their social structures with them (1996:438).

While pressure of any kind on a people's worldview may result in culture conversion, such pressure for change is usually from the outside, "typically in the form of a message that represents a radically new perception of the universe, . . . challenging traditional perceptions and precipitating the formation of new perceptual paradigms." Touching the very core of culture itself, it results in radical change at worldview level. Such conversions are significant in that they affect the people's worldview, but they are, nevertheless, only "partial conversions in terms of the extent of the assumptions that are changed (Kraft 1996:438).

The breakdown of ethnic cohesion as a result of pressures exerted on the worldview results in "demoralization," where "neither traditional nor novel adaptations to life and answers to problems and challenges are perceived as effective." Such situation can result in either extinction or revitalization.

3. Extinction

When a demoralized society does not regain its cohesion, extinction occurs. Kraft points to a number of paths that can lead from demoralization to total extinction of a culture.

People may try to *escape* their society to align themselves with another society altogether . . . A society may also become extinct because people are no longer willing to reproduce. When a group has abandoned the search for security and cohesion altogether and is overtaken by hopelessness, procreation may be halted entirely (Kraft 1996:438).

4. Revitalization

Not all cases of demoralization develop into extinction: When there is a conscious effort to rebuild a workable sense of cohesion, revitalization can occur. . . . Revitalization . . . results from the attitude of the people, not merely from the external pressures. . . . If the members of the society recognize the inadequacy of their system to deal with the crisis at hand, and if they possess a will to survive, the stage is set for revitalization (Kraft 1996:439).

Such will to survive moves the people to refuse to allow themselves and their way of life to disintegrate. It drives them to take steps to restructure and reorganize, to “search for something new around which to reformulate their way . . . and deliberately seek to rebuild a more satisfying cultural system.” This enables them to discover “a new paradigm, a new worldview allegiance, around which to reorganize themselves and their culture” (Kraft 1996:439).

How do these outcomes help to explain the worldview changes in Filipino society that transformed it into what it is now?

Outcomes of Filipino Worldview Change

As I have mentioned above, the “Old Steady State” is represented by the pre-colonial Filipino society. The radical challenge that resulted in a “Crisis Situation” is represented by the intrusive Spanish and American cultures of the colonial period. The pattern of change that ensued will be examined in

two areas: the Filipino worldview in general, and the religious subsystem in particular.

It has been pointed out that both the Spanish and American colonial powers sought to control Filipino society as a whole, and, as a rationalization to salve their conscience for their imperialistic designs, to convert the people from “heathenism” into the Christian faith. Furthermore, as noted in the discussion of the “Unholy Trinity,” the effort to establish social, economic and political hegemony by the colonial governments went hand in hand with the endeavors of the religious to convert people to Christianity. Since both cannot be separated from each other, they will be treated together here.

Backed by the threat of military force, control was easily established by the Spanish regime through the policy of *reduccion* or the coercive resettlement of the tribes into larger communities controlled by the friars. These friars circumscribed the limits of the thinking and behavior of the natives in the communities they controlled, forcing them into unquestioning obedience.

Submersion: Filipino Worldview Goes Underground

With every aspect of the people’s lives under the control of the friars, and with the new cultural values forced upon them by the same, the traditional worldview went into submersion. With the pliancy of the bamboo characteristic of Filipino culture, the people seemingly surrendered control over their lives to the Spanish, readily taking on the cultural veneer the unquestioning, obedient colonial subject, most willing to behave according to the wishes of their masters. Covertly, in the inner sanctums of their homes and families, their behavior betrayed what remained in the inmost recesses of their hearts, a continuing allegiance to the traditional ways.

Thus behind the façade of change to accommodate the demands of survival, traditional worldview considerations remained intact. Bulatao's observation about the "split-level" characteristic of Filipino Christianity, defined as the "coexistence within the same person of two or more thought-and-behavior systems which are inconsistent with each other" may be said of Filipino culture as well. In a remarkable coincidence of definition, Kraft calls this same phenomenon a "worldview schizophrenia" where "persons or groups may attempt to retain two sets of mutually contradictory values" (1995:73) and thus live their lives according to those antithetical standards.

This submersion is even more apparent in the religious life of the Filipino. The early Spanish missionaries came to the islands with the intent of converting the animistic natives to Christianity. A central feature of their evangelistic strategy was to literally stamp out all traces of the pagan religion, burning the *anitos* (idols) and places of worship, and threatening Filipino souls with hell-fire and brimstone (for more on this, see the section on the Filipino traditional religion in Chapter 2). Coupled with the policy of *reduccion* mentioned earlier, the new faith was forcefully imposed upon the people.

Faced with a powerful and angry alien God whose power their own idols could not withstand, Filipinos reacted with fear and bewilderment. Demoralization was evidenced by the people trying to escape to the mountains to avoid this angry God and his fanatically aggressive agents. Those who could not escape resigned themselves to surrendering their cherished beliefs to this frightful God, threatening the very existence of the traditional religion.

Difficulties encountered by the missionaries in producing genuine conversions led to changes in the attitude of the Church toward the indigenous religion from total rejection to open acceptance. Conversion strategies also changed from destruction

to accommodation and adaptation, allowing for a revitalization. The native belief system survived, remaining relatively unaltered, and the threatened extinction turned instead into submersion. Accommodation and adaptation on both sides produced the syncretistic popular religion that to this day characterizes Filipino Folk Catholicism. This verifies Kraft's perception that submersion, which is a common reaction to colonialism as a coping mechanism on a cultural scale, usually results in syncretism (1996:437).

Demoralization: Colonial Mentality Emerges

The submersion of the Filipino worldview in general as a reaction to the aggressively intrusive Spanish culture gradually developed attitudes that allowed itself, in the words of Kraft, "to enter into demoralized reasoning that undermines the last vestiges of security" (1996:438). The three centuries of Spanish exploitative domination produced and ignorant and subservient people who saw themselves as culturally and intellectually deficient in comparison to their oppressors. Their experiences in life as colonial subjects taught them that they cannot take pride in themselves as a people.

Kraft's following description of the attitude of a people undergoing demoralization proves accurate:

The people's attitude may be, "We are lost. Everything we do is wrong. Whatever is good anymore comes from somewhere else. Our god no longer protects us; he must have died. We are weaklings and fools. What is there now to live for?" Psychological attitudes such as these quickly ramify through an entire society, calling into question its will to persevere (1996:438).

This time, flight was not to the mountains, as in the case of the religious demoralization described above. Escape was now in terms of denying the validity of Filipino culture and aligning with the dominating Spanish culture—to try to look, act, think, speak, and live like the Spanish. Thus, cultural demoralization produced colonial mentality.

Revitalization and Revolution

Education came to be considered the easiest means to close the gap between themselves and their “betters.” Once a privilege accorded only to Spaniards, it became available to the newly emerged *petit bourgeois*. This new brand of native and Chinese *mestizo* elite, called the *ilustrados*, were able to send their children to institutions of higher learning in Manila and even in Spain. Exposed to liberal ideas in Europe, they began to demand reforms and started the “Philippine Propaganda Movement” that eventually resulted in the Philippine Revolution against Spain.

It should be noted though that at the outset, the demand for reforms were in fact a confirmation of their colonial mentality. Constantino observes:

Since most of its leaders belonged to the generally wealthy *clase ilustrada*, their primary aim was to secure for their class participation in political rule and a greater share in economic benefits. Since their own social acceptability was premised on their Hispanization, it was to be expected that their cultural demand would be for Filipinos to be accorded the right to Spanish culture (1975:156).

The demanded reforms did not come and the movement lost what little support it had from the Filipino masses. Some of the

factors that led to its demise were the elitist character of its demands that excluded the broad masses of the people. Another was its use of the Spanish language in its propaganda material, limiting their usefulness to the educated sector, mainly composed of *ilustrados* themselves. Also, the movement was situated mainly in Spain, giving it even more limited Filipino circulation.

However, the propaganda material did reach the local *ilustrados* who in many instances came to lead the revolutionary forces in their provinces. In the hands of the local *ilustrados*, demands for reform turned into cries for freedom, a clarion call that reverberated throughout the islands. The demoralization apparent in the colonial mentality expressed by the people's desire to become like their oppressors was now replaced by a movement towards revitalization expressed in the people's desire to get rid of their oppressors and stand on their own. A new paradigm was discovered, "a new worldview allegiance, around which to reorganize themselves and their culture" (Kraft 1996:439) emerged. This new paradigm came in the form of nationalism, which also served as the rallying point of the revolutionary movement.

Revitalization Thwarted

But before the revitalization had any chance to succeed, a new invader entered the scene, pushing back whatever advances in nationalism and ethnic pride have been made. The victory of Admiral Dewey at the "Battle of Manila Bay" ushered in a new colonial power just as the Filipino Revolutionary Army was on the verge of overpowering the last Spanish military stronghold in Manila. Thus, without a new "Steady State" having been established, a new "Crisis Situation" appeared, adding more fuel

to the “Reservoir of Tension” that had already exploded into the Philippine Revolutionary War against Spain.

As in Spanish colonialism, the American colonialists sought to establish its hegemony in the country by controlling the population, who, after more than three hundred years of oppression had at last tasted freedom and experienced the pride of self-determination, were reluctant to give them up. The use of military force to establish control was violently opposed by the Filipinos, and a war, which lasted several years and was eventually won by the United States, erupted.

Having won the initial battle, and having thus established military control of the islands, the battle to control the people’s mind was joined. Education was the primary tool used for this purpose. The success of education not only hastened the campaign for the pacification of the people—it also remolded the Filipino mind to conform to the purposes of the colonial power.

Here, the process of worldview transformation was a little more complicated. Starting with a worldview that was fully immersed in the process of revitalization, the intrusion of a new ascendant culture resulted in a variety of outcomes happening simultaneously.

Mixed Outcomes

Submersion as a survivalist cultural response to colonial crisis was undeniably present. Confronted with the invasive culture of the new colonial master, Filipino worldview was once again forced underground. A new western veneer, this time American in flavor, was put on. The traditional worldview configurations, with the accretions from Spanish culture, remained intact and in force. Karnow’s observation that Filipino “values and traditions, though frequently concealed under an

American veneer, were their own—and often antithetical to the American model” (1989:xi) is accurate.

While, at the surface level of culture, the modern Filipino seems thoroughly westernized, a cultural persistence at worldview level is evident. Kraft would label this persistence “sectional,” similar to that found in Japanese society which, while it “seems to have opened up much of its way of life to western influences, . . . it has, to date, done a good job of maintaining its tightly structured social system . . . and a good bit of traditionalism in religion” (1996:365).

Submersion is also apparent in the Protestantism brought in by the American missionaries. Unlike what occurred in the Roman Catholic missionary endeavors, the initial stance of rejection by Protestant missionaries of the indigenous religions (and of syncretistic Folk Catholicism, which they also considered pagan) never changed and was passed on to the Filipino Protestant churches. The problem of syncretism was thus avoided, but in its place came what Hiebert calls “the flaw of the excluded middle.”

The animistic (and to those converted from Folk Catholicism, syncretistic) beliefs and practices that were rejected or ignored by the Protestant churches did not easily go away but instead went “underground.” Remaining in submersion most of the time, these beliefs and practices would on occasionally surface especially in crisis situations (such as sickness and calamities) where questions relating to the above-mentioned “excluded middle” arise and where, understandably, the western oriented explanations of the Protestant faith did not suffice.

Conversion was indubitably existent also. The hunger for knowledge, which in the Filipino colonial mind of the Spanish era was motivated by the desire to close the gap between themselves and their erstwhile masters, remained

among the Filipinos. The encounter with American culture added another attractive incentive—that of materialism. If, during the Spanish era, life experiences taught them that to live respectable lives they should become like their oppressors, colonial education under the Americans opened to them vistas of “the good life” characterized by material wealth. And so for the desire to attain the good life, Filipinos sold their souls to their new oppressors, believing, or perhaps more accurately, deluding themselves into thinking that indeed, the American colonial designs were just as the Americans claimed them to be—benevolent, therefore, altruistic. Colonial education was key to all these.

Education made converts of the initially hostile and skeptical Filipinos. It made them believe in the preeminence of American culture. It gave credence to the legitimacy of the American Manifest Destiny. It convinced them of the magnificence of the American democratic ideals, making them forget that the conditions they were being subjected to were far from democratic. Education sold them to the superiority of American values, and persuaded them of the desirability of the American way of life. The colonial mentality which first appeared in the form of the desire to look, act and live like their oppressors during the Spanish colonial era, once again reared its ugly head, transforming Filipinos into “little brown Americans.” This time though, it came as a result of conversion, not of demoralization as in its previous appearance.

A strong case for the presence of demoralization can nevertheless be made when one considers that the underside of conversion is rejection. Conversion does not only mean conversion *to* but also *from*. In discussing the different paths that can lead from demoralization to cultural extinction, Kraft suggests that one such path is where people “may try to escape their society to align themselves with another society altogether”

(1996:438). Thus the Filipino colonial mentality expressed in the longing for the American way of life can easily be understood to also mean a desire to escape their own way of life.

Indeed, the Filipino embrace of American values and allegiances suggests the necessary abandonment of corresponding values and allegiances in their own culture. In the case of religious beliefs for instance, conversion to Christianity often means the acceptance of the western assumption of a two-tiered universe, which translates further into the acceptance of the two-kingdoms theology of western Christianity. The consequence of this is the rejection of the “supernatural but this worldly beings and forces” (Hiebert 1982:43) that occupy the middle zone.

Hiebert’s criticism is directed to western Christianity’s failure to recognize the reality and importance of this middle zone in the lives of people in the many societies that the western Christian missionary enterprise has brought into its sphere of influence. Hiebert’s point is that such a middle zone exists as an integral part of the worldview of those societies, to a large extent determining the manner in which people in those societies relate to their world. The consequence is the perception that conversion to Christianity necessitates the repudiation of the worldview assumptions associated with this middle zone, and the abandonment of all practices related to it.

Worldview Schizophrenia

Protestant missionaries in the Philippines did, in fact, encourage the renunciation of such beliefs and practices, seeing them as merely pagan superstitions without any connection to reality. And the converts, on their part, seemed to have indeed cast them aside.

The reality however, is that Filipino converts have never truly abandoned them. Animistic values lurk beneath the façade of evangelical beliefs, ready to surface as the need arises or as soon the missionaries or pastors turn their backs. This brings to mind Bulatao's contention of a split-level Filipino Christianity where two or more inconsistent thought and behavior systems coexist, and Karnow's perception of Filipino society as having an American façade but a contrary Filipino worldview operating underneath.

How does one explain the coexistence of such contradictions within Filipino society?

As mentioned earlier, Kraft has pointed out that the locus of worldview change is in the mind. The use of education to control and reshape the Filipino mind in order to conform to American colonial designs in the Philippines was a stroke of genius on the part of the colonizers. The emergence of the Filipino colonial mentality points to the success of their endeavor remold the Filipino mind.

And that is where the changes did happen, and stopped—mainly in the mind. Filipino *mentality*, as the term suggests, is a matter of the mind. Granted that the mind is the locus of worldview change, the changes in the Filipino worldview have, nevertheless, been on the main, superficial. According to Karnow,

While the United States left a more durable imprint in the Philippines than the Europeans did on their colonies, the impact was only superficial. Nevertheless, both Americans and Filipinos have diligently clung to the illusion that they share a common public philosophy - when in reality, their values are dramatically dissimilar (1989:19).

Thus at the conscious level where thought and action meet, Filipino is decidedly westernized. But on the subconscious level deep-seated feelings and intuitive conduct, the traditional Filipino worldview still prevails.

Kraft calls this phenomenon “worldview schizophrenia” where “persons and groups may attempt to retain two sets of mutually contradictory assumptions and thus live their lives with (a) kind of worldview ‘split personality’” (1996:62).

An Alternative Explanation

Perhaps an alternative explanation utilizing the principles of dialectical theory may help clarify the matter.

I have contended earlier that, contrary to the judgment that modern Filipino society is a true melting pot of oriental and occidental cultural influences, Filipino society is, in fact, composed of two divergent streams of culture that have never merged into one cultural river. In dialectical terms, these two cultural streams, namely the oriental and occidental, continue to exist in an antithetical relationship that has not been resolved into a new cultural synthesis.

My thesis is that when the Filipino culture, representing the oriental stream, came face to face with the American culture, representing the occidental stream, the Filipino culture went underground (Kraft’s submersion). To use dialectical language, in the interaction between the two dialectical elements, the thesis (Filipino culture) confronted by a stronger, more aggressive antithesis (American culture), became submerged into the subconscious level, allowing the emergence of a Western *facade* that would take over and remain at the conscious level. A

dialectical engagement that could have resolved the antithetical contradiction into a new cultural synthesis was thus avoided.¹

It should be noted here that the application of the triadic dialectical formula of the thesis, antithesis and synthesis in the analysis of the cultural contradictions within Filipino society does not neatly fit into the framework of Hegelian dialectics.²

According to Hegel, the interaction between the thesis and the antithesis results in a synthesis. In the synthesis, the thesis and the antithesis are resolved on a higher level. At the same time, they are “sublated” (*aufgehoben*). The term *aufheben* (sublation) carries within itself some ambiguity in meaning. It can mean: (1) to keep or preserve, (2) to abolish, annul or cancel out, and (3) to raise or lift up. Hegel’s technical use of *aufheben* carries all three meanings. Thus, the thesis and antithesis are preserved in the synthesis, while at the same time they are canceled out and but also raised to a higher level. The higher level becomes the new thesis which generates its own antithesis from which a new synthesis emerges, richer and more concrete than the former.³ This process goes on until an all-inclusive synthesis which generates no further contradiction is achieved. Through the process then, all contradictions are resolved.⁴

¹The dialectical method of analysis is commonly represented by the triadic movement of thought from an original position or thesis to an opposite position or antithesis and then from antithesis to a synthesis that unites or reconciles both thesis and antithesis to a higher level. While Hegel used this triadic formula to describe specifically the movement of thought (*Geist*), it has also been applied to other analytical systems, especially by Marx and Engels in their analysis of society and of the movement of history which they called “historical materialism.”

² The brief analysis that follows represents my attempt to distill my understanding of Hegel’s dialectical method. It is based on several sources, most notably, Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the *Science of Logic*.

³ Hegel distinguishes between ordinary and pure dialectic. Ordinary dialectic consists of two opposites as predicates of a single subject. Pure dialectic asserts understanding (thesis) as being in itself its own opposite and thus negating itself. The discussion here regarding the dialectics between the Filipino and American cultures would thus fall under ordinary dialectics.

⁴This attempt to present Hegel’s dialectical method in a few paragraphs is admittedly simplistic and superficial, and does not do justice to Hegel’s thinking. However, as a basic

The absence of internal contradictions, namely, where the thesis (Filipino culture) generates its own contradiction, may be the reason why no synthesis has been reached in Philippine society. Instead, the negation has been provided by an external agent (American culture) through the use of force, thereby disrupting the natural dialectical process. A sublation of some sort happened, with elements of both thesis and antithesis being preserved and yet somehow negated at the same time. However, because the antithetical elements were not resolved into a synthesis, they were not raised into a new, higher level thesis. Instead, the thesis, confronted by a more aggressive antithesis, went underground relatively unaltered.

These results can be demonstrated easily in Filipino society. Karnow's observation that the Philippines is "immediately familiar to an American," and to a newcomer at that, indicates that the superimposed American cultural superstructure is firmly in place and remains intact, hence the familiarity. Similarly, the Filipino culture that went underground seems also intact. Karnow continues: "But with each successive visit I perceived that their values and traditions, though frequently concealed under an American veneer, were their own, and often antithetical to the American model" (1989:xi). Hence, the first connotation of Hegel's *aufheben*, that is, of the antithetical elements being preserved, is demonstrated in both the American and Filipino cultures remaining intact.

The second connotation of the term, that of both elements being canceled out or negated at the same time, is also true. While both the thesis and the antithesis are generally intact, their interaction has somehow changed each of them that they can no longer be said to be what they were before. A good example of this is the emergence of a "Filipino English" (more commonly

outline, it is faithful to the rudimentary principles of Hegelian dialectics. See Hegel's *Science of Logic* for a comprehensive treatment of the subject.

known as “*Taglish*”—from *Tagalog*-English), which is quite different from the English taught by the colonial teachers. The *Tagalog* language too, is not longer the same as a result of the encounter. It has included in its vocabulary words taken straight from English and has generated new terms derived from English. Thus, an *aufheben*, in the sense of a negation of both the original thesis and antithesis, has been achieved.

However, since no synthesis between the two cultures has been consummated, no higher level cultural thesis has developed either. That the Filipino culture has, instead, gone underground and remains relatively unaltered beneath the superimposed veneer of American culture is seen whenever Filipinos face matters of life and death. Then the submerged Filipino values surface and take over, only to go back under when the life and death situations disappear.¹

Yet, it cannot be said that the interaction between the two cultures is not without any form of a synthesis, and this is where the Filipino colonial mentality comes in. If any synthesis can be pointed to as to have emerged from the interaction between the Filipino and American cultures, it is at the conscious level of the intellect or the mind, hence this focus on colonial mentality. This is to say that Westernization is, for the majority Filipinos, mainly a matter of the mind but not of the heart.

Furthermore, colonial mentality, while it affects all of Filipino society, affects the educated Filipino more directly and decidedly than those with lesser education, and the more educated the Filipino, the more colonial the mind will be. However, no matter how colonially minded or Westernized the Filipino is, however consciously his/her worldview may have been altered by

¹ An example of this happened in Pasadena where, during the day of the funeral for his grandmother, a friend of mine got very sick in the stomach. His mother, a registered nurse who openly dismissed traditional Filipino beliefs as superstition, nevertheless got very distraught, remembering that her son was the favorite grandson of her mother-in-law. She was afraid that the grandmother was trying to take her favorite grandson with her.

exposure to American culture, at the deep level of the subconscious, the Filipino worldview remains relatively intact, ready to spring up and take over the conscious thinking and doing in situations of crisis.

This cultural schizophrenia is not only found in Filipino society in general but also within the Filipino personality itself in particular. This is largely the reason why Filipinos feel a gnawing sense of loss in terms of their identity. With two divergent cultural influences constantly tearing them apart, Filipinos cannot help but feel like they belong to a marginal culture, like “nowhere men” (to borrow a term made popular by the British rock group, the Beatles). More than ever, the search for the elusive Filipino soul has taken on a note of urgency among Filipinos of today.

This is where the problem of the locus of theology comes in. For the locus of Filipino theology cannot simply be the mind of the Filipino, colonial as it is. I have mentioned earlier that Filipino theology is *altrocephalous* in characteristic, thus unable to address the realities of Filipino society. If theology in the Philippines is to be relevant, it must be able to speak to the heart and not simply to the mind of the Filipino. It must be a holistic theology that is able to speak to fragmented persons with fragmented minds, living in a fragmented society characterized by a fragmented culture reflective of a fragmented worldview, such as can be found in the Philippines. Only as Christianity ministers the wholeness of Christ to Filipinos can it begin to bring healing to the fractured, broken and bewildered Filipino soul.

The question is, how is this to be done? A large part of the answer lies within the purview of history: its nature, function, and how it is perceived. In more concrete terms, questions pertaining to how is history made, who makes history, how is it written and who writes it, need to be reckoned with in the process of addressing the problems raised by colonial mentality.

CHAPTER 7

SEARCHING FOR A USABLE PAST

The colonial era in the Philippines officially came to an end in 1935. Yet the negative effects of the many long years of Western imperialistic hegemony remains indelibly etched in the consciousness of the modern day Filipino. Indeed, the deplorable fact is that the colonial mentality which is an outcome of that era remains influential to this day, largely dominating the ethos of the prevalent Filipino culture.

The reality of the influence of colonial mentality is readily apparent in the vast majority of the academic, literary, and aesthetic productions of Filipino academicians, scholars and artists. It is especially true of the plurality of current historical writers who, mentored by historians immersed in colonial intellectualism, continue to perceive history and contemporary society through the lens of colonial scholarship. Elevating to a fetish the Western notion of objectivity passed on to them by their colonial mentors, they remain oblivious to the actual political implications of what they insist as their “value free” scholarship. Their refusal to critically re-examine the nature of Philippine society and the lack of a serious re-evaluation of the colonial experience in their work are proofs positive of the thorough-going influence of colonial scholarship on their work.

A more devastating outcome of colonial mentality has to do with the Filipino identity. A people’s identity, the way they look at and feel about themselves in the present is inseparably linked to the past. To talk about the Filipino as having a colonial mentality, for instance, is not only to describe something about the Filipino in the present. The use of the word “colonial” to

refer to the present mentality connects that mentality back to the past. It is using the past to interpret and describe the present. It is, furthermore, to say that the past impinges on the present, that is, who we are now is not only a part of the past but that the past in many ways determines who we are now. Thus, the problem of identity. Colonial mentality has provoked an identity crisis that occasions a sense of marginality and of being torn apart inside, making the search for the elusive Filipino soul an urgent task that continues to challenge Filipinos today.

Much of what ails the Filipino personality, as we have seen, can be traced back to the Filipino colonial experience. One could wish that past to just go away. But that past, no matter how unpleasant, is part of who we are now. Besides, the past is often not what it is purported to be, that is, our perception of the past does not often correspond to its reality.

Part of the difficulty is that much of the record about the Filipino past has written by the foreign historians who interpreted Filipino history from a colonialist's view. Thus, what Filipinos know to be their history does not represent their way of looking at history. However due to the influence of their colonial education, they have come to accept history as it was written for them as their own. The context within which said history was written led to many distortions and obfuscations that need to be uncovered and corrected that a more accurate Filipino history emerge.

The uncovering of historical distortions may lead to discoveries of liberating themes contained within the Filipino past that have been obscured by the colonial reading of history. Such positive, liberative themes constitute a "useful past" that Filipinos can employ in their search for identity and for meaning in history, but they too have to be dug out of the dust of history.

A project of this kind requires a critical investigation of Philippine history, with primary focus on the more than four

hundred years of Western colonial domination. Historical accounts of this period abound. However, if the manner in which the majority of these histories were written, and the ideological orientations and motivations of the writers are taken into consideration, the credibility of the facts they present and their interpretation of the same come under a cloud of suspicion. So there are some basic questions that need to be addressed. How do people make history? Who writes history? How is it written? The discussion following will attempt to answer these questions.

The Problem of History

The problem of methodology is a fundamental issue that historians have to contend with in that the methodology employed directly impacts the historian's apprehension, perception, and manner of writing history. The issue becomes even more important when one considers that written history serves as a record of the past which is basic to the understanding of the present and essential in anticipating the future.

The complications attendant to the writing of history become even more problematic when historical writing crosses national and cultural boundaries. For instance, much of what is known as "Third World" history has been written by Western writers using their Western worldview, that is to say, assumptions, presuppositions, methods, philosophies, and what have you, to select, evaluate, analyze and interpret historical data. Added to the cultural context, the social, political and economic milieu of the writer also affects the writing of history. Thus, a Western writer of the post-colonial era will most probably write from a different perspective than another who wrote during the height of Western colonialism. Due to this, not only are the reflective grasp of the subject matter and the content

of history called into question, but the ideology that guided its writing also becomes suspect.

A people's history is vital to the understanding of their own identity. It is therefore important that a people's history reflect their own self-understanding. History written as described above—by foreigners—usually ends up as a foreign history, not one that is, with apologies to Mr. Lincoln, of, by, and for, the people.

Such is the case of Philippine history. Written mostly by Western historians of the colonial era, Philippine history is for the most part, foreign to the experience of Filipinos. A reexamination, reinterpretation, and rewriting of Philippine history that will hopefully result in a history that reflects the not only the experiences but also the desires, goals and aspirations of the Filipino people, is therefore in order.

Understanding History

Nothing exists by itself. Everything that exists has a context. This is true with human beings, cultures and societies. Human beings are born into a world of contexts. But human beings as such are not only beings *in* the world. Each human being interacts with his/her different contexts, and such interactions are not simply reactions to the stimuli provided by his/her environment. Reactions belong mainly to the biological sphere, and human beings cannot be reduced to the plainly biological. Rather, a human being responds to his/her world, and in the process, is shaped into what he/she is by such interactions. However, it is not only the human being that is changed in the interactive process. The result of the interaction is two-way: in the process of interacting with the world, the human being in turn shapes his/her world.

The ability to shape the world puts human interaction with the environment above the biological. Human interaction is not simply instinctive reaction to the environment. Nor is it merely an emotional response. It is, rather, a rational response to it. In the interaction between the human and his/her world, both shape, as well as are shaped, by the other. This means that the human being, far from just being in the world, comes into being with the world. The interaction between the human and the world constitutes the sum and substance of history.

It should be pointed out that the word "history" itself is ambiguous. For Rust, it may mean "either the process of events, that is, the totality of past human actions, or it may mean the story of that process, a connected and intelligible narrative constructed by the historian from those events." Rust's reference to the philological distinction in the German language between *Historie* and *Geschichte*, which both translate into "history" in English is very helpful: "*Historie* describes a series of outer events. *Geschichte* describes the inner side of these events as the historian endeavors to give a significant account of them" (1963:3-4). This project will be concerned with history as *Geschichte*, requiring an attempt to penetrate to the inner side of history.

Human history as we know it, therefore, is not simply a series of events that evolve in a deterministic way as blind Darwinian-type reactions to previous events. Rather, as mentioned above, the sum and substance of history consists of human interaction with the world as rational response, namely, humanity's coming into being *with* the world. That is to say, it is human beings who shape and make history and, in turn, are shaped by it. History then, as it pertains to the past, is a record of the rational human interaction with his/her environment—an account of humanity's coming into being with the world.

Human rational response to the world also constitutes the essence and spirit (Hegel's *Geist*) of history. Human response to the world as rational is important in understanding history. As C. Gregg Singer puts it: "It is impossible to understand completely the history of a nation apart from the philosophies and ideologies which lie at the heart of its intellectual life" (1981:1). What this means, as Richard Weaver so aptly expressed in the title of his book, is that "ideas have consequences" (1948).

All historical systems reflect the influence of philosophies and ideologies. A good example can be seen in the concept of the purposefulness or the *telos* of history that is characteristic of Western historical systems. This idea reflects the Judaeo-Christian thought which insists that history cannot be understood apart from God's self-disclosure as its author. History is thus a record of God's dealings with humanity and the rest of creation. Thus, having an author, history also has a direction and purpose (*telos*).

A more specific example is Arnold Toynbee's *A Study of History* (1934). Toynbee engages in a comparative study of civilizations as a basis for general conceptions about history. Toynbee's presupposition is that civilizations, not states, nations or race, are the real units of history. Toynbee draws heavily from the intellectual wealth of Western civilization to serve as background for his arguments and reflections: from Goethe, Shakespeare, Blake, Shelley, and most heavily, from the Bible, whose "texts lie scattered thickly over his pages" because "in them he finds his profoundest truths foreshadowed and confirmed" (Geyl, Toynbee, and Sorokin 1949:4, 13).

Toynbee's heavy reliance on the Biblical text is remarkable, especially since many Western secular historians seldom acknowledge their indebtedness to the Judaeo-Christian thought but instead insist on the historical observer himself reflecting the

idea of human autonomy.¹ Such obvious reliance on Biblical text by Toynbee is proof that historical systems do indeed reflect the influence of philosophies and ideologies.

Historical systems exhibit some basic theoretical stances that are inherent in the nature of history. The following, which constitutes some kind of an historical hermeneutical circle, are the most basic:

A. History is the present looking backward to the past. As such, the present influences all portrayals of the past.

B. Because history is the present looking back at the past, all history is interpretation. Interpretation is unavoidable in all portrayals and/or understandings of the past.

C. The hermeneutical circle is completed when people in turn use their view of the past to interpret the present. One's view of the past becomes part of one's experience. Past experiences affect the apprehension of one's surroundings and thus influences the reading of the present.

The Present to Interpret the Past

Historical knowledge does not begin *tabula rasa*. We start with what we know in the present to begin our understanding of the past. Marrou points out that we can construct a hypothetical picture of the past only by comparison with a human situation that we know (1977:401). The historian always begins where he/she is, in the present, utilizing what is available in the present to look back to the past. It is necessary for the historian to look back to the past because the events that constitute history have occurred in the past and are so unique they will never be repeated.

This "looking back" by the historian indicates that his/her sense of direction will be significantly influenced by his/her

¹ See J. M. Roberts' discussion on the myths of autonomy and teleology (1985:36-37).

philosophical or ideological position in the present. A Marxist historical materialist, for instance, will not be looking for the same historical patterns that a Christian critical realist will be interested in. The historian's theoretical assumptions not only inform but in many ways determine the historical model that he/she will employ to extract meanings from the past that will be helpful for interpreting the present. Furthermore, because the model used to examine the past is constructed in the present with insights, needs and pressures provided by the present, the picture of the past will include reflections of the present.

The past is not accessible to be experienced in the present "*wie es eigentlich gewesen*" (as it actually was). Thus the historian can only get to the past through existing evidence. This evidence, coupled with the resources available to help interpret that evidence put limits on how history is viewed.

There are two major limits imposed on the present view of history by the available resources. One is the amount of the existing evidence, and the other is the historian's ability to interpret said evidence.

Regardless of whether an event did or did not occur in the past, when no evidence for it exists, that event cannot be construed as history. An event must be told or related in some way for it to become history. Moreover, even when evidence exists, such evidence needs to be interpreted in order to be understood. Even so, one's understanding of the evidence is limited by the resources accessible for interpreting the evidence. A fossil, for instance, can be seen as a concrete, factual, irrefutable evidence of the past. However, understanding the fossil, and therefore, its historical significance, is limited by the available tools for examining it, such as the accuracy of methods for determining the fossil's age. Here, the exactness of the interpretation is highly dependent on the correctness of the methodology employed in interpreting it.

To further complicate the matter, whatever evidence is available is only partial. To go back to the example of the fossil, one may perhaps only have a few parts of a dinosaur, say a jawbone, a rib, and perhaps a femur. The incompleteness of the evidence forces the scientist studying it to extrapolate from the evidence and build a whole dinosaur from the limited materials at hand. The outcome of it, though arguably scientific, is at best, an intelligent guess, and the real dinosaur that existed may not at all look like what the paleontologist comes up with.

The same thing happens with historical evidence. As noted above, the past as it actually was is no longer available for the historian of the present to observe. All that the historian is left to work with is whatever extant evidence there is of the past. But from the dormant data comprising the evidence the historian reconstructs the events, and the past is brought to life in his/her mind. This means that the historian is able to get at the original event only through his/her reconstruction of it (Collingwood 1977:218). But again, like the extrapolated dinosaur, because of the guesswork involved, it is possible that the reconstruction may not look at all like the original. As Florovsky observes:

We can never remember even our own immediate past, exactly as we have lived it, because, if we are really remembering, and not just dreaming, we do remember the past occurrences in a perspective, against a changed background of our enriched experience (1959:150).

It is quite clear therefore, that since the evidence of the past is never complete, then the past can never be fully understood. As such, all history cannot be but incomplete, and the understanding of it only partial.

History is always viewed from the standpoint of the present. As alluded to earlier, the study of history invariably proceeds

from the known to the unknown—from the known present, the historian moves, by analogy and comparison, into the unknown past. Any new data or new evidence from the past can only be interpreted in light of present understanding (Brown 1977:172). Predictably, this present greatly affects how history is viewed, much like a lens affects the vision of an eye. The lens of the present inevitably colors the historian's view of history. Thus,

in a very real sense it is impossible to divorce history from life. Mr. Everyman can not do what he needs or desires to do without recalling past events: he can not recall past events without in some subtle fashion relating them to what he needs or desires to do (Becker 1932:227).

From the perspective of the present, people pick and choose from the past, moving Jakob Burckhardt to describe history as "the record of facts which one age finds remarkable in another" (C. Brown 1977:180).

C. Brown cautions, however, that to realize the past as always seen through the lens of the present does not mean a license to press past events into present forms. To allow it is to permit the rejection of whatever does not fit (1977:173). He argues instead that when the past does not fit the present forms, the limits of human understanding must be admitted.

Not only does the present color the view of the past, it also becomes the basis by which the past is interpreted. The present provides the tools applied to discover and interpret history. That the past is filtered, sifted, and examined through the lens of the present means that all history is interpreted.

History as Interpretation of the Past

Certain historians have deliberately sought to reduce themselves to the role of reporters, but even reporters must be interpretative and selective, if they want to be intelligible (Florovsky 1959:145).

In historical reconstructions, the process of selectivity and interpretation happens even before the historian gets a hold of the data to be used in the reconstruction. History, as it unfolds, is experienced as it really is. However, not everything of the event that is experienced is remembered. Only those parts that are meaningful, and therefore significant, tend to be remembered. Also, different individuals have different memories of the same event. Furthermore, the longer the span of time between the actual event and the reconstruction of it, the more of the event will be forgotten. Still further, people, in recounting an event, are inclined to recount only the pleasant parts of their experience and hide the unpleasant. As such, much of the original event is left out. All that remains for the historian to work with is but a partial, selected, interpreted memory of the actual event.

Hence, right at the outset, any attempt to reconstruct or examine history already involves interpretation. All historical inquiries entail the selection and organization of material, both of which already involve interpretation of the data. History then, or to be precise, historical reconstruction or writing, is a matter of interpretation.

The particular context of the historian plays an important role in the shaping of the criteria for the selection, organization, examination and evaluation of data, and therefore, in the historian's total reading of history. That is to say, the historian

patterns the reading of history according to his/her personal tendencies.

While evidence for the past is never complete, the historian is often confronted with a significant amount of it. Furthermore, the facts of the evidence may turn out to be contradictory. In order for history to be intelligible, the historian must select from the available data. However, selection is always made on the basis of some criterion that involves imposing some standard on the material. In the selection process the historian assigns pattern and meaning to the material also (Marsden 1975:81).

That the writing of history is an interpretative process can be demonstrated in several ways:

1. Even if all that the historian wants to do is copy from sources, and even if it were possible for the historian, in writing history, not to add anything to the material, the decision as to what or what not to copy already constitutes interpretation. Judgment as to what to include and exclude, what is pertinent or irrelevant, involves interpretation of the material. The subsequent product is undeniably the result of interpretation.

2. The historian does not exist in a vacuum. Like any other human being, the historian is a creature of a certain time, place, circumstances, interests, predilections and culture, meaning that the historian belongs to a specific context. Related to this is the immediate situation the historian finds him/herself in. The immediate situation places demands on the historian that will affect the selection of material. As Handlin so aptly put it, "When the wires are busy, the fall of a throne will earn no attention; when all is quiet, reporters are out looking for a dog to bite." (1979:135).

That the historian belongs to a context that affects selection means that the historian does not approach the material *tabula rasa*. The particular milieu that the historian is immersed in determines to a large extent the attitude of the historian toward

the source of information which will also affect what is selected. Americans, with their tendency to consider a printed source automatically more reliable than a verbal source, for instance, would easily be more inclined to consider written evidence over a verbal testimony. The bottom line is that, try as he/she may to be objective, the historian cannot escape from the influence these surroundings will have on him/herself, and therefore, his/her work.

3. These various influences upon the historian will affect every step in the process of writing history. Even in the seemingly insignificant choice of words, a difference in wording can give a considerable slant on how history is perceived. For instance, the hostilities between Filipinos and the American colonial forces during the first decade of the 20th century was termed by American historians an "insurrection." Filipinos who were engaged in hostilities were thus seen as insurrectionist brigands and malcontents (see Wolff 1991:191-249). In contrast, Filipino historians called the hostilities a "war" between the Philippines and the United States, and saw the Filipino fighters as soldiers and patriots (Agoncillo 1974:159-179).

4. Data selection in the historical project results in the inclusion of those events perceived by the historian as significant. Those considered insignificant are left out. Given that, it is inevitable that there will always be gaps left in the writing of history. Gaps cannot be avoided because the data or evidence of the past is, as already noted, only partial. Further, the historian selects from available evidence only those significant to his background and purposes. Even more telling, the available evidence often come from the more privileged sectors of society: the educated, wealthy and powerful, who have the ability and means to articulate their views in recorded form. The poor and the powerless have their own views of events but are often inarticulate, and, since others are seldom

interested about what they think, their views are less often recorded (Handlin 1979:141-142).

5. The writing itself is a process of interpretation. Writing involves composition, and in composition, classification and categorization are important. Events are classified into different categories, and those seen as relating to each other are then brought together under the same category. This involves interpretation for to classify, as Dray points out, is to interpret (1964:9).

All of these factors enter into the process of writing history. What is apparent in the foregoing discussion is that history as we know it is not a factual (in the sense of *wie es eigentlich gewesen*), objective record of the past but rather, a subjective reconstruction of memories of the past. That is to say, all history exhibits the historian's bias.

History as a Basis for Interpreting the Present

While it is true that the past is interpreted from present perspectives, it is equally true that the present perspective is built on the past. Thus, just as the present is used to interpret the past, so is the past used to interpret the present.

Faced with the future, people look to the past for clues and from those clues, adjust their understanding of the present in order to anticipate and prepare for the future. Without a perception of the past, there is no hope for the future. In plotting directions, travelers use their point of origin (past) to determine their current position (present) and from there, to plot their bearings towards their final destination (future). The same is true with history. From the past people receive clues as to who/where they are in the present and, learning from the past, plan their future course.

Hope for the future is possible because people can look to the past as the foundation on which the present is built, just as the present is the basis upon which the future is being built. We are what we are now because of our past, and on the basis of that identity, we plan our future. This is true, for instance, with the life of faith. A Christian may live with assurance today and with hope and confidence for the future because he/she can look back to the faithfulness of God in the past. If the present were a sharp break from the past, if nothing in the past matters in the present, if, for the Christian, God proved unfaithful in the past, there would be no basis for assurance in the present or confidence in the future. The continuity between the past and the present enables trust in the future.

No era is completely new. It does not matter how big or drastic the changes, much of the past is always there in the present. No matter how complex and heterogeneous, there must be causes for the present situation for there are no causeless events (Brown 1977:168). On the other hand, nothing really remains the same. Changes always happen in persons, in society, in the world. To simply be alive is to change. In many instances, if one is to survive, one has to change.

Still, because change always carries some degree of uncertainty with it, people are not eager to change. Tradition means that that which is familiar, that which is known, that which is predictable, is more secure than the unknown that changes bring. So people tend to stick with the old and traditional. Even so, no matter how tradition-bound people are, changes will occur. So life is lived in the tension between tradition and change.

But change can become so desirable people easily embrace it or even work for it. At other times though, circumstances force people to change, and during these times, change can be painful. But whether change comes hard or easy, continuity with the past

is extremely important. To be completely cut off from the past is to be like a person with amnesia. Knowing nothing of the past, the amnesiac is unfamiliar with anything in the present and looks with dread at the future. The past has to be known in order to validate claims for the present and hopes for the future. Hendrikus Berkhof defines history as “the ordering of what has happened in the world, in the determination of our place in the present” (1979:19-20). It is the past that makes sense of the present. By it, people know who they are.

Working with the past brings it to life by making available a host of experiences for use in the present. That part of history that is used becomes part of the present, and immediately becomes part of the past. Brown points out that the concept of continuity with the past is not new to the Christian faith:

the Biblical writers measure the present in the light of their understanding of the past. The Psalmist strengthens faith and builds up hope by calling to mind the great deeds of God. Peter seeks to put the plight of his readers in perspective by addressing them as “exiles of the Dispersion,” “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people,” and as “aliens and exiles.” The history and the imagery of the past is applied to the present in order to reveal dimensions of the situation which would otherwise be concealed (Brown 1977:175).

Hence, for the Christian, continuity means that God’s acts in history cannot be limited to Biblical times. It is tempting to break the continuity of Biblical history after the last book of the Bible due to the nature of God’s revelation. As special revelation it has a special authority. But the Bible itself does not limit the action of God to its time. Instead, it assures us that just as God acted in the

lives of people in the past, so God wants to act in our lives today. Jesus changed not just Biblical history but all of history. Just as he saved his people then, we too are saved by his death and resurrection now.

Certain experiences in the past become very crucial in the ordering of one's world that all other events in life are interpreted in terms of those experiences. Abraham Maslow coined the term "peak experience" to refer to such key experiences, which are like being on top of a mountain where one can clearly see one's position in relation to where one has been and where one hopes to go (see Maslow 1978). For many Christians, the key event is their conversion, as in the example of Paul who interpreted his life in terms of his Damascus experience. Christianity as a whole looks to Christ's death and resurrection as the crucial events in history, and all other history is to be interpreted from the viewpoint of these mountaintop experiences.

It should be noted that a key event is not only used to interpret events that come after it, including changes that happen in the present, but also to re-interpret events that happened before it. To go back to the example of Paul, his conversion was used not only to interpret all that happened thereafter, but also to view those that happened before it, seeing all of it as preparation for God's call to be an apostle to the gentiles. It is clear then that the past functions as a basis to interpret the present.

Historical Theories as Cultural Products

Historical facts are not so much discovered as arrived at by processes of argument, and the question whether we can fit it in with the other conclusions to which we have already committed

ourselves, or can fit it in without disturbing those conclusions to an undue extent (Walsh 1977:54).

Traditional Western thinking often views history from a philosophical, speculative, remote position, allowing for a conception of history in terms of cause and effect that can be gleaned from the past. This view of history bestows upon the historian a feeling of objectivity. Historical formulations that reflect this thinking are generally produced in academic institutions of higher learning and do not reflect history as practiced by most people. A view of history that attempts to understand history as perceived by the people has to take into account the worldview of the people.

A person's worldview serves as the lens by which he/she views and interprets the world. A product of culture, it is the standard by which people measure and derive meaning for all their experiences and the basis on which they organize their world. Historical theories provide the criteria for the selection and organization of history, and are therefore very susceptible to the influence of culture.

A people's worldview contains the basic, deep level assumptions they have on life. It acts as a grid through which all experiences pass, and ascertains what people consider to be significant or not. As such it determines how an event is experienced, evaluated, and recalled—in short, what is possible and not possible to say about an event. Consequently, it certifies what to them is history and what is not.

The questions that are asked of history to a large extent determine what one finds in history. Earlier, it was noted that history as we know it is not the same as history as it really happened. Due to human limitations, it is not possible, for instance, to "notice" or account for all the evidence. What is seen as evidence and what is missed is often related to the questions

that are posed. This is so because the questions asked define the extent of the evidence investigated, and at the same time, impose limits on the manner that the evidence is investigated. If questions posed relate to the spirit world for instance, one cannot really expect to receive technological data for answers.

The kinds of questions posed, and the manner in which they are posed reflect two main factors that come into play in historical investigations. Personal factors like the historian's vision, his dispositions and concerns, likes and dislikes— influence the nature of the questions asked. However, individuals are shaped by their culture, and the historian's culture presses him/her to ask a particular set of questions. Thus for the western historian, predisposed by his/her culture to view events in terms of temporality, the investigation of the proper sequence of events is important, while to another from a different culture, it may not be so important.

What this means is that the historian must be conscious of his/her own personal and cultural biases, especially as they shape the theory of history that he/she brings into his/her investigations and writing. As Link puts it, "all theories and philosophies of history have been the product of their peculiar culture and their culture's understanding of human affairs" (1962:79). Since historical theories are "born" in the worldview of the historian, it cannot but color the historian's reading of history. Such "coloring" may prove negative in the writing of history, especially if the historian is writing a history of a people other than his own. This is true with most histories written in colonial situations.

Bernard Lewis gives examples from both British and French historians of how colonial histories were written. Lewis says,

The purpose is always the same - to blacken the regimes which existed before the coming of the empire and to depict their rule as barbarous and

tyrannical, thereby justifying the conquest and the maintenance of imperial rule (1975:90).

History thus written, reflecting the culture and milieu of Western colonialism, has proven to be unfair and inimical to the victims of colonialism. What is claimed to be their history turns out not to be their own, but rather, a “foreign” history, recounted and written for them, reflecting not their own vagaries and peculiarities as a people, but how foreigners, often in a negative way, saw them. The sad thing about this is for a while, they believed it, and saw themselves in the same negative light as their exploiters saw them. It comes as no surprise that, coming out of colonialism, and coming into some degree of freedom and self-determination, there is now a strenuous effort on the part of these people, to rewrite their history.

The attempts by Filipino historians to rewrite Filipino history can be understood better if seen against the background of the colonial experience of the Filipino people.

The Need to Rewrite History

Rubem Alves, in his book, *A Theology of Human Hope*, addresses the problem of poverty, colonialism and freedom as they relate to history. For Alves, colonialism, which he defines as a “relationship in which the powerful dominated and controlled the lives of the weak,” was not just a situation of the past, but was, rather, “intrinsic to the relations between the poor and the rich and indeed the cause of the poverty of the poor.” The poor are what they are because they were made poor. Dominated by the rich, the poor are

not allowed to become creators of their own history. They are reduced to a situation of reflexivity. This means that the lives of the

colonial nations or groups were not planned according to their own needs, but according to the needs of the economy of the dominant groups. The lives of the dominated became then sub-systems which always *reacted* according to the stimuli of their masters, without ever being able to change the relationships of domination under which they were (1975:8, italics mine).

Prevented from becoming subjects of their own history, the consciousness of the poor, which Alves calls the “proletarian consciousness,” moved from a consciousness of poverty into “a consciousness of impotence or of having been made impotent before history.” Referring to Frantz Fanon’s argument that colonialism distorted the humanity of the oppressed, Alves points out that the success of colonialism can be seen in that “it was able not only to maintain an oppressed man but an oppressed consciousness as well” (1975:9). This domesticated, reflexive consciousness, deprived of a sense of direction and of historical vocation, was unable to be a subject.

Inability to be a subject meant that the proletariat were unable to enter into critical dialogue with their environment, and thus became mute. Their muteness further reduced them to paralysis, disabling them from creative action. This is so because creative action

is possible only in the context of hope and power, when man envisages a future and finds himself powerful enough to master his environment, through his action, in order to achieve his goal. The oppressed consciousness, however, is deprived of both these elements. . . . Action therefore, does not create a new future, because it

is always determined for the master (Alves 1975:10).

In fact, according to Alves, there is no future for the proletariat, for the future belongs to the master. The oppressed consciousness is not capable of planning the future, and his inaction is a reflex to the impotence to which he was reduced by colonialism. The bottom line of Alves' argument is that the poor were not allowed to create their own history. It was made for them, or rather, forced upon them by their colonial masters.

What is needed is to liberate this oppressed consciousness. Such liberation can happen even in the midst of oppressive conditions. There is, in human beings, a basic desire, a hunger for freedom. Such a hunger can only be suppressed for a time, but it will, in one way or another, find a way to be satisfied. The eminent Filipino nationalist and poet, Amado Hernandez put it this way:

<i>Ibon man may layang lumipad</i>	Birds that freely fly
<i>Kulungin mo at umiiyak</i>	Cage them up and they will cry
<i>Bayan pa kayang sakdal dilag</i>	Will a people deprived of liberty
<i>Ang di magnasang makaalpas</i>	Not struggle that they may be free

The innate human desire to be free causes a people to struggle against the inhumane conditions they are subjected to, until the oppressive character of their existence is, to use Sartre's words, "transformed within into a stubborn refusal of the animal condition" (in Fanon 1966: preface). The stubborn refusal turns into a determination to be free, and the oppressed consciousness is no longer domesticated. It reflects on its oppressive situation and begins to develop a language of its own, articulating its desire for liberty. The ability to articulate signifies that the oppressed, heretofore muted by oppression, has emerged into history. The oppressed now insert themselves into the historical

present as a contradiction to it—as historical subjects with a definite sense of vocation and hope for the future.

Now born into history, the oppressed are determined to liberate themselves historically. In the past, the future was closed to them, and their consciousness was closed to the future. Now, though the future may still be closed, they are open to the future, and are no longer incapable of planning for nor are impotent towards the future. Having been transformed into historical subjects, they are now capable of transforming and making their own history.

But before that can happen, there is a need to rewrite their own history, reflecting their own consciousness of who they are as subjects of history. The need is there to understand the past, in their own terms, so they might see who and where they are in the present, that they might chart their course in the future. Lewis comments:

In almost every ex-colonial territory tremendous efforts were made to rewrite the past - first, to reveal the imperialists in all their well-concealed villainy, and, second, after that, to restore the true image of the pre-imperialist past which the imperialists themselves had defaced and hidden. It is at this point that the imaginary golden age once again makes its appearance. It is exceedingly difficult for even the most conscientious historians to be fair to former and fallen masters (1975:96-97).

Lewis' comments reveal an immediately apparent characteristic of post-colonial scholarship as decidedly partisan in its endeavor to rewrite history. As a result of their colonial experience, the consciousness of the oppressed has been forced to accept without question the history written for them by their erstwhile colonial masters. To counteract this deplorable

situation, post colonial scholarship has taken up the arduous task of trying to reverse the negative effects of centuries of colonialism on the consciousness of the oppressed.

The common term we have used to refer to this oppressed consciousness is “colonial mentality.” Because of this negative self-valuation characteristic of colonial mentality, many of the efforts to reverse it has taken on an overtly nationalistic slant designed to encourage a more positive self-identity amongst the oppressed. In this sense post-colonial scholarship cannot be but partisan and post-colonial historiography openly subjective.

A brief digression into the intellectual milieu of post-colonial literature will be helpful as an introduction to this brave new world of emergent scholarship in pursuit of an alternative to colonialist systems of knowledge that have been used to perpetuate the enslaved consciousness typical of colonial mentality.

The Nature of Post-Colonial Discourse

A prominent theme in post-colonial studies that serves as a common agenda among so-called “Third-World” scholars is “the retrieval of alternative literary practices and the interrogation of colonialist systems of knowledge” (Patajo-Legasto 1993:1). One reason for this is *Orientalism*, which, according to Edward Said, is a “mode of discourse by which European culture (British and French) was able to manage—and even produce—the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period” (1978:2-3).

As a construct, Orientalism has its own supporting institutions—foreign service, departments of Oriental Studies, Oriental Languages and Literature, and Oriental History; vocabulary—for example, the use of women’s names for

conquered territory; scholarship—conventional anthropology, especially ethnography, which according to Rabasa, was used by the Spanish colonizers as an ideological “weapon” during the conquest of Mexico (1990:187-215); imagery—for instance, colonial postcards, Conrad-type novels, and adventure stories and movies like “Indiana Jones” that perpetuate myths about “dark continents” and the “mysterious orient” with bare-bosomed or half-naked women, the “inscrutable” Chinese, thick-lipped Africans, dark, deceitful Arabs, despotic Hindu rajahs; doctrines—like the “white man’s burden,” “Manifest Destiny,” or the “Benevolent Assimilation Proclamation” by McKinley in 1898 as justifications for colonial conquest of the Philippines.

Such forms of discourse “produced by Western, logocentric binary frames and which were employed during the period of colonial/imperialist expansion as modes of legitimization for the colonizer’s deracination of cultures and decimation of peoples” and further, to “construct the histories and realities of colonized . . . peoples,” (Patajo-Legasto 1993:2) are what post-colonial writers and critics interrogate, especially as they impact historical narratives.

One example is Spivak’s critique of archival materials in India. In one essay, she critiques what she calls “the fabrication of representations of the ‘historical reality’” that would become *the* reality of the Northern Hill States. Following Heidegger’s concept of “worlding of a world on uninscribed earth,” Spivak calls this process of constructing reality as the “worlding of a world” where the notion of a virgin, pristine territory like the Hill States was a prerequisite for the pacification campaigns of the British East India Company and later, of the British Empire itself (1985:128-151).

In the Philippines, such “worlding” can be found in historical accounts of how the earliest Spanish chronicles described “heathen” and “devilish” rituals by the natives, and

how these “facts” were used to justify the destruction of the indigenous culture (Diesto 1997:11-12). McKinley’s attempt to legitimize the U. S. colonization of the Philippines since Filipinos were “unfit for self-government” and as a gracious act to “civilize and Christianize them” is another case in point (Diesto 1996:36).

Having looked at examples of post-colonial discourse, the question needs to be asked. What then is post-colonial discourse?

Patajo-Legasto defines it as

those (writings) that articulate the oppositional/interventionary as well as redefined consciousness of peoples whose identities have been fragmented, whose cultures have been deracinated by the physical and epistemic violence of imperialist incursions and colonialist systems of knowledge (1993:6).

Said describes the common features of post-colonial writing to include: their “anti-Orientalist/colonialist critiques,” the “new critical models” they postulate that “upset or at least alter the prevailing [read Western] paradigmatic norms,” and “their being deliberately situated at vulnerable conjunctural nodes of ongoing disciplinary discourses (1985:23-24).

In essence, post-colonial discourse is a critique of domination, or to be precise, of Western hegemony, aimed at exposing the philosophical and historical assumptions of colonial discourses used to legitimize colonialism. As such, it seeks to postulate an alternative articulation of reality (or for purposes of this project, history) as seen from the “underside,” that is, from those who historically have been reduced to impotence in the making, shaping and articulation of their own history. Aimed at the forging of a culture of resistance, an

important feature of the post-colonial literary project is the rewriting of history that will negate, or at least, counterbalance the effects of Western hegemony.

The effort to rewrite history has preoccupied many of the modern Filipino scholars. In the discussions to follow, I will be interacting with some of these scholars in an effort to understand Filipino post-colonial discourse especially as it pertains to the making (and writing) of history.

Towards a Filipino Reading of History

We see our present with as little understanding as we view our past because aspects of the past which could illumine the present have been concealed from us. This concealment has been effected by a systematic process of miseducation characterized by a thoroughgoing inculcation of colonial values and attitudes—a process which could not have been so effective had we not been denied access to the truth and to part of our written history. As a consequence, we have become a people without a sense of history. We accept the present as given, bereft of historicity. Because we have so little comprehension of our past, we have no appreciation of its meaningful interrelation with the present (Constantino 1978:1).

These words, written by the distinguished Filipino scholar and nationalist, Renato Constantino, offers a glimpse of the nature of the post-colonial, Filipino nationalist sentiments. As a historian, Constantino is unabashed about being highly selective, interested only in what he calls a “Usable Past”: the programmatic title of the last chapter of his recent *History of the*

Philippines (1977). He looks at the routinized “objectivity” of academic historiography as the reduction of the rich and complex dynamism of the live social process into isolated “facts” and “events.” These are then transformed into petrified beads, with a hole in each, so that they can be conveniently arranged in a mechanical succession on the thread of lifeless chronology. In Constantino’s view,

History for most of us is a melange of facts and dates, of personalities and even a mixture of hero worship and empty homiletics about our national identity and our tutelage in democracy. History appears as a segmented documentation of events that occurred in the past, without any unifying thread, without continuity save that of chronology, without clear interrelation with the present (1977:7).

In contrast, Constantino proposes a concept of history which “must deal not only with objective developments but also bring the discussion to the realm of value judgments.” And since value judgments arise from the agonizing choices and alternatives of the present, politics and history become indissolubly integrated. For Constantino, this involves the concepts of “demystification” and “decolonization.”

Constantino’s profound concern for the study of history is shared by many of the intellectuals of the “Third World,” a concern which at present assumes a particular urgency. For them the task of developing an adequate historical consciousness requires cultural decolonization since the inherited form of national consciousness bears the marks of “internalized” colonial domination. The quest for self-identity therefore demands both a radical revision of colonial-inspired historiography and the

reorientation of historical consciousness towards asserting the interests of the dominated people.

Since the enterprise of cultural decolonization involves the clash of irreconcilable interests, there can be no cool detachment in it. Thus the commonly heard criticism from Western scholars of biased scholarship, of “sharply cutting corners in order to force a conclusion” completely misses the point. For the post-colonial scholar is forced to do more than just “cut corners”: he/she must cut diagonally across the whole field of mystifying colonial historiography, unceremoniously blowing up all the categories of internalizations he/she can lay his/his hands on. The task is formidable, and the stakes are painfully real:

The various justifications for our subjugation emanated from an adroit utilization of the past in order to serve colonial ends. Thus our ‘liberation’ by the Spaniards during the early days of occupation underwent successive rationalizations. The Americans, too, projected various rationalizations for their invasion until they were finally able to convince us that they came to educate us and to teach us the ways of democracy. These justifications have become part of our national consciousness. We learned to regard the cultures imposed on us by Spaniards and Americans as superior and, despite sporadic attempts to assert our national identity, we still tacitly accept the alienation of our own culture and the deformation of our economy as natural and unobjectionable developments. We look up to our conquerors and depreciate ourselves; we give respectful consideration to their view point and interests and defend our own with diffidence or equate our interests with theirs. Nationalist voices

have had some impact during the last two decades but the dead weight of colonial consciousness and the continuous influx of foreign cultural influences steadily erodes whatever gains have been made. A study of history which seeks to clarify the genesis and development of our peculiar consciousness can be a powerful factor in effecting our independence, both economic and intellectual (Constantino 1977: 385-386).

For Constantino, when the stakes are as high as this, "cutting corners" is a very small price to pay for accomplishing a vitally necessary task, and its urgency is justification for such unorthodox means. Insisting that he is making "no claims to new findings, only new interpretations" (1977:xi), Constantino is conscious of the limitations he is forced to accept:

When intellectual decolonization shall have been accomplished, a historical account can be produced which will present a fuller, more balanced picture of reality. To obtain a comprehensive knowledge of the activities of the masses in each period of our history will require painstaking examination of documents and all available records, including folklore, as well as inspired deduction. An arduous task, it is nevertheless possible considering what anthropologists and archeologists have been able to do with societies long dead. But since such a history will surely take decades of study, it must be postponed to a period when social conditions will afford scholars the luxury of spending years on this investigation (1977:6).

Such “activities of the masses,” that will help “clarify the genesis and development of the peculiar Filipino consciousness” and thus “present a fuller, more balanced picture of reality” is the “usable past” that Constantino is interested in digging out to reexamine and reinterpret. To do so, he insists on the imperative of emancipation as the only guide marking out the path to be followed by the searching examination and reinterpretation of the past in the service of the desired future. Politics and history, then, are inseparable. In fact they constitute an organic unity, and the burning issues of the present give vitality to historical analysis.

In Constantino’s system, it is inevitable that the search for an adequate historical consciousness becomes the assertion of national self-consciousness. Indeed, to insist on the rights of nationalism against the background of colonial ideologies and practices is equivalent to defending the elementary rights of emancipation and self-determination. This means that the continuing arrogance of the so-called “great nations” who, reluctant to give up their dominance from the colonial past, and who remain key players in the less obvious but no less exploitative neo-colonial power politics of the present, must be openly challenged. Furthermore, the newly-found proud self-awareness of the still brutalized “societies without a history” must be clearly voiced by juxtaposing the lessons of the re-interpreted “usable history” to the humiliating images of colonial supremacy that continue to plague them.

To do so is not easy since, taking cues from their imperial past, it is characteristic of neo-colonial powers to extol the virtues of international brotherhood while in fact ruthlessly defending the same selfish exploitative interests they had in the past. Having firmly secured positions in the world order of domination the oppressors can misrepresent themselves as a true internationalists and condemn all attempts at emancipation

from neo-colonial rule as a dangerous capitulation to the "ideology of nationalism."

Hypocritical subterfuge is nothing new to those victimized by colonialism. In the Filipino experience, the epitome of such deceptions was reached during the height of the American colonial occupation, and its vestiges remain to the present, very much alive in the colonial mentality exhibited by modern Filipinos. The deceptions perpetrated by the ascendancy of American colonialism that caused the "worlding" of the Philippines then are still true with American neo-colonial hegemony today.

Some recent studies of the modern "worlding" of the Philippines are Reynaldo Ileto's "U.S. Conquest and the Production of Knowledge About the Philippines: A Preliminary Inquiry" (1991), E. San Juan's "U.S. Imperial Hegemony and the Forging of a Culture of Resistance" (1990), and "Postcolonial Theory Versus Philippine Reality: The Challenge of Third World Resistance Culture to Global Capitalism" (1995) also by San Juan. All three take issue with Stanley Karnow's popular book, *In Our Image: America's Empire in the Philippines* (1989).

Ileto questions Karnow's thesis that the American experiment in democracy failed in the Philippines because of the tenacity of traditional Filipino values. For Ileto, Karnow's assertion is a reinscription of colonial scholarship about the Philippines which located and continues to locate present day problems in the Philippines to what Karnow calls the "complicated and often baffling web of real and ritual kinship ties." The effect of this discourse, according to Ileto, is the expunging or at least the downplaying of U.S. culpability in the shape that the Philippines is in right now.

San Juan sees Karnow as essentially arguing that "Filipinos cannot fashion their independent future, their sovereign destiny, without the help of the U.S. government and its corporate elite."

For San Juan, Karnow's conclusion that the interim accord signed between the U.S. and Foreign Secretary Raul Manglapus in 1988 "represented an indirect admission by Filipinos that they desperately needed American assistance—and would for years to come" replicates "all the cliches and banalities of U.S. scholarly expertise in the Philippines—from Leroy to Hayden and Taylor" (1990:1). San Juan adds:

A paltry version of the "special relationship" between the dominant metropolitan power and the peripheral neocolony, Karnow's concept of the "shared experience" between Filipinos and Americans reduces the historic truth of colonial dominance into a not so harmonious family relationship. The TV documentary derived from the book, however, reveals this family as disciplined and normalized by a patriarchal authority without whose intervention Filipinos would have never saved themselves from (among other evils in this century) the diabolical Marcos dictatorship (1990:1).

Ileto exposes Karnow's "half-conscious reproduction of the imperialist argument" as fallacious, his espousal of the "Immaculate Conception" view of American foreign policy naïve, and his "suggestion that [Filipinos] submitted voluntarily to their exploitation" as insulting (1991:1-2). Such history erases what Filipino historians like Renato Constantino, Hernando Abaya and others have tried to recuperate: the endurance of the Filipino revolutionary tradition from the time of early anti-Spanish insurrections to the popular resistance against U.S. colonial occupation and its persisting stranglehold over native institutions and psyche.

This submerged or repressed tradition of revolt . . . can only be discovered in the current multifaceted struggle of subalterns, a community of victims now undergoing profound radical changes (1991:2).

The unmasking of neo-colonial deceptions such as the ones outlined above is imperative since, as continuations of the colonial deceptions of the past, it is through such deceptions that the colonial history of the Philippines continues to hold its sway over the Filipino people. The reason why colonial mentality continues to exert a strong influence upon the Filipino consciousness lies in the perpetuation of colonial attitudes stemming from such deceptions that have long been imbedded in the people's history that they have been accepted as an integral part of their identity as a people. It is to the exposure of such mendacities that the process of decolonization and demystification is aimed at. A rereading and reinterpretation of Filipino history is thus in order.

Rediscovering the Past: Decolonizing History

The task of cultural decolonization in the Philippines is considerably more difficult due to the peculiarities of American imperialism. It is easier to face an adversary that is openly repressive than one that claims to be one's "liberator" and great friend—as when the oppressor succeeds in misrepresenting exploitation as generous "aid" for "development" and "modernization." The deceptions were so well hidden under American colonialism's altruistic, benevolent mien that, after the initial phase of bloody colonial repression, outright domination was touted and consequently accepted as paternalistic concern. The oppressor took on the air of an "emancipator" whose sole

motive for coming was to liberate Filipinos from the tyranny of Spain, and whose only interest in remaining was to teach the people the ideals of democracy that they may benefit from it, enabling them to truly enjoy the blessings of American civilization that their benefactors were only too willing to share. Behind this benevolent posturing was the knowledge that the need for a direct and costly political-military domination would diminish to the same degree as its functions will be taken over by the increasingly more powerful structures of economic dependency.

Education became the key to achieve this deception. Thus the accent of colonial rule was shifted from direct military control to the complete domination of the economy and ultimately, of the people through the subtlety of education. Control of education was so important that the U.S. refused to relinquish it until as late as 1935 when independence was granted, notwithstanding all mystifying semblance of “autonomy” early on. To quote Constantino:

Control of the economic life of a colony is basic to colonial control. Some imperial nations do it harshly but the United States could be cited for the subtlety and uniqueness of its approach. For example, free trade was offered as a generous gift of American altruism. Concomitantly, the educational policy had to support this view and to soften the effects of the slowly tightening noose around the necks of the Filipinos. The economic motivations of the Americans in coming to the Philippines were not at all admitted to the Filipinos. . . . from the first school-days . . . to the present, Philippine history books have portrayed America as a benevolent nation who came here only to save us from Spain and to spread amongst

us the boons of liberty and democracy. The almost complete lack of understanding at present of those economic motivations and of the presence of American interests in the Philippines, are the most eloquent testimony to the success of the education for colonials which we have undergone (1966:46-47).

Colonial education cast a spell of mystifications on Filipinos resulting in the loss of their identity and of their confidence on themselves as a people, both of which are characteristic of colonial mentality. Is it possible to break that spell? How?

Constantino insists that the task of decolonization should include the effort to construct a counter-consciousness. Such an effort begins with the presentation of a new approach to history. The reason for this is that

History has been used to capture our minds, if not by outright forgery and falsification, at least by the subtle distortion of certain events with the result that our conquerors have been transformed into altruistic and self-abnegating partners. This distorted history has been an important factor in the development of our colonial consciousness . . . (which) in turn has made it pathetically easy for colonizers to make us Filipinos believe that the policies in pursuit of their own selfish designs were really for our own good. Philippine history, therefore, is one area in which we must struggle in order to free our minds so we may at last act in our own best interests (Constantino 1978:260).

It is obvious that Constantino sees the urgency of counteracting the influence of colonial ideas and rectifying the

historical myths that have been accepted as reality—to demythologize and demystify Philippine history and uncover the truth. A nationalist stance is important in the endeavor because “it endows the serious history student a definite point of view . . . (which) immediately alerts him to any form of distortion . . . that merely serve the ends of colonial powers and ruling groups” (1978:263).

Constantino elaborates a critique of the distortions that a number of Filipino historians have added. First is the idealization of pre-Spanish culture. He looks at it as the “drive to present an exaggerated view of pre-colonial achievements” that concentrates on “building an illusory past on which to base our identity as a people” thereby neglecting the central aspect of that identity “which is to be found in the long history of anti-colonial struggle of our people” (1978:263). For him, the unifying thread of Philippine history is the people’s resistance to colonial oppression.

Second is the uncritical celebration as heroes of every leader who ever fought against the Spaniards (though not, he wryly observes, as readily bestowed on those who fought the Americans). While the struggles of all these leaders point to the fact that Filipinos fought against oppression, the failure of historians to discuss the “nature of the societies in revolt” and to analyze the “conduct and motivations of the leaders” has ended up in accepting as heroes some who do not deserve such honor (1978:264).

Third is the fetish of objectivity where historians merely present a compendium of historical data. Though such historians believe that their objectivity protects them from distortion by presenting only facts, the result of that very objectivity, Constantino believes, is in fact a distortion:

given the weight of colonial storiography in the sources consulted and the added burden of one’s

own colonial consciousness, a bare recitation of events presented in impeccable chronology would still result in distortion because the writer would, wittingly or unwittingly, be accepting the premises of colonial scholarship (1978:265).

In order to be useful, Constantino argues, objective facts must be presented within a framework and a point of view—that of the people: “The real objective of history is the version written from the vantage point of the people” (1978:267). It is the people who make history, and therefore history must be written from their point of view.

Partisan scholarship is essential in doing this, for it is a scholarship that, eschewing the myth of objectivity, takes a stand on the side of the people, giving voice to their way of looking at their world, providing a record of their interaction with that world, their coming into being not only in, but with, the world. That, after all, is the essence of history.

Thus, the construction of counter-consciousness involves the demystification of colonial history and the decolonization of culture, a process that begins with the critical reevaluation and rewriting of history. The goal in rewriting history is to construct a history that truly reflects heart and soul of the Filipino people.

The Inadequacy of Post-Colonial Historiography

The efforts to rewrite Philippine history by post-colonial Filipino scholars and historians have done much to demystify and correct the distortions perpetrated by colonial historiography in the Philippines. However, such efforts are still inadequate in offering a history that is truly reflective of the people’s consciousness.

Part of the reason for this inadequacy is that the period covered by post-colonial historiography represents a very short time-span in the history of the Philippines. Covering much of the colonial and post-colonial eras, it does not go far back enough to include pre-colonial times. What we are now is a result not only of a specific period of history, no matter how significant that period may be to the judgment of the historian. The history of the Filipino people started long before the Spanish, and later, the American colonial invaders trampled the shores of the archipelago. Philippine history as history reflecting the consciousness of the people must account for who we were before the colonizers came, in order to understand our reactions to, and the changes that occurred resulting from, our interactions with the colonial invaders. In short, we need to understand who we were before the colonizers came, if we are to understand who we are, and why we are what we are now, as a result of our colonial experience.

The object here, contrary to Constantino's critique, is not the idealization of pre-Spanish culture geared to build an illusory past on which to base our identity as a people. Rather, it is to acknowledge and reckon with a concrete past, without which our identity for the present cannot be adequately apprehended.

This is all the more important when one considers that what we now refer to as the modern Filipino worldview, which includes the oppressed, proletarian, colonial mentality that post-colonial scholarship aims to decolonize, cannot be understood and accounted for without reference to pre-colonial culture. Since worldview determines how an event is experienced, evaluated, and recalled, it not only influences, but also to a large extent, ordains and certifies what is considered history. Philippine history therefore, as seen from the standpoint of the people, does not consist only of the "usable past" in terms of the people's resistance to colonialism as Constantino insists. Rather,

it involves the sum total of the people's experiences as apprehended, interpreted and reconstructed by the people in accordance with their worldview.

Thus the inadequacy of post-colonial scholarship in its attempt to construct a genuine people's history stems from its failure to take seriously the people's worldview *in toto*. This is where the method of ethnohistory becomes crucial as a complement and corrective to the failings of post-colonial historiography. Ethnohistory, according to Luzbetak, "is a study of culture over a long period of time" (1988:145). It is not just a study of historical events or occurrences at a particular period of time. This is so important because, quoting Luzbetak's critique of Latin American, "their relatively long histories are as responsible for their woes as the more recent North American dependency and imperialism" (1988:146).

Addressing the pressing socio-economic and political needs of a people is necessary and must be done. Looking at history, exposing the lies and uncovering the truth are important as initial steps towards finding solutions to the problems. Yet if there is one thing to be learned about liberation movements in the recent past, it is this: that liberating people from the oppressive situation without addressing the deep-level issues of how they perceive themselves and the world will prove to be an exercise in futility. For as long as the oppressive consciousness remains strong, there will always be those who will try to exploit others. And as long as the oppressed consciousness is there, there will always be those who will accept their repressive situations, for, as Jose Rizal, the national hero of the Philippines put it, "there are no tyrants where there are no slaves."

Ethnohistory completes the historical picture that post-colonial historiography leaves unfinished. The backdrop of pre-colonial Filipino studies that it can contribute provides the necessary "time depth" (Townsend 1970:71) that Luzbetak

(1988:145) believes is necessary for a more complete knowledge and understanding of a people.

Beyond History into Worldview

The term “ethnohistory” is somewhat new in the academic world, so that it does not yet have a generally accepted definition. The journal *Ethnohistory* featured a series of articles in 1961 and 1962 attempting to arrive at a definition the term. The general consensus among the authors was to define ethnohistory not as a discipline but rather as a method or technique. Ethnohistory was seen as a means of combining the generalizing tendencies of ethnology with the careful handling of sources and the regard for time sequence characteristic of history (Carmack 1972:230).

Tippett’s definition of ethnohistory as “a methodological approach to the extraction, classification, and evaluation of cultural information contained in historical documents” (1973:18) certainly agrees with other scientists in regarding ethnohistory as basically a research methodology.

Carmack (1972:230) and Sturtevant (1966:6-7) see three basic elements in ethnohistory: 1) the focus on past conditions of the culture; 2) the use of the traditions of the people whether they be oral or written; and 3) an emphasis on change over time in the culture studied.

Margaret Lantis (1970:5) provides several definitions of the term. First, it is the “use of written historical materials in preparing an ethnography.” This usually involves a reconstruction of a culture using the memory of informants to supplement documentary data. Second, ethnohistory can be seen as the “use of historical materials to show culture change.” Often including recoveries by classical archaeology, “history” can be either synchronic or diachronic. A third definition that is most

useful where there is a dearth of historical data is the “use of a people’s oral literature in reconstructing their own history.” Here, “subsidiary studies of a group’s attention to and use of history or of the forms in which their history is preserved” may be necessary.

Based on the foregoing definitions of ethnohistory, several basic questions need to be raised immediately.

First, who does the ethnohistorical study/writing? One of the objections with regard to colonial historiography is that such history was written by foreigners, thus raising the issue of history written *for* the people, rather than history by the people themselves. The same objection may apply to ethnohistory, faced with the reality that the vast majority of anthropologists/ethnohistorians are foreign to the culture they are studying and writing about.

Second, what standards are to be used in selecting and evaluating the data? Just as foreign historians imposed foreign historiographic standards in the selection and evaluation of data in colonial historiography, so would the likelihood be in ethnohistorical studies, given the preponderance of Western or Western-trained ethnohistorians.

Third, what historical data is to be used? Tippett and Lantis both want to use written historical materials as basis for ethnohistorical study. The problem is that most of the written historical materials were written by Western historians, thus once again raising the issue of the reliability of the data.

It must be pointed out that ethnohistorians like Tippett have taken pains to ensure that ethnohistory be written with the people’s worldview in mind. Thus, Tippett insists that, “The historical judgements of the cross-cultural historian have to be made within the values and thought-forms of the people he studies - not his own” (1973:16).

Tippett suggests a methodology called “upstreaming” for discovering a people’s history. The method consists of starting with what is known in the present and proceeding chronologically backwards or against the stream of history to the past. Thus, if I were, for instance, writing a history of my family, I start with what I know about myself, then move backwards to what I know about my parents, then my grandparents and so on. I found the method quite useful in tracing my own family tree.

Despite efforts to define ethnohistory as a methodology that seeks to understand history as it is seen by the people, the question remains as to whether or not ethnohistorians like Tippett have succeeded in avoiding the use of Western criterion in making historical judgments. The problem has to do with the ethnohistorian’s concern with getting to the “facts of the case”.

Thus, in setting forth the basic components of Fijian oral tradition, Tippett points out that Fijians have their own standards for credibility and their ways of validating tradition. Validation, Tippett insists, should therefore be done from within the culture (1973:30).

However, Tippett immediately goes on to contradict his own insistence on the internal validation of oral tradition. That getting to the facts of the case means, at least for Tippett, using external criteria for validation is evident:

Can these be identified by external evidence - ship logs, etc., or by modern technology like astronomical calculations? Can they be put in sequence, like the two Fijian epidemics? Can they be related to ship movements, migrating people and such things which may be dated (1973:31)?

The impression that one gets is the inevitability of the ethnohistorian having to measure what he/she finds against the “facts,” and that validation implies an outside standard. Thus,

“while getting to the facts” may be a necessary step in the methodology, it is important to recognize it as an etic criterion, meaning that it is from outside the culture. As such, brings to the history of a people a standard from another people, and evaluates their history by that foreign standard.

This is not to say that the outsider’s perspective is necessarily wrong. It can be very helpful to look at the history of a people from an etic perspective. Comparison is usually necessary for an outsider to begin to grasp the new viewpoint being explored. However, an ethnohistorical study that truly seeks to come up with a genuine history of a people must seriously take into account the people’s own view of history, and thus, the evaluation and validation are best done by the people themselves, using standards they understand. An emic perspective on history is therefore a necessity.

An emic perspective requires the ethnohistorian not simply to look at the available historical data him/herself and from it construct an ethnohistory for the people, but rather, to look at the way the people themselves do history. Here, the emphasis is not on the ethnohistorian and his/her method of looking at, interpreting, and verifying the available data. The focus is instead on the people themselves, and their method of doing history. Ethnohistory then becomes the study of the way a people do their history.

This is where ethnohistory becomes so valuable as a supplement to post-colonial historiography. While post-colonial historiography insists in seeing history from the standpoint of the people, it does not say how that can be done. One gets the feeling that despite the efforts of post-colonial historians to seriously take the people’s point of view, the historian’s perspective will get very much in the way.

Ethnohistory circumvents this difficulty by looking beyond the product (history) and focusing on the producers (the people)

themselves and their mode of production. This means going beneath the data that the traditional historian is interested in, even deeper than the motivations (e.g., Constantino's nationalism) that the post-colonial historiographer looks for, into the deep-level assumptions, commitments and allegiances (worldview) that inform and determine those motivations.

Understanding a people's history requires knowledge of the processes involved in doing history. History provides the explanations for questions of the present, and such explanations are shaped by our worldview. To be meaningful, explanations need to be consistent with our worldview for it is the worldview assumptions that are the basic deep level beliefs through which we see the world. Our worldview uses the past to give its definition of our place in the present.

Thus the Filipino worldview has much to do with how Filipinos define themselves and their place in the present. Simply knowing the historical data is not enough, nor even the motivations that shaped them. One may, for instance, point to the historical data to explain why Filipinos may feel inferior to an American. That historical data could be that the Filipinos were under the colonial rule of the Americans, who educated, or, as Constantino puts it, miseducated the people to passively accept American hegemony in their country. One may even point to the American motivations behind the historical data—perhaps it was out of genuine compassion, or perhaps in order to dominate them as to be able to exploit them. But that does not explain why Filipinos reacted to colonialism the way they did, nor adequately enucleate the processes of change that were involved. These last relate to the Filipino way of looking at things, which has to do with their worldview.

Understanding the people's worldview gives a deeper understanding of a people's history, pointing not only to what things are, but also why things are the way they are. Again, this

is important because merely changing the historical circumstances (or the data) of history does not easily rectify the errors that have occurred, nor the effects of those errors in the present.

For instance, to a people who have been enslaved, and as a result have developed a slave mentality, being given physical freedom is not necessarily tantamount to being free. Stories abound regarding slaves who, given freedom after the Civil War, chose to remain with their former masters under conditions that were not much different to what they had before. The physical reality of slavery was removed, but the experience of slavery continued to oppress them long after. What needed to be addressed went deeper than history, beyond mere physical reality. What needed to be changed was the psyche, the mind, the consciousness, the soul, the way that the slaves looked at and interpreted themselves and the world, in short, their worldview.

For Filipinos, the physical reality of colonialism is no longer there, but the effects of that past reality remain today. If the Filipino is to be free from the vestiges of the past that continue to oppress and enslave, steps must be taken to bring about changes that will arrest such harmful impinging of the past on the present. The perfidies of history cannot be allowed to continue exerting undue influence upon us. We are not simply at the mercy of history. As historical subjects, we can, and must, begin to write our own history.

Rewriting History

Where, and how, do we as a people, begin to write our history?

In a very real sense, we have already begun. We have begun by saying no to our oppressive past. Thus far, our past has been a negation of who we are as a people. It negated the validity of

our claim to be the subjects of, and thus write, our own history. It denied us our voice in the shaping of our destiny as a people. We have begun by voicing our dissatisfaction, by negating the negation.

And we have not remained in that negativity. We have also taken positive steps to rectify the distortions and redress the wrongs inflicted upon us by that negative past. To such a project, post-colonial scholarship has put in much of its effort. We have started to dig out the past, to uncover lies and expose the truth about our past and about who we are. We are in the process of rediscovering ourselves and rewriting our history.

Two big events in our recent past point to the fact that we have already begun. The first was our refusal to endure and abide with tyranny any longer. Our colonial past taught us to be long-suffering in the face of tyranny. Knowing that, Ferdinand Marcos took advantage of it. But he overestimated the people's capacity to endure injustice, and underestimated the smoldering fire of freedom that was always there in the heart of the Filipino even while patiently enduring oppression. In the end, he paid for it.

The second was the decision to not extend the lease to the American bases in the Philippines. Those bases were the most apparent vestiges of American colonialism in the country. In the past, the Filipinos deluded themselves into thinking that the bases were there for their own protection. It was, for them, a sign of the enduring friendship of the United States, the benevolent friend and paternal mentor whose only interest in remaining in the country was to continue to extend the benefits of American Democracy to it.

Both tied the Filipinos to their oppressive past. Repudiating them meant breaking away from that past. It was a painful, heart-rending process, for no matter how negative the past, it

was still a part us. But it was also a liberating process, and thus, an exhilarating experience for us.

What happened were the results of Filipino history reexamined. The distortions were uncovered, the truths discovered, and learned, resulting in an a new understanding of history that challenged and galvanized people to action. Sometimes, mere exposure to the truth is all that is needed to bring about necessary changes. During such times, changes may just come naturally. But more often, changes must be done deliberately and painfully. What are some of the things that might be done to affect changes where they are needed most?

Liberating the Mind

Foremost is the liberation of the oppressed Filipino consciousness from its colonial captivity. I have already mentioned that history is both our link to the past and our foundation for the present. From it we learn about the past and get our clues to interpret the present. From it we learn who we are and why we are what we are. On it we base our self-understanding or identity.

If the understanding of the past is based on a lie, then a faulty apprehension of the present results. For instance, because in the past we have been made to believe that we cannot stand on our own, we find, as part of who we are in the present, a proclivity towards dependency—our government on foreign (often spelled American) aid, our churches on mission support. Colonial mentality, of which dependency is but one of its many manifestations, is mainly rooted in the distortions of the past, therefore correcting those distortions will go a long way in the rectification of its effects in the present.

Education, or to be precise, colonial education, was used to mold our minds and make us believe in the historical distortions

perpetrated by the colonialists to assert and maintain their ascendancy over the country. It played a central role in the pacification of Filipinos, turning them into docile, unquestioning subjects of colonial oppression. Just as education was the key to the colonization of the Filipinos, so is education the key to their decolonization. Education now must be used to agitate Filipinos into a state of dissatisfaction about the way things are, to probe, to question, to uncover the lies about their history, to discover the truth about themselves, and to find their true identity.

Education in the service of cultural decolonization should aim not only at rooting out the distortions of the past, nor just at correcting those distortions, but also at finding ways to see to it that such wrongs in the past may not be repeated. In theological terms, what needs to happen is “repentance” not merely in terms of recognizing that one has sinned (believing the lie), nor even that of making restitution (correcting) for the harm the sin has done—after doing so, the sinner can easily turn around and do it over again—but rather, in terms of *metanoia*, a transformation by the “renewing of the mind” (Rom. 12:2). In worldview terminology, this means a paradigm shift, a change of values, of one’s way of looking at the world, a worldview change.

I have referred earlier to Kraft’s contention that the locus of worldview change is the mind. If the Filipino is to be free from the debilitating effects of the colonial past, there must be a liberation, a freeing of the mind that would trigger changes in the way the Filipino perceives him/herself, the world, and his/her relationships with others in it.

This paradigm shift is what Constantino calls the development of a “counter-consciousness” in the service of cultural decolonization. Since the colonizing of the Filipino consciousness is the direct result of colonial miseducation, what needs to be done is to reeducate the Filipino in such a way as to

encourage the development of what Paolo Freire calls a “critical consciousness” in his book of the same title (1969).

Such a critical consciousness is necessary to counterbalance the Filipino predisposition to unquestioningly accept as true and superior anything that comes out of the West, while dismissing his/her own as inferior. Education for critical consciousness aims for a reversal of attitude where the Filipino learns to appreciate his/her own culture and worldview again.

What has been said of the consciousness of the Filipino as a whole can be said of the Filipino religious consciousness. For instance, the ascendancy of Western colonial literature in general is reflected in the religious literature produced in the Philippines. As I pointed out earlier, the Filipino theological enterprise in the Philippines is pretty much a borrowing from the West. It does not reflect the worldview of the people, nor the ethos of the culture. Being so, it cannot address the deep-level needs of the people.

As such, the post-colonial critique of Philippine colonial history also applies to Filipino theology. Just as colonialism did not allow the people to become creators of their own history, so has it not allowed them to produce their own theology. Just as history has been created for them, so has Western theology been imposed upon them. Prevented from becoming subjects in their own history, they were reduced into historical impotence, their voices unheard. The continuing dominance of Western theology in the Philippines points to this “muting,” concretized in the impotence of Filipino theologians in producing a theology that is Biblical in essence but significantly Filipino in temperament and praxis. Thus, a post-colonial critique of the Filipino religious consciousness, and in effect, of Filipino theology and practice, is also in order.

The development of a critical stance towards western theology is an important step in correcting the predominance of

western style theologizing in the Philippines. In the midst of a foreign, though firmly entrenched, theological milieu as is found in the country, objectivity becomes an illusion. This lack of objectivity is due to the natural tendency of colonial-minded theologians who, by virtue of their western intellectual framework, readily accept the presuppositions of western theology as their own.

One way to counterbalance this natural tendency is to deliberately take a negative initial stance towards western theology. Such a stance could pave the way to a more balanced and objective reading of western theology. I will call this stance the “hermeneutics of skepticism.”¹ This skepticism is not epistemological in nature. But the term, rather, underlines a methodology that demands a hard, objective analysis. Furthermore, it is to be distinguished from Segundo’s hermeneutics of suspicion that does not deal with the theology itself but questions the ideological motives of the theologian.

Such a stance will allow for an atmosphere of theological inquiry that previously was not possible due to the Filipino theologian’s dependence on western formulations of theology. Hopefully such an atmosphere will in turn encourage the development of a liberated and liberating theology that can speak to the real needs of the Filipino people.

Because the Filipino church is a product of its own particular history that is rooted in the colonial history of the Philippines, the analysis of the effects of colonial mentality on it necessitates an examination of the church history. Also, since much of that history shares the characteristics of colonial history in that it was also written mostly by colonial historians, a post-colonial

¹ In the New Testament are two kinds of skepticism: the stubborn and prideful skepticism of the Scribes and Pharisees that Jesus condemned, and the faith-seeking skepticism of Thomas that Jesus recognized and honored. The latter kind of skepticism is what I am referring to here.

critique of Philippine church history is likewise needed. A project of decolonizing the church must also be engaged in as part of the process of historical re-examination that should culminate in the rewriting of the history of Christianity and the church in the Philippines. Such a history should reflect the struggle of Filipino Christians to understand their faith against the background of their nation's history on the one hand, and the complexities of its society and culture on the other.

Such an endeavor will hopefully uncover and correct the historical inaccuracies that Filipinos in general have allowed to affect their understanding of who they are, and the obstacles to a genuine Filipino expression of the Christian faith that are rooted in that self-understanding. It is further hoped that the uncovering of said obstacles will pave the way towards the emergence and development of an authentic Christian faith that Filipinos can claim to be their own.

The effort towards development of a contextualized Filipino theology demands an understanding of the Filipinos way of looking at the world. If theology must speak from and to the Filipino experience of faith, it must, by necessity, take into account the values, commitments and allegiances, in short, the worldview of the Filipino people.

CHAPTER 8

TOWARDS A CONTEXTUALIZED FILIPINO THEOLOGY

Paul's letter to the Corinthians clearly shows his commitment to make the Gospel understood and relevant to culture. He writes:

For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more. And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law, though not being myself under the Law, that I might win those who are under the Law; to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, that I might win those who are without law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some. And I do all things for the sake of the Gospel, that I may become a fellow-partaker of it (1 Cor. 9:19-23).

Contextualization aims for the communication of the Gospel in such a way that it addresses a people's way of looking at the world. Locating the Gospel in the worldview of the people is like setting a diamond on a ring in such a way that the ring brings out the beauty of the diamond, while at the same time, the diamond increases the value of the ring. The Gospel imbedded

in a particular culture on the one hand brings out the best in a culture, making that culture more meaningful, and thus, of greater value to those who belong to it. The uniqueness of the culture on the other brings out a never-yet-seen facet in the Gospel that makes it even more attractive for people to behold. The communicator of the Gospel then is like a jeweler who is able to understand and appreciate the character of both diamond and ring in order for him/her to set the diamond properly on the ring.

Therefore it is incumbent for one who tries to contextualize the Gospel to have a thorough understanding of the culture in which the Gospel is to be set. This necessitates knowledge of the people's worldview. In terms of the Filipino, it means being in touch with the *loob* or *kalooban* which is at the very core of his/her being as a person. *Kalooban* corresponds to the cultural core where lies basic assumptions, values and allegiances that dictates the way the Filipino people understands the world. What are some of these values that the Gospel communicator/contextualizer needs to be in touch with? And how can those values be used to locate the Gospel within the Filipino cultural context?

What follows is an attempt to apply the Gospel to Filipino culture, using the values that I, as one indigenous to that culture, understand to be at its core. I consider it important to emphasize my being indigenous to the culture, since I believe the responsibility of contextualizing the Gospel to a culture belongs primarily to the Christians indigenous to that particular culture.

The attempt will not be a full-blown endeavor to present a systematized exposition of theology in the context of Filipino culture. Rather it will be composed of some carefully chosen cultural values that I believe are crucial to the project of contextualizing the Gospel to Filipino culture, and thus, of developing a contextualized theology for the Filipino. As such, it

will indicate relevant theological themes that may serve as points of departure, and suggest how such themes may be used. The suggestions will therefore, at best be tentative.

Applying the Gospel to Core Filipino Values

Not all cultural values are useful in propagating the Gospel. Some values may in fact so contradict the Gospel that they are better left untouched at first to be dealt with later. Other values however, are so identical to the values taught in Scripture it seems almost like a sin not to use them in the propagation of the Gospel. Still others may seem, at first glance, not so useful or even contrary to the Gospel. Yet a closer look may reveal them to be redeemable and consequently useful for making the Gospel easily recognizable and consequently, readily acceptable to a people in a particular culture.

The majority of the values I have chosen here are of the third kind. Traditional, or more precisely, colonial, interpretations of these values have attached so much negative connotations to them they seem hardly worth looking into. But a more serious look at these values reveal some deep-level meanings that when taken into consideration can render them quite useful to the Filipino Christian who seeks to have a suitable cultural expression of his/her faith. Furthermore, their being situated at the core of the Filipino value system makes these values worth at least a second look.

Social Acceptance

Social acceptance is perhaps the highest value that Filipinos hold on to. What others think of him/her is important to Filipinos. A parent, for instance, would tell the child not to do something, and the reason often given would not be because it is

wrong but "*baka ano ang sabihin ng tao,*" (think of what others may say). So the child grows up thinking not so much about the wrongness or morality of a certain action, but about what others will think of him/her as a consequence. This is not to say the child grows up not knowing what is right or wrong, but rather that the morality of an action does not reside on the action itself. It resides on the morality that society places on it. The problem is that, if what stops me from doing something wrong is what others will think and not so much the wrongness of the act, then as long as others do not know, it is okay to do it.

This moral dilemma can be addressed by the emphasis that there is a God who sees everything, one from whom nothing can be hidden. He is a God who sees not only the wrongness of the act itself, but also the motive behind the act. More important, this all-seeing God is also a loving God who is always ready to forgive those who come to him with contrite hearts.

Concern for what others *think* is the negative expression of the genuine concern for *others*. I have chosen to begin the discussion of Filipino values on this somewhat negative note to emphasize the fact that most values have both good and bad sides, and that the usefulness of a value to Gospel is often dependent on which side is emphasized. As already mentioned, the colonial interpretation of Filipino values has generally dwelt on the more negative side, and the low self-image that Filipinos have has contributed to the perpetuation of accentuating the negative. The responsible thing for a Filipino Christian, looking for a cultural expression of his/her faith, to do is to now balance the scales by accentuating the positive. Further, it is important to see if the negative connotations can still be redeemed, thus making the value useful to the Gospel.

So to emphasize the positive, I have mentioned above the positive side of genuine concern for others, a value that is not hard to find biblical support for. One of the main features of

Filipino culture is group orientation, which is why social acceptance is such an important value. Group life cannot succeed without members of the group showing genuine concern for the others.

The expression of genuine concern for others is best illustrated in the context of the Filipino family. One of the things that a Filipino is taught early in life is the value of *pagmamalasakit*. *Pagmamalasakit* is concern for others expressed in the willingness to sacrifice for it. Thus, parents will sacrifice everything for the sake of their children—to get them a good education, for instance. Here, other siblings often join in the sacrifice by foregoing their chance at education themselves and working to earn money to help send their siblings to school. This is usually true of older children who will usually postpone their plans for the future, including marriage, to help out. The younger ones who received help will, in turn, help the families of their older siblings by sending them to school. Expressions of this *pagmamalasakit* often extends beyond the nuclear family to include distant relatives and ritual kin.

The application of *pagmamalasakit* to the Gospel message is clear. God, our Father, sacrificed his only begotten son for our sake. Christ, our older brother, willingly sacrificed his own life for us. We, in turn, can reciprocate by offering ourselves as living sacrifices to God.

Another feature of Filipino group orientation is interdependence (*pagmamalasakit* applies here too). Since members of the group depend so much on each other, decisions on important matters are usually made by the consensus of group. Individual or personal decisions are reached only after consultations with the group, and actions following the decision are either with the tacit approval of the group or with the group's cooperation.

This application to evangelism is easy to see. Emphasis should be placed on group evangelism, rather than individual evangelism or the evangelistic crusade type where individual decisions are often the outcome. Evangelistic Bible study groups are most useful, and those done in the homes are most effective. Here, when the head of the family makes a decision for Christ, all the other members are likely to follow suit.

This manner of evangelism affirms group life and the cultural structures of relationships in the home. It also protects the family from being torn apart by the Gospel, which at times may be necessary as Christ himself indicated, but should not be the policy of the evangelistic endeavor. Where a family opens its home to the teaching of the Gospel, members who do not make a decision for Christ are often tolerant of other members who do, and may turn out to be easier to evangelize because of it. Further, this often means decisions being made without having to deny one's family and cultural heritage. Biblical examples of the validity of group decisions abound, for instance the household of Cornelius.

In terms of church practice, decision making should reflect this group-orientation by allowing for consensus decisions to be made by the whole church. This will avoid the difficulties that happen when decisions are made by voting, where calls for the division of the house literally end up dividing the house. This is so because voting drives a wedge of disunity between members of the group who are used to express their oneness by their consensus decisions. Because decisions are not made by the consensus of the group, those who disagree do not feel obligated to honor those decisions, angering the majority, and driving the two groups further apart.

There is then the need to develop a theology of evangelism whose main emphasis is the group or the family. Such a theology would include the themes of the church as family, and,

more than just any family, the family of God. The Fatherhood of God would be an important feature, emphasizing the care and provision, the guidance and protection, and the discipline of the Father, a theme that is often neglected but is such an integral part of the Biblical teaching, and one which will resonate with well with Filipinos.

The concept of Christ as brother will be an important theological theme as well. This is due to the fact that because of the paternalistic and authoritarian emphasis in the relationships in the home and society, the most meaningful and open relationships happen between siblings in the home and between peer groups in the larger community. This would address the problem of a distant God that Filipinos, due to their experiences with their authoritarian earthly fathers, and also due to the concept of a disinterested and distant *Bathala* (God) of the traditional animistic religion, are bound to feel.

Another emphasis would be the work of the Holy Spirit. Here, focusing on the feminine characteristics of God such as tenderness and compassion would be important, since Filipinos are very attached to their mothers. This explains the popularity of Marian devotion in the Philippines. Mary is the one Filipinos pray to for intercession with God. This goes with the structure of relationships in the Filipino home where children, wanting to ask for a favor from their father, would usually go through the mother, and the mother would deal with dad. Also, when punished by the father, it is to the mother that children run for comfort, which is also why Filipinos look to Mary for comfort and protection. The emphasis on the Holy Spirit as exhibiting the motherly love of God would be an important substitute for Marian worship in the Philippines.

The significance that Filipinos place on not only their immediate families but also on the extended family, composed of distant consanguineal relatives, affinal, and ritual, kin, should

also be addressed by a contextualized Filipino theology. Here, the concept of *angkan* or the clan comes to play. Biblical themes of God's dealings with his people through the clan should be studied and utilized. Examples would be God's promise to Abraham of descendants (*angkan*) that will eventually become a nation (*bansa*), the division of God's people according to different tribal clans, and the emphasis on the Messiah as coming from the line (*angkan*) of David. The promise of God in Isaiah 60:22 that the smallest one will become a thousand (clan) and the least one a mighty nation through a process that God will hasten himself points to the prospect of a major spiritual activity where God will use the *angkan* for his purposes. Such a prospect can materialize into people's movements in the magnitude of clans and nations. Would the Filipino nation be one of those whom God uses?

One value connected to the Filipino group-orientation that has received negative connotations is what is commonly referred to as SIR, for "smooth interpersonal relationships." SIR has been defined as conformity, simply going along with the others as a conflict-avoidance mechanism. A common cultural expression of this SIR is *pakikisama* or yielding to the group. *Pakikisama* has been considered a vice in the sense of it being used to force another person conform to the wishes or desires of a group, to the point of compromising one's principles.

What critics of *pakikisama* have not considered is the self-negation or the self-sacrifice involved in yielding to the group. Thus a person may be asked to do something which demands a sacrifice of his efforts, money and time. If what is asked for redounds to the welfare of the group, or cooperation (going along) with the group for the common good, then *pakikisama* is to be considered a virtue rather than a vice. But like all virtues it can be abused, and the unfortunate thing is that people who do

not understand the logic of the value in relation to the worldview have only noticed the negatives.

Likewise SIR, as avoidance of conflict can be seen in a very bad light when interpreted using the logic of the value orientations of another culture. Seen from the light of a confrontative, individualistic culture, it may indeed be harmful to the individual who would end up with a neurosis resulting from conflict avoidance that deprives him/her of a way to ventilate his/her negative feelings. But persons coming from a group-oriented culture are aware of other coping mechanisms unavailable to outsiders. Euphemistic language, for instance, would not suffice for a person from the west to describe negative feelings, who would then go ahead and "be frank" about it. The desire not to offend, which goes with SIR and euphemistic language, has been seen as encouraging dishonesty by those belonging to other cultures. But to another cultural insider who understands the message conveyed by the euphemism, it is honest enough.

Seen from within culture then, the negative connotations of a value, in this case, of SIR and *pakikisama* are to be judged inaccurate and unfair. In a more positive light, SIR becomes an active pursuit for the maintenance of peaceful relationships, or *shalom* in the biblical context of the well-being of the community. Such is the characteristic of a peacemaker whom Jesus called blessed. *Pakikisama* becomes an expression of cooperation which is much needed in society, especially in the body of Christ, where all the members with their different gifts are enjoined to cooperate and use their gifts for the proper functioning of the body.

In Philippine society, *pakikisama* springs forth in the form of *bayanihan*, a community cooperation usually portrayed in terms of people in the whole *barrio* or village coming together to help transfer a house to another location by literally carrying the load

on their shoulders together. It also issues in *balikatan*, the word coming from *balikat* meaning shoulder, conjuring the image of people marching shoulder to shoulder together for a common cause. Both images can be utilized by the Filipino church to convey the message of Filipino Christians working together as one body for the common cause of Christ.

Another value related to group orientation that has received bad press from foreign observers is *gaya-gaya*, which describes the Filipino proclivity for imitative behavior. This characteristic has been blamed for many things including the economic ills of the country, accusing Filipinos of lack of imagination, self-reliance, ingenuity, and inventiveness. Those who have been in the Philippines are likely to have seen “jeepneys” which are used as a means of transportation. The imagination and ingenuity involved in taking an old, World War II army jeep and turning it into beautiful, shiny (if garish) vehicle that can take a load of fifteen passengers (where originally it could take only four) is nothing less than impressive. The self-reliance and inventiveness involved in maintaining such an old mechanism in running condition, sometimes, literally, with just wire and gum boggles the mind.

The point here though, is that the Bible does not look down on imitative behavior. In fact it encourages it. “Imitate me,” says Paul, “just as I also imitate Christ” (1 Cor. 11:1). One can only imagine the tremendous effect of Christians on society if they indeed came to imitate Christ. The theological implications of such a theme, of imitating Christ are considerable, as shown by Thomas a’ Kempis’ book, *The Imitation of Christ*. As to how that would actually look in Philippine society necessitates the application of what we know of Christ in the context of said society, the object of contextualization.

Self-Image

The inferiority complex that resulted from the Filipino experience of colonialism is directly related to this concern for what others think which I have discussed above. The many years of experiencing the shame of being looked down upon, being treated as second-class citizens in one's own country, the degradation of not being allowed to think for oneself by being told what to do and being forced to do it, even the paternalism of well-meaning foreigners, all these took a toll on the Filipino psyche. Sensitive about what others think, the Filipino came to believe that he/she is what others think him/her to be. Thus the feelings of unworthiness, of being lower than, of being not as good as, their erstwhile colonial masters. As one Filipino acquaintance remarked, assessing his own feelings of inferiority, "To be Filipino is to be weak." These feelings, as we have seen are sure signs of colonial mentality.

The Filipino value of *amor-propio*, of self-esteem expressed in the pursuit of personal honor is also related to the Filipino concern for what others think. Personal honor is very important, because such is the basis of acceptance. To be put to shame by the slighting of one's person is one of the worst things that can happen to a Filipino.

The low self-image of Filipinos engenders in them the desire to be accepted for what they are. This explains Filipino sensitivity to personal slights. Strong disagreement with another will often be taken personally, which is why Filipinos are very careful about what they say, and is another reason for euphemistic language.

Another similar value is *hiya* or a deep sense of shame. This is again related to the need for acceptance and low self-image. Personal slights puts a Filipino in a situation of *hiya* or *napahiya*,

being put to shame. Therefore care should be taken not to place another in such a situation.

Hiya has been criticized as the Filipino substitute for guilt. A Filipino, it is said, is more concerned of being found doing something society frowns upon than of doing something wrong. While the criticism is right in pointing out the primacy of the fear of being found out in the Filipino, it is wrong in its tendency to dismiss Filipinos as having no sense of guilt, thus substituting one for the other. Coupled with a deep sense of shame are feelings of guilt, but shame is the deeper, and thus more serious of the two. Guilt is feeling bad over what one has done, and the Filipino certainly feels that. But shame is feeling bad over who one is, and is thus more overpowering. This feeling of shame is clearly related to the low self-image of the Filipino. What is needed here is to develop a theology of shame, to interrogate it in light of Scripture and see how it can be properly dealt with.

Positively, *hiya* makes a Filipino behave at his/her best in the presence of others. Concern for what others think can be turned to concern for what God thinks of my behavior, and since God is concerned with what is right or wrong, then I ought to be concerned about it also. This is the point where emphasis on guilt can come in. The combination of both, what God thinks, and what others will think can issue in a way of life that will be a good testimony to others.

The Gospel message can make a big impact in correcting the low self-image engendered by colonial mentality. The message of Filipinos being so precious that God himself considered it worthy to suffer for them and die in their place. The themes of being children, thus, heirs of the King, of being inheritors of the Kingdom of God, of being part of God's own family, are just some of the ego-boosting Biblical teachings that would resonate well with the Filipino search for a positive self-image. The message is that if indeed God loves and values Filipinos so

much, if God accepts us for what we are, then we must not be as bad as we think we are. Here, a theology of God's love, focusing on his care and concern for those whom society thinks so poorly of will be useful. The humiliation of Christ is another theological theme that may also prove worth exploring

Related to this is God's willingness to suffer for them. The theme of suffering is something that Filipinos will readily latch on to. Those who are familiar with the popular religiosity or "folk Christianity" in the Philippines will not fail to notice the centrality of Christ's suffering in its belief system and practice. One need only to look at the most popular objects of devotion by the masses to realize this.

The image of the crucified Christ graces not only the altars of Catholic churches in the Philippines, but also the necks of the believers who wears the crucifix. Black Nazarene of Quiapo Church is one that devotees flock to every Friday in order to kiss its feet. This particular image depicts the dead Christ entombed, which, according to Douglas Elwood and Patricia Magdamo, is influenced by the Spanish "tragic sense of life" that shapes their religiosity. Elwood and Magdamo quote John Mackay's interpretation of the Spanish Christ: "'Christ stands before us as the tragic Victim, . . . bruised and bloodless,' a 'Horizontal Christ' who has succumbed to death—the embodiment of unrelieved tragedy" (1971:3). This tragic sense of life is something that Filipinos, with their many long years of suffering under oppression, can easily identify with.

This is the reason why Good Friday is more important to Filipinos than Easter. Here again, the pageantry of the religious processions feature suffering: the devotees identifying with the suffering Christ, some by flagellating themselves, others going to the extent of having themselves literally crucified. In this connection also, the importance of Christ's passion to Filipinos is the theme of Reynaldo Ileto's book, *Pasyon and Revolution* where

he analyzes its centrality to the millenarian movements in the Philippines.

The implications are obvious. There is a need for a theology that addresses the pain and suffering of Filipinos, expressed in their "tragic sense of life." Such a theology should look to find meaning in the many long years suffered by Filipinos under colonial oppression, and important, the pain and suffering they are experiencing now. While it should obviously focus on the pain and suffering of Christ to interrogate the Filipino interpretation of, and give meaning to, the same, it should also accentuate the resurrection of Christ as the bright hope at the end of suffering. The victorious image of Christ who triumphed over pain, suffering and death can serve as a contrast to the suffering Christ of the crucifix and the helpless entombed Christ. As such it can also provide an effective antidote to the feelings of helplessness and hopelessness that the latter images engender.

It should be pointed out that American Protestantism did introduce Christian triumphalist themes to the Philippines. However, the failure of Protestantism to adequately address the themes of pain and suffering and of hopelessness that have so much become part of the Filipino religious psyche resulted in the rejection of the triumphalist themes it introduced. Thus, a theology of the resurrection that is much needed in the Philippines necessitates a serious attempt at a theology of pain and suffering. Only as the latter is adequately dealt with will it be possible to develop a theology of the resurrection that can truly address the Filipino religious consciousness.

Other Important Values

Utang na loob (eternal gratitude and loyalty to a benefactor) is another Filipino value that has been misunderstood a lot. Abused, this results in obligations that can become indeed

burdensome. It works like this: When a favor is done to a Filipino by another, the Filipino feels obligated to return the favor. The obligation becomes serious to the degree of the importance of favor done and the status of the person doing the favor. If the person doing the favor is important, and the status of the person receiving favor is lower, then gratitude springs eternal. This is where a lot of abuse can happen, with the person owed the obligation requiring the other to repay by doing something that may compromise his/her principles. Because the debt must be repaid, the person who owes an obligation will do it anyway, or *nakakahiya* (shameful).

This value may be turned to the Gospel's advantage by allowing the Filipino Christian to get the true picture of how enormous a favor was done to him/her by God. That God took upon himself the punishment of sin causing his suffering and death on the cross is enormous enough. Add to this the status of God as the benefactor and the status of the human being as recipient, and gratitude will have to spring eternal indeed.

Repayment for such enormous favor would be the giving up of one's life to God, who then turns around by giving a new, meaningful, abundant life to the person—another big favor. This introduces the idea of God's unceasing love and generosity to the Filipino, of favors from God that can never be repaid, thus giving entry to the teaching about God's grace. All a person can do is serve God as in return for his favors (now understood as grace), a relationship that opens a person's life to even more of God's grace flowing. *Utang na loob*, directed toward God, can thus issue in a lifetime commitment to service in the life of a Filipino.

The last value that I would like to look at is called the *bahala na* attitude of Filipinos. *Bahala na* means something like "Que sera, sera," whatever will be, will be, so leave it alone for there is nothing to be done. Defined this way, it has been dismissed as

fatalism by its critics. This explains, the critics would say, the indolence of the Filipino— not wanting to do anything about a situation, leaving it all to fate. All the Filipino wants to do is whatever it takes to simply get by.

Enriquez refers to a study by an American scholar, Lynn Bostrom comparing *bahala na* with American fatalism. Bostrom, according to him, concluded that “knowing the possible deeper meanings of *bahala na* is ‘not so significant as the fact that it is definitely an expression of fatalism’” (1994:72). The error of disregarding the deeper meanings of a Filipino cultural value is something that colonial scholars of the past often committed, and unfortunately, is still being done today.

Bostrom could not be more wrong. For the deeper meaning of *bahala na* is indeed significant. What Bostrom failed to consider is that *bahala na* is an attitude that signifies strength and determination by the Filipino in the face of obstacles. Confronted by a seemingly insurmountable problem, the Filipino will say *bahala na* and confront it anyway. Furthermore, when Filipinos use the term, it is often followed by the words, “*ang Dios*” changing the whole meaning into leave it or trust it to God. Furthermore, in a conversation with older members of my congregation about *bahala na*, I was told that the terminology may have actually evolved from “*Bathala na*,” with *Bathala* being the name of the Supreme God in Filipino animistic cosmogeny. If this is true, then *bahala na*, far from being fatalistic, is actually an expression of deep faith and trust in God. The value’s applications to Filipino theology are obvious.

Power Encounter: The Challenge of Traditional Religion

The western orientation of Filipino theology has largely ignored the animistic character of the traditional Filipino belief system and praxis, dismissing it as merely superstition. This is

true especially of the Protestant churches, where the scientific orientation of its western-oriented theology does not allow for the acknowledgement of the existence of a spirit-world characteristic of animistic cultures. It is also true, to some extent, with the Roman Catholic Church, whose ambivalent stance can be seen in its allowing syncretistic Folk Catholicism to flourish, while at the same time refusing to give it official endorsement. Both the intolerant attitude of Protestantism and the tolerant position of Roman Catholicism have not succeeded in bringing Scripture to bear on the animistic Filipino worldview, resulting in their failure to develop a much-needed theology addressing the Filipino spirit world.

The Church and the Filipino Spirit World

For those who have strong beliefs in spirits and the spirit world, western theology has little or nothing to offer. This is why the Filipino church, with its western-oriented theology, is not able to address the animistic beliefs and practices that continue to impinge upon the lives of the majority of the population, including those who profess the Christian faith. Thus, despite the many centuries of Christianity in the Philippines, a large segment of the population continue to live in fear of the spirits that populate their world. God has given the believer power over the spirit world but God does not intend for the believer to fight the spirit world alone. God has called His people together into a body called the church, so that they can encourage and equip each other to do battle against evil, with the promise that “the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it” (Matt. 16:18).

Church praxis is often organized around the question of whom it believes it is contending with. If it believes that it is in contention against ignorance and superstition, then its emphasis is on education. When it sees its adversary as disease, it

organizes hospitals and medical missions to combat those diseases. When it sees itself as battling against human sinfulness, emphasis shifts to evangelism. Where the fight is against injustice and oppression, the church becomes political and takes on a revolutionary praxis, as in Latin America. In other words, a church's theology to a large extent determines its praxis.

Western Protestant theology as introduced in the Philippines saw the church's battle to be either carnal, that is, against the "flesh" in terms of the physical (e.g., diseases, hunger) and the intellectual (e.g., ignorance and superstition), or spiritual in terms of sin expressed as moral failing or turpitude. The existence of the Devil or Satan was accepted, but was commonly seen as an abstract, other-worldly force wielding its evil influence upon human beings, leading them astray. That, as Prince of this world, Satan can work through the agency of this-worldly spirits was generally ignored and dismissed as superstition.

Ignoring the presence of the spirit world or denying demonic manifestations, as Western-oriented Filipino churches tend to, does not negate the reality of its presence nor diminish the control of demonic spirits over the lives of the people. What this denial does instead is render the churches incapable of dealing with the daily struggles of the people who see their world as populated by spirits and their lives inextricably linked to the activities of those spirits. Worse, it leaves the church impotent in dealing with demonic manifestations, and the individual Christian at the mercy of said powers.

That Filipinos have come to embrace the Christian faith does not automatically mean that they have abandoned their animistic beliefs or that they have terminated their dealings with the world of the spirits. The immense popularity of syncretistic folk Catholicism, and the continuing reliance of church members, Protestant and Catholic alike, on spirit-world

practitioners such as the *baylan* and the *siruhano* point to the pervasive power of the spirits over their lives and to the inability of the church to address their needs.

There is much truth to Bulatao's contention that the Filipino is still an animist at heart (1962:210). This leads me to believe that unless the Church seriously takes into account the people's animistic beliefs and preoccupation with the world of spirits into its theology and practice, it will continue to be a foreign implant into Philippine soil, and, furthermore, that a genuine Filipino theology cannot be developed.

Such an endeavor will not be alien to the Christian faith. Not only has the church historically acknowledged the reality of the spirits, the Bible itself affirms their existence. Indeed, the Biblical record shows Jesus himself dealing with demonic spirits as part of his ministry. Paul's belief in their power and influence over people is clear: "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Eph. 6:12). Thus, for Paul, the focus of the church's struggle is not against flesh and blood but against "powers and principalities," including Satan and his demons.

These rulers, powers, and forces of darkness and evil populate the Filipino spirit world, causing many Filipinos to live in daily fear of offending them. Such fear forces them to seek help outside of the church, depending instead on spirit world practitioners to defend, protect, and guide them. It is also that fear that leads them to look to the saints, who, as we have seen earlier, serve as functional substitutes for the traditional *anitos* and other benevolent spirits, instead of coming to Christ. The need for the Gospel, if it is to be relevant to Filipino culture and society, to address the issue of animism and the spirits is obvious and urgent. What are the steps that need to be taken in order to effectively address the problem?

If the Filipino church is to address the problem of animistic beliefs and the influence of the spirits on the people, it must, as a start, acknowledge the existence of spirits and the reality of the spirit world. The failure to recognize the reality of the spirit world, as mentioned above, stems from the pervasive influence of Western theology that sees the nature of the conflict in terms of flesh and blood and of ignorance and superstition. Thus, one of the reasons for the hesitance of Filipino Christians to address the issue is the fear that they will be judged as ignorant and superstitious by their western counterparts.

Where the conflict is viewed as spiritual, it is seen primarily as human sin in terms of willfulness and rebellion against God, concretized as moral failing or as evil in terms of inhumanity towards others. The concept of sin and evil in the form of Satanic powers and demonic forces continue to be ignored. The result is that most Filipinos end up taking their spirit world beliefs and needs outside of the church, which means that Christians are looking to have genuine spiritual needs met without the guidance of the Word and outside of the protection and power of God.

The recognition of the existence of the spirit world, however, is not enough. Doing so merely confirms what the people already know. The question is what the Bible teaches about it, and, in accordance with the Biblical teaching, how the Christian is to deal with it. A clear Biblical teaching about the spirit world and its relationship human beings will take it out of the shadowy, mysterious, magical realm of legend and superstition and place it under the scrutiny and authority of Scripture. Viewing it from the standpoint of Scriptural truth will remove much of the awe and terror associated with the spirit world, seeing not only their Lord's power over the spirits, but also that such power is available to them. Thus they are not at the mercy

or under the control of those spirits, but rather, that God's power enables them to actually have authority over the spirits.

A clear teaching on the spirit world will encourage Filipino Christians to look to the church for guidance and help in dealing with problems and needs that they previously sought help for outside of the church. It will enable the church to provide solutions and alternatives to the spiritual needs that were being met by the spirit world practitioners.

A Christian Approach to the Filipino Spirit World

The attempt by the Filipino Church to develop a teaching that addresses the issue of the Filipino spirit world should include the following:

A Theology and Practice of Healing

Filipinos believe that other than physical or biological causes, illnesses may also have supernatural origins. For those believed to have physical or biological origins, western allopathic medicine is applied. But illnesses caused by the spirits can only be handled by spirit world practitioners of the spirit world, since neither western medicine nor the church are equipped to deal with them. Such a situation is lamentable since most Christian churches in the Philippines believe, theologically, in divine healing. The Roman Catholic Church, for instance, has a ritual for healing called the Rite of Anointing, while Evangelical Protestants feature prayers for healing in both mid-week prayer meetings and Sunday services. In reality, however, Filipino churches, with the notable exception of charismatics and pentecostals, do not take healing seriously.

Scriptures portray Jesus as one who took healing seriously. Healing was an integral part of his ministry both as an extension

of his message and as a demonstration of the reality and presence of the kingdom (Jn. 11:4-6).

God has given the gift of healing to his church for the common good of all the members (1 Cor. 12:9) and to the end that his power can be displayed and released among his people. Satan has taken advantage of the church's reluctance to use the gift of healing by falsifying the gift, claiming the power as his own, thereby misleading people to seek guidance and help outside of the church.

If the church is to help its people to stop going outside of the church for help, it has to take the business of healing seriously. When God's healing power is manifested in the context of the church where the message of salvation by grace is also preached, it leaves no room for doubt as to the veracity of the Gospel and the power of its message. For the church to take healing seriously means not only developing a theology of healing, but also practicing the gift of healing as an integral part of its ministry.

A Theology of Power and the Practice of Power Encounter

The Filipino belief that evil spirits can cause physical, mental, and spiritual harm finds strong support in the Scriptures. Jesus' example is not to shrink from confrontation, as the church often does, with said spirits, but rather to exercise direct authority over them in his name. Such authority is made available to the church by Christ to his disciples, giving them power to heal the sick (Ac. 3:1-10; 5:12-16), cast out demons (Ac. 19:11-12) and raise people from the dead (Ac. 20:7-12).

A theology of power, God's power in relation to the powers of the inhabitants of the Filipino spirit world, needs to be developed. Based on Scriptural teaching, such a theology will be enhanced, deepened, broadened and made meaningful by the

experiences of the church as it wields God's power in its exercise of authority over the powers and principalities of the Filipino spirit world.

In relation to this, a theology of the Holy Spirit as both source and agent of God's power, and his relation to the church is important, since it is the Spirit who provides the necessary gifts (e.g., healing) to every believer for the proper functioning of the church.

Discerning the Spirits

Given Satan's falsification of the power and gift of healing, and, as a result, the apparent ability of spirit world practitioners to effect healing, it is important that the church learn to discern the spirit behind the healing. If, for instance, an illness is caused by evil spirits, and is subsequently healed by an out-of-church spirit world practitioner who appeals to the spirits who caused the illness in the first place, can it be said that a genuine healing has occurred? Was the sickness real in the first place, or was it a deception of Satan since, as Jesus pointed out, "a house divided against itself cannot stand?" Will Satan cast out Satan? Are all spiritual healing outside of the church necessarily of the devil? In contrast, given the ability of Satan to deceive and infiltrate the ranks of the faithful, can it be said without doubt that all healing within the context of the church is of God?

The problem becomes even more complicated given the syncretistic character of folk Catholicism. In the Philippines, one often hears about miraculous deeds, usually in the form of healing, attributed to Mary or some other saint. Are such healing to be automatically and categorically dismissed as counterfeit, superstitious, and thus, of the devil? What about cases where healing is attributed to God but accomplished through the agency and/or intervention of the saints? Do we not often

recognize as genuine, healing done by human agency and intervention (e.g., medical doctors, psychiatrists)? Why not those by the agency of the saints, or for that matter, of spirit world practitioners, some of whom seem sincere in their profession of faith in the Christian God (and the Trinity) and in their claim to derive healing power from Him?

The Incarnation and Mediation of Christ

The prevalence of the saints in Filipino popular religiosity has been pointed out as proof of the syncretism folk Catholicism. Here, saints are viewed as supernatural beings, attributed with powers previously ascribed to the elemental spirits. Furthermore, the saints took over the functions of the environmental spirits, such as ensuring big harvests, accommodating the faithful with miraculous acts, and protecting the communities where they resided. As community benefactors, they became the *patron* of their particular town or village.

Belief in the saints is a deception perpetrated by the enemy upon the Filipino people, allowing them to think they have embraced the Christian faith by adhering to its trappings, while in reality, perpetuating belief in the powers and principalities of the spirit world. It also points to the Filipino search for a link with the divine, and the importance given to mediators as providing the link.

Central to the need for mediators is the traditional Filipino concept of God. Here, God is seen as the totally other, the mysterious and unpredictable reality, the *Deus Absconditus* who is at the same time, the *tremendum* and *fascinosum*—enigmatic, aloof, unapproachable. Furthermore, the Filipino God is the *Deus Otiosus*, the idle God, who, after the initial act of creation, is no longer involved with it. Given such characteristics of God, the emphasis on mediators is understandable.

Folk Catholics, while claiming to believe in God and Jesus Christ, appear to be more closely attached to Mary and other saints. Jesus Christ is perceived not so much as human as divine—a bit too divine, it seems, for people to experience a warm and personal relationship with. This can be seen in the fact that the most popular images of Christ in the Philippines are the Crucified Christ, the *Santo Entierro* (the dead or entombed Christ like the Black Nazarene of Quiapo), the *Santo Nino* (the Christ-child) and the *Christo Rey* (Christ the King), all images of the divine Christ. Images depicting the life of Christ as the Incarnated (human) God are rarely, if ever, seen.

The saints however, are human beings believed to have divine powers. Their attainment of divinity is not unlike that of dead ancestors in the spirit world. Similarly, since they emerge from the human realm, they remain trusted persons with whom, like the *anitos*, one can personally relate.

The influence of traditional animistic beliefs is evident. The function of saints as protectors, taking the place of the *anitos* (environmental spirits) has been discussed in the section about *fiestas* above. Add to this the perception of God as the hierarchical relationships between God, Jesus Christ and the Saints, and what one sees is the unmistakable imprint of tribal religions.

As such, a sense of belonging, of ownership, and thus, of approachableness is evoked by the. Thus the saint is not just St. Mary or St. Elizabeth, she becomes “Our Lady of Guadalupe” or “Our Lady of Antipolo.” This is not so with God the Father or Jesus Christ. The link between the believer and either God the Father or Jesus Christ tends to be universal rather than elective. They do not belong to any particular place and cannot be claimed to be one’s own (*patron*). Thus God, and for that matter, Jesus Christ, remain comparatively estranged or even foreign. Both do not inspire relationships in the intimate terms that

Filipinos are looking for, a relationship which the traditional *anitos* provided, and which their patron saints continue to furnish. Therefore, it is to either the traditional *anitos* or their functional substitutes of the saints that Filipinos gravitate to for help with regard to their spiritual needs.

The Filipino Church's effort to combat syncretism and the reliance on traditional spirits and healers for help must address the issue of mediators. It should include a strong teaching on the Incarnation, stressing the human characteristics of Jesus, focusing on his earthly life and ministry. It should point to God's total identification with humanity, thus Christ's "belonging" to the human race. Christ's "owning" or taking upon himself the sins of humanity reinforces such identification, and thus "ownership" as one of our own.

Such identification also gives Christ the "right" to represent human beings to God, and, vice-versa, his being God (divine) gives him authority to represent God to humanity. Christ alone, therefore, is the true mediator between God and humanity.

The teaching of God as a loving Father will also be crucial, since the father in Filipino culture represents power and authority over his clan or family. Thus God as father can be seen as one who has authority and power over all his creation, and that includes the spirit beings of the animistic world. The father is also seen as provider in Filipino culture. As such, God as father can be seen as the one who alone can provide the resources for people in all their needs. There is therefore no cause to fear any power on earth, nor any need to go anywhere else for help.

Important too, would be the teaching of the Holy Spirit as God's abiding presence not only in the world but in the life of the person itself. This counteracts the concept of God as distant and disinterested in human affairs. Again, emphasis on the feminine attributes of the Holy Spirit discussed earlier will

underscore the approachableness of God as loving, protective mother to whom one can always go.

It should be pointed out that these are tentative suggestions as to what should be included in the Filipino Church's teaching as it attempts to address the issues of the Filipino spirit world, spirit beings and powers, and the syncretism that results from the Filipino Christian's preoccupation with the same. However, the suggestions, I believe, go right at the heart of the issue and should at least be considered in any such attempt. They would need further conceptualization and refinement, and more concrete cultural applications would have to be developed in order for them to be truly useful.

To summarize, the Bible must be brought to bear on the spirit world beliefs and practices of the Filipino and to broaden the scope of the theology and praxis of the church to include said beliefs and practices. As the church begins to realize that the struggle is 'not against flesh and blood' but against the "powers and principalities," it will understand the need to equip its people to do battle against the real foe. Such a struggle cannot be fought with ordinary weapons. It must be fought with God's power and weapons he provides by the gifting of his Spirit. "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God . . ." (2 Cor. 10:4). Nothing less will ensure victory.

The good news for the Filipino Church engaged in the struggle is that "The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work" (1 Jn. 3:8). With him to lead us, who, indeed, can be against us?

CONCLUSION

I have maintained right from the beginning that Filipino colonial mentality exerts a negative influence on the consciousness of the Filipino people. A by-product of colonialism, it has done incalculable harm to the Filipino personality and identity, and to the effort to plant the seed of the Gospel in Filipino culture. Its undeniable presence in Filipino society, and its harmful effects have been pointed out, discussed, analyzed and criticized throughout this study.

To recapitulate, I have defined colonial mentality as “a negative consciousness characteristic of cultures that have experienced the oppression of colonial rule. . . . its main characteristic is the tendency of people to consider themselves and their culture as inferior to their oppressors and their culture” (see complete definition on page 10 of the Introduction).

The veracity of the definition is proven by the fact that Filipinos have indeed learned to belittle themselves and to denigrate their own culture. At the same time, American culture is held in high esteem by many Filipinos, considering it more superior, thus more desirable, than their own.

History, or more precisely, colonial history, has contributed a lot to this negative way that Filipinos view themselves and their culture. Historically, characterizations of the Filipino have been taken from the point of view of the colonizers. There is an abundance of materials written by both Spanish and American writers that describe Filipinos from the judgmental but shallow impressionistic view of the colonizers. Colonial labels betraying the cultural superiority felt by the colonizers have been attached to observed Filipino customs and values. Consequently, Filipino culture has suffered in the many comparisons with the culture of

the colonizer that it has been subjected to, in not too subtle attempts to push the colonizer's patterns of behavior as models for the Filipino to emulate.

Such comparisons were often made in order to explain the Filipino way of life to strangers. However, the observations were usually made by strangers themselves, often with very little experience with what they were trying to explain. Because the values they identified and tried to explain were not viewed in terms of the Filipino worldview, experience and milieu, the organization and logic of these values were not taken into consideration. Thus, gross distortions usually resulted, and Filipino values were misjudged and thus suffered in the comparisons.

It should be pointed out though that this injustice has been inflicted on Filipino culture not only by colonial writers, but by many Filipino writers and scholars themselves. The massive influence of colonial education on the minds of these scholars predispose them to embrace the colonial viewpoint in studying and explaining the Filipino psyche.

Virgilio G. Enriquez observes,

Most of the American-trained social scientists did not only appraise the data that came in but also stood in judgment of their worth and importance, using American categories and standards. The supposedly Filipino values or concepts were lifted, as it were, from the cultural milieu and examined according to inappropriate alien categories, resulting in distorted and erroneous appraisal of indigenous psychology (1994:59-60).

Moreover, the use of colonial language, in this case, English, by both foreign and Filipino scholars alike may have also

contributed to the distortions. Using a foreign language to label, designate, and describe indigenous values and patterns of behavior were bound to create misunderstandings. Each language has a logic of its own, and using a foreign language, and with it foreign categories of analysis that make sense in a particular language and worldview, are bound to create even more distortions.

The sad thing about this is that we Filipinos have come to believe these distorted portrayals of ourselves also. Trained as we were to unquestioningly accept what our erstwhile masters told us, we have also come to accept the labels, no matter how inappropriate, that they have attached to our values and ourselves as a people. With our colonial mentality already predisposing us to look at ourselves disparagingly, the unflattering descriptions given us and our culture have damaged our self-image even more.

Such distortions need to be rooted out and exposed for what they are. Just as history needs to be re-examined in order to uncover the distortions in the past that have contributed to a twisted view of history, so must there be a reexamination of how and what in our values have become twisted as a result of that history. In other words, there needs to be a serious reexamination and reevaluation of our culture similar to that of post-colonial historiography, perhaps something like a post-colonial cultural anthropology. This is necessary since, like colonial historiography, Filipino worldview and culture has heretofore been mostly written and evaluated by either colonial anthropologists, professionals and pretenders alike, or by those trained to think like them.

The historical efforts to reexamine and rediscover the past have resulted in a new and more positive appreciation of that past amongst Filipinos. This more positive evaluation of our history has also opened the way for a more positive valuation of

ourselves and our culture. However, they remain but small, inadequate steps in the direction of correcting the negative view that we have of ourselves and our culture. And so just as the first step towards cultural decolonization is the reexamination and rewriting of history, so the reexamination and reevaluation of the Filipino worldview is the next step towards the same goal.

This is where theories of worldview and worldview change have already helped a lot. One of the most useful concepts in relation to the problem of colonial mentality is cultural relativism. Following Nida's concept of "biblical cultural relativity, Kraft contends that "God treats people in their cultural contexts in terms of this relativism. That is, he does not absolutize one way of life and require everyone to convert to it" (1996:80).

Such a concept is tremendously freeing to anyone who has suffered under colonial mentality's illusion of cultural and personal inferiority. In the eyes of God, no culture or way of life is absolute. God can and does work in Filipino culture as he does with others. Therefore I do not need to look at any other culture as necessarily better than my own. Filipino culture is neither worse nor better than any other culture, so I do not need to abandon it in favor of another. It is just as good, or perhaps even better than other cultures insofar as my being a Filipino is concerned, because it fits my Filipino way of looking at the world.

This affirmation of the validity of Filipino culture can help resolve the cultural schizophrenia of Filipino society. It has been pointed out earlier that Filipino society consists of two divergent worldviews existing in an antithetical relationship that has not yet been resolved. The primary obstacle to its resolution is the submersion of Filipino worldview as a survival response to being confronted by an aggressively intrusive western (American) worldview. Part of the problem is the perception that

both worldviews cancel each other out, therefore one has to submerge if they are to exist together. They cannot exist together on the same cultural plain.

The problem becomes more complex when one considers that after existing with each other for so long, both have now become integral parts of Filipino society and culture. Despite the fact that the western worldview has mainly existed as a facade, it nevertheless is now an inseparable part of Filipino culture. That is, Filipino culture as it is now is no longer defined by just the Filipino worldview as it was before colonialism. It is, now, a both/and culture—both Filipino and western—all at once.

The difficulty is that as long as the Filipino worldview remains submerged, Filipino culture will also remain schizoid. That it has remained submerged for so long is partly due to the colonial mentality that sees it as inferior, and therefore allows it to remain hidden. But resolution or integration can only happen if the Filipino worldview comes out of hiding and confronts its western counterpart on equal footing. A more positive valuation of the Filipino worldview can pave the way for that to happen.

How realistic is it to expect both worldviews to exist on the same cultural plain without canceling each other out?

I have called Filipino culture a “synthetic culture” (see discussion on page 13 and following) due to its being a complex mixture of native and assimilated external cultural influences resulting from contact with various other cultures. There is no reason why it cannot accommodate still another culture without being obliterated by it. Furthermore, I have also called the Philippines “a land of a thousand contrasts” (see page 16 and following) in that it has incorporated within its cultural structure the contrasting variety of features from the different cultural systems that have contributed to it. Again, there is no reason why it cannot add to this rich hodgepodge still some more contrary features from western culture that will make it even

richer. I have also alluded to the fact that the concept of Filipino society as a “cultural melting pot” is a myth (see page 18). There is still no reason why it cannot remain so even with the addition of western cultural elements. Indeed, Filipino culture need not be a melting pot where all the ingredients melt together into an unrecognizable and unpalatable goo. Rather, it can continue to be a sumptuous feast of a variety of gourmet cultural dishes.

As the Filipino worldview surfaces from its submersion and take its proper place in society, a true Filipino identity that takes into account all of the elements that make up the Filipino soul can emerge. But, to reiterate, that surfacing of the Filipino worldview starts by the effort to make a positive valuation of it.

The assumption of a positive stance towards Filipino culture that runs counter to the negative value placed upon it by the colonial consciousness is the counter-consciousness that Constantino is searching for. As is a counter-consciousness, it refuses to believe the lie that the Filipino culture is inferior to other cultures. As such, it is a counter-consciousness that frees the Filipino people from the oppressive past that prevented from constructing their own historical future. It is a counter-consciousness that gives sound to their muted voice, thus allowing them to become a historical subjects at last.

The results of this counter-consciousness on the religious consciousness of the Filipino are tremendously exciting. Filipino culture can now be seen as a locus of God’s saving activity, and Filipino Christians no longer have to leave behind their cultural identity in order to live out their faith. Since Filipinos can now feel that God has not abandoned their culture, they now can use their culture to propagate their faith to other Filipinos. The Gospel need no longer be clothed in a foreign dress to be respected and appreciated. It can now be clothed in Filipino garments, making it easier to recognize, and because familiar, easier to accept. Nor does it need to speak with the thunder of a

foreign tongue in order to be heard, and the formulations of a foreign mind to be understood. It can now speak in the still small voice of the people's heart language and still be heard and understood.

Filipinos can now freely look at and reexamine their own values, even those that in the past have been summarily dismissed as useless or even inimical to the Gospel, and see how they can be redeemed for the Gospel, that they may be used by the Gospel for the redemption of their own people. Realizing that God not only speaks to them but also speaks through them as a people, Filipinos can now proceed to construct a contextualized theology that truly speaks of their own faith experience as a people.

Contextualization is therefore an issue that any missionary endeavor cannot avoid if it seeks to be faithful to the Lord's commission to make disciples *panta ta ethne*, of all peoples or nations. To simply ignore the issue on the one hand could result in a foreign, exotic church that is irrelevant, and therefore, has no real salting or lighting influence on the society it belongs to—much like salt that retains its crystalline identity, refusing to be admixed or diluted into the soup which is the world; or like the light that is hidden under a bushel. Churches resulting from the evangelical Protestant missions of the American colonialist era in the Philippines have, time and again, been charged with such foreignness.

On the other hand, an overly-enthusiastic, uncritical pursuit of contextualization can produce an indigenous, syncretistic church that is practically indistinguishable from its environment. Such a church is like salt that is insipid in its taste, fit only to be thrown out and trampled under foot, or like light that is too diffused, unable to make much difference on the larger community it finds itself in. In the Philippines, uncritical contextualization such as pursued by the Roman Catholic

missionary enterprise during the Spanish colonial era, has resulted in the animistic practices characteristic of popular religiosity exhibited by Folk Catholicism.

Given the danger of syncretism in the pursuit of contextualization, the alternative of the church remaining foreign, and therefore esoteric and exotic, to its environs, would seem reasonable. The exotic can be very attractive—mysterious, exciting, extraordinary, fascinating, like exotic plants, animals, artifacts, women—so much so that the religiosity in the West has succumbed to its allure. How else can one describe the fascination with Eastern religions, the New Age, even the renewed interest in the occult? Besides, does not the Bible urge Christians towards transformation through non-conformity to the world (Rom. 12:2)?

However, given the pitfall of irrelevance and uselessness, and the danger of truly becoming what Marx accused religion to be—an opiate of the people—the church seems to have no alternative but to become indigenous to its surroundings. Did not Christ himself give the example, through his Incarnation, of how mission is to be done—by total identification—God becoming flesh, like one of us, truly human (Jn. 1:14)?

How then does one reconcile this dilemma, this paradox of mission as one of total identification, yet of separation—of complete engagement, yet of disengagement, all at once?

The answer to this, I believe, lies in remembering that the Incarnation was itself a paradox, a paradigm of the missionary calling for attachment and detachment with the world, and of the church's contradictory identity as both indigenous and exotic. Part of the problem in identifying the church's stance towards the world lies in our tendency to consider Christ's complete identification with humanity in the Incarnation as totally canceling out the exotic and the different.

The prophet Isaiah offers valuable clues as to how the Incarnation is to be viewed properly in his prophetic announcement of the birth of the Messiah: "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given . . ." That the child is *born* refers to Christ's entrance into the human race—through the womb—signifying his total identification with us. That he was *given* refers to his being unlike us—not a creaturely being as we are—born, but nor created, very God, but very human. In such a paradox, or contradiction, if you will, of identification and distance, lies the blueprint for the identity of the church in the world—indigenous, yet exotic, *in* the world, but not *of* the world. Thus the Incarnation as God becoming human, the Spirit's coming in the flesh, serves as the paradigm for the church's own ministry and mission.

It can be said that the Incarnation as Christ's total identification—his complete involvement, in the lives and affairs of those he ministered to—is God's indigenization to the world. At his birth, he became truly indigenous to the Jewish culture, fulfilling the traditions of the Law and the Prophets, both of which were central to the culture and identity of the Jewish people. In his life and ministry, he went beyond indigeneity to contextualization in his critical and prophetic confrontation with society and the keepers of its traditions, getting right into the essence (worldview) of the Jewish culture, fulfilling the Law even when he seemed to be breaking it.

Yet it is in this very indigenization where the *Totaliter Aliter*, the Totally Other became totally involved, that God also reveals himself as exotic. Another way of expressing this is to say that to be totally involved is to be Totally Other. That is to say, becoming truly one of us, or becoming totally identified and involved in relation to others, is something God alone can do. Therefore to be totally involved and identified, to be completely

indigenous, is to be totally different, to be strange, thus to be mysterious, exotic.

To be sure, superficial identification or partial involvement takes little effort. It is relatively easy to take on the trappings of a culture or people, to dress like they do, eat what they eat, to live like they live. For many of us, that is the fullest extent that we go to in our missionary identification with others. Much too often, so does the church. It makes superficial accommodations while engaging in easy, token missions. Such paternalistic endeavors are characteristic of the imperialistic ecclesiasticisms of colonial days. They do not make a contextualized church. Instead, they induce a backlash of counter-productive reactions that result in either the outright rejection of the church as irrelevant, or the more insidious repudiation of the substance of its message while embracing its forms.

But to penetrate beyond these superficials into the heart of and soul of a culture is the goal and purpose of mission as incarnation. And that is not so easy to do, for it requires identification and involvement at the deepest level. Christ ("who, being in the form of God . . .") entered into the sphere of our humanity so fully ("coming in the likeness of man") that he left himself without an exit other than by the same way we exit our humanity and enter into eternity, by our physical death ("became obedient to the point of death") (Eph. 2: 6-8).¹

In the paradox of the Incarnation is found both the essence of mission as total identification and the answer to the danger of

¹ Conversely, missionaries go to their fields of endeavor, intending fully to enter into the lives of the people they serve, nevertheless leaving themselves an exit at least as wide as the entrance they came through. Thus, when real difficulties come, as when freedom is at stake, or lives threatened, it is easy for them to exit the way they came. It will be interesting to see how many, amongst those who claim to be incarnational in their ministry, have considered giving up their citizenship (and thus the protection of their embassies) or remaining in their field of endeavor after they retire. In fact I have yet to see one who would be willing to apply for permanent residence in the same. This, of course, is neither to belittle or dishonor those who gave up their lives in the field. I have nothing but great respect and admiration for such heroes of our faith.

syncretism. Indeed, in the pursuit of a ministry that can truly incarnate the truths of the Gospel in the lives of people, and in the endeavor to build a church that both speaks to and from the context of the people who are the receptors of that same Gospel, the dangers of syncretism abound. Yet, if such a mission or such a church faithfully follows God into the peculiarities and particularities of humanity's existence in the world, it need not fear that it will become so indigenous and conforming as to lose its identity and influence, nor so foreign and exotic it would lose its relevance and usefulness. It will always have something both exotic and indigenous about it, because it serves Him who is at the same time, the Incarnate One who totally identifies with, and the Wholly Other who is completely different from, the world.

That the Gospel must speak to the Filipino culture in order for Filipinos to understand its implications on their way of looking at the world as Filipinos, thus resulting in a meaningful faith that they can live out without having to abandon the deep-level meanings and assumptions that enable them to make sense of their world, is without question. That the theology as a result be the genuine expression of that faith lived out in Filipino society is something that all Filipino Christian theologians must strive for.

There are dangers on the way towards contextualization that the Filipino theologian must watch for. First is the danger of throwing away the rich Christian heritage that has come out of the West in an effort to be relevant. The majority of those affirmations are basic to the faith that to throw them away as simply western formulations will do injustice to the supracultural eternal truths contained therein. They are part of the body of Christian truths that all Christians regardless of culture can and must affirm

Second is the danger of letting culture shape the Christian faith. This is the error of uncritical accommodation that was

made by the Roman Catholic mission in the Philippines, an error that resulted in the syncretism of Folk Catholicism in the country.

Last is the danger of forgetting that ultimately, it is the Holy Spirit that must guide and direct all efforts of contextualizing the faith that he himself has revealed. Acts 15:28 provides a Scriptural guide to all our contextual efforts: "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us . . ." What is good to the Holy Spirit first, then us later.

The attempt that I have made above is only the beginning of my own personal pilgrimage to find meaning in my faith as a Filipino, and as one who has to daily contend with the obfuscations to that faith resulting from a consciousness warped by an oppressive colonial past. It is my prayer that from out of such an effort will emerge a theology that is able to synthesize the divergent feelings and attitudes that continue to pull me apart, a theology that affirms my being a Filipino, nationalist and colonial minded at the same time, yet Christian first and foremost.

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VITA

Genaro Depakakibo Diesto, Jr. was born on March 30, 1952 in Iloilo City, Philippines to Genaro Diesto, Sr., a Baptist pastor and evangelist, and Ruth Depakakibo, a provincial missionary of the Convention of Philippine Baptist Churches. He accepted Christ as his personal Savior and was baptized in 1963 at a “Christian Emphasis Week” convocation held at Central Philippine University (CPU), an American Baptist founded educational institution.

In 1972, Genaro graduated from CPU with the degree, Bachelor of Arts in Political Science. He then entered the College of Law of the same institution, intending to pursue a career in politics. That same year, Martial Law was declared in the Philippines, and Genaro found himself incarcerated due to his political activities as a student leader.

Incarceration proved to be the turning point in his life. Upon release, Genaro entered the CPU College of Theology, and graduated in 1975 with the degree, Bachelor of Divinity, *cum laude*. A scholarship from Northern Baptist Theological Seminary in Lombard, Illinois, sent Genaro to the United States for further studies. He graduated from Northern in 1979 with the degree, Master of Arts in Theological Studies. Genaro was awarded a doctoral fellowship by the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago where he graduated with the degree, Master of Theology in 1982. Doctoral studies in Systematic Theology followed, but personal difficulties prevented him from finishing.

Genaro moved with his family to Pasadena, California, where he entered the Master of Missiology program in 1983, and was accepted into the Ph.D. program in 1986.

Genaro has been involved in pastoral ministry since 1980, as Associate Pastor at Calvary United Methodist Church in Villa Park, Illinois from 1980-1983, and as Senior Pastor of the Filipino congregation at Temple Baptist Church in Los Angeles, where he still serves today. Genaro also serves with the Asian Ministries team of the American Baptist Churches, USA.

Genaro is married to Jean Te and they have three children, Chaim Genaro, Asher Genaro, and Iana Jean.

AFTERWORD

Dr. Lester Edwin Ruiz

