

Contextual Theology in the Philippines

A Preliminary Report

I. INTRODUCTION

Christians of the Philippines, like their other brothers in the Third World, are getting more conscious of their role in the Church today. A major area in this consciousness is to theologize independently of First World models.

On Contextual Theology In General

Some theologians, like the leaders of the Theological Educational Fund (Elwood 1976: 48) prefer contextual theology to terms like indigenization, inculturation, and the like because they claim the preferred word does not only embrace traditional culture but also "takes into account the process of secularity, technology, and struggle for human justice, which characterize the historical movements of the Third World." Whatever be the choice of terms, we take "culture" here to mean the umbrella concept which embraces everything (including politics, economics, socio-cultural realities) in their dynamic and static aspects.

The need for contextual theology is urgent because of meaningfulness in the pluralism of cultures. For example, "Lamb of God" cannot be understood in New Guinea because sheep and lambs do not exist there. Hence some theologians proposed "Pig

of God" as the counterpart because the pig, which is a meaningful animal in New Guinea, is the nearest equivalent to lamb. Bultmann wanted to demythologize the poetic imageries of the Bible. But making "Lamb of God" as "Pig of God" is, to use the expression of Tillich, an example of remythologization. Furthermore, contextual theology is also demanded by the changes of society brought about by modernization. The new structures ushered in by change open horizons and therefore affect also theologizing in that given situation.

At any rate, faith in Christ is required for the people/theologians in attempting to incarnate Christ in their given culture and context. If faith is also expressed in action, doing theology or orthopraxis (as opposed to armchair theologizing and orthodoxy) is a way of inferring the contextualized theology behind the praxis.

As to the method of theologizing, almost all Third World theologians agree on starting with experience in the given situation/context as the bedrock for reflecting the Word of God (for example, Tabert 1978, E. W. Fashole-Luke (Anderson and Stransky 1976: 135-150), Mercado 1975). Abesamis (Lambino et al. 92-112) proposes to "bracket off the Western Greek tradition" because the Western theological tradition is cumbersome or hinders indigenous theologizing. Likewise Choan-Seng Son (Anderson and Stransky 1976: 211-222) says the process of theologizing should be "a theological leap from Israel to Asia" for what Israel did can be applicable to any nation.

These proposals are actually not new for the first Christians were already contextualizing their theology. Thus St. Paul, who faced the problems of the Greek and Hebrew communities, thought of solving them in the light of Christ. What resulted was Pauline theology. The same thing happened to St. John and his encounter with the Gnostic and Essene traditions of his Christian community.

Incarnating Christ in a given culture is a two-way traffic. According to the 1977 Synod of Bishops (no. 5), "a true 'incarnation' of faith... supposes not only a process of 'giving' but also of 'receiving.'" That means a given culture has its contribution to incarnating Christ, just as Mary was necessary in order for Christ to be born. Evangelization in the past was only thought of in terms of 'giving.' Incarnating Christ means to seriously

respect a people's response to the question, "Who do men say the Son of Man is?" (Mt. 16, 13). The average man will have to ask himself: In what way does Christ become meaningful to me as a Filipino? This particular way of asking and answering the question gives rise to a pluralism of theology but still keeping the unity of faith in the one and same Christ.

But does incarnating Christ in a given culture not remove the redemption? Did the cross not criticize man's sinfulness in his given culture? I do not think so. Incarnation implies the healing of man. The incarnation is one totality, just as Christ's whole life is one. Christmas already contains Easter. Hence the incarnation also implies redemption.

If culture is to be taken seriously in incarnating Christ, the role of the social sciences have also to be weighed in the contextualization of theology (*Gaudium et Spes*, no. 5). One possibility of understanding a people's way of thinking is by analyzing their language (Mercado 1974: 8-49).

Granted that Christ as presented in the Bible is to be incarnated in a given situated culture, the problem of *how* remains. On the one hand, Pannikar (Elwood 1976: 338-376) says that Christ did not come to convert the other religions but to make them better. Rahner would say that the existing non-Christian religions are a preparation for Christ. There will always be the danger of the non-incarnational approach as in the syncretizers, accommodators, situationalists, warns Bong Rin Ro (Elwood 1976: 47-58) The problem of contextualizing Christ will be similar to what model the theologian selects as when he theologizes on what model the Church should have (Dulles 1974). Marasigan (1974) met the same problem when he tried to theologize in a Philippine barrio; after faced with four models, he opted for two.

Furthermore, whatever product comes out of the process of theologizing is never a finished product (Mercado 1975: 13-15) for there is an on-going process of purification, synthesis, and finding its resonance on the people for whom the theory is meant.

Limitations and Purpose

In view of the above-mentioned pluralism as well as difficulties in the making of contextual theology, this report on the

contextual theology of the Philippines has to report the pluralistic trends being done. Furthermore, the time given to this commissioned paper was too short. A questionnaire to be sent to various parts of the country was originally intended. Due to the shortness of time, the author was constrained to sampling interviews with concerned people from different parts of the Philippines. Together with the interviews we report a sampling of published recent theological reflections. This paper does not include the theological attempts by Protestant theologians in the Philippines. In short this is a preliminary report; we hope that the topic be given more justice in the future.

What is the aim of this paper? The aim is twofold: firstly, to report on attempts of contextual theology being done in the Philippines; secondly, to comment on those attempts and to point out where the attempts may have a distinct Philippine flavor. These reflections are not a finished product but an invitation to think together and to dialogue of the state of theology in the Philippines.

Much of what will be reported may reflect universal attempts of theologizing done today. In other words, the types of contextual theologizing done may not be Filipino at all. But I beg to disagree. To give an example, the jeepney which is found in the Philippines came from the jeep of World War II. But Filipino ingenuity transformed it into the jeepney, which according to tourist brochures, is a Filipino invention. In the process of acceptance, a transformation takes place, which is an example of culture change. The example of the jeepney illustrates the possibility that an imported theology might be Filipinized in the process of cultural and theological interaction.

The following are instances of contextual theologies done in the Philippines: (1) liberation theology, (2) the theology of the basic Christian communities, (3) "barrio" theology, (4) spiritual theology, (5) liturgy, and (6) moral theology. The areas mentioned actually overlap each other; they are just separated for the sake of explaining better each topic.

II. AREAS OF CONTEXTUAL THEOLOGY

1. *Liberation Theology*

Liberation theology is tied up with the theologies of total evangelization, of the signs of the times, of development, of justice. The total development of man implies his development, his evangelization, his liberty and human rights. Liberation theology has been imported to the Philippines from Latin America. Quoted often are Latin American theologians like Gutierrez, Segundo, Freire, Bonino, and others who are also tied up with future-oriented European theologians like Bloch, Moltmann and political theologians like Metz. In the Philippines most of the theological writings center on liberation. Among the Filipino liberation theologians are de la Torre (1969, 1970, 1971), Arevalo (1970, 1971, etc.), Lambino (1977 etc.), Claver (1971, 1976, 1977) and many others.

Since liberation theology arose from the Latin American situation, the following questions may be raised. Is the situation of the Philippines like that of Latin America? How valid are the criticisms of the Filipino liberation theologians? Do their comments find resonance among the masses? Is there a distinct type of Philippine liberation theology?

The Situation

It must be noted that 7,200 islands of the Philippines have a wide variety of situations. The people vary from the ethnic minorities with G-strings in the rain forests to millionaires in the air-conditioned skyscrapers of Metro Manila. Furthermore, demographers say that the average Filipino is a teenager. Hence the Philippines is a young nation when compared to the average age of First World countries.

The variety also can go to the technological. The minority groups may still be in the Stone Age. There are peasants and fishermen who still practice the traditional ways of livelihood. The most technologically progressive part is Metro Manila, which is the seat not only of the government but also of international happenings.

The *Pro Mundi Vita* (1970) analysis of the Philippine situation has still relevance today. But it has to be updated with the proclamation of Martial Law or the New Society which has attempted to influence all sectors of society. The established Church (in the popular or clerical sense) has varying degrees of reacting to the New Society. Lambino (Claver et al. 1977: 59-94) outlines the four positions taken up: The far right (those in favor of the Martial Law Government), the right of center (the position taken by the Civil Liberties/Message of Hope Group), the left (Communist Party of the Philippines, the New People's Army, the National Democratic Front), and left of center (Democratic Socialists). Members of the Philippine clergy have also as wide a prism of reaction as outlined in the four positions above. The Bishops and priests of Manila (1977) as well as the Association of Major Superiors in the Philippines have taken the official stand of "critical collaboration" with the present government. The following are more details of the Philippine situation.

In *education* where 90 percent of the schools are private, there is a growing government action of taking over education. In spite of the government regulation that no school be put at least 300 meters within existing schools, the government is erecting its *barangay* or rural high schools. In a month's time (April, 1978) the president converted two government-run colleges (one in Ilocos Norte and another in Manila) into government universities. Because the government offers higher salaries, the teachers of the private schools are lured away. There seems to be a double standard wherein the government is strict in enforcing regulations to private schools but not to government schools. Furthermore, private schools are taxed.

There has been the feeling of helplessness of the part of the private school administrators. The church has also gone through the informal type of education such as seminars for youth and adults (see BCC *infra*).

That the government controls the *mass media* is also admitted. The national television, radio, and newspapers hardly report anything against the New Society. The government also closed down two radio stations in Mindanao.

The clergy's reaction to the media control has been ambivalent. The pro-government group used the government media for the people's information. The anti-government or liberationist group used the church channels such as the pulpit and the mandated organizations. Others have gone underground with mimeographed handouts and documentations to air grievances and call the attention of the authorities.

The New Society has also reached out to the *youth* especially through the *Kabataang Barangay* (KB). It was reported that the government has organized youth camps wherein they were supposedly "brainwashed" with the following messages: (1) that the Church is an enemy to progress, (2) that China is the model of progress. But in spite of these programs, the youth has not become anti-clerical or anti-Church. The KB has not really been effective because the program has not been fully implemented. The Church programs on youth training, such as the Christian Life Community and the Student Catholic Action (both established before Martial Law) have also not been so effective.

The state of human rights has also varied reactions. The reactions also depend on the situation of peace and order of the region. If human rights were violated, some ordinary people felt that this is part and parcel of Martial Law which seemingly has been accepted by the majority of Filipinos. But the militant groups have been sensitive to these violations such as arrest without trial. In the provinces the people are not so outspoken as those in Manila or in Cebu. One bishop said that where people depend much on the government for their livelihood, they are not free to dissent. "You cannot bite the hand that feeds you," he said. The real outspoken are those who are somewhat economically independent. These groups would be the middle class found in the cities, the clerics, as well as the youth, the slum dwellers in the cities who are influenced by these groups. The same trend is seen in referendums and elections. Hence, the diocese of Palo, for example, has organized a labor union to protect oppressed sugar workers in Ormoc City.

Another area of protest is how the government has been handling the *ethnic minorities* through the policies of PANAMIN. The PANAMIN wants to preserve these groups as living museum

pieces for anthropologists and for tourists. Bishops and other clerics have denounced this policy as a form of human exploitation as a cover-up for other selfish reasons.

Peace and Order has been varied in the country. In places where there has been unrest, such as Samar, the bishop of Calbayog denounced the military abuse. The denunciation has helped somehow the situation but there so far has been no permanent solution.

The *economy* has been one of the most heated targets of criticism. From Mindanao to northern Luzon we have witnessed the coming of multinational corporations. Although these corporations have raised the employment level of the areas affected, the liberationists have also questioned their presence. Land reform as proclaimed by the New Society, has not been enforced, so claim the liberationists. The Marxist analysis used by the liberationist is grouped into three categories: U.S. imperialism (that the real enemy of the Philippines is outside the country), feudalism (which perpetuates background agricultural state of the country), and bureaucrat capitalism (which is claimed to be the base of fascism). This analysis can be traced to Marxists like Amado Guerrero (1971) and its updated forms. The Katipunan ng Bayan Para sa Kalayaan (1977) or KABAKA have also made factual analysis of the New Society.

After weighing the alternatives Lambino (Claver et al. 1977: 101) concludes that the Filipino Christian must side with the poor with the three possible ways:

- a) Forming "communities of freedom and dialogue" (Bishop Claver): conscientizing the poor to their rights and obligations, to *peaceful* action for their rights and participation; non-ideological, with *Gospel* values *explicitly* stressed:
- b) direct Christian witness through total self-giving lives for the poor and suffering (eg. Mother Teresa of Calcutta);
- c) Christian communities as fully as possible "sharing the life and lot of the poor" through living Christian presence and witness (e.g., Bishop Tutud); in "radical living" and "radical sharing"; deriving its inspiration and constant strength from the Word and the Christian community.

Comments:

According to Choan-Seng Song, liberation theology has the merit of rejecting "a conceptual and propositional theology — which has been characteristic of western theology — can barely touch the heart of Asian humanity... Israel must become their existential experience. The danger of propositional theology lies in its hidden claim to universal validity" (Anderson and Stransky 1976: 221). In other words, liberation theology as concrete and experiential, has relevance to Asian conditions.

However, liberation theology as proposed in the Philippines has also its limitations. The method of situational analysis as used has the danger of being simplistic: things as either just or unjust with no middle ground. It is like saying that all colors are either black or white and no colors in between them. Liberation theology with its grim picture of injustice has no place for the theology of joy and laughter or of Dionysian theology (Rahner 1965). But the so-called oppressed people have time to laugh even at and in spite of their situation. The picture of constant injustice seems rather a pre-occupation of clerics and bourgeois theologians who have life somewhat easier than oppressed people. When Christ said, "you will always have poor people with you" (Mt. 26,11), he saw that there will always be evil and injustice until the end of time. According to Mother Teresa, to remove the little joys that the poor have by making them more gloomy through liberation theology categories will deprive them the little sweet things they still have to cling to.

Secondly, is there a difference in the situation of the Philippines and that of Latin America as contexts for the theology of liberation? De la Costa (1976: 21) observes:

Christians of Asia and Africa can, and by all means, should, learn the theology of liberation based on Latin-American experience. But while there may be similarities between regional experiences, there are bound to be differences as well, differences that will give a distinct character and quality to praxis in each context.

The following may be a key to the difference between the Philippine reaction to the Latin-American counterpart. The hot-

beds of liberation theology are found in the big cities like Metro Manila and Metro Cebu. Perhaps the more rural the people are, the less vocal they are. The majority of Filipinos are silent while the few intellectuals in the cities seem to be the most noisy. Now why has not liberation theology caught fire in the grass-roots like how the Pentecostal movement has spread without really much effort? Why has liberation theology been a concern of the middle class? I think the reason is cultural. According to the study of Agpalo (1972), the political behavior of Philippine society has always been that of a pyramid, namely, that the leaders found in the apex have always an opposition right below them. When the opposition wins, they in turn find another opposition. Furthermore, the common Filipino has always been traditionally authoritarian and likes authority (Mercado 1974: 92-104; 1977a: 42-54). Because the New Society is authoritarian, the common *tao* finds it according to his nature. The main opponents to the authoritarianism of the New Society are the westernized Filipinos who have been used to the individualism and kind of justice as pictured by westernized democracies.

Justice as understood by the liberationists is different from the justice as understood by most Asians. The former is based on the individualistic model whereas de la Costa says the latter is based on the communitarian or group model as corporate dimensions and accepts inequality.

The individualistic model as the basis for liberation theologians is manifest in the eight-point proposals ("The People's Alternative) of the KABAKA (1977) as well as the ten-point program of the National Democratic Front (1977). Even Marcos (1971) uses this individualistic model when he speaks of a democratic revolution. (Perhaps a comparative study should be done on how the word "democracy" is used because even the Communists claim they are also democratic).

If liberation theology is to be Filipinized (or Asianized), then it has to take the Asian concept of justice. Otherwise, liberation theology as proposed will still be a middle-class and Western import, with little support from the masses. It must be remembered that three out of four Filipinos are found in the *barrio*. The *barrio* people have first to really like it; if it does not suit their

taste, then liberation theology as individualistic and Western will find no acceptance. It is only in accepting that Filipinos will give their transformation of liberation theology.

Lastly, the dream of liberation theology (which is mostly economic) has to be re-evaluated. There is the danger of making financial well-being an end by itself or another idol. Asians are not usually materialistic. We find this in the spirit of Buddhism which rejects desires. St. Francis of Assisi, with his freedom and happiness in his voluntary poverty, finds much resonance for the Asian soul. In short, if culture and society are one, as mentioned above, liberation theology has denied this unity.

2. *Theology of the Local Church's People of God*

For some theologians, liberation theology is tied up necessarily with the theology of the local church. For example, Bishop Claver believes that "basic human rights must remain inviolable" in any form of government because ideology must serve the people's common good; hence "our main focus has been the building up of the people through small Christian communities" (Claver 1977: 57).

Vatican II's *Lumen Gentium*, which emphasized the Church as the People of God, gave impetus to the formation of basic Christian communities (*comunidades de base*). More details of this vision and program are found in Stephen Clark's (1972) work. The formation of these small basic communities has found importance in most Philippine dioceses, especially in the lay ministry program (Gresh 1976).

The Situation

The Basic Christian Communities (BCC) got its successful implementation through the Mindanao-Sulu Pastoral Conference (MSPC). The climate in Mindanao for the BCC was right because most of the people in Mindanao are immigrants from other parts of the country. In other words, people with the frontier spirit are open to new ideas and are much unlike the conservatives of older dioceses elsewhere. Furthermore, the training which the Federation of Free Farmers (FFF) gave to farm leaders fitted the BCC program. The success of the BCC in Mindanao has been copied into varying degrees by other dioceses in the Philippines.

The scarcity of priests as well as the inadequacy of the traditional parish structures led to the creation of the lay ministers (also called *kapilya* leaders or *Kaabag* in Mindanao). The formation and picking of the lay leaders take place in the seminars somewhat after the Cursillo style. In Metro Manila the training of leaders is more sophisticatedly done at the Lay Formation Institute (Gresh 1976; 57-65). In Marivoet's survey the lay ministers preside over the liturgy of the word, distribute communion, bless the dead, and do other forms of ministry depending on how far the local bishops allow them (*ibid.*, 27-56). Their work is not only in liturgy but also in social action as well as Christian education.

Together with the formation of lay leaders is the formation of families clustered in Christian communities (Kristohanong Katilingban). The diocese of Calbayog somewhat differed from the Mindanao emphasis. Whereas the BCC in Mindanao began with the *kapilya* or local chapel, the Calbayog diocese began with an economic base (such as the organization of farmers, fishermen), in health (the MAKAPAWA program), and the social basis of neighborhood concern.

One reason for the stress on local leadership is that the parish organization officers mostly come from the middle and upper class of the parish. On the other hand, the majority of the parishioners are from the lower class. So it is logical that the lower class or the majority should have a fairer part in the organization.

The introduction of the lay ministers has ushered in the following development and problems. Firstly, the relationship between the parish council (which is composed of the leaders of the traditional mandated organizations) and the new lay leaders is not clear. In active parishes, the heads of the mandated organizations feel displaced. In other places, the BCC core groups stand side by side with the existing structures. Secondly, the introduction of the lay ministers has been welcome; in some places of Davao, the people prefer the liturgies of the lay ministers to that of the priests. On the other hand, there were also unfavorable reports. Thirdly, the lay leaders and the BCC came too fast and too much, resulting in not well-trained leaders. This inadequate training led to excesses. Because the BCC stresses economic

self-sufficiency with financial contribution as part of the membership, new settlers were denied baptism and funerals because they did not know about the system. The importance given to the lay leaders has been so much in some dioceses that the priest has become a mere functionary and at the command of the lay leaders. This exaggerated importance given to lay leaders has also brought the fear of eventual schism.

The development of the local church embraces all aspects. It is not limited to liturgy but also embraces education, socio-economic development such as the social action apostolate. Here the Philippine dioceses are developed differently: from traditional structures to dynamic and progressive lay participation in others.

Comments

When a typical Filipino is asked a question by a superior, he will first study what kind of answer the latter expects and tells that desired answer. An American missionary introduced the American type of democratic spirit in his Mindanao Christian community. The leaders certainly aped his American ways — much of which went against the local leaders' culture. When the American missionary moved out of the place, the conflict of Filipino authoritarianism and the missionary's methods surfaced.

Studies done on the psychology of leadership in locally founded sects show that the desired trait of the leader is that he be a kind father to his members (Mercado 1977b: 109-188). These examples show that the Basic Christian Communities will eventually grow within the context of Philippine culture, that is, the people have to give their imprint if it is to become their own.

Much of ecclesiology and even much of doctrine in general has greatly been influenced by the Western cultural background as well as Western preoccupations. An example is God as *person*. Likewise the Philippine context will have to contribute its part in the shaping of the theology of the local church. In the final analysis the people (not the theologians) are the ones who really shape a genuine contextual theology. This point will be explained in the following section.

3. *Barrio Theology*

The word "barrio" here is not taken in the sense of rural only. It is taken in the encompassing reality that the majority of Filipinos have a Malayo-Polynesian heritage and are influenced much by animism. Most of the barrios exist in agricultural settings which certainly affect their life-style as well as way of thinking. Many of the Philippine cities have enclaves of rural society. People who go in and out of the city to the country know their traditional roots. Barrio theology then also applies to the city in the meaning of barrio as explained above.

Barrio theologians therefore try to theologize in the premise that much of the Filipino religious experience is colored by their realities. The Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (1973) sees the importance of popular piety, such as the fiesta, processions, and pilgrimages in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary; but the bishops also give some precautions. There have been attempts to theologize on the Quiapo Black Nazarene devotion and other forms of popular piety (Jacob 1976, Mercado 1977b). The writings of Marasigan (1974, 1975, 1977) go towards the same direction.

A concrete example of theologizing is the *langkap*, which is an ecstatic form of preaching found among Tagalogs (Marasigan 1977). A person falls into an altered state of consciousness, and preaches in this state much to the edification of the hearers. After considering the psychological, anthropological, and biblical factors, Marasigan concludes that *langkap* is an example of a bridge between culture and the bible. He proposes two hypotheses (*loc. cit.*):

- (1) ecstatic preaching is a culturally-conditioned exercise of natural parapsychic powers: and
- (2) God's word can be incarnated in any indigenous ritual of *Langkap* that authentically fulfills the function of biblical prophetism in responding to the spiritual needs of particular Christian communities.

Mercado's *Elements of Filipino Theology* (1975) is also in the same thrust of barrio theology. It is based on an earlier

work (1974) with a methodology based on language and behavior analyses. The study starts with barrio experience and reflects how they are related to the Bible. The work covers a wide area: from basic Filipino ideas on religion to particular problems on worship. For example, it tries to justify the Filipino veneration for the departed ancestors, which is also a concern in Africa (Singleton 1977).

4. *Spiritual Theology*

If orthopraxis is the measure of sound theology, the women religious of the Philippines are quite advanced in this venture. The trends mentioned above are combined in spiritual theology. If liberation theology is to side with the poor and the oppressed, many sisters have opted for real simplicity of life-style. Several congregations live in small communities (with the average of five sisters) where there is interaction. Each community tries to be financially self-reliant, that is, independent from the central house and from foreign aid. Barrio theology has also made them open to experimentation based on popular piety. Each congregation tries to keep its original charism vis-a-vis the signs of the times and not vice-versa.

Another trend is the cultivation of oriental asceticism, such as yoga and Zen meditation — a trend which is also hitting the West. One concrete example is to have Oriental-styled prayer rooms where there are no benches and where the worshipper has to enter barefoot.

The imposition of Martial Law in the Philippines has somehow redirected the energies of the activists. One priest-activist has gone from the extreme of hurling Marxist invectives to preaching on the Holy Spirit. This trend seems also noticeable in Europe: when the people of God enjoy material prosperity, the tone of church apostolate is mostly social action. But in the time of persecution, the tone is that of prayer and asceticism.

The Pentecostal or charismatic movement, which began in the United States, has also spread through the Philippines. When asked whether there is a change of style between the charismatic prayer meetings in Manila's plush sub-urban areas and in the barrio, charismatic leader Father Schneider says yes. The style

of the prayer meetings in the cities is like that of America, but Filipino pentecostals in the grassroots pray the rosary.

Furthermore, another influence of Philippine culture is the entrance of the medium, similar to the medium of the *langkap* as mentioned above. When the charismatic movement was introduced in one major seminary, the "prophetism" of those baptized in the Holy Spirit finally settled in one man, who "became" God's medium or spokesman for the rest of his peers. A parallel case happened in the pentecostal movement in Tacloban City. A woman was believed to be the medium of God, and many believed in her private revelation which took place during her trances.

5. *Liturgy*

The state of liturgy in the Philippines has not been so innovative as compared with that of Africa or of India. The form and rites are merely translations of the general texts given by Rome.

However, there have also been advances. At least many of the liturgies are said in the local languages. Some formation houses also try to pray in Filipino (Marino and Katigbak 1978). Because the ethnic minority Christians feel that the Catholic marriage rite is not meaningful enough for them (and therefore invalid), there have been attempts to indigenize the marriage rite for such groups (Maryhill School of Theology 1975). Father Chupungco (1973: 171) says that "in the process of transforming our Western-oriented liturgy into something more Filipino, there is need to foster those elements of folklore which have shaped the Filipino identity throughout the ages." He has therefore proposed a Filipino mass in the spirit of a contextualized liturgy (Chupungco 1976). Likewise there are experiments on liturgical dancing in Mindanao. The dance takes place at the beginning of the mass, during the offertory, and after the consecration. These experiments are not widespread and are only for special occasions. The mass is also said squatting and a low altar is used.

Comments

One bishop commented that the use of squatting during the mass is an example of a static concept of culture. The rationale

behind the innovation is that most Filipinos supposedly do not use the table: they squat and even eat from the floor. But he says the table can be found in most Filipino homes today so that the table users would form the majority. Hence to insist on archaism is to forget that culture also changes and therefore miss the point.

Secondly (the bishop continues), the Filipino is sentimental by nature. So why not make a liturgy that fits his sentimental nature? But Filipino liturgists, who often are trained abroad, want to make liturgy rational or intellectually cold after the style of Western liturgy.

Because the Filipino has a holistic view of himself (Mercado 1974: 73-81), he wants rites that attract his psychology, such as the physical participation which devotees feel in the Santo Entierro procession of Good Friday.

Thirdly, liturgists must also consider the important role of the people in contextualizing theology. One example is how Filipinos have given an old belief a new dressing or perhaps sublimated such belief (Mercado 1977b: 183):

Veneration of the departed ancestors was stressed in the animistic religion of the pre-colonial Filipinos. The same pattern was discovered by Fr. Neri in the stipends offered by Filipinos for Requiem masses... The following may be a typical case. Relatives pointed out to a sick young man that his illness may be due to his forgetfulness of his departed grandparents. So the family requested that a Requiem mass be offered for the repose of his grandparents.

Fourthly, Filipinos love the mysterious to be part of liturgy. This desire for mystery is expressed in the cryptic formulas and symbolisms of the shamans (*ibid.*, p. 185-186). The stress of the mysterious is found in the Oriental rite but missing in the Western liturgy, which has made almost everything so clear and rational.

6. *Moral Theology*

Studies on Filipino moral theology have relatively been few. The few (Salgado 1972, Gorospe 1974) which claim to be of the Philippine context tend to be exterior dressings of Western (scho-

lastic, existential) approaches. The result is the same moral conclusions as mentioned by Western authors.

The recent work of Mercado, "Elements of Filipino Ethics" (1978) has a new approach. The methodology used is based on the priority of Filipino values. The topics touched are man and society, justice, truth and person, children and marriage, natural law, law and the like. Some of the moral conclusions reached are different from the traditional textbooks and truly that of the common *tao*.

III. CONCLUDING REMARKS

This paper has shown areas of contextual theologies in the Philippines. Some of them had foreign models and some arose from the Philippine setting. Those from foreign models had dimensions of having a Philippine interpretation after the manner of assimilation in culture change.

The areas mentioned actually overlap each other. We have seen that liberation theology is to be realized and carried out in Basic Christian Communities which in turn must embody barrio theology because the majority of the BCC's are in the rural setting. Furthermore, a contextualized spirituality also must embody the above-mentioned areas as well as liturgy and moral theology.

The areas mentioned were also separated because they are not shared by all sectors of society. For example, many of the middle class and the Westernized elite would go for liberation theology. But liberation theology would not find much resonance in the barrio people. The pluralism of Philippine society would, therefore, demand also a pluralism of theology, depending on the value or inclination of said class.

In spite of the differences in the pluralism, all Filipinos have something in common. This commonality should be the basis of more dialogue and sharing as well as mutual enrichment because the best contextualizers of theology are the people themselves.

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