Remembering the Missionary Moratorium Debate: Toward a Missiology of Social Transformation in a Postcolonial Context

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Thirty years ago, John Gatu, general secretary of the Presbyterian Church in East Africa, called for churches in the West to declare a moratorium on missionaries. "[Our] present problems," he asserted, "can only be solved if all missionaries can be withdrawn. . . . The churches in the third world must be allowed to find their own identity, and the continuation of the present missionary movement is a hindrance to this selfhood. . . ."[1] Many other two-thirds world leaders echoed Gatu in this radical proposal, causing a worldwide, cross-cultural, trans-denominational debate among missiologists and missionaries. And although the moratorium did not occur as extensively as its extreme advocates would have liked,[2] the issues surrounding the call are worth revisiting on a regular basis, especially when considering the question, "What role should foreign missionaries play in social transformation in a postcolonial context?"[3]

I ask this question at this particular time in the history of evangelical missions because, first, global trends like the rise of contextual theologies and the development of human rights legislation evoke it. Second, I ask it because the social conscience among evangelicals seems deeper and more mature than ever before. "After . . . decades of debate," writes Melba Maggay, "social concern is . . . entrenched as a part of the church's agenda."[4] The question, however, is not only important for those recently awakened to the church's social responsibility. Indeed, the whole missionary enterprise needs to grapple with the growing complexity of cross-cultural social involvement in the postcolonial age. If missionaries go with the desire to work out their theological social ethics in another culture, then guiding principles are needed to ensure cross-cultural sen-

sitivity as well as ministry effectiveness in a postcolonial context.

I believe the call for a moratorium on missionaries thirty years ago (as well as the missiological scholarship that followed) provides a strong starting point to tackle such an issue. For although most interpreters deemed the moratorium unrealistic, if applied sweepingly and for all time,[5] a regular return to the reasoning behind the moratorium keeps the missionary enterprise accountable as it resurfaces the history of colonialism and the part missionaries played in it. With the advantage of twenty-first-century hindsight, I will first briefly review the burden of colonial history, and from it, suggest two Christian virtues—humility and servanthood—for defining basic missionary posturing in a postcolonial context, out of which I will proceed to point out some insights for Christian missionary social involvement.

The Burden of Colonial History

Common usage of the term "colonialism" today usually refers to those "aspects of…control exercised by one society over another…[and of the] exploitation by [that] foreign society and its agents who occupied the dependency to serve their own interests, not that of the subject people…."[6] The colonial period, commonly referred to as the Vasco de Gama era among missiologists, spans almost 500 years from 1492 to 1947.[7] The records of mass killings, torture, forced labor, slave trades, broken treaties, environmental abuses, oppression, and destroyed cultures leave one numb. Reacting to rationalizations coming from colonial sympathizers, Aime Cesaire writes passionately, "I am talking about societies drained of their essence, cultures trampled underfoot, institutions undermined, lands confiscated, religions smashed, magnificent artistic creations destroyed, extraordinary possibilities wiped out."[8]

From a postcolonial vantage point, I hold suspect any attempt to justify these acts of human brutality in colonial history. Some historians have encouraged contemporaries to analyze colonialism from its historical ethos to understand more accurately the mixed motivations of the colonizers.[9] In other words, colonizers were not devils; they were not purely evil, and we should not judge them out of context. Although the evidence these historians present softens the blow somewhat, there is ultimately no ethical justification for what happened to countless people and their cultures under colonialist rule. Committed were "crimes against humanity" based on the assumption of racial superiority that justified the destruction of lives, property, and cultures for the colonizers' economic and political gain. The existence of resistance forces fighting

against the colonialists in almost every context in every generation seems a contrary testimony to the inference that it is unfair to judge the colonizers with postcolonial hindsight. We certainly cannot accuse resisters like Emilio Aguinaldo of the Philippines, Ho Chi Minh of Vietnam, Mohandas Ghandi of India, Stephen Biko of South Africa, Geronimo of North America, and many others of postcolonial motivations! Indeed, they testify to the inherent evil of colonialism and to the moral fortitude that it took to resist it. To judge colonialism today affirms their resistance.

Consequences of Colonialism. It does not take a scholar to surmise that 500 years of colonialism has enduring consequences for the colonized. "It is one thing," writes Klauspeter Blaser, "to see the problem of colonial expansion in historical perspective, and another to understand it in terms of meaning for an enslaved population [now]…."[10] First of all, postcolonial people struggle for self-worth, trying to shake off centuries of being told that they were something less than human. "A miserable looking lot of little brown rats," wrote a correspondent regarding Filipinos during the American colonization of the islands.[11] Savages, animals, property, and objects were other words used to describe the colonized. Colonized people and their descendants must overcome the socio-psychological notion of subhuman-ness. Anthropologist F. Landa Jocano, although addressing fellow Filipinos, challenges all people of the two-thirds world by saying, "We need to free our minds from the biases of the old colonial value models and to build new ones that reflect the best in us."[12] The crisis of cultural and national identity is another consequence of colonialism. Some attempt to rediscover characteristics from the "pristine life" of the precolonial era. For example, Mobutu Sese Seko, president of Zaire, changed his name (as well as the name of the country) to reflect tribal roots and ordered all in the country to do the same.[13] Others attempt to negotiate the present realities of cultural hybridity, like Omondi wa Radoli of Nairobi who said with stark realism, "The African must wake up…and cease to bury his head in the sand and face facts as they stand—that is, that [pure] African culture is gone."[14] These psychological and cultural factors have led inevitably to social unrest, another consequence of colonialism. This unrest manifests itself in various ways, ranging from a general lack of initiative to determine the future (political fatalism) to violent revolutionary attempts to overthrow present structures (political fanaticism). Moreover, many de-colonizing nations continue to rely on political, military, and/or economic assistance from their former colonizers, thus creating unhealthy relationships of neo-colonialism.

At least two glaring realities emerge from these consequences: massive poverty and political instability. "Mass poverty is increasing everyday and is spreading like a mortal plague all over the third world where the majority of mankind is now living… [and] a great deal of it arises from the colonial system which was imposed [upon the population] for centuries…."[15] Political instability often accompanies mass poverty. Staving off regular coup attempts and/or succumbing to leadership changes under conditions of violent revolutions typify the pattern of former colonies trying to establish self-government. It would be an oversimplification to blame colonialism for everything, but can anyone deny its contribution to these ills? Stripping a people's psychological, cultural, and social identities over centuries has indeed played a major role in the impoverishment and political instability of many two-thirds world nations.

Missions and Colonialism. If this brief analysis of colonialism's lingering consequences is even remotely accurate, then the undeniable link between colonialism and Christian missions should disturb us profoundly. Although many of the charges leveled against the missionaries were (and are) ideologically exaggerated and based on stereotypes,[16] colonial advances were no doubt aided by missionary work. Even historian Brian Stanley, who attempts to offer a more sympathetic view of missions history based on "evidence rather than propaganda," concedes that "in some cases [of missionary participation in colonialism]…the evidence is sufficient to secure a 'conviction.'"[17] At the very least, the lesser charge of blind complicity to colonial practices must be leveled against the missionary enterprise as it participated in the Manifest Destiny of the Enlightenment age. But the more severe charge of aiding and abetting the colonialist project as its deliberate domesticating and even sanctifying tool would not be far-fetched.

To be sure, this undeniable relationship served as the historical impetus for the call for a moratorium on missionaries some thirty years ago. Secular and Marxist theorists did not make this call (although they too expressed their opinions); rather, it came from church leaders of the two-thirds world[18] who sought to decolonize indigenous churches to give way for authentic cultural expressions of the gospel, to affirm local indigenous leadership, to break the unhealthy cycle of dependence upon Western funds and personnel, and to prick the conscience of the missionary community to re-examine the meaning of mission altogether.[19] Debate went on for a decade on both theological and practical levels, and though the idea finally lost steam, the debate itself bore enduring

fruit. Emilio Castro of the World Council of Churches acknowledged this fruit early on. He wrote in 1975, "The whole debate on moratorium is already accomplishing an important missionary function: It obliges us to rethink our motivations and our relations and forces us to make use of our imaginations."[20]

Missionary Posturing in a Postcolonial Context

Given the burden of colonial history and the lessons learned from the moratorium debate, at least two Christian virtues come to the fore that demand an integral place in the basic posturing of Western missionary presence in the two-thirds world—namely, humility and servanthood.

Missionary Humility. Missionary humility, or what missiologist David J. Bosch calls the "vulnerability of mission,"[21] assumes equality between cultures. The multiple cultures involved in the missionary encounter simultaneously reflect God and need God. In humility, missionaries go to another culture to discover God's ways in-context, along with the people of that culture.

Bosch distinguishes between "exemplar missionaries" and "victim missionaries."[22] Exemplar missionaries arrive as examples of holiness and spirituality and as carriers of the only right way to understand the gospel. Nathan Price, the fictitious Baptist missionary in Barbara Kingsolver's best-selling novel *The Poisonwood Bible*,[23] is unfortunately not as fictitious as some would like to believe. Unbending, unteachable, and missionizing under an aura of self-reliance and superiority, Price bungles the very message of the gospel by a correctable mispronunciation. Wanting to say, "Jesus is precious," he preaches instead, "Jesus is poisonwood." As an exemplar missionary, he not only embarrasses his family, he also alienates the very people he seeks to serve. Even though Kingsolver ultimately caricatures the Western missionary in the form of Nathan Price,[24] the exemplar spirit behind the character has survived into the postcolonial age. To be sure, the imposition of this kind of Christian spirituality comes in more subtle forms today, but we must identify it for what it is: the offspring of the colonial missionary spirit. "Just as the smell of stale cigarettes clings to the clothes even of a nonsmoker coming out of a room full of people smoking,"[25] exemplar missionaries carry the stench of colonial history.

By contrast, "victim missionaries"—or servants afflicted by their own weaknesses and vulnerabilities and who seem always to have before them the absolute necessity of the cross of Christ for their lives—posture

themselves with humility as they bear the burden of colonial history.[26] It calls for meekness strong enough to break the superior/inferior default of the missions-colonial era. They do not come with answers, but rather with the openness to discover the answers along with the national church. They do not come as soldiers with marching orders on a crusade; rather, they come as participants with, and servants of, those whom God has already called in that particular culture. The call for a moratorium was ultimately a call for fewer exemplars and more victims! C. Peter Wagner identifies four characteristics of missionary presence that need desperately to be put to death—Western cultural chauvinism, theological and ethical imperialism, paternalistic interchurch aid, and missionary nonproductivity. He writes, "This is no time for a total moratorium… [but] we do need a moratorium on certain kinds of missionaries…."[27]

Missionary Servanthood. Humility leads to another virtue that should characterize the basic missionary posture in a postcolonial context: servanthood. I considered the word "submission," because missionaries should submit to the authority of the national church. I also considered "accountability," because the national church primarily should hold missionaries accountable. "Servanthood," however, connotes both of these elements *in order to serve*, to serve the national church as it strives to be salt and light in society. "The call to missionary engagement… should be one of genuine servanthood, which humbly respects [national] leaders…and looks for ways to assist them…."[28] We should not, however, mistake this posture of servanthood for the subtle arrogance of refusing to be served or to be subjected the hospitality characteristic of many countries in the two-thirds world. "Only superiors never receive help," asserts missionary and theologian Bernard T. Adeney.[29] As servant-guests in the country, it is only proper that missionaries also receive with humility the gifts of their hosts.

The missionary as servant (and served) clearly opposes the colonial spirit. Instead of condescension, cooperation, participation, and respect define the cross-cultural relationship. Instead of assuming that missionaries automatically take places of leadership, they come with the intention to help their national coworkers accomplish the church's tasks before them. Instead of fostering what Kosuke Koyama calls "the teacher complex,"[30] missionary servants come to learn a new way of life, a new worldview, a new way of being church, a new way of evangelization, a new way to seek justice: in short, a new way to be Christian.

This servant posture will take more than rhetoric and good intentions, for the default relationship between missionaries and two-thirds world

people carries on the colonial legacy. Missionaries from the conquering West often fall to patterns of superiority and conquered peoples to patterns of inferiority. The moratorium acknowledged these default patterns and sought to break them. But, as sociologist Emele M. Uka reminds us, "The emphasis of [the] moratorium is on changed relationships, not *cessation* of relationships."[31] The moratorium called for change. The colonial spirit can be stifled. The relationship between missionary and national church can be redeemed and be more conformed to Christ's call to servanthood. To the extent that missionaries can resist the colonial spirit with the posture of Christ's servanthood, they reflect an authentic gospel as Jesus lived and preached it.

The virtues of humility and servanthood must define the basic missionary posture anywhere, but especially in a postcolonial context. This posture authenticates missionary participation in cross-cultural ministries in general and social transformation ministries in particular. To the social transformation question we now turn.

Toward a Postcolonial Missiology of Social Transformation

As I mentioned earlier, few if any dispute that the gospel has a social dimension. As the many facets of Jesus's kingdom ministry come to the fore, many theologies of mission today define themselves more holistically, which include at least the two activities of verbal proclamation (evangelism or evangelization) and visible demonstration (social concern or social transformation).[32] Missionaries of all traditions are doing better at reflecting the values of the gospel by both word and deed, which is good news to two-thirds world church leaders like Filipino Isabelo Magalit. "Please do not send missionaries," he pronounced at a major missionary convention held in Wheaton, Illinois, "who insist on a dichotomy between evangelism and social concern."[33]

Many excellent works have been written regarding the cross-cultural communication of the gospel,[34] but fewer have articulated the cross-cultural demonstration of the gospel.[35] As more Western missionaries go to serve churches in two-thirds world contexts with strong theologically informed social convictions, the greater the need for insights that can help negotiate the complexities of cross-cultural social involvement. With humility and servanthood as guiding virtues wrought from the burden of colonial history, I offer two sets of insights in the service of missionaries who are seeking to work out their social ethics in a cross-cultural context. The first set involves at least two postcolonial issues of which missionaries should be keenly aware before "crossing the bor-

der"—namely, human rights and globalization.

Human Rights. The concept of human rights began to take its modern shape after World War II, culminating in the now-famous *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) as conceived, drafted, and finalized by the United Nations in 1948. Although not without sharp disagreement regarding its contextual meanings and implementation, the UDHR has become a standard, if not the standard, by which the actions of governments against citizens—either of other nations or their own—are judged by the international community. Writes Eugene Heideman, "…[The UDHR] has achieved the status of being a creed for the guidance of the nations. Affirmed officially today by more than 180 nations, it is the most widely adopted document in the world."[36]

To give a comprehensive treatment of human rights—their transcendent and secular origins, their historical evolutions, their first, second, and third world interpretations, the controversies that emerged from them, and so on—would detract from the main focus of this study.[37] The focus on a missiological understanding of human rights, however, necessitates a basic working theological definition of the term. Human rights reflect the basic value of dignity to which all human beings are entitled.[38] A Christian perspective provides a biblical and Christological basis for this inherent dignity. Jürgen Moltmann explains:

> On the ground of the creation of man and woman in the image of God, on the ground of the incarnation of God for the reconciliation of the world, and on the ground of the coming of the Kingdom of God as the consummation of history, the concern entrusted to Christian theology is one for the humanity of persons as well as for their ongoing rights and duties.… It is the duty of the Christian faith beyond human rights and duties to stand for the dignity of human beings in their life with God and for God.[39]

This theological concept of human rights affirms the spirit of the international movement, but provides the motivation for its active advocacy on the basis of a loving God who demands justice for all. In this light, human rights should play an important role in formulating a missiology of social transformation. First of all, human rights humanize theology. They force the lofty ideals of the *Imago Dei*, kingdom justice and righteousness, and divine-human reconciliation to land where people live and breathe and suffer. They force theology to become applied theology (mission!), for the "stuff" of human rights affirms as well as

defends the freedom, equality, and participation (or self-determination) of all peoples.

Second, "human rights are to be understood as the rights of the poor."[40] Of course on one level, the concept of human rights articulates what every human being is entitled to; by its fundamental nature therefore, it does not exclude anyone. So "rights of the poor" do not mean a denial of the rights of the rich; the rights of the powerless do not mean a denial of the rights of the powerful, and so on. But precisely because the Christian basis of human rights is God's demand for compassion and justice, socially informed missionaries should be naturally drawn to the poor, the suffering, and the oppressed. "Justice must be partial in order to be impartial. Only by giving special attention to the poor and downtrodden can one be said to be following 'the principle of equal consideration of human interest.' "[41] Herein is the kernel of truth at the core of popular phrases like "the preferential option for the poor" and "God is on the side of the poor."

Third, awareness of human rights issues maintains the healthy tension between the universal transformative and the local contextual elements of the gospel. The gospel challenges all cultures (transformation). And yet, it seeks to take on specific cultural forms according to context (contextualization). "Every tribe and nation must be allowed to evolve a brand of Christianity whose spirit is biblical [applicable to all] but whose body is indigenous."[42] Along these very same lines rages the universal-local debate among human rights voices. On the one hand, many claim the existence of common, fundamental patterns and practices across cultures that make such a universal list not only possible, but essential for the pursuit of global justice and peace.[43] On the other hand, a growing number of scholars across disciplines question the validity of a universal list of anything, which would include human rights, in these postmodern, multicultural times.[44] Should human rights be determined by an international body that tends toward universals or by each context that seeks a radically local ethics? The more we pose this question as "either/or," the less valid it becomes, for the truth of the matter is that human rights are both universal and local, much like the nature of the Christian gospel. This paradox is often framed among human rights debaters as "fundamental creed" versus "implementation." Wolfgang Huber writes, "Universal validity is claimed for human rights, yet the situations in which one must fight for them differ greatly."[45]

The United Nations has responded to this tension by forming many different kinds of implementing bodies that regulate human rights inter-

connectedly between international and regional levels. Perhaps the most relevant of these groups for missionaries in postcolonial contexts is the Working Group on Indigenous Populations. This Working Group "is the only UN body that allows representatives from indigenous peoples' organizations to speak freely before its official meetings, enabling them to meet with state government representatives to point out long-standing state neglect and violations of their rights."[46] This Working Group, as it works under the UN Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and the Protection of Minorities, has drafted a document representing an international standard "that shall be known as the 'Universal Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.' "[47] This declaration articulates the right of self-determination as well as broadly defines the concept of indigenous peoples to include the once colonized, the conquered, and the politically or geographically marginalized. It reinforces the missionary humility and servanthood that I have advocated in this paper. Declarations of this kind are worthy of the attention of missionaries who are seeking to implement human rights issues in a contextual, yet transformative way.

Human rights in general and the rights of indigenous peoples in particular inform a missiology of social transformation. One other issue needs the attention of missionaries before they go to the field—namely, the newer phenomenon of globalization.

Globalization. Like human rights, globalization defies easy definitions. Again, I cannot do justice to all of the issues that it evokes.[48] But globalization basically refers to "a multifaceted process through which peoples, nations and cultures become increasingly integrated into a single world system."[49] The combination of the end of the Cold War—when the collapse of socialist nations in 1989 gave way to the flourishing of market capitalism[50]—and the rapid advancements of communications technology has catalyzed this process. As a process, globalization offers exciting possibilities (though far from being value-free and neutral) "for the exchange of knowledge and ideas, for the expression of solidarity among peoples, for the sharing of human and material resources, and for fostering intercultural communication."[51]

Far from being just a process, however, globalization is also an ideology, an ideology that mandates participation, commitment, and even loyalty to the global market.[52] As an ideology, globalization offers, in a sense, salvation to the world—a unifying future for humankind—via the imposition of a capitalist-based, technologies-based consumerism. Terms like "McDonaldization" or "McWorld" and "Coca-colonization"

capture in a popular way this particular kind of *eschaton*.

The fact that many critics of globalization have likened it to historical colonialism is hardly surprising, for both its goals and its consequences are disturbingly similar to what happened during colonial times.[53] The imposition of a foreign structural system (social, economic, political, ideological/religious), the disregard for the richness of diverse cultures, the exploitation of natural resources, and the marginalization of the majority of a population are just some of the striking parallels between historical colonialism and ideological globalization. Globalization as an ideology is a dominant force today that warrants the prophetic call of the church against its spreading evils. It also warrants active compassion among the victims of globalization—namely, the poor—as well as advocacy on behalf of indigenous cultures and the environment.

How should globalization, both as process and ideology, inform a missiology of social transformation? First, it compels us to have a "glocal" perspective, which views culture in light of globalization.[54] We can no longer conduct ethnographical studies on local contexts without taking into account the influences of globalization upon them. Such a perspective calls for a new kind of socio-cultural analysis that asks the question, how has the locale responded to the forces of globalization? Has it fully assimilated into the global flow of "McWorld," or has it reacted in "Jihad" fashion against it,[55] or does it find itself somewhere in between? The particular culture's response or responses to globalization will have implications for missionary social strategy.

Second, given the parallel mentioned earlier between colonialism and globalization, any association with globalization should produce fear and trembling within the missionary community. Extreme caution should characterize the relationship that missionaries have with globalization forces. While participating in and taking advantage of the process, missionaries must steer clear of propagating its ideology. This is not easy since both the process and ideology are value-laden with all of the negative and positive aspects of free market capitalism. It will take constant awareness and serious discernment to distinguish between the two.

Beyond a cautionary stance toward the ideology of globalization, however, mission should also be proactive in countering its ideological dimension, the third way in which globalization should inform missionary social involvement. There is certainly a place for Christian participation in the political and economic arenas to quell the tide of globalization, and there is a place to make corporate church statements against it. But I believe the church's primary role against this dominant, world-

wide, neo-colonial ideology is "bottom-up subversion." By this I mean that rather than trying to mount a large enough force to counter the giant problem of globalization, the church could direct its primary energies into small deeds that bring the full implications of the gospel on the grassroots level. Elsewhere, I offer a meditation on the parable of the mustard seed as the biblical model for this proposal.[56] Whereas I limited my analysis in that article to the Philippine context, American futurist Tom Sine published a book that features "mustard seed activities" all over the world.[57] These stories demonstrate the power of the mustard seed, the truth that "God has chosen to change the world through the lowly, the unassuming, and the imperceptible."[58] In that vein I wrote: "To deal locally with real people in real communities tackling real problems plays an important role in the battle against globalization, no matter how insignificant our actions may seem."[59]

Human rights and globalization constitute the first set of insights for the formulation of a missiology of social transformation in a postcolonial context. Missionaries should be keenly aware of these issues prior to crossing the border if they want to play a sensitive, effective role in the socio-ethical problems of another culture. The second set is comprised of two postcolonial insights that are gained only as missionaries apply themselves in context. The first of this second set calls for taking into serious account the history of resistance during the colonial period as the starting point for social ethics. The second calls for the appropriation of a cross-cultural praxis method that informs missionary participation in the national church's theological reflection, its social analysis, and its actions as agents of social change.

History of Colonial Resistance as Starting Point for Ethics. Missionaries should become students of the history of the country to which they are called as part of their acculturation. Specifically for social ethics, they should begin their education with a look into the national history of colonial resistance. This is a viable starting point in developing a missionary social ethics. To gain an understanding of the history of colonial resistance for one's theology is certainly not an original idea, except possibly in its suggested application to cross-cultural practice for missionaries. But as far as calling for a serious reckoning of colonial history from the perspective of the resistance, many theologians and historians can be credited. Eleazer Fernandez, for example, begins his treatise on the theology of struggle that emerged in the Philippine context with a chapter on a history "from the underside" and from the "resistance and struggle."[60] He quotes historian Renato Constantino as

saying, "The only way a history of the Philippines can be Filipino is to write on the basis of the struggles of the people. . . . Filipino resistance to colonial oppression is the unifying thread of Philippine history."[61] This can be said for many two-thirds world countries, where Christians "have begun [looking] at history from their perspective as citizens of poor and dominated countries."[62]

Missionaries discover a source of solace when reading history in this key—namely, that many missionaries in the past also participated in the struggle. The burden of the missions-colonialism connection lightens when one reads about Dominican Friar Bartolome de Las Casas, who committed his life fighting against the abuses of Spanish *conquistadores* in Latin America, or of French Protestant missionary Maurice Leenhardt, who jeopardized his own life for his active "pro-native" stance against the colonialists in New Caledonia. Or of William Carey in India, William Sheppard in the Congo, and the Baptist missionaries in Jamaica, who fought aggressively against the slave trade. Such examples support the statement by anthropologist Darrell Whiteman: "To accuse the *entire* missionary enterprise of being a tool of colonialism is a polemic that will not stand against the documentary evidence to the contrary."[63]

Starting with the history of colonial resistance in formulating a cross-cultural social ethics yields several results. First, missionaries learn history from a perspective that perhaps they were unaware. Traditional and more widely distributed histories are usually written from the perspective of the dominant culture, the winners of society. To hear perspectives that tell the other side will, at the very least, expose missionaries to a fuller understanding of historical events. Second, the much needed process of conscientization can begin here, producing both humility toward the adopted culture and a prophetic edge toward one's home culture. If an American missionary, for example, were to read of the "holy resistance" assembled by Filipinos against American colonialism, it would probably alter his or her view of both the Philippines and America. And third, an historical grounding establishes identification with the poor, the ongoing victims of colonialism and neocolonialism. To identify with them is to understand their plight, to maintain a standard of living in accordance with that understanding, to empower people for self-reliance and God-dependence. The poor sense keenly that missionaries are either with them in their daily struggle, or they are not. Knowledge of what went on in the past can well make the difference in the missionaries' attitude toward, and therefore their practice among, the poor.

Cross-Cultural Praxis. The second insight for a cross-cultural social ethics is to engage in praxis as the methodological vehicle by which missionaries participate in social transformation. The term "praxis" was popularized during the heyday of liberation theology in Latin America, instigated in large part by theologian Gustavo Gutierrez vis-a-vis Paulo Freire's use of the term. Freire defines praxis as "action and reflection upon the world in order transform it."[64] He reinvigorated the word in the context of oppression, offering a way for the oppressed to reclaim their lives and to liberate themselves. Gutierrez seems to have appropriated Freire's motivation for the use of "praxis," but seems to use the term more as a synonym for "practice" or "concrete action." This is why he describes theology as "critical reflection *on praxis*," whereas Freire's definition of the word already includes reflection. Consequently, Gutierrez needs to add "ortho" to "praxis" in order to get his point across.[65] "Praxis" or "orthopraxis," it means the same thing—namely, that our reflection informs our action and our action informs our reflection in a circular, mutually enriching process that seeks to transform situations of injustice and oppression.

This dynamic method for theology challenges the traditional model of theologizing, a model conceived as reflection leading to action in a linear fashion, not giving the action any power to inform further reflection. This model, according to liberationists, results in static doctrines of truth that are ultimately rendered unserviceable in the here-and-now. This new way of theologizing, posits Juan L. Segundo, is *the liberation of theology*.[66]

There have been many praxis models formulated since the 1970s. One of the earlier and more enduring is Segundo's well-known hermeneutic circle,[67] a model that has spawned conceptual variations. At the risk of merely adding yet another variegated model of praxis, and thus undermining the genius in its simplicity, I suggest that the dynamic of the cross-cultural situation becomes a principal player in working out a missionary social ethics based on praxis. In the illustration below, indigenous theologies and ethics of both home and host cultures enter into the process. As missionaries become aware of their cultural conditioning, they enter into a praxiological—dialogical and active—relationship with the national church, a church that is also culturally conditioned. In a healthy intercultural relationship, several positive praxiological features arise.

First, the exchange enriches both missionaries and the national church as they learn from each other's culturally conditioned "Christianities,"

and thus broaden each other's respective versions. Beyond that, this mutual enrichment is the means for a creatively unified intercultural conception of the gospel. Herein is the potential "magic" that occurs in the intercultural communication process: a creative, contextually relevant, synthetic theology emerges from the interaction between at least two Christianities, two different cultural understandings of God. And third, the relationship testifies to the global, multicultural nature of the gospel. When representatives of two (or more) cultures worship and minister together, they speak of the transculturality of Christ that is at the heart of the gospel.

These kinds of features only have a chance if both missionaries and national church become aware of their respective cultural conditioning. Adeney points out the extent to which our respective faith communities and cultures condition us and thus limit us. He writes: "As we become aware of the historical 'conditionedness' of our own thought, we are humbled by the partialness of our understanding."[68] Entering into dialogue with the faith and culture of the national church then increases the missionaries' understanding. Reciprocally, missionaries have the potential to enhance the national church's understanding. They challenge possible blind spots of the inside or emic perspective.

Having said this, missionaries do not have the same level of authority in the dialogue that the national church does. Missionaries are guests, and "as guests we must always remember that our hosts are superordinate. We are on their turf."[69] Missionaries dialogue to enhance, challenge, contribute, and support the national church; the national church dialogues to obtain, process, and reflect on the input given by missionaries (as well as to speak into the missionaries' lives) and to decide on the relevance of that input for the church's social task.

Basic to the idea of praxis is its engagement in and for the world. It is once again, "action and reflection upon the world in order to transform it." "Cross-cultural praxis," adds Adeney, "is a three-way dialogue between God, our adopted culture, and us."[70] Combining these two perspectives comes closer to the praxis process for missionaries who seek to participate in social transformation. Missionary praxis is cross-cultural action and reflection upon God and God's mission for the sake of the transformation of the world.

The reflection component of missionary praxis contains at least two aspects: social theologizing and socio-ethical analysis. First, social theologizing means that missionaries and national church together enter into dialogue about the social dimensions of the biblical faith—the reign

of God, the Ten Commandments, the Exodus, prophetic justice and righteousness, the Sermon on the Mount—and in so doing ascertain the theological basis of social ethics for that context. Certainly, theologizing can happen without the presence of missionaries. But keeping in mind the potential fruit of an intercultural relationship, the national church can come to a richer theological understanding of God's intentions for society by including them. For missionaries, their participation in cross-cultural social reflection requires what anthropologist Charles H. Kraft calls, "dynamic equivalence theologizing,"[71] or what sociologist Everett M. Rogers calls, "client orientation," which is basically missionizing with the perspective of the receptor culture primarily in mind.[72] In other words, the theologizing of missionaries is dialogical and in the service of the national church, as the church seeks to formulate a contextually relevant social ethics. Some guiding questions for missionary theological reflection may be: What are some transcultural ethical themes found in scripture? How has my culture dealt with these themes? More importantly, how has my host culture dealt with them? The two great commandments, for example, to love the Lord our God with all of our being and to love our neighbors as ourselves (Mark 12:30-31) "transcend all cultures, but how [they are] lived is culturally specific."[73]

The second aspect of reflection in the cross-cultural praxis model is social analysis, defined practically "as the effort to obtain a more complete picture of a social situation by exploring its historical and structural relationships."[74] To know society is prerequisite to assuming a transformative posture within it. Based on praxiological theologizing, missionaries and the national church conduct a social analysis and eventually make theological ethical judgments based on that analysis. In light of the national church's biblical social vision, what aspects of society are worth affirming? And what aspects need critique? A guiding question for theological social analysis may be: What present social values and structures are in line with the national church's version of the biblical social vision, and which are not?

The key word for the action component of missionary praxis is participation. Praxis is not praxis unless there is an activist element to it. As the national church takes context-sensitive action, based on its theological reflections and socio-ethical analysis, missionaries simply participate. By "simply," I do not mean "simple," for participation calls for real commitment, shared suffering, and shared involvement in the nitty-gritty of grassroots ministry. It is far from simple. It means participating in acts of compassion or lending a hand in a community project

or politically advocating alongside church leaders on behalf of the poor. This kind of missionary participation authenticates their contribution to theological reflection and socio-ethical analysis. If missionaries spend their days "staring at computer screens…while the national [church] engages the poor and the lost,"[75] then their words ultimately become irrelevant. If, on the other hand, missionaries participate in the trenches, concretely engaging in the struggle with and for the poor, then they earn the right to re-reflect together theologically and ethically with their national church partners. And missionary praxis—cross-cultural action and reflection upon God and God's mission for the sake of the transformation of the world—continues.

Summary

By way of summary, the attempt to answer the question of the role of missionaries in social transformation in a postcolonial context brought us back to an important debate thirty years ago on the call for a moratorium on missionaries. This debate led us down the depressing path of colonial history and the part that Christian missions played in it. Under the burden of colonial history, the missionary posture in a postcolonial context should be characterized by the two Christian virtues of humility and servanthood. With these guiding virtues, I offered two sets of insights toward the formulation of a missiology of social transformation. The first set consists of two unavoidable "universal" issues—namely, human rights and globalization—with which missionaries need to come to terms before entering into a postcolonial situation. The second set also consists of two points. The first views history from the point of view of colonial resistance, the starting point for a missionary social ethics. And the second appropriates a cross-cultural praxis methodology that informs the role of missionaries in the dynamic process of the national church's reflecting and acting.

Implementing a social change strategy in a cross-cultural context poses daunting missionary challenges. As Adeney warns, "[It] is not for the self-protective or timid."[76] There certainly are easier life options than the missionary vocation to take part in social change in another culture. But as our reality increasingly becomes multicultural, the day quickly approaches—in fact, a case can be made that it is already here—when we will need the skills to deal with cross-cultural ethical issues without ever leaving our neighborhoods. A basic feature of a multicultural context is the interaction between peoples of the first, second, and third worlds; postcolonial issues, therefore, must be figured into the relation-

al equation. So even though I primarily had foreign missionaries in mind, the issues raised here are relevant for all Christians who seek to be agents of social change wherever they may be.

Suggested Reading

Adeney, Bernard T., *Strange Virtues* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995).
Bradshaw, Bruce, *Bridging the Gap* (Monrovia, CA: MARC, 1994).
Grigg, Viv, *Companion to the Poor* (Monrovia, CA: MARC, 1990).
Maggay, Melba P., *Transforming Society* (Oxford: Regnum/Lynx, 1994).
Sugden, Chris, *Gospel, Culture and Transformation* (Oxford, et al: Regnum, 2000).

Endnotes

1. Quoted in Gerald H. Anderson, "A Moratorium on Missionaries?" in *Mission Trends No. 1*, ed. Gerald H. Anderson and Thomas F. Stransky (New York, Paramus and Toronto: Paulist; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans), 134.

2. Missionary numbers from the West, especially among mainline denominations, did decrease, suggesting, at least in part, that some groups took the moratorium to heart. See Emele M. Uka, *Missionaries Go Home? A Sociological Interpretation of an African Response to Christian Missions* (Berne, Frankfurt, et al: Peter Lang, 1989), 235.

3. I use the term "postcolonial" in this paper simplistically, fully aware of the existence of more complex postcolonial theories developed by the likes of Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, Homi Bhaba, and others. "Postcolonial" in this paper simply refers to a post-World War II perspective that takes seriously the negative impact of the colonial period upon the people and interprets culture and society according to indigenous values and religious consciousness.

4. Melba P. Maggay, *Transforming Society* (Oxford: Regnum/Lynx, 1994), 16.

5. "The Moratorium Debate," *International Review of Mission* 64 (April 1975): 152-54.

6. David K. Fieldhouse, *Colonialism 1870-1945: An Introduction* (New York: St. Martin's, 1981), 7.

7. Stephen Neill, *Colonialism and Christian Missions* (London: Lutterworth, 1966), 11. See also Robert J. Schreiter, *The New Catholicity* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1997), 123-24.

8. Aime Cesaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, trans. Joan Pinkham (New York and London: Monthly Review), 21.

9. See Fieldhouse, *Colonialism 1870-1945*, 8ff. See also Brian Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag* (Leicester, England: Apollos, 1990), 33-53.

10. Klauspeter Blaser, "Multicultural Christianity: A Project for Liberation," *International Review of Mission* 82 (April 1993): 206.

11. Quoted in Daniel B. Schirmer and Stephen R. Shalom, eds. *The Philippines Reader: A History of Colonialism, Neocolonialism, Dictatorship, and Resistance* (Boston: South End, 1987), 18.

12. F. Landa Jocano, *Filipino Value System: A Cultural Definition* (Manila, Phil.: Punlad Research House, 1997), 5.

13. Stanley Meisler, "Black Africa: A Decade of Change," in *Aftermath of Colonialism*, ed. Nancy L. Hoepli (New York: H.W. Wilson, 1973), 15. Mobutu changed his name from Joseph Desire Mobutu to Mobutu Sese Kuku Mgbendu Wa-za-Banga and the country's name from the Belgian Congo to Zaire.

14. Quoted in Meisler, "Black Africa," 16.

15. Blaser, "Multicultural Christianity," 206.

16. See Thomas N. Headland, "Missionaries and Social Justice," *Missiology* 24 (April 1996): 169-71. See also Richard and Helen Exley, *The Missionary Myth: An Agnostic View of Contemporary Missionaries* (Guildford and London: Lutterworth, 1973), 1-6.

17. Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag*, 12-13.

18. Blaser, "Multicultural Christianity," 206.

19. "The Moratorium Debate," 149-51.

20. Emilio Castro, "Editorial," *International Review of Mission* 64/254 (April 1975): 5.

21. David J. Bosch, "The Vulnerability of Mission," in *New Directions in Mission and Evangelization* 2, ed. James A. Scherer and Stephen B. Bevans (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1999), 73.

22. Bosch, "The Vulnerability of Mission," 80-83.

23.Barbara Kingsolver, *The Poisonwood Bible* (New York: HarperCollins, 1998).

24. Alan Neely, "Review of *The Poisonwood Bible* by Barbara Kingsolver," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 24/3 (July 2000): 138.

25. Bosch, "The Vulnerability of Mission," 82.

26. Ibid., 81-82.

27. C. Peter Wagner, "Colour the Moratorium Gray," *International Review of Mission* 64/254 (April 1975): 175-76.

28. F. Albert Tizon, "Team Building in a Cross-Cultural Context," in *Leadership and Team Building: Transforming Congregational Ministry through Teams*, ed. Roger Heuser (Matthews, NC: Christian Ministry Resources, 1999), 263.

29. Bernard T. Adeney, *Strange Virtues: Ethics in a Multicultural World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995), 50.

30. Kosuke Koyama, "Christianity Suffers from 'Teacher Complex,'" in *Mission Trends No. 2: Evangelization*, ed. Gerald H. Anderson and Thomas F. Stransky (New York, Paramus and Toronto: Paulist; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 71.

31. Uka, "Missionaries Go Home?" 235. Italics are mine.

32. Mission statements from various traditions now reflect these two dimensions of mission, making obsolete the dichotomy that formed between evangelism and social concern. For conciliar Protestants, see their statement, "Ecumenical Affirmation: Mission and Evangelism." For Roman Catholics, see "Evangelii Nuntiandi." For evangelical Protestants, see "Consultation on the Relation of Evangelism and Social Responsibility." These statements are in many publications but are conveniently brought together in James A. Scherer and Stephen B. Bevans, eds., *New Directions in Mission and Evangelization 1: Basic Statements* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1992). One tradition that this book does not cover is Pentecostalism, which emphasizes another dimension of Christ's kingdom ministry that further defines holism—namely, the work of the Holy Spirit. See "Brussels Consultation of the Division of Foreign Missions of the Assemblies of God," *Transformation* 16/2 (April/June 1999): 41-43.

33. Quoted in Miriam Adeney, *God's Foreign Policy* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 7.

34. See Donald K. Smith, *Creating Understanding A Handbook for Christian Communication Across Cultural Landscapes* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), Melba P. Maggay, "Communicating Cross-Culturally: Towards a New Context for Missions in the Philippines (Quezon City, Philippines: New Day, 1989), Charles H. Kraft, *Com-*

munication Theory for Christian Witness (Nashville: Abingdon, 1983), and Marvin K. Mayers, *Christianity Confronts Culture: A Strategy for Cross-Cultural Evangelism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), to name just a few.

35. Articles like "The Development of Guidelines on Missionary Involvement in Social-Justice and Human-Rights Issues," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 6/1 (January 1982): 9-12 are far and few between.

36. Eugene Heideman, "The Missiological Significance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights," *Missiology* 28/2 (April 2000): 164.

37. Besides, excellent analyses on the subject have been published in recent years. See for example, Alf Tergel, *Human Rights in Cultural and Religious Traditions* (Uppsala, Sweden: ACTA, 1998) and Richard P. Claude and Burns H. Weston, eds., *Human Rights in the World Community: Issues and Action* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1989), to name just a few.

38. UDHR cited in Heideman, "The Missiological Significance of the UDHR," 164.

39. Jürgen Moltmann, "A Definitive Study Paper: A Christian Declaration of Human Rights," in *A Christian Declaration of Human Rights*, ed. Allen O. Miller (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 130.

40. Wolfgang Huber, "Human Rights," in *Dictionary of Mission*, ed. Karl Muller, Theo Sundermeier, Stephen Bevans and Richard Bliese (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1998), 195.

41. Stephen C. Mott, *Biblical Ethics and Social Change* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 66.

42. Eduardo Lapiz, "Filipino Indigenous Liturgy," *Patmos* 14/2 (February 1999): 26.

43. See Douglas J. Elwood, *Human Rights: A Christian Perspective* (Quezon City, Philippines: New Day, 1990) and Max L. Stackhouse, *Creeds, Society and Human Rights: A Study in Three Cultures* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984).

44. I am referring here to the emerging postmodern scholarship that increasingly questions the philosophical and theological foundations for truth and morality assumed during the Enlightenment as well as during the age of Western dominance. For this postmodern tendency in human rights circles, see Tergel, *Human Rights in Culutral and Religious Traditions*, 26-30. In section 1:8 of this volume entitled "Human Rights and the Third World," Tergel lists almost a page of references that relate to postmodern, multicultural interpretations of human rights.

45. Huber, "Human Rights," 193.

46. Roberto M. Benedito, "The Emerging International Standard on Indigenous Peoples' Rights: Issues and Implications for Mission Work in Third World Countries," *Missiology* 24/2 (April 1996): 230-31.

47. Benedito, "The Emerging International Standard on Indigenous Peoples' Rights," 229-31. To see the actual document, see "Draft United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples," E/CN.4/1995/2 and E/CN.4/Sub.2/1994/56, pp. 105-15.

48. Roland Robertson's *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture* (London and Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1992) continues to be the standard text for an overview of globalization. To gain a perspective on religion and globalization, see the aptly titled, Peter Beyer, *Religion and Globalization* (London and Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1994).

49. "The People of God among All God's Peoples," in *The People of God among All God's Peoples: Frontiers in Christian Mission*, ed. Philip L. Wickeri (Hong Kong: Christian Conference of Asia; London: Council of World Mission, 2000), 14.

50. Schreiter, *The New Catholicity*, 5-6.

51. "The People of God among All God's Peoples," 14.

52. Philip L. Wickeri, "Dialogue and Resistance: Mission in the Context of Globalization," *CTC Bulletin* 16/1 (1999): 53ff.

53. See P. Jegadish Gandhi and George Cheriyan, eds., *Globalization: A Challenge to the Church* (Chennai, India: Association of Christian Institutes for Social Concern in Asia; Nagpur, India: National Council of Churches in India-Urban Rural Mission, 1998).

54. Roland Robertson, "Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity," in *Global Modernities*, ed. Scott Lash, Mike Featherstone and Roland Robertson (London and Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1995).

55. See Benjamin R. Barber, *Jihad vs. McWorld: How Globalism and Tribalism Are Reshaping the World* (New York: Ballantine, 1995).

56. F. Albert Tizon, "Revisiting the Mustard Seed: The Filipino Evangelical Church in the Age of Globalization," *Phronesis* 6/1 (1999): 3-26. The Scripture references for this parable are Matthew 13:31-32, Mark 4:30-32, and Luke 13:18-19.

57. Tom Sine, *Mustard Seed vs. McWorld: Reinventing Life and Faith for the Future* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999).

58. Ibid., 22.

59. Tizon, "Revisiting the Mustard Seed," 22.

60. Eleazer S. Fernandez, *Toward a Theology of Struggle* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1994), 6-18.

61. Ibid., 8.

62. Sergio Torres, "Introduction," in *The Emergent Gospel: Theology from the Underside of History*, ed. Sergio Torres and Virginia Fabella (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1978), vii.

63. Darrel Whiteman, *Melanesians and Missionaries: An Ethnographical Study of Social and Religious Change in the Southwest Pacific* (Pasadena: William Carey, 1983), 430.

64. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 1970), 36.

65. Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1973), 6-13.

66. Juan Luis Segundo, *The Liberation of Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1976).

67. Segundo describes the hermeneutic circle as "the continuing change in our interpretation of the Bible which is dictated by the continuing changes in our present-day reality. . . " in *The Liberation of Theology*, 8.

68. Adeney, *Strange Virtues*, 64.

69. Ibid., 51.

70. Ibid., 52.

71. Charles H. Kraft, *Christianity in Culture: A Study in Dynamic Biblical Theologizing in Cross-Cultural Perspective* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1979), 291-312.

72. Quoted in Robert L. Montgomery, *Introduction to the Sociology of Missions* (Newport, CT: Praeger, 1999), 49.

73. Adeney, *Strange Virtues*, 52.

74. Joe Holland and Peter Henriot, *Social Analysis: Linking Faith and Justice* (Washington D.C.: Center for Concern; Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1998), 14.

75. Tizon, "Team-Building in a Cross-Cultural Context," 266.

76. Bernard Adeney, *Strange Virtues*, 74.