

Listening Appreciatively to the Voice of Culture: Transcending Linguistic Domination in Theology

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Abstract

Filipinos' colonial experience under Spain and the United States had eroded their sense of pride in their indigenous way of life. During the centuries of colonial rule, the colonizers had communicated a negative self-image of what it means to be a 'Filipino'. One of the lingering effects of colonization is the difficulty of using the vernacular language as a means to communicate theologically. For this reason, the struggle to give voice to a Filipino interpretation of the Gospel via the Filipino language has proven to be very challenging. The heart of this paper explores how one's own language enables one to readily experience the God who loves unconditionally. It concludes by thinking about the Filipino word *kagandahang-loob* as a locus in which God's will and God's character are seen to be intimately intertwined.

Introduction

A number of years ago, a Filipina pastoral worker who attended a session on "inculturation" in the Northern Philippines remembered and recorded the following incident. Apart from the presentation which opened her eyes to the big task facing the church, what caught her attention during the session was a remark made by one of the participants. "... What was more powerful to me," she recalls, "was the intervention of the elderly sister in the lecture." With tears in her eyes, she asked (the lecturer), "Are you saying that we need to go back to those things which the Church has asked us to give up many years ago? What is there to go back to? We have lost our culture."