

argues for a theologically based unity. This section needs more work. The arguments lack support and are unconvincing.

Even though I do not accept all the ideas of Koranteng-Pipim, I applaud him for his boldness in addressing issues with regard to which many would think "silence is wisdom." I also congratulate him for being thorough and forthright in his research and presentation. He, however, should guard against the appearance of confrontation and of belittling the work of his opponents. Such an approach limits his audience and his influence on those of the opposing camp. He should also guard against repetition, a problem that is acute in this present work. The book also needs some careful editing to remove the spelling and other mechanical errors.

Despite these weaknesses, this book should be a must read for all church members, and especially for pastors, administrators, and thought leaders of the SDA Church.

Julius Muchee

Mercado, Leonardo N. *From Pagans to Partners: The Change in Catholic Attitudes Towards Traditional Religion*. Philippine Inter-religious Dialogue Series No. 6. Manila: Logos, 2000. vii + 134 pp.

Leonardo N. Mercado, a Divine Word missionary, has done pioneering work in the study of Filipino Philosophy and theology. He is the executive secretary of the Episcopal Commission for Inter-religious dialogue, Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines. A prolific writer, his other works include *Inculturation and Filipino Theology* (Divine Word University Publications, 1992); and *Doing Filipino Theology* (Divine Word University Publications, 1997), to name a few. To date, he has edited or co-edited all the books in the Asia-Pacific Missiological series.

Mercado contends that there has been a shift in attitude, from arrogance to respect, among Roman Catholic authorities towards Traditional Religion (TR). Indigenous peoples (IP) who practice Traditional Religion are no longer regarded as pagans but are accorded partnership in inter-religious dialogue. "Traditional Religion . . . should now be ranked as equal to others world religions" (1). The purpose of this book is to trace why and how Catholic attitudes changed toward Traditional Religion.

A brief introduction (chap. 1) underlines three factors: (1) the theoretical framework which posits a change, from negative to positive, in the Catholic dialogue with TR; (2) scope and limitations which set the boundary for inter-religious dialogue as the discussion between the Catholic Church and lowland Filipinos who, although they "have embraced Christianity, Traditional Religion remains the substructure of their Christianity" (4); and (3) significance of the study, more so, because about "forty percent of the world's population base their lives on TR thinking" (5).

Chapter 2, "The Nature of Traditional Religion" (9-22), first defines IPs.

They are minority communities which are culturally and socially distinct from mainstream societies by being closely attached to their ancestral territories, by the desire to preserve their cultural identity, by their own languages, beliefs and practices; by their distinct social and judicial systems (9-10).

Mercado believes that negative terms such as "pagan," "primitive religion," "shamanism," "polytheism," "fetishism," and "animism" should never be used to designate TR. Expressions, such as "cosmic," "biocosmic" and "primal" (from *prima*, "first") should be used.

The heart of the chapter deals with the features of TR. These include: (1) a worldview that is transpersonal. The person "does not exert his individuality but rather his being part of a greater whole" (14); (2) communal ownership of ancestral lands. To take away their land is to annihilate both their spiritual and physical life; (3) a Supreme Being, sometimes male, other times with no gender, but always perceived as powerful and transcendent; (4) good spirits who are intermediaries between people and the Supreme Being. Bad spirits from the underworld also exist; (5) departed ancestors, who are interested in the continuation of their line; (6) shamans who mediate between the visible and invisible worlds, and (7) rituals, which are performed in order to get permission (to carry out certain activities like hunting) from the spirits.

Chapter 3, "Pagans" (23-59), traces how Catholics regarded adherents of TR as pagans. Mercado believes that despite changes in European society, effected by the Enlightenment and 19th century science (specifically Darwinism), IPs were seen as "culturally and religiously inferior and needed to be Christianized as well as Westinized" ([sic] 26). Using the Bible to forge a theology of supremacy over IPs, "the Church in general saw nothing positive in IP culture and their TR" (30). This of course urged the missionary "to transform the IPs according to his own image and likeness" (31). So when Spanish Catholic missionaries and explorers, fueled by both evangelical and pecuniary motives, landed in the Philippines, they enforced a Western-brand Christianity on the IP, proclaimed the sovereignty of Spain, and used coercion, slavery, and even murder, in a attempt to wipe out all traces of TR.

Mercado contends that the USA, like Spain, attempted "to mold the Filipinos according to their . . . own brand of Christianity" (50). Indeed, "their attitudes and missionary methods did not vary much from that of the Spaniards" (53). Further, by failing to understand and recognize the focal features of TR (see chap. 2), the USA marginalized the IPs.

How did the IPs deal with this new religion? Mercado points to three responses: (1) acceptance of Christianity and absorption of westernization; (2) total rejection, characterized either by flight or fight; and (3) compromise, externally

accepting Christianity with its symbols and feasts, but internally retaining traditional religion.

The development of inter-religious dialogue is at the heart of chap. 4, "Partners in Dialogue" (60-82). Mercado claims that Vatican II, with its advocacy of freedom of religion, brought a "watershed of change" (64). Following the initiative of reconciliation advocated by Pope Paul VI, Pope John Paul II "asked forgiveness for the past mistakes of the Church on harming the IPs and disregarding their religions" (68). Clearly, with a new thrust toward evangelism, inter-religious dialogue became important (70). It is characterized by freedom, respect, and the belief that "all religious traditions have positive aspects and express true religions experience . . ." (73).

In a series of inter-faith dialogues between 1991 and the present, IPs (and their TR) in the Philippines, transitioned from being "the church's special concerns" (74) to "dialogue partners" (75).

Chap 5, "Pagans and Partners in other Places" (83-91), discusses TR in places outside the Philippines. After briefly canvassing TR in the Americas, Australia, and Africa, Mercado says, "Respect for TR is still something new in other parts of the world" (88). However, in places where TR comes in contact with Christianity, the same threefold reaction is noted as in the Philippines: acceptance, rejection, and compromise.

In his "Concluding Remarks" (92-101), Mercado claims that "dialogue with TR is an example of the growth of understanding" (93). In the past, incorrect theology, coupled with aggressive missionary evangelization, "wrought havoc on the IPs" (95). But today there is a striking change in the church's "attitude toward other religions" (97). Mercado lauds Pope John Paul II for this change, asserting, "To Pope John Paul II belongs the credit of elevating TR to the role of the world's major religions" (97).

Despite some obstacles, Mercado believes that with on-going dialogue, education, the worldwide interest in shamanism, the New Age Movement, and the environment, that the future of TR looks good.

The book closes with two appendices (102-18), references (119-25), and a useful index (128-34).

This book is useful both to the person who is informed on IP and TR as well as the one who wishes to be informed. With his excellent grasp, not only of Filipino history and culture, but also of world history, Mercado educated me about IP and the features of TR. I certainly feel a greater sense of respect for these people. Nevertheless, the book leaves me with a nagging question, "What is the role of the saving Christ in the lives of IPs?" If Jesus, as "the symbol of freedom," seems to be invalid for IPs (96) then what is the function of His salvific sacrifice in their lives? And corollary to this, how should Christians, given the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20), respond to these people?