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THE INTERSECTION OF HISTORICAL INJUSTICES AND ECOLOGICAL DESTRUCTION IN ASIA

Enriching Catholic Social Teaching on Indigenous Peoples

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Introduction

Filipinos are gratefully excited to celebrate in 2021 the fifth centenary of the coming of Christianity to their country, for although Christianity was born in Asia, it only arrived on Philippine soil in 1521. For this reason, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) has decided to "embark on a nine-year spiritual journey that will culminate with the great jubilee of 2021,"[1] and offered a list of nine pastoral priorities that correspond to the nine-year program of the Philippine Church between 2012 and 2021. This article, however, deals with the urgent issue of indigenous peoples, a theme that is unfortunately missing from the CBCP's list.

Indigenous peoples (IPs) refer in general to "those with a social or cultural identity distinct from the dominant or mainstream society, which makes them vulnerable to being disadvantaged in the processes

[1]Jose Palma, "Live Christ, Share Christ: Looking Forward to Our Five Hundredth," CBCP Pastoral Exhortation on the Era of New Evangelization (July 23, 2012), available at http://cbcpwebsite.com/2010s/2012/newevangelizatio.html (accessed August 5, 2012).

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of development."[2] In the Philippine context, moreover, they include not only the original occupants of a place but also those who had settled there long before the arrival of Spanish colonizers in the second half of the 16th century.[3] Muslim Filipinos who had been in Mindanao since before Hispanic colonization, therefore, may also be considered IPs. Non-Islamized and non-Christianized IPs, on the other hand, are commonly called *Lumad*, a Cebuano-Visayan term that emerged in 1983 which literally means "native" of the place or one who is "born of the earth." All in all, the 2010 census reveals that there are around 14 million IPs in the Philippines, 61% of whom reside in Mindanao.[4] It is unfortunate, then, that IPs today are not only the *least* in terms of demography but also the *last* in matters of development priorities.[5] In the Asian context, for instance, historical injustices against the IPs are intimately connected with the ecological destruction of their homelands.

Such urgent issues are, sadly enough, not addressed and discussed in many textbooks on Catholic social teaching. The main reason for

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[2]Raymundo Rovillos & Daisy Morales, "Defining Indigenous Peoples," in *Indigenous Peoples/Ethnic Minorities and Poverty Reduction: Philippines* (Manila: Asian Development Bank, 2002), 3.

[3]There were 5 Spanish expeditions sent—that of Loaisa (1525), Cabot (1526), Saavedra (1527), Villalobos (1542), and Legazpi (1564), but the process of colonization only started with Legazpi in 1565 when he conquered Cebu. Cf. Rudy Rodil, "The Resistance and Struggle of the Tribal Peoples of Mindanao 1903–1935," *Mindanao Focus Journal* 29 (1990): 33–59, here at 37–39.

[4]See NSO's Household-Based Statistics, available at http://www.census.gov.ph/data/indexes %20etc/index2.htm (accessed January 27, 2011).

[5]See ICL Research Team, "Tribal Filipinos' Issues in Mindanao Context," in ICL Research Team, *A Report on Tribal Minorities in Mindanao* (Manila: Regal Printing Company, 1979), 9–18; see also the declaration of the Tribal Leaders' Conference to Re-examine IP Rights on Ancestral Domains, "What about Us?" in Carolyn Arguillas, Romulo Bueza, & Jamil Matalam, eds., *Bangsamoro: Documents and Materials* Vol. 2: *Speeches, News and Commentaries on the Annexes of the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro* (Davao City: Ateneo de Davao University Publication Office, 2014), 101–104, here at 101.

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this, perhaps, is the lack of adequate theological discussions and Church teachings on these issues. The present article thus attempts to fill in this lacuna, beginning with a hard look at the process of colonization and the subsequent historical injustices done to non-Christians in the name of evangelization. It will then offer an analysis and theological reflection on how colonialism has adversely affected IP culture and the natural ecosystems of their homelands. Lastly, it will highlight some principles found in Catholic social teaching that need to be explicitly developed by both theologians and the ecclesial magisterium.

The Coupling of Colonization and Evangelization in Asia

Medieval ecclesiological theory considered the pope to be a world monarch and vicar of Christ who was entrusted with a mission to bring the Gospel to the whole world. It was a regalist perspective that permeated bulls[6] and other papal teachings at that time. For this reason, Nicholas V (1447–1455) was called on to settle the dispute between Spain and Portugal over ownership of the Canary Islands. This prompted him to issue the papal bull *Romanus Pontifex* (January 8, 1455), which "legitimated Portuguese expansion around the Western coast of Africa from Capes Bojador and Nam through the whole of the Guinea coast and beyond into the southern regions to Antarctica."[7] With this papal intervention, the kingdom of Portugal legitimized its

[6]The term *bull* refers to the lead seal, *bulla*, that was attached to the document to authenticate the pope's official and formal decree. Papal bulls have been issued and used since the sixth century to establish a religious order, clarify doctrine, ratify other documents, found a university, and convoke a general council, among others. See Stephanie Mann, "What is a Papal Bull? Understanding Differences in Papal Decrees and Documents," *The Catholic Answer* (September 2016), https://www.osv.com/Magazines/TheCatholicAnswer/Article/TabId/652/ArtMID/13618/ArticleID/20552/What-Is-a-Papal-Bull.aspx (accessed November 4, 2017).

[7]Michael Stogre, *That the World May Believe: The Development of Papal Social Thought on Aboriginal Rights* (Ontario: Éditions Paulines, 1992), 65.

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territorial discovery and overseas expansion outside Europe in the name of propagating the Christian faith.

When further discoveries created the same conflicts as those in the Canaries and West Africa, the Spanish Crown requested Alexander VI (1492–1503) to confirm Spanish possession of these newly discovered islands. In response, the Pope issued the papal bull *Inter caetera* (May 4, 1493)—also popularly known as "bull of donation" or "bull of demarcation"—that eventually excluded "Portugal from the [Spanish] field of discoveries."[8] This bull, together with subsequent extraordinary papal grants, "vested in the Spanish sovereigns the right and duty of sending missionaries to the lands newly discovered by Columbus."[9] This bull also allowed Spain to take the westward route while Portugal moved in the eastward direction.[10]

Such collaboration between the Holy See and the Spanish Crown in the task of colonization has been known as the *patronato real de las Indias*. The support provided by the State to the missionary activities of the Church became the theological justification for colonizing the newly discovered territories—the Spanish Crown could rule their colonies as long as it promoted the Gospel message of Jesus Christ.

European colonizers thus came in fairly large numbers to Southeast Asia (SEA) between 1500 and 1900.

> The Portuguese had been successful in establishing in areas such as Malacca, Ambon, Solor, Flores, and Timor, but in the end the latter

[8]Charles-Martial de Witte, "Les Bulles Pontificales et L'expansion Portugaise au XV^{e} siècle," quoted in Stogre, *That the World May Believe*, 70.

[9]Horacio de la Costa, *Asia and the Philippines* (Manila: Solidaridad Publishing House, 1967), 39–40.

[10]The Philippine archipelago was supposedly within the assigned domain of the Portuguese but, perhaps due to their inaccurate knowledge of geography at that time, it turned out that Spain's claim over the Philippines prevailed. The Philippine islands thus became a colony of Spain. On this account, see Teodoro Agoncillo & Oscar Alfonso, *A Short History of the Filipino People* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1960), 71.

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> island was the only place in SEA that they could retain.… The British ruled Burma and Malaya, the French held sway over Indo-China, the Dutch had become masters of most of Indonesia, and the Spaniards of the Philippines. In fact, the only large area not under European dominance around 1900 was Siam, now Thailand.[11]

Northern Americans had already started to trade with SEA around 1800, but they did not establish their presence in Sumatra and the Philippines until 1900.

The Historical Injustices Against Non-Christians during the Colonial Period

Etymologically, the term "colonization" is derived from the Latin *colere*, which means "to cultivate or to tend" the land. It can thus be analogically applied to mean "cultivating" the people and their natural environment. In the Philippine experience, however, colonization has been closely associated with oppression and exploitation. This section therefore highlights three main historical injustices suffered by the IPs during the rule of foreign colonizers.

Denial of the Rights to *Dominium*

There was a debate in the thirteenth century as to whether or not non-Christian peoples, who were considered "infidels," have political and property rights or what medieval authors called *dominium*. The canon lawyers were interested in the question, "If it is licit, why is it licit?"[12] On this issue, the arguments of two well-known canonists,

[11]Peter Boomgaard, "Environmental Impact of the European Presence in Southeast Asia, 17th–19th Centuries," http://www.raco.cat/index.php/illesimperis/article/viewFile/69206/89354 (accessed May 3, 2017), 21–35, here at 26.

[12]Innocent IV, *Commentaria doctissima in Quinque Libros Decretalium* (Frankfurt/Main: Minerva, 1968), 3.34.8, p. 429; English translation from James Muldoon, *Popes, Lawyers, and Infidels: The Church and the Non-Christian World 1250–1550* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1979), 6.

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Innocent IV (1243–1254) and his student, Henry of Segusio (1200–1271)—better known as Hostiensis, provided the legal framework for the debate. Innocent IV argued on the one hand that "lordship, possession, and jurisdiction can belong to infidels licitly and without sin, for these things were made not only for the faithful but for every rational creature," adding that it "is not licit for the pope or the faithful to take away from infidels their belongings or their lordships or jurisdictions because they possess them without sin."[13] Furthermore, he maintained that *dominium* is a basic human right common to all and cannot be lost. Hostiensis, on the other hand, denied that infidels possessed *dominium* because "with the coming of Christ, every office and all governmental authority and all lordship and jurisdiction was taken from every infidel lawfully and with just cause, and granted to the faithful.…"[14] This implies that "those who did not acknowledge [Jesus Christ] automatically lost their rights"[15] to own property and to exercise *dominium*. The majority of canonists agreed with Innocent IV, but the Hostiensian position prevailed in history as it "lent itself more readily to [the] simplification of issues and [the] rationalization of the growth of empires."[16] This largely explains the historical injustice suffered by non-Christians during the colonial period—they were dispossessed of their ancestral and tribal domain and became marginalized from mainstream society as a result.

In the Philippines, the denial of the political right to *dominium* also caused a lot of agrarian injustices due to the imposition of the Spanish

[13]Innocent IV, *Commentaria doctissima in Quinque Libros Decretalium*, 3.34.8, p. 430; English translation from Brian Tierney, *The Crisis of Church & State, 1050–1300* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1964), 155.

[14]Hostiensis, *Lectura in Quinque Libros Decretalium* Vol. 2 (Torino: Bottega D'Erasmo, 1965), 3.34.8., p. 128a; English translation from Muldoon, *Popes, Lawyers, and Infidels*, 16.

[15]Olive Dickason, "Concepts of Sovereignty at the Time of First Contacts," in Leslie Green & Olive Dickason, *The Law of Nations and the New World* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1989), 242.

[16]Dickason, "Concepts of Sovereignty at the Time of First Contacts," 242.

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concept of *realengas* (i.e., crown lands) based on the feudal Regalian Doctrine, which legally justified the colonizers' control and claim of all lands, territories, and other valuable possessions in their colonies. Regalian Doctrine did not recognize the customary tribal rights of indigenous Filipinos over property[17]—it unevenly awarded lands to the natives on the condition that if they fail to occupy their assigned space, it would revert to the Spanish Crown.[18] As a result, many became landless and squatters in their own land.[19]

Reduction to Slavery

Another historical injustice suffered by IPs during the colonial period was slavery. In the Middle Ages, and especially during the Christian crusade against the Muslims, it was considered legitimate for the victors of "just war" to despoil the losers, and to sell the vanquished into slavery.[20] In this context, it was legitimate for Christian Europe to repossess formerly Christian lands occupied by Muslims. Indeed, Nicholas V (1447–1455) extended the just war theory to the non-Muslim world—he instructed the Portuguese colonizers to

> invade, search out, capture, vanquish and subdue all Saracens and pagans whatsoever, and other enemies of Christ wheresoever placed, and the kingdoms, dukedoms, principalities, dominions, possessions,

[17]See Owen Lynch, Jr., "Native Title, Private Right and Tribal Land Law: An Introductory Survey," *Philippine Law Journal* 57 (1982): 268–306.

[18]This was codified in the Maura Law of 1894, the last Spanish land law promulgated in the Philippines. Cited in Lynch, "Native Title, Private Right and Tribal Land Law," 274.

[19]See James Putzel, *A Captive Land: The Politics of Agrarian Reform in the Philippines* (London: Catholic Institute for International Relations, 1992), 46.

[20]See John Francis Maxwell, *Slavery and the Catholic Church: The History of Catholic Teaching Concerning the Moral Legitimacy of the Institution of Slavery* (London / Chichester: Barry Rose Publishers, 1975), 52–68.

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> and all moveable and unmovable goods whatsoever, held and possessed by them, and to *reduce their persons to perpetual slavery*.…[21]

"[The colonizers] killed in order to take possession of the land, and *reduced [the natives] … to slavery in order to exploit their work*. At the same time, they began to develop a racist theory in order to justify their actions."[22] Such racial ideology for many European colonizers presumed that non-European and non-Christian races were less human and fit only for slavery. They doubted the full humanity of IPs and underestimated their capacity to receive the Christian faith. It was thus the European elites in particular who arguably "became the engines of colonial exploitation" as they hailed the superior achievements of the Enlightenment[23] (the Catholic Church today humbly acknowledges that the Christian colonizers, especially the companion soldiers and traders of the great navigators between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, were not free of racial prejudices).

While it is true, then, that Spanish colonizers did not introduce chattel slavery in the Philippines,[24] native Filipinos were victims nevertheless of painful religious and cultural oppression under the colonial government. For one thing, they were forced to abandon their animistic beliefs[25] which the Spaniards considered to be based

[21]Nicholas V, *Romanus Pontifex* (January 8, 1455), in Frances Gardiner Davenport, ed., *European Treaties Bearing on the History of the United States and Its Dependencies to 1648* Vol. 1 (Washington, DC: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1967), 13–26, here at 23 (emphasis mine).

[22]Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *The Church and Racism: Towards a More Fraternal Society* (Vatican City: Polyglot Press, 1988), no. 3 (emphasis mine).

[23]Georges De Schrijver, "European Colonialism and the Legacy of Enlightenment," *Hapag* 3 (2006): 205–223, here at 208.

[24]A certain form of bondage already existed in pre-Hispanic Philippines, but it was not chattel slavery in which the persons were treated as personal property (chattel) of the owner. It was more of dependency and debt peonage based on certain customary laws of the natives. See William Henry Scott, *Slavery in the Spanish Philippines* (Manila: De La Salle University Press, 1991).

[25]On this account, see de la Costa, *Asia and the Philippines*, 8.

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on "superstitions and errors of the devil."[26] To resist the forceful evangelization, indigenous Filipinos had to flee to the remote mountains to practice their ancestral culture and religion. They bore the indelible scars of painful memories and social stigma brought about by colonization.

Low View of Women

It has been claimed that pre-colonial Filipino women enjoyed a status of relative gender equality with men. "Tribal laws recognized their social and political rights. They could own and inherit property. They could engage in trade and industry. Insults and other crimes against them were punishable by death or slavery. They were allowed to rule."[27] Indeed, gender equality is implied in a popular Filipino creation myth where the first man and woman simultaneously came out of a bamboo stalk.

Western colonizers, in contrast, have a low regard for women. As such, "the idea and practice of gender inequality that we talk about today were introduced by the colonizers … [and] were not part of our indigenous tradition."[28] The Western Europeans inherited Christianity's patriarchal anthropology which was rooted in Greek and Jewish sources.[29] Greek anthropology views women as inferior to men; the former are symbolized in Greek dualistic philosophy "as analogous to the lower realm of matter or body, *to be ruled* by or

[26]See "Patente librado por el Vic.° Gral. Fr. Pedro de Herrera al P. Fr. Andrés de Urdaneta y demás religioso que con el Sr. Legaspi pasaron a las Islas Filipinas desde N.ª España"; as quoted in John Schumacher, *Readings in Philippine Church History*, 2nd ed. (Quezon City: Ateneo De Manila University Press, 1987), 13.

[27]Gregorio F. Zaide, *Early Philippine History and Culture* (Manila: G. F. Zaide, 1937).

[28]Felipe Landa Jocano, *Filipino Prehistory: Rediscovering Precolonial Heritage* (Metro Manila: Punlad Research House, 1998), 104–105.

[29]Here the term *Western* refers to "those civilisations whose major ideas and attitudes derive from Greek and Hebrew sources" (John Passmore, *Man's Responsibility for Nature: Ecological Problems and Western Traditions* [New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974], 11).

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shunned by [the] transcendent mind" which is the male.[30] Similarly, ancient Jewish society also considered women as inferior to men in all things—the second story of creation in Genesis, for example, has been narrowly interpreted from the patriarchal perspective to legitimize the *de facto* subjugation of woman to man. As such, many Western colonizers not only had a low view on women but also developed a misogynist attitude.[31] Women were thus made to believe that their primary vocation on earth is to be mothers whose role is limited mainly to the domestic sphere.

As expected, then, indigenous Filipino women suffered more than male Filipinos at the hands of oppressive Western colonizers. They were demoted to a lower status and modeled after Spanish women who played a secondary position in Iberian patriarchal society.[32] To Hispanicize these native women, the colonizers had to reconfigure them according to the Hispanic model of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which partially emphasized the sublime ideal of a "good" woman: chaste, obedient, docile, humble, passive, and timid.[33] The Spanish

[30]Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God-talk: Toward a Feminist Theology* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983), 79 (emphasis mine).

[31]For example, John Chrysostom (347–407 A.D.) had this to say: "Among all beasts, none is found so harmful as women." Quoted in Pamela Cooper-White, *The Cry of Tamar: Violence Against Women and the Church's Response* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 52. Tertullian (155–245 A.D.) also wrote: "Do you know that you are Eve?.… You are the devil's gateway.… How easily you destroyed man, the image of God.…" Quoted in Mary Daly, *The Church and the Second Sex* (Boston: Beacon, 1985), 87.

[32]On this discussion, see Rachel Bundang, "Scars ARE History: Colonialism, Written on the Body," in Nantawan Boonprasat-Lewis & Marie Fortune, eds., *Remembering Conquest: Feminist/Womanist Perspectives on Religion, Colonization, and Sexual Violence* (New York: The Haworth Pastoral Press, 1999), 58.

[33]On this discussion, see Janet D'Urso, "The Social Construction of Woman: Western Mythic and Religious Stereotypes," *Hecate* 1 (1975): 23–30, here at 23–24; see also Christina Blanc-Szanton, "Collision of Cultures: Historical Reformulations of Gender in the Lowland Visayas, Philippines," in Jane Monnig Atkinson, ed., *Power and Difference: Gender in Island Southeast Asia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 345–383.

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colonizers did not fairly present Mary's prophetic and *revolutionary* image as depicted in her *Magnificat*, which powerfully "stresses the social justice implications of the choice of the mother of the foretold Messiah from among the poorer class of a colonised people."[34] This project of "re-feminizing" the indigenous Filipina was then further reinforced by the glorification of a "Maria Clara" type of woman: sweet, shy, docile, subservient, and pious.[35] Such a colonial strategy had therefore successfully *reconstructed* the image of an indigenous Filipina into that of a subordinate status, making her highly vulnerable to sexual abuse and exploitation by the colonizers, including the Spanish friars.[36]

The Colonization of Nature and Its Impact on Asian Indigenous Peoples

The ecological impact of colonization on the natural environment is a less-explored area in the prevailing historical and environmental research. Current studies fail to take into account the intimate link between social oppression and ecological exploitation.

It must be said at the outset that not all forms of colonization have destructive effects on people. For this reason, Paul VI invites us to "acknowledge the qualities and achievement of colonizers" even as he challenges us to critically recognize "the damage done by a certain type of colonialism and its consequences."[37] Thus, without romanticizing

[34]Carolyn Brewer, *Shamanism, Catholicism and Gender Relations in Colonial Philippines, 1521–1685* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 46; cf. Luke 1:46–55.

[35]María Clara is the mestiza heroine in *Noli Me Tángere*, a novel by José Rizal, the national hero of the Republic of the Philippines. Her name and character has since become a byword for the ideal woman in Filipino culture.

[36]On this account, see Leonila Bermisa, "Facing the Reality of Clergy Sexual Misconduct in the Church: A Step toward Justice and Healing," in Agnes Brazal & Andrea Lizares Si, eds., *Body and Sexuality: Theological-Pastoral Perspectives of Women in Asia* (Quezon City: Ateneo De Manila University Press, 2007), 216–233, here at 219.

[37]Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio* (Boston, MA: Daughters of St. Paul, 1967), no. 7.

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indigenous practices, this section highlights the impact of colonialism on ecological destruction.

A Glance at the Ecological Worldview of Asian Indigenous Peoples

Before exploring the damaging effects of colonialism on IPs and ecology, it is instructive to have a glance at the indigenous ecological worldview. It has been claimed that the pre-colonial way of life of Southeast Asian countries as a whole was essentially animistic, owing to the influence of Indic Hinduism.[38] They believed in an inaccessible supreme deity[39] who created everything as well as in the existence of lesser deities or spirits who dwell everywhere and are accessible to human beings. These lesser spiritual divinities may be further classified into three groups: the spirits of nature, of the seasons, and of life's phases. Among these three, the spirits of nature played a privileged role as they were invoked for the peoples' continued existence.

As religious animists, the pre-Hispanic Filipinos "worshipped in caves, in forests, inside houses of the chiefs and in many other places"[40] where they believed the spiritual divinities might dwell. It was also common, like the ancient Egyptians and Assyrians in many of their own religious practices, for Asian religious animists to render divine respect to the sun, moon, rainbow, rivers, plants, caves, mountains, trees, certain animals, and the spirits of their outstanding ancestors.[41] In the end, all these forms of worship nurtured their love and reverence for nature.

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[38]See de la Costa, *Asia and the Philippines*, 8.

[39]See Francisco Demetrio, *Myths and Symbols: Philippines* (Manila: Navotas Press, 1981), 33, 36.

[40]Felipe Landa Jocano, *Philippine Prehistory: An Anthropological Overview of the Beginnings of Filipino Society and Culture* (Quezon City: Philippine Center for Advanced Studies, University of the Philippines System, 1975), 228.

[41]See John Leddy Phelan, *The Hispanization of the Philippines: Spanish Aims and Filipino Responses, 1565–1700* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1959), 24.

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IPs today still continue to recognize nature as the dwelling place of spirits and other *enchanted* beings which have the capacity to influence people's lives.[42] They perceive the world as "alive, dynamic, and can be related to in a meaningful way to ensure well-being."[43] They treat nature not as objects but as part of the ethos of human propriety and reciprocity. Such a worldview is encapsulated in "folk beliefs in environmental spirits"[44] and in the enchantment of nature which evoke ecological consciousness and move individuals to sacralize the whole of the natural world.

This recognition of the sublime presence of *environmental spirits* moves IPs to respect certain designated spaces and times in nature. They believe that they "share their physical environment not only with animals but also with members of the supernatural world."[45] In fact, IPs do not only look at nature as their common dwelling place but also consider their lives as deeply interwoven in the very fabric of nature. In the words of a *Talaandig Datu*, "the earth is our flesh, the water is our blood, the trees are our bones, the vines are our veins, the sun is our torch and sight, the air is our breath and strength, the sound is our language, the cosmic energy and the spirits are our soul."[46] This

[42]See Demetrio, *Myths and Symbols: Philippines*, 324.

[43]Edmundo Pacifico Guzman, *Creation as God's Kaloób: Towards an Ecological Theology of Creation in the Lowland Filipino Socio-Cultural Context*, Ph.D. dissertation (K.U. Leuven: Faculty of Theology, 1995), 371.

[44]Guzman, *Creation as God's Kaloób*, 304–307. As Guzman explained, "environmental spirits" refer to the so-called "beings-who-are-not-like-persons" such as "the *duwende* (dwarf or elf), *engkanto* (spirits in nature), and the *engkantado* and *engkantada* (fairy or enchanted being)" who deserve respect as they are believed to be dwelling among us within the natural environment.

[45]Raul Pertierra, *Religion, Politics, and Rationality in a Philippine Community* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1988), 132.

[46]Quoted in Albert Alejo, "Pakigduyog sa mga Lumad: Identity and Solidarity of Indigenous Peoples in Mindanao," public lecture (Cagayan de Oro: St. John Vianney Theological Seminary, September 27, 2012).

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mystical experience of being one with nature makes them realize that the destruction of nature is tantamount to self-destruction.

Western Colonialism and Its Contribution to the Ecological Crisis in Asia

This sub-section identifies at least six negative contributions of Western colonialism to the present ecological destruction in Asia. The first one is the anthropocentric interpretation of the divine mandate to exercise *dominion* over other creatures and to *subdue* the earth.[47] Western Christianity has been accused of narrowly interpreting this Biblical command to promote a dominion theology that considers human beings as masters of other creatures. Accordingly, it falsely assumes that "no item in the physical creation had any purpose save to serve man's purposes."[48] The European colonizers thus used this Biblical mandate to justify their forceful conquest of IPs in foreign lands on the eve of the modern period,[49] after which the modern paradigm of conquest was extended to conquering the wildness of nature. Indeed, as a religion that has been used to justify the exploitative practices of anthropocentrism, Western Christianity "bears a huge burden of guilt for environmental deterioration."[50]

[47]Genesis 1:28.

[48]Lynn White, Jr., "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis," *Science* 155 (1967): 1203–1207; republished in Ian Barbour, ed., *Western Man and Environmental Ethics: Attitudes Toward Nature and Technology* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1973), 18–30, here at 25.

[49]See Richard Eburne, *A Plaine Path-way to Plantations* (London, 1624), 16–18; cited in Peter Harrison, "'Fill the Earth and Subdue It': Biblical Warrants for Colonization in Seventeenth Century England," *Journal of Religious History* 29:1 (2005): 3–24, here at 10.

[50]White, "The Historical Roots of our Ecologic Crisis," 27. For a critique of White's sweeping accusation, see Ben Minteer & Robert Manning, "An Appraisal of the Critique of Anthropocentrism and Three Lesser Known Themes in Lynn White's 'The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis,'" *Organization & Environment* 18:2 (June 2005): 163–176.

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A second contribution is the use of modern science to eradicate indigenous belief in the sacredness of nature. Asian IPs commonly regarded the forest as sacred and some trees as inviolable. The presence of European colonizers had contributed to "the disappearance of these taboos"[51] owing to the spread of Enlightenment ideas in Southeast Asia. For instance, let us call to mind that the well-known proponent of the Enlightenment, Francis Bacon (1561–1626), regarded nature like a slave-woman who must be subjugated and pressed into delivering her secrets.[52] Bacon did not consider this aggressive attitude toward nature as sacrilegious or against the will of the Creator since, from his perspective, science has a license "to crack the creator's code, and that it is within God's purpose that people should do so."[53] Such was used accordingly by European colonizers to exploit forests in foreign lands.[54]

The third contribution is the introduction of agrarian capitalism, which emerged in England around the 16th century as a consequence of the "class struggle between peasants and lords" that eventually dissolved feudalism.[55] This agrarian system did not reach Asia until the nineteenth century when "large tracts of climax forest were cut

[51]Boomgaard, "Environmental Impact of the European Presence in Southeast Asia," 30.

[52]Francis Bacon, *The Masculine Birth of Time* (1603); cited in Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution* (New York: Harper & Row, 1980), 170.

[53]Cited in Robin Attfield, *Environmental Philosophy: Principles and Prospects* (Aldershot, UK: Avebury, 1995), 14.

[54]See Eburne, *A Plaine Path-way to Plantations*, 16–18; cited in Harrison, "'Fill the Earth and Subdue It,'" 10.

[55]On this account, see Robert Brenner, "Agrarian Class Structure and Economic Development in Pre-Industrial Europe," *Past & Present* 70 (1976): 30–75; see also Robert Brenner, "The Agrarian Roots of European Capitalism," *Past & Present* 97 (1982): 16–113.

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to make way for plantations."[56] It is shown in "industrially pursued large-scale agriculture" which has been criticized for exhausting "the natural power of the soil" and exploiting workers[57] due to "compulsions of accumulation, profit maximization," and unlimited growth.[58] IPs expectedly suffered its worst effects as capitalists deceivingly grabbed their ancestral lands and forced them to flee to the remote mountains where they could continue their traditional way of farming.[59]

Fourth on this list is the unsustainable exploitation of forests. It has been claimed that 90% of Southeast Asia around 1500 was covered by forest; as of 2004, however, "less than half (41.3–44.2%) of the original forests of Southeast Asia remain."[60] Indeed, in some countries like Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, and Vietnam, old-growth forests have nearly vanished, "comprising just 6.7% of their original forest area."[61]

Analysts point out that the major causes of deforestation in Asia are attributable to unsustainable practices such as the conversion of forested land for agricultural use.[62] This exploitative practice began in the Philippines

[56]Boomgaard, "Environmental Impact of the European Presence in Southeast Asia," 26; see Rene Ofreneo, *Capitalism in Philippine Agriculture* (Quezon City: Foundation for Nationalist Studies, 1980).

[57]Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy* Vol. 3 (1894), trans. David Fernbach (London: Peguin Books, 1991), 950.

[58]Ellen Meiksins Wood, *The Origin of Capitalism: A Longer View* (New York: Verso, 2002), 146.

[59]On this account, see Karl Gaspar, *The Lumad's Struggle in the Face of Globalization* (Davao City, Philippines: Alternate Forum for Research in Mindanao, 2000).

[60]Navjot Sodhi, Lian Pin Koh, Barry Brook, & Peter K. L. Ng, "Southeast Asian Biodiversity: An Impending Disaster," *Trends in Ecology & Evolution* 19:12 (December 2004): 654–660, here at 656.

[61]William Laurance, "Forest Destruction in Tropical Asia," *Current Science* 93:11 (December 10, 2007): 1544–1550, here at 1548.

[62]Sodhi et al., "Southeast Asian Biodiversity," 656.

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> when the [Spanish colonizers, after establishing] their foothold in the country in the 16th century […] also started felling trees to build ships for the Galleon Trade, churches, fortresses, and [the] large houses of elite Spanish families.… Transforming forested land into agricultural land was necessarily part of establishing a missionary settlement and pioneering colonization, which began during the late 17th and 18th centuries.[63]

Thus, after 333 years of Spanish rule, the original forest cover of the Philippines had declined by twenty percent, and would decline further by another twenty percent when the North Americans assumed the colonization of the country for 46 years afterwards. Sadly enough, the subsequent post-colonial government continues to uphold this extractive practice up to the present day.

The fifth negative contribution is the introduction of European crops, including foreign tree species, in large-scale monocrop plantations which not only changed the Southeast Asian landscape but also proved to be an ecologically unsustainable practice. This is really the *colonization* of nature in the ecological sense of a dominant foreign species invading the habitat of indigenous and endemic ones.[64] The European colonizers introduced tobacco, coffee, tea, cacao, rubber, sugar cane, and oil palms to Asian soil beginning around 1500, and although these were not originally from Europe but from other continents, they "made their appearance as 'European' crops in the eighteenth century."[65] Such large-scale agricultural monocropping

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[63]Reynaldo Raluto, *Poverty and Ecology at the Crossroads: Towards an Ecological Theology of Liberation in the Philippine Context* (Quezon City, Philippines: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2015), 25; cf. Marshall McLennan, "Changing Human Ecology on the Central Luzon Plain: Nueva Ecija, 1705–1939," in Alfred McCoy & Ed De Jesus, eds., *Philippine Social History: Global Trade and Local Transformations* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1982), 57–58.

[64]See "Colonization," in Michael Allaby, ed., *A Dictionary of Ecology*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 92.

[65]Boomgaard, "Environmental Impact of the European Presence in Southeast Asia," 31.

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was made possible by the presence of logged-over areas,[66] and foreign plant species still dominate today in large-scale industrial plantations, effectively invading the country's own endemic flora. Propagating imported tree species en masse was also not ecologically appropriate: "Touted as fast growing, nine foreign exotics dominated government replanting programs for decades. But they lacked the resiliency of the native trees after typhoons or droughts."[67] It is sad to note, then, that many of our endemic trees are now considered endangered species.

The sixth and last colonial contribution to ecological destruction are the European-induced population growth-rates. History shows that between 1500 and 1800, the population growth-rates in Southeast Asia were 0.2% per annum at the most. It is surprising then that there was an extraordinary multiplication of the population from little more than 30 million in 1800 to around 80 million in 1900. How can this explosion be explained? There are two dominant theories so far to account for this population growth. One is the lower death-rate due to the progress of medicine introduced by Europeans.[68] The other is that more improved agriculture could feed a larger population.[69] In any case, global population growth, together with the unsustainable consumption and extravagant lifestyle of affluent countries, is rightly seen nowadays as one of the main causes of environmental degradation[70] as it places

[66]See Robin Broad & John Cavanagh, *Plundering Paradise: The Struggle for the Environment in the Philippines* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993), 46.

[67]Juan Mercado, "U-turn at dead ends," *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (August 5, 2013), available at http://opinion.inquirer.net/58179/u-turn-at-dead-ends (accessed August 6, 2013).

[68]See N. G. Owen, "Toward a History of Health in Southeast Asia," in N. G. Owen, ed., *Death and Disease in Southeast Asia: Explorations in Social, Medical and Demographic History* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1987), 3–30, here at 9.

[69]Boomgaard, "Environmental Impact of the European Presence in Southeast Asia," 31.

[70]See Catherine Keller, "Chosen Personas and the Green Ecumenacy: A Possible Christian Response to the Population Apocalypse," in David Hallman, ed.,

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severe stress on natural resources, including water, agricultural land, timber, fuel-wood, and other forest products. Population growth also unjustly forces the poor to dwell in more ecologically vulnerable areas and displaces many IPs from their ancestral domains.

Pointers for Enriching Catholic Social Teaching on Indigenous Peoples

The main thrust of this section is to show that the plight of the IPs is a theological and moral issue that deserves a privileged place in Catholic social teaching. IPs are certainly among the poorest in society. They merit to be accorded preferential treatment and Christian love. In this regard, we shall highlight five principles of Catholic social teaching and apply them to the plight and urgent areas of concern of the IPs.

Defending the Human Rights of Indigenous Peoples

We have seen that during the colonial period, the Church's concern for the human rights of IPs was deemed as secondary to her mission to proclaim the Gospel to all peoples. Prior to Leo XIII (1878–1903), the human rights and proper treatment of IPs were simply taken for granted as practical and necessary conditions for evangelization and reception of the Gospel.[71] Human rights questions were not yet considered back then as issues in their own right.

Historically, the question of whether or not IPs were human beings emerged in the papacy of Paul III (1534–1539) who strongly affirmed their true humanity and advocated that they should "not be reduced to slavery" and that they "must be invited to the said faith of Christ by preaching of the word of God and by the example of a

Ecotheology: Voices from South and North (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994), 300–311, here at 303.

[71]On this account, see Stogre, *That the World May Believe*, 95–96.

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good life."[72] Building on this teaching, John Paul II affirmed that every human person has inalienable rights "irrespective of racial, ethnic, cultural or national, or religious belief." He also acknowledged "the fundamental unity of the human race [that] takes its origin from the one God, the creator."[73]

In defense of the full humanity of IPs, John Paul II recognized their fundamental rights "to exist," "to preserve and develop their own culture," "to have contact with groups having a common cultural and historical heritage," and "to religious freedom."[74] Acknowledging these basic human rights, therefore, is a necessary condition for protecting and promoting human dignity. Nevertheless, in John XXIII's view, "minority ethnic rights are relativized by, and subordinated to, the universal common good of humanity, and the common destiny of the goods of the world."[75] One may hope, then, that this ecclesial teaching may be communicated respectfully in a dialogical manner.

Promoting Indigenous Peoples' Right to Self-determination and Religious Freedom

The right of IPs to self-determination should be highlighted as one of the most frequently violated rights in history. Innocent IV argued that it is not licit for anyone to deprive some human beings of their right to self-government simply because the latter happen to be

[72]Paul III, *Veritas Ipsa* (June 2, 1537); Latin text available in Francisco Javier Hernáez, ed., *Colección de Bulas, breves y otros documentos relativos a la iglesia de América y Filipinas* Vol. 1 (Vaduz, Liechtenstein: Kraus Reprint Ltd., 1964), 102–103; English translation from Stogre, *That the World May Believe*, 84–85.

[73]John Paul II, "1989 World Day of Peace Message: To Build Peace, Respect Minorities," *Origins* 18 (December 29, 1988): 466–469, here at 467; available at http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/peace/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_19881208_xxii-world-day-for-peace.html (accessed May 20, 2017).

[74]John Paul II, "1989 World Day of Peace Message: To Build Peace, Respect Minorities," 468.

[75]Stogre, *That the World May Believe*, 144.

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non-Christians.[76] Leo XIII in turn clearly explained that the right to self-determination demands recognition that IPs are "[masters of their] own person, that they could live together under their own laws, and that they could acquire and hold property for themselves."[77] Along this line, John XXIII gladly welcomed the processes of decolonization and overcoming inferiority as concrete manifestations of self-determination. It is a positive sign of the time for him that "no one wants to feel subject to political powers located outside his own country or ethnic group."[78] The main challenge of the present generation, therefore, is to bring awareness of these rights down to the level of grassroots IP communities.

It should be noted that in understanding the meaning of the IPs' right to self-determination, the Church magisterium tries to avoid two extremes. On the one hand, the IPs should not "be relegated to reservations as if they were to live there forever, trapped in the past."[79] On the other hand, they should not "be forced to assimilate without any concern for their right to maintain their own identity."[80] To maintain this dialectic, the Church believes that certain "forms of coexistence can be found" and that it is possible to maintain the identity of IPs "within the greater whole to which they belong with all due rights." In any case, she teaches that "the greater or lesser degree of their integration into the surrounding society must be made on the basis of a free choice."[81] As both an individual and a collective right, self-determination concretely means that each member of a minority

[76]Innocent IV, *Commentaria doctissima in Quinque Libros Decretalium*, 3.34.8; English translation from Tierney, *The Crisis of Church & State*, 155.

[77]Leo XIII, *In Plurimis* (May 5, 1888), in Claudia Carlen, ed., *The Papal Encyclicals* Vol. 3 (Wilmington, NC: McGrath Publishing Comoany, 1981), 165.

[78]John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris* (April 11, 1963) (Boston, MA: Daughters of St. Paul, 1963), nos. 42–43.

[79]Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *The Church and Racism*, 18.

[80]Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *The Church and Racism*, 18.

[81]Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *The Church and Racism*, 19.

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group is "to respect the decisions of each one, even if someone were to decide to adopt the majority culture."[82]

The foregoing discussion also leads to the other equally important right to religious freedom. The ideal missionary strategy preferred by the Church since the time of Paul III was to evangelize the non-Christians "by preaching the word of God and by the example of good and holy living."[83] To reaffirm this, Vatican II declared that "the human person has a right to religious freedom.… Freedom of this kind means that all men [sic] should be immune from coercion … [and that] nobody is forced to act against his convictions in religious matters in private or in public, alone or in associations with others."[84] In an Asian context, this summons Christians to dialogue with believers of other religions by "listening to what they are expressing in and through their lives of the goodness of the Almighty. It is clear that dialogue is not for conversion."[85]

Embracing the Liberative Evangelization of Cultures

The Biblical mandate to "go and make disciples of all nations" (Matt. 28:19) has been traditionally interpreted to mean bringing

[82]John Paul II, "1989 World Day of Peace Message: To Build Peace, Respect Minorities," 469.

[83]Paul III, *Sublimis Deus* (May 29, 1537); Latin text and English translation from Francis Augustus MacNutt, *Bartholomew de las Casas: His Life, His Apostolate, and His Writings* (New York & London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1909), 426–431.

[84]Second Vatican Council, *Dignitatis Humanae* 2, in Austin Flannery, ed., *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents* Vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988).

[85]Faith Encounters in Social Action (FEISA), "Understanding Christian-Muslim Dialogue in South East Asia" (Kuala Lumpur: July 16–20, 2001), in Franz-Josef Eilers, ed., *For All the Peoples of Asia: Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences Documents from 2002–2006* Vol. IV (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 2007), 77–88, here at 86.

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the Gospel to all human beings, including those outside the fold of the Church. Vatican II affirms that human response to God by faith "ought to be free" and that "nobody is to be forced to embrace the faith against his will."[86] It is therefore instructive to show at this juncture the three shifting approaches to evangelization throughout history. The first is the colonial approach to evangelization, which tends to forcefully *convert* IPs to Christianity and to closely *conform* their ways of life to the Western cultures of the colonizers. Critiques of this approach emphasize that the "gospel" brought about by the European colonizers was not a "pure" gospel but rather an inculturated one. The colonial approach to evangelization, therefore, turned out mainly to be an "implantation and extension of a European version of the Christian faith."[87]

The second and third approaches emerged with the shift to a pluralistic empirical notion of culture in Vatican II,[88] and can be seen today as competing approaches to evangelization. One pertains to "restorationist Catholic culture"[89] which basically promotes a defensive and suspicious attitude toward non-Christian cultures, including both indigenous and modern ones. This approach recognizes the "seeds of the Word"[90] present in other cultures and religions but treats such as only to be integrated into the fold of the Catholic substratum. It

[86]*Dignitatis Humanae* 10.

[87]Stogre, *That the World May Believe*, 104.

[88]Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes* 58 and also 52; in Flannery, *Vatican Council II*, Vol. 1.

[89]See Georges De Schrijver, "*Gaudium et Spes* on the Church's Dialogue with Contemporary Society and Culture: A Seedbed for the Divergent Options Adopted in Medellín, Puebla, and Santo Domingo," in Mathijs Lamberigts & Leo Kenis, eds., *Vatican II and Its Legacy* (Leuven: Peeters, 2002), 289–327, here at 312.

[90]See *Gaudium et Spes* 92, *Ad Gentes* 11, *Lumen Gentium* 16, and *Nostra Aetate* 2, among others. For a good commentary on the recognition of the "seed of the Word," see Jacques Dupuis, "The Church, the Reign of God, and the 'Others,'" *FABC Papers* 67 (1993): 1–30, here at 22.

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tends to absorb *only* what it judges to be holy, lovable, and good in other cultures while maintaining a suspicious and defensive posture toward the non-Christian elements. Using its particular standards, the restorationist seeks to purify and correct the values of the *other* that are judged to be incongruent with Christian culture.

On the other hand, there is the liberative approach that proposes to free IPs from colonial mentality by recognizing that their local cultures, as well as their humanity, are not at all inferior to Western ones.[91] Moreover, this approach also enables IPs to creatively express their own cultures that have allowed them to survive as a people for millennia. Along this line, Leonardo Boff presupposes that all cultures—as creative responses to God's proposal of communion, life, and fullness[92]—are "already impregnated with revelation, gospel, and God."[93] This liberative approach thus creates a space where indigenous cultures could make their "own assimilation of the gospel, with the same right and freedom as the Jewish, Greco-Roman, and Germanic cultures did so."[94] Like any other culture, indigenous ones are seen as equally capable of delivering *good news* and expressing Kingdom values. The Christian faith can thus be enriched and catechized by the "gospel" of other cultures and religions. IPs, therefore, should not be treated as passive objects of evangelization but as potential "evangelizers of their own culture and society."[95] It is

[91]See Virgilio Elizondo, "Culture, the Option for the Poor, and Liberation," in Daniel Groody, ed., *The Option for the Poor in Christian Theology* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007): 157–168, here at 161. For Elizondo, "no one culture is superior or inferior to other cultures; all cultures are simply particular expressions of being human" (161).

[92]Leonardo Boff, *Good News to the Poor: A New Evangelization*, trans. Robert Barr (Tunbridge Wells, UK: Burns and Oates, 1992), 21.

[93]Boff, *Good News to the Poor*, 34.

[94]Boff, *Good News to the Poor*, 34.

[95]John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Asia* 35.

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thus hoped that the Church magisterium would be able to recognize the validity of the liberative approach.

Retrieving the Practice of Reparation for the Sins against Indigenous Peoples

The Church's consciousness of the historical injustices against IPs is evident in her commendable attempts to rectify them. We can cite two examples from history. One was the imposition of severe ecclesiastical sanctions (i.e., excommunication *latae sententiae* reserved to the Holy See) on those who enslaved IPs or despoiled them of their property.[96] Although this ecclesiastical sanction was nullified in 1538, Urban VIII decidedly reinstated it in 1639[97] and Benedict XIV reconfirmed it in 1741.[98] This largely explains why slavery had significantly ceased to be a major problem for most European states (except in some mission lands) by the 19th century.[99]

The other commendable example was the restitution in the sixteenth century for damages done to IPs. Bartolomé de las Casas (1474–1566) requested Pius V (1566–1572) to decree that those who had enriched themselves unjustly by collaborating with the conquistadors and *encomenderos* must be ordered to "make restitution for all the gold, silver, and precious stones which they [had] acquired."[100] This principle

[96]See Paul III, *Pastorale Officium* (May 29, 1537); Latin text available in Hernáez, *Colección de Bulas*, 1: 101–102; English translation from Bartolomé de las Casas, *In Defense of the Indians*, ed. & trans. Stafford Poole (DeKalb, IL: Northen Illinois University Press, 1974), 102.

[97]See Urban VIII, *Commissum Nobis* (April 22, 1639), in Hernáez, *Colección de Bulas*, 1: 110.

[98]See Benedict XIV, *Immensa Pastorum* (December 20, 1741), in Hernáez, *Colección de Bulas*, 1: 113.

[99]See Stogre, *That the World May Believe*, 126.

[100]Bartolomé de las Casas, *Doctrina* (Mexico: Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico, 1972), 165.

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of reparation was also applied in the Philippines when Gregory XIV (1590–1591) instructed the Archbishop of Manila to oversee and adjudicate the process of restitution for damages done by the Spaniards, headed by Miguel López de Legazpi who bombarded the helpless settlement in Cebu that resisted the colonization.[101]

Recent popes also encouraged minorities to take an active role in claiming their own rights. John XXIII, for instance, proposed that those who have been discriminated against in the past have "the duty to claim those rights as marks of … dignity, while all others have the obligation to acknowledge those rights and respect them."[102] This liberative approach has encouraged the victims of injustices to help themselves and not simply depend on paternalistic initiatives.

A very important recent development of papal social thought can be discerned in John Paul II's humble gesture of asking for the forgiveness of IPs. He apologized in *Ecclesia in Oceania*, saying that

> the past cannot be undone, but [that] honest recognition of past injustices can lead to measures and attitudes which will help to rectify the damaging effects for both the indigenous community and the wider society. The Church expresses deep regret and asks forgiveness where her children have been or still are party to these wrongs.[103]

We know, however, that asking for forgiveness is not enough. There should be reparation to satisfy the requirements of justice and healing.

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[101]See Gregory XIV, *Cum Sicuti* (April 18, 1591), in Hernáez, *Colección de Bulas*, 1: 108–109; see also José Arcilla, *An Introduction to Philippine History*, 3rd ed. (Quezon City: Ateneo De Manila University Press, 1984), 14.

[102]John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris* 44.

[103]John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Oceania* (November 22, 2001), no. 28, available at http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_20011122_ecclesia-in-oceania.html (accessed June 7, 2017).

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Learning from the Ecological Perspectives of Indigenous Peoples and Women

The ecological perspectives of IPs and women arguably remain very relevant despite current advances in ecological science. IPs are known for their special relationship with the ancestral land—the land of their birth where their ancestors grew up, raised their families, and were buried. It is sacred for them because this is the place "where the spirits of their ancestors roam [and] … help them take care of the land."[104] The spirit guides those that dwell in this land, which is not simply the soil but includes all natural resources, bodies of water, airspace, and minerals under the earth. IPs would not survive in a land "where no birds soar, … where no trees, flowers, and crops grow, where no beasts run free. What use has a piece of land if it cannot feed its people?"[105] A depleted environment, therefore, destroys the indigenous culture and human dignity of its inhabitants.

John Paul II was the first pope to officially recognize the intimate connection between IPs and their land. It was clear to him that when "indigenous peoples are deprived of their land, they lose a vital element of their way of life and actually run the risk of disappearing as a people."[106] IPs identify themselves with their ancestral land

[104]Stuart Schlegel, *Tiruray Subsistence: From Shifting Cultivation to Plow Agriculture* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1979), 135.

[105]Quoted in TRICOM, SNV, ICCO, & AFRIM, *Defending the Land: Lumad and Moro Peoples' Struggle for Ancestral Domain in Mindanao* (Davao City, Philippines: TRICOM, SNV, ICCO, & AFRIM, 1998), 8–9.

[106]John Paul II, "1989 World Day of Peace Message: To Build Peace, Respect Minorities," here at 468. For a similar perspective, see the following works of Filipino anthropologists: Francisco Claver, "The Social Marginalization of Tribal Peoples and Their Contribution to Ecological Health," in *FABC Papers* 80 (1995), available at http://www.fabc.org/fabc%20papers/fabc_paper_80.pdf; Karl Gaspar, *Manobo Dreams in Arakan: A People's Struggle to Keep Their Homeland* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2011); and Albert Alejo, *Generating Energies in Mount Apo: Cultural Politics in a Contested Environment* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2000).

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so intimately that separation from it would naturally lead to the destruction of their culture and eventually to their extinction. As such, John Paul II rightly links tribal peoples' land rights with the right to life.

In *Laudato Si'*, Francis speaks of the "cultural ecology" of IPs to counteract the unsustainable practices of modern societies. He wants us to learn from IPs who treat land not as a commodity but as "a gift from God and from their ancestors who rest there, a sacred space with which they need to interact if they are to maintain their identity and values."[107] He laments that the global trend of modern cultures forces IPs "to abandon their homelands to make room for agricultural or mining projects which are undertaken without regard for the degradation of nature and culture."[108] A concrete way to defend IPs, therefore, is to join them in their struggle for agrarian justice and help them cope with the negative effects of modern cultures.

Finally, the ecofeminist view needs to be creatively integrated into Catholic social teaching. Ecofeminism seeks to bring together the "concern for the domination of women and other subjugated groups with concern for the exploitation of the Earth."[109] Mistreatment of women and abuse of nature are correlated as they both suffer from the oppressive practices in patriarchal and anthropocentric society—recall, for instance, that indigenous women "are the first to suffer the consequences of injustice and environmental destruction."[110] It is thus significant that Francis invites us to treat Earth "like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us."[111] The expression "Mother Earth" is a metaphorical way of saying that Earth sustains and nourishes the living species whose

[107]Francis, *Laudato Si'* (May 24, 2015), no. 146.

[108]Francis, *Laudato Si'* 146.

[109]Mary Judith Ress, *Ecofeminism in Latin America* (New York: Orbis, 2006), 77.

[110]Greta Gaard & Lori Gruen, "Ecofeminism: Toward Global Justice and Planetary Health," in Andrew Light & Holmes Rolston III, eds., *Environmental Ethics: An Anthology* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 276–293, here at 280.

[111]Francis, *Laudato Si'* 1.

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existence absolutely depends on her providence. Sadly, though, Mother Earth, "burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor."[112] We can no longer separate the cry of poor women from the cry of the Earth.

Conclusion

We have shown in this article the intimate connection between historical injustices suffered by IPs and the destruction of natural ecosystems. Both are products of the same oppressive forces of colonization. IPs, and especially their women, suffer the most from the effects of ecological destruction. Their persistent cry of oppression calls us to broaden the scope of our preferential option and work for the poor to include protecting both IPs and the ecosystem that supports them. We therefore need to address ecological issues as integral components of Catholic social teaching. It is a challenge that theologians and members of the Church's magisterium must face.

We also pointed out limitations in how the magisterium and theologians treated historical injustices suffered by IPs. Nevertheless, this lacuna should not be used as an excuse to omit the topics on IPs from the standard course syllabus on Catholic social teaching. The marginalization of IPs in both the intellectual ministry and pastoral advocacies must be overcome. Indeed, it is a moral imperative for Christians to bring the issues of disenfranchised IPs to the mainstream of public discussion.

Finally, this article also proposed to enrich the scope and praxis of Catholic social teaching on IPs. It highlighted the defense of their human rights, the promotion of the liberative evangelization of cultures, the reparation for sins against IPs, the creative appropriation of the IPs' ecological worldview, and the recognition of the value of the ecofeminist perspective. As we have shown, these elements are not totally missing in Catholic social teaching; they simply need to be sufficiently developed and appropriated.

[112]Francis, *Laudato Si'* 2.

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