

Appendix 2

ONE BREAD, ONE BODY, ONE PEOPLE: THE CHALLENGES OF MIGRATION TO THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

(The following essay by Gemma Tulud Cruz is the first winner of the Catherine Mowry LaCugna Award for Best Essay by a New Scholar in 2005.)

One bread . . . one body . . . one people. This is part of the refrain of a Mass song usually sung during communion that I have always liked for its deep message. I never knew, however, that I will come to more deeply embrace its message and realize the full range of its implications until further studies abroad beckoned and I decided to write my dissertation on migration.

Migration is a phenomenon that is as old as humankind. Today, however, its density, velocity, multi-directionality, and consequent complexity is radically redefining human geography. The United Nation's 2002 International Migration Report, for instance, says that there are roughly 175 million migrants, 105 million or 60% of whom are in developed countries. Of these, 56 million are in Europe, 50 million in Asia, and 41 million in North America. Indeed, the volume of migration in the last decades is such that it is believed to be responsible for two-thirds of the population growth in industrial countries.¹ This offers us insights not just into human geography but also into the human condition primarily because of its entanglement with the process of globalization.

Migration, as we are witnessing it today, has a lot to do with globalization because it is heavily dictated and controlled by economics.² The economic polarization globalization has spawned created not only a more mobile transnational elite³ but also a more dependent underclass. Because of the exacerbation of poverty, unemployment, and underemployment thousands of people all over the world leave

¹"Global Trends" *Migration News* 10/2 (April 2003).

²Mike Parnwell, *Population Movements and the Third World* (London: Routledge, 1993) 29-30.

³It has created a different breed of migrants, e.g., "skilled transients"—corporate managers, consultants and technicians who hop or get transferred from one international branch of the transnational company to another—and the "transnational migrants"—the elite group of rich entrepreneurs who can "buy" citizenship and shuttle or split their time in two or more countries. Nikos Papastergiadis, *The Turbulence of Migration* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000) 40, 44.

their homes and countries everyday in search of work or better job opportunities. Excluding the permanent immigrants and refugees who also look for remunerative activities, global estimates of migrant workers by the International Labor Organization run as high as 120 million as of 1995.⁴ And this does not include yet those who resort to or fall prey to irregular/undocumented migration where migrants are kept in bondage or forced into prostitution.

Because there is a vast labor reserve from the ever-increasing millions of poor people from Third World countries, migrant workers, especially women, are today's "hot commodities" that can be "acquired" at "cheap prices" as part of the "circulating resources" or capital in the world. Take the case of domestic workers. There is a structural and global trade in maid that turns millions of women into victims⁵ by their employers, host governments and its citizens, as well as by their recruiters, financial institutions, their own governments, and their own next of kin, not to mention by their fellow women.

This gendered economic imbrication of migration with globalization alone already merits a space in our theological imagination. How much more when one takes into consideration the socio-political and the religio-cultural dimension of this phenomenon? How does one take into theological account, for example, the cultural and religious problems or tensions that arise when two or more ethnic or religious groups are brought together by migration? Moreover how does theology make sense of the ways in which culture and religion become not only sources of oppression but also means for survival and liberation in the context of migration? This paper explores these questions and dimensions of migration and their theological implications in the context of the experience of the Filipina domestic helpers (or "DHS" as they are popularly called) in Hong Kong, to give a face to the challenges being brought by what, I believe, is a new locus for theological reflection, i.e., migration.

THE FILIPINO WOMEN DOMESTIC WORKERS IN HONG KONG: A CONTEXTUALIZATION

Driven by the economic instability in the Philippines many Filipinas began leaving the country in the early 1970s to work as maids in Hong Kong. Today, they number to more or less 150,000 and compose not only the majority of Hong Kong's foreign domestic workers but also its largest ethnic migrant group. Despite all the seeming advantages, however, life for the Filipina DHS is a saga riddled with drama, with triumphs and defeats interspersing it. This dialectic between triumph and defeat as experienced by the Filipina DHS can be evinced from their experiences of oppression and their strategies to survive their oppression as it is woven

⁴Patrick Taran and Eduardo Geronimi, *Globalization, Labor and Migration: Protection is Paramount* (Geneva: International Labor Organization) 6.

⁵Noeleen Heyzer and Vivienne Wee, "Domestic Workers in Transient Overseas Employment: Who Benefits, Who Profits," in *The Trade in Domestic Workers: Causes, Mechanisms and Consequences of International Migration*, ed. Geertje Lycklama à Nijeholt and Nedra Weerakom (Kuala Lumpur: APDC, 1994) 44-70.

in the context of their experience as migrant Filipina domestic workers in Hong Kong.

EXPERIENCES OF OPPRESSION

Under global capitalism, domestic work is already unjustly considered as one of the 3D (dirty, dangerous, and disdained) as well as SALEP (shunned by all citizens except the poor) jobs. The fact that it is a gendered job makes it all the more unjust. Then when this is performed in the context of migration it usually becomes the subject of a host of oppression as shown below by the experience of the Filipina DHs in Hong Kong. Indeed, life for the Filipina domestic helper in Hong Kong is a life replete with oppression that comes in various forms.

As Filipinos working in predominantly Chinese-Hong Kong, Filipina DHs suffer from cultural isolation. Language is one primary problem. Cantonese, the popular language in Hong Kong, is not spoken nor understood by most of the DHs. Many cases of miscommunication between the DHs and employers arise because of this. It also severely delimits the DHs in their daily, inevitable interaction with Chinese in markets, shops, and other public places. Moreover, it intensifies their (DHs') vulnerability to abuses as they are often made the butt of jokes, get cheated, and given a raw deal without their knowledge. Even the Chinese way of speaking English is problematic. Firstly, English spoken with a Cantonese accent can be hard to decipher. Secondly, most Chinese have a problem with pronouncing the letter "r" which often becomes "l" as in "fry" becomes "fly." One popular joke among the DHs, for example, is how one got terminated for throwing the chicken out of the window because she literally followed her employer who said "fly the chicken" when what she meant was "fry the chicken." One fact comes out of all these: The DHs' sociocultural, economic, and political power is reduced by their lack of facility with Cantonese.

Peculiar cultural traits, practices, and beliefs also present difficulties. For instance, DHs are insulted by employers who count even the grapes in the refrigerator—an act attributed to the cultural frugality of the Chinese. They also suffer at the expense of the notorious abrasiveness that often borders on rudeness⁶ of the Chinese in Hong Kong. "The average Filipino is a very courteous person with a deep sense of his [her] own self-worth. . . . [She or he] is very conscious of 'hiya'

⁶Isabel Escoda, *Letters from Hong Kong: Viewing the Colony through Philippine Eyes* (Manila: Bookmark, 1989) 33, 50, observes that the HK Chinese tend to be "too serious, purposeful and rather grim" while the Filipinos are "gayer and more laidback." She also claims that whereas Filipinos would tend to smile more often, Chinese Hong Kongers can be stone-faced and surly.

(shame) since dignity and honour are everything to him [her].”⁷ So when the Chinese bluntly speak to them or shout at them, Filipina DHs feel offended.

Finger wagging, finger pointing, or pressing fingers on the forehead or chest, especially the forefinger, is another problem. Even if the employers do not find anything offensive with it, it has a derogatory connotation to Filipinos who believe it is a gesture meant only for animals or someone inferior. Problematic cultural practices, in the meantime, include bathing. Chinese usually take a bath⁸ in the evening while Filipinos bathe in the morning. Hence, many DHs balk at employers’ rules for them to take a bath in the evening, especially since they are made to iron clothes at this time. In the Philippines, it is considered unhealthy to take a bath after ironing or after doing any physically strenuous work. Filipinos believe that one can get *pasma* (an illness where the hands tremble) and more pronounced veins in the hands. Superstitions get in the way too. An employer, for instance, did not want the DH to take a bath, comb her hair, or even wash her face in the morning because this was considered bad luck for business.

Contentious beliefs, meanwhile, include the difference in the Chinese and Filipino idea of a domestic worker. Most Chinese employers adhere to the traditional master-servant relationship. As such, a domestic helper is not a professional nanny or housekeeper as most of the predominantly educated Filipina DHs tend to think of themselves or want to be treated. For the employers, a domestic worker is nothing more than an unskilled, inferior laborer who can never be an equal and has minimal or no rights. The Filipinas, on the other hand, subscribe either to the more professional working relationship or to the more personal/relational employer-employee relationship. Hence, problems arise when their employers make them “feel so low” and treat them like no-body.

Discrimination based on race (non-Chinese) and ethnicity (non-Western) is also a major problem for the DHs. The Chinese associate them with discriminatory racialized stereotypes like “Filipinos are only DH”, “aliens”, and “poor country people”. The most pervasive and oppressive of these, however, is the label “maids” or “DHs.” In 1986, souvenir dolls called Filipino Helper Dolls⁹ were even marketed in trendy tourist shopping areas. Aside from discrimination, this is also a blatant form of commodification.

⁷Rev. G. Arotcarena et al., *The Maid Tangle: A Guide to Better Employer-Employee Relationship* (Singapore; Katong Catholic Book Centre, Pte. Ltd.) 71, quoted in Jose S. Brillantes, “Addressing the Problems of Filipino Women Migrant Workers” in Ateneo Human Rights Center, *OCWs in Crisis: Protecting Filipino Migrant Workers* (Makati City, Philippines: Ateneo Human Rights Center, 1995) 44.

⁸Nicole Constable, *Maid to Order in Hong Kong* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997) 98-99.

⁹See Nicole Constable, “Dolls, T-Birds, and Ideal Workers: The Negotiation of Filipino Identity in Hong Kong,” in *Home and Hegemony: Domestic Service and Identity Politics in South and Southeast Asia*. ed. Kathleen Adams and Sara Dickey (Ann Arbor MI: University of Michigan Press, 2000) 232-33.

The “Battle of Chater Road” is another example of racial discrimination against the DHs. In 1992, Hong Kong Land—Central District’s most powerful landlord—proposed the re-opening of Chater Road (a “haven” of Filipina DHs) to public traffic on Sundays. It reasoned out that re-opening it would allow another “class” of people to come and not the off-duty DHs who deface the place and turn it into a “slum.”¹⁰ It even suggested putting them in the underground car parks instead—another maneuvering to keep the DHs “out of sight”—in the same way that existing rules “force them to use back entrances to buildings, and confine them to certain waiting areas in elite clubs.” Some residents who came to the defense of the Filipinas even labeled the suggestion as “ethnic cleansing.”¹¹

As migrants, they do not only feel the sense of disorientation that comes from being in a strange land with various people with different languages, food, religions, and values. Adjusting to highly-urbanized Hong Kong equally create a lot of difficulties, especially since most of the DHs are largely unexposed to life in a “global city” with all its ultra-modern structures and facilities. Hong Kong’s airport alone and the “octopus card”—an automated credit-debit card that can be used for buses and trains—are enough to scare the wits out of the mostly rural-born and bred DHs.

As migrants, they inevitably have to struggle with homesickness and loneliness. Even religion, which they strongly turn to as a coping mechanism, contributes to their marginalization. Unlike the Philippines, which is a predominantly Christian country, Hong Kong is mainly a Buddhist/Confucianist/Taoist territory. Moreover, within the general Chinese and even the Filipino Christian community in Hong Kong, there is class discrimination. Because DHs are supposed to be “*bakya*” (people with low culture) and inferior the other Filipino migrant Christians and the local Christians dissociate themselves from the Filipina DHs even in religious services. As the Church of Hong Kong says:

As we appreciate the contribution of our Filipino brethren to the Church of Hong Kong, we also recognize the difficulties in establishing a Church that is both Filipino and Chinese. We are aware that we still need to inculcate among our Chinese people that the Church is universal and that two cultures can proclaim the same faith in the same Church, in different ways and languages. The Diocese of

¹⁰See Mariana Wan, “HK Land Under Fire for ‘Racist’ Report,” *SCMP* (13 September 1992); Belinda Wallis, “Call for Campaign to Warn Maids,” *SCMP* (4 June 1992); AMC, “Foreign Domestic Workers, Needed but Out of Sight—a Dilemma,” *Asian Migrant Forum* 5:24; and “Maids Make a Mess at Post Office,” *Hong Kong Standard* (23 May 1992); quoted in Nicole Constable, *Maid to Order in Hong Kong*, 4, 36.

¹¹See Sanjay Chugh, “Appalled by Car-Park Suggestions,” *SCMP* (21 September 1992); Roselyn D. Palaghicon, “Angered by Car-Park Suggestion,” *SCMP* (12 October 1992); and Brett Free, “‘Ethnic Cleansing’ Label Thrown at Objectors to Filipino Maids,” *Hong Kong Standard* (14 January 1993); quoted in Nicole Constable, *Maid to Order in Hong Kong*, 4-6.

Hong Kong would like to see the Chinese and the Filipinos join one another at Mass and gatherings, as equals and as friends.¹²

Indeed, the DHs' strong reliance on religion for comfort lays them open to the disdain of the local people who frown at the crowds they (DHs) create in church grounds. Furthermore, it "makes them easy prey for [commercialized] charismatic groups which do not ordinarily concern themselves with things mundane like the migrants' almost slave-like conditions."¹³

Fr. Pidgeon, a Redemptorist priest, also points to the problems posed by these commercialized charismatic groups which, he says, "do their members more damage than good." He claims that the migrants' hunger for religion or deep desire to experience the comfort of religion are taken advantaged of, by these religious groups which do not have sound leadership and are un-Catholic in their teaching.¹⁴ But the problem is actually not only external but also internal. As admitted by another Filipino minister in Hong Kong, their oppression is rooted in "centuries of the misuse of religion . . . [which] has created a people that are susceptible to blackmail." "Filipino Christianity," he says is "a brand of Christianity that is more enslaving rather than liberating."¹⁵ One can see symptoms of this in how they romanticize suffering¹⁶ and in how DHs with children are burdened by deep guilt rooted in what they perceive as their transgression of a "good" Filipino Christian woman's proper place and role, which is at home with her husband and children. This is also discernible in how church people incessantly urge them to make their families a priority and return home, putting the DHs in a double bind as they left the Philippines for their family's sake in the first place. The uncritical mystification of servanthood through Bible passages like Ephesians 6:5-7 also points to this.¹⁷

The New Conditions of Stay (NCS), or the Two—Weeks Rule, on top of the restrictive "two-year contract only" policy for foreign domestic workers in Hong Kong, is also one great bane among the DHs. The said rule automatically reduces

¹²See "Filipino Migrant Workers in Hong Kong," *Asian Migrant* 7/1 (January-March 1994): 7.

¹³Eliseo Tellez Jr. "An Overview of Filipino Migrant Workers in Hong Kong," in Christian Conference of Asia, *Serving One Another* (Kowloon/Jiulong HK: CCA Urban Rural Mission) 82.

¹⁴F. J. Pidgeon, "Challenging the Christian Community," *TNT Hong Kong* 5/4 (April 1999): 6-7.

¹⁵See Profile # 6, "Ministry Alongside Migrant Workers," in *Migrant's Focus Magazine*, issue no. 1, online at <<http://www.migrants.net/resources/magazine/issue1/profiles6.htm>>, accessed 12 February 2003.

¹⁶Erlinda Layosa, e.g., quotes a biblical passage that says: "You servants must submit to your masters and show them complete respect. . . . If you endure suffering even when you have done right, God will bless you for it." [1 Peter 2:18-19] Erlinda Layosa, "Don't Find Fault . . . Find a Remedy," *TF* (July-August 1990): 15; quoted in Nicole Constable, *Maid to Order in Hong Kong*, 192.

¹⁷Mommie Jingco, "Lowly Yet Fulfilling" *Tinig Filipino* (October 1991): 24.

their visa to two weeks upon termination of their employment. In case of a new two-year contract the DH is still “forced” to go on vacation because the visa extension would be stamped only upon her reentry in Hong Kong. Other attacks on their status as migrants include: 1) a political party’s proposed solution to impose a HK\$ 500 tax on foreign DHs (FDHs)¹⁸; 2) a larger scheme by H.K. authorities to ease out FDHs; 3) the proposal to remove maternity protection benefits of foreign DHs; 4) and the imposition of a service charge, on their use of public facilities.

Indeed, the fact that they are in a place where they are aliens and not citizens have adverse effects on their agency. This is very true for those who have just-arrived and literally all-alone DHs. The following excerpt from a filed complaint for rape of a DH tells their extreme vulnerability to abuse because of the confluence of the reasons and conditions born out of their migrant status:

There he raped me. I don’t want it to happen but I was so afraid of him because he is my employer. I am new in Hong Kong, I don’t know what to do and no places to go. I was afraid he was going to kill me like what happened to others. . . . I was confused. . . . I don’t want to die because I have a daughter and parents to support. I owe PhP 46,000 from my sister.¹⁹

As domestic workers, two Chinese myths reinforce the Filipina DHs’ oppression. These are the stories on the legendary *amahs* and the denigrated *muijais*. The *muijais*—historically the lowest servant in the Chinese household—were actually young girls who were bought and turned into servants and even concubines. But it is the *muijai*’s name and legacy that the Filipina DHs are made to carry with their Hong Kong name *banmui* (*ban* is from the final Cantonese syllable term for “Philippines” and *mui* is from the objectified *muijai*). The *amahs*, in the meantime, are the live-in migrant domestic workers from the Canton Delta before 1945 who took on iconic proportions because of their unquestioning dedication and adherence to the classical standards of the master-servant relationship. While the Chinese consider the *amahs* “incomparably superior” the stories on the *amah* are the master narratives they incessantly drill and impose on the Filipinas. As such, two myths pull the Filipinas from both ends of the spectrum. From one end, the haunting image of the *muijai* ties them to their lowest private and public position. From the other end, the daunting image of the *amah* presses harder the idea that they can never be good, much less better, as domestic workers.

STRATEGIES FOR SURVIVAL

¹⁸This was later imposed through the HK\$400 levy charged to Chinese who employ foreign domestic workers. See Ambrose Leung, “\$HK500 a month from maids would ease deficit, say liberals,” *SCMP* (5 November 2002): 2; and Sammy Martin, “Filipinos in HK to lose medical benefits,” *Manila Times* (11 March 2003).

¹⁹At the time of the actual research this is one of the ongoing cases among the residents of Bethune House—a shelter for FDHs in Hong Kong.

Inasmuch as their life is landscaped by oppression the story of the Filipina DHs in Hong Kong is not just about death-dealing situations. It is also about the ways and means in which they survive their oppression. These survival strategies come in three interwoven and oscillating forms, namely, submission, resistance, and accommodation.

Submission happens when the DHs fit themselves into the “ideal DH” image, that is, one who is economically inferior and dependent.²⁰ They take out large and multiple loans to the point of using their passport as collateral. This, of course, buries them deeper into their oppression. Some submit when they feel treated in a “special” way like a “member of the family”. For others, submission becomes the response when they themselves see the employer’s rigid rules, as “proper for maids.”

As Filipinos, they submit by conforming to cultural values like *utang na loob* (debt of gratitude) and *kapalaran* or *tadhana* (fate or destiny) which is often interpreted as God’s will. One common culturally-rooted reason for submission is *bahala na*. In its popular description, it entails playing things by ear or accepting (oftentimes blindly) whatever happens. In its spiritualized form, *bahala na* is the shortened version of *ipa-Bathala na*. *Bathala* is the local or indigenous name for God. Hence, it means “leave it all up to God” or “simply trust in God.” This religious dimension makes *bahala na* more acceptable and prevalent among Filipinos. Among the DHs themselves it ranked first in their responses to a Tracer study question on their positive attitude towards work.²¹ But in its extreme expression *bahala na* drives them to passively accept their situation. Vicky Casia—Cabantac gives a glimpse on how this cultural trait plays a role in their submission: “It is quite pathetic to see how hopeless and helpless fellow DH can be. Clearly, they are ready to accept whatever salary, just to feel secure in their job. But where is justice? Until when do we allow ourselves to just keep quiet and leave everything to *bahala na*.”²²

Aside from submission, Filipina DHs resort to resistance. Individually, they reason out, or refuse to be cheated or manipulated. They do not sign blank papers or blank receipts even when they are being coerced to do so. Others refuse to renew a contract; choose day work over live-in work; and part-time work for several employers, rather than full time work for a single employer. Most look for good employers or those who allow them greater autonomy, better working conditions, and flexibility. Then they also write advocacy and protest letters to widely—read newspapers in H.K. or seek the help of GOs, NGOs, and Church-based groups. They also resort to chain migration and maintain transnational families, e.g.

²⁰Nicole Constable, *Maid to Order in Hong Kong*, 68-70, 72-73.

²¹Noel Vasquez et al., *Tracer Study on Filipina Domestic Helpers Abroad: The Socio-Economic Conditions of Filipina Domestic Workers from Pre-Departure Until the End of their First Two-Year Contract in Hong Kong* (Geneva: International Organization for Migration, 1995) 37.

²²Vicky Casia—Cabantac, “Job or Justice?” *TNT Hong Kong* 5/4 (April 1999): 9.

transnational mothering, as well as transnational networks and communities, e.g. OFW (Overseas Filipino Workers) networks, to counter psychological and economic problems.

Collectively, sisterhood serves as a primary strategy of resistance. They provide emotional and financial support or look for another employer for their terminated “sisters.” They also keep each other abreast of potentially oppressive employers and deter other Filipinas from working with such employers. For those who work in the same building and are strictly monitored or prohibited to talk with other Filipinas they make use of the garbage area as their meeting place.

Socially and politically they resist through their Sunday gatherings. They occupy Hong Kong’s Central District from its parks, malls, church compounds, walkways and alleys and do anything and everything under the sun even those that are normally done in private, e.g. having a haircut, manicure, and pedicure, in public. This is seen as a highly symbolic “claim of autonomy . . . an expression of power beyond their lowly rank as maid”, that “gives them a chance to throw away imposed Chinese customs, meet with friends, and talk about home.”²³ Then they also organize themselves into clubs and federations where they struggle for their socio-political rights and welfare through socials, seminars, workshops, and public fora, as well as public protests or demonstrations.

To resist the oppressive myths on the *amah* and *muijai*, the DHs embraced a counter-icon in the person of Flor Contemplacion. Contemplacion, who has become the icon of the Filipino OFWs’ (Overseas Filipino Workers) struggle, is a Filipina DH widely believed to have been unjustly executed in Singapore.

They also resist through religion-based means. They maintain close ties with the church by forming faith groups where they conduct regular prayer meetings that usually culminate with a common meal. Some seek to understand their faith more deeply by attending Theology classes arranged by the Diocesan Pastoral Center for Filipinos. Some forge closer ties with their fellow DHs and the local community through outreach activities on Sundays. Shu-Ju Ada Cheng, in her comparative study of migrant women domestic workers in Hong Kong, Singapore, and Taiwan, meanwhile, extols the Hong Kong DHs’ church attendance as one that “provides an important opportunity and space for Filipino women to establish their support system and networking, which is essential for breaking the isolation of the household.”²⁴ Indeed, many admit to a feeling of “homecoming” whenever they join other DHs for a Eucharistic celebration. Wherever it is held, “it’s another home” where they can “forget [the] misgivings induced by being a stranger in another

²³Quoted by Julian Lee, “Filipino maids’ act of resistance,” <http://info.anu.edu.au/mac/Newsletters_and_Journals/ANU_Reporter/_pdf/vol_29_no_07> accessed 3 Nov. 2003.

²⁴Shu-Ju Ada Cheng, “Migrant Women Domestic Workers in Hong Kong, Singapore, and Taiwan: A Comparative Analysis,” in *Asian Women in Migration.*, ed. Graziano Battistela and Anthony Paganoni (Quezon City, Philippines: SMC, 1996) 119.

country.”²⁵ They do not care whether they have to stand instead of sit, kneel on a rough floor, or put up with the noise and the stares of curious passers-by. For them, “it is the spirit in which one attends the Mass that counts.”²⁶ Lastly, they also resort to re-imagining God as a God of strangers or as a host. These are not common God images in the Philippines but the DHs are discovering and embracing these in Hong Kong²⁷ to resist their oppression as migrants.

Some, however, opt for religious conversion. This often occurs within Christian denominations but a significant number of conversions to Islam is also happening. Sithi Hawwa, who did a study on this phenomenon, says that 70% of the 60-70 annual average of conversion to Islam in Hong Kong are Filipina domestic helpers.²⁸ Hawwa points out that Filipina DHs are primarily brought and converted to Islam through their Pakistani boyfriends and Sr. Madiha: a Filipina DH convert who facilitated the conversion of 300 Filipina DHs in just a matter of 5-6 years. Aside from romantic involvement and inter-marriage with the Pakistani men, factors such as prior contact with Muslims, previous work experience in the Middle East, dissatisfaction with their former religion, mere curiosity, or a desire for enlightenment also account for their conversion.²⁹ It is interesting to note as well that most conversions are fueled by a desire for “greater autonomy and liberation” especially from stifling marriage—related policies of Catholic Christian Philippines like the ban on divorce and abortion and the severe restrictions on birth control methods.³⁰

But, with their conversion to Islam, basic Islamic obligations like wearing the *hijab*, eating of *halal* food, and praying five times a day often exert enormous

²⁵Chris Yeung, “A building that serves both God and mammon,” *SCMP* (27 June 1983) in MFMW, *Filipino Workers: Off to Distant Shores*, 66. See also Gemma Tulud Cruz, “No strangers in this church,” <<http://www.nationalcatholicreporter.org/globalpers/gp120303.htm>>, accessed 31 December 2004.

²⁶Ibid. This witness to their faith has also born fruit as the Church of Hong Kong attests: “Our churches are very alive on Sundays because of their presence. The Filipinos have brought their religiosity and faith to the Church of Hong Kong—they enhance the faith of our local people with their presence, witnessing hospitality, joy, and love for music. The diocese is truly blessed in many ways because of the Filipinos, and their dynamism will keep alive the faith in the territory. . . . In short, the Filipinos are to be called missionaries first before they are labeled as domestic helpers.” “Filipino Migrant Workers in Hong Kong,” *Asian Migrant* 7/1 (January-March 1994): 6-7.

²⁷See for instance Racquel Morales “Sa Aking Pag-iisa” *TNT Hong Kong* 4/2 (July 1998): 33-34.

²⁸Sithi Hawwa, “Religious Conversion of Filipina Domestic Helpers in Hong Kong” *ISIM Newsletter* 4/99:10.

²⁹Hawwa also attributes the facilitation of the conversion to the intensity of religious faith of Filipino women and their prior tendency to shift among different denominations within Christianity. Hawwa, “Religious Conversion of Filipina Domestic Helpers in Hong Kong.”

³⁰Hawwa, “Religious Conversion of Filipina Domestic Helpers in Hong Kong.”

pressure on the DHs. To survive, “some balance the religious obligations and situational context of Hong Kong by abstaining from pork but not from other non*halal* foods such as beef or chicken. Some wear loose clothes instead of the *hijab* and may pray during the absence of their employers or during their leisure time instead of praying at the times designated by Islamic laws.”³¹ But then a lot of converts also revert back to Christianity when Islam becomes repressive or less able to contribute to the mitigation of their oppression. Reasons for reversion include the “inability of Mosque to fund sisters in terms of financial crises, the absence of a physical space for converts with terminated contracts, the unwillingness of fellow Muslims to employ them. . . . and the dissatisfactory behavior of Muslim men.”³²

Accommodation, the third form of the survival strategies, takes place through various means. This includes crying, singing, laughing, and joking. Chicken and cooking jokes, for instance, make fun of the employer’s English while some poke fun at the travails of adjusting to the place. There is, for example, a joke about a *promdi* (pejorative for rural-born and bred) DH. Upon her arrival at the airport,

No one is there to meet her so she gets back in line at the ticket counter. The person at the counter says, “Your ticket was coming to Hong Kong, right?” She answers, “Yes, but no one was here to meet me.” So she asks directions to the domestic airport. He tells her that there is no domestic airport in Hong Kong. She answers, “I have to go to the domestic airport because I am a domestic helper.”³³

Evasion also serves as a form of accommodation. In a study done by Erino Ozeki,³⁴ for instance, he found out that Filipina DHs “tend to keep to themselves in their activities in the private domain and rarely try to develop any other relationship with the Chinese.” As a matter of fact, the overwhelming majority of his interviewees have no Chinese acquaintances beyond their employers and their employers’ immediate and extended family.

Language manipulation is another means. For example, DHs substitute the *Tagalog* word *unggoy* which means “monkey” for the Cantonese *m’goi* which can be translated as “please,” “thank you,” or “excuse me.”³⁵ They do this in places and situations where they are also usually victimized. In the restaurants, for example, they may call the Chinese waiter saying, “*Unggoy, unggoy!*” which he will probably understand as “Excuse me” or “Please.” Similarly, they make use of this on their employer, when they thank him/her or excuse themselves for a slight offense. These make the DHs feel that they have somehow gotten even for the many times the Chinese mock them in Cantonese without their knowledge.

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid.

³³Nicole Constable, *Maid to Order in Hong Kong*, 175.

³⁴Erino Ozeki, “Migration Frontier of Filipino Women: Ethnic Relations of Filipina Domestic Helpers with Chinese Employers in Hong Kong,” *Southeast Asian Studies* 34/4 (March 1997): 682-83.

³⁵Constable, *Maid to Order in Hong Kong*, 176.

Most accommodate, however, by negotiating their identities. For instance, they construct an “ethic of service” with regard to domestic work and try to project themselves as “saints” not just to allay the social inferiority attached to domestic work but also to counter negative images labeled on them, e.g. prostitutes. Kimberly Chang notes, for instance, how some DHs “define themselves as servants of the Lord rather than the physical world of men” and “describe this service to God and Church as cleansing, filling them with a sense of ‘righteousness’ and ‘completeness.’”³⁶ As a DH points out in an article entitled *Lowly Yet Fulfilling*: “From Christ’s point of view these (domestic helpers) are the people who will become great because they humble themselves to serve others. It was [Christ who] promoted servanthood” (Ephesians 6:5-7).³⁷

One issue among the DHs that also illustrates this and at the same time points to another way in which they negotiate their identity is the debate on the change in the *Maria Clara*³⁸ image (of the Filipina) among them. The following excerpt from a letter entitled *Maria Clara in Mini* gives us a glimpse of this “saint” construction as well as identity negotiation, among the DHs, as a response to their exposure to a more liberal society like Hong Kong.

I’d like to contribute a bit of my ideas about the MARIA CLARA issue. . . . Before putting on a sexy outfit, face the mirror and ask yourself *kung bagay o hindi* (if it looks good on you or not) . . . I suggest that those who are very pa-sexy, *mag-taxi na lang kayo para class ang dating* (just take a taxi so you’ll look classy). We have to make ourselves respectable *dahil gawa ng isa ay damay ang iba* . . . (because what one does affects the others).³⁹

The DHs also try to construct a separate social identity by engaging in activities that present them as more than just DHs. They stage beauty and brain contests, hold celebrations in posh hotels, and engage in “power dressing”. Some even have pictures of themselves wearing expensive but rented gowns and with the skyscrapers of Hong Kong in the background. These pictures are then sent home

³⁶Kimberly Chang and L.H. Ling. “Globalization and its intimate other: Filipina domestic workers in Hong Kong,” in *Gender and Global Structuring: Sightings, Sites, and Resistances*. ed. Marianne H. Marchand and Anne Sisson Runyan (London: Routledge, 2003) 38-39. See also Kimberly Chang and Julian McAllister Groves, “Neither ‘Saints’ Nor ‘Prostitutes’: Sexual Discourse in the Filipina Domestic Worker Community in Hong Kong,” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 23/1 (2000): 73-87.

³⁷Jingco, “Lowly Yet Fulfilling,” 24.

³⁸*Maria Clara* is the Filipino version of the *doncella*—a sweet, docile, obedient, conservatively dressed, and self-sacrificing woman based on the perfect woman of the Iberian peninsula in the 15th century—which the Spanish colonizers used to subjugate and domesticate the Filipina. This feminized colonization was reinforced by the “cult of the Virgin Mary” that the Spaniards introduced whereby the obedient Mary of the Annunciation was the only model used to speak of Mary. Mary John Mananzan, OSB, *The Woman Question in the Philippines* (Manila: Institute of Women’s Studies, 1997) 4-5.

³⁹See “Letters,” *TNT Hong Kong* 2/2 (February 1996): 26-27.

to paint a good life in H.K. and make their families, as well as their communities, think that they are not “just” a maid.

THEOLOGICAL CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES

Arguably, no other phenomenon under the process of globalization can serve as an icon for the ongoing reformulation of the boundaries between what used to be clear polarisations: core and periphery, global and local, home and away, and difference and identity, than that of migration. Migration is a highly complex phenomenon with significant economic, sociopolitical, cultural, and religious repercussions for the migrants, their native countries, and the host societies, particularly in terms of the transformation of identities and the redefinition as well as reshaping of culture and religion as sources of empowerment. With these in mind, we ask ourselves the questions: How can we make sense of the experience of the Filipina domestic workers in Hong Kong from the perspective of faith? What are its theological implications? What challenges do they bring to theology in a way that one can say migration is, indeed, a new context for understanding and transforming humanity, hence, a new place for theology? I believe that there are two main challenges that theology has to face given the DHs’ experiences. These are: 1) The Challenge of Borders, Margins, and Strangers; and 2) The Call to Hospitality, Solidarity, and Catholicity.

THE CHALLENGE OF BORDERS, MARGINS, AND STRANGERS

To migrate is to cross borders. For today’s migrants, however, crossing borders does not mark the end of the difficulties of journeying into “a new world.” It is where the real ordeal begins. Today, borders are no longer just the political membranes through which goods and people must pass in order to be deemed acceptable or unacceptable but also the “thin porous membrane”⁴⁰ that people risk to pass and cross towards freedom or towards the promised land only to find spoils and end up in a no wo/man’s land. Borders have become places where “people cross and sometimes remain, as if suspended, awaiting the next step in their life’s journey” trapping people “in a reality that is filled with human suffering, poverty, neglect, and despair.”⁴¹ Today, to cross the border is to live on the border. For the border is “an open wound.” It is a gaping wound that serves as a testament to the violence of difference and the ever-widening gap between the haves and the have-nots. It is a bleeding wound inflicted by discrimination and infected by a sense of

⁴⁰Bobby Byrd and Susannah Byrd, ed. *The Late Great Mexican Border* (El Paso TX: Cinco Puntos Press, 1998) viii; quoted in Daisy Machado, “The Unnamed Woman: Justice, Feminists, and the Undocumented Woman,” in *Religion and Justice: A Reader in Latina Feminist Theology*, ed. Maria Pilar Aquino et al. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002): 169.

⁴¹Ibid.

loss and isolation. Cuban-American theologian Ada Maria Isasi-Díaz lays bare this wound as she says:

I am caught between two worlds, neither of which is fully mine, both of which are partially mine. . . . As a foreigner in an alien land I have not inherited a garden from my mother but rather a bunch of cuttings. Beautiful but rootless flowering plants—that is my inheritance. Rooting and replanting them requires extra work . . . it requires much believing in myself.⁴²

Borders serve as indicators of the limits of existence, identity, and belonging. When one crosses the border, one traverses the yawning gap between being a citizen, to being an alien or a foreigner, a visitor, a guest, in short an outsider.⁴³ Indeed, to cross the border is to live on the margins and be a stranger. Xenophobia, or fear of the stranger, is the curse of the migrant, for today's migrant is today's stranger—"the image of hatred and of the other."⁴⁴

Borders are actually meeting points. They exist not to separate but for people to meet. They ought not to drive people away for they are places where we are supposed to welcome and meet people halfway. As Justo Gonzales says: "A true border is a place of encounter [and] is by nature permeable. It is not like a medieval armor, but rather like skin. Our skin does set a limit to where our body begins and where it ends. But if we ever close up our skin, we die."⁴⁵ A true border then is a space where "we may choose to lay our bodies bare, where[in] we may choose to tell the truth of our lives."⁴⁶ Space creates presence. Space empowers presence. When one is present, one counts. And our bodies are the primary mediators of this presence. When one is considered somebody and not a nobody (as the DHs were made to feel), one takes up a living presence. This notion of space as presence is significant to theology, because it is "revelatory".

For example, while pushed to live on the borders of Hong Kong society, the Filipina DHs refuse to do so completely and have created spaces for themselves to survive. Their street demonstrations and public and private gatherings, e.g. Sunday rituals and fellowships, illustrate this. Their creative use of an "imposed shrunken space" like the garbage area and their literal as well as figurative occupation of the Central District—a highly public and a core space—has a revelatory quality. This

⁴²Ada María Isasi-Díaz, "A Hispanic Garden in a Foreign Land," in *Inheriting Our Mothers' Gardens*, ed. Letty Russell et al. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1988) 92.

⁴³Virgilio Elizondo, "'Transformation of Borders': Border Separation or New Identity," in *Theology: Expanding the Borders*, ed. Maria Pilar Aquino and Roberto S. Goizueta (Mystic CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1998) 29.

⁴⁴Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991) 1.

⁴⁵Posted at <http://www.maryknoll.org/MARYKNOLL/MMAF/mf_border.htm>; accessed 15 April 2004.

⁴⁶Melanie May, *A Body Knows: Theopoetics of Death and Resurrection* (New York: Continuum, 1995) 90-91.

reconfiguration of borders into spaces, by migrants like them, brings a new dimension to theological reflections. For one, it gives us a glimpse on how “bordered” or “marginated” existence can be transformed into spaces of presence and challenges theology to make the “borders” theological “frontiers.”

Clearly, the Filipina DHs doubly experienced “bordered existence” by being Hong Kong’s alien underclass. And as Hong Kong’s stranger *par excellence* the DHs’ experience, first and foremost, challenges theology to draw from the richness of the Christian tradition as embedded in the biblical notion of the stranger. Being a stranger is the primary condition of the people of God (cf. Ex. 23: 9; Deut. 24: 18)⁴⁷ and migration is woven into this “stranger condition”. “The land . . . is mine” says the Lord and we “are but strangers and guests of [His]” (Lev. 25:23). As David acknowledges in prayer: “All comes from you; what we have received from your own hand, we have given to you. For we are strangers before you, settlers only, as all our ancestors were; our days on earth pass like a shadow” (1 Chr. 29:14-15). From the journey of Abraham to the journey of the Israelites from Egypt to the Promised Land, being a stranger is basic to the Israelites and to us Christians as the pilgrim people of God. God even commanded the Israelites to love the stranger, as they were also strangers in Egypt (Deut. 10:19). In fact, many other Old Testament laws were put in place to protect the stranger (cf. Ex. 22:20; Lev. 19:33-35; 24:22; Deut. 14: 28-29; 16:14; 24:14; 26:12-15; Num. 15:15-16; 35:15) to the point that anyone who does not respect the rights of the stranger will be cursed (Deut. 27:19). The New Testament and Jesus himself also have very specific exhortations to show goodness to the stranger to point to the reality of our fundamental Christian identity as strangers. Jesus himself, by His incarnation and by being an itinerant preacher, took on the conditions of a stranger. Moreover, he advocated for the care for the stranger (Mt. 25: 36).

The stranger is a fundamental paradigm in the Christian tradition, particularly in the Gospel or in the biblical message. As such theological construction of the self or of ourselves as Christians cannot be separated from the acceptance of the stranger in the same way as the identity of the Israelites as a people of God is very much linked with the stranger. The God we believe in is a God of the stranger (Deut. 10:17-18; Ps. 146:9). At this time of backlash and xenophobia—a time when strangers, like the migrants, are ostracized, demonized, and vilified—Christian theology cannot but articulate a theology with the “stranger”, particularly the biblical concept of the stranger, as heuristic means.

At the same time if this theology is to be in dialogue with the experience of today’s migrants as strangers, it has to integrate dimensions of the migrants’ experience that are quite unique as compared to the biblical stranger. For instance, migrants today, like the DHs, exercise more power compared to biblical strangers who are still very much at the mercy of their host or host community (cf. Gen. 19:1-

⁴⁷Subsequent biblical quotations are from *Christian Community Bible*, 27th ed. (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1999).

11). Economically, the DHs have regular and legislated wages. Politically, they have internal and external support. Socially, they have local, national, and transnational networks. Lastly, they are free to practice their own religion.⁴⁸

As such, today's theological reflections on the stranger must be a nuanced version of the biblical stranger. Their transnational families, networks, and communities, for example, strike at the heart of traditional theological reflections on home, power, identity, and subjectivity. These and their Sunday rituals, particularly their symbolic occupation of Chater Road, challenge theology to articulate home not as a place "but a movement, a quality of relationship, a state where people seek to be "their own," and [be] increasingly responsible for the world."⁴⁹ It also means reassessing the adequacy of "land" as a category for theological reflections on "home", e.g. homeland theology, and "identity." Lastly, their survival and resistance strategies challenge Christian theology to expand its discourse on power from power as domination to power as resistance.⁵⁰

To speak about the stranger in the context of migration also entails speaking about the religious notions of "pilgrimage" and "exodus." As a people, the Israelites' history is highlighted or defined by the journeys of individuals, e.g. Abraham and Moses, and their journey as a people, e.g. journey to the Promised Land. Jesus himself traveled from place to place relying on the hospitality of people along the way for rest and nourishment. His utterance "I was a stranger and you welcomed me" is not just rhetoric but something that was very concrete for him. As a microcosm of the human condition, the situation of contemporary migration touches upon these biblical themes of pilgrimage and exodus. The multiple and multidirectional transforming journeys that migrants undertake today remind us of the character of Christian life as a pilgrimage and exodus—as a constant coming and going; of a continuous departure and arrival; of Christian life as a process. This challenges us to rediscover the God of revelation in the context of leaving, of going out to other places as Abraham did. This is because for the in-between, like the migrants, reality is always someplace else. As a people of faith, we are a people on the move. We are like Israel in the wilderness that embarked on a journey believing that the promised rest lies ahead. As a people who travel across seas and deserts in search of "greener pasture", in search of their "promised land", with their faith in hand, the migrants' journey is like a pilgrimage. This journey that forces them to

⁴⁸A. Lacocque, "The Stranger in the Old Testament," in *World Council of Churches and Migration: WCC Fifth Assembly Dossier No. 13* (Geneva: WCC Migration Secretariat, 1981) 50-51, says that the Old Testament stranger has no other choice but to accept the religious and cultic obligations of the house of Israel. In fact, they were required to submit themselves to circumcision to enjoy all the rights of sharing fully in the house of Israel.

⁴⁹Nelle Morton, *The Journey Is Home* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985) xix; quoted in Letty Russell, *Household of Freedom: Authority in Feminist Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987) 67.

⁵⁰See Kyle Pasewark, *A Theology of Power: Being Beyond Domination* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993).

survive and thrive in strange places is a journey of hope and faith. This is an important aspect of the migrants' lives that Christian theology has yet to articulate.

But the main questions remain: What does it mean to look at the "other" in the context of revelation? How can Christian theology engage in subverting the process of "other-ing?" Feminist theologian Letty Russell says that theology must subject the doctrine of election (God has "chosen" certain groups of people over others)⁵¹ to a hermeneutics of suspicion in view of intolerance and discrimination. Russell argues that "it is often the hidden assumption of divine election to privilege and power" that is "used to deny the diversity of our society and of the whole earth by closing out persons of different race, class, sexual preference, gender, or nationality."⁵² She maintains that a reconstruction of the doctrine must avoid this deformation by insisting that its meaning is situation variable.⁵³ Rosemary Radford Ruether and Herman Ruether add their voice to this, particularly in the context of the Jews and the problems wrought by Zionism. They point out that "the religious idea of election does not claim any innate superiority for Jews but only a calling to be faithful to God" and that "human beings must limit the claims of their own distinctiveness in order to accommodate themselves to the rights of others to live, side by side with themselves."⁵⁴ This, the Ruethers say, is the fundamental biblical ethic of "loving the neighbor as oneself."

In a similar way others construe the religious idea of election in terms of mission rather than a privilege. While this makes it less exclusive I still find it problematic as it leaves the room open for people or groups to present themselves and act like wo/men with a mission to save other people and the world. An example of this is the Iraq war rhetoric of George Bush and his government which depicts him and his government (and consequently America) like an unwanted messiah, or at the very least people with messianic complex. Liberation theology, I believe, provides a relevant reconstruction with its notion of "preferential option." Indeed, in this time when racism and xenophobia rear their ugly heads, the doctrine of election can only make much sense when we interpret it in the light of the option for the poor and when we humanize and concretize "the poor" even more by integrating a new face of the poor that migration brings: the migrant's face.

THE CALL TO HOSPITALITY, SOLIDARITY, AND CATHOLICITY

Undeniably, loneliness and homesickness are given problems when one migrates. Nevertheless, as the DHs have shown, there are a number of alternatives

⁵¹Letty Russell, "Practicing Hospitality in a Time of Backlash," *Theology Today* 52/4 (January 1996): 476-84.

⁵²Ibid., 478.

⁵³Ibid., 481.

⁵⁴Rosemary Radford Ruether and Herman Ruether, *The Wrath of Jonah: The Crisis of Religious Nationalism in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002) 241.

to assuage or combat these. But what if marginalization rooted in discrimination, that was so much a part of the life of the DHs as migrants in Hong Kong, worsens the situation? How can Christian theology offer a way of dealing with this imposed human misery? What sources from the Christian tradition can it make use of to apprehend migration from the perspective of liberation?

The Christian tradition of hospitality, I believe, can serve as a source. Hospitality is a way of life that is fundamental to the Christian identity. While it is often regarded in its tame and pleasant dimension, i.e. welcoming only friends and acquaintances, hospitality in its “subversive countercultural dimension”⁵⁵ can provide a framework for critiquing xenophobia. This radical hospitality is the opposite of cruelty. It entails welcoming socially undervalued persons, like migrants or socially different people like the Filipinas as DHs and as Christians or as Muslims. It means challenging the practice of making outsiders out of strangers and paving the way towards the respect for and visibility of strangers. Hospitality, in this way, becomes resistance for or towards humanization rooted in the power of recognition. Matthew 25:31-46 where Jesus says “Come . . . inherit the kingdom prepared for you . . . for I was hungry and you gave me food . . . thirsty and you gave me drink . . . a stranger and you welcomed me” offers a very good basis for this. It goes to show that the hospitality that recognizes the stranger is a Kingdom value that is actualized in the recognition of a neighbor in the stranger and/or, most especially, in the recognition of Jesus in every stranger.

Hospitality, as a practice that integrates respect and care, recognizes and enriches human dignity. It does not only create a safe and welcoming space for the guest but also provides an enriching experience for the host. Parker Palmer points at this common grace in hospitality: “Through the stranger our view of self, of world, of God is deepened and expanded . . . we are given the chance to find ourselves . . . and God finds us and offers us the gift of wholeness in the midst of our estranged lives.”⁵⁶ Hospitality in this way is seen in terms of what John Koenig describes as “partnership with strangers”. But I find this limited in articulating the depth of hospitable encounters. For one, the idea still carries elements of, at best, charity and, at worst, patronage or paternalism.

The Filipina DHs’ new image of God as a host provides a way of revolutionizing this. It destabilizes the usual roles, with the migrant as the usual guest and the citizen as the usual host, and the unbalanced order of relations these roles spawn. God as a host presents, instead, both the migrant and the citizen as guests and, consequently, as both strangers. It could serve theology well to articulate this change in the ordering and dynamics of relations. It is a more

⁵⁵Christine Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 1999) 61-62.

⁵⁶Parker Palmer, *The Company of Strangers: Christians and the Renewal of America’s Public Life* (New York: Crossroad, 1981) 70; quoted in John Koenig, *New Testament Hospitality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985) 145.

egalitarian way of looking at the experience of hospitality. In fact, it is very much Christian as exemplified in our experience of creation, grace, healing, forgiveness, etc. as God's gifts. This means that whenever we receive or practice hospitality we are actually just sharing in God's hospitality. This challenges theology to go beyond the notion of partnership *with* strangers to partnership *of* strangers and from hospitality *to* strangers to hospitality *of* strangers. Lastly, this means Christian theology must go beyond *koinonia*, or communion among Christians, to what Elisabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza describes as *ekklesia* or discipleship among equals.

Meals or fellowships (or the "Eucharist" in explicit Christian terms), which usually serve as the context of most hospitable encounters and which figured prominently in the experience of the DHs, could elaborate on hospitality as a practice of *ekklesia*. Jesus himself connected with those most in need of human connection—the least, the last, and the lost of Jewish society—by sitting at table with them. Meals also played a vital role in the early Christians' understanding of Christian life and witness (Acts 2: 46). Meals in the Christian tradition are not just about generosity and graciousness. They are most of all about friendship rooted in a profound respect and care for one another.

This hospitality rooted in the recognition of human dignity and/or shared humanity is linked with solidarity—another resource for a Christian theology of migration from the perspective of liberation. The solidarity I refer to here is not just about charity though. Neither is it just about agreeing with, being supportive of, or liking or being inspired by an individual or the cause of a group of people. It is about the union of kindred persons, who, having understood the interconnections that exist between oppression and privilege, feel a sense of responsibility and unites themselves with oppressed people as well as with other individuals or groups who share their convictions and visions.⁵⁷ Solidarity then is rooted in what generates human coresponsibility. It is a "bearing with one another in faith" born out of identification with fellow human beings.

In the midst of exclusion in the context of migration solidarity cannot but be the love of neighbor today. In the first place, the struggle for survival has to do with the breakdown of solidarity. Ethnocentrism and/or racism are, in themselves, expressions of solidarity but in its corrupted form. Authentic Christian solidarity, on the other hand, calls us not only towards openness to but also towards embracing social diversity. It springs forth from a sense of equality and coresponsibility, in and among human beings, regardless of their religious, racial, and sexual origins.⁵⁸ Together with hospitality, solidarity creates what Miroslav Volf calls as the catholic personality: "a personality enriched by otherness, a personality which avoids

⁵⁷Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz, "Solidarity: Love of Neighbor in the 1980s," in *Lift Every Voice: Constructing Christian Theologies from the Underside*, ed. Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite and Mary Potter Engel (New York: Harper, 1990) 32-33.

⁵⁸Jon Sobrino and Juan Pico, *Theology of Christian Solidarity*, trans. Phillip Berryman (New York: Orbis Books, 1985) 72-75.

exclusivism, and at the same time transcends indifferent relativism. It does not simply affirm the otherness, as otherness, but seeks to be enriched by it.”⁵⁹ This becomes more urgent in the Christian tradition, particularly the Catholic Church, not only because it carries the very name “catholic” but because, as Paul Schotsmans says, Christianity, especially Roman Catholicism, is guilty of ethnocentrism and racism.

In his article *Ethnocentrism and Racism: Does Christianity have a Share in the Responsibility?* Schotsmans claims church language itself prompts intolerance towards other views of faith and those who put these views into practice.⁶⁰ This tendency for “totalizing religious dogmatism” encourages ethnocentrism⁶¹ even more and this theoretical and practical stance cannot hold not only because of the changes presented by a globalizing world but, most especially, because it negates the very character of the church as catholic, understood as universal, and as the people of God.

CONCLUSION

Migration has only recently engaged the attention of theology. But theological attention, it indeed, must get. For migration is not only rearranging human geography and redefining cultures and religions. It is also reshaping identities and subjectivities. It is not only bringing new forms of oppression. It is also creating other paths to human survival and liberation. Alienation, obviously, is the fundamental sin in migration: personal alienation through the migrant’s alienation from his/her roots as a person, and structural alienation through local people’s discrimination and the antimigrant policies of host countries and global capitalism. At the same time, today’s migrants, like the DHs, are not utterly nor hegemonically powerless. They devise strategies to survive their oppression that give us glimpses into what constitutes human liberation. This dialectic between oppression and survival towards liberation where religion play a significant role challenges theology to articulate a new catholicity: a theology between the global and the local; a theology where hospitality, closely linked with solidarity, is a key hermeneutical category. Solidarity enables us to embrace poverty and social diversity. When we do so, it becomes more possible to recognize fellow strangers, and transform border existence into spaces of presence. And when these become a reality, catholicity, which really means radical universality, is not far away.

⁵⁹Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996) 51.

⁶⁰Paul Schotsmans, “Ethnocentrism and Racism: Does Christianity have a Share in the Responsibility?” *Concilium* 4 (1993): 88.

⁶¹He cites here a research comparing the behavioral patterns of Catholics, Protestants, Jews, and nonbelievers where the Catholics have been found to react in a more ethnocentric way than the other groups. *Ibid.*, 87, 89.

One bread . . . one body . . . one people. Ultimately, migration should bring us closer to the fulfillment of this dream and, consequently, of God's reign. For migration, particularly in the context of globalization, challenges us not only to truly live our catholic identity by practicing hospitality and solidarity with strangers like the migrants; it also teaches us that in God's great economy of salvation there is bread, a room, and a place for everyone.

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