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Ethical Issues in the Struggles for Justice by Daniel Chetti and M.P. Joseph

Daniel Chetti is Director of Programmes at the South Asia Theological Research Institute (SATHRI), Bangalore, India. M. P. Joseph teaches Ethics at the United Theological College, Bangalore, India. Published by The Christava Sahitya Samiti, Cross Junction, Tiruvalla 689 101, Kerala, in collaboration with The Board of Theological Text books Programe in South Asia, This material was prepared for Religion Online by Ted & Winnie Brock.

(ENTIRE BOOK) Essays in honor Rev. Dr. K. C. Abraham on his sixtieth birthday. An eminent theologian and ecumenical leader and teacher, Abraham made significant contributions to both theological and social thinking in India and abroad. The purpose of this volume is to explore theological thinking especially in these areas: 1) Re-definition of mission, 2) Theological and ethical articulation of ecological concerns, 3) Faith response to caste and, communalism, and 4) Ethics and economics with special attention to the question of poverty and development.

Introduction, by M. P. Joseph

Chapter 1: Common Life in the Religiously Pluralistic India, by M. M. Thomas

Many visions of perfection are more or less the same or at least analogical, and therefore if each faith keeps its ethics of law dynamic within the framework of, and in tension with, its own transcendent vision of perfection, the different religious and secular faiths can have fruitful dialogue. This is needed in the depth of the nature of human alienation which makes love impossible.

Chapter 2: Interfaith Dialogue: Towards Building New Communities, by Hans Ucko

There is a tendency towards monocultures threatening the mosaic of religious plurality and an open human community. It is in such an unmerciful environment that destructive and violent forces, hatred and lust for power, emerge and take over. To enter into dialogue across this monoculturism requires an opening of the mind and heart to others. It is in a culture of dialogue that we are enabled to build the new communities that the world requires.

Chapter 3; Popular Religion & Cultural Identity: Mexican-American Experience in the USA, by Virgil Elzondo

From a Mexican perspective, the author is convinced that one can only understand his religious symbols correctly from within and not by mere observation -- even the best and most critical -- from the outside. In seeking to understand religious symbols correctly, the so-called "objective distance" of Western scholars is a sure guarantee of falsification and objective error, especially if it is not in dialogue with the believers themselves.

Chapter 4: Ecumenical Social Ethics Today, by Charles C. West

There are paradigms that compete with each other: 1. On the order of being. 2. In absolute law. 3. In enlightenment humanism. 4. Especially in our relationship with God.

Chapter 5: Christian Love for Justice and Peace, by Ronald Stone

As followers of Jesus, we are called to build a community that embodies the new relationships of God's Kingdom based on freedom, justice, dignity of every human person, love and fellowship. The love commandment assumes these dimensions. It became the dharma of the Kingdom, the dharma of Jesus.

Chapter 6: Feminist Ethics: A Search for Meaning and Hope from the Margins, by Aruna Gnanadason

Most Indian cultures are inherently patriarchal and have viewed women as the property of men and therefore she has very little control over what happens to her body. Cultures in India have permitted the most outrageous traditional practices, with no regard for what this does to the innermost psyche of individual women and to their communities. It is now time for the Church and the ecumenical movement to stop and listen to the voices of the women.

Chapter 7: Theology and Politics: A South African Perspective, by Simon S Maimela

There is an increasing awareness that creation in the world we live is not a completed act in some remote past but continues here and now and must be carried forward to its completion through political action. It is thus incumbent on theologians to develop a theology of cultural and social transformation because such a theology can be the only one which truly is political theology.

Chapter 8: Theology and Earth, by Larry L. Rasmussen

The all determining fact of our need is to understand the earth as an organism, for it is presently endangered. There is a need to understand that earth-nature and society together is a community itself, and one without an exit. There is the need to understand faith now as fidelity to earth in accord with creation's integrity as God-given.

Chapter 9: Responsible Citizenship in a Christian Perspective, by Milan Opocensky

The Word of God is concrete, personal and political, and speaks to a solid situation. In a given situation we should ask ourselves whether we are sufficiently informed and whether we faithfully listen to God's commandment.

Chapter 10: The Contours of Third World Contextual Theologies, by Felix Wilfred

In each context of our pluralism the truth of God's self-communication acquires new light, new accent and emphasis. The basic pattern of God's self-revelation as life and grace, on the one hand, and the response in human freedom through faith and deeds to the same revelation on the other, is such a complex and multifaceted reality that it can never be imprisoned in any one single mould.

Chapter 11: Martin, Malcolm and Black Theology, by James H. Cone

Theology can never be true to itself in America without engaging blackness, encountering its complex, multi-layered meaning. Theology, as with American society as a whole, can never be true to itself unless it comes to terms with Martin and Malcolm together. Both spoke two different but complementary truths about blackness which white theologians do not want to hear but must hear if we are to create theologies that are liberating and a society that is humane and just for all of its citizens.

Chapter 12: What Does God Ask of Us? by Mercy Amba Oduyoye

As Christians the struggle for the integrity of creation, for justice and peace in the human community, for compassion towards the neighbor and concrete expressions of our love of God, all flow out of our affirmation that God first loved us and gave us Jesus Christ.

Chapter 13: The Struggle for Justice and Peace, by Jose Miguez Bonino

A look at: 1. Some of the basic points of departure for a Christian consideration of issues of justice and peace. 2. A brief review of the issues from the specific consideration of the situation of the poor as a test for Christian commitment. 3. Some ways in which the Christian community and churches can participate in these struggles.

Chapter 14: The Future of Liberation Theology in Latin America, by Sergio Torres G.

We are at the beginning of a new theological development, that of Liberation Theology. This theology is recognizing and assuming the rich indigenous cultures present in the continent before the arrival of the conquerors. There are already some indigenous theologians who are developing

this new perspective. They are thinking from inside their traditional cultures and religions. They do not accept any more the presence of outsiders, especially white people, who pretend to speak on behalf of traditional persons.

Chapter 15: Globalization and its Cultural Consequences by S. J. Samartha

With the removal of socialism as an alternative, the whole world is thrown open to the claim of market economy, liberal democracy and the powerful march of Western cultural values all over the globe. This claim, in theory and practice, is as exclusive as any made by certain religions in history, and has the same tragic consequences on the life of other people who refuse to accept such claims.

Chapter 16: Self-interest and Justice in Development, by C.T. Kurien

With the apparent triumph of capitalism over its rival economic arrangements the view is gaining ground that whatever may be the content of development, there is only one route to it and that is growth. Increasingly, the writings of Adam Smith are being evoked to rehabilitate what may be called a "growth first" approach to development. It is also held that according to Adam Smith, it is the self-interest of the individual that results in growth and wealth, and not any organized national effort to achieve them.

Chapter 17: Two Interviews with K. C. Abraham, by Bhargavi Nagaraja & P. N. Benjamin

Two journalists interview, on his sixtieth birthday, Rev. Dr. K. C. Abraham, a Marxist scholar and propounder of the theory of "liberative solidarity" sharing some of his thoughts on faith and politics.

Writings of K.C. Abraham

A list of writings by K.C. Abraham.

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Introduction, by M. P. Joseph

This volume, collectively produced by friends and students of Rev. Dr. K. C. Abraham, is to do him honor and express our deep gratitude for his leadership and contribution to both theological and social thinking in India and abroad. Kuruvilla C. Abraham, popularly known as K. C. Abraham (and KC to his friends) is an eminent theologian and one of the most talented ecumenical leaders and teachers that India has given to the world. Starting his ecumenical journey as the Youth Movement Secretary of the Church of South India, KC provided a new perspective to the Christian youth and challenged them to encounter the gospel in its totality. As a presbyter of the church in later years, KC reiterated the need for the total witness of gospel, and invited the church members and his fellow clergy to experience the liberative dimension of faith. During his time as a researcher at the Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society, KC initiated new avenues of research exploring the space where ideology and faith intersect to activate a process of social change. This research found an embodiment in the action programme of the St. Marks Cathedral in Bangalore when KC joined them as their presbyter. The Cathedral attempted to rediscover the meaning and practice of mission by identifying themselves with the poor and the marginalized in the city. KC's involvement with the Ecumenical Christian Centre was considered to be unique because of a shift in orientation that he initiated at the Centre. Instead of being limited in its programme being only a conference centre, ECC was

transformed into being a centre for learning and action for the various people's movements. This shift in orientation can be attributed to the theological approach that KC has pursued throughout his illustrious career.

Though his leadership and contribution to the ecumenical and theological worlds are both unique and varied, he is most revered as a gifted theological teacher and writer. While guaranteeing an impeccable academic foundation and excellence for the doctoral degree programme of the Senate of Serampore, KC provided a genuine leadership to introduce an interdisciplinary approach to theological studies. The SATHRI doctorate is unique among those of the many theological institutions around the globe, because of its interdisciplinary approach incorporated in their research methodology.

Many of the contributors to this volume are members of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians. Their participation is an expression of gratitude to its president who raised the association into becoming a formidable force to contend with in the contemporary theological world.

His wife, Dr. Molly Abraham, a trained medical practitioner, excelled herself in the field of social action. Her initiatives to provide care for the differently-abled children in Bangalore corresponds to the theological challenges that the Abrahams have taken up throughout their research and teaching careers.

KC's wholistic approach to the Gospel is a reflection of his understanding of theology. Therefore, any attempt to identify KC with one area of discourse will be limiting. Nevertheless, one may find four major areas of debates to which KC has offered new depth of meanings: 1) Re-definition of mission, 2) Theological and ethical articulation of ecological concerns, 3) Faith response to caste and, communalism, and 4) Ethics and economics with special attention to the question of poverty and development. All these debates reveal a deep concern for the freedom and liberation of the poor and the marginalized and are thus commonly referred to under the rubric of liberation theology. His passion for justice knows no bounds.

An ethical critique of globalization and the emerging global economic forces have received special attention in KC's recent writings. He has observed that the marginalization of women, racial/ethnic/minorities,

Dalits, the poor, children, elderly and the sick, in short the majority of the people the world over, has escalated with the spread of the forces of globalization. There are basically two crises that we face at the present time: 1) A crisis of meaning, and 2) a crisis of faith.

Crisis of Meaning

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Herschel in one of his monumental treatises on the Sabbath argues that in a technological culture people expend time to occupy things in space. The Creation narrative, however, explicitly points out that time is holy. Holiness of time was introduced as a principle of equality. Nobody could make boundaries and own holy time. Time provides equal participation and equal enrichment. Marginalization has no scope in the concept of time. The Sabbath, according to the narratives, is the celebration of holy time and hence is a demand to practice equality. "You, your son or daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident shall observe Sabbath." Those differences are not pleasing to God. Therefore, the created world is advised to transcend these differences to celebrate the holiness of time and thereby participating in the holiness of God. The celebration of equality is what time has to offer.

Contrary to the concept of time, the concept of space denotes inequality. Those who claim ownership of space marginalize others. When a specified space is identified as holy, those who have the ability to maintain a control over that space alienate others from experiencing holiness. The practice of purity and pollution as a conceptual framework to maintain caste divisions finds its rationale in identifying space (and things) as holy. Those who are deprived of access to such space and things are destined to lead a life of exclusion. The operational principles for the marginalization of women from society and religion also find its justification within the concept of holy space. When the concept of time demands and guarantees equality, holiness in space justifies inequality.

Globalization is a culture of space, where we exchange or transfer time for things that could occupy space. What counts as valuable in society under the ethos of globalization are only things that could occupy space, that is, commodities and money.

Globalization of the present type is fundamentally a market process where the primacy of space is accepted. Market survives because of its ability to convert all realities into commodifiable things. Therefore, in a

market society, people, land, knowledge, faith, religion, our abilities for creating pleasure and other faculties are transformed into things that occupy space. Moreover, things in space are measured on a value's scale of money. The value of everything, including that of a person, is counted in terms of money. What we have determines what we are. Having determines the being. If we have nothing, we are nothing. Value and reality itself have been monetized.

This means that those realities which refuse to assume or submit themselves to be valued in monetary terms as commodities have no place in society. This could be considered to be one of the major ethical crises of globalization. Meaning is determined by the measure of commodities and money and that amounts to a total loss of meaning to life. The concept of freedom, equality, compassion, heteronomy and other rich meaning systems have lost their legitimacy and spiritual strength within the prevailing market principle. People who are lower on the economic and social valuation have become redundant. They are considered as being expendable in the global economic process.

Crisis of Faith

The concept and practice of space also manifests a deep crisis in our faith. Within the commodity culture those realities that refuse to assume the form of things, forfeit their value. Only things that occupy space have any value. This means that the reality of God has to appear from within the form of things to make its presence known. Turning God into an idol is one of the demands of commoditization. The value and power of divinity are measured according to the measurable categories at the present time. The measurable could be the number of people who are healed or the amount of material blessings that are bestowed upon, and so on. The measurable is that of space and not of time. And only that which is measurable has value and acceptance.

As Fr. Kappen has prophetically reminded us the cultural expression of the market process is the. worship of an "ungod". An ungod who will be often invoked for material blessings, for the legitimation of hegemonic power. hierarchical structures and exploitative economic, social and religious relationships. This ungod will not be disturbed when death and injustice prevail as the order of the time. This ungod is a re-creation of the god of Pharaoh. The Exodus narratives observed that the god of Pharaoh provided legitimacy to a flourishing economy of their times. They have more numbers to quote than the emerging global economy of

the present time. The growth in their treasure cities, Pithom and Rameses, was faster than that of New York and they sought priority of space over time. Therefore, exploitation and slavery was found to be acceptable for the sacred.

The God of Moses, on the other hand, was a critique of that perverted form of the sacred. Moses rejected the god which was part of a system of space and provided justification for slavery. Moses instead offered a new language of divinity after negating the existing concepts of the sacred. To Moses, the god of Pharaoh was a god of space. This newness of language led the slaves to the realization of freedom and liberation.

This is the function of theology in our times for which KC has given leadership. Like the priests in Pharaoh's courts, traditional theology had assumed the burden of re-defining the god concept in order to satisfy material wants and self interests, the wants of body and the greed for power and wealth. KC reminds us that to be spiritual is to profess the God of life, God of justice and the God of righteousness. This is a celebration of the holy time and the principles of equality and community. This celebration is a new politics of our time. This is the politics of meaning through which we attempt to embody the face of God in the face of the people around the globe. Life of the other, particularly the marginalized will assume priority in our decisions.

We submit this volume in honour of our friend and teacher, Dr. K.C. Abraham, with the hope that the debate in this volume will lead to the strengthening of our search for a newness in language. Recalling the practical recommendation of John Cobb for an ecologically sensitive praxis, one may argue that there are at least three steps towards identifying a newness in faith language.

(1) The recognition that something is wrong in history. The Human Development Report of 1998 observed that well over a billion people are deprived of basic consumption needs. Of the 4.4 billion people in developing countries, nearly three-fifths lack basic sanitation. Almost a third have no access to clean water. Worldwide, two billion people are anæmic, including 55 million in industrialized countries. The report does not shy away from exposing the reasons for this colossal depravity. "When 20% of the rich accounts for 86% of total private consumption expenditure, the poorest 20% a minuscule 1.3%. Marginalization of the majority from the resources of this created world is sign of a deep crisis in the body politic of our society" It is also important to accept that most

of the present problems, poverty, ecological destruction, gender and caste marginalization and other issues are interrelated.

(2) The second act is to create a consciousness, that the present form of crisis has evolved from human actions and is not divinely ordained. The marginalization of people and nature is due to our insistence on worshipping a deformed god presented by a deformed society. Since these are human creations, people have the responsibility to correct it or change it. The engagement to practice the social condition of our time is therefore a theological priority.

(3) And thirdly, theological discourses need to create a sense of hope. a hope that there is a new history ahead of us, and is possible. To hold the present as eternal is anti-divine. Humanity is not simply trapped in the present stage of perversion but has a future. That is the promise of God.

The rediscovery and articulation of the holiness of time by rejecting the claims of holiness bound in space is the challenge and task of our times.

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Chapter 1: Common Life in the Religiously Pluralistic India, by M. M. Thomas

(M. M. Thomas was the former Moderator of the World Council of Churches.)

I have known Dr. K.C. Abraham for many years. He belongs to a group of Christian thinkers and activists who have risen to ecumenical leadership through the Youth Movement of the Central Kerala Diocese of the Church of South India. We were colleagues on the staff of the Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society before he was called to be the Presbyter of St. Mark's Cathedral congregation in Bangalore. He was, for a period, Director of the Ecumenical Christian Center, Whitefield, before he was called to be Professor of Ethics at the United Theological College, Bangalore, and now he is holding the eminent position of director of the foremost institute for higher theological education in Southern Asia. As Chairman of the Association of Third World Theologians he has ventured into the new fields of theological-ethical thought and has shown tremendous creativity in promoting the theology of liberation in the context of the struggles of

the peoples of the non-Western world. He is at his best when communicating his ideas whether in the class room or before the congregation or the public. The fact that he and his wife had to take care of a handicapped daughter has molded their character in a quality of tender love in all their relationships which I have always found to be marvelous. I have a special reason for gratefulness to him since he was perhaps the first person who thought of taking a doctorate based on my writings on social ethics from which I learned what my ethical methodology was. I take this opportunity of his completing sixty years to wish him many more years of creative and meaningful life and work.

I feel honored by being asked to contribute a paper for the Volume being produced in his honor on this occasion. Ethics of pluralism is a topic in which he is deeply interested. Since the time given is short, I thought I would contribute a paper which I presented at a seminar at the Centre for Christian Studies on Culture of the University of Kerala which has not been published elsewhere on that topic. It is addressing the situation of religious and ideological pluralism in India.

Pluralism is different from mere traditional plurality which was a coexistence of communities largely isolated from each other. Vice-President K. R. Narayanan, in his recent speech at the Indian Institute of Social Sciences, Delhi, spoke of Indian society even now as a ‘coexistence society’ rather than a single society;" he defined coexistence society as "many groups, castes and religions living together but interacting among each other only at the margin". He added that "what we have achieved through years of social reforms and economic changes is that the degree of this marginal interaction has been progressively enhanced" (*Address by K.R. Narayanan,* ISS 1994). Secular ideologies which have brought a new sense of selfhood to all communities and the rights of that selfhood for full participation in the centers of power which determine the meaning-content and goals of life in society is also a basic factor in this pluralism with parity. As religion has been constitutive of the self-identity of several traditional communities in India, the situation may be spoken of as a pluralism of religions and secular ideologies. The only path available today is, either the domination of the majority religion or secular ideology as the established framework of the state suppressing the rights of others using state coercion or open democratic secularism in which a consensus is sought regarding the values and directions of the common life of society and the state policy related to that common life, through peaceful but active dialogue among religions and ideologies. My topic deals with

some lines in which the transition from coexistence to democratic secular existence in a single society may be constructively pursued.

This open secularism should not be interpreted as the common acceptance of any one common secular or religious faith. That will be a denial of plurality. The common unity should be sought at the level of *Values* of secular living and not at the level of *Ultimate Truth.* The traditional understanding of separation between *Vyavaharika* versus *Paramarthika* levels of truth is important. But the separation of the two levels should not be considered in any total sense. People's faiths (truth affirmations) have their implications for the values for secular living to which they commit themselves. Faith and culture, faith and morality are different but closely related. But it is possible to hold to different faiths and support a move towards a more or less consensus about cultural and moral values through rational dialogue among faiths, and reinforce that consensus from different faith-standpoints. What does this mean in practice?

Democratic secularism should not be interpreted as a common denial of belief in a transcendent religious ultimate, as when scientific rationalism or Marxism is made the state ideology. That would be making a secularist ideology the established "religion" of the common life. It would only make for a religious vacuum in the life of the people leading to the rise of religious fundamentalism and communalism to fill the vacuum. Of course it is one thing for individuals and groups having faith in a philosophy of secularism that denies the transcendent ultimate, but it is a another to make it the established faith of the whole society or state. Indeed, one may even argue that atheists are necessary in any religiously oriented society to correct corruptions and criticize superstitions in religion; they play the prophetic role when prophets who attack false religion in the name of authentic religion are not available.

Similarly no one religious faith or religious conception of the ultimate reality or even any one doctrine about the relation between religions should be made integral to open secularism. The idea that equality of religions is integral to secularism is a characteristic of the mystic approach to reality that denies any ultimate reality to *nama* and *rupa* of religions. This approach is different from that of the Semitic religions which is based on the self-revelation of the ultimate in history in unique particular *nama* and *rupa.* Here again, there will be peoples affirming the mystic or revelatory approach to reality, but any one approach

cannot be made basic to democratic secularism, though there is no harm in discussing the relative merits of each in relation to the ethic of common living. No doubt equal respect for persons holding different faiths in sincerity and equal respect and serious consideration for whatever faith held by any person in sincerity are essential to democracy. But this should not be confused with religious belief in the equality of religions. Freedom to "profess, practice and propagate" religion makes sense as a fundamental right of persons only on the basis of the recognition of this difference. The right of religious propagation given by medieval theocratic religious states was only for truth recognized as true by the established religion and state. It was different from the present democratic freedom of persons to pursue truth as dictated by one's reason and conscience and to propagate the truth to which one decides to commit him/her-self. Even in States which had the ideology of communism as established truth, as formerly in Russia and China, it was only the truth in its established sense that was originally given the right to freedom of propagation; it was a purely medieval theocratic idea in its reverse secularist form.

The crucial question is whether a plurality of religious and secular faiths, each of which had developed its own traditional culture, that is, philosophy, morality, ideology and legal system of corporate life, can, through inter-faith rational discourse, create at least the basic framework of a common culture or common direction and scheme of values for peoples to build together a new dwelling, like the national community. That is, will the faith-communities while keeping their separate identities be prepared in the present historical situation of pluralism, to interact with each other bringing their respective religious and/or ideological insights on the conception of the human so as to build something of a consensus of cultural and moral values on which to build a single larger secular community. While their distinctive cultural traditions will have to be renewed, can they do it and feel that their traditions have found fulfillment through that renewal? I submit that we can.

Let me spell out two very clear ideas about the nature and destiny of humanness. First, all religions and ideologies post love as the ultimate moral law of human perfection and, a community of love with its harmony is the final goal of human and cosmic relationships. Second, nevertheless all religions and ideologies do have a sense that humankind, as they are today, is in some kind of self-alienation which makes the fulfillment of that perfect law impossible and corruption of

power inevitable. Therefore while keeping love as the essence of humanness and, therefore, the criterion and goal of all human endeavor, human society today has to eschew utopianism and organize itself as power-structures based on a sense of the moral law of structural justice and utilize even the coercive legal sanctions of the state to preserve social peace and protect the weaker sections of society in a balance of order, freedom and justice. That is to say, all realistic social morality requires keeping the relation between power, law and love in tension, till the sources of human self-alienation are overcome and loving relation which has spontaneity as its character is possible.

Thus in biblical thought, there are two divine covenants with humanity operating in the face of evil created by human self-alienation from God -- one, the covenant of redemptive grace with Abraham which ends in the Messianic Kingdom of Love and the other, the covenant with Noah of protective law of reverence for life and later with Moses of the Ten Commandments for the preservation of rough justice in society. In Christianity, Jesus' Sermon of the Mount expresses the character of the ethic of perfect love characteristic of the community appropriating the reconciling Grace of God in Jesus and this is to be consummated in the Kingdom of God to come. Since this unconditioned love is impossible of practice in a world where unredeemed sinfulness must be considered the general characteristic, common civil society and its individual members as well as institutions like the family, the economic order, nationality and the state necessary for the preservation of humanity are to be ordered according to the moral law inherent in their nature. Such laws are ordained by God in their creation and not destroyed by sin and therefore called Law of Nature understandable by reason in the Catholic tradition. In the Protestant tradition sin has perverted the moral law of creation more radically and, therefore, takes a more pragmatic approach to the laws needed in different historical situations for the preservation of civil society, its individual members and its basic institutions. But the idea of two distinct and interrelated levels of morality, the ultimate ethic of love and the relative ethic of law, are clearly laid down in the Christian system of ethics.

The two levels of morality is found in Marxist ideology. Feuerbach in his *Essence of Christianity* interpreted theology as only a form of anthropology and explained the human belief in the God of Love as an affirmation of love as the essence of being human which is denied in human existence. Marx and Engels accepted this interpretation but strongly criticized Feuerbach for assuming that this essence can be

realized in human existence by moral willing of it. Engels says: "But love, -- with Feuerbach love is everywhere and at all times the wonder-working god who should help to surmount all difficulties of practical life -- and that in a society which is split into classes with diametrically opposite interests. At this point the last relic of its revolutionary character disappears from his philosophy, leaving only the old cant: love one another; fall into each other's arms regardless of distinctions of sex or estate -- a universal orgy of reconciliation" (quoted by Bastian Wielenga, *Introduction to Marxism*, p.353). Love is not realizable until the social alienation of human beings in a class society is overcome and classless society emerges, for which, of course, the ethics of power-politics of class-struggle with its denials of love is to be followed. In fact Marx would say that just as selfishness is natural in a class society they need not be interpreted in moral terms. Both are natural necessities of social conditions, one of social alienation and the other of its being overcome. It looks that only they do not even interpenetrate now; they come one after the other in history. It is this that Fidel Castro and the Che Guevara have questioned, "let me tell you, at the risk of looking ridiculous, that a true revolutionary is led by great feelings of love" *(ibid.,* p. 354).

Hinduism also has this two-tier morality of perfect love and relative law. It speaks primarily, not of love but of unitive vision as the final goal of human life. But, as Vivekananda has maintained, the two are ethically the same; only the Hindu system of ethics uses, not the personalist but the more philosophical language. He says, "There is no limit to this getting out of selfishness. All the great systems of ethos preach absolute selflessness. Supposing this absolute unselfishness can be reached by a man, what becomes of him? He is no more the little Mr./So-and-so; he has acquired infinite expansion. . . . .The personalist when he hears this idea philosophically put, gets frightened. At the same time, if he preaches morality, he after all teaches the very same idea himself" *(Works*, vol. I, p. 107). While striving for this end, the natural goals (the secular *purusharthas -- artha, kama, and dharma* -- pursuit of wealth, happiness and duties of one's social station) of civil society are organized according to the laws of *sadharana dharma* of *ahimsa, varnasrama dharma* of four social vocations and the *asrama* stages of individual life. Of course the dharmic laws of civil society got absolutized when separated completely from the final goal of unitive vision, and as a result their historical situational character was lost until neo-Hinduism took up the cause of social reform. That is another matter. The point is that the perfect ethics of *nishkama* for the self-

realized and the relative ethics of *artha*, *kama* and *dharma* of the world of plurality, were both posited in traditional and modern ethical systems of Hinduism.

India's Socialist Secularism worked out within the ethos of traditional Hinduism, pursues this two-tier absolute-relative system of ethics. For instance, Asoka Mehta writing on democratic socialism said that a thoroughgoing moral relativism would bring about chaos or tyranny. So while recognizing that there are historically conditioned morality like feudal morality, bourgeois morality and proletarian morality, there must be an absolute moral criterion to evaluate all moralities. Elsewhere he said, "There undoubtedly are aspects of ethics that are relative but men's deeper responses are to the absolute ethic, that nostalgia of man's deepest ultimate triumph over all limitations". The absolute is the "achievement of self-harmony and acceptance of the rights and reality of other persons," that is, harmony is self-realization in a community of interpersonal love. For him it is the final fruit of all efforts and the end of all quests. It provides the "touchstone to judge and improve the historically conditioned morality. To deny validity to absolute ethics is to rob the ship at sea of its compass *(Report -- The Congress Socialist Party*, 1950). Ram Manohar Lohia interpreted the relative-historical and perfect-eternal dimensions of his socialist ethics by relating Marxism to Hindu spirituality. He wrote. "Every moment is no doubt a passing link in the great flux, but is also an eternity in itself', and added, "The method of dialectical materialism informed by spirituality may unravel the movement of history; the method of spirituality informed by dialectical materialism may raise the edifice of being" *(Marx, Gandhi and Socialism,* p. 373-4).

Islam, with its central emphasis on the unity of God and God's moral sovereignty of the world, sees the universe as "teleological, growth-oriented and destined to evolve towards perfection" in which the unity of all humanity will be realized. God has "created the potential for it through divine *hidaya* and revealed the values which would ensure growth." God called human beings to be vice-regent of God and entrusted him/her with the burden of responsibility for the future of the universe. But human beings have betrayed the trust through shirk, that is, by associating creatures with God. The Qur'an declares, "Verily I proposed to the heavens and the earth and the mountains to receive the trust (amanah), but they refused the burden and feared to receive it. Man alone undertook to bear it, but has proved unjust, senseless." It is in this situation of human alienation from the path of perfection that the laws

of social living which took the form of *shariat* were ordained to call human beings to God and to their vocation of witness to divine justice and mercy. Here too, there seems to have an ethic of perfection and an ethic of the alienated situation (Asghar Ali Engineer, *Islam and its Relevance to Our Age*, 1984).

A.A. Fyzee in his *Modern Approach to Islam* (Bombay, 1993) says that the *shariat* is analogue of the Torah of the Jews and the Dharma among the Hindus. One could add that they are analogues to the Christian ethic of law of nature, to the liberal ethic of individual freedom and to the Marxist law of class struggle. They are all ethics of empirical historical situations alienated from the essence of humanity, in one sense witnessing to, and in another sense waiting in hope for the realization of, the ethic of love. And one could further add Engineer's comment about *shariat* to all of them. He says, "Law is empirical and vision is transcendental. The balance between the two is lost if either is de-emphasized." Once the ethic of law is totally separated from the relation to the transcendent or the futurist vision of perfection, it loses dynamism and becomes static and gets absolutized and made irrelevant to new historical situations. When that happens, there is absolute conflict between them or they join hands in defending ethics of reaction against all new conceptions of justice in law as *shariat* and natural law did in the recent Cairo World Conference on Population.

My thesis is that the many visions of perfection are more or less the same or at least analogical, and therefore if each faith keeps its ethics of law dynamic within the framework of, and in tension with, its own transcendent vision of perfection, the different religious and secular faiths can have a fruitful dialogue at depth on the nature of human alienation which makes love impossible and for updating our various approaches to personal and public law with greater realism with insights from each other. This will help to make our different ethics of law expressive of our historical responsibility of building a common civil society for adherents of all faiths.

Recently at a meeting in Kozhencherry (Kerala), E.M.S. Nampoodiripad advocated cooperation between religious believers and Marxists at the action-level for the good of humanity, without interfering at the level of each other's beliefs or basic ethics. Personally I think the cooperation in action requires some conversations on each other's anthropology for the sake of arriving at a measure of consensus on an adequate common approach to what constitutes the good of

humanity in the present situation and to the nature of the ethic of struggle and action needed to realize it. This remains true for cooperation between religions and between religions and secular faiths. For a situation of ethical pluralism, that is the only way in which a more or less common mind on empirical ethics relevant to the contemporary situation can emerge. Only then can law become an instrument of humanizing the technological culture of the global village and of meeting the demands of social liberation of the dalits, the tribals and the women whether in our separate communities of faith or at large in the country.

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Ethical Issues in the Struggles for Justice by Daniel Chetti and M.P. Joseph

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Chapter 2: Interfaith Dialogue: Towards Building New Communities, by Hans Ucko

(Hans Ucko is on the staff of the Dialogue Unit of the World Council of Churches, Geneva.)

Consideration of ethical issues is or should be a continuing concern for any Church. Changes in relation to production, political organization, ideological struggles continue to raise a number of questions for which the traditional theological and ethical repertoire of the confessional churches may have little or nothing ready-made to say. The ecumenical movement has therefore in many ways come to serve as a vehicle for common reflection on the challenge of contemporary ethical issues. This continued reflection has, in fact, become an intrinsic part of the ecumenical movement. Ethical considerations remain an ongoing obligation. As time goes by and circumstances change, we continue to need mentors, guides, philosophers, teachers, prophets, who raise questions and challenge established systems. We are dependent on them to enable us to confront reality and the complexity of our world, not as a problem to overcome but as a condition to life itself. There are many in

the ecumenical movement, who in this respect have contributed to this ongoing discussion on the significance of Christian witness and ethical considerations. Among those, the ecumenical movement recognizes with gratitude the contribution of K. C. Abraham. It is an honor to share some reflections on the topic of ethics in this setting.

Religion and philosophy as agents fostering ethical considerations must at the same time also reckon with their in built inclination to congeal in perspectives, which allow the living tradition to harden. Renewal is therefore necessary as *tonus firmus* in both religion and philosophy. But breaking up is hard to do, though necessary if God is not to be reduced only to the God of our fathers and mothers. The God of our fathers and mothers, the God of our traditions is to be our God today, which is not an affirmation of relativism, but of *aggiornamento.* The *semper reformanda* should not become a peg for the history of reformation but serve as a calling into questions of that which has just been adopted and accepted as a rule. This implies an awareness of the choice as an ever present condition of being human.

Sören Kierkegaard reacted against Hegel's seemingly impenetrable system by raising the existential ethical concern, the problem of choice. Theological and philosophical systems such as Hegel's run the risk of obscuring this crucial problem by making it seem an objective matter capable of a universal solution, rather than a subjective one that each person must confront. As time continues to enfold the complexities of life itself, it becomes ever more apparent that old models do not always suffice. Both the ascetic saint and the detached sage, exalted in various hagiographies as the true beacons for humanity, may in the final analysis in themselves prove to be poor human models, because they are, in spite of their perfection, incomplete human beings, static and unchanging. Ordinary human imperfection on the other hand has an inbuilt aspiration, prodding us to continue searching, probing, questioning. There are many ways of expressing this thrust towards a *semper reformanda* or a permanent revolution.

The following anecdote wants to illustrate that the question is superior to the answer. There was once a little boy in the Polish town of Lublin, who came running out from his Talmud class shouting, "Is there anyone who has any good questions? I have a good answer!" A good answer may be, but still cheaper than the good question, because the good question leads on, continues. There is no end to it. One question stimulates another question. In the same vein, Wittgenstein said that

philosophy must end, where it begins, in bewilderment or may be rather in confusion. In bewilderment instead of a grasp, the uncertain choice instead of the unquestionable forward march is of course threatening. One prefers not exposing oneself to incertitude and unknowing and become vulnerable. "Wondering is a mode of human being. But wondering may just be sheer wandering, moving aimlessly, roaming, rambling. Channeling our wondering into the form of a question is the imposition of a pattern and a procedure upon the mind," says Abraham Joshua Heschel and continues: "To know that a question is an answer in disguise is a minimum of wisdom."[1]

Propositions, answers, proclamations may come across as strong, safe and reliable also in ethical considerations. The wisdom of the question seems less responsible. It is open to vulnerability. The wisdom of vulnerability is however a good biblical insight (1 Cor. 1), it is also part of human experience as, e.g., in the pregnant formulation by Chuang Tzu:

> The tree on the mountain height is its own enemy.
> The grease that feeds the light devours itself.
> The cinnamon tree is edible: so it is cut down?
> The lacquer tree is profitable: so they maim it.
> Every man knows how useful it is to be useful
>
> No one seems to know
> How useful it is to be useless.[2]

"No man is an island." Also, ethical considerations underline the interrelationship. A *vis-à-vis*, whether another human being or creation itself, is always required. Martin Buber taught us through his philosophy of dialogue an existentialism centered on the direct, mutual relationship, the "I-Thou," in which each person confirms the other as of unique value. The ‘I’ is accomplished in relationship with the Thou’. Life is, in itself, an encounter. The importance of interrelationships, in ideas as well as in other phenomena, is the only truly effective tool for our journey through life. It creates a mutual responsibility between I and Thou. I am responsible for Thou in reciprocity, where I will be Thou and Thou will be I. There is an ethical interrelationship, where someone having the possibility of confronting the transgression of the other and for various reasons neglects to do so, actually will be held responsible in his or her place. "Whoever can stop. . . the people of his city from sinning, but does not . . . is held responsible for the sins of the people of

his city. If he can stop the whole world from sinning, and does not, he is held responsible for the sins of the world."[3]

If I am not accountable and answerable for myself, what am I and have I then not really ceased to be I? This interrelationship is even more complex than the I being at time the Thou and the Thou at time the I. There is an ever changing asymmetry built into the relationship of the I and the Thou. It is important that the Thou, the other remains other, i.e., different from the I. The other is not as other only my *alter ego.* The other is the he or she and I am not, never can be and never should be. The other is as other important for me in my journey through life, in my pilgrim's progress. It is of utmost importance that we remain distinct, different from each other. This is the only guarantee that I have against my becoming self-contained, self-supporting, self-sufficient, full of answers. The other needs to remain other in his or her integrity to make me realize that I don't hold the entire truth, that I need the other in order to fathom more. I need the other as other for my formation as a human being. I am not helped by the other becoming me, confirming me. There is an existential need for an interrelationship, where I am not Thou, an insight, which is essential for continuation, for keeping on, pursuing, prodding, questioning. "If I am I" said the Rabbi of Kotzk, "because I am I, and you are you because you are you, then I am I and you are you. But if I am I because you are you, and you are you because I am I, then I am not land you are not you."

"We have just religion enough to make us hate, but not enough to make us love another" wrote Jonathan Swift.[4] He may be pressing his point, but it seems as if religious language is more specific articulating the role, place, needs, concerns of its own people and is if anything rather general when addressing the other as significant other. It seems to be in the nature of religions to be mainly preoccupied with themselves and the people adhering to them through rites and beliefs. The main thrust in every religion seems to be to concentrate on their own tribe, followers, believers. The other is either passed over in silence or without distinction looked upon as the stranger, the foreigner, the pagan, the one who is different, the outsider and the threat, the unbeliever, the one to be ministered to, the object for mission. The horizon of each religion seems limited to the world-view of its own people. It uses its own yardstick to measure the entire world. This may have worked well as long as each religion was content with living each in its own confined place. The limited interaction with the other did not require changed parameters or perspectives. Today we live in a different world, where people of

different religious traditions live together side by side. This holds true also for places and countries, which since time immemorial have been religiously plural. Religious plurality is in itself no guarantee that religious traditions will create space for the other.

The very fact that every society today is or has become religiously plural demonstrates to each and everyone that there are parallel and competing claims how to interpret the conditions of life. There is no longer any possibility of emulating the ostrich and getting away with it. Each religion may in itself have universal aspirations and claims, expressed in many and sometimes almost contradictory ways. Where Christianity and Islam are very articulate as to their universal validity and as the only way for the entire humanity, the other world religions display in different ways a similar penchant for monopoly. There may, according to the Hindu world-view, be room for every religion but only as long as the stage remains the Hindu pantheon.

The dream of Judaism is about the day when "ten men from nations of every language shall take hold of a Jew, grasping his garment and saying, "Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you" (Zech. 8:23). One is of course entitled to maintain the hope that all the others will one day realize the ultimate truth of one’s religion and be converted, see the light or realize the truth. It seems intrinsic to religious discourse to have the other-rather confirming my own choice, whether it is now or in the eschaton, than providing space for the integrity of the other. And yet, we know, particularly in our time that religious plurality seems here to stay. How do we deal with the insight that the whole world will probably not become Christian or Muslim or...? Is it a problem, a defeat for our religion or do we discover that the interrelationship of people of different religious traditions is of benefit for our life as human beings in this global village? Could the continuous dialogue on ethical issues between people of different religious traditions building new communities bring about a sustainable world?

Religion as the means of well-being for a community and thus for each individual, who has a role in that community, requires a common understanding between like-minded involving faith in a creed, obedience to a moral code set down in sacred Scriptures or participation in a cult. Religion is not only a set of ideas for the individual but requires an interpersonal relationship with the other. But religion does not end with a relation between an I and a Thou. It requires a community of believers, of like-minded. "The community’ said

Abraham Halevi Kook, "must first find itself within itself; then it must find itself in all of humanity." Community-building is something basically human and is probably more fundamental than anything else. "No man is an island." Every human being needs to relate to the other and to others, a community.

But the community is more than ever before threatened with fragmentation. There are in many ways and in many places obstacles and threats to the well-being of the human community. The human community and creation itself are exposed to and are part of an environment in which destructive forces threaten to undermine life. The human community is frustrated and impeded through pervading patriarchy, caste and class systems in society, through institutionalized and bureaucratic power-structures of religious organizations and communities and through compliancy towards rampant capitalism and consumerism, acquiescent to unchecked individualism and a culture of competition. Religions continue to play an ambiguous role in many political, social and economic conflicts in our world. Religious fundamentalism and its equivalence in many of the religious traditions today hinder the formation of a new community. There is a tendency towards monocultures threatening the mosaic of religious plurality and an open human community. It is in such an unmerciful environment that destructive and violent forces, hatred and lust for power, emerge and take over. Although different from each other and functioning on various levels, psychological, socio-political, economic or cultural, they are all intertwined and are obstacles to the development and well-being of the human community. There is a need to take a stand against the exploitative dominance and destructive character of the present free market policy. The changing economic system requires an ethical evaluation of the practice of charity and the meaning of solidarity in support of developing countries, a sharing of resources paving the way for equality and self-reliance in the human community. The human community is today, as maybe never before, confronted with the choice as an ever present and ominous condition that may have a bearing on the future of life and creation itself. "I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live . . ." (Deut. 30:19). It seems to us as if these words bear a particular meaning in our time.

And yet almost as a counter-movement to the continuing fragmentation of many societies in our world today, there seems to be a quest for

community in different and sometimes also contradictory ways. Barriers of religion are sometimes broken down and new bonds of solidarity and constructive building together emerge. In situations of common threats new partnerships come forth and common ethical considerations evolve. Transforming visions and possibilities of an enhanced humanity within an ethos of mutual responsibility and accountability can develop in the quest for a new human community. There seems to be some room for the insight that that which we can do together, we should not do separately.

There are, in the midst of fragmentation, signs of a changing society in the context of religious plurality, where people of different religious traditions are instrumental in building new communities and where interreligious dialogue promotes a new understanding of the other. What emerges is not one human community, but a community of communities. which is neither a paradigm of a super-community, nor a ‘kingdom’ of dominance and hegemony. The community of communities is not an entity in and by itself. but relational and open. It has no boundaries, but exists as an organic relationship, spontaneous and creative.

People of different faiths have specific and distinctive contributions to make to the new community, provided they are given space for their own integrity and identity. One of the "commandments" of interreligious dialogue has been the insistence that everyone has the right to define him/herself. No one should be the object of the other. We are interchangeably subject and object, I and Thou. There are possibilities to build new communities provided we are willing to accept others as others. The context of plurality obliges an openness that goes beyond our own confines.

People of different religious traditions are today experiencing a changed world, where they discover the interconnectedness between religions. This is important in order that people of different religions be not obsessed with themselves in self-sufficiency and self-containment. We need to discover that we, although we can and should live a full life in the realm of our own religious tradition, may be enriched and helped by the other to discover unknown depths in our own religious traditions. Each religion can be a teacher to the other, providing ethical suggestions for common learning growth, as a prophet challenging the other, as a mystic intriguing the other, shedding new light, hinting at new directions, provoking the other to a breaking up from that which has

become congealed and hardened.

We are far from having exhausted our own traditions as sources for our ethical considerations. But we may need to have new light to discover it. Through interfaith dialogue we are led into the very center of our own being and given keys that open doors we had never known existed before. This is a profound outcome of interreligious dialogue: the unexpected discovery about oneself! French historian Fernand Braudel once wrote to a French student, who was about to leave Paris for one year's studies in London: "Living in London for one year does not automatically imply that you will know England very well. But in comparison, in the light of the many surprises that you will have, you will suddenly have understood some of the deepest and most original features of France, those you did not know before and could not learn in any other way."[5]

We live today in a culture of war, which has made it increasingly important that our religious traditions contribute to generating social change towards peace. We may as Christians think that the notion of peace has sufficiently penetrated the life and history of the Church to secure a satisfactory ethical basis for Christian conflict resolution, a peace ministry or to carry out the World Council of Churches' "Program to Overcome Violence" and that the Church, therefore, is not pressed for other alternatives. And yet it is exactly in such a situation, that the Church needs the other, needs another reading of that which is so well known. May be it is precisely in a situation of abundance of Christian ethical considerations on peace that the interaction with the other can offer new dimensions and insights. In this latter part of the essay, I would like to highlight a few Jewish leanings about peace as a possible contribution to an enriched Christian discourse on the same topic. We share the major part of the Bible with the Jewish people, but remain nevertheless strangers to each other. The Old Testament is part of the Christian Bible and yet it is as if Jews and Christians read different books. Whereas Christians traditionally have tended to read the Old Testament as "salvation history" Jews have looked upon the same books as part of their patrimony, their history and their identity. The Old Testament tells a story, which is a history of a people, a history to learn from or to forget. It is the story of having neighboring states and being obliged to relate to them one way or the other. It is a history of waging war, terrible bloodshed and long and strenuous attempts towards peace. In this history there is little room for any spiritualization. Traditional Christian reading may not primarily have used the Old Testament as an

experience of what it means to live in a world of war and peace. For our ethical considerations on peace, peace-ministry, conflict resolution, Christians may profit from reading the Old Testament, our Holy Scripture, as a witness to the experience of a people in war and peace with other nations and as a reflection on what peace requires of the community.

The word *shalom* has gained coinage in Christian discourse. It is well known that *shalom* is not peace as in absence of war and that it is not a static notion. *Shalom* is the positive enjoyment of physical, economic and social well-being. *Shalom* is not only an ideal to attain in days to come or in a spiritualized realm. It is important that religion does not allow its otherworldly concerns to anaesthetize people to the reality of the global dangers. In a secular age when people are exercising their freedom not to follow blindly religious authority, people of religion must begin taking risks for peace. The very meaning of *shalom* suggests that there is no *shalom* without an effort. The very root of *shalom* has to do with *shalem*, to pay. Peace is costly and requires sacrifices. It is not sufficient to love peace. It requires more. "Depart from evil, and do good; Seek peace, and pursue it" (Ps. 34:14), and "Be like the followers of Aaron: love peace and pursue it." **6** The mere talking about peace is not enough. "For the least to the greatest of them, everyone is greedy for unjust gain; and from prophet to priest everyone deals falsely. They have treated the wound of my people carelessly, saying, 'Peace, peace,' when there is no peace" (Jer. 6:13-14). It is equally wrong to engage in wishful visions of peace, where none exists. "Prophesy against the prophets of Israel, who are prophesying; say to those who prophesy out of their own imagination: 'Hear the word of Lord!' They have envisioned falsehood and lying divination; they say, 'Says the Lord', when the Lord has not sent them. They have misled my people, saying, 'Peace,' when there is no peace" (Ezek. 13:2ff).

Another aspect of *shalom* is that it gives room for difference. President Woodrow Wilson hinted at the same in an address to the Senate in 1917: "It must be a peace without victory. . . . Only a peace between equals can last." The Jewish liturgy and the daily prayer for peace, "Let there be peace on earth as it is in heaven" highlights this perspective. The rabbis asked, "how is then, peace in heaven, since it is to be model for peace on earth?" It became imperative for the rabbis to find out about the quality of peace in heaven. What is the substance of the heavenly peace? They found the answer in the word for 'heaven', which in Hebrew in *shamayim.* The rabbis construed that two words were hidden

in *shamayim*, two words which are each other's absolute opposites: *esh, 'fire'* and *mayim,* 'water'. Peace in heaven is then the living together in unity and communion of two opposites, fire and water. Water doesn't quench fire. Fire doesn't make the water vaporize. Fire and water are reconciled. One does not defeat the other. There is no separation between fire and water. There is true reconciliation.

The ambiguity of victory over one's enemies is reflected in a *midrash* on Ex. 15. The Egyptians are drowning in the sea. Of course there was reason for jubilation -- the people were finally liberated. And the enemy was no more. But the Israelites were saved through the death of the Egyptians! The angels, wanting to join Moses and the Israelites in their song of praise to the Lord, saw that the Lord was neither singing nor did he look pleased. They asked him why. God answered, "How can I sing when the work of my hands is drowning in the sea?" The *midrash* rejoins here texts in the Old Testament and in the Jewish tradition, which are attentive to the risks of a cult of the nation and the temptation to a mythology on the *Ûbermensch.* It is in the history book of the Jewish people that we read sobering verses like "Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my heritage" (Isa. 19:25) or 'Are you not like the Ethiopians to me, O people of Israel? says the Lord. Did I not bring Israel up from the land of Egypt, and the Philistines from Caphtor and the Arameans from Kir?" (Amos 9:7). It is also in this context that the rabbis wanted to make sure that there should be no room chauvinism, "Because of the *mipnei darkei shalom* (ways of peace), we support the non-Jewish poor along with the poor of Israel, and visit the non-Jewish sick along with the sick of Israel and bury the non-Jewish dead with the dead of Israel. . . ." [7] and similar texts in the Old Testament and in the Jewish tradition show that ample space is given for self-criticism.

> *Shalom* has precedence over truth. Peace is, in certain instances, more important than telling the whole truth. The sages illustrated the waiving of truth in the interests of peace by contrasting the characters of Moses the prophet with his brother Aaron the priest:

If two persons had quarreled with each other Aaron would go and sit with one of them and say to him: "Son, do you know how your friend is taking it? He is breaking his heart and tearing his garment and saying, Woe is me, how can I look my friend in the face. I am ashamed on his account because it was I who misbehaved towards him." Aaron would

sit with him until he dispelled the resentment from his heart. Then Aaron would go and sit with the other one and say to him: "Son, do you know how your friend is taking it? He is breaking his heart and tearing his garment and saying, Woe is me, how can I look my friend in the face. I am ashamed on his account because it was I who misbehaved towards him." Aaron would sit with him until he dispelled the resentment from his heart. And when they met they embraced and kissed each other. This is why "they wept for Aaron thirty days, even all the house of Israel" (Numbers 20:29). Whereas with regard to Moses, who rebuked them with harsh words, it is stated: "and the children of Israel wept for Moses" (Deut. 34:8).[8]

Another example is the so-called Divine emendation of Sarah's actual words, when God addressed Abraham. Sarah had said laughing within herself: "After I have grown old, and my husband is old, shall I have pleasure?" (Gen. 18:12). But this is how it was reported to Abraham by God: "Why did Sarah laugh, and say, 'Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?"' (Gen. 18:13). The sages commented that God, for the sake of peace in the family and for Abraham not to be offended, altered the words of Sarah. "Great is peace, seeing that for its sake even God modified the truth."[9]

By the examples above taken from the Jewish reading of the Old Testament regarding ethical considerations towards peace and reconciliation, it is evident that there are learnings from the encounter with people of other religious traditions. In this way interfaith dialogue is a fundamental part of our Christian service within community. It is a possibility of reflecting together, learning from each other and of growing together for the sake of our community. To enter into dialogue requires an opening of the mind and heart to others. It is in a culture of dialogue that we are enabled to build the new communities that the world requires.

Notes:

1. Abraham Joshua Heschel, *Who is Man?* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1965), p. 12.

2. Thomas Merton. *The Way of Chuang Tze* (New York: New Directions, 1965), p. 59.

3. Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Shabbat 54b.

4. Jonathan Swift, *Thought on Various Subjects;* from Miscellanies, 1711.

5. Fernand Braudel. *Ecrits sur l'historie.* Ed. Flammarion, Paris, p. 59.

6. Pirke Avoth 5,12.

7. Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Gittin 61a.

8. Avot DeRabbi Nathan 12 in Nehama Leibowitz, *Studies in Shemot (Exodus)* (Jerusalem: The World Zionist Organization, Dept. For Torah Education and Culture in the Diaspora, 1978). pp. 438-39;

9. Yevamot 65b to Gen. 18:12-13 and Talmud Yerushalmi, Peah I.

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Ethical Issues in the Struggles for Justice by Daniel Chetti and M.P. Joseph

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Chapter 3; Popular Religion & Cultural Identity: Mexican-American Experience in the USA, by Virgil Elzondo

(Virgil Elizondo is Director of the Mexican-American Cultural Centre in San Antonio.)

Introduction

Allow me to introduce myself so that you may read this presentation from the perspective from which I am attempting to reflect on -- the great frontier between Mexico and the USA. I am a native born Mexican-American Tejano from San Antonio, Texas, USA. I have always lived and worked among my own people -- except for very brief periods of time when I went away to do advanced studies or on special assignments in different parts of the world. My own family and the people from my *barrio* have been my basic formation team and it is from them that I have acquired my most cherished values, beliefs and religious expressions. It is through them and with them that I have

experienced God, Jesus and the communion of saints -- all of them have become very good friends.

As I practice and reflect on the popular tradition of faith of my own Mexican-American people, I become more and more fascinated with its meaning and function in the everyday lives of the people and the enriching contribution that these faith traditions can make to the universal church and to society in general. Many have tried to force us to give up our language, culture and even religious expressions of our faith. But we have resisted and to the degree that we have resisted, we continue to be *el pueblo.. la raza*. What ultimately makes us who we are? We continue to re-create annually the ancient traditions which are the very substance of our collective soul.

Formation of Mexican American Religious Tradition

Religion and religious expression is power -- but will it be a power unto life or a power of sacralized and legitimized oppression, marginalization, exclusion, ethnocide and even genocide? I am involved in the praxis of what theologians and social scientists tend to call "popular religiosity." And from within the praxis of "popular religiosity" I can say honestly that I find very few authors that seem to know what he/she is really talking about -- they always seem to be speaking about the faith expressions of someone else who does not have the "pure faith" the author seems to presuppose about him-/herself. I do not believe that anyone can penetrate the deep mystery of the religious expressions of a people from the outside. Outsiders can describe it and analyze it, but they will never know it for what it truly is. To the outsider, the ways in which people express their faith will always appear as religiosity while to the people themselves, they will be the ultimate, tangible expressions of the ultimately inexpressible: the mystery of God present and acting in our midst.

Our Mexican-American religious expression, as we have it today, started with the prodigious *mestizaje* of Iberian Catholicism with the native religions which were already here. The rich and original synthesis did not take place in the theological universities or the councils of the Church, but in the very ordinary crossroads of daily life. This *mestizising* process started in 1519 and is still going on today. It is in the pantheon of these religious symbols and rituals that the Mexican-American experiences the deepest belonging and cultural communion. They need no explanation for those of us for whom they are meaningful,

and no explanation will suffice for those who live and operate in a world of different religious symbols. We Mexican-Americans do not need or seek explanations about Our Lady of Guadalupe, *Nuestra Señora de los Lagos, el Cristo Negro de Esquipulas, San Martin de Porres.* . . . We know them well as living persons. In them, we experience the mystery of our own identity. They are our collective *alter ego.*

The Christian word of God was inculturated deeply within the collective soul of Mexico not by the intention of the missioners, but by the process of symbolic interchange which took place in a very natural way in the *cocinas, mercados, plazas, hogares, tamaladas, panteones, milpas y fiestas del pueblo.* In these places, the free interchange of life and ideas between the Iberians and the Nahuatls took place in a very natural way. Nobody was planning it or organizing it, it was simply taking place as naturally as the new flowers blossom in spring time.

Because the ordinary Spaniards of that period of time were mostly illiterate and came from the medieval world which was so rich in imagery and the native world of the Americas communicated mainly through an image-language, it was much more at the level of the image-word than of the alphabetic spoken word that the new synthesis of Iberian Catholicism and the native religions took place and continues to take place today. This synthesis became flesh in the gastronomic world which produced the new Mexican foods for which Mexico is famous today. Our cuisine, rich in contradictory flavors, is the earthly expression of the heavenly banquets referred to in the Scriptures. As Mexican cuisine emerged, so did the Mexican soul. Our mothers struggled to prepare tasty dishes out of the little or nothing they had available. They managed to nourish both our bodies and our spirit out of the same domestic tabernacles of life: *Las cocinas.*[1] Here they were free to talk, discuss, imagine, think, formulate and understand without coercion or control from higher authorities. This interchange at the grassroots level has gradually given birth to Mexican Christianity.[2]

Ritual, mystery and image might well be called the trinity of the Mexican and Mexican-American cultural-religious identity. Dogma and doctrines seem to be so Western, while ritual and mystery seem to be so *mestizo* Mexican. It is only in Our Lady of Guadalupe that the dichotomy is both assumed and transformed into synthesis. It would be the *madrecitas in the cocinas* who would gradually unfold and transmit the innermost meaning of this theophany which ushered in the new Christian tradition of the Americas. The male theologians have imposed

Western Marian categories on Guadalupe and have missed the creating and generative power of Guadalupe which has been articulated, developed and transmitted by the abuelitas, storytellers and artists.[3] It marks the beginning of our own tradition of Christianity -- or what some people call "popular religiosity."

Function of Religious Tradition

Popular religiosity is simply the religious tradition of the local church.[4] The term itself "popular religiosity" is what others call the religious expressions of my people. For us, they are simply *nuestra a vida de fe*! They are our own sacramental life which has arisen out of the common priesthood of the people acting in the power of the Spirit. The Word has become flesh in us in the form of our religious practices and traditions. They are the visible expressions of our collective soul through which we affirm ourselves to be who we are in our relationship to each other and to God. Others may take everything else away from us, but they cannot destroy our expressions of the divine. Through these practices we not only affirm ourselves as a people, but we likewise resist ultimate assimilation. Thus they are not only affirmations of faith, but the language of defiance and ultimate resistance. In our collective celebrations, we rise above the forces which oppress us and even seek to destroy us and celebrate publicly our survival. But it is much more than survival; through them, the new born babies and growing children are initiated into the God-language of our people and thus we are assured that life will continue unto the next generation and generations to come.

By popular expressions of the faith I do not refer to the private or individual devotions of a few people but to the ensemble of beliefs, rituals, ceremonies, devotions and prayers which are commonly practiced by the people at large. It is my contention, which is beyond the scope of this paper to develop but which will be its point of departure, that those expressions of the faith which are celebrated voluntarily by the majority of the people, transmitted from generation to generation by the people themselves and which go on within the church, without it or even in spite of it, express the deepest identity of the people.

The popular expressions of the faith function in totally different ways for various peoples depending on their history and sociocultural status. For the dominant culture, the popular expressions of the faith will serve to legitimize their way of life as God’s true way for humanity. They will tranquilize the moral conscience and blind people from seeing injustices

which exist in daily life. For a colonized/oppressed/dominated group, they are the ultimate resistance to the attempts of the dominant culture to destroy them as a distinct group either through annihilation or through absorption and total assimilation. They will maintain alive the sense of injustice to which the people are subjected to in their daily lives.

They are the ultimate foundation of the people's innermost being and the common expression of the collective soul of the people. They are supremely meaningful for the people who celebrate them, and meaningless to the outsider. To the people whose very life-source they are, no explanation is necessary, but to the casual or scientific spectator no explanation will ever express or communicate their true and full meaning. Without them, there might be associations of individuals bound together by common interest (e.g., the corporation, the state, etc.), but there will never be the experience of being a people *un pueblo***.**

It is within the context of the tradition of the group that one experiences both a sense of selfhood and a sense of belonging. Furthermore, it is within the tradition that one remains in contact both with one's beginnings through the genealogies and the stories of origins and with one's ultimate end. We are born into them and within them we discover our full and ultimate being. I might enjoy and admire other traditions very much, but I will never be fully at home within them. No matter how much I get into them, I will always have a sense of being 'other'.

From the very beginning, Christianity presented a very unique way of universalizing peoples without destroying their localized identity. People would neither have to disappear through assimilation nor be segregated as inferior. The Christian message interwove with the local religious traditions so as to give the people a deeper sense of local identity (a sense of rootedness), while, at the same time, breaking down the psycho-sociological barriers that kept nationalities separate and apart from each other so as to allow for a truly universal fellowship (a sense of universality). In other words, it affirmed rootedness while destroying ghettoishness. Christianity changed peoples and cultures not by destroying them, but by reinterpreting their core rituals and myths through the foundational ritual and myth of Christianity. Thus, now a Jew could still be a faithful Jew and yet belong fully to the new universal fellowship and, equally, a Greek or a Roman could still be fully Greek or Roman and equally belong to the new universal group.

In the same way, Christianity, without destroying our ancient

rootedness, allowed us to enter into a universal family by sharing in a new common faith and in universal religious symbols. It changed our native ancestors and their *mestizo* descendants not by the elimination of our religious ways, but by combining them with the Iberian-Christian ways to the mutual enrichment of both. This has been the consistent way of the Christian tradition as it has historically made its way from Galilee, to Jerusalem, through Europe, Asia and North Africa and to the ends of the earth.[5] Without ceasing to be who we had been, we have become part of a broader human group -- the Christian family which takes its members from all the nations of the world without destroying their nationalities.

Two Distinct American Religious Traditions

The beginning of the Americas introduces two radically distinct image/ myth representations of the Christian tradition. The USA was born as a secular enterprise with a deep sense of religious mission. The native religions were eliminated and totally supplanted by a new type of religion. Puritan moralism, Presbyterian righteousness and Methodist social consciousness coupled with deism and the spirit of rugged individualism to provide a sound basis for the new nationalism which would function as the core religion of the land. It was quite different in Latin America where the religion of the old European world clashed with those of the world they were conquering and in their efforts to uproot the native religions, found themselves totally assimilated into them. Iberian Catholicism with its emphasis on orthodoxy, rituals and the divinely established monarchical nature of all society conquered physically but itself was absorbed by the pre-Colombian spiritualism with its emphasis on the cosmic-earthly rituals expressing the harmonious unity of opposing tensions: male and female, suffering and happiness, self-annihilation and transcendence, individual and group, sacred and profane, life and death.

In the secular-based culture of the United States, it is the one who succeeds materially who appears to be the upright and righteous person -- the good and saintly. The myth of Prometheus continues to be the underlying myth through which all religions of the USA are reinterpreted and reshaped. In the pre-Colombian/Iberian-Catholic mestizo-based culture of Mexico it is the one who can endure all the opposing tensions of life and not lose one’s interior harmony who appears to be the upright and righteous one. Our religions and culture are constantly reinterpreted and reshaped through the combined myths

of the suffering and crucified Jesus -- as Jaime Vidal has stated: "El Señior del gran poder" -- combined with the myths of Cuatemoc: the young Aztec prince who allowed himself to be burned to death slowly rather than give the Spaniard the secret of the Gold and Quetzalcoatl who sacrificed himself for the good of his people.

Prometheus sacralized the power to conquer for self-gain while El Señor del Poder and Quetzalcoatl sacralized the power to endure any and all suffering for the sake of the salvation of others -- two very distinct foundations for the main religions of the Americas.

The Catholicism of the USA and the Catholicism of Mexico accept the same creed, ecclesiology, sacraments, commandments and official prayer. But the ways these are reinterpreted, imaged, and lived are quite a different question. The use of sacramentals and prayer forms and the relationship of people to the institutional church is totally different in Mexican and Mexican-American Catholicism than in the USA. For example, it seems to me that in the USA, we tend to see the Pope as the President/CEO of our giant, worldwide Catholic "multinational," while in the Mexican-American group, we see, love and reverence him as the "papa grande" of the big family. The implications of this are quite different! In the USA, the sacraments have been the ordinary way of church life, while throughout Latin America it has been the sacramentals. The written and spoken alphabetic-word (dogmas, doctrines and papal documents) are most important in US Catholicism while the ritual and devotional image-word have been the mainstay of Mexican Catholicism. The US has been parish-centred while the Latin American church has been home, town and shrine-centred.

With the great Western expansion of the USA in the 1800’s, 50 per cent of northern Mexico was conquered and taken over by the USA. The Mexicans, living in that vast region spanning a territory of over 3500 kilometres from California to Texas, suddenly became aliens in their own land . . . foreigners who never left home. Their entire way of life was despised. The Mexican mestizo was abhorred as a mongrel who was good only for cheap labor. Efforts were instituted to suppress everything Mexican: customs, language and Mexican Catholicism. The fair-skinned/ blonde Mexicans who remained had the choice of assimilating totally to the White, Anglo-Saxon Protestant culture of the USA or be ostracized as an inferior human being. The dark-skinned had no choice! They were marked as an inferior race destined to servants of the white master race.

Today, social unrest and dire poverty force many people from Mexico to move to the former Mexican territories which politically are part of the USA. Newcomers are harassed by the immigration services of the USA as illegal intruders -- a curious irony since it was the USA who originally entered the region illegally and stole it from Mexico. Yet the descendents of the original settlers of this region plus those who have immigrated continue to feel at home, to resist efforts of destruction through assimilation and to celebrate their legitimacy as a people.

Religious Symbols as Roots, Core and Aspirations

The Mexican-Americans living in that vast borderland between the USA and Mexico have not only survived as a unique people but have even maintained good mental health in spite of the countless insults and putdowns suffered throughout its history and even in the present moment of time.[6] Anyone who has suffered such a long history of segregation, degradation and exploitation should be a mental wreck.[7] Yet in spite of their on-going suffering, not only are the numbers increasing, but in general they are prospering, joyful and healthy, thanks to the profound faith of the people as lived and expressed through the common religious practices of the group. I could explore many of them,[8] but I will limit myself to what I consider to be the three sets of related core expressions which mark the ultimate ground, the perimeters and the final aspirations of the Mexican American people: Guadalupe/Baptism; *polvolagua bendita;* crucifixion/*los muertos.* They are the symbols in which the apparently destructive forces of life are assumed, transcended and united. In them, we experience the ultimate meaning and destiny of our life pilgrimage.

Guadalupe/Baptism

There is no greater and more persistent symbol of Mexican and Mexican-American identity than devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe. Thousands visit her home at Tepeyac each day and she keeps reappearing daily throughout the Americas in the spontaneous prayers and artistic expressions of the people. In her, the people experience acceptance, dignity, love and protection ... they dare to affirm life even when all others deny them life. Since her apparition she has been the flag of all the great movements of independence, betterment and liberty.

Were it not for Our Lady of Guadalupe [9] there would be no Mexican or

Mexican-American people today. The great Mexican nations had been defeated by the Spanish invasion which came to a violent and bloody climax in 1521. The native peoples who had not been killed no longer wanted to live. Everything of value to them, including their gods, had been destroyed. Nothing was worth living for. With this colossal catastrophe, their entire past became irrelevant. New diseases appeared and together with the trauma of the collective death-wish of the people, the native population decreased enormously.

It was in the brown Virgin of Guadalupe that Mexicanity was born and through her that the people have survived and developed. At the very moment when the pre-Colombian world had come to a drastic end, a totally unsuspected irruption took place in 1531 when, in the ancient site of the goddess Tonanzin, a Mestizo woman appeared to announce a new era for "all the inhabitants of this land." Guadalupe provides the spark which will allow the people to rise out of the realm of death like the Phoenix rising out of the ashes of the past -- not just a return to the past but the emergence of a spectacular newness.**10** In sharp contrast to the total rupture with the past which was initiated by the conquest-evangelization enterprise, Guadalupe provided the necessary *sense of continuity* which is basic to human existence. Since the apparition took place at Tepeyac, the long venerated site of the goddess Tonanzin, it put people in direct contract with their ancient past and in communion with their own foundational mythology. It validated their ancestry while initiating them into something new. The missioners had said their ancestors had been wrong and that the diabolical past had to be totally eradicated. But the lady who introduced herself as the mother of the true God was now appearing among them and asking that a temple be built on this sacred site. She was one of them, she was clothed with the colors of divinity, but she definitely was not one of their goddesses. In her, there was continuity and newness; rootedness and breakthrough. Out of their own past and in close continuity with it, something truly new and sacred was now emerging.

Furthermore, she was giving meaning to the present moment in several ways for she was promising them love, defense and protection. At a time when the people had experienced the abandonment of their gods, the mother of the true God was now offering them her personal intervention. At a time when new racial and ethnic divisions were emerging, she was offering the basis of a new unity as the mother of all the inhabitants of the land. At a time when the natives were being instructed and told what to do by the Spaniards, she chose a low class

Indian to be her trusted messenger who was to instruct the Spaniards through the person of the Bishop and tell them what to do. In her, the conquered, oppressed and crushed begin to conquer, liberate and rehabilitate.

Finally, she initiated and proclaimed the new era which was now beginning. Over her womb is the Aztec glyph of the centre of the universe. Thus she carries the force which will gradually build up the civilization which will be neither a simple restoration of the past nor simply New Spain but the beginning of something new. The flowers, which she provided as a sign of authenticity, was for the Indian world the sign which guaranteed that the new life would truly flourish.

Thus in Guadalupe, the ancient beginnings connect with the present moment and point to what is yet to come! The broken pieces of their ancient numinous world are now re-pieced in a totally new way. Out of the chaos, a new world of ultimate meaning is now emerging. The Phoenix had truly come forth not just as a powerful new life, but also as the numinosum which would allow them to once again experience the awe and reverence of the sacred -- not a sacred which was foreign and opposed to them, but one which ultimately legitimized them in their innermost being -- both collectively as a people and individually as persons.

The complementary symbol of Guadalupe is the baptism of infants. The Lady of Guadalupe had sent the Indian Juan Diego to the Church. The Indian world immediately started to go to church and ask for baptism. Yet, they were no longer being uprooted totally from their ancient ways in order to enter into the church which the Lady had sent them. They were entering as they were -- with their customs, their rituals, their songs, their dances and their pilgrimages. The old Franciscan missioners feared this greatly. Many thought it was a devil’s trick to subvert their missionary efforts. But the people kept on coming. They were truly building the new temple the Lady had requested: the living temple of Mexican-Christians. It is through baptism that every newborn Mexican enters personally into the temple requested by the Lady.

Through baptism the child becomes part of the continuum and is guaranteed life in spite of the social forces against life. The physical birth of the child is completed by the spiritual birth and both form an integral part of the biological life of the child. For our people, baptism of infants is not just a sacrament of initiation of our Catholic Church,

but also a biological-anthropological event which binds the child and the community together in a profound and lasting blood-spiritual relationship.

Through baptism, the community claims the child as its very own and with pride presents to the entire people -- no matter how it was conceived or what might be the social status of the child. In the group, the child will receive great affirmation and tenderness. This will give the child a profound sense of existential security and belonging. Whether others want us around or not is of little consequence because we grow up knowing that we belong. He/she will be able to affirm selfhood in spite of the putdowns and insults of society: they will dare to be who they are -- and they will be who they are with a great sense of pride! This deep sense of security and belonging will develop through participation in the multiple religious rituals of the people -- *posadas. rosarios, velorios, peregrinaciones, viacrucis. . . .*

For a people who have a historical memory and contemporary situation of degradation, insults and rejection, baptism is the recognition that this child, regardless of what the world thinks of it, is of infinite dignity. It is the sacred rite of initiation into the community and the ancestors. Through it, not only are the newborn welcomed into the group, but the continuity of the life of the group is assured ... the life of the ancestors will continue in the future generations because of our religious celebrations today.

As the apparitions of Our Lady of Guadalupe at Tepeyac were the beginning of an anthropological resurrection event for the native and *mestizo* peoples of Mexico, so is baptism the individual entry into the life of these resurrected people. Through baptism a child not only becomes a child of God according to the Christian tradition but equally also a child of our common mother of the Americas, *Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe.*

Cenizas y Agua Bendita (Ashes and Holy Water)

For anyone who knows anything about the Mexican and Mexican-American religious expression, there is no doubt that ashes on Ash Wednesday is one of the most popular rituals of the entire year. In my parish of San Fernando in San Antonio, we have a service of ashes every half hour averaging 1,200 persons per half hour. By the end of the day, we have had over 30,000 persons go through for the ashes. The

church does not really promote this, yet it is one of the most popular rituals of the entire church year. Why?

For us, the earth is sacred. We come from the earth and in time we return to the earth. The earth, and especially the portion of the earth out of which we originate is the very source of our life, subsistence and existence. In a survey I conducted a few years ago of Mexican-Americans living in the Southwest, to the question, "What would you like to leave your children?", the most frequent response was: *"una tierrita"*. Precisely because we are so bound to the earth, one of the deepest sources of our suffering as a people is that we have been deprived of our own land. Without even having migrated, the natives of the Americas have been forced to live as aliens in the very lands of their ancestors. Only the languages, dress, food, customs and religion of the foreigners who invaded and robbed the natives of the lands are considered true and legitimate while the ways of the natives continue to be despised as pagan, savage and inferior. In our own land, we cannot be at home! We are treated like squatters without rights to be thrown around as the powerful see fit. We are thrown around from one space to another without any regard for our families or cemeteries. Our natural resources are taken away from us and replaced with garbage and toxic wastes. Whatever the rest of the society does not want -- jails, public housing, garbage dumps -- is conveniently placed in our neighborhoods.

What is life without connectedness to our own proper earth? *Polvo!*

On Ash Wednesday, as the people come up to receive the ashes, they hear the words: *"Polvo eres* The ashes of the beginning of Lent are a curious and mysterious religious expression of the Mexican tradition which finds its full socio-religious meaning when coupled with the Holy Water which is blessed during the Easter Vigil -- when, through God’s power, justice triumphed over injustice in the resurrection of the innocent victim from the death inflicted upon him by the unjust "justice" of this world. The one whom the world had rejected and killed, God raised and installed as the Lord of all nations.

For people who have been forced to become foreigners in their own land, who have been driven from their properties and who have been pushed around by the powerful like the mighty wind blows the dust around, ashes, as a moment of the continuum of the pilgrimage of life become most powerful. They mark the radical acceptance of the moment -- actually there is no choice -- like Jesus accepting the cross.

This is a ritual reenactment of the burning of Cuatemoc's feet while he refuses to give in to the demands of the Spaniards. He endured rather than giving in to the unjust demands of his captors. But this acceptance does not indicate approval in any way whatsoever. It is the acceptance of an unjust situation without the acceptance of its disastrous consequences: the destruction of our people. The very fact that we are here in growing numbers and walking up to receive the ashes is an act of public and collective defiance of the destructive situation that has been forced upon us.

We will not be eliminated from this earth, we might be dust today, but dust settles down and can take roots when it receives moisture. The people do not only come for ashes, throughout the year they come for holy water to sprinkle upon themselves, their children, their homes. . . everything. They are very aware that our entire world yearns and travails in pain awaiting to be redeemed -- a redemption which in Christ has indeed begun but whose rehabilitating effects are yet to take effect in our world of present day escalating injustices. The use of the regenerative waters of baptism in every aspect of life is a constant call to God to right the wrongs of our present society. If God is truly God, God must intervene. God cannot remain distant and passive in the light of the great misery and suffering of God's people. We know that God hears the cries of the poor and God will come to save us. God will redress the unjust situation which has been imposed upon us. God opened the sea to allow his people to escape enslavement, God called his assassinated Son to life from the tomb and this same God will convert us from aliens to children in our own land. The present situation will not last forever for the God of justice and mercy will bring about change.

The sprinkling with the waters of the Easter Vigil is a constant call for the regeneration of all creation. The dust which is sprinkled with the water will be turned into fertile earth and produce in great abundance. As in the reception of ashes there is an acceptance, in the sprinkling of holy water there is an unquestioned affirmation: the ashes will again become earth: the dust-people will become the fertile earth and the earth will once again be ours. The dust-water binomial symbolizes the great suffering of an uprooted people who refuse to give in to despair but live in the unquestioned hope of the new life that is sure to come.

Crucifixion/"Muertos" (Dead)

The final set of religious celebrations which express the core identity of

the Mexican-American people is the Crucifixion which is celebrated on Good Friday, and The Dead whose day is celebrated on November 2. For a people who have constantly been subjected to injustice, cruelty and early death, the image of the crucified is the supreme symbol of life in spite of the multiple daily threats of death. If there was something good and redemptive in the unjust condemnation and crucifixion of the God-man, then, as senseless and useless as our suffering appears to be, there must be something of ultimate goodness and transcendent value in it. We don't understand it, but in Jesus, the God-man who became the innocent victim who suffered for our salvation, we affirm it and in this very affirmation receive the power to endure it without destroying us. Even if we are killed, we cannot be destroyed.

Jesus was killed but not destroyed. He is alive and his cross has become the source and symbol of the ultimate triumph of goodness over evil, courage over fear, love over righteousness. No wonder that in their faith-filled evangelical intuition, at the moment when the scourged and crowned with thorns Jesus of Nazareth appears to be the most powerless, the people spontaneously acclaim him as *"El Señor del Poder. . . el señor de la Gloria."* He had the incredible power to sustain the most cruel suffering for the sake of our salvation. This, in the minds of our people, is the ultimate power of God -- the power to endure for the sake of those we love. And this is precisely the power that we see missing in today's world -- husbands or wives abandon their sickly partners because they can no longer endure the pain, children abandon their elderly parents because they can no longer endure the pain of seeing them helpless, society abandons those who have made mistakes to like imprisonment because they cannot endure to have them around; multinationals abandon their faithful workers rather than endure a loss or diminishment of profits. The power to conquer might be glamorous and appealing, but only the power to endure for the sake of others is truly divine and life-giving. Animals conquer by force, God conquers by enduring love -- enduring even unto death on the cross. The power to conquer diminishes with time and remains only in the dust of unread history books while the power to endure lives on in the lives of those who are saved through it -- the crucified Jesus lives today but the conquering Caesars and armies have long been dead, buried and hardly remembered. The crucified is alive, but the executioners are all dead and gone.

In the presence of *el Señor del Poder* (The Lord of Power) we see and celebrate our own inner strength which has allowed us to endure for the

sake of our families and our people. What others ridicule as weakness, we see as the divine power alive in us. We are not a fatalistic people who enjoy suffering, but a powerful people who will not allow suffering to destroy our lives or even our joy of living. The radical acceptance of the cross of life is the basis for our festive music, dances and fiestas. We do not celebrate because we suffer, but we celebrate because we refuse to allow suffering to control or destroy our lives.

Dia de los Muertos/The day of those who are ultimately alive!

People who know us from the outside claim that we are so fascinated with suffering and death that we ignore joy and resurrection. Nothing could be farther from the truth. They are so totally wrong about us -- they see us but they do not know us. Often the ones who make this claim are the very ones who have no inner appreciation of the fullness of the paschal mystery themselves. Our people accept openly the harshness of suffering and death only because we participate already in the beginning of resurrection. Certainly we celebrate our collective resurrection on the early morning of December 12 at our sunrise service to our Lady of Guadalupe; certainly we celebrate resurrection every time we use the *agua bendita* in reaffirming God's power over sickness and death. But at no time do we celebrate resurrection and the communion of living saints more than on *"el dia de los muertos"* which in effect is the day of the living -- the day of those who have defied death and are certainly more alive than ever!

We know the secret of the mystery of life. Those whom the world takes for dead, we know beyond doubt are alive not only in God -- and God is the fullness of life -- but in us who remember them. Because they are no longer limited or imprisoned by "this body," they are more alive than ever. The final, absolute, definitive death beyond which there is no earthy life left is when there is no one around to remember me or celebrate my life. Thus in remembering -- "re-cordando" -- we keep alive our ancestors as much as they keep us alive and continue to guard over us. The pain which we experience when someone we know and love dies is transformed into an innermost joy at the annual celebration of those who through death have entered ultimate life. The memory of their lives becomes a source of life and energy. As we bring them flowers, build altars of remembrance, light candles, share in the common bread and punch of the dead, we truly enter into the ultimate fiesta. In the mystical moment of the celebrations of *el dia de los muertos*, the veil of time and space is removed and we are all together

on earth and in heaven, in time and in eternity singing the same songs, enjoying the same drinks and sharing in the same life that no earthly power can take away from us.

It should be noted that our *dia de los muertos* is the very opposite of Halloween. Our "dead" do not come to spook us, but to visit, comfort and party with us. We do not fear them. We welcome their presence and look forward to having a good time with them. Sometimes we even take music to the cemeteries to share with them their favorite songs. We celebrate together that death does not have the final word over life and that life ultimately triumphs over death. Our family and *our pueblo* are so strong and enduring that not even death can break them apart. Thus what is celebrated as the day of the dead is, in effect, the celebration of undestructive life -- a life which not even death can destroy. Society might take our lands away, marginalize us and even kills us, but it cannot destroy us. For we live on in the generations to come and in them the previous generations continue to be alive.

Conclusion

The conquest of ancient Mexico by Spain in 1521 and then the conquest of northwest Mexico by the United States in the 1840's forced the native population and their succeeding generations into a split and meaningless existence. It was a mortal collective catastrophe of gigantic death-bearing consequences. Yet the people have survived as a people through the emergence of new religious symbols and the reinterpretation of old ones which have connected the past with the present and projected into the future. The core religious expressions as celebrated and transmitted by the people are the unifying symbols in which the opposing forces of life are brought together into a harmonious tension so as to give the people who participate in them the experience of wholeness. In them and through them, opposites are brought together and push towards a resolution and the people who celebrate them experience an overcoming of the split. Where formerly there was opposition, now there is reconciliation and even greater yet, synthesis. This is precisely what gives joy and meaning to life. indeed makes life possible in any meaningful sense regardless of the situation and it is in the celebration of these festivals of being and memory that the people live on as a people.

I have carefully limited my observations and attempts at interpretation to my own personal Mexican-American experience, not because I am

not interested in all the Hispanics, but precisely because I do not dare to have the arrogance to speak for the others. I have not lived their experience and even though I respect their religious symbols and practices deeply, they are not my own. I am convinced that you can only understand religious symbols correctly from within and not by mere observation -- even the best and most critical -- from the outside. In seeking to understand religious symbols correctly, the so-called "objective distance" of Western scholars is a sure guarantee of falsification and objective error, especially if it is not in dialogue with the believers themselves. Only by a patient and prolonged listening to the believers can one begin to understand the real meaning of their practices and rituals. They cannot be judged by criteria of another cosmovision or world-view.

I very much admire what Richard Flores is doing with the *Pastorelas* and how he has gone through the process of becoming a *pastorsito* himself, has personally taken part in all the aspects of the process and is gradually beginning to understand them from within. I very much appreciated what Ana Maria Diaz Stevens is doing with the development of religious thought of the Puerto Rican women. Her insights have opened up a whole new field of reflection for me. All of a sudden "las cocineras" were not just the women in the kitchens, but the creative thinkers who were cooking-up new and profound theological thought. Woo! We need Hispanic theologians and social scientists who will reflect from within the common experience of faith of our people, not as outsiders but as believers who are seeking to understand, clarify and enrich our own life of faith.

I am anxiously awaiting and looking forward for the other Hispanic groups in the United States to begin speaking and writing about their own religious expressions of their culture. To the degree that this takes place, we will be able to begin a very fruitful dialogue among ourselves. I long to see deeper studies on the Cuban American devotion to N. S. de Caridad and their Afro-Cuban sense of *santeria;* on the Puerto Rican devotion to San Juan Bautista and other religious practices; on the *Cristo Negro de Esquipulas* of Guatemala and other devotions and rituals of the various Hispanic peoples living in the United States. I trust that PARAL will be able to continue encouraging this type of socio-theological reflection and dialogue among the various groups -- each from within its own lived experience of enculturated faith with its corresponding religious symbols. These religious symbols and rituals are the keys that will unlock the secret to the deepest and most far-

reaching elements of the cosmovision of our people and thus provide the ultimate basis of our earthly identity.

Notes:

1. We do not intend to indicate that women should stay in the kitchens, but only to bring out a very important aspect of life which has not been properly recognized. It was Anna Maria Diaz Stevens during the PARAL symposium who first made me aware of this fascinating contribution of how much more had come out of the kitchens than mere *food.* They had been the most exciting place where new life in all its aspects had truly blossomed and developed.

2. O. Espin has some very good articles on the relation between popular expression of the Faith and the Roman Catholic tradition. In particular. I would recommend: Tradition and Popular Religion" page 69 in Allan Deck's book: *Frontiers of Hispanic Theology in the U.S.A.* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1992); a classical work on this subject is: J.MR. Tillard *et al: Foi Populaire Foi Savante* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1976).

3. For more in-depth studies on Our Lady of Guadalupe I recommend my own book: *La Morenita: Evangelizer of the Americas* (San Antonio: MACC Publications) and subsequent articles on this subject in *Concilium.* Also the coming book of Jeanette Rodrigues on this topic by the Texas University Press in Austin, Texas.

4. For some very good clarification on the concept of the Local Church. consult, J.M.R. Tillard.

5. Jean-Louis Aragon: "Le 'Senus Fidelium' et ses fondaments neotestamentiares" in *op. cit., Foi Populaire.*

6. R. Acuna, *Occupied America* (San Francisco: Canfield Press, 1972).

7. Roberto Jiminez, "Social Changes/Emotional Health," *Medical Gazette of South Texas*, vol. 7, no. 25, June 20, 1985.

8. For a greater discussion of other religious symbols, consult my previous works: *Christianity and Culture* (San Antonio: MACC

Publications); *Galilean Journey. The Mexican American Promise* (New York: Orbis Books, 1983).

9 For other aspects of Guadalupe, consult my previous articles in *Concilium,* No. 122/1977 and No. 188/1983.

10.J. Ruffie, *De La Biologie A La Culture* (Paris: Flammarion. 1976), pp. 247-252.

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Ethical Issues in the Struggles for Justice by Daniel Chetti and M.P. Joseph

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Chapter 4: Ecumenical Social Ethics Today, by Charles C. West

(Charles C. West is Professor-emeritus at the Princeton Theological Seminary, USA and was K.C. Abraham's guide for his doctoral studies there.)

One always runs a risk in entering a dialogue from out of another society ten thousand miles away, even when the conversation is within the community of the Church. The risk is somewhat less great, however, when the occasion is to celebrate the ministry of an old friend and colleague. K.C. Abraham is no stranger to the ecumenical search for an effective social witness today, with all the controversy it involves, and the new directions it takes: It is a pleasure to join him in that search.

Let me begin with a concept that has become popular in ecumenical circles during the past few years: that of "paradigm shift." Konrad Raiser, now General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, uses it to describe, a change in theological perspective which affects the whole range of ecumenical work.[1] His colleague and former student Martin Robra applies it specifically to a change in perspective on social

ethics in World Council work.[2] K.C. Abraham describes it as a change in theological and ethical perspective brought about by the participation of the Third World in the ecumenical movement.[3] They all make important points. I would like, however, to suggest that "paradigm" has a broader and deeper meaning than these changes indicate. There are paradigm conflicts in theology, philosophy and ethics. Unlike natural sciences, whence the term was borrowed, one does not replace the other as investigators become convinced that the new one is more meaningful. Rather they exist side by side. They influence and often subvert one another. Decision for one or the other is a commitment of faith that is more than the rational insight of which Thomas Kuhn speaks. It is more complete, though of the same character, as Michael Polanyi's "personal element" in all knowledge. What the authors cited above are describing is differences of perspective and experience within one basic paradigm. It is inclusive enough to hold them all in one community of faith and discourse. It deepens and changes through the dialogue between them. But it is one of at least four that compete with each other, both within and outside the Christian tradition. Let me briefly enumerate them.

A. The Paradigms

1. The first, and probably the oldest, is the paradigm of participation in an order of being. For the ancient civilizations of Babylon and Egypt it took the form of a union between cosmology and political order. Gods and human rulers interacted in a sacred sphere to sustain this order. Nature and humanity were defined by their part in it. The Greek philosophers projected the essence of this order more in terms of reason than mythology. Chinese Confucian civilization found it in a system of relationships which bound together heaven and earth, emperor and officials, government and families in an unchanging harmony. There are undoubtedly parallels in Hindu cosmology as well. In all these societies, and in many others, human life was given meaning and direction by participation in an eternal order which embraces all things, and determines the place and the right behavior of all who are a part of it. Ethics is participation in this order.

The classic struggle with this paradigm took place in Christian history during the early centuries when neo-Platonic metaphysics was conquered by the biblical drama of creation and redemption. But it still is with us today where eternal life and immortality of the soul replace the hope of resurrection. It faces us afresh when ever the order of a traditional society with its apparent timeless harmony of nature,

humanity and religion offers to absorb or replace the Christian message. It arises in demonic forms when cultures, threatened by change, idealize their own past and try to enforce it against enemies within and without.

2. The second paradigm is that of reality, human and divine, defined by an absolute structure, doctrine of law. The modern form of it we call fundamentalism, but it has its ancient forms. Jesus faced it among the Scribes and Pharisees of his time. There was a Chinese philosophy known as Legalism two centuries before Christ which served the emperor well in efforts to establish his authority. Islam is based on a revealed doctrine and law which embraces the whole of life, both personal and social, though it is often softened by interpretation. Legalism has dogged Christianity throughout its history whenever a particular structure of the Church, a particular doctrinal statement, or a particular form of behavior, has replaced the living Christ as the expression of divine revelation and the guide for human life.

Absolute law is a derivative paradigm. It arises in troubled times to protect an embattled society when its religious confidence fails, or to create order when chaos threatens. It replaces participation in cosmic reality with power in the form of positive divine and human authority. In the Hebrew-Christian context it replaces the living God with a structure of organization, doctrines and laws that claim to embody God on earth. Human beings become creatures of law. The meaning of life, the way to salvation, is obedience to the structure.

3. The third paradigm is more modern, that of Enlightenment humanism. It, too, has ancient roots, both in Epicurean materialism and in Stoic rationalism. One finds suggestions of it in the Confucian model of the true scholar. Gandhi found many of its values in the Bhagavad Gita. Still, as a full paradigm it is a post-Christian redefinition of idealized Greek humanism. It dismantles Greek cosmology and Christian revelation alike, yet retains the confidence in human reason which characterized the one and the hope for a fulfilled future that is derived from the other. It turns the human being into an individual, and places all confidence in the goodness and power of that individual pursuing his or her own objectives in freedom from restraint to understand, master, and organize all reality -- personal, social, natural and even divine -- for the greatest good of all. Ethics then becomes the rational pursuit of subjectively defined goals, private or as agreed upon in groups. Public ethics require only that a social context be maintained by law and custom, which maximizes the freedom of individual self-

determination.

Marxism has presented itself as the total nemesis of this worldview, and in a way it was. Yet it is still a variation on the same paradigm. The individual is replaced by collective humanity, a vision of the free individual expressed in and through the whole species creating itself and universalizing its power over nature by its labor. History, to be sure, is not only the progress of humanity but also the drama of class war, brought about by the division of labor, private property, and exploitation. Salvation comes therefore through revolutionary action by the dehumanized victims of this process who rediscover in the solidarity of their total deprivation, the true humanity which will finally triumph. The ethic is provisionally revolutionary, finally rational planning by one humanity working in harmony to universalize itself. The paradigm is militantly, if collectively, humanist.

Christian ethics has learned many things from this paradigm, both good and bad. Human rights, both political and social, have been dramatized as a command of God. The relation between freedom in Christ and freedom in political and economic life has been newly conceived. The dynamic of God's justice judging and transforming the powers of this world has been grasped in new contexts. The dimensions of divine blessing on human enterprise and of the vast new responsibility it brings for creation and the quality of human life, have expanded beyond previous imagination. In all these ways this post-Christian humanism has reminded the Church of whole ranges of its gospel which it had restricted or forgotten.

At the same time this paradigm poses a constant temptation for the Church, the more so because its humanism *is* post-Christian and draws so heavily on a vision of the human which is inspired by Biblical revelation and the person of Christ. It is tempting to turn the perfections of God -- God's justice, mercy, holiness, faithfulness and love -- into perfections of human nature. It is easy to forget the self-centred perversity of our human ambitions and causes, and therefore to turn the struggle against sin into a self-righteous crusade against evil. We have learned from the Enlightenment and its Marxist negative image some bad lessons: a self-righteous view of human nature, individual or collective, a good-evil dichotomy in our judgment on others and in our social action, a shallow sense of human community, and an exaggerated confidence in the power of human beings to manage and control their own destinies.

4. The fourth paradigm I will call, though the term is too weak, relational. Reality is found not in an order of being, not in a law, not in the free self-expression of human beings pursuing their individual or collective ends, but in the relationship established by the one who created us, has made himself known to us, called us, made a covenant with us, remained faithful to us when we have broken that covenant, who has come to us in Jesus Christ, redeemed us and our world in the victory of Christ over sin and its powers, and made us witnesses by the power of the Spirit to his coming in glory. Ethics in this paradigm is to live in this relationship, to trust its promise, to repent and be transformed by the renewal of our minds (Romans 12:2) In response to the one who calls and forgives us, and to discern our responsibilities to the world around us in the light of this creator and redeemer. K.C. Abraham, following Martin Buber, puts it well: "Who Yahwe is, is known only in the events of his continuing relation to the Hebrew people, a relationship in which the knower is transformed."**4** So it is also with Christians who seek to understand and respond to the triune God in the world today.

Ethics, then, is the exploration of this relationship, of its claim on us and on the world. In this relationship we discover our own unfaithfulness, our self-centred misuse of divine gifts, our distorted ideological perspectives, and all that is included in the word sin. We know ourselves and the world as being judged by a righteous God, brought to repentance and restored to life. We see this happening to the world around us as well, and it determines our engagement with that world. We are in the midst of a history, the total meaning of which we do not know, whose limits we cannot escape, but which we know to be directed toward its fulfillment by a God of justice and love. We know ourselves to be stewards of the gifts of this God, responsible for such power and dominion as is given us, to the one whose character is revealed in the powerlessness, the servanthood and sacrifice of Christ. Being judged and transformed ourselves, we try to realize in our time the gracious purposes of a God who reaches out for the poor and marginalized among us, and who calls us into a community of mutual acceptance and forgiveness.

B. The Ecumenical Context

It is my thesis that the last paradigm has been basic for ecumenical ethics from its earliest expressions to the present, and that it is the

context which continues to make encounters between radically different social experiences and theological perspectives fruitful. Let me list, without claiming to be exhaustive, a few characteristics which it gives to this dialogue.

First, it is a dialogue which is open at every point to new insight from the word of God. A dynamic of judgment and repentance, directed first at the Church itself, operates in it.

Second, it is a dialogue of mutual confrontation, correction and new direction among the participants who bring it not only different but often conflicting analyses of the world, engagement in social action, and convictions about the work of God.

Third, it is an open search for new ways by which the Holy Spirit works and Christ takes form in the world, and for patterns of faithful response. This too may lead to clashing styles of piety and social engagement which challenge and correct each other.

Fourth, It is a dialogue about human responsibility to confront the powers of this world with the power of God, to bring about justice and peace through human action and witness. It presupposes that Christians are so engaged, that their praxis in the faith is subject to reflection and reform in the midst of life not in some theory apart from it.

Fifth, it is a dialogue among Christians about their stewardship of God’s non-human creation in the light of God’s purposes for it and for the future of humanity.

Within these parameters the dialogue is open to an ever-increasing variety of perspectives and points of view, based on the vast plurality of human solidarities, of culture, of class, of nation, language, and common experience. It is relationships among all these that are built and transformed in the encounter.

It is in this context, I believe, that the changes which Raiser, Robra, and in a different way Abraham, call paradigm shifts, should be understood. Raiser maintains that "Christocentric universalism," a phrase which he quotes from his predecessor WA. Visser’t Hooft, was the early paradigm of the Ecumenical Movement but that after 1968 it was no longer adequate. Robra extends his argument. Christocentrism could no longer cope with the challenge of religious pluralism; universalism did

not grasp the depth of alienation among the poor and the marginalized; salvation history did not do justice to the plural histories of the world's many cultures and nations; the unity of the Church in Christ offered no power or guidance in overcoming sexism, racism and human exploitation. Pragmatic realism as an ethical method expressed in the concept "responsible society" could not expand its perspective to include these new challenges. Even liberation theology, its still Christocentric successor, failed to come to terms with both technology and the human relation to nature.

Therefore, say Raiser and Robra, the search is on for a new concept of ecumenical theology and ethics. A new way of seeking truth, especially moral truth, is replacing the old linear logic of Western rationality. A spirit of mastery is yielding to a spirit of solidarity. Conceptually structured systems of truths known by experts are giving away to an "ethic of discourse" in the "living world." Raiser suggests that image of "Oikoumene, the one household of life" and suggests three emphasis in it: (1) "a Trinitarian understanding of divine reality and of the relationship between God, the world and humankind;" (2) "life" understood as a web of reciprocal relationships as a central point of reference (instead of history);" and (3) "an understanding of the one church in each place and in all places as a fellowship in the sense of community of those who are different from one another."**5** Robra sees in the meetings and actions of the World Council of Churches during the past fifteen years a new style of "dynamic interactive reality" in ecumenical ethics. He finds in the 1990 Seoul Conferences on "Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation" not the chaos and confusion most observers reported, but "a case study in paradigm change". There was conflict. No longer did "the transnational global definition of reality expressed in abstract terms as above" controlled the proceedings. Rather concrete, often contradictory experiences were taken seriously and a covenanting process took place outside "the model of the great church councils."**6** Out of this process, he maintains new concepts will emerge to discern the will and purpose of God in social mutuality, participation, and sensitivity to the marginalized and excluded people of the world.

To this perspective two things should be said. First, the elements of what Raiser and Robra call the emerging new paradigm are not new. They have characterized the ecumenical encounter from the beginning. "Christocentric universalism" in theology, and "pragmatic realism" in ethics, so far as they played a strong role, were always provisional. They were forms of human response and human witness, constantly being

judged and reformed in dialogue with other partners, even though they were, as they still are, coherent and responsible witnesses. The context of the theological and ethical debate has always been dialogical interaction in which voices from all parts of the *oikumene* joined, and which have expanded over the years to include more and more partners. The process is continuing. They are a part of it.

Second, the concept "paradigm shift" inhibits rather than promotes dialogue. It divides Christians into two camps, those who operate in the old framework and those who participate in the new. This can only be done by drawing contrasts that mislead, even to the point of caricature: e.g., Christology "from above" vs. Christology "from below," or "oikoumene of domination" vs. "oikoumene of solidarity."[7] One perspective is stigmatized; the other is idealized. There can be no mutual challenge and correction. The result is a curious combination of intolerance toward the theological and ethical work of the past and celebration of the most diverse and unreflective expressions of the present so long as they emerge from groups designated as marginalized or oppressed.

C. Contrasting Styles

K.C. Abraham's concern is somewhat different. His use of the term "paradigm shift" is, I think, mistaken, but his concern is real. He describes the change from "naturalistic/substantialistic forms of thought to historical/ personal categories."[8] Within this latter paradigm, which is just the one we have described above as ecumenical, he pleads the case for new theologies which are non Euro-centric but emerge from the faith and witness of churches among the people of the Third World. "These theologies are not marginal," he says, "although they arise out of the experience of the marginalized. Rather they are in the classical tradition of the fundamental reformulations of the Christian faith, just like Augustine, Luther or Schleiermacher." [9] These theologies, and the ethics that flow from them, make universal claims from particular perspectives. They "provide what they believe to be the central vision of the Christian faith." They are essential participants in the ecumenical dialogue which has the same objective.

Within this dialogue there are contrasting styles and they create areas of controversy over social ethics and policy. Let me here delineate just two. Both are represented by Indians, though both are ecumenical in the scope of their allegiance.

1. In a recent book M. M. Thomas speaks of being asked in a public lecture to "expound the Scripture with some degree of autobiography. The suggestion," he writes, "led me to ask myself what particular aspect of the Gospel of Jesus Christ provided for me the continuing crucial link first between the spiritual experience of my adolescence and of my adulthood, and second, between my inner spirituality and my concern for religious renaissance and social change in India. And it was not difficult to come to the conclusion that it was the Gospel of Divine Forgiveness offered in the Crucified and Risen Jesus Christ. It is intensely personal, sustaining a person's faith, in spite of his/her moral failure, intellectual doubt and spiritual despair of his/herself and the world; and it gives to personal life a sense of direction and destiny. But it also gives him/her a realization of solidarity with all men and women before God, both in sin and in divine forgiveness and opens up the vision and power of a new fellowship and a new humanity in Christ. In that sense the divine forgiveness offered in Christ is deeply social in character, and provides the source, the criterion and goal of the struggle everywhere today for new societies which can do justice to the dignity of the human being. **10**

This confession, rooted in the ancient piety and worship of the Mar Thoma Syrian Church and nourished in the ecumenical movement, underlies an ethic of profound involvement in the struggle for social justice, profound realism about the powers of this world including those which possess the righteous, and a profound hope which is never satisfied by the achievements of this world. A dialectic is at work here, between the just cause and the sin of those who espouse it, between the vision of a new humanity in Christ, and the forgiveness of sins that makes it possible, between hope and realism about social change. There is a style of engagement in the struggle and openness to repentance and correction in the midst of it, of combat with the enemies of justice and readiness for the reconciling word that transforms the conflict. It is one way of doing Christian social ethics, one form of Christian witness on the ecumenical stage.

2. There is another way. The American Black theologian James Cone writes: "When the meaning of Christianity is derived from the bottom and not the top of the socio-economic ladder, from people who are engaged in the fight for justice and not from those who seek to maintain the *status quo*, then something radical and revolutionary happens to the function of the "holy" in the context of the 'secular'. 'Viewed from the

perspective of oppressed people's struggle for freedom, the holy become a radical challenge to the legitimacy of the secular structures of power by creating eschatological images and legends about a realm of experience that is not confined to the values of this world."[11] To interpret the story of Jesus, "from the standpoint of the marginalized" (Abraham) in the view of many liberation theologians, leads to an ethic of liberation directly and without dialectical restraints. Christ is in the struggle, against all the forces which support and justify the domination of the poor by the rich, the weak by the powerful. Salvation is continuous with the efforts of the oppressed to achieve their humanity through it.

Between these two styles there are many controversies. Let me list a few:

a) Both styles are rooted in the biblical message. How do we deal with the profound differences in our understanding of how the power of God in Jesus Christ is at work in the world and in the life of the believer?

b) Both styles are aware of the role of ideology in distorting truth and reality in the world. Where does each go for correction of ideological perspectives? What role does revelation play for each?

c) Both are dedicated to human liberation. What, for each, is the relation between freedom in Christ and freedom from the oppressive powers of the world?

d) What role does repentance play in each style, and reconciliation with God and with enemies?

e) The two styles differ basically in their understanding of the powers of this world and the form of Christian action toward them. How total are they? How are they related to human motivations? How can they be made to serve human justice and peace? What is the interaction in Christian witness between resistance to and responsibility for them?

f) What, for each style, is the basis of our common humanity? How do (1) solidarity of the oppressed in their marginalization, and (2) community of forgiveness and grace in Christ, relate to each other?

g) What community is given us in Christ, and what community can we

achieve socially and politically among people of (1) different cultures and nations, (2) different class and social conditions (e.g., caste), (3) different ultimate commitments of faith, whether secular or religious? How do changing relations between men and women affect all these solidarities?

h) What is the reality of the Church and what is the role of the Church in realizing community and justice, and in bearing witness to God's reign in the world?

i) What is the form of God's promise for human community and for the relation between human beings and the achievements human struggle for justice and peace can achieve in our time?

This is only a list. Behind each question is a field of controversy to be explored in ecumenical encounter. The plea with which I close is that this encounter continue with passion, with conviction, with a determined wrestling for each other's souls and faithfulness as Christian believers, but with a recognition that the Triune God is our judge and our redeemer. Before this God all of us are called to repentance and new understanding.

Notes:

1. *Ecumenism in Transition* (Geneva, 1994).

2. *Oekumenische Sozialethik* (Bochum, 1994).

3. "Third World Theology: Paradigm Shift and Emerging Concerns" in M.P. Joseph (ed.), *Confronting Life: Theology out of the Context* (Delhi: ISPCK. 1995).

4. *op. cit.*. p. 203.

5. Raiser, *op. cit.*, p. 79

6. Robra, *op. cit.*

7. Raiser, *op. Cit.*, pp 59, 63.

8. Joseph, *op. cit.*, p. 203.

9. *Ibid*.. pp 204-205.

10. M.M. Thomas, *The Gospel of Forgiveness and Koinonia*, (Delhi & Tiruvalla, 1994), pp. 1-2.

11. "Christian Faith and Political Praxis" in Joseph (ed.), *op. cit*. p. 12.

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Ethical Issues in the Struggles for Justice by Daniel Chetti and M.P. Joseph

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Chapter 5: Christian Love for Justice and Peace, by Ronald Stone

(Ronald Stone is Professor of Christian Ethics at the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, USA.)

Our Christian contributions to the struggles for social justice make use of the broad social resources of our institutions and our thought. These Christian contributions also utilize our particular conceptions of Christian love. This essay, a contribution honoring the thought of our brother and mentor K.C. Abraham, focuses on the meaning of Christian love as a foundation for our explorations on ethics and the struggles for justice in our pluralistic societies.

Walter Rauschenbusch, the leading interpreter of the social gospel in the early 20th century, is recognized to have the Kingdom of God as his major concept. However, he could rise to lyrical passion in interpreting Christianity as a religion of love. Paul's chapter 13 of I Corinthians summarised the Christian message and was the motif of *Dare We Be Christians?* **1** His little book of 1914 is written as a book of inspiration and perhaps apology for Christianity. It is not an academic treatise that

bears up under analysis. That, however, is the nature of much of the Christian literature written for ordinary people like the conflicted Corinthians and not particularly for professors. Aside from the hymn-like praise of love its meaning is found in love as the force that brings human beings together.

Love is the social instinct, the power of special coherence, the *sine qua non* of human society. What was Paul requiring but the social solidarity of the Corinthians when he called for them to assert their unity in Christ? "In demanding love he demands social solidarity? [2] Rauschenbusch holds to this meaning of love as that which calls people together as he discusses sexuality, family, parenthood, social amelioration, charity towards the helpless groups, patriotism. Love was the force that brought people together and formed society.[3] Love by business people was the force he called on to reform society in this book as he dismissed class divisiveness as separating what should be united. The demand of love is universal excluding no one. Towards his conclusion he moves from Pauline solidarity to Johannine theology "God is love." He calls all Christians to affirm it and live it. The little volume does not reflect the sociological sophistication of his earlier volume *Christianity and the Social Crisis* [4] which dealt realistically from a hopeful socialist perspective with class conflict. Nor does it reflect the theological development of the latter volume *A Theology for the Social Gospel,*[5] but this latter volume refers to the social portrait of love in *Dare We Be Christians?* and the earlier volume interpreted Jesus' teaching of the virtue of love largely as social attraction and solidarity.

> The fundamental virtue in the ethics of Jesus was love, because love is the society-making quality. Human life originates in love. It is love that holds together the basal human organization, the ..... . Love creates fellowship.[6]

Rauschenbusch concentrates his theological reflection on the Kingdom of God and its reforming social implications. His discussions on the concept of God emphasize the reformation caused in the concept of God when it is undertaken by different social groups. His hopes are to democratize and make ethically relevant the concept of God. Consequently, most of his writings on the double love commandment is on the love of neighbour, and the imperative of love of God does not receive equal emphasis. It should be noted that for Rauschenbusch the community defines the concept of God while love produces community.

Though writing at the same time neither Rauschenbusch nor Ernst Troeltsch utilized the work of the other. Rauschenbusch might have raised Troeltsch's estimate of the dun prospects for a revival of social Christianity. Troeltsch would have dimmed some of Rauschenbusch's optimism. Troeltsch's *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches* only came to have great influence in the United States after its English publication in 193l.[7] Both of the Niebuhr brothers had come under its influence using it much earlier from its German editions. Though Rauschenbusch, the son of an immigrant German and who himself had studied in Germany, did not rely on Troeltsch's major work of 1911.

For Troeltsch the essence of the Christian ethic by the end of the nineteenth century had come to mean four essential theses, all derived from the double love commandment. The first is the personalistic theism recognized in the unity of heart, mind and soul oriented toward God. The second is the social solidarity which in love embraces everyone and grounded in metaphysical reality overcomes competition, compulsion, reserve and strife. The third is the ethical orientation of "mutual recognition, confidence, and care for others" which resolves the inescapable issues of equality and inequality. Finally, the Christian ethos produces to relieve the suffering of the world which is inevitable. Beyond these four contributions all desirable from the character of life confronted with the love commandants is the vision and promise of overcoming life in the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom is for God to realize, but Christian life is also lived anticipatorily in it now.[8]

Before coming to his concluding theses Troeltsch had ransacked nineteen centuries of Christian history condensing it in a thousand-page text. What had begun as a religious idea of reality and ethics had in its evolution compromised with both the world and other philosophies. Such a compromise was necessary and fitting and each age would need to work out its own compromises between the ethic of Jesus and its historical reality. His present Lutheran church was ill-equipped to do so and its reality cast a Teutonic gloom over his historical perspective.

Jesus' ethic or the gospel ethic seemed straightforward to Troeltsch. Jesus' inspiration was religious and social, it came from its relationship to God. Troeltsch's insistence upon "the religious idea" is similar to "spirituality" discussed later. The first concept is the Kingdom of God as meaning "the rule of God upon earth." Its date of completion is unknown, but probably soon. Jesus called followers to a purity of heart

and a radical loyalty to God. It involved self-renunciation and a centring of life upon God. The way was severe but not socially radical in Troeltsch's perspective. In emphasizing the "spirituality" of Jesus he wrote:

To love one's neighbor, that is, that in intercourse with him we are to reveal to him or to arouse in him the Divine spirit of love.[9]

Once establishing the religious devotional quality of Jesus and his call to discipleship, Troeltsch can then investigate the sociological characteristics of the "gospel ethic". Without wanting to deny a distinction between spirituality and political economy, it is wise to set aside some of Troeltsch's extreme statements. Jesus' ministry was brief and the records are fragmentary, but we need not agree with Troeltsch that Jesus did not fight oppression, did not found a church, and had no idea of the state. The conflicts of Jesus with authorities, the organization of the twelve, and his political-religious execution all assert that Troeltsch had more to learn about Jesus. Of course, Troeltsch still had to go through World War I, see his church changed, and serve in a revolutionary government before his last thought on social order was written.

These theses of the socially powerless Jesus, the compromise of the gospel ethic with world and other systems of thought, the centrality of the love commandments, the need for a viable social ethic utilizing social philosophies, and the understanding by all this in relationship to the history of social philosophies had a forceful impact upon both H. Richard Niebuhr and his older brother Reinhold Niebuhr. It controlled Reinhold's ethic throughout his career. H. Richard Niebuhr interpreted Troeltsch's work in a typological method in *Christ and Culture'*[10] while Reinhold's first book *Does Civilization Need Religion?*[11] presents it in a linear model. He then continued to rewrite this history of the ideal hopes and norms and the reality for most of his career and in many ways in his books until *Man's Nature and His Communities,*[12] his last volume.

Reinhold Niebuhr was not centrally interested in exact definitions of ethical terms. He was more committed to writing and speaking so that people would be encouraged in compassionate actions. In his course on theological ethics he explicated agape in terms of the considerations of Anders Nygren, M.C. D'Arcy, Soren Kierkegaard, and Emil Brunner while referring to the classical sources in scripture, Plato and Aristotle. In the end he found a middle position between theological liberalism

which he believed regarded *agape* as a human possibility and Anders Nygren who regarded it as a *human* impossibility. For Niebuhr *agape* is a vision of life that is obligatory upon humanity for it reflects human possibilities under grace. The rich young ruler who came to Jesus knew that beyond particular requirements which he had fulfilled there was a deeper commandment. The requirement of total commitment was too much. The disciples asked how anyone could be saved, and Jesus responded salvation was only possible with God and not by human effort. *Agape* as an expression of love contained reference to the perfection of the unity of person in heart, mind and spirit in relationship to God and to the harmonious relationship of one to the neighbor. Under conditions of existence either harmony with God or neighbor was not to be normally expected. "Love is the final form of that righteousness."[13] Love as the ultimate rule of human relations is for Niebuhr a derivative of the complete faith and trust in God. The further extension of this to justice as a work of love is considered elsewhere in this volume.

Anders Nygren, Lutheran bishop of Lund, contributed a sharp distinction between *agape* and *eros* to the 20th century discussions. In a profound survey of the history of the discussion of love in biblical, classical, and Christian sources he concluded *agape* was the central Christian idea. In its truest form in Martin Luther *agape* as God's disinterested love for humanity was radically distinguished from *eros* as human love for the good. Love for Martin Luther and Nygren was not human love but divine love which God poured through humanity as through a tube. It had ideally nothing to do with human striving or fulfilling a law. This meaning of love ignored egocentricity or self-love. Only one loved by God and blessed could pass on this love.[14] Metaphorically *agape* flowed down from God's love to neighbor love to love for God and denied self-love; *eros* flowed up from self-love to love for God, to neighbour love and ignored God's love. Now Nygren recognized these distinctions as ideal types or motifs which in many Christian thinkers and practices were mixed. But to the extent possible he wanted to sharpen the contrast and to theologically overcome the Roman Catholic tradition which had, from Augustine until Martin Luther, mixed *agape* and *eros* under the motif of charity. The ideal types may be too ideal in their presentation. Are not most expressions of Christian love mixtures of grace, obligation, trust, and even unfaith? If God desires human response, is even the divine love free of *eros?* But most of all any type of Christian *agape* that attaches little emphasis to human love to God as Nygren's schematic does [15] is deficient, for that is still the first commandment.

The realization that Nygren has divided *agape* and *eros* too sharply requires that the understanding *of agape* be sought elsewhere. Gene Outka surveyed the literature on *agape* from 1930, the culmination of Nygren's research, to 1967, the date of his dissertation defense at Yale, and refined his work with Basil Mitchell at Oxford in 1968-69. His work combines knowledge of Continental theology, American Christian ethics, and British analytic philosophy. He succeeds in sharing the conceptual difficulties in discussing this love imperative.

He chose to restrict his work to concerns about *agape* as neighbour love recognizing that such a choice exacted a price.[16] *"Agape* is a regard for the neighbour which in crucial respects is independent and unalterable"[17] He set out to analyse how *agape* is the requirement: "to consider the interest of others and not simply his own."[18] The choice not to examine more fully the reference to love God in the first commandment led to neglect of obvious theological references in the texts he analyzed. An example is a very full paragraph of H. Richard Niebuhr's from *The Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry* [19] *in* which Outka claims "The richness of the meaning of neighbour regard is nicely exemplified" [20] But the text actually is referenced to the love of God and neighbour by Niebuhr on the preceding and following page. One cannot explain Christian neighbour love without reference to the love of God and the meaning of Christ. Christian ethics without their theological context appear conceptually confused. The left tablet of the ten commandments presupposes the right tablet and the second commandment depends upon the first and the theological context of the New Testament witness to Christ.

It seemed strange to find the Christian ethics of Reinhold Niebuhr discussed under the rubric of "self-sacrifice" in Outka's book because Niebuhr never talked much about "Self-sacrifice" in his ethics courses. His courses were more about the history of Christian Ethics, power issues in society, relative natural norms, criteria of justice. etc. The 300-page book of his writings entitled *Love and Justice* edited by D.B. Robertson discusses love as "the ideal of pure disinterestedness,"[21] "an attitude of the ideal of spirit without any prudential or selfish consideration."[22] and "love in which every life affirms the interest of the other." [23]

Niebuhr does talk about sacrificial love as an ideal and also as a solvent in human affairs. Christ's acts in accepting the cross and initiating

atonement were sacrificial love. So Niebuhr refers to sacrificial love as the pinnacle of love. *Agape* has for Niebuhr qualities of ecstasy which define "the ultimate heroic possibilities of human existence (including of course martyrdom).[24]

But *agape* is also forgiving love in emulation of God and a universal sense of obligation which transcends particular obligations. We are obligated to love which is the meaning of love affirmed by Outka as equal regard for the welfare of the other. Outka has discovered a dimension of love implied in Jesus' commandment, but in his neglect of the other dimensions in Niebuhr's interpretation he misses aspects of Christian *agape*. *Agape* includes self-sacrifice as in Christ or in Martin Luther King, Jr. and Dietrich Bonhoeffer, in Niebuhr and Outka's own history. Niebuhr was concerned that *agape* not be reduced simply to achievable good acts that liberals suggest as the meaning of love. They may be loving, but they may lack the profundity of *agape*. The differences between Niebuhr's broad Christological use of love and Outka's rather humanistic use of love reflect both theological differences and sociological differences Another pivotal point is that Niebuhr understands love to be the overcoming of the cleavage between essence and existence. In love what is and ought to be is overcome. It is a commandment but it is literally fulfilled. The commandment itself shows that the separation is not overcome in history.

The love imperative for Niebuhr is a religious symbol confronting egoism, promoting humility. We will not have the perfectly united self to be utterly directed to God with all our mind, heart and soul. Nor will we perfectly love our neighbour with the interest we serve ourselves. But still to do so would be the harmony of God. Yet with the full religious message of the gospel, people in Christian community can and do produce moral fruit utilizing *agape* in family and social strategies of mutuality and forgiveness. So Niebuhr's understanding of love is both more religious and more communal than the relatively rationalistic, individualistic ethic[25] of Outka. In his presentation of most theologians' views in *Agape: An Ethical Analysis* Outka suppresses their theology except for Karl Barth. In doing so at least in this case of the Niebuhrs he misses their meaning. But the sociological clash is even more acute. Niebuhr would have little but scorn for the youthful Outka's social optimism. Outka wrote:

> The personal relations and perhaps also (or sometimes instead) the social order in which one finds oneself may

> be more amenable to a progressive realization of harmony and brotherhood than Kierkegaard and Niebuhr believe. While there is no strict guarantee that the appropriate response will be elicited, there should be no systematic refusal to hope, if not for perfection, then at least for continuous progress[26]

Or he recognizes that the conflict with Niebuhr is over different estimations of the human possibilities in history and then he writes:

> Conflict may be increasingly channeled in non-violent directions for example, and in any case in not as much of a fixed datum as Niebuhr appears to believe.[27]

Both Reinhold Niebuhr and Walter Rauschenbusch understood love as its base to be a drive for union or unity. Niebuhr expressed this more transcendentally and Rauschenbusch more immanently. They were both in the tradition of the social gospel as Niebuhr affirmed in *Interpretation of Christian Ethics.* The more recent Outka does not emphasize this harmony and seems not to be in this same tradition of the social gospel.

In summarizing the results of his analysis Outka concludes that *agape* expressed "equal regard" for the other. The other is treated with an "active concern for the neighbour's well being" without undue emphasis upon the particularity of the other.[28] Each neighbour is equally in their relationship to God in their need for freedom, the meeting of basic human needs. This understanding of *agape* as regard carries to his understanding of justice which finds equalitarian ideas of justice overlapping with *agape.* He does not intend to collapse the distinction between love and equalitarian justice. The goals of meeting needs equally may require unequal distributions and different characteristics may be treated differently, but equal regard is required by justice. Outka's conclusions in his careful analytic book are meagre, but they point in helpful ways toward further development of the relationship of the norm of justice.

The New Testament presents us with many uses of *agape.* It is from God for the world, the law of humanity toward God, and toward each other. Its context is the radically theistic context of the prophetic tradition culminating and transformed in Jesus Christ. Paul Ramsey was certainly correct when he explained that: "To be in the world with transforming power, the *agape* of Christ must be clearly understood as

not of this world. Such as insist shows again the need for consideration of *agape* in terms of revelation, paradox, and theism. Ramsey is correct in relating this revealed norm to the nature of humanity and showing it to be expressed in a radical revisioning of natural law. The dangers of the expressions of natural law are in association of natural law with time bound statements of natural law and in the neglect of the degree to which natural law reflects its historical context. Also the conclusions of natural law theorists reveal the very relativity of the perceptions of natural law. So in this attempt to explicate Christian ethics love is related to a particular tradition of moral norms understood as both revelation and natural law in a particular communal context. The ten commandments are taken as the most important summary statement of both Hebrew morality and Christian morality and related to agape. Yet before the stipulated meaning of agape is finalized two voices from communities critical of the analysis so far need to be included: the feminist and the African-American.

Sally McFague's metaphorical theology expresses the Christian gospel as radical love. Love becomes the essence of theology for her expressed in her metaphorical trinity. The parenthood of God is expressed in agape which seeks the fulfillment of life as a mother nurtures and cares for the next generation. *Lovo no ero* is expressed as the second of the trinity which seeks union with humanity in God's body of the universe. And as philla seeks in express the companionship and friendship of the divine with the world. She tends to find the double love commandment as incapable of achievement, but affirming its direction she expresses it in terms she regards as more adequate for a nuclear and ecologically threatened age. Each of the expression of the trinity has its own characteristic ethic. That of the divine-universal parent is justice. Here the drive is for humans to model the loving presentation and fulfillment of life in concrete actions. The model of God's love and by extension human love.

> in their battle against the forces that bring disorder to the body, that enslave the spirit. . . God as mother-creator feels the same anger and judges those harshly who deny life and nourishment to her children.[29]

The work of God as friend is to be with humanity in the world, and the human ethic is to accompany the other and not in betray life in the enemy. The friendship with God requires the struggle for justice and the identification with the suffering by the friends of the Friend of the

World.

She playfully suggests the enrichment of our models of the trinity. In her elevation of love to the center of her theology she is faithful to the New Testament and especially the Johannine emphases. The recognition that God's love can be expressed persuasively as divine parent, lover, friend each with their own developed ethical meaning is a welcome joining of ethics with her theology. The theology of the trinity in her care is ethical in its essence, expressed it also has ethical consequences.

The political symbols of the older traditional theology Father, King. Monarch, Creator may have more of the Janus- faced character than she elaborates. In the words of Jesus these symbols express love not oppression or heteronomy. The preference for organic metaphors in much of her theology and the displacement of political-social metaphors like the Kingdom of God may not be as helpful to Christian thought as she thinks. Is it not the case that the issues of nuclear terror have been reduced by political choices and changes? Wise ecological choices too must be made politically before the organic death and responses themselves overwhelm politics. She is correct to recognize the need to include the material-organic in her theology, but she errs if this emphasis trivializes the political-social symbols.

She is correct that theology articulates models of God and that metaphor is a large part of the model building. She is wise in her middle way between fundamentalism about religious symbols and the cynical deconstruction of religious symbols. Christian realism in the spirit of Paul Tillich or Reinhold Niebuhr is closer to the reality pole than the deconstructionist pole. For here the symbols express hypotheses about human nature which are verifiable in human experience. For our time when one of the great human advances is the gender revolution, the need for her symbols of love, parent, love and friend, for God can be accepted with less tentativeness than characterized in her bold book.

Barbara Hilkert Andolsen's research into feminist ethics is a strong reminder that partiarchialism has haunted the tradition. From the 19th century women have protested that they do not need counsel from male ethicists to sacrifice themselves. Margaret Farley represents the tradition in recognizing *agape* as full mutual love marked by gender equality.**30** Andolsen affirms agape as a norm applicable to all realms of life. I think she erred in regarding Niebuhr as following "in the footsteps of Nygren condemning self-love and emphasizing sacrifice as the primary

historical manifestation of *agape"*.[31] The textual evidence is clear that Niebuhr warns against egoism as corrupting mutuality. Christ as a religious symbol participates in sacrifice. Our old weak patriarchal dependent selves need to be given up, but the goal of his ethic in fulfilled people is as much as is possible under the limits of sin.

Beverly Harrison had preceded Sally McFague in using the term of radical love to discuss passionate, engaged, embodied love in relational terms, Also she had made the point that anger is part of love. Anger reveals the connected relationality of the bearer of the anger. She fears that Christians have nearly stamped Out love and become loving because of their refusal to express anger. Anger, for her, expresses caring and is "a sign of some resistance in ourselves to the moral quality of the social relations in which we are immersed."[32] Anger becomes both the recognition that change is needed and part of the energy to achieve the change. The model of God as a mother angry at the mistreatment of her children is a powerful image and one worthy of our imaging as we enact our Christian ethics. Of course, one may mistakenly direct anger at the wrong source, the wise use of anger implies adequate analysis of the cause of anger. Anger itself may blind one to truth or energize a foolish cause. Anger like passion requires appropriately directed action.

The theory and practice of love in direct action for social change received new impetus in the 20th century. Out of anger for servitude, oppression and anti-colonialism Mahatma Gandhi was able to fashion organized force to impel the British to surrender India to its people. Combining the respect for life from his lain-influenced Hindu traditions with the image of love from the Sermon on the Mount he evolved a theory and practice of non-violent action. By articulating just needs for change, negotiation, purification, disciplined man’s suffering and further negotiations he organized the expression of love which moved the empire. From the success in India, world-wide decolonization became the world’s agenda. Massive non-violent civil disobedience carried forth from India would eventually win civil rights for African-Americans in the United States and be an important ingredient in the overthrow of Communism and apartheid in the closing years of the century.

Gandhi was impelled by *agape* as he learned it from Christian example and study. But British justice in which he trained as a law student in London failed in India and as an Indian or Hindu he utilized love and strategy to force justice to cede power and become more just. Martin

Luther King, Jr. as an African-American minister grafted Gandhi's methods onto the African-American church's own non-violence and his Christian theological studies. In his life and thought non-violent direct action became *agape* in action. This certainly is correct. The church as a spiritual community ought not to adopt the tools of violence for social change even though the world always presupposes violence. The non-violent tactics are necessarily more loving than the violent and more intimate to the nature of Church. The Church cannot deny all violence in the world, particularly it cannot deny the violence of self or communal defense against violent attack. But it can and must teach that *agape* governs church tactics directly and non-church tactics indirectly. In its ecumenical discussions the Church having learned that God is love will have to insist that the religious utilization of violence for social or political change is a failure. If dialogue partners argue for violence for other than justifiable defense the Christian criteria of *agape* will incline Christians to argue that the other religious tradition be amended. Christianity has amended its tradition in light of *agape* and others can learn from that growth that *agape* governs methods as well as goals of religious life, and crusade or fanatic religious mentality is outdated and wrong.

Summary

This running commentary on selective 20th century interpretations of *agape* in Christian Ethics reveals certain convictions and trajectories. The interpretation is undertaken from a Christian realist perspective rooted in John Calvin's sense that Christians and others need moral instruction. The love commandments require their theological roots, they ultimately matter. We also need their practical illustration. The parable of the Good Samaritan follows upon the lawyer's recounting of the double love commandment. The lawyer needed to know who his neighbour was. It was the other encounter in need. The response was to care for and provide what the other needed. So *agape* is ultimate, universal and particular with broad consequences.

To reduce these broad theories of love to a single (even if complex) insight is hazardous. Still for summary a single emphasis may be isolated:

> Walter Rauschenbusch: *Agape* is the power which united human society.

Ernst Troeltsch: *Agape* as personal-social theism produces charity and social harmony.

Reinhold Niebuhr: *Agape* is a transcendent requirement that is relevant to all immanent situations.

Anders Nygren: God's grace is best recognized when our inadequate human love is not equated with God's *agape.*

Gene Outka: Equal regard for the other and justice as equality are expressions of *agape.*

Paul Ramsey: *Agape* is expressed through other norms and non-definitively Christian moral insights.

Sally McFague: The meaning of *agape* is determinative for theology and shapes the meaning of *eros* and *philia* and the three together are metaphors for the trinity.

Beverly Harrison: *Agape* as radical love contains mutuality, anger and friendship more completely than heretofore emphasized.

Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr.: *Agape* is expressed in different religious traditions and societies as a means of social change as well as a religious reality.

Our understanding of love is as Jesus recognized a summary of our total ethic. It is also that on which all our prophetic religion and moral guidelines depend. It governs religion and ethics, if a teaching cannot be reconciled with love it is not Christian ethics. We recognize its source in the nature of God and God's will for humanity. Beyond these general guidelines which determine the shape of Christian ethics, it is the meaning of the particular need of our encountered neighbour as if it were our own needs.

J. Russell Chandran related his reflections on the basis for a Christian social vision to the unifying "bond of love" which carried the same meanings as Rauschenbusch half a world and eighty years removed. Analyzing the vision in relationship to both India and the world ecumenical movement he wrote:

> The goal of the Christian social vision is, therefore, a society in which all people [are] . . . committed to work together for the common well-being of all and for the removal of all forms of injustice and divisiveness, united by the *bond of love* for the realization of the one new humanity.[33]

In commitment to Dalit liberation S. Arokiasamy, S.J. put it pointedly:

> As followers of Jesus, we are called to build a community that embodies the new relationships of God's Kingdom based on freedom, justice, dignity of every human person, love and fellowship. The love commandment assumes these dimensions. It be-came the dharma of the Kingdom, the dharma of Jesus. We are called to commit ourselves to Jesus' praxis. The agenda of Dalit liberation belongs within Jesus' praxis.[34]

The meaning of love is that it unites God and humanity and neighbour to neighbour. In so doing it liberates people and changes structures toward the justice it seeks.

Notes:

1. Walter Rauschenbusch, *Dare We Be Christians?* (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 1993) Originally published 1914.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

3. *ibid.*, p. 30.

4. Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1964) Originally published 1907.

5. Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel.* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1917).

6. *Christianity and the Social Crisis,* p. 67.

7. Ernst Troeltsch. *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches* (New York: The Macmillan Company. 1931).

8. *Ibid, pp. 1004-1006*

9. Ibid., p. 54.

10. H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1951).

11. Reinhold Niebuhr, *Does Civilization Need Religion?* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1929).

12. Reinhold Niebuhr, *Man's Nature and His Communities* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1965).

13. Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man.* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941).

14. Andres Nygren, *Agape: An Ethical Analysis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), p. 8.

15. *Ibid.* p. 219.

16. Gene Outka. *Agape: An Ethical Analysis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), p. 8.

17. *Ibid.,* p. 9.

18. *Ibid.*. p. 8.

19. H Richard Niebuhr, *The Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1956). p. 34-36.

20. Outka, p. 8.

21. D.B. Robertson, ed., Reinhold Niebuhr, *Love and Justice* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1957).

22. *Ibid.,* p. 220.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 50.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 28.

25. Stephen J. Pope finds Outka still working for a individualistic bias in his more recent essay on the love commandment. "Love in Contemporary Ethics," *Journal of Religious Ethics* (Spring, 1995), 23.1, pp. 157-197.

26. Outka (references)

27. *Ibid.*, p. 43.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 260.

29. Sally McFague, *Models of God: Theology for an Ecological Nuclear Age* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), p.149.

30. Barbara Hikert Andolsen "Agape in Feminist Ethics, *'The Journal of Religious Ethics* (Spring, 1981) 9/1, pp. 69-83.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 70.

32. Beverly Wilding Harrison "The Power of Anger in the Work of Love" *Union Seminary Quarterly Review,* XXXVI (Supplementary, 1981) p. 49.

33. J. Russell Chandran, "Biblical and Theological Basis for a Christian Social Vision" *Religion and Society* (June-Sept), No.2 and 3, p.67.

34. S. Arokiaswamy "Faith that does justice" *Religion and Society*, (December, 1990), XXXVII, No. 4, p.67.

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Ethical Issues in the Struggles for Justice by Daniel Chetti and M.P. Joseph

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Chapter 6: Feminist Ethics: A Search for Meaning and Hope from the Margins, by Aruna Gnanadason

(Aruna Gnanadason is on the staff of Women's Desk of the World Council of Churches, Geneva, and an active member of EATWOT.)

Women have not been active in the field of theological ethics in India. Unfortunately, the theological establishment in our country have not taken seriously enough the contributions women can make to this important field of theology. There has been no strategy to empower women to become qualified in this field and therefore the non-existence of women theological ethicists is no surprise. This is indeed a shame that after so many decades of work in theology, India still paints such a dismal picture. I am therefore grateful to the editors that they have asked me to contribute to this volume being brought out to honor Dr. K.C. Abraham. On a personal note, I am very happy to write because we as a family have much to thank Dr. Abraham for - a man who as a pastor to us lived out the principles that he teaches as a theological ethicist. We have known him for many years now, and recognize the important contributions he is making to theological thought and education, in India

and globally.

I have heard Dr. Abraham speak at innumerable gatherings and have read a lot of what he has written and I have been struck by the methodology he uses to link faith to the struggles for life in our societies. His starting point is of course the context of our world today and the many dangers it poses to the life of millions in our world. More recently, the rapid globalization of the world economy and the challenge that the market is posing to the quality of life, has been a central concern to him. Within this broad spectrum of concerns, it is important to note that he is increasingly paying special attention to our ethical responsibility to creation. He has from the earliest stages of his theological work emphasized the need and responsibility of Christians to get immersed into social action and movements as a theological imperative for our times. In a context where millions in our world are either excluded or have been rendered invisible by callous and inhuman policies and actions of international financial institutions and agencies (which are supposedly there to regulate trade and create the space for the powerless), to talk of ethical engagement of Christians in struggle for life, is more urgent now then ever before. I am therefore grateful to Dr. Abraham for his contributions to liberation theology which attempts to shape such a commitment of Christians everywhere.

In my paper, I attempt to open a dialogue on another area of ethical and moral engagement, which receives scant attention in India. Increasingly, women theologians in Asia, Africa and Latin America are pointing out that well-being or the quality of life has another very important dimension this is the way in which we relate to our bodies and talk of sexuality. Much of the violence women experience in the world is centered around the physical abuse and control of our bodies as women and the denial of basic rights over one's own sexuality and sexual choice. Most Indian cultures are inherently patriarchal and have viewed women as the property of men and therefore she has very little control over what happens to her body. We live in cultures in India which have permitted the most outrageous traditional practices, with no regard for what this does to the innermost psyche of individual women and to their communities.

There are two reasons why it is important for women to get more actively engaged in ethical discourse in India, as in all parts of the world. The primary reason for this is that it is often women who find themselves in the midst of almost daily ethical and moral choices that

they are called to make in their own lives but also in the life of their families or communities. Women are critical in molding the ethical consciousness of families -- to deal with the pressure of modern life and the demands it makes, on particularly the young, to break out of the norm and to experiment with life. Women are called to often make moral choice about their own bodies, their relationships as well as their lifestyles. It is matters related to women's sexuality and sexual choice that cause the greatest unease in the church -- and therefore the inability of the church to provide a powerful moral condemnation of the violence women experience.

In 1988, the World Council of Churches launched the Ecumenical Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women. At the mid-point of the Decade, the WCC initiated a project of ecumenical Team Visits - Living Letters - to every member church, for the first time in its history on a single major ecumenical theme. This project is almost complete. The purpose was to reflect with the churches on how far they have come in their solidarity with women, and with them to identify the obstacles that stand in the way of change so that more creative and intentional plans can be set in place for the remaining years of the Decade and beyond. A small group of women and men, a Readers Group, has been analyzing the reports received from the teams. Yes, the WCC has been moving along in its history of standing in solidarity with women but the question is whether the churches are moving along in this history too! The anger, the frustration, the pain and agony. . . but also the extraordinary love and patient endurance and perseverance of women in the churches is very evident. The Church on the other hand, has neither responded to the pain and outrage of women, nor has it recognized this immense love women have for the Church. The Church is steadily "leaving women behind".

What we discover through the Team Visits is that now steps are being taken by many churches to "accommodate" the presence and participation of women. This indeed is not what women yearn for. The Decade process has made it clear that to most women, it is not those small concessions that the churches offer that really matter. The question being asked by women is whether the Decade will invite "the churches and the ecumenical movement to discover and nurture an enriched understanding of the very nature and mission of the church . . . growing from and supporting a new community, embodying the visions of all persons . . . ," as the Readers Group describe it in their interim report. They add, "Women are calling for the strengthening of the

community of women and men in a way that will lead to fundamentally new understanding of ecclesiology."

How can the churches meet and dialogue on their brave commitments to koinonia and the unity they seek, without facing up to the fragmentation of the community of women and men? How will visible unity ever be reached as long as there is this brokenness within each of our churches and societies? The Readers Group challenges the WCC to relook at its criteria for membership and the way in which it calls on the churches to dialogue. Such claims do indeed sound presumptuous -- but is it not true that at the heart of a new community of women and men in the church lies that basic question of how we live in faith and faithfulness so that we will truly reflect in our life that we are indeed the Church of Jesus Christ?

The Team Visits have opened our eyes to the extent of violence that women experience and the resounding silence of the Church or indeed its theological legitimization of the violence. I share some images and I ask -- how can we claim discipleship when we as the Church refuse to face up to the moral and ethical challenges that images, such as these described below, evoke?

The image of a woman who is battered for 20 years by her clergyman husband and who would forgive him, "because the Bible tells her to," the image of a young mother and father who cannot understand why their three-year-old daughter was sexually abused in the day care center to which they had entrusted her each morning; the image of a woman who was sacked from the women's program of her church because she refused to comply to the request of the president of the church that she and the other women vote for him in his election campaign; the image of a 14-year-old migrant domestic worker who faces the death sentence on trumped up charges, because she would not give in to the sexual demands of her employer; the image of a male priest of a church saying that every time he beats his wife she should thank him, because she is one step closer to salvation; or the priest who would make sexual advances on a woman who out of vulnerability turns to the church for pastoral comfort. . . these are but a glimpse of the many such images that are gathered during the course of this Decade. The Ecumenical Decade is challenging the church not to ignore this reality but to courageously speak out and stand in solidarity with women. How can the churches not face up to their responsibility to hold each other mutually accountable for the violence in their midst? How can we make

statements about our evangelistic witness to issues of justice, peace and the integrity of creation in the world, when even within the womb of the church, there is no safety for women?

Even as I write this article, I have before my mind's eye a letter I received recently from a woman in Nigeria. She has both her Masters in Theology and a Masters in Education, and yet she writes: "I am in a very difficult and life-threatening marital situation and it is imperative that my children and I get to safety as soon as possible (before I become a statistic of domestic violence). . . ." For her the ethical choice is clear whether to live on in a farcical and dangerous relationship so as to serve the demands made on her by society . . . or to protect herself and her children. Hers indeed is the kind of moral choice which millions of women are being forced to take, increasingly.

To speak of the violence we experience as women is not easy -- every encounter is surrounded by the tears of women. We weep together, but we also reflect on the theological challenge to us as women, to transcend our victimization and transform our pain into political power and action. It is true that it is the very personal faith, a childlike spirituality that has sustained women who live in contexts of violence . . . but we so easily see the inseparable link between our faith and our obedient action in the world and demand a violence-free and safe world.

The second reason why women must get more engaged in this discourse is because they have something radically new to offer -- a new way of understanding society, of human relationships and even of being church. Women are speaking with a new voice, a courageous voice which challenges many traditional assumptions -- the most important is the challenge to the notion that women are required, by tradition and by the biblical heritage, to submit to all forms of inhuman treatment. The courageous work that women in theology do in all parts of the world, to deconstruct basic theological and reconstruct more inclusive and life affirming principles, is an example of this.

In this article I would like to explore what implications this issue has on the Church on the basis of two basic principles: the question of "the common good" and the use of "power and authority."

To Be or Not to Be: To Live for the Common Good

I have opted to use this as an ethical yardstick, because often women, or

rather the women's movement in India, has been targeted and blamed for the breaking up of the family unit. I often have it said to me, when I speak in gatherings, that women always only speak of negative images, never affirming what is positive and good in our lives -- but is there not a basis on which women are forced to speak out, or is silence preferred? In the Indian psyche, the sanctity of the family is to be maintained at all costs for the common good, even if it requires a woman to live in daily violence, even in jeopardy for her life. It is disheartening to see how the work of a core of committed women in the women's movement in India is so often trivialized or rejected. The work they do to avoid perpetuating or acquiescing in the oppression of women but rather to contribute, whenever possible, to the further understanding of dissolution of sexual inequality, has often been branded and labeled as "Western" and therefore rejected as not being related to the India's "cultural ethos." But then, it is out of a commitment to "the common good" that the women's movement in India is to be weighed. It must be recognized for what it is: ". . . the women's movement represents, not merely an oppositional force fuelled by anger, a rather negative reaction to oppression, but the development of a distinctive female culture, a positive creative force inspiring men and women alike," write Johanna Liddle and Rama Joshi.[1]

In fact, I will boldly claim that the women's movement has at its central binding force a commitment to "the common good." Perhaps the most striking example of this truth is what happened in Beijing in September of 1995. Over 30,000 women gathered in the holiday town of Huairou, some 60 km. from Beijing, for the parallel NGO gathering of the IV UN World Conference on Women, Peace and Development. They came from all parts of the world, they came with their commitment and courage, they came with their multitude of concerns and voices but they came to meet each other, to share their stories of struggle and pain. It was clear that the women gathered often entered the struggle from different vantage points, they did not always agree with all that was spoken, but what could not be ignored was that there were some common issues that did draw them together -- it was not accidental or designed that over one-third of the 4,000 workshops by different women's groups, from all regions of the world, focuses on the issue of violence against women -- some of the best being organized by Indian women, What was at the heart of Huairou was the commitment of the women present to draw energy and support from each other -- it was a consciousness that they were doing it all "for the common good." Women have through the centuries been devoted to ending all forms of

violence. This commitment extends beyond what happens to individual women, it is built on the determination that war, poverty and cultural and social practices are the forms of violence that destroy the fabric of families and societies.

However, Asian women draw attention to the fact that the family in Asia is a source of control of women:

> The family, along with the state today, has sought to control women through rigid definitions of sexuality and appropriate for itself reproductive rights and control over her body; violence and subjugation have been woven into institutionalized forms of religion whose patriarchal tenets have marginalized and domesticated the female and the feminine, shackling her and legitimizing violence against her. Social and legal codes of justice have either been blind to crimes against women like wife-battering and prostitution that have in fact received tacit social approval; or have seen violations like sexual assault and rape as acts of individual aberration and deviance and have even rendered some totally invisible, as in the case of homophobia.[2]

All this is in fact what does breaks the family unit. There is the constant demand on a woman to give up everything, most of all her dignity, even if this demands submissiveness and silence in the face of outrageous and inhuman treatment, so as to serve the common good. There are in India proverbs, teachings and cultural norms which are taught to a woman from childhood, preparing her for such a life of hardship and injustice. There is for instance the old Hindi saying that accompanies a woman from the family of her birth into that of her marriage: "A woman is like spit, once spat out she cannot be taken back in." She is expected to give up her identity, her dignity, and in cases even her name for "the common good." She cannot "be taken back" even when she tries to warn her family that her life is in danger. The almost daily newspapers stories of "accidental deaths" of women in their homes reveals the consequence of our silence.

One way by which the control has been achieved is by privatizing violence against women into the domestic realm. Corrine Kumar. writes:

And in the traditional human rights discourse there is no place for

women. Human rights was born of a specific world view which endorsed the relegation of women to the private domain. The privatization of crimes and violence and crimes as a domestic issue made these violations invisible, denying them their public face and any political significance or social reparation. The assumptions of gender intricately woven into the international covenants on human rights articulated in 1948 legitimated the denigration of women. The founding fathers of the liberal tradition from Hegel to Rousseau understood the feminine as woman's biological nature, lack of political consciousness, emotionality, irrationality, all of which made her a threat to public life and citizenship. Women could contribute by rearing citizens, but not by being citizens. Liberalism and the politics of the nation-state sought to make men good citizens and women good private persons."[3]

And to this is added, the theological dimension which again privatizes women's pain...

"Christ died for you on the Cross, why can't you bear some suffering too?", "Your husband is your cross . . . you have to carry whatever comes, silently." "Christ forgave . . . you must also forgive . . . such statements are no figments of my imagination -- they are words of advice given by clergy, or in other words, the Church, to women who finally opt to seek refuge in the Church when the daily violence becomes unbearable or dangerous. This indeed is what makes the discussion on violence so difficult to deal with -- the fact that it is a theological problem and that the violence is so often legitimized by religious practices and teachings -- including that of the Church. The silence is rooted in these theological convictions and teachings. The doctrine of forgiveness, the doctrine of the Cross as a symbol of redemption, the myths and the mysteries surrounding the human body and human sexuality, the identification of sin and temptation with femaleness, the Image of God, the mind/body dualism that devalues female life, the depreciation of creation . . . these are some of the problems Christianity poses, giving subtle sanction to the violence women experience. Sometimes the church tends to engage in an unqualified affirmation of sacrifice and suffering for the sake of the larger community -- the common good -- without taking into consideration who sacrifices what, for whom and within what kind of relationships.

The Church's reluctance to deal with the issue of human sexuality is at the heart of the problem. All religious traditions have tended to convey

warped images of sexuality, providing quasi-divine legitimization for rape and abuse of women's bodies. It is therefore easier to discuss, for example, the economic and political roots of prostitution than the reason why men seek out prostitutes. The Church would rather take a moralistic stand on the women involved in prostitution, blaming them for their lack of a moral code of behavior than challenge the men to examine their depraved sexuality. Joy Bussert writes: "Christian theologians like Luther projected 'uncontrolled sexuality' and thus responsibility for the fall, onto women, as the object of sexuality, since sexuality appears to be what they feared most in themselves."[4]

To achieve this order of power women had to be kept in control in the private sphere, with rituals, religious practices, customs and traditions, defining "the common good" from a particular vantage point which will render women invisible. What is needed is a radical reclaiming of what we mean by the common good. Keep silent and listen . . . the women of India and of the world are reclaiming their right to do just this, out of their deep commitment to preserve life.

Power and Authority. . . Can the Church Sing Another Song?

Women often as they struggle for justice in painful situations are ridden with feelings of guilt. Often they will say, "but does not the Bible say that as women we must be submissive?". . . or "I will have to obey my husband, this is what my pastor told me is the expected behavior of a 'good' woman." To convince women in such situations that there is another truth which has to be unraveled, is not always easy. Such a dilemma is related to two central concerns of theology and ethics: power and authority. Therefore women theologians have recognized the need to also deem it important and some new insights are emerging. Letty Russell, in much of her writings explores this theme, as she attempts to demonstrate what constitutes genuine authority. She writes that in fact, "everything feminists touch in a patriarchal society seems to turn into a question of authority."[5]

Women theologians have particularly drawn attention to the fact that it is the "authority" of the scripture and tradition that are problematic. This is because the starting point for women's theological work, in all regions of the world, is their day to day, existential experience of life. How they understand their daily experiences of struggle, informs how they understand the place and authority of the Scriptures and other religious traditions. Kwok Pui Lan, "rejects both the sacrality of the Bible and the

canon as a guarantee for truth." She writes:

> For a long time such a "mystified" doctrine has taken away the power from women, the poor and the powerless, for it helps to sustain the notion that the "divine presence" is located somewhere else and not in ourselves. Today, we must claim back the power to look at the Bible with our own eyes and to stress that divine immanence is within us, not in something sealed off and handed down from almost 2000 years ago.[6]

I cite Kwok Pui Lan as one example of what women raise as central in all parts of the world. The Church has held women ransom for too long, based on what in fact constitutes the basis for the authoritative voice of control of women.

Letty Russell writes that "if authority is understood as authorizing the inclusion of all persons as partners, and power is understood as empowerment for self-actualization together with others, then the entire game of authority shifts. . . ." [7]

Ecclesiology and Ethics --- A Way to Reconstruct Anew Authority and Power?

I understand the new work on ecclesiology and ethics which the World Council of Churches has launched to be a way to find new ethical principles to interpret the very nature and being of the Church. Of course throughout Church history there have been efforts to discover the connections between ecclesiology and ethics. The entry point into the debate has varied, but there has always been an awareness in the Church that the search for visible unity and the communion the churches seek, is connected inextricably with the authority with which the Church interprets and lives up to its traditions, but also the way in which we act as Christians in the world. In fact it is in servanthood to Christ that the Church discovers its basis and this is what formulates its ethical and moral authority in the world. The Ronde Consultation on "Costly Unity," which drew together the work on ecclesiology and ethics put it this away: "the Church not only has, but is, a social ethic, a *koinonia* ethic."[8]

Such an affirmation, of course gives to the Church the responsibility to

engage in the moral formation of its community -- it is to "help shape both character and particular moral choices and action people take, singly and together. In doing so, they teach and embody virtues, values, obligations and moral visions."[9]

But then, new questions have been raised in recent times about this authority of the Church by what many see as the complicity of the churches in political conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, in Rwanda and Burundi, in South Africa and in Northern Ireland. In all the situations cited, a section of the Church was in itself directly involved in provoking and participating in the violence -- often giving theological legitimization for the conflicts or for the oppression of "the other." Though slightly different in context, one could add an event that must not be forgotten: the silence of the Indian church during the Emergency period (1975-1977) even though everyone knew of all the atrocities committed by the Indira Gandhi regime. But then, equally shameful was the protest lodged by the officers of the NCCI, against WCC for having condemned emergencies. All this has led to an understanding that for the Church:

> Some of the presuppositions which have been taken for granted in the past are beginning to crumble. Regarding the Church and its self-understanding, the question is no longer simply when and by what authority the Church (as distinct from the individual Christian) should take a stance on ethical issues. Instead the focus is on what it means to be the Church in face of the fundamental ethical challenges of our time or, to put it differently, how church fellowship can be maintained in face of ethical conflicts. It is no longer possible to assume the traditional theological bases of the understanding of the church as given and concentrate solely on the question of the legitimate connection between ecclesiology and ethics. The ethical debates surrounding the struggle against racism, the relationship of rich and poor and the Christian witness to peace have opened up a new perception of the reality of the Church, which needs to be worked through ecclesiologically.[10]

Unfortunately, as women, we have found it difficult to persuade the churches and the ecumenical movement that the issue of violence against women is as much an issue of ecclesiology as is complicity in

political conflicts, because women have been silent for too long and the churches too have been complicit by their often silence, but also by their sometimes legitimization of the violence theologically. The Decade has pointed this out repeatedly to the churches-first that the veneer of silence with which violence against women is dealt with is a moral failure of the Church and secondly that outrageous biblical and theological legitimizations of violence, calling into question the authority and power of the church, as a moral community. In a recent discussion on "impunity" against the former corrupt political regime in Argentina, individual after individual present spoke out in shame against their silence in the face of oppression -- each one felt that they had succumbed to the fear of repression, maybe of the possibility of "disappearance" -- but now they recognized that their silence had sanctioned so much of the violence.

This had meant that many corrupt leaders who had been accused of crimes against humanity escape without being charged, tried and punished for criminal acts committed, with official sanction, in times of war of dictatorial rule. "Impunity can happen by default -- the deliberate lack of action at all."**11** Suddenly, in the midst of that litany of voices from various people, a woman spoke up. She was middle-class and smartly attired. She spoke of the many years of violence she had experienced in her home in the hands of her husband and her shame at the silence that she had decided to maintain. She recognized her submissiveness as granting impunity to the perpetrator of the violence against women -- perhaps her only option is to get away from that abusive and life-threatening relationship. Does this not challenge the churches and the ecumenical movement to respond to the issue of violence against women as an ecclesiological concern, as serious and as vital as are other issues of moral engagement to which the Church is challenged?

To continue Konrad Raiser's analysis of the new debate, all of which comes alive, if we would only look at violence against women in the same framework. He writes, "The radicalizing of these questions becomes especially clear if we take seriously that the scope of ethical responsibility is no longer confined to life in personal relations or in social structures. What is at stake is the preservation of the very foundations of life itself."**12** He is of course referring here to our inhumanity to all creation, but then the question I ask is whether such an enquiry can ignore the fact that for women living in unsafe environments it is life itself that is constantly at threat. Added are the

new forms of violence being heaped on women by the colonizing of our wombs by bio-technology and other scientific methodology, controlling the reproductive choices and capacities of women -- threatening the "very foundations of life itself."

The Voice of Hope from the Margins. . .

from the Excluded

Women have found ways to deal with the violence. They have moved away from their victimization into recovering a sense of their identity and integrity. Out of such a commitment to discover the sources of their power, women have been able to be creative in the conceptualization of new forms of community and relationship. Corrine Kumar raises this in the form of a series of questions which are the challenges that women pose to each other and to the Church:

The patriarchal ethic has only violent answers. We need a radically new ethic, another vision of the world. Can we women who know the sacredness of life return the spiritual to the material? Can we rediscover the feminine in the increasingly violent male ethos of civilizations? Can we bring back the sacred to the earth? It is not difficult to see that we are at the end of an epoch. Can we find new words, seek new ways, create new possibilities out of the material and human spirit to transform the existing exploitative social order and discern the great human potential?[13]

Corrine speaks Out of a "secular" consciousness of the women's movement which increasingly seeks the "sacred," the "spiritual." The feminist theological movement in all regions of the world attempts to discover a theological response to these "secular" questions. It begins where women in theology attempt to deconstruct basic ethical principles such as "the common good" and "the question of moral power and authority," but from there it moves to the creative impulses we see around us, as women in faith and faithfulness reconstruct the future image and face of the Church as a "community of Christ, bought with a price, where everyone is welcome,"[14] as Letty Russell describes it. Her image of the Church in the Round -- of round table talk and of leadership in the round is an exciting image of the church inclusive and open, welcoming, hospitable, comforting, prophetic and visibly present in the struggles for justice and life. Indeed she aptly sums up what women are saying. The ecclesial reality of the Church is intricately

interwoven with its life as a moral community -- it has to constantly test its authority to be the moral voice in the world against its ability to respond with courage and conviction to the voices of the excluded, the voices from the margins. The Decade has gathered together the voices of women globally -- it is now the responsibility of the Church and of the ecumenical movement to stop and listen . . . for wisdom flows from here . . . .

Listen to the women
Listen
Listen to the women
They are arriving
Over the wise distances
On their dancing feet
Make way for the women
Listen to them. . .[15]

Notes:

1. Johanna Liddle and Joshi, *Daughters of Independence. Gender, Caste, and Class in India* (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1988), p. 5.

2**.** From the Bali Declaration, Asian Regional Meeting on Violence Against Women held in Bali, Indonesia, organized by WCC, the Christian Conference of Asia and the Asian Women's Human Rights Commission, 1-6 August 1993.

3. Corrine Kumar. "The Universality of Human Rights Discourse, in Gnanadason, Kanyoro Musimbi; McSpadden Lucia Ann, *Women, Violence and Non-Violent Change* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1996). p. 42.

4. Joy Bussert, *Battered Women: From a Theology of Suffering to an Ethic of Empowerment* (Lutheran Church in America, 1986).

5. Russell Letty M., *Household of Freedom, Authority in Feminist Theology* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1987), P. 59.

6. Kwok, Pui Lan, quoted by Chung Hyun Kyung, *Struggle to Be the*

Sun Again (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1993), p. 107.

7. Russell Letty M., *op. cit.,* p. 61.

8. "Costly Unity?' Final Statement of World Council of Churches Consultation on Koinonia and Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation. Ronde, Denmark, February 1993.

9. Best Thomas and Robra Martin (eds.), *Ecclesiology and Ethics; Costly Commitment.* WCC Consultation in Jerusalem, November 1994.

10. Konrad Raiser, "Ecumenical Discussion of Ecclesiology and Ethics," *The Ecumenical Review,* Vol. 48, No. I, January 1996, pp. 7-8.

11. Harper Charles, "From Impunity to Reconciliation" in *Impunity, An Ethical Perspective,* WCC Publications, 1996. p. ix.

12. Raiser Konrad, *op. cit.,* p. 8.

13. Kumar Corrine, *op. **cit.,*** p. 53.

14. Russell Letty M., *Church in the Round, Feminist Interpretation of the Church* (Westminster: John Knox Press, 1993), p. 14.

15. Corrine Kumar, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

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Ethical Issues in the Struggles for Justice by Daniel Chetti and M.P. Joseph

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Chapter 7: Theology and Politics: A South African Perspective, by Simon S Maimela

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The relationship between theology and politics or religion and politics is a very difficult one for some people. There is often a misunderstanding that the coupling of theology and politics would lead theologians and churches to be absorbed in politics at the expense of the furtherance of the gospel and salvation of people.

The question as to whether there should be any relation between theology and politics has often arisen in the countries where there is constitutionally no "official state church", and therefore where the separation between church and state is invoked. In such countries ministers of religion are encouraged and indeed expected to stick to religion and to leave the realm of politics to the so-called experts or professional politicians and bureaucrats. In consequence, the extent to which political decisions and actions raise theological questions and

vice versa is never clearly confronted and reflected upon and clarified. This is because people often work with the mistaken assumption of confining the meaning of "politics" to "party politics", and of casting votes in which case the church as church is expected to take a "neutral" stance in order to avoid alienating or dividing its constituents who might hold different political persuasions. Thus by involving itself in "party politics" the church might give a wrong impression that it favors one party and against another.

Put somewhat differently, it is when the word politics is understood to be identical with party politics that a confusion arises, regarding whether religion has anything to do with politics, leading some people to call on the church and its ministers to abstain from making political utterances.

However, we want to suggest that the word politics need not be understood in this narrow sense of "party politics". In its broader sense the word politics means human attempt to structure or organize life or society for the benefit of the people concerned. It is in this sense that the Greek philosopher, Aristotle, in his rejection of Platonic dualism correctly argued that human beings are by definition *political beings.* As such they organize life and construct structures and institutions to regulate their relationships among themselves. Even individuals, when they do such planning as budgeting for their financial needs, work in order to place meals on their tables, decide where to send children to school or do shopping in order to get the value for their money et cetera, they are involved in politics. Therefore, politics, like the air we breathe, is unavoidable whether we are consciously aware of this or not.

If "politics" is understood in this broad sense, then the church and theologians cannot afford to stand above politics in the situations they find themselves, for to do so would be an abdication of their responsibility. For, whether we admit it or not, political decisions and actions involve the people about whom God cares very much and, therefore, political exercise has theological dimensions. It is against this background that our countryman, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, has rightly argued that the church has to be concerned about the secular things such as politics and economics, education, medical aid, the rent and housing, food prices et cetera. This concern arises out of the fact that Christians believe that God, the Creator, is the Lord over human life in all aspects -- be it political, economic and social. Indeed, it is impossible for Christians and churches to be non-political because to do

so implies that there are substantial aspects of human life over which God and the gospel have no say. Such *apolitical* stance will create an unacceptable dualism between the spiritual and the material aspects of life, implying that there is another Lord who is in charge of the political sphere than God, our Creator and Redeemer. Indeed, to invoke the separation between religion and politics in order to uphold this sort of Platonic dualism is to suggest that human beings somehow belong to the powers that be, that is, they are at the mercy of political authorities who can do what they please with them without any fear of rebuke from God through the prophetic ministry of the Church.

It would further mean that, as Creator, God is totally indifferent to what happens to and among human beings and how human beings treat one another. Significantly, the witness of the Church over the centuries has denied the possibility that God is indifferent to what human beings do to themselves and to the life that has been entrusted to them, because every human being must one day account for their actions before their Creator. For this reason what happens to and with human beings makes the difference as to whether they are under the dominion of some demon or the dominion of God, who cares about human life and has, in Jesus Christ, demonstrated a willingness to come to its defense. The cash value of this claim is that the problems of politics and theology are not as separable as it is often assumed by those who are ready to advise theologians and preachers to stick to religion and not meddle in politics.

It is important to note that the inseparability between religion and politics has been part of church history since 313 AD. when, for better or worse, the Emperor Constantine the Great declared Christian religion as *religio licita***,** that is, an approved religion. From that time on Christians began to identify their welfare and the protection of the gospel with the fortunes and the security of the Roman Empire. We may, of course, regret the fact that this alliance between church and state has allowed the ruling classes to co-opt Christian religion in order to legitimate the interests, the hopes, the struggles and the ambitions of the dominant elites at the expense of the oppressed and powerless sections of society. In consequence, the Church and its theology, reflecting and being conditioned by the values of the ruling classes developed a religion of oppression and exploitation which justified the economic bondage and domination to which the majority of human family became subjected. Commenting on the misuse of religion to legitimate the interests of dominant classes no lesser an individual than the French Emperor Napoleon, when, with deep insight, observed:

> As far as I am concerned, I do not see in religion the mystery of the incarnation but the mystery of social order: it links the idea of inequality to heaven which prevents the rich person from being murdered by the poor. How can there be order in the state without religion? Society cannot exist without inequality of fortunes and the inequality of fortunes could not subsist without religion. Whenever a half-starved person is near anothers who is glutted, it is impossible to reconcile the difference if there is not an authority to say to him: "God wills it so, it is necessary that there be rich and poor in the world, but afterwards in eternity there will be a different distribution" (cited in Lindberg 1981:37).

It was in response to this misuse of religion that led the Enlightenment thinkers to question the idea of state churches which, in the name of religion, condemned the so-called heretics and persecuted many people who were perceived to be a threat to the security of the Church and state. Tired of these persecutions, thinkers of the Enlightenment called for a principle of Criticism so that all dogmas could be subjected to and be justified before "the bar of reason." In so doing, they helped to cultivate a spirit of anti-dogmatism, anti-religious fanaticism and toleration in matters of faith and personal conscience (Maimela 1987:9).

Taken at their face value the demands of "reasonableness" in religion and the choice in matters of personal belief appear innocent and worth embracing. However, this spirit of tolerance was interpreted by the liberalism of the 18th and 19th centuries to mean that religion is a private and personal matter between God and the individual, an individual who must be left to live without interference from other authorities regarding what one must believe or how to lead one’s life. This liberal mood is summarized beautifully by Welch (1974:31) who points out what the plea for anti-dogmatic reasonableness reflects:

> The general tendency to the secular and the bourgeois in the (18th century) life, the desire to settle down to relative security and a life governed by "good common sense" as one well-satisfied with his or her lot, (the lot, that is, of an educated and financially secure English person in a mercantile culture), not thinking too highly or too humbly of oneself, but seeing oneself as a pretty decent sort of a fellow, entitled to some pursuit of self-interest, and

> certainly not to be preoccupied either with the joys of heaven or the torments of hell.

The consequence of this non-interfering kind of religion was the conception of God as a being who stands aloof from human affairs. After all, the Copernican revolution and scientific advances had revealed that the world and humanity operated according to certain natural laws, laws of cause and effect which should not be violated by providential interferences as religion claims.

In the 19th century both the Church and theologians were caught unprepared to deal with the liberal's insistence that God be banished from public life through the restriction of the gospel to a private life of individuals, but the Church was willing to pay the costly price for its survival when it accepted the view that religion is a private matter. In practice, this meant that religion has no place in the realm of politics, economics, and other socio-cultural spheres -- leaving thereby the realm of law and order, science, the state, racism, sexism and classism and other forms of social oppression beyond the reach of the Gospel.

The emergence of religious revivals and pietism in the 19th century did not help much to overcome this dualism, because of its overemphasis on the cultivation of private virtue and piety. For, priests bought wholesale the motto of liberalism and its individualism, which effected the separation between the private and public life, the realm of the inner life and external realm, between the secular and the sacred spheres, and between the Sunday faith and weekday morality.

The upshot of what has been said is that the thoroughgoing separation between the secular and the religious spheres is a recent development during the 18th and 19th centuries, which lead to the confusion regarding what relation religion ought to have with politics. Regrettably, some Christians concluded that theology and the Church have no place in the public matters which are better served when they are left to the so-called experts. Not surprising, it has taken the Church a long time to develop a critical and prophetic theology with which to confront the social evils and oppression which have condemned the majority of the human family to abject poverty and dehumanizing life.

Against this dualism, between the internal and external, private and public, a dualism which has led to the exploitation and oppression of many human beings, I contend that followers of Christ have no other

option but to take an active interest in the earthly, secular things such as politics and economics because Jesus would not permit us the luxury of dwelling in a "spiritual ghetto unrelated and unconcerned with real life issues". I am persuaded by Archbishop Tutu's contention that we must resist socially oppressive forces because the God whom we worship is one who:

> Cares enormously about children in resettlement camps, who must drink water to fill their stomachs because there is no food; he cares about shivering women at Nyanga whose flimsy plastic shelters are being destroyed by police; He cares that the influx control system together with Bantunization are destroying black family life not accidentally but by deliberate government policy; He cares that people die mysteriously in detention; He cares that something horrible is happening in this country when a man will often mow down his family before turning the gun on himself; He cares that life seems so dirt cheap (cited in Maimela 1986:43).

It is because God cares so much about the life the Creator has made that God is not useless and irrelevant to human struggles for political freedom, but is worthy of praise and worship. In consequence, Archbishop Tutu believes that he cannot be the disciple of such a caring God and remain aloof from socio-political involvement. For he is conscious of the fact that in their interactions with one another, human beings, by virtue of being social beings, are of necessity political beings whose actions have both political dimensions and involve moral responsibility before God and their fellows.

It is the God who seeks the lost, who binds the broken-hearted, who rescues the afflicted and is the comforter of the weak. Because of the love, concern and care that this God shows to those who call on him/her, the God portrayed by liberation theology is able to elicit human response of faith and trust. This portrait of God in liberation theology is impressive enough to move, inspire and involve those who have encountered God's love in acts of love and liberation towards their human fellows. It is the God about whom Archbishop Desmond Tutu could, with exuberant tone and deep insight, testify:

> we worship an extraordinary God who says that in order for your worship of me to be authentic, in order for your

> love of me to be true, I cannot allow you to remain in your spiritual ghetto. Your love for me, your worship of me, are authenticated and expressed by your love and your service of your fellows (cited in Maimela 1986:49).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the debate about the relationship between theology and religion sheds some light from another perspective, which, often betrays a conservative mind-set. Put more crudely, when people demand that religion should be kept separate from politics, and especially that the Church should not preach politics, they usually say that the preacher must not meddle in *"dirty* politics". The thought here is that the Gospel and the Church are concerned with things which are clean and lovely, with holy things, with the soul and the hereafter, with exalted things. By contrast, politics is seen as *dirty,* as concerned with "worldly" things, unworthy and unholy things, things which should not be allowed to pollute the Gospel and the Church. Politicians often solemnly admonish the Church and its preachers and clergy to confine themselves to their task and leave politics and social life to the politicians, particularly the government. These politicians, of course, do not speak of politics as dirty, but they base what they say on the same sharp distinction between the Church (or Gospel) and politics.

We may approach the question of the meaning of politics from two angles.

First, we can consider the concrete question of what is that politicians and particularly the government are doing. A government makes laws which citizens must obey. These laws govern the lives of the citizens; they set out to improve certain conditions and to create other conditions; they determine what is right and may be done and what is wrong and may not be done?

Secondly, we may look at the question from a slightly different angle. Politics, and the government in particular, have to do with the structuring of the society. It is the government which determines how the money gained from taxation is to be applied, how much is spent on armaments, how much on large industrial projects and so on. Such decisions can change the whole course of events in a country and so change the lives of millions of people. It is the authorities who determine whether national service shall be made compulsory for young

men and women, how long that service shall be made compulsory for young men and women, how long that service shall be and what they will do. Have all these things nothing to do with the Gospel? Has the Gospel nothing to say about war and peace, about our lives and how our lives are changed by the projects of politicians? In South Africa politicians used to determine where men and women may live and where they may not live, where they may work and where they may not work, where they may vote and own property, who will have free and compulsory education and who will not. Such are the all embracing decisions they make! Has the Gospel nothing to do with all these? Does the Bible have nothing to say about what our community should be like? Do we not have Amos and James in the Bible?

Enough rhetorical questions, the Gospel has a great deal to do with politics. It would therefore be wrong for us to assume that the Gospel and politics can be kept in separate compartments. The Gospel has much to say to the politician and to the government. Or did Elijah and Jeremiah and Amos and Jesus not have much to say to the authorities of their times?' But this argument still has not clarified what is meant by the term "political theology".

Let us approach the problem from another angle. People of Jesus' time felt that they were quite defenceless against supernatural powers. They were at the mercy of diseases and catastrophes over which they had no control. Their faith in God was shaken by natural disasters. As recently as two centuries ago the earthquake in Lisbon (1755) which killed thousands of people, raised the question of the existence of a God of love, because things beyond human control, things in and outside nature threatened human existence.

The events of the Twentieth Century have made this kind of question even more pertinent. Not only have natural disasters such as earthquakes occurred; atrocities of apocalyptic dimensions have been committed by the so-called civilized nations. There was Auschwitz, a German concentration camp where millions of Jews were killed during World War II. There were Hiroshima and Nagasaki where nuclear bombs killed thousands of people in a flash: not only soldiers, but also women and children and unborn infants. These were not natural disasters, they were political disasters. These were carefully planned and executed events in which politicians and governments took decisions.

Has the Gospel nothing to say about things like these? Has the Church

no message of judgement upon the racial hatred of the Germans and their murder of the Jews? All these things occurred as a result of political decisions, dirty political decisions.

Was it not, however, precisely for sinners and for the enemies of God that Jesus came? Does John 3:16 have nothing to say about mass murder and about the oppression of human beings? *In truth, the Gospel has everything to do with politics.*

In our century we have even come to see such matters as disease in a new light. Disease is not simply the fate of an individual assigned to him or her from above. One can become ill by working under bad conditions, by living in a badly built house, by being underfed. One can die of an illness because efficient medical services are not available. Has the Gospel nothing to do with this kind of thing? If not, then it was a mistake to do medical missionary work.

Stated briefly, we no longer live under conditions of cosmic powerlessness and slavery that characterized the lives of people from the first centuries of the Christian era until quite recently. We live in a political world, a world in which human political decisions have tremendous influence over people's lives and opportunities and circumstances. Because the Gospel is concerned with our lives, with love to God and neighbor, the Church has an indispensable message for our political life.

Three important points need to be noted. First, it is a delusion to believe that some churches are not involved in politics. All churches and religious groups have a political influence. Even those churches that do not criticize politicians and the government are involved in politics. By their silence they support and promote the government's actions. Simply by saying nothing, they accept what is happening and sanction it by silence.

Secondly, let us note that politics can indeed be dirty but that it does not need to be dirty. A.A. van Ruler has called politics a holy matter, and he was right. Reformed theology has always called for the sovereignty of Jesus over all society. God created the earth and mankind and has made us responsible for one another. How we live together, what our community looks like, how we act towards the poor and the underprivileged, who may marry whom, who may live where -- all these matters are God's business. A government that does not heed the

message of the gospel cannot do the will of God. Therefore, the church which is not continually expressing the will of God to the government is not fulfilling its calling. For, in the first place, no politician or government can by herself, himself or itself know the will of God for all the difficult situations in a society. They are dependent upon the word of God and on the Church as the proclaimer of that word. Further, it is often difficult for politicians and for a government to carry out God's will, particularly if the government has been democratically elected but finds out, after the election, that it has to act in ways which are unpopular with the voters. If, in such a situation, the Church does not let its voice be heard clearly and persistently, then it is abandoning the government to its fate and denying the Lord Jesus Christ.

The third important point is: The scope of political theology is much wider. It does not concentrate only on abuses. Political theology is based on the insight that human beings are increasingly creating their own history and destiny. We are responsible for the shape which our lives will take today and tomorrow. The things that determine our lives are our own creation.

Cars, trains, the radio, machines they may never be switched off, these things which so determine our lives are our own creation. How much food is produced, and what people's standard of living will be, are increasingly determined by planning and are less and less dependent upon forces beyond human control. This situation is usually defined as the political situation in which we live. We must accept responsibility for the world as it is today and as it will be tomorrow. This all-embracing, human-made society is created by political decisions, and so in a sense the whole of life may be called the political situation. It is here that men and women express themselves. This is where things can be changed.

Political theology, then, means the one that interprets the Bible with an eye to this political situation. Who should have a say in the decisions which determine our lives today and tomorrow? Who has the right to share in the prosperity that is now possible? Is there any limit to the things we may make and alter (heart transplants, artificial insemination, "test-tube babies," nuclear weapons -- more than enough to destroy all forms of life on earth!)? Can we regard it as acceptable that two or three people can determine the destiny of all humankind -- those people being for instance the leaders of the United States of America, the Republic of Russia and China? For whatever reason, one of these men or women

could decide tomorrow to wage nuclear war and within 24 hours all human life on earth could be snuffed out.

Has the Gospel anything to say to this human-made history? This is the most fundamental and legitimate question posed by political theology. Although many forms of political theology may be unacceptable and have endorsed unbiblical concepts, the basic starting point of political theology is sound. God has created the earth and loves the world (even though it is a sinful world). This belief has decisive consequences for our activity in the out-and-out political situation in which we all live.

The view expressed above is soundly rooted in the biblical tradition (which affirms the sovereignty of Jesus Christ in all areas of life). Although most of us probably grew up in different traditions, we might nevertheless agree that people fall into either of two categories: those who accept God without the world, or those who accept the world without God. This is the basic difference (somewhat oversimplified) between Christianity and atheism. The majority of the established churches have separated God from the world, thinking that those who serve God can have nothing to do with the world. God may well be concerned with the soul, with our inner lives, with the intimate community life of our small groups, but we cannot "leave dirty politics alone." By contrast the atheist has chosen the world, and has absolutized politics, and let go of God.

Neither of these extremes is the truth. For as we have increasing awareness that creation in the world we live is not a completed act in some remote past but continues here and now and must be carried forward to its completion through political action. It is thus incumbent on theologians to develop a theology of cultural and social transformation because such a theology can be the only one which truly is political theology. Such a theology will be the one which is capable of inspiring and impelling Christians to live creatively and positively for God and their fellow humans. Political theology and creative political will thus remain a chance and opportunity to work with God for our fellows' liberation and freedom until victory of love and justice for all is finally won. To that end God will not let us rest and a good political theology could even less afford to be tranquilizer and therefore make us slumber.[1]

Note:

1. For a major statement on the theology of social transformation and creative change, see my *God's Creativity Through the Law* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1984).

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Ethical Issues in the Struggles for Justice by Daniel Chetti and M.P. Joseph

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Chapter 8: Theology and Earth, by Larry L. Rasmussen

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K.C.Abraham's leadership in ecumenical circles is well-known, especially where EATWOT and World Council of Churches circles overlap Asian ones. Steady attention to economic development and ecological issues, and the cruel choices they pose for so many poor, has been one of the passionate concerns he has given leadership within these circles. While this chapter of tribute is not an exposition of his thought on these matters, these pages are indebted to his writing and his leadership, and are meant to join ongoing attention to his persistent concerns.

Centennial Spirits

There is an extraordinary passage in the 1907 volume that helped launch the Social Gospel movement. It is Walter Rauschenbusch's portrayal, in *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, of the gathering of the spirits of centuries past. "When the Nineteenth Century died," Rauschenbusch writes, "its Spirit descended to the vaulted chamber of the past, where

the Spirits of the dead centuries sit on granite thrones together."[1] There the Spirit of the Eighteenth Century asked for the mandated report; "Tell thy tale, brother. Give us word of the human kind we left to thee."[2] What follows, as the witness of the Nineteenth Century, is only plausible as a confident expression of the extraordinary belief in Western-style Progress that Rauschenbusch and his generation and social stratum breathed daily.

> I am the Spirit of the Wonderful Century. I gave men mastery over nature. Discoveries and inventions, which lighted the black space of the past like lovely stars, have clustered in the Milky Way of radiance under my rule. One man does by the touch of his hand what the toil of a thousand slaves never did. Knowledge has unlocked the mines of wealth, and the hoarded wealth of today creates the vaster wealth of tomorrow. Man has escaped the slavery of necessity and is free.
>
> I freed the thoughts of men. They face the facts and know their knowledge is common to all. The deeds of the East at even are known in the West at morn. They send their whispers under the seas and across the clouds.
>
> I broke the chains of bigotry and despotism. I made men free and equal. Every man feels the worth of his manhood.
>
> I have touched the summit of history. I did for mankind what none of you did before. They are rich. They are wise. They are free.[3]

In Rauschenbusch's report, the Spirits of the dead centuries sit in silence for a while, "with troubled eyes." Eventually the Spirit of the First Century speaks and asks a series of searing questions about the claims of the Nineteenth Century that "You have made men rich.... You have made men wise.... You have set them free... You have made them one."[4] The Spirit of the Nineteenth Century listens carefully, then its head sinks to its breast, and the Spirit says:

> Your shame is already upon me. My great cities are as yours were. My millions live from hand to mouth. Those

> who will toil longest have the least. My thousands sink exhausted before their days are half spent. My human wreckage multiplies. Class faces class in sullen distrust. Their freedom and knowledge has only made men keener to suffer.[5]

Pensive, and now with troubled eyes of its own, the Spirit of the Nineteenth Century can only issue a request: "Give me a seat among you, and let me think why it has been so."[6]

Rauschenbusch wrote that on the eve of the Twentieth Century's birth, it is left to us to imagine what the Spirit of the Twentieth Century will testify in the gathering of the Spirits of the dead centuries when this one comes to a close, and what searing questions will be asked in response. No doubt we will also have to sit and, with troubled eyes, "think why it has been so."

Of course, the extraordinary fact may well be a simple one. Perhaps both the tally of unprecedented accomplishment and the litany of shame that Rauschenbusch penned could simply be repeated in 2007, only with stronger words about even starker realities. After all, the Twentieth Century both promised more than the Nineteenth and delivered on it. Goods and services increased fiftyfold. Lifetimes for millions, even billions, doubled. Equal numbers were lifted from misery. Children lived better than their parents. Education became a common treasure, as did better health. And the gifts of innumerable cultures, together with the amazing discoveries of science and invention of technology, moved far beyond their home borders.

At the same time, what were the Nineteenth Century's domestic problems of industrializing nations have now gone global with a vengeance. Mass unemployment, severe cyclical slumps in rapid-fire investment and mobile business, the spreading distance between rich and poor in a confrontation of limousine plenty and homelessness, and limited revenues for limitless needs now afflict all societies, even if in drastically different proportion.

Still, there may be a difference of 2007 from 1907 beyond that of scale. If so, it rests somewhere near the intersection K.C. Abraham has been watching carefully in recent years: the incompatibility of The Big Economy (the global human economy) with The Great Economy (the economy of nature).[7] Local human economies have been reduced to

complications of transnational decisions, or simply left aside altogether. Governance efforts themselves are pulled apart by these transnational economic forces as the latter exercise political as well as economic power. Revolutions in communications and transport annihilate time and distance and invade traditional communities and their ways of life in destructive ways. And hardly anyone truly believes that present institutions have control over the collective consequences of The Big Economy.[8]

At the same time an intersecting phenomenon the Nineteenth Century never conceived strides front and center and qualifies everything. This is human power, chiefly techno-economic power, sufficient to outstrip earth's capacity to restore itself on terms hospitable to life as we know it. It is, in fact, the growing revenge of The Great Economy (the economy of nature) as The Big Economy ravages it. At the beginning of the Twentieth Century, soil erosion was not exceeding soil formation (or at least we didn't notice). Species extinction was not exceeding species evolution. Carbon emissions were not exceeding carbon fixation. Fish catches were not exceeding fish reproduction. Forest destruction was not exceeding forest regeneration. Freshwater was not exceeding aquifer replenishment.[9] Half the world's coastlines, the most densely populated human areas, were not imperiled. Nor was anything like half the world's human population crowded into urban areas, with fewer chances for self-sustainability than people on the land have when times turn desperate. Thus there appear at century's close certain words which were unknown at century's beginning "unsustainability" "carrying capacity," "the integrity of creation," and "sustainable development." More importantly, the reality that virtually every natural system essential to The Big Economy was in a state of slow degradation at century's end was not the reality at century's onset. (Or, if it was, it was not recognized.) The Great Economy was not on a collision course with The Big Economy. The economy of nature was not yet effectively fighting back against the human economy, even when the latter was treating the world as game and booty and land fill. Western-based globalization had not yet reached into every nook and cranny with an economy that doesn't ask what nature's economy requires for its own regeneration and renewal.

The Next Turn

But where do we go from here, as the Spirit of the Twentieth Century retires to contemplate "why it has been so?" (Rauschenbusch)

One necessary change pertains to the framework within which we think, and the categories we "think with" when we "think about" things (to recall E.F. Schumacher's distinctions). If we consider one of the subjects vital to K.C. Abraham's concerns -- theology and theological education-the recent testimony of Juergen Moltmann becomes highly significant. Looking back on his immensely productive career, Moltmann reconsiders it all, only to conclude as follows. "If I could start all over again, I would link my theology with ecological economics. The last two centuries were dominated by economic questions; the next century will be the age of ecology, in which the organism of the earth will become the all-determining factor and will have to be taken into consideration by everyone."**10**

This is another way of saying what was asserted above: the crucial issues before us lie at the intersection of The Big Economy and the Great Economy. But Moltmann's specific point is that the dialogue partner for theology shifts from philosophy and the social sciences to ecological economics, that emerging mutant subspecies hardly conceivable when the century began and still marginalized by dominant economic theory and practice. Moltmann's point, put differently, is that theology must turn to thinking within a framework "in which the organism of the earth will become the all-determining factor?' Just finding the categories to do so will entail a theological reimagining that can only be compared with the reconstructs of great reformations. Here is the paradigm shift asked for but not yet accomplished. It pushes questions that will not be pushed back: How do we do all our theological reflection from earth-centered praxis, with "earth" encompassing of the human economy and the economy of [the rest of] nature together? How do we shift in our understanding and articulation of faith from anthropocentric and androcentric categories and habits to biocentric and geocentric frames? How do we articulate Christian vocation as quite simply fidelity to earth, and measure all our religious and moral impulses by the moral criterion of their contribution to earth's care and well-being? (With "earth" again understood as comprehensive of nature and society together as a single, complex community that is full of life but "under house arrest," to recall the graphic description of Boutros Boutros-Ghali at the Earth Summit of 1992).

The Plowshares Institute report, *Changing The Way Seminaries Teach: Globalization and Theological Education,* is not sanguine about this shift. Perhaps it will come with EATWOT and other Third World leadership, and the methodology of various liberation intersecting

theologies. The Plowshares Report itself is restricted to the study of twelve North American seminaries that participated in the Globalization of Theological Education Program over five years in the early 1990s. The research conclusions nonetheless likely pertain to far more institutions than this slender dozen. One of those conclusions is that in a time when "multinational, corporate capitalism" is "one, if not *the*, major causal force behind global interdependence," North American seminary education has given "little theological attention.., to economics in general and global capitalism in particular."**11** Furthermore, attention to ecological issues does not warrant attention at all, much less the huge agenda that sits where the dynamic, globalizing economy and planetary life systems rub raw against one another. The report documents in detail the need for a new "conceptual space" for theological education and argues for it. Yet "the organism of earth" as the "all-determining factor" is not conceived as that conceptual space. It is still missing as the framework within which the theological enterprise does what it does for people of faith.

If we *did* make the global economy and the economy of nature together key concerns for the conceptual space of theological studies, what would need to happen beyond Moltmann's nomination of a new dialogue partner? If the Spirit of the Twentieth Century were to contemplate "why [the great developments of the century] have been so," where would that Spirit turn for insight and attention?

It is easier to say where such consideration has *not* occurred. Again, my reference point is North America and specifically the United States. While it is easy to make the case that economic globalization involves the most fundamental redesign and centralization of economic power since the Industrial Revolution, with far-reaching consequences for political power; and while it is easy to document how swiftly planetary life systems have been placed in jeopardy, it is difficult to find the major institutions of society attending to these in any but superficial ways. That is, it is difficult to find those institutions that know and show the "ecological" and "social" and "economic" connections to one another *from the inside out.* Neither the mass media, nor government, nor corporations help us understand. None of them explains, in Jerry Mander's words,

> that all these issues -- overcrowded cities, unusual and disturbing new weather patterns, the growth of global poverty, the lowering of wages while stock prices soar,

> the elimination of social services, the destruction of wildlife and wilderness, the protests of Maya Indians in Mexico -- are products of the same global policies. They are all connected to the same economic-political restructuring now under way in the name of accelerated free trade and globalization.[12]

About the only major force trying to uncover truth and speak it in power is the loose networks of NGOs[13] that operate locally, regionally, and, by increasing measure, globally. Here something is clearly afoot. What is afoot is sometimes witting, Sometimes unwitting, backlash against the forces of globalization. What is afoot are efforts to preserve what is endangered by globalization. The largely unorganized efforts are largely "off-camera," to be sure, but they are widespread. They include local citizens' movements and alternative institutions that are trying to create greater economic self-sufficiency, sustain livelihoods, work out agriculture appropriate to regions, preserve traditions, languages, and cultures, revive religious life, repair the moral and social fiber, resist the commodification of all things, internalize costs to earth in the price of goods, protect ecosystems, and cultivate a sense of earth as a sacred good held in common.. Churches and movements, especially those active in ecumenical networks, are significant participants here, even when their activities have not be put at the center of theological education itself. Richard Barnet and John Cavanagh, who judge this inchoate NGO uprising as presently "the only force we see that can break the global gridlock," finish their important study with a judgment about its high stakes: "The great question of our age is whether people, acting with the spirit, energy, and urgency our collective crisis requires, can develop a democratic global consciousness rooted in authentic local communities."[14]

"A democratic global consciousness rooted in authentic local communities" is, of course, another way to express the ancient ecumenical vision itself! The church in every place *is* the Church Universal and the Church Universal is legitimately represented in each place. Yet what churches face as the grave issues at the end of this century and the beginning of the next is itself the same that all other communities face: the compelling need to understand "the organism of the earth" as "the all-determining factor" that is presently endangered; the need to understand that earth-nature and society together -- is a community itself, and one without an exit; the need to understand faith now as fidelity to earth in accord with creation's integrity as God-given.

Such counsel is only very general -- more exhortation than advice. is And our actions must be concrete. In closing, we could do worse than pose some questions on a core issue for all of us that happens also to be one of K.C. Abraham's persistent concerns; namely sustainable development. The questions, drafted by Denis Goulet, can serve as guides for a praxis that works within a biocentric and geocentric theological frame.

1. Is sustainable authentic development compatible with a global economy?

2. Is sustainable authentic development compatible with a high material standard of living as presently defined for all human population? If limits need to be placed on growth, must there not be cutbacks in present consumption of the haves and in the future acquisitive aspirations of the have-nots?

3. Is sustainable authentic development compatible with widening global economic disparities? Does not such development presuppose, if not relative equality, at least the abolition of absolute poverty amongst the masses of the poor in the world?

4. How can strategists promoting sustainable authentic development deal with the hundreds of millions who have a vested interest in the destructive economic dynamism now prevailing in the world?**16**

Notes:

1. Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1907), 211.

2. *Ibid*.. p. 211.

3. *Ibid.*

4. *Ibid*., p. 212.

5. *Ibid.*

6. *Ibid.*

7. The phrases, "The Big Economy" and "The Great Economy." are Wendell Berry's.

8. For a detailed account of these and other dynamics, see Eric Hobsbawn, *The Age of Extremes: A History of the World, 1914-1991* (New York: Random House).

9. See Lester R. Brown, Hal Kane, and David Malin Roodman, *Vital Signs, 1994: The Trends That Are Shaping Our Future* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Co., 1994), pp. 15-21.

10. Juergen Moltmann, "The Adventure of Theological Ideas," as cited in M. Douglas Meeks, "Juergen Moltmann's Systematic Contributions to Theology:' *Religious Studies Review,* Vol. 22, No. 2, April, 1996, p. 105.

11. David A Roozen, Alice Frazier Evans, and Robert A. Evans, *Changing the Way Seminaries Teach. Globalization and Theological Education* (Hartford, CT: Hartford Seminary Center for Social and Religious Research, 1996), pp. 189-190.

12. Jerry Mander, "The Dark Side of Globalization: What the Media are Missing:" *The Nation,* Vol. 263. No. 3, July 15/22, 1996, p. 12.

13. Non-Governmental Institutions.

14. Richard I. Barnet and John Cavanaugh, *Global Dreams: Imperial Corporations and the New World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994), p. 430.

15. 1 have attempted to elaborate what such a paradigm shift would mean for theology, ethics, spirituality, and public policy in the volume, *Earth Community, Earth Ethics* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, and Geneva: WCC Publishing, 1996).

16. Denis Goulet, as cited in the EWG Circular Letter # 6, March, 1996: 23.

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Chapter 9: Responsible Citizenship in a Christian Perspective, by Milan Opocensky

(Milan Opocensky is Executive Secretary of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, Geneva.)

I

Theological Critique of Post-Modernism

In the first part of my letter I wish to deal with some characteristics of our present era at the end of the millennium. It is in contrast to previous periods in the 19th and 20th centuries when people were proud of being modem. Does it still hold? Is it true that we live in modem times? Probably it does not apply to all part of the world equally but it is suggested because our world has radically changed and we live in a new epoch. After 1945 some thinkers spoke about the atomic age with its perils and threats to which we have gradually become immune. But there are other forces which shake the foundations of civilization and render traditional values empty and invalid. You have to judge for

yourselves to what extent my comments are applicable to the situation in South Africa.

It seems that post modernism is the new philosophical background of our theological reflection and the entire Christian existence. It is a new feeling. It is a new mentality which is widely spread in the consumer societies of the affluent North. However, there are pockets of luxury and affluence in the South. Visit the Waterfront in Cape Town and you will understand what I am talking about.

According to D. Sölle,[1] nowadays the only untouchable value is tolerance. In the time of Enlightenment tolerance was essential and important in the process of seeking for truth. This is no longer the case. Today there are many non-committal truths. In place of identity there is diverse and divergent thought.

We are told that any discourse has its right. Therefore, we can speak about important concepts and values in the plural. In the aesthetic sphere "anything goes." For example, if we examine the fashion and how people dress, then indeed one comes to the conclusion that there are no rules and no regulations. The consequences for the moral sphere is radical openness. The ideal is an open person who is not impressed by anything that is absolute. The time of absolute claims is over. We have to learn to live in the jungle of what is relative and penultimate. Nothing is firm, reliable and dependable. Can a human being bear such a spiritual atmosphere?

Post-modern thinkers react to the shock of totalitarianism. They sense a kind of totalitarian thinking whenever a discourse about progress, emancipation and humanization becomes the master discourse. Anything that claims to be leading and determining is suspect. Whenever a discourse claims a special authority there is a danger of terror. In this context utopia is criticized. According to the post-modernists the utopian thinking of modem times proved to be the most merciless enemy of the people. How can we reconcile this position with the high esteem of G. Gutiérrez for utopian thinking and the expectation that a Christian community should always produce new utopias?

It is counterproductive to protest against capitalism and its recklessness. It is a sign of strength that the capitalist system has liquidated all that is noble and sacred. There is no place for solidarity. The world becomes a market and the market is god. Concepts such as suffering, struggle and

solidarity should be put aside.

It is not important to better the world through struggle for peace, justice and a human environment. What really matters is the liberation of an individual. It can be achieved by immersion in the hedonistic world. People are told that sexual freedom and porno-culture are vehicles of human happiness and fulfillment. The ideal is no longer the well-being of a larger community or society. We are guided to be concerned primarily about our individual life and its success. Why bother about history, theory and metaphysics? The question of what is true and false, genuine and fake, profound and shallow is irrelevant. Humans should examine their feelings (Does it feel good?) and perhaps aesthetic experiences. You cannot be happy without being fit, without undergoing sophisticated cosmetic surgery and without regularly being exposed to the super markets of the inner city. The post-modem culture has cancelled any meaning. The real meaning lies in our becoming uncritical consumers who enjoy the present moment and are often manipulated by the market and by the flood of advertisements. Fifth Avenue in New York, Oxford Street in London or Kurfürstendamm in Berlin are the cathedrals and temples of post-modern times waiting for their worshippers who have sacrificed their lives to the idol of the possession syndrome.

It is quite obvious that the biblical (Jewish-Christian) tradition is opposed to the post-modern liberal culture as described above. The post-modern discourse rejects the polarity between life and death, good and evil, love and sin. Our culture is apathetic -- it refuses to recognize suffering and to speak about suffering. And yet, the world is full of painful contradictions. However, in order to avoid the impact of pain and suffering, the tensions and contradictions should be made muddy and invisible.

Biblical reflection is based on memory. "Your God executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and loves the strangers. . . . You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Deut. 10:17ff.). Memory and remembering, retelling the story of God’s people is dangerous. Nowadays the market is an idol, a holy place. Everything should be geared to the conditions and demands of the market. In the situation of market predominance the principal virtue is tolerance, which is forgetful and bears everything. The idol demands many sacrifices but they should not be remembered. A broad and magnanimous tolerance cannot tolerate the utopia of the future, the

anticipation of freedom and of a common hope for a more equitable life on earth.

The post-modern philosophy eliminates any meta-discourse. We should not be bothered by thinking beyond our immediate needs and feelings mediated by the culture of fun and pleasure. Ideas of preceding modern times are useless. Let us forget the great designs of the Enlightenment and idealist Philosophy. Let us stop critical questioning because it loses its meaning and value. Let us forget everything between input and output. It is irrelevant whether Korean workers sleep on the floor of factories in order to save time spent in commuting. Let us put aside the difference between the elite and the mass culture. Let us try to avoid conflict stemming from a critical attitude. We live in a world where nothing is binding. There is a programed and calculated lack of overview. Our world seems to be a wonderful cultural supermarket. And yet, if we look more closely it is obvious that the perennial problems of personal and collective human existence remain. The features of need and misery may be different, but under the glittering surface we are confronted with all forms of money, power and domination.

Today, as yesterday and tomorrow, we cannot resign ourselves to the idea that there is no reason in history. Humans cannot give up seeking for truth and asking about God. We need to generate new utopias which will motivate us to struggle for a more humane and inhabitable world. We have to analyze the existing forms of escape from reality. One possibility is self-denial which is preached by fundamentalism, leading people into immaturity. Another form is reckless self-affirmation and concentration on one’s own life and individual pursuit of happiness.

Our task remains to tell the story of God’s liberation and salvation. By doing so we strengthen the dignity of human beings and sharpen the conscience of people. It is important to constantly unmask the idols and false gods. We have to cultivate the memory highlighting the suffering and infinite value of dignified life (human life and life in general). Finally, we have to resist the temptation to bless the mechanism of modern society. Post-modern society expects the Christian community to bless and so to legitimatize its ethos. The only answer to such advice has to be the unequivocal refusal and denial of such an invitation. We have to learn what it means to be "in the world but not of the world" (John 17: 14ff).

II

Christian Political Responsibility

There is no doubt that South Africa finds itself at an historic cross road. No wonder that churches in South Africa tackle the question of political responsibility in a new and urgent way. For all of us it is constantly a pressing question: What is our personal and communal political responsibility? Not only in South Africa but also in Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Botswana -- in many other African and non-African countries -- we are confronted with this difficult and urgent question.

You are not newcomers to some of these questions. We have been moved by the Belhar Confession. We have been moved and encouraged by the KAIROS document. Like the Barmen Declaration of the Confessing Church in Germany (1934) some of these statements are not only your statements and documents, these pronouncements have become our common property -- they belong to all of us in the Church Universal. I wish to express our gratitude for your struggle, inspiration, insights and encouragement.

Christian Existence is Always Political

Let me say simply that the political dimension is a part and parcel of our human existence. We cannot escape the fact that we are all political beings because we participate in political life and by our stance we influence political processes. Also a Christian community is a political factor which should not be underestimated. We am all enmeshed in political life and we should reflect this reality. Even if we say that we are apolitical -- that we don't wish to deal with political decisions and that we withdraw from the political arena -- we are taking a political decision. Those who claim to be apolitical usually side with and support the forces of *status quo.*

If we speak about Christian political responsibility we say that our ethics is a political ethics of responsibility and that we derive our norms and principles from the Gospel. In our political decision-making we wish to respond to the claim of the Gospel. The Gospel comes to us as a promise -- but at the same time the Gospel claims us -- claims our entire existence -- our being a political animal. We respond to the claim of the Gospel -- we are as much responsible as we are faithful in our response to the Gospel. We have constantly to ask what is the concrete claim of

the Gospel on us and whether we are obedient and faithfully respond to this claim. Each situation requires a new hearing of the Word, our asking what the will of God is a fresh and genuine decision.

The Abuse of Biblical Texts

For centuries the Bible nourished and sustained the Christian community in a unique way. However, we are also heirs of a false and one sided understanding of the biblical texts which deal with the Christian attitude towards a state and authorities. The dominating and widely agreed theology is often a theology which serves the interests of the rulers. Some classical biblical texts have been used and abused in order to affirm the necessity of uncritical obedience and submission. It is our first task to reinterpret certain texts and to teach our congregations what is the original intention of the biblical message.

For a moment, let us examine the text: *Fear God, honor the emperor* (1 Peter 2:17). It has to be seen in the context of the situation of the early Christian church. It is a situation on the brink of persecution. The overall ethos has been influenced by the Aristotelian political philosophy which later was embraced by the Stoic philosophy. It is an attitude of patriarchal domination in state, in household and in marriage. This ethos emphasizes law and order. In the interest of survival Christians should follow the strategy of accommodation. This is not, however, the only strategy which is proposed by the New Testament. For example, the prophetic author of Revelation sees the embodiment of Antichrist in the emperor and in Rome. The book of Revelation challenges Christians to oppose oppressive power and to accept the risk of imprisonment and death. Whenever the slaves converted to Judaism or the Christian faith the common order of the household was threatened and in this way the political setup of the state was also challenged. The non-Christian attacks make clear that Christians were considered politically subversive in the second and third centuries. Let us not forget that Jesus himself was condemned as a subversive and revolutionary who for some adversaries was also close to the zealots. It seems that the author of the First Letter of Peter wants to weaken the critical arguments against Christians. This writer understands Christian calling as a religious vocation -- it is primarily a spiritual existence. It should be clear that a Christian way of life is not in opposition to the accepted order of a household and of a state. Although we may understand the intention of the author, it is unfortunate that in the long run the strategy of survival has introduced the patriarchal ethos and domestication into

the Church. Obedience and the spiritualized message of the Gospel replaced the genuine version of equality. We should bear in mind that not submission, order and obedience but this vision of equality of all races and cultures is one of the peaks of the Gospel.

The First Letter of Peter has to be seen in its proper context. In the same way Romans 13 should be understood not as a universal doctrine of state but as an apostolic pastoral word in the particular, unique situation of a Christian community in Rome. Subordination should not be interpreted as blind obedience (Kadavergehorsam). The Apostle Paul offers pastoral guidance in the difficult question of a Christian attitude *vis-à-vis* local and regional political authorities. Paul does not speak about the limits of these governing bodies -- he does not speak about the conflicts either. Paul speaks out of fear of anarchy -- he writes against the enthusiastic inclinations. We cannot deny the one-sidedness of Paul's position and a certain weakness in his argument which has been abused and misinterpreted throughout history by the theology of the court (Hoftheologie) and by the rulers. Paul neither glorifies nor demonizes power. However, political power and political violence in its dialectic is not his theme. The text is short of dialectics which is necessary for dealing with a democratic process. However, in spite of this shortcoming, there is the binding lesson for all of us that we are called to serve God in the political arena.

Barmen 1934 (Thesis 5)

I wish to call your attention to the fifth thesis of the Barmen Declaration of 1934. This was the very beginning of the Nazi era. It was necessary to say a clarifying word in a situation where the Christian faith was contaminated by the ideology which was uncritically glorifying the state, German ethnicity, German mythology and Germans as Herrenvolk superior to other nations. It was the beginning of a racist period which led to the extermination of 6 million Jews and to activities and crimes committed in many other nations. Already in the Thirties we have been confronted with "ethnic cleansing." It was necessary to say that not Jesus Christ mixed-up with the ideology of "Blut und Boden" would do but that Jesus Christ is the only Word of God.

The fifth thesis says that we exist in the as yet unredeemed world. Also the Church exists in the as yet unredeemed world. The state has been appointed by God to provide for justice and peace. It fulfils this task by means of threats and exercise of force according to the measure of

human judgment and human ability. The Church's task is not to glorify the state -- to be passive or to be subservient to the state. In gratitude the Church acknowledges the benefit of the divine appointment of the institution for *providing justice and peace.* The Church calls to mind the Kingdom of God, God's rule, God's commandment and righteousness. By doing so, the Church reminds us of the responsibility both of rulers and of the ruled. By referring to the Kingdom of God the Church constantly reminds the state of its original appointment and calling. The Church does not trust and obey the state in the first place. It trusts and obeys the power of the Word by which God upholds all things. The doctrine is rejected as though the state should and could become the single and totalitarian order of human life. On the other hand, the Church should not usurp the commission and the dignity of the state. In recent times-almost 60 years ago -- this was an authentic interpretation of the role of the state and of the political responsibility of a Christian community.

In the New Testament there is a polarity between Romans 13 and Revelation 13 -- between honoring the state and resisting the state. It is an indication that the institution of a state is not *a priori* good. The state can pervert -- it can become inhuman and anti-human. The Apostle challenges us to struggle against the demonic forces of our times. "We are contending not against the flesh and blood but against principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness . . ." (Eph. 6:12). The political powers are not isolated, autonomous *(eigengesetzlich).* They are related to Christ and Christ's work is related to them as well. Regarding the state and political arena Christians have a perspective of hope. The political institutions can degenerate and can be perverted but this is not a fatum -- a necessity. Because we know of the heavenly Jerusalem we cannot make any state of this world into an idol.

Prophetic But Not Arrogant

Christians should pray for all people, especially for those in positions of authority and power. By its prayer, a Christian community carries and upholds the existence of the polis. Prayer and intercession for those who hold state power is one of the basic political tasks of the Church. If the Church forgets to fulfil this task, the Church ceases to be a church. Intercession for the state is the most central task of a church. If the state is perverted and dehumanized, if brutality and injustice reign, this institution requires our responsibility and our intercessions even more; it

is our noble duty to pray for the state so that the state continues as a state in which law and justice prevail. We are responsible whether a state will be a *Reichtstaat* -- a state in which law and justice prevail. *Hypotassesthai tini -- hypotage* does not mean a blind submission and subordination but a thoughtful and active respect. A Christian is not called to be submissive. A Christian believer is free in Christ and through Christ -- therefore he/ she is responsible for the entire society which surrounds a Christian community. Because we believe in Jesus Christ as the head of the entire world we take upon ourselves the responsibility for the polis -- for the political form of society in which we live. We should participate in the process of seeking the best and the most appropriate system of political life. If South Africa today is looking for a new political system, Christians should be and must be a part of this process. Because we know of the Kingdom of God, we know the limits of all political systems. It is our duty to come up with critical questions; it is our obligation to be prophetic without being arrogant.

Christians are not indifferent with regard to the forms of political rule. We have to differentiate between order and arbitrariness, between orderly rule and tyranny, between freedom and anarchy. We have to look for a political system which serves the interest of human beings in the best way. We should favour a system which gives freedom of decision-making, freedom of expression, freedom of human existence. Sometimes these freedoms may be limited but they cannot be forgotten or denied. A Christian community is opposed to any kind of dictatorship. Political freedom is not an invitation to arbitrariness but it is a space in which we should exercise our political responsibility. Christians favor a political mechanism which is open and transparent. Any kind of secrecy and hiddenness is in contradiction to a true democracy which is based on mutual control of power. In the long run, secret diplomacy and mafia-like associations are a threat to democracy.

To Proclaim the Kingdom of God

Soon after the Second World War Karl Barth gave some lectures in Bonn, Berlin and other places in Germany in which he tried to reason theologically why it was right and necessary to embrace a socially-oriented democracy. It seems timely for South Africans to recall some of these arguments.

The word of God is both the promise of God’s forgiveness and the

claim to our entire life. This makes it impossible to interpret the Gospel in an abstract, theoretical and private (individualistic) sense. We have to be vigilant with regard to structures and institutions. We are not called to bless uncritically the status quo.

The Christian community should not be absorbed by and dissolved in a society or in a state. We should keep a necessary critical distance. If we exercise our political responsibility we should not deny the fact that we are PAROIKOL -- that we are a communion of pilgrims *(communio viatorum).* We are seekers of the city which is to come (Heb. 13:14). And yet, we have to exercise our political responsibility in this world and for this world - each of us in our respective society, region and political community.

A Christian attitude towards a political realm is differentiated. A Christian community says NO to any absolutist ideology which comes with totalitarian claims. It says YES to a state which is religiously neutral. It is open to a reasonable argumentation in the political realm.

Because God in Jesus Christ became human and is linked with us in spite of our godlessness, human well-being and dignity will be a criterion of all things. Because of the humanity of God we are constantly engaged in the struggle for humaneness and humanization in communal life. Therefore, a Christian community struggles for structures which make possible, defend and protect a fully human life.

Because we know of God’s justice and justification by faith, we can differentiate between God’s justice and human efforts for social and political justice. There is a difference but there is a link between these two levels. We are called to struggle for a justice which gives the possibility of life and of social security.

In Christ we are liberated from powers and principalities which enslave us. We proclaim the ultimate freedom in Jesus Christ. The Gospel equally calls us to struggle against any physical, psychic slavery, against exploitation and manipulation.

The Gospel proclaims reconciliation between God and this world in Jesus Christ. Peace on earth and among people cannot be put on the same level, and yet it cannot be separated from God’s work of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18). Christ has entrusted us with the message of reconciliation. A Christian community has the responsibility to work for

peace in freedom and justice in human society, against hatred and violence.

Our unique and irreplaceable political task is to proclaim the Kingdom of God. By doing so, we indicate certain limits for any human society and community which has an inherent tendency to absolutize itself. By being political (non-political) we usually confirm and sanctify the *status quo.*

From time to time a Christian may feel compelled to issue an explicit political statement. There is no definable boundary between the pure questions of faith and questions of estimation (Glaubensfragen and Ermessensfragen). Political themes and questions are part and parcel of our preaching and proclamation of the Gospel. We do not live in a vacuum which is totally free from the political issues of today and tomorrow.

The Word of God is concrete, personal and political, and speaks to a concrete situation. In a given situation we should ask ourselves whether we are sufficiently informed and whether we faithfully listen to God's commandment.

For the South Africa of Tomorrow

In conclusion I would like to commend the KAIROS document. It is an inspiration for all people and especially religious communities which struggle against oppression and dehumanization. However, it seems to me that starting with the KAIROS document Christian churches and communities have to go beyond KAIROS. In this section I draw on the insights of Julian Kunnie.

1) Although it seems that the basic laws of apartheid have been dismantled, there are still important mechanisms in place. It is important to help people to be liberated from apartheid mentality. The South African state still represents a colonial power and machinery. A Christian community in this country is called to introduce such programs in its activity and education which would help people to be liberated from the colonial mind and apartheid mentality. The sin of apartheid lies in the fact that African people in their own land were exposed to the policy of disfranchisement, disinheritance and de-Africanization. I submit that churches themselves are captives of colonialism and apartheid. They are products of this history. This

society needs to be liberated from its settler-colonial heritage. The idea of democratic state institutions needs to be fostered and promoted. Julian Kunnie says that in South Africa the state is non-existent -- only a colonial apparatus is. It is the responsibility of Christian churches to be a part of the process introducing a democratically functioning state. It is the primary role of the Uniting Church to make people in this country understand that in the long mm the future lies with the indigenous population.

2) In the KAIROS document I miss a thorough class analysis. What will be the future economic orientation of this country? In many parts of the world the capitalist market economy is considered detrimental to the interests of indigenous people. A Christian community cannot promote uncritically a system which is based on greed, profit-making, exploitation and commodification of all social relations. This kind of system is socially destructive. The market economy cannot be a goal in itself -- it is an instrument of economic mechanism. The failure of socialist economy in Eastern Europe should not hinder Christians from looking for an alternative to the prevailing world economic system. The failure of command economy should not be considered as a victory and justification of capitalism. Frank Chikane has said: "A vision of justice should be combined with political realism and prudence so that foreign investors do not ignore South Africa."

3) It is necessary to pay attention to the situation of women in church and society. They experience triple oppression: classism, racism and sexism, which are intertwined. The contribution of women to the struggle against apartheid has been considerable.

The immediate program in South Africa is decolonization, liberation from apartheid with all its ramifications, de-Europeanization, reAfricanization, socialization -- by which I mean social security, medical care, security for aged people. In all these areas women have a great role to play. And it is a Christian community where women can be conscientized for their active role in society. I hope that the absence of women in he leadership of African churches does not suggest the domestication and patriarchal oppression continue in churches. African women should be actively involved in the shaping of the future South Africa. This process should start in the churches in the first place.

4) Another area is the struggle for a new African self-understanding. How can we help people to confirm their African identity? With regard

to South Africa churches should introduce programs which would throw light on the theme "The Gospel and Culture." By suggesting this theme I am not speaking about the racist "separate development" of cultures but rather about the interaction of cultures which are fully affirmed and encouraged. By being Christians we are not called to renounce our own culture. We are challenged to relate Christ to our respective culture and our culture to Christ. Christians need to be seriously involved in the process of re-Africanization. There is a rich religious and cultural tradition in South Africa. We all impoverish ourselves if we do not learn how to appreciate this tradition. Any theology has to be done against the background of African culture. *Hic Rhodus, hic salta!*

5) KAIROS fails to mention that South Africa is a multi-religious society. There has been a contribution of Muslims and other non-Christians in the struggle for liberation. Inter-religious dialogue can facilitate and promote living together with people of different cultures and races.

6) Last but not least: the struggle for Integrity of creation applies also to South Africa also. lam afraid that in South Africa also the theology of creation is neglected. The-dualistic concept of F. Bacon of *res cogitans* (human being) and *res extensae* (other creation) has found a fertile soil in South Africa as well. Today we are struggling for the survival not only of human civilization, but for survival of life on the planet Earth. Global warming, population explosion, extinction of many species, maintaining the human environment -- all this involves South Africa. Are we responsible stewards of creation or careless tyrants?

I pray that the churches in South Africa may be given the vision, courage, endurance and strength to be in the forefront of the struggle for a new South Africa.

Notes:

1. In this part I draw largely on the arguments expressed in the publication ‘Die Sowohl-Als-Auch Faile" (K. Füssel, D.Sölle, F. Steffensky), Luzern 1993.

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Ethical Issues in the Struggles for Justice by Daniel Chetti and M.P. Joseph

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Chapter 10: The Contours of Third World Contextual Theologies, by Felix Wilfred

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When I recall Dr. K.C. Abraham's great contributions to theology, a threefold "E" comes to my mind: They are Ecumenism, Ethics and EATWOT (Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians). In all these areas he has made his mark. It would be appropriate I thought that in a volume meant to honor him, I should take up for reflection some line of thought that is closer to his own theological vision. With the following reflections on contextual theologies of the Third World, I wish to express my appreciation of this great ecumenical and Third World theologian on the occasion of his sixtieth birthday.

One of the stories collected by a popular story-teller in India goes something like this:[1] Once a parachutist found himself caught up in a storm, and he was swept off several kilometers away from his original destination. He landed on the top of a tree, and was only happy his life

was saved. He saw someone passing by, and called out to him and asked, "Sir, can you tell me, where I am?" Came the answer, "You are on the top of a tree." The parachutist said." Are you a theologian?" At this the other man was simply wonder-struck. He asked the parachutist. "Yes I am, but how do you know that?". The parachutist replied. "Oh that is easy. Because what you said is correct, but useless!"

Theology can state many correct things, and yet become quite useless and even ridiculous when it fails to identify its *topos,* its location. A general theology would be a theology on the top of a tree, in the clouds. That is why every theology has to be really located, has to be *contextual.* This is what the experiences in our Third World societies continue to impress upon us.

In the shorter first part of this article, I will try to highlight the difference of Third World contextual theologies by contrasting it with other types of theology in contemporary times, and in the second part, I shall attempt to delineate in seven *sutras* (aphorisms) some of the salient features of contextual theologies.

PART I:

Contextual Theology - A Different Approach

There are several ways in which the contemporary trends in theology could be characterized. My purpose is not to go into any detailed survey of these various trends. My purpose here is to highlight the newness and difference represented by contextual theology. With this in view, I would like to make three typologies with one or other of which most theological attempts in recent years could be identified. Against these three types, one will be able to understand better the originality of contextual theologies of the Third World.

1. If we view the developments in and around the Council Vatican II, we can notice how the project of going back to the resources *(resourcement)* constituted an important force for the renewal in theology that had turned arid through exaggerated ratiocination and speculation. By bringing into theological reflection the early Christian and artistic sources, there came into being the so-called ‘new theology’ *(theologie nouvelle).* One must acknowledge the merit of this theological enterprise whose influence in the Council and in the post-Conciliar period has been remarkable. It brought greater historical

concreteness to faith, to Church, to the Scriptures. It contributed to the overcoming of Tridentism.

This theological orientation has also its implicit hermeneutics. The hermeneutics at work in this type of theology is a *hermeneutics of retrieval.* The assumption is that the true and authentic lies in the past, in tradition. Consequently the present experiences are judged as either conforming to the tradition or as deviations and distortions to be overcome by recapturing the original. In biblical studies this method of retrieval is exemplified in the historico-critical method which attempts to reconstruct the original setting of the text and the meaning of the author.

Let me illustrate the difference of this theology from contextual theology, with reference to the issue of the local church. A theology of renewal would see the importance of a local church by contrasting it with a centralized and universal ecclesiology of the Middle Ages. It would recall the importance of locality, place. The *local* of the local church is with reference to the place where eucharistic celebration takes place *(epi to auto).* It would underline the importance of the Word of God, episcopal ministry, etc. as constituting the essential ingredients of the local church. Further, in contrast to an universalistic and centralized ecclesiology, it would remind us that the Church is a communion of churches.

Contextual theology does not deny the importance of all this. However, its starting point lies somewhere else. It rests on the conviction that the anthropological precedes the theological. This is a very foundational principle. If we begin from the anthropological foundations, then we have to go deep into the world of the culture of a people and its understanding of what is to be a community, and study the already existing forms of togetherness, community, group, etc. Then it has to enter into the conflicts and contradictions that characterize a particular situation and the struggles that are being gone through to become truly a people, a community. A contextual theology of the local church will begin from the cultural reality, from contextual experiences.

2. The second type of theology is one that wants to explain and justify faith in relation to contemporary philosophical and cultural quest. It has a strong anthropological basis in relation to which truths of faith are explained and made relevant. It tries to build a bridge between our faith and philosophy by investigating the transcendental conditions for the

possibility of understanding the various truths of our faith by probing into the very foundational structure of the human spirit. We have the foremost representatives of this type of theology in K. Rahner. As expressed in the preface to his *Foundations of Christian Faith,* his theological intention was "to reach a renewed understanding of this message and to arrive at an 'idea' of Christianity . . . and . . . try as far as possible to situate Christianity within the intellectual horizon of people today."[2] This theology so rich in its speculative rigor and so very influential, turned out to be something which tried to respond mostly to the spiritual and cultural situation of the postwar Europe, and is quite removed from our Third World situation.

3. A third type of theology is represented by a *revised* co-relational model. It is called "revised" to distinguish it from the co-relational model of liberal tradition. Here the concern is to reinterpret Christianity as well as the contemporary situation in their mutual and critical relationship. At an international seminar held in Tubingen a few years ago, one tried to characterize this type of approach to theology as a paradigm shift. The shift envisaged is from the de-historical post-Tridentine model of theology as the bastion of certitudes to a model in which Christian understanding of faith takes place in the midst of changing modem situations.

Though the theology here is co-relational, nevertheless, one can see that its chief axis is on *the interpretation of Christianity and its tradition* resulting from the contemporary (Western) situation. In the words of David Tracy who summarized the proceedings of the seminar, "In one sense, this hermeneutical formulation is simply a rendering explicit and deliberate of the fact which unites all forms of theology: that every Christian theology is interpretation of Christianity."

Here lies the chief difference. Contextual theology is not primarily interpretation of Christianity and its tradition. *It is interpretation of life and is in service of life and its promotion, and in defense of life* when it is threatened. We need to only recall at this point the words of Jesus: "I have come to give life, and life in abundance" (John 10:10). Contextual theology is interpretation of life in concrete context as lived, as practiced. In service of this goal, theoretical frameworks and interpretations come into existence. To the extent Christian faith is brought in relation to the promotion of life and its defense, it acquires the character of a living faith giving birth to a living contextual theology.

The differentiation we have made permits us to glean through some of the features of contextual theologies. With that I come to the second part of this contribution.

PART II:

Some Salient Aspects Of Contextual Theology

Attempting to delineate commonalities of various contextual theologies would go against the spirit and orientation of them. In spite of the unique nature of each particular context, we can observe certain convergences. On this basis, I want to highlight some of the salient features of contextual theology.

By *context* is not meant simply the geographical locality. The fact that theologies are pursued in Asia, or Latin America does not turn them into contextual theologies. For, as we know from experience, right in the heart of Asia or Africa or Latin America there could be Mediterranean or Central European theology of medieval times very much at work. Context is made up of a people living in a determined cultural environment with its own *history and tradition and amidst particular neighbors.* Context is made up as well by the contemporary *socio-political realities* in the midst of which life is carried on. Contextual theology could also come out of particular experiences which cannot be reduced neither to geographical, cultural or socio-political dimensions. Such is the case for example of contextual theology that is pursued by the oppressed *dalits* of India. Contextual theology is a general designation, and it exists concretely as dalit theology, as eco-feminist theology, black theology, Minjung theology, etc. And in some cases, the geographical factor may circumscribe a particular contextual theology.

Sutra 1

Contextual Theology has no pretension of being a total theology.

The preoccupation of contextual theology is not to construct a comprehensive explanatory system of faith. Contextual theology is only partial and fragmentary, but always engaged and in dialogue. In everyday life-situations when we are faced with critical issues, certain dimensions and aspects of Christian faith get accentuated. No serious Christian would wait for total clarity on all the dimensions of faith,

before he or she plunges into action. Such a thing is an unrealistic pretension and it never happens in real life. With the conviction and insight faith gives here and now, we try to respond to vital issues -- not seldom questions of life and death. We try to get enlightened on the situation through the light of the Gospel and bring into the context a sense of hope. In the concrete it means that we cannot have a general Christology or general ecclesiology. We get to know who Jesus Christ is concretely in the context. So too, what it is to be a community of the disciples of Jesus will depend very much on the context and not who our neighbors are.

All true theology can only be partial. Expressing paradoxically we can say that, precisely because the Ultimate Reality is total, all our theology can only be partial. This is not something new. In fact it has always been so. But the difference is that certain theologies claimed to be total theologies are unaware of the fact that they were only universalizing what has been a particular, historically and culturally limited experience. Let us take the example of Christology. There is the general assumption that the Chalcedonian formula has given us in a nutshell the essence of Christ's mystery. And yet we know that this formula does not express all the aspects of the mystery of Jesus Christ. Where in Chalcedonian formula is the mystery of Jesus' death, his passion and resurrection?

The partial and provisional character of contextual theologies are not to be understood as though they are waiting to be completed and made definite. Rather *the partial and provisional character is the strength of contextual theology rather than its weakness.* For, in this way, contextual theology understands itself as always on the way, always in search of new and wider horizons.

Here I would like to recall an experience narrated to me by a friend from Nepal who is an expert also in Buddhism. He took a group of theology students to a Buddhist monastery. After the chief monk spoke, the young students were vying with each other in putting critical questions to the monk. One of them argued this way: If Buddhism teaches that desire is the root cause of all suffering and that we should free ourselves from desires, then, there will still remain at least one desire the desire not to have desires. Perfect logic, of course! But the response of the experienced monk was simple: "This means, my friend," said the monk, you are not yet ready for Enlightenment."

We need to first walk a bit on the path to experience and understand it. This is how every authentic theology needs to begin. But where does this path lie? Life is today the path on which we encounter God, and it is in walking on the path of life in a determined context that true contextual theology takes flesh and bone.

Sutra 2

Contextual theology is one that is sustained and nourished by a definite option. It is nothing but the very option of God for the poor, the powerless and the marginalized.

In its analysis, formulation, choice of sources, etc. contextual theology is centered on what happens to those who are continuously pushed to the margins of society. It is through identification with the excluded that contextual theology derives its power and incisiveness; it acquires its true evangelic character.

If it is true that the quality of a civilization is judged ultimately not by anything else but by the way it treats its weaker ones, this can be applied in a way to theologies too. The various theologies can be judged on the basis of the extent the poor figure in its overall framework and orientation.

What is remarkable is the fact that this definite option of contextual theology represents a crucial turning point in the history of theology. For, if we look back the path theology has traversed, we can note that for the past one thousand years the central preoccupation of theology has been to assert its scientific character and within this dynamic to reconcile the demands of reason with the truths of faith. As I see, the different theologies since then have been variations on this fundamental motif or paradigm.

It is for the first time with the emergence of contextual theologies of the Third World, this foundational scientific paradigm of theology has been broken. And that explains much of the conflict and misunderstanding between the classical theologies of the First World and theologies of the Third World. Through what may appear as loss of its scientific character, contextual theology gains in its evangelical quality. It is not a matter of bidding good-bye to reason, but to rediscover reason through another path. Here is the case, wherein, to quote Pascal, "the heart has its reasons which the reason does not understand." Here is the case in

which -- to state with contemporary Taiwanese theologian C.S. Song -- theology starts with the aching of the heart. This option for the poor and the marginalized will turn all contextual theologies into truly theologies of the heart, into theologies of liberation. If the option for the marginalized impregnates contextual theology with evangelical spirit, it is the same Gospel which demands it to be truly prophetic.

Sutra 3

Contextual theology calls for a different conception of universality.

Relating particularity with universality is one of the crucial philosophical questions of today which has far-reaching consequences and implications in all fields -- political, cultural, economic, religious, etc. The same problem is reflected in the field of theology also. The problem is concretely posed in terms of how we could reconcile the universality of faith or the Gospel and the particularity of theology as represented by contextual theologies.

In the first place, it is not proper to contrast the universality of faith with the particularity of the context. For, faith or Gospel is as much particular, concrete as it is universal. The problem lies somewhere else. What is required is that we need *to revise and redefine our conception of universality.* In other words, contextual theology requires revision of the dominant understanding of the universal which is still very much marked by the ecclesial praxis and attitudes of 19th century Europe.

We gain a proper understanding of the question involved if we widen our perspective and view it as part of the larger question of the relationship between the Gospel and culture. There is a sense in which we can and ought to speak of faith being above cultures. But what is meant by "above" is not simply that we refer to a "transcendental signified" existing outside the concrete encounter of the Gospel and culture. If we have truly various cultural forms of faith, we need to also recognize that none of them is capable of expressing all the aspects and dimensions of faith. Every form stands in relation to others. What we call "above" is in reality the recognition of the inherent limitations of each cultural form of faith-expression and an invitation to reach out to other forms through dialogue. There takes place, then, truly a *communion of faith* which is at the same time a *communion of cultures.* This dialogue and communion are truly the way for saving the faith from being reduced to any one particular self-enclosed cultural form.

Such a dialogue appears to be also the best way to effectively maintain the authenticity and orthodoxy of our faith.

Implicit in all this is *the difference in the understanding of universality*. No culture, no people, no institution can lay claim that Christian faith is its possession. It belongs to the whole of humanity, to all the peoples. The problem arises when one culture, one tradition pretends to be the judge and the normative instance for the faith of other peoples, other cultures and other traditions. Here then arises the *conflict of universalities.* To those who believe that the expression "inculturation" could still be redeemed from the misconceptions to which it is open, it should be made clear that such redemption would require, in the first place, the undergirding of the concept with a fresh and different conception of universality. If we arrive at the realization that faith is above cultures through the recognition of the limitation of all its particular expressions, we become aware of its universality by recognizing the richness of each and every cultural expression of the same faith.

In other words, we need to recognize that there is transcendence of faith. It is above cultures. But this "above" or transcendence is not achieved by creating a form of formula that is supposed to be *common* to all, or a form that would not belong to anyone. Rather, the "above" is primarily in the fact that no culture is able to adequately express the Christian faith, and therefore the concrete forms of Christianity as lived among the various peoples need to be *in dialogue and communion* with one another. Unfortunately, because of excessive centralization such a process of horizontal dialogue among people of different cultures has not really started.

In short, contextual theology calls for both rootedness and openness. None of these two poles can be given up. What that signifies could be gleaned through a thought that Gandhi made in some other context. He said that he wanted the doors and windows of his house to be wide open, but refused to be blown off his feet.

Sutra 4

Practice of Dialogue is the foundational method of all contextual theologies.

Method is a central issue in every theologizing. It also marks off one

theology from the other. Where theology has been conceived as an intellectual activity, method served to build up a system of explanation for the understanding of faith -- *fides quaerens intellectum.* But when we understand theology as having its point of departure in the real and is centered on life, then we need a method that corresponds to such an-approach. Dialogue is the process and method through which contextual theologizing takes place. **I** think it is appropriate to perceive contextual theology today as *"vita quaerens dialogum"* (life-seeking dialogue). Dialogue is open-ended. It is the pedagogue leading us by hand into the wondrous land of the Ultimate Mystery. The path of contextual theology is not so much one from faith to the clarity of knowledge about it, but rather a movement from life to the faith-experience of its mystery through the process of dialogue. Knowledge and understanding do have a role; they are not excluded, but subsumed into the process of dialogue.

Dialogue is involved on many fronts. The exigencies of a particular context will set the accent on one or other form of dialogue. Contextual theology means, among other things, entering into a fresh dialogical relationship with our roots, our own cultures, our own primordial language through which we are, and experience the world. Particularly important is the dialogue we foster with our neighbors of other faiths with whom we share the same context of life.

Ultimately, the method of dialogue goes to the very heart of theology itself. For, we understand the divine mystery not so much as a substance as *relationship.* In fact, St. John reminds us repeatedly in his Gospel and letters, that God is love. The dialogical relationship in love fostered among human beings becomes the appropriate language and sacrament for the experience and expression of the divine mystery.

In the light of all this, we can say that there is no greater preparation for doing contextual theology than *to increase the capacity for dialogue.* That also indicates something of the type of theological programs required in our Third World countries and the type of theologians we require.

Sutra 5

Contextual theology is based on the conviction that God's saving Word comes to us today concretely within our context and our historical circumstances. Context, therefore, is not only a place of questions but also of saving answers.

The goal of contextual theology is the encounter with the real. It is in the immersion of the real that one comes to experience the truth. That is precisely what incarnation is. In recognizing and encountering the real of every context we recognize the truth of God's Word here and now. In this way, incarnation ceases to be simply an event of the past, and it becomes the very structure of our faith whereby we constantly encounter the real of God in every moment of our context. Otherwise, as Jon Sobrino rightly points out, "it would be contradictory to say that God really communicates himself in history and at the same time to say that this history nowhere perceives such a communication of God."[4]

The spirit behind contextual theology is that today Christianity needs to have at least as much confidence and trust in the present grace of God and in what God is revealing today, as in the grace of his past revelation embodied in tradition. In methodological terms, contextual theology breaks the simplistic framework according to which the context would be that from where questions emerge and Christian tradition are reservoirs from which the answers are derived. If we take earnestly that the present self-revelation of God in our context is part of our Christian faith, then the context is not only a place of questions, but that it contains indications for answers as well which need to be discerned through the process of dialogue. In other words, the context is itself part of the answer. This, I think, is a principle, which the experience of any authentic contextual theology will confirm. And that indicates also the different attitude of contextual theologies to the past tradition.

To express it differently, once we are really convinced that there can be no such thing as universal theology, nor can there be, on the other hand, any pretension on the part of the contextual theology to be total theology, then these convictions will naturally bear upon the relationship of contextual theologies to tradition. Congar once remarked that Christianity does not begin every time from zero.[5] One can hardly dispute the truth of such a statement. But we need to add in the same breath that the past tradition of Christianity may not be equally applicable to all contexts. That would be to contradict the very spirit and nature of contextual theology. In any case, we cannot build everything of our future on a past in which we do not fully recognize ourselves.

As the present experience of God's self-manifestation and the challenges it brings will be the entry point for a discerning appropriation of the Christian past, one will discern all those things which really

contribute to the present. A contextual theology which is sensitive to listen to the speaking of God today will also be in a position to discern from the Christian past also those things which enable it to listen to his Words today and translate them into action. Such a starting point places us also in a position of openness and dialogue with our neighbors of other faiths.

Sutra 6

Contextual theology is one which is in constant dialogue with other sciences

This dialogue needs to be understood in its proper perspective. The motive behind this call for dialogue is not because theology is a science, and therefore it needs to relate to other sciences. Rather it is because the promotion of the grace of life, which is the vocation of theology, demands the enlisting of the support of all sciences that can throw light on the reality of life and help to respond to its contemporary exigencies. It is a common experience today that the sciences insulate themselves and thus believe to maintain their autonomy. We are far from an organic, integral and holistic vision. The fragmentation of knowledge that is happening today is one of the chief causes for the fragmentation of life in its integral nature.

Contextual theology is an attempt to gain the wholistic approach to God-given life. And in this task, theology cannot rely exclusively on any one single discipline. In the classical approaches of the past as well as in the continuation of those traditions in present times, philosophy has taken a prominent place as the science most congenial to theological enterprise. This is understandable in a situation in which the major preoccupation was to harmonize reason and faith, or faith with the modern thought. But today in our Third World contexts, for obvious reasons, theological enterprise needs to be nurtured by other disciplines such as social sciences, cultural anthropology, study of religions, political sciences, economy, etc. Theology in our Third World societies can ignore dialogue with such sciences only at the risk of betraying its vocation. But one more important word needs to be added. We envisage these sciences to be *critical* and not simply descriptive and functional. It is in relationship with critical sciences that theology will come to expression as a prophetic enterprise.

Today, sociology of knowledge has made it amply clear that there is

nothing like a neutral standpoint. All human and social sciences have their orientation and choice. It is of decisive importance for contextual theology. which instruments, which tools it employs in analyzing, understanding and interpreting the realities around. In its dialogue with these sciences, authentic contextual theology will be guided by its fundamental option of being on the side of the powerless, on the side of the victims.

Sutra 7

In contextual theology, it is people themselves who do theologizing and in this process from their own resources.

The professional theologians have a subordinate role in so far as they help to formulate and articulate what emerges from peoples' encounter with the realities of their context. Even to be able to do this service, the professional theologian has to immerse herself into the experiences and life-realities of the people.

As experience testifies, the most innovative and creative theology taking place today is not in academic centers or institutes of higher learning, but right in the midst of the conflicts and contradictions of everyday life.

When people are the subjects of contextual theology, the resources they employ will also be different. They will not be far-fetched, but closer to their everyday life and experience. I do not intend to present any comprehensive list of such resources. Speaking from Indian experience, I could think of, for example, in the context of *dalit* theology, the importance of the forgotten stories of their origin which are so very crucial to reconstruct their identity as a people. Then, there are the streams of neglected Indic religious traditions which differ from the classical Brahminic sources. We have the dalit versions of the classical epics like *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana,* in which we find reversal of roles -- the heroes of the classics turned into villains and those vilified get reinstated as heroes. In modem times, the emergence of dalit literature in almost all the Indian languages is a very remarkable phenomenon.[6] They constitute a very important resource for the dalit people for the development of a dalit theology from out of their world of experiences. The same can be said of the tribal people in their development of a truly tribal theology.

The implications of people being the subject of theology and for employing their own resources, could be illustrated by an example. For the past one hundred years, in one form or other, there developed an *Indian Christian theology.* Analyzing it, we note how it has been a theology which tried to express Christian truths through the help of categories drawn from the dominant Sanskritic culture and tradition. In my view, such a theology, though taking place in India, in the Third World, does not merit to be called contextual theology. It is not a theology by the people -- the oppressed and suffering -- who would not certainly employ the tools and resources of the upper castes and classes. On the other hand, dalit theology, tribal theology are examples of true contextual theologies. Similarly, one may attempt to do theology in Sri Lanka by trying to relate with the religious world of Buddhism. And yet, it would not be a contextual theology if it fails to start from the traumatic experiences of people themselves caught in the midst of the Tamil-Sinhalese bloody ethnic conflict.

CONCLUSION

Now, to conclude, one of the early Christian writers if I rightly remember, Dionysius the Aeropagite said something like this: God's center is everywhere and his circumference is nowhere. What he said of God is true of theology as well. There is no center for theology, for it could spring up from anywhere, from any context. It has no circumference either, because every contextual theology knows that it has not fully exhausted the mystery of God or the human, and therefore is open and in dialogue with other contextual theologies.

Contextual theology belongs to the realm of organic realities and not to the world of architechtonics. Its growth needs to be understood not in terms of a building as that of a tree. And no tree grows according to standardized patterns or pre-set programs. It has an inherent dynamics of its own, and it unfolds itself in its splendorous beauty overshadowing the world of architechtonics. It is this same dynamics which symbolizes the power of the inexhaustible mystery of the divine and the human.

With contextual theologies we stand in the face of a rich theological pluralism. In each context the truth of God's self-communication acquires new light, new accent and emphasis. The basic pattern of God's self-revelation as life and grace, on the one hand, and the response in human freedom through faith and deeds to the same revelation, on the other, is such a complex and multifaceted reality that

it can never be imprisoned in any one single mould. It takes all the different contexts of the world to have a glimpse into the great mystery of the continuing dialogue between the divine and the human. Attempting to express it calls for a different language on our lips and a new departure into the endless horizons of that mystery into which we ourselves and our life-contexts are enveloped.

When our words fail, poetic intuitions come to our aid. Let me then conclude with the words of Rabindranath Tagore, a great modern poet of India, to say what kind of feelings and excitement the venture of contextual theology could bring to our hearts:

When old words die out on the tongue
New melodies break forth from the heart
And where the old tracks are lost
New country is revealed with its wonders[7]

Notes:

1. Anthony D'Mello, *The Prayer of the Frog. Book of Story Meditations* (Anand: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1988), p. 88. 1 have adapted the story to suit the theme on hand.

2. Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith. An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity* (London: Darton. Longman & Todd, 1978), p. xi.

3. David Tracy. "Some Concluding Reflections on the Conference" in Hans Kung, David Tracy (eds.). *Paradigm Change in Theology. A Symposium for the Future* (Edinburgh:, T. & T. Clark Ltd, 1989), p. 462. Emphasis mine.

4. Jon Sobrino, 'Theology in the Third World. Reflections from El Salvador" in T. K. John (ed.), *Bread and Breath. Essays in Honor of Samuel Rayan S.J.* (Anand: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1991), p. 36.

5. Cf. Y. Congar. "Christianisme comme foi et comme culture," in *Evangelizzazione e Culture.* Vol. I (Rome: Pontificia Universita Urbaniana, 1976), p. 99.

6. By way of example. I refer here just one work that has recently appeared: Arjun Dnagle, *Poisoned Bread. Translations from Modern Marathi Dalit Literature* (Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 1994).

7. Rabindranath Tagore. *Gitanjali* (Delhi-New York: Macmillan, 1918). no. 37.

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Ethical Issues in the Struggles for Justice by Daniel Chetti and M.P. Joseph

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Chapter 11: Martin, Malcolm and Black Theology, by James H. Cone

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> America, I don't plan to let you rest until that day comes into being when all God's children will be respected, and every [person] will respect the dignity and worth of human personality. America, I don't plan to let you rest until from every city hall in the country, justice will roll down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream. America, I don't plan to let you rest until from every state house..., [persons] will sit in the seat who will do justly, who will love mercy, and who will walk humbly before their God. America I don't plan to let you rest until you live it out that all [persons] are created equal and endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights. America, I don't plan to let you rest until you live it out that you believe what you have read in [people] to dwell upon the face of the earth.[1]

Martin Luther King, Jr.

All other people have their own religion, which teaches them of a God whom they can associate with themselves, a God who at least looks like one of their own kind. But, we so-called Negroes, after 400 years of masterful brainwashing by the slave master, picture 'our God' with the same blond hair, pale skin, and cold blue eyes of our murderous slave master. His Christian religion teaches us that black is a curse, thus we who accept the slave master's religion find ourselves loving and respecting everything and everyone except black, and can picture God as being anything else EXCEPT BLACK.[2]

Malcolm X

The prophetic and angry voices of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X together revolutionized theological thinking in the African-American community. Before Martin and Malcolm, black ministers and religious thinkers repeated the doctrines and mimicked the theologies they read and heard in white churches and seminaries, grateful to be allowed to worship God in an integrated sanctuary and to study theology with whites in a seminary classroom.

I remember my excitement when I was accepted as a student at Garrett Theological Seminary more than thirty-five years ago. It was my first educational experience in a predominantly white environment. Like most blacks of that time who attended white colleges and graduate schools, I tried hard to be accepted as just another student. But no matter how hard I tried, I was never just another student in the eyes of my white classmates and my professors. I was a *Negro* student -- which meant a person of mediocre intelligence (until proven otherwise) and whose history and culture were not worthy of theological reflection.

No longer able to accept black invisibility in theology and getting angrier and angrier at the white brutality meted out against Martin King and other civil rights activists, my Southern, Arkansas racial identity began to rise in my theological consciousness. Like a dormant volcano, it soon burst forth in a manner that exceeded my intellectual control.

"You are a racist!" I yelled angrily at my doctoral advisor who was lecturing to a theology class of about 40 students. "You have been talking for weeks now about the wrongdoings of Catholics against

Protestants in 16th and 17th century Europe," I continued, raising my voice even higher, "but you've said absolutely nothing about the monstrous acts of violence by *White* Protestants against Negroes in the American South today in 1961!"

Devastated that I -- who was a frequent presence in his office and home -- would call him a racist, my advisor, a grave and staid English gentleman, had no capacity for understanding black rage. He paced back and forth for nearly a minute before he stopped suddenly and stared directly t me with an aggrieved and perplexed look on his face. Then he shouted, "That's simply not true! Class dismissed."

He stormed out of the classroom to his office. I followed him. "Jim," he turned in protest, *"You* know I'm not a racist!" "I know" I said with an apologetic tone but still laced with anger. "I'm sorry I blurted out my frustrations at you. But I am angry about racism in America and the rest of the world. I find it very difficult to study theology and never talk about it in class." "I'm concerned about racism too," he retorted with emphasis. We then talked guardedly about racism in Britain and the U.S.

The more I thought about the incident, then and later, the more I realized that my angry outburst was not about the personal prejudices of my advisor or any other professor at Garret. It was about how the discipline of theology had been defined so as to exclude any engagement with the African-American struggle against racism. I did not have the words to say to my advisor what I deeply felt. I just knew intuitively that something was seriously wrong with studying theology during the peak of the civil rights era and never once reading a book about racial justice in America or talking about it in class. It was as if the black struggle for justice had nothing to do with the study of theology -- a disturbing assumption which I gradually became convinced was both anti-Christian and racist. But since I could not engage in a disinterested discussion about race as if I were analyzing Karl Barth's christology, I kept my views about racism in theology to myself and only discussed them with the small group of African-American students who had similar views.

After I completed the Ph.D. in systematic theology in the fall of 1964, I returned to Arkansas to teach at Philander Smith College in Little Rock. No longer cloistered in a white academic environment and thus free of the need of my professors' approval, I turned my attention to the rage I

had repressed during six years of graduate education. Martin Luther King, Jr., and the civil rights movement helped me to take another look at the theological meaning of the black struggle for justice. My seminary education was nearly worthless in this regard, except as a negative stimulant. My mostly neo-orthodox professors talked incessantly about the "mighty acts of God" in biblical history. But they objected to any effort to link God's righteousness with the political struggles of the poor today, especially among the black poor fighting for justice in the United States. God's righteousness, they repeatedly said, can never be identified with any human project. The secular theologians were not much better. They proclaimed God's death with glee and published God's obituary in *Time* magazine. But they ignored Martin King's proclamation of God's righteous presence in the black freedom struggle.

Although latecomers to the civil rights movement, a few white theologians in the North supported it and participated in marches led by Martin Luther King, Jr. But the African-American fight for justice made little or no impact on their intellectual discourse about God, Jesus, and theology. Mainstream religion scholars viewed King as a civil rights activist who happened to be a preacher rather than a creative theologian in his own right.

It is one thing to think of Martin King as a civil rights activist who transformed America's race relations and quite another to regard racial justice as having theological significance. Theology, as I studied it in the 1960's, was narrowly defined to exclude the practical and intellectual dimensions of race. That was why Albert Camus, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Susan Sontang were read in theology courses but not Richard Wright, Zora Neale Hurston, W.E.B. DuBois, and James Baldwin. Likewise Harry Emerson Fosdick and Ralph Sockman figured high on the reading lists in homiletics courses but not Howard Thurman and Martin King. White theologians reflected on the meaning of God's presence in the world from the time of the Exodus to the civil rights revolution and never once made a sustained theological connection between these two liberation events. The black experience was theologically meaningless to them.

Unfortunately black ministers and theologians were strongly influenced by the white way of thinking about God and theology. When Richard Allen and other black Christians separated from white churches in the late 18th and early 19th centuries they did not regard their action as having *theological* meaning. They thought of it as a *social* act, totally

unrelated to how blacks and whites think about God. That was why they accepted without alterations the confessions of faith of the white denominations from which they separated. But how is it possible to enslave and segregate people and still have correct thinking about God? That was a question which black ministers did not ask.

Even Martin King did not ask that question so as to expose the flawed white liberal thinking about God that he had encountered in graduate school. King thought his theology was derived primarily from his graduate education, and to a large degree, it was, especially his ghostwritten books and speeches to white audiences. As a result, he was unaware of the profoundly radical interpretation of Christianity expressed in his civil rights activity and proclaimed in his sermons.

But what King *did* in the South and later the North and what he *proclaimed* in sermons and impromptu addresses profoundly influenced our understanding of the Christian faith. King did not do theology in the safe confines of academia -- writing books, reading papers to learned societies, and teaching graduate students. He did theology with his life and proclaimed it in his preaching. Through marches, sit-ins, and boycotts and with the thunder of his voice, King hammered out his theology. He aroused the conscience of white America and made the racist a moral pariah. in the church and the society. He also inspired passive blacks to take charge of their lives, to believe in themselves, in God's creation of them as a free people, equally deserving of justice as whites.

King was a public theologian. He turned the nation's television networks into his pulpit and classroom, and he forced white Christians to confront their own beliefs. He challenged all Americans in the church, academy, and every segment of the culture to face head-on the great moral crisis of racism in the U.S. and the world. It was impossible to ignore King and the claims he made about religion and justice. While he never regarded himself as an academic theologian, he transformed our understanding of the Christian faith by making the practice of justice an essential ingredient of its identity.

It could be argued that Martin King's contribution to the identity of Christianity in America and the world was as far-reaching as Augustine's in the fifth century and Luther's in the sixteenth.[3] Before King no Christian theologian showed so conclusively in his actions and words the great contradiction between racial segregation and the gospel

of Jesus. In fact. racial segregation was so widely accepted in the churches and societies throughout the world that few white theologians, did see the injustice, did not regard the issue important enough to even write or talk about it. But after King no theologian or preacher dares to defend racial segregation. He destroyed its moral legitimacy. Even conservative white preachers like Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell make a point to condemn racial segregation and do not want to be identified with racism. That change is due almost single-handedly to the theological power of King's actions and words.

Martin King was extremely modest about his political achievements and rather naive about the intellectual impact he made on the theological world. Theologians and seminarians have also been slow to recognize the significance of his theological contribution. But I am convinced that Martin Luther King, Jr., was the most important and influential Christian theologian in America's history. Some would argue that the honor belongs to Jonathan Edwards or Reinhold Niebuhr or even perhaps Walter Rauschenbusch. (King acknowledged that the latter two, along with other white theologians, had a profound influence on his thinking.) Where we come down on this issue largely depends upon how we understand the discipline of theology. Those who think that the honor belongs to Edwards or Niebuhr or Rauschenbusch cannot possibly regard the achievement of racial justice as a significant theological issue, because none of them made justice for black people a central element of their theological program. Edwards, Rauschenbusch, and Niebuhr were *white* theologians who sought to speak only to their own racial community. They did not use their intellectual power to support people of color in their fight for justice. Blacks and the Third World poor were virtually invisible to them.

I am a black liberation theologian. No theologian in America is going to receive high marks from me who ignores race or pushes it to the margin of their theological agenda. But my claim about the importance of race for theology in America does not depend on one being a black liberation theologian. *Any* serious observer of America's history can see that it is impossible to understand the political and religious meaning of this nation without dealing with race. Race has mattered as long as there has been an America. How then can one be regarded as the most important and influential Christian theologian in this land and not deal with racism, its most intractable sin?

Martin King is America's most important Christian theologian because

of what he said and did about race from a theological point of view. He was a liberation theologian before the phrase was coined by African-American and Latin American religious thinkers in the late Sixties and early Seventies. King's mature reflections on the gospel of Jesus emerged primarily from his struggle for racial justice in America. His political practice preceded his theological reflections. He was an activist-theologian who showed that one could not be a Christian in any authentic sense without fighting for justice among people.

One can observe the priority of practice, as a hermeneutical principle, in his sermons, essays, and books. *Stride Toward Freedom* (1958), *Why We Can't Wait* (1964). and *Where Do We Go From Here* (1967) were reflections on the political and religious meaning (respectively) of the Montgomery bus boycott (1955-56). the Birmingham movement (1963), and the rise of Black Power (1966). In these texts, King defined the black freedom movement as seeking to redeem the soul of America and to liberate its political and religious institutions from the cancer of racism. I contend that as a theologian to America he surpassed the others, because he addressed our most persistent and urgent sickness.

But two other features of King's work elevate him above Edwards, Rauschenbusch, and Niebuhr. The first is his international stature and influence. I do not mean his Nobel Prize, but his contribution beyond the particularity of the black American struggle. He influenced liberation movements in China, Ireland. Germany, India, South Africa, Korea, and the Philippines. Hardly any liberation movements among the poor are untouched by the power of his thought.

Secondly. King was North America's most courageous theologian. He did not seek the protection of a university appointment and a quiet office. One of his most famous theological statements was written in jail. Other ideas were formed in a brief breathing space after days of exposure to physical danger in the streets of Birmingham, Selma, and Chicago and the dangerous roads of Mississippi. King did theology in solidarity with the "least of these" and in the face of death. "If physical death," he said, "is the price I must pay to free my white brothers and sisters from the permanent death of the spirit, then nothing could be more redemptive." Real theology is risky as King's courageous life demonstrated.

From King black liberation theology received its Christian identity, which he understood as the practice of justice and love in human

relations and the hope that God has not left the "least of these" alone in their suffering. However, that identity was only one factor which contributed to the creation of black liberation theology. The other was Malcolm X, who identified the struggle as a black struggle. As long as black freedom and the Christian way in race relations were identified exclusively with integration and nonviolence, black theology was not possible. Integration and nonviolence required blacks to turn the other cheek to white brutality, join the mainstream of American society, and do theology without anger and without reference to the history and culture of African-Americans. It meant seeing Christianity exclusively through the eyes of its white interpreters. Malcolm prevents that from happening.

I remember clearly when Malcolm and black power made a decisive and permanent imprint upon my theological consciousness. I was teaching at Adrian College (a predominately white United Methodist institution) in Adrian, Michigan, trying to make sense out of my vocation as a theologian. The black rage that ignited the Newark and Detroit riots in July 1967, killing nearly eighty people, revolutionized my theological consciousness. Nothing in seminary prepared me for this historic moment. It forced me to confront the blackness of my identity and to make theological sense of it.

Martin King helped to define my *Christian* identity but was silent about the meaning of blackness in a world of white supremacy. His public thinking about the faith was designed to persuade white Christians to take seriously the humanity of Negroes. H challenged whites to be true to what they said in their political and religious documents of freedom and democracy. What King did not initially realize was how deeply flawed white Christian thinking is regarding race and the psychological damage done to the self-image of blacks.

To understand white racism and black rage in America, I turned to Malcolm X and black power. While King accepted white logic, Malcolm rejected it. "When [people] get angry,' Malcolm said, "they aren't interested in logic, they aren't interested in odds, they aren't interested in consequences. When they get angry, they realize that the condition that they're in -- that their suffering is unjust, immoral, illegal, and that anything they do to correct it or eliminate it, they're justified. When you develop that type of anger and speak in that voice, then we'll get some kind of respect and recognition, and some changes from these people who have been promising us falsely already for far too long."**4**

Malcolm saw more clearly than King the depth and complexity of racism in America, especially in the North. The North was more clever than the South and thus knew how to camouflage its exploitation of black people. White Northern liberals represented themselves as the friends of the Negro and deceived King and many other blacks into believing that they really wanted to achieve racial justice in America. But Malcolm knew better and he exposed their hypocrisy. He called white liberals "foxes" in contrast to Southern "wolves." Malcolm saw no difference between the two, except that one smiles and the other growls when they eat you. Northern white liberals hated Malcolm for his uncompromising, brutal honesty. But blacks, especially the young people, loved him for it. He said publicly what most blacks felt but were afraid to say except privately among themselves.

I first heard Malcolm speak while I was a student at Garrett but I did not really listen to him. I was committed to Martin King and hoped that he would accept the invitation offered him to become a professor of theology at Garrett. I regarded Malcolm as a racist and would have nothing to do with him. Malcolm X did not enter my theological consciousness until I left seminary and was challenged by the rise of the black consciousness movement in the middle of the 1960's. Black Power, a child of Malcolm, forced me to take a critical look at Martin King and to discover his limits.

It is one thing to recognize that the gospel of Jesus demands justice in race relations and quite another to recognize that it demands that African Americans accept their blackness and reject its white distortions. When I turned to Malcolm, I discovered my blackness and realized that I could never be who I was called to be until I embraced my African heritage -- completely and enthusiastically. Malcolm put the word "black" in black theology. He taught black scholars in religion and many preachers that a colorless Christianity is a joke -- only found in the imaginary world of white theology. It is not found in the real world of white seminaries and churches. Nor is it found in black churches. That black people hate themselves is no accident of history. As I listened to Malcolm and meditated on his analysis of racism in America and the world, I became convinced by his rhetorical virtuosity. Speaking to blacks, his primary audience, he said:

> Who taught you to hate the color of your skin? Who taught you to hate the texture of your hair? Who taught

> you to hate the shape of your nose? Who taught you to hate yourself from the top of your head to the sole of your feet? Who taught you to hate your own kind? Who taught you to hate the race you belong to so much that you don't want to be around each other? You should ask yourself, 'who taught you to hate being what God gave you?'[5]

Malcolm challenged black ministers to take a critical look at Christianity, Martin King, and the civil rights movement. The challenge was so deep that we found ourselves affirming what many persons regarded as theological opposites: Martin and Malcolm, civil rights and black power, Christianity and blackness.

Just as Martin King may be regarded as America's most influential theologian and preacher, Malcolm X may be regarded as America's most trenchant race critic. As Martin's theological achievement may be compared to Augustine's and Luther's, Malcolm's race critique is as far-reaching as Marx's class critique and the current feminist critique of gender. Malcolm was the great master of suspicion in the area of race. No one before or after him analyzed the role of Christianity in promoting racism and its mental and material consequences upon the lives of blacks as Malcolm did. He has no peer.

Even today, whites do not feel comfortable listening to or reading Malcolm. They prefer Martin because he can easily be made more palatable to their way of thinking. That is why we celebrate Martin's birthday as a national holiday, and nearly every city has a street named in his honor. Many seminaries have a chair in his name, even though their curriculums do not take his theology seriously. When alienated blacks turn to Malcolm, whites turn to Martin, as if they really care about his ideas, which most do not. Whites only care about Martin as a way of undermining the black allegiance to Malcolm.

When Malcolm X was resurrected in Black Power in the second half of the 1960s, whites turned to Martin King. White religious leaders tried to force militant black ministers to choose between Martin and Malcolm, integration and separation, Christianity and Black Power. But we rejected their demand and insisted on the importance of both. The tension between Martin and Malcolm, integration and separation, Christianity and blackness created black theology. It was analogous to the "double-consciousness;" the "two unreconciled strivings," that W.E.B. DuBois wrote about in *The Souls of Black Folk* in 1903.

Martin King taught black ministers that the meaning of Christianity was inextricably linked with the fight for justice in the society. That was his great contribution to black theology. He gave it its Christian identity, putting the achievement of social justice at the heart of what it means to be a Christian. He did not write a great treatise on the theme of Christianity and justice. He organized a movement that transformed Christian thinking about race and the struggles for justice in America and throughout the world.

Malcolm X taught black ministers and scholars that the identity of African-Americans as a people was inextricably linked with blackness. This was his great contribution to black theology. Malcolm gave black theology its *black* identity, putting blackness at the center of who we were created to be. Like Martin, Malcolm did not write a scholarly treatise on the theme of blackness and self. He revolutionized black self-understanding with the power of his speech.

The distinctiveness of black theology is the bringing together of Martin and Malcolm in creative tension -- their ideas about Christianity and justice and blackness and self. Neither Martin nor Malcolm sought to do that. The cultural identity of Christianity was not important to Martin because he understood it in the "universal" categories he was taught in graduate school. His main concern was to link the identity of Christianity with social justice, oriented in love and defined by hope.

The Christian identity of the black self was not important to Malcolm X. For him, Christianity was the White man’s religion and thus had to be rejected. Black people, Malcolm contended, needed a black religion, one that would bestow self-respect upon them for being black. Malcolm was not interested in remaking Christianity into a black religion.

The creators of black theology disagreed with both Martin and Malcolm and insisted on the importance of bringing blackness and Christianity together. The beginning of black theology may be dated with the publication of the "Black Power" statement by black religious leaders in the *New York Times*, July 31, 1966, a few weeks after the rise of Black Power during the James Meredith march in Mississippi. Soon afterward the National Committee of Negro Churchmen was organized as the organizational embodiment of their religious concerns. It did not take long for the word "Black" to replace the word "Negro," as black ministers struggled with the religious meaning of Martin and Malcolm.

Christianity and blackness, non-violence and self-defense, "freedom now" and "by any means necessary."

I sat down to write *Black Theology and Black Power* in the summer of 1968. Martin and Malcolm challenged me to think deep and long about the meaning of Christianity and blackness. Through them, I found my theological voice to articulate the black rage against racism in the society, the churches, and in theology. It was a liberating experience. I knew that most of my former professors at Garrett and Northwestern would have trouble with what I was saying about liberation and Christianity, blackness and the gospel. One even told me that all I was doing was seeking justification for blacks on the Southside and Westside of Chicago to come to Evanston and kill him. But I could not let irrational white fear distract from the intellectual task of exploring the theological meaning of double-consciousness in black people.

Martin and Malcolm symbolize the tension between the African and American heritage of black people. We are still struggling with the tension, and its resolution is nowhere in sight. We can't resolve it because the social, political, and economic conditions that created it are still with us today. In fact, these conditions are worse today for the black poor, the one third of us who reside primarily in the urban centers like Chicago and New York.

It is appalling that seminaries and divinity schools continue their business as usual -- analyzing so many interesting and irrelevant things -- but ignoring the people who could help us to understand the meaning of black exploitation and rage in this society. Why are two of the most prophetic critics of the church and society marginal in seminary curriculum? If we incorporated Martin's and Malcolm's critique of race and religion into our way of thinking, it would revolutionize our way of doing theology, just as class and gender critiques have done.

But taking race seriously is not a comfortable task for whites or blacks. It is not easy for whites to listen to a radical analysis of race because blackness is truly *Other* to them -- creating a horrible, unspeakable fear. When whites think of evil, they think of black. That is why the word "black" is still the most potent symbol of evil. If whites want to direct attention from an evil that they themselves have committed, they say a black did it. We are the most potent symbols of crime, welfare dependency, sexual harassment, domestic violence, and bad government. Say a black did it, whites will believe you. Some blacks

will too.

With black being such a powerful symbol of evil, white theologians avoid writing and talking black theology. Even though black theologians were among the earliest exponents of liberation theology, we are often excluded when panels and conferences are held on the subject. One could hardly imagine a progressive divinity school without a significant interpreter of feminist and Latin American liberation theology. But the same is not true for black theology. The absence of a serious and sustained engagement of black theology in seminaries and divinity schools is not an accident. It happens because Black is the Other -- strange, evil and terrifying.

But theology can never be true to itself in America without engaging blackness, encountering its complex, multi-layered meaning. Theology, as with American society as a whole, can never be true to itself unless it comes to terms with Martin and Malcolm together. Both spoke two different but complementary truths about blackness which white theologians do not want to hear but must hear if we are to create theologies that are liberating and a society that is humane and just for all of its citizens. Only then can we sing, without hypocrisy, with Martin King, along with Malcolm X, the black spiritual, "Free at last, free at last, thank God almighty, we are free at last."

Notes:

1. Martin Luther King, Jr., "Which Ways Its Soul Shall Go?", address given 2 August 1967, at a voter registration rally, Louisville, Kentucky, in *Martin Luther King, Jr., Papers* (Atlanta, Georgia: Martin Luther King, Jr., Center for Nonviolent Social Change).

2. Malcolm X, "God's Angry Men," *Los Angeles Herald Dispatch***,** 1 August 1957.

3. That observation was made to me in a private conversation by theologian Langdon Gilkey of the University of Chicago. It is unfortunate that he never made a disciplined theological argument about King's theological importance in his published writings. If he had done so, perhaps American white theologians would not have ignored the black freedom struggle and would have been less hostile toward the rise

of black liberation theology.

4. *Malcolm X Speaks.* ed. by George Breitman (New York: Grove Press, 1965), pp. 107-108.

5. See *Washington Post*, 23 January 1994, p. G6.

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Ethical Issues in the Struggles for Justice by Daniel Chetti and M.P. Joseph

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Chapter 12: What Does God Ask of Us? by Mercy Amba Oduyoye

(Mary Amba Oduyoye, an ecumenical leader from Ghana, is President of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians [EATWOT].)

Introduction

The Assembly of the World Council of Churches held in Vancouver, Canada in 1983 had the theme: "Jesus Christ, the Life of the World." It did not come as a surprise to anyone that while we were being called to life we had to talk about death. We would like to praise God, adore God, thank God for the gift of life. Everyday is a fresh gift from God -- we know, but we praise our Maker while we have life. We believe that when our voices are lost in death, our nobler parts shall continue to praise God: But here and now we need to live as people who recognize that life is a gift from God.

What does God expect us to do with the life he has given us? If God loves the whole world and brought it into being, we ought to relate to

creation as having the same source as us -- as if we were siblings. St. Francis of Assisi caught this vision of our link with the rest of creation. If we believe that God is a God of justice, the Righteous One, dealing with compassion and showering us with well-being -- shalom, then our lives have to reflect this justice and this peace. We begin life loving, appreciating beauty and care and tenderness. We begin life acknowledging our dependence on those around us, smiling for pleasure offered us and holding firmly to friendships that are offered to us. And even before we can say it, we show that we are thankful to God for life. We are thankful to God for the healthy environment and we are thankful to God for people. We do not say it and may be we have forgotten that time was, when all we had were people and what we needed to survive was the life of another human being. JPIC (Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation, June 3-5, 1989) calls us to praise God for human beings and for all of God's creation.

How did a conference on life pass into deliberations on death? Brokenness is an experience we all share. Barriers and fences, they and we, are divisions Set up not simply to recognize diversity, but to fence off others, to conserve for our sole use the gifts of God, and to prevent others from trespassing on what we see as ours. When we go over boundaries we do so usually to exploit, to add to what we have. The JPIC call here is to penitence and confession. To this we shall return.

Faced with a world at home with sin, John the Baptist proclaimed the word of hope, a way out of our seemingly intractable problems and irreconcilable postures -- Repent and be forgiven, turn to your neighbors and hence to God. When Jesus began his work he brought the same message and even more urgently. God reigns, he said and if you acknowledge this then your lifestyle and attitudes have to conform to life in God's presence. Whenever the word of God is proclaimed, whether in the Old Testament, New Testament, or to us today through the events around us we are called to make a decision. All who are concerned with the human stewardship of the earth, with justice and with peace, are called to be committed to what makes for justice and for peace.

The focus on the integrity of creation, on peace and on justice has been launched because there are many who hurt, and know that they hurt. This is the sign of hope. There are people all over the world who have never doubted the interdependence, inter-relatedness and common welfare of all of creation and who have lived conscious that they have

no right to pillage and despoil the earth. That is a sign of hope. All over the world there are people who cannot stand by and see others exploited and dehumanized, they themselves would never sit quietly under indignities, there are persons who have courage to call for justice and to deal justly with those they encounter, they are a sign of hope. All over the world there are people who know the injustices cannot go on for ever and that the peace of any community is perched precariously wherever there are people who hurt. More and more people have become aware that the absence of military combat does not necessarily mean peace but also that preparing for war is a waste of what may be used for better expression of humanness. Peace movements all over Europe and North America have done great work to expose the arms race, militarism and militarization which in the final analysis is a profit-earning enterprise that feed directly on human blood and human greed. All these people and organizations are signs of hope. We have not gone too far to turn back. That is the sign of hope on which we call for further efforts. We still burn with desire not to perish together. God, I believe, will continue to keep stirring in us, this love for life and this awareness of our inter-relatedness.

It is the faith that God is in our struggle for survival, that God stands for justice and for peace and that there is no part or portion of creation that God ignores, which keeps us praying. We pray not only for just and peaceful relations among human beings but for an awareness of God's care for creation of which we are a part. How can we say we love God, we thank God for giving us the earth for a home, and then continue to ruin all that is given to sustain our lives. The litanies of our intercessions grow longer with our awareness of what we ought to be about as human beings. The creation that used to rejoice with us and to remind us of the beauty and bounty of God now groans with us as rain and snow do not come to feed our crops and as the earth grumbles and the waters spit out death. We call on God to sharpen our awareness and to give us the will to live as we pray.

We commit ourselves to all, not only other Christians. but all human beings who work for justice, who recognize that a necessary first act on the road to peace is to recognize our common humanity, our common dependence on God and the earth God has given us. All who realize that the future of humanity is linked together are beginning to subsume their physical and economic differences under the need for human survival which depends on the survival of the earth. Religious people are contributing to this search in the belief that the earth and all of creation

is God's and that our future depends on recognizing this. We, all human beings, share one human nature and our future depends on this. Recent experiences remind us of how easily we can share and spread death around. Our future depends on sharing and spreading life to all peoples. We cannot call God our common Father and live as if some human beings are expendable.

We who have met under this theme of justice, peace and the integrity of creation have done so as part of our commitment to stand together and to work. For this we share our experiences of the struggle, the joy of the signs of hope and the agonies of the barriers to shalom. We shall gather further steam to launch forward, firm in our faith that working in this is doing God's will, that indeed we are standing together with God against death and suffering. So let me share something of what I see as the affirmations, and the signs of hope that Americans are an integral part of this struggle to manifest total humanness and to acknowledge God's ownership and care of the whole of creation of which human beings are a part.

Creation Hangs Together

In the wisdom and religious beliefs of Africans, we human beings are linked with the earth and nature around us although we know ourselves to be children of God. We know that we depend on the earth, the sea, the rivers, all of nature to sustain the life God has given us, but also that there is a living spirit in all of this created life that we must recognize and honor. When we Africans acknowledge this by associating the spiritual powers we feel around us with these other manifestations of God's creative power, we are despised as pagans, worshiping trees and stones. We were told to be more scientific about our relations with the rest of creation. To tap their potential for our technological development and never mind how many trees we cut down nor how much waste we pour into our waters as long as each year we produce and consume more than the previous year.

The worst of this education is that we were being prepared to open our lands for callous exploitation. The best of our forest was cut down for furniture that soon became archaic and was replaced by cutting down more forests. Land that could grow corn for staple food went for cocoa for luxury chocolates and human beings who could have developed Africa were bought and sold to grow sugar cane which today we have realized is not too good for human consumption. The recognition of the

integrity of creation means for me above all the recognition that all human beings have a right to live and that our environment has to be protected and respected to ensure this life. The labels primitive people, non-technological cultures, have helped to create a hierarchy of human beings. We all live in a developing world and our common survival depends on how we understand how much we need to live and how much of what we have is a show of power and prestige.

Much of what we call culture is the outcome of how we relate to our physical environment and our sense of responsibility towards the human beings among whom we live and the rest of creation around us. Under the philosophy of development built on the illusion that change and growth are the same as progress and that any move, especially if it goes in the direction of control and exploitation of nature is to be desired, we have set up the Euro-American culture as the mark of development, and the acceptable level of human consumption.

We have argued that since theirs is a developed world all that they do must be right. Their values and relationships as expressed in social and legal systems are set up as being better than what obtains in African culture. To be developed Africans have to give up their world view and human values, take up those of Europe and make innovation and consumption the end of life.

Our very physical form is disparaged and people are simply exploited, ignored, dehumanized for no other reason than that they are black. They represent a "dying" culture, a primitive form of being human. The white world is unable to integrate black-skinned people into their view of the human species. Primitive ideas that people who look different are not quite human still rules the minds of most white people. This deep-seated disability gets rationalized into sophisticated theories that enable the white world to exploit Africa, Africans and all peoples of African descent with impunity and satisfaction. The integrity of the human race is daily disputed by our language. We speak of races, a concept which has no translation in my language. All human beings are children of God, the Akan say -- none is the child of the earth. The injustice built into global economic relations that exploit sectors of human race by color and gender disputes the integrity of humanity. Peace in the southern hemisphere is violated daily and continuously because of injustice that flows from lack of recognition of the integrity of all creation. It is stewardship turned into domination. This is injustice -- the absence of right relationships.

To Do Justly is to Live Peaceably

The ability to respond to God only comes as we relate gently (justly) to the world and to one another. Time was when we blamed poverty on indolence, attributed domination and hierarchies to natural order and appropriation of land as the will of God. Today, we are more critical about the causes of the inequities that we experience. In most of Africa, before the intervention of Europeans, land was not sold, it was not owned, it was assigned for use and when not in use reverted to the whole community. Today, land issues are central in the struggle for justice in South Africa, in other parts of the continents, small farms are giving way to commercialized plantations that take away land without providing employment.

We lament the state of family life, but today we cannot blame prostitution, child abuse, delinquency of adults and children simply on lack of morals and irresponsibility. To deal justly with the socio-economic situation of Africa, we have to agree to the necessity of social analysis and an understanding of the historical and cultural underpinnings of what we experience. Not much of this analysis is being done in Africa itself. The Africans who do so in the global context in international meetings are often made to feel like they do nothing but complain. People are tired of hearing of our colonial and missionary past and what it has done to us. But we cannot forget. We have to work with this history if we are to be just to ourselves. We have to do this analysis if we are to act effectively on root causes. Since the end of the U.N. Decade celebrated in Nairobi, a more realistic approach to the world of African women has begun. The only problem is that we African women have become objects of study. We want to do our own analysis and to seek solutions to what matters most to us. We are yet to find people who understand our position.

We would like to see how the struggle for human dignity is undertaken without having to divide the search into racism, sexism and classism, least of all to be made to prioritize our struggle. Some women's experience is that of domination, other feel marginalized, while for some the experience is one of rejection. For women in Africa much of the injustice and lack of a sense of well-being is located in the area of technological development. So much of what the West takes for granted is, still in Africa, a struggle for survival. Women in Africa have to decide whether to abandon ourselves to the technological culture or to

remain in the fire wood and water-fetching age. Left to the priorities of the men at the helm of affairs nothing will change for women in the homemaking and food production lines; men do none of this except for pay outside the home. The disabilities of women are legitimated by the exploitation of God and what is said to be natural. Violence against women may not show itself blatantly as sexual violence, but much of religious rites do violence to the self-esteem of women.

The global phenomenon of the increase in the numbers of poor applies to Africa. With modern land-use acts some women have lost their means of livelihood. In West Africa where commercial enterprises give women a fair amount of economic independence, there is an invidious language that disparages this and makes it sound unnatural for women to be wealthy. In the 1950s a whole gender of literature known as "The Onitsha market Literature of Nigeria" focused on the economic activities of Ibo women describing them as viragoes, witches and prostitutes or else portraying them as money-loving, adulterous killers. More insidious in this attempt to control the economic success of women is the Legio Maria a Namuwango church which uses confession to control women. Women are made to feel guilty for trying to acquire an independent source of income. They are accused of being greedy and of departing from Luo traditional image of a good wife. Women who succeed economically cannot be decent women, if they were, they would submit to the control of men. In this way women are made to fear the disapproval of society if they did not play the right game in a man’s world, playing this game means allowing oneself to be marginalized from most modern structures.

Justice for women would involve a just definition of development which implies that women participate in defining national development. Justice for women means the possibility to influence policies involving war and peace, militarism and militarization, the possibility of diverting resources from death-generating enterprises to life-sustaining efforts. Justice for women includes room to participate in deciding what health care is needed, what legal developments are just. Women want to and must be left in peace to organize themselves against control, domination and exploitation. The yearning for a just society is deeply woven into the bearing and caring of life.

There are several government-sponsored or -created women’s organizations in Africa, usually named National Council for Women’s Development or similar appellations. There are African heads of state

who have gone out of their way to promote the political activities of women and to sponsor them as party-politicians. There are others who have been made to accept women's participation. But there is more of the atmosphere of lip service or sheer antagonism towards women in politics. Justice demands participation.

Peace! Peace!

Women in West Africa have been known to hold governments to ransom when they have had enough of being marginalized, manipulated and managed. There were events against colonial governments in Nigeria. At least since 1956 when South African women hit the headlines with their protest against pass laws, they have never rested. They fight forced removals, they protest against the detention of their children. They continue to labor relentlessly for the birth of a South Africa that respects the humanity of all of God's children.

There can be no just and life-giving shalom as long as forces that promote death continue to reign. There can be no peace and caring relationships in a human community that treats as less than human any group of persons within or outside of it. As Christians we affirm that one of the fruits of righteousness is peace. Opposing nuclear weapons is a good course, but we know that beyond that is the peace we are yet to understand. When there is no more physical combat will we be able to boast of an end to the psychological violence of all sorts that we experience today? When will people be able to live unmolested by laws that safeguard the interests of the powers-that-be? Shalom (peace) is the well-being of the total community, not just sectors of it. On this more than anything else, the whole community must stand together for we are in danger of perishing together. Peace and the well-being of the whole of creation is one agenda. The victims of war are victims of injustice and greed and they include human beings as well as the rest of creation. We cannot struggle for human rights in the midst of war, neither can we enjoy social and cultural developments when the conditions for peace are absent.

Response and Commitment

As Christians the struggle for the integrity of creation, for justice and peace in the human community, for compassion towards the neighbor and concrete expressions of our love of God, all flow out of our affirmation that God first loved us and gave us Jesus Christ. It is our

response to the call of Jesus to take up our cross and follow him. We share the pain the rest of creation is going through as a direct result of our lack of integration of theology, ecology and technology. Our involvement in the struggle has to be one of a permanent concern that will guide our lifestyles. If we can make joint commitments, then we have to speak and act together or at least in concert as we pursue different aspects of the struggle. We have to affirm our faith together and continue to worship together so that the world may come to believe that we mean it when we say all human beings are the children of God and that this world belongs to God.

We shall join as a world of humans to commit ourselves to a theocratic world, getting rid of all patriarchies and androcentric view of life that draw us even into militarism, incessant innovations.

We need to join hands to reconceive and give birth to a model of development that is not exploitative either of humans or any aspect of creation.

We shall join as a human community in seeking to end the spiritual, psychological, intellectual and economic impoverishment of all women.

We need to create more awareness of the detrimental use of chemicals on women, rivers and plants.

We shall be dealing justly when as a Christian community we commit ourselves to the abrogation of all structures that generate external debts in the Third World.

As humans we have to rekindle our commitment to the ending of all human rights violations or else we all stand dehumanized.

There can be no peace where there is no justice-this you who belong to peace movement have to digest and act accordingly.

Europe has just been through an assembly with the theme "Peace with Justice" saying "Justice and Peace embrace each other."

Between Europe and world peace is the exploitation of the Third World.

Children die before they have lived, starve in the face of Europe coming

between Europe and the peace she thinks of.

What does this ask of us but to turn back from our foolish ways. Turn back from ethnocentricity and self-justification. Turn back from the lust for scientific and technological innovation whatever it costs and however it is used. Turn back to God the Creator of all.

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Ethical Issues in the Struggles for Justice by Daniel Chetti and M.P. Joseph

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Chapter 13: The Struggle for Justice and Peace, by Jose Miguez Bonino

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"Justice and Peace" the conjunction symbolizes a dream, an aspiration that has haunted humankind throughout history. The Hebrew Psalmist expresses it poetically:

Love and loyalty met together, justice and peace have kissed each other (Ps. 85:10)

Sometimes the vision has taken the shape of a religious hope: the heavenly Jerusalem", the new land where righteousness dwells, the new age'. In the Guarani indigenous tradition, in Brazil and Paraguay, it was seen as the pilgrimage to "a land without evils." Or it takes the shape of a political utopia: Plato's *Republic* or More's *Utopia.*

The impact of these visions on the life of peoples seems to be diverse and at times ambiguous:

> It has strengthened people as they had to endure the hardship of the present time and to persist in the efforts to reach the expected future. We are here close to the biblical idea of 'patience' (hypomone), resistance. It has at times led to passivity, resignation to injustice, violence and oppression, postponing the solution of all problems to 'that day';
>
> It has inspired hope, beckoning from the future, awakening a restlessness in relation to existing conditions and inspiring the quest for changes that would move in the direction of hope;
>
> Sometimes it has triggered conflict and even violence, when apocalyptic hope has led to violent attempts to 'force in' the 'new age' by a messianic group which conceives itself as the divine (or historically appointed) bearer of the new age.

1. Some Biblical Insights

It is Interesting and worth noting that we don't find in the Bible general definitions of peace and justice but rather an endless number of concrete acts and events in which God and human beings 'act justly' or 'unjustly', thus, for instance,

> David is 'more just' than Saul because he does not take the occasion to revenge himself for the latter's attempt to kill him -- for faithfulness to the 'royal status' of Saul (the Lord's anointed, I Sam. 24:18).
>
> God reveals his 'justice' by leading 'the peasantry of Israel' to victory, making the land free and safe again for his people (the Song of Deborah, Judges 5:11, one of the earliest Old Testament poetic compositions that has reached us.).

We will look in vain for universal laws or definitions of an ideal justice that can then be applied to concrete cases. Even the 'law' is understood as 'signposts' or 'indications' of the best way to organize human relations for the people. When we put together these concrete indications we find some common elements which help us to understand

what ‘justice’ is.

> Justice is essentially a concept of relation, referring to "the real relation between two . . . and not the relation between an object, subject to the judgement of an idea" (von Rad). In other terms: people belong to a family, to a community (tribe), a people, a form of work, or they are foreigners. To be ‘loyal’ to the relation Involved is to be ‘just’; to falsify these relationships is to be ‘unjust’.
>
> Those relationships, however, are defined in relation to an overarching and all-encompassing relation; the ‘alliance’ that God has established and defined in his action of calling, liberating, protecting and leading the people. God’s own action is the paradigm of loyalty and therefore of ‘justice’.
>
> This paradigm, however, is not a definition but a story of ‘the mighty acts of deliverance’, from the Exodus, reaching back to patriarchs and forward to the new land, etc.
>
> ‘Justice’ has therefore a ‘tendency’; it ‘tilts’ towards those who need deliverance -- the poor, the oppressed, the defenseless (widow, orphan, foreigner). And therefore the king, the judge, the father or common men and women are ‘just’ when they act in favor of the weaker , mistreated or defenseless.

When all relationships are justly realized, we can, in biblical terms, speak of peace *(shalom).* "Shalom is the substance of the biblical vision of one community embracing all creation. It refers to all those resources and factors which make communal harmony joyous and effective" (Ref. to Ezek. 34:25-29a; Walter Brueggemann, *Living Towards a Vision. Biblical Reflections on Shalom,* 1976, p. 16) But, again, one must guard against making this definition a description of an ideal utopia. It is, rather, bringing together the concrete struggles at every level of human life.

> Shalom appears in the Bible innumerable times, mostly in reference to very specific conditions. In sum, we can speak of (a) a relation to nature -- the animal kingdom, the

> calming of a storm, rain and fruitfulness of the land; (b) the social and political community -- the overcoming of economic injustice, oppression, cheating or bribing, conflict and lack of compassion; (c) the wellbeing of persons in the community -- an aspect assumed in the critique of things that hinder it (covetousness, anger, jealousy) and depicted as family and communal harmony.
>
> This peace is always threatened; it has to be created again and again over against the forces of destruction -- sword and drought, wild animals, enemies, evil people. Therefore the community needs to pray and work for peace. It is a gift of God that has to be constantly maintained by doing 'justice', i.e. by keeping loyalty to the requirement of the relationships with creation, the community, the family (for instance, the jubilee).

We can close this brief biblical recollection with three very simple reflections that can help us to make a future step in the consideration of our subject:

(1) In the Bible, the divine, the cosmic and the human are never separated in the consideration of justice and peace. Separating these dimensions (worship without justice and false security when God and the neighbor are rejected) is precisely the injustice and betrayal of the covenant that is denounced by the prophets. The consequence will be God's wrath and punishment and the absence of shalom both in their relation to God, to nature and in the community.

(2) The 'utopia' of peace and justice (i.e., the expectation of 'a new age') is not an ideal construction from which certain consequences are derived for specific situations but, on the contrary, it is the coming together in a vision of the specific struggle of the community to solve the conflicts, contradictions and difficulties that they find in everyday life -- political, social, religious, economic.

(3) Injustice and lack of peace are, therefore, fundamentally betrayals of the right relationships. Consequently, someone is wronged in these acts: fundamentally the sand and the neighbor and, as a consequence, God who has pledged himself as the defender of both. Those who are wronged, then, become the 'test' and the 'measure' of justice and peace. Both in the Old and in the New Testament, they are the poor, the

oppressed, the unprotected, the despised, in their dominant forms of the time: the poor, the orphan, the widow, the foreigner, the sick, etc.).

2. From the Reverse Side of History

These last lines bring us to the bottom line in the emergence of liberation theologies -- whether Korean, Philippians, South African, Black, Tamil or Latin American. We have all learned, and perhaps this is our only contribution, that God's purpose and action are best, and perhaps only, understood when we stand by the side of 'the little ones'. And God has not taught us that primarily through theological reflection or clever hermeneutics but through an encounter with the massive reality of poverty, deprivation and marginalization. Thus, these theologies are not, in the first place, a reflection but a sense of consternation, a cry of compassion and anger, a prayer and a commitment. Then reflection, analysis, study followed. In it we recovered the rich heritage of the Scriptures, the prophets, above all of Jesus Christ and the line that has run, sometimes more visibly, sometimes almost lost, throughout the history of the Christian community. Peace and justice can only be understood, re-created and defended from the perspective of the poor and oppressed. Of course, reflection had to be informed by understanding and here all the instruments of human social sciences had to be recognized. And they have to be constantly corrected, and made more precise and inclusive. Besides, theologians and ethicists have to recognize that most of us do not naturally have the perspective of the poor. By birth some and by formation and education most, belong to non-poor (which does not necessarily mean 'rich'). Some of our churches and institutions are also caught in this dilemma. For many of us and for many of our churches to take this perspective means a conversion and a learning process. In this learning process I would suggest three 'tracks' of thought:

> In the first place, the poor teach us how our world is and who we are.
>
> The 'non-poor', as a whole, are convinced that our world, the world as we see and live in, is the real world. To be sure, we know that there are, unfortunately, "islands of poverty" with which we have to deal. The poor show us the real world (encompassing more than two thirds of the human race, and growing) is an ocean of poverty where you can find a few islands of wealth and comfort (not

infrequently threatened by rising tides);

From the perspective of that ocean, things look very different. The world, its organization, its economy, its politics, its growing ‘globalization’ do not appear as rational, logical, normal, fundamentally acceptable, but as unjust, irrational and absurd. An organization of society which fails to provide for the needs of the vast majority "where there is no room for all", can hardly be considered rational.

It seems, therefore, perfectly understandable that such a human society be shot through with conflict (as any family would under similar conditions). When we look at it in this way, the problems of our world -- internal and international conflicts, delinquency, terrorism, widespread violence -- do not appear any more as strange and mysterious phenomena, due to the irrationality and wickedness of a few, but as the ‘logical’ and foreseeable expression of an ‘unviable’ family, organized in a perverse and self-destructive way;

In Christian terms, nobody who has heard our Lord Jesus Christ speaking in the gospels will dare to think that the Creator and Father/Mother of all women and men can be satisfied with this organization of the family. It then becomes clear why the Bible speaks of the mercy and the judgement of God: God’s compassion for the poor and oppressed, God’s wrath and judgement for a world in which the larger part of God’s children are condemned to hunger, deprivation, marginalization and death.

In the second place, we see that the poor are neither necessarily passive nor powerless. As they become aware of the irrationality of their situation, they can discover their possibilities and assume their historical role. It has to be recognized that the deterioration of conditions and the process of mass marginalization produced by the globalization of the economic model is producing a certain amount of demoralization in certain Third World areas and that some too sanguine expectations of the Sixties and Seventies have to be reassessed. But we cannot simply accept the defeatist pessimism which has become so mesmerized by the apparent omnipotence of the technological knowledge and globalization

of the system that gives up all hope of change.

> The self-confidence of prominent spokespeople and main actors of the dominant system has began to hesitate and they have had to recognize some of the problems and shortcomings, particularly at three points: First, the inadequacy of the 'market' to solve by itself some of the serious threats to human survival, like the deterioration of the environment and the depletion of the energy resources. Second, the need for some political role of institutions -- national and international -- in order to prevent the increasing marginalization and destruction of a growing number of people. Thirdly, the insufficiency of the system to produce by itself the relation between economic growth and democratic participation. Although this has not led such people to seriously work for the necessary changes, it is undermining the self-confidence that has been one of the main aspects of the neo-liberal ideology.
>
> It is also important to recognize that this drama is not only being played in the 'larger' but also (and perhaps more importantly) in the 'small' local stages of history. We are beginning to recognize the meaning and value of 'small victories' -- the birth of a new community, a local election, the struggle for the installation of running water in a neighborhood. To bring together these small triumphs and to relate them to a larger struggle, to discover forms of organization, tactics and strategies, is a long and difficult effort, fought through with failures, mistakes and, why not, defections and betrayals. But people, like in the past, show their resourcefulness and their resolution.
>
> As Christians and churches, we must see as an act of God's grace and forgiveness as well as a call to discipleship and commitment that we -- who many times have been indifferent to the suffering of the poor, or allied with their domination -- are allowed to join in the struggle for justice. It cannot be taken for granted that we have such a place. But experience shows that the Good News that God accepts us in God's struggle and that -- most of the time -- the poor make room for us in it, is really true.

> Not as an avant-garde, but as useful and even necessary participants. If we fail to take this place, God will find other participants. But we will have missed our salvation!

Finally, we begin to discover 'the logic of hope' over against the 'technical reason' that forecloses the horizon.

> The developed Western world is more and more captive of a fatalistic ideology that we can call 'possibilism' (usually defended as realism') according to which the future cannot be anything but the result of the operation of the forces and tendencies already visible in our present reality. It can only be perceived through the technical instruments today at our disposal. This really means that the future can only be 'rationally' perceived as the projection of the present. This is particularly important with reference to social, economic and political reality, that is, the 'world' as it presently functions. Recent discussions on economics seem to be the best illustration of this ideology; our hopes are rationalized by the data that we can feed into our computers. Everything else is 'irrational' and 'unreal'.
>
> The poor, in their struggle, on the other hand, have to believe in another logic; the possibility of the emergence of the 'new' which they perceive as the only possibility for their own survival. It is a logic born on the logic of life itself, which cannot be verified by the data fed into the computer but that introduces a new datum; the very existence and struggle of the poor. There is nothing intrinsically irrational in it, since that datum is already present in reality, although hidden from the 'organs of perception' privileged in our construction of 'scenarios'.
>
> In Christian terms, only this perspective is possible. The Bible speaks of a God who does 'new' things, which are 'marvelous in our sight': the barren women conceives and gives birth, water springs from the rock, five pieces of bread and two fishes feed a multitude, the world is created from nothing and Jesus is raised from the dead. Of this God as the living God we must admit that we seem to know very little. For the poor it is the only God that

counts. If this is true, the claim of the present system that 'it is the only alternative' is not only false but 'heretical'. If God is the God of Scriptures, the God of Jesus Christ, there is no situation in which 'there is no alternative'. And this is the basic premise for the possibility of finding alternatives.

3. Is There an Agenda?

Oppression is a complex reality. It has many names and faces. The struggle against it has to be also multifaceted. As Christian people and churches engage in this struggle, they have to decide where and in which ways their participation can be most meaningful. While such quest is difficult and will have to be reorganized many times, we can suggest some tentative criteria to be considered.

First of all, we should canvass the different 'names' of oppression: (i) The experience of dependence and the struggle for national determination took in the Sixties the form of creating the organizations of the Third World countries and the UN attempts to define a more just New International Economic Order . These attempts were to a large extent frustrated through the opposition of the powerful states and the -- frequently induced or forced -- resignation of the Third World countries. The issue, however, is by no means irrelevant. The foreign debt continues to be an issue and new voices have began to sound the need to look for ways to face it; (ii) At the national level two questions are concentrating increasing attention: one is the reassessment of the necessary role of the state to correct the distortions of a runaway market (currently discussed in Europe and in the discussions about the role the initiatives of 'an active state has played in the economic development of Asian countries); the other is the need for a 'participative democracy over against a purely representative formal democracy: in this sense the need to strengthen civil society with its intermediate organizations becomes an important concern; (iii) the struggle for collective and personal identity in a society in which forced immigration, dehumanizing conditions in urban marginal situations, and foreign cultural aggression and massification in many forms produce a degrading type of poverty where communal, family and personal identity are eroded and even destroyed.

Secondly, we have to look at ways in which Christians personally and Christian churches and organizations can most significantly enter the

struggle. In a general sense, one can speak of four areas of struggle: (i) the system of economic exploitation and social stratification (racial segregation, women's working conditions, unemployment and the new legislation of 'flexibility and 'deregulation); (ii) the ideology (the way of representing the world, social relations, etc.) that justifies the system -- the new ideologies of race superiority, the religious legitimation of competition and the so-called free market as the only and sufficient way of organizing human life (iii) the ways in which the consciousness of the oppressed, is led to interject this ideology of domination and to develop a feeling of self-denial and self-devaluation; (iv) the atomization of the society through the weakening and destruction of neighborhood, workers and local cultural manifestations. Although the struggle must be carried at every one of these aspects, I would suggest that churches and educational, cultural and even recreational institutions have their best possibilities in areas iii and iv. I will just mention some possibilities in order to open a conversation.

> As international or internationally-related institutions, they have the possibility of developing networks of concern, solidarity and mutual support among peoples and groups engaged in struggle for justice and peace in different parts of the world.
>
> Both at the international and national level there is a 'prophetic ministry which can be exercised as taking positions on fundamental issues and making them public (it has been done on issues of discrimination and segregation). This includes -- particularly for Christians -- the denunciation of the idolatry of absolute claims for a particular economic system or the myth of the 'only one alternative. Sometimes this can be done through 'symbolic action'.
>
> The task of re-socialization, particularly in relation to children and youth by offering concrete possibilities of association for specific goals (neighborhood, recreation, environmental issues, etc.) and new styles of personal and communal life. This has to do with values, attitudes, styles of relation, views of work, sex, leisure. etc. We all know there is a primary socialization that develops in the first years (basically in the home) and a second socialization, which reaches a significant point in

adolescence and youth and which takes place through church, neighborhood, school recreation as a struggle for identity and personhood.

In these rather general notes we have tried first to look at some of the basic points of departure for a Christian consideration of issues of justice and peace. Then, a brief review of the issues from the specific consideration of the situation of the poor as a test for Christian commitment, and finally, some ways in which the Christian community and churches can participate in these struggles. Certainly, there are a number of problems and issues to be considered. The only purpose of these notes is to stimulate a discussion which has already a significant history in ecumenical life but has to be re-entered again and again in the changing conditions and demands of our societies.

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Chapter 14: The Future of Liberation Theology in Latin America, by Sergio Torres G.

(Sergio Torres, a Chilean priest, teaches systematic theology at the Alfonsin Institute of Pastoral Theology in Santiago, Chile)

1. Introduction

I have been asked to take part in recognizing the theological work of Doctor K.C. Abraham on the occasion of his 60 years of life. It is a just acknowledgement for a man who has been able to relate his deep Christian convictions with a liberating commitment in the context of his cultural roots.

I have had the privilege of knowing and working with K.C., as he is known among his friends in the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT), which recently in 1996 celebrated its 20th anniversary.

K.C. has been a prominent member of the Association and was its Vice President from 1986-1991 and its President from 1991-1996.

We, Latin American Theologians, have participated from the very beginning in the life of the Association, and we have been enriched by the contribution of theologians from other continents and regions. We have valued especially the cultural and religious traditions of Asia and India which have helped us to open ourselves to the dialogue with other cultures and religious.

This dialogue within EATWOT hasn't been without difficulties and confrontations. Our commitment, however, has prevailed and we have been able to overcome those differences. Doctor K.C. Abraham has played a leading role facilitating the dialogue and the mutual enrichment within EATWOT.

As a Latin American theologian I join with pleasure in this acknowledgement as a sign of joy and gratitude for the contribution of K.C., through his writings and commitment to the development of a theology in the Third World.

In this occasion my contribution will be to write an article on the future of Liberation Theology in Latin American in view of the questioning and criticism of the past years.

2. Liberation Theology at Crossroads

Liberation Theology in Latin America has a short history.[1] It was born Out of the participation of Christians in the historical process of liberation in the 60s and the 70s. Contrary to what is sometimes thought, however, it is a genuine theology, a reflection on the Word of God starting from the praxis of liberation.

It is in continuation with the theological traditions of the Church and, at the same time, has made important new contributions to the development of theology. This theology takes seriously the proclamation of Jesus in the synagogue of Nazareth when he says that he has been sent to announce Good News to the poor, give sight to the blind and free captives.[2]

Latin American Liberation Theology makes the saving power of God present in the historical context of oppression and recalls the God of the Old Testament who has seen the slavery of his people and has come down to liberate them.[3]

Liberation Theology underlines the evangelical privilege of the poor. They are the first to receive the Good News. This is a theology in favor of the poor and against poverty. Christians, struggling for liberation and against poverty, develop the political dimension of Christian faith.

Liberation Theology is a critical reflection on the experience of God in the praxis of liberation. The content of this theology has always been the experience of God, as experience lived, celebrated and announced in the historical process of liberation.

Resistance to this theology

In its short life Liberation Theology grew and developed with great force in the Latin American continent. Many people felt interpreted by this new manner of doing theology. The Catholic Church assumed it as an official teaching in the Episcopal Conference of Medellin in 1968.

In proclaiming the defense of the poor, however, it received great opposition from the powerful of this world. The persons that are favored by the present unjust order considered this theology as a dangerous enemy. This theology is feared, not only because it speaks of justice and equality but also because it proclaims a God who sides with the poor.

Another great difficulty for Liberation Theology was the crisis of socialism in the countries of Eastern Europe. Liberation Theology, assuming some elements of Marxist analysis, appeared too identified with the ideology of Marxism. Many people superficially believed that the fall of socialism also included the fall of Liberation Theology. Other persons, including high officials of the Church, have said that Liberation Theology is dying.

The major difficulty, however, for Liberation theologians has come from within the Catholic Church. In 1984 the congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith published the document "Libertatis Nuntius" on Liberation Theology which contains strong attacks against this theology and practically condemns the liberation theologians. In 1986 the same Congregation published a second document "Liberatic Conscientise" with a more positive tone.[4]

We intend new to explain the content of these two documents focusing our attention on the first one.

3. The Document "Libertatis Nuntius

The document is divided into eleven chapters with an introduction and a conclusion. The first part contains a positive approach of liberation. It underlines that Liberation Theology is necessary to respond to the aspirations of liberation and reflects the biblical meaning of liberation which is an essential theme of the Old Testament and the New Testament.[5]

The document says that this type of theology was developed in recent years in Latin America. This process, however, did not last long and very soon its Christian identity.

According to the document, the fundamental reason of this failure comes from the use of Marxist analysis without any critical assessment. With the pretext of a deeper understanding of reality, Latin American theologians reinterpret the Christian message and they separate themselves from Christian orthodoxy The Instruction says that is impossible to separate Marxist analysis from Marxist ideology. When Marxist analysis is used, the person necessarily assumes all the content of Marxist ideology, including the Marxist concept of truth, ethics, class struggle the use of violence and atheism.

When these criteria are applied to theology we have to accept historical. Immanentism, and we identify God with the historical process. The Church also becomes a reality of this world without any relationship with God’s transcendence. The Church is part of the dominant class and losses its sacramental and hierarchical identity.

Practically this is a new hermeneutics, a political rereading of the scriptures. This is the reason of the emphasis of Latin American theologians on some biblical texts like Exodus and the Magnificat.

This is a short synthesis of this critical document. It is a disqualification of Liberation Theology and a misunderstanding of the real intentions of the theologians of Latin America who have always proclaimed their faith in Jesus Christ, have been active members of the church and have supported the poor even with the risk of their lives.

The reactions of the theologians

Latin American theologians knew with anticipation that Rome was preparing a document on Liberation Theology. They were very surprised by this document, for they never expected a condemnation of their theological commitment to the church and to the poor.[6]

Their first reaction was to disagree with the document because they did not feel identified with the type of theology described in the document. At the same time they were forced to enter into dialogue with the Vatican about the critical assessment of their theology and of their personal Christian commitment.

The focus of the discussion was the use of social sciences in theology, the rereading of the Bible from the perspective of the poor, the Christian communities in the struggle of liberation and the assumption of some elements of critical and Marxist analysis for a better and deeper understanding of the conflictual reality of the continent. The instruction of the Vatican says that theologians using Marxist analyses become ipso facto Marxist atheists. In their response, Latin American theologians have tried to prove that all these issues are very complex, and it is not possible to simplify the relationships among science, philosophy and theology.[7]

Theology and Social Sciences

Traditionally theology has used the mediation of philosophy to understand the complexity of the human person and to interpret the biblical message of revelation. Latin American theology introduced a new mediation of social science in order to know and to interpret social and historical reality and to propose concrete ways of transforming the unjust society.[8]

The Roman Instruction is not clear about the relationship between social sciences and theology. On one hand it says that "scientific knowledge of the situation and the possible ways of social transformation are the basic for an efficient action, capable of obtaining the goals that have been determined.[9]

On the other hand the document does not accept the dialogue between Christian faith and political action and puts into question the autonomy of social science in relation to Christian faith. We have here again the understanding of the Church as a mediaeval Christendom where all

structures and levels of knowledge are determined and controlled by theology and tradition. The document says in this respect: "Critical examination of the means of analysis taken from other disciplines has to be done in a special way by theology. The light of faith provides the criteria for analysis through theological reflection.[10]

The text speaks about the instrumental value of social science, but it does not make clear the goal for which the instrument is used. If the goal is to know and to interpret revelation, social science does not make a contribution. if the goal is to know reality in order to change it, social science does not need the help of theology.

Marxism

The Roman document speaks at length about Marxism. At the same time it is necessary to recognize that it appears ambiguous and contradictory dealing with this ideology. Latin American Theologians never identified themselves with Marxist though. They have always been very critical about orthodox Marxism, and they denounced through the years the excesses of Stalinism.

The Instruction proposes a definition and a description of Marxism which does not correspond to the reality of many Marxist authors and political tendencies. Several times the document speaks about a nonpolitical concept of Marxism. In other sections of the same text we read a different approach: "From the beginning, but especially in recently years, Marxist thought has diversified itself in various trends which differ one from the other.[11]

In this way there is a contradiction between an univocus concept of Marxism and a variety of different trends. Latin American theologians have always been attentive to the evolution of the Marxist science and to the concrete applications to political life. They have never accepted the totalitarian role of the State and the lack of freedom and participation of people in political life and in the decisions about their own future. On the scientific and philosophical level they never accepted mechanical determination of the economic infrastructure and have always proclaimed freedom and spiritual dignity of persons building their own destiny with the help of the transcendent God.

For all these reasons it has become impossible to accept the description of Liberation Theology of the Roman document. Theologians affirm

themselves as Christians, committed to God and to the poor, and they consider that Christianity and theology have biblical roots and are not determined by any ideology.

Class struggle

The document speaks several times about class struggle. Latin American theologians consider that its analysis is out of date. Marx himself did not invent the existence of classes. He only provided the instrument for understanding the conflicts among different classes. In response to the document, Latin American theologians have synthesized the social teaching of many social scientists. Some of their findings are as follows: class struggle is an objective situation of oppression and conflict starting with the existence of social classes. Christian love demands to eliminate or to diminish the causes which produce this division. The only condition is to do it without hatred.

Class struggle is an effort of social groups oppressed by the class structure of the society in order to overcome this division and obtain their social political liberation. This effort is legitimate in itself and Christians should join their forces in to obtain it.

Class struggle, in a technical sense, is the application of strategies and tactics to overcome a class society. Some of these tactics are not allowed to Christians because they are promoted out of violence.

Latin American theologians have never accepted to promote violence and class struggle. They have followed the orientation of the episcopal conference of Medellin which introduced a very useful distinction between the violence of the system and the oppressors and the legitimate efforts of the oppressed to overcome the first form of violence. The Latin American Bishops called the violence of the social system "institutionalized violence."

4. New challenges to Liberation Theology

The present moment of Liberation Theology is a critical one. The crisis of the socialist world and the attacks against this theology have given to the theologians the opportunity to make an evaluation, to asses their own principles and criteria and to open themselves to the new challenges coming from the changing situation. We will present a few of these new challenges.

Theology from women's perspectives

Theology has always been a masculine enterprise. Liberation Theology in Latin America has not been an exception. The focus was the liberation of the poor without the distinction of men and women. The concept of the poor included everybody, Indians, blacks, men, women, peasants, urban workers, etc. The specific identity of women's oppression was not present in the sociological and theological analysis of the first writings of Liberation Theologians.

Changes started to take place in the eighties. Little by little the women's perspective entered into theological reflection. This happened not because the men changed their mind but because women themselves started studying and writing theology.

Option for the poor women

In Latin America it is accepted that women are oppressed at different levels, as poor, as Indian, as black and as women. It is said that women are doubly oppressed.

Women theologians in Latin America are dealing with the issue of women's oppression from the traditional point of view of Liberation Theology, i.e., from the perspective of the poor. This effort incorporates the best insights of feminist theology from the United States and Europe, reinterpreted from a third world perspective. Women theologians favor the option of the women for themselves, for their legitimization, for their dignity in a world of "machines" oppression. This personal recognition does not mean in any way a sign of selfishness. Affirming their identity women are prepared to enter into dialogue with "the other". Women are prepared to enter in this way to struggle in solidarity with other women and with the men for their liberation.

A new biblical hermeneutics

Latin American women have realized that the Church and the Bible itself legitimized the oppression of women. At the same time they are experiencing great difficulty reading the Bible from their perspective To do it properly they have used the hermeneutics of suspicion, which has

been elaborated by women theologians from the First World. Latin American women have read it critically and adapted it to the Latin American reality. The suspicion starts recognizing that the text has been produced by a patriarchal and anti-feminist culture.

Latin American women are forced to deny the obligation of the readings of the Bible which consider that the inferiority of women comes from God's will. The reading of the Bible cannot content itself with the text but has to go to the deep liberating meaning of the biblical plan of God in human history.

Liberation theology from an indigenous and a black perspective

Liberation Theology from the very beginning underlined the concept of poor. This concept included indigenous and black people. Today things are changing. These strong minorities do not accept any more to be considered only as poor. They claim that their oppression has its own identity and it is necessary a specific strategy for their liberation.

The indigenous perspective

We are at the beginning of a new theological development. This theology is recognizing and assuming the rich indigenous cultures present in the continent before the arrival of the conquerors. There are already some indigenous theologians who are developing this new perspective. They are thinking from inside their traditional cultures and religions. They do not accept any more the presence of outsiders, especially white people, who pretend to speak on behalf of traditional persons.

These theologians are claiming that the option for the poor has to be translated in the option for indigenous people.

The black perspective

Black people have been able to keep their cultural and religious traditions. They have realized a powerful synthesis between their African traditions and the Christian message preached to them by the Church. They practice some form of syncretism, which expresses itself in rites and other forms of cult and devotions.

Liberation Theology is facing the challenge of integrating the black perspectives in its theological reflection. Black men and women theologians have to realize that the Churches have contributed to the oppression of black people and that it is necessary to repent before reconciliation is possible. The option for the poor has to include the option for the black people.

5. Conclusion

I wish to end my observations as I began, I join my words of thanksgiving to God with many other friends throughout the world who want to congratulate Doctor K.C. Abraham on his anniversary.

Notes:

1. The first book of Gustavo Gutierrez, Theology of Liberation was published in Lima, Peru in 1971.

2. Luke 4:18-21.

3. Exodus 3:7-8.

4. Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Liberatis Nuntius, 1984 & Libertatis Concientae, 1986. Vatican city, Rome

5. Libertatis Nuntius, p.3-15.

6. The majority of L.A. theologians wrote responses in different magazines of the continent.

7. Libertatis Nuntius, p.17-21.

8. See Juan Luis Segundo, Teologia de la Liberacion. A response to Cardinal Ratzinger. ed. Christiandad, Madrid. 1985.

9. Liberatatic Nuntis, VIII. 3, p.17.

10. Ibid., VII.10, p.19.

11. Ibid., VII. 8, p.19.

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Ethical Issues in the Struggles for Justice by Daniel Chetti and M.P. Joseph

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Chapter 15: Globalization and its Cultural Consequences by S. J. Samartha

(S. J. Samartha, the first Director of the Dialogue Program of the World Council of Churches, Geneva, guides doctoral students at SATHRI.)

So much has been written about globalization that so little new can be said about it today. A good deal has been said about its economic and political effects, but not much about its cultural consequences. This is an attempt to draw attention to this dimension of globalization, and to review some of the theological responses to it in recent years.

1

Globalization has a long history as a political and cultural reality and as a religious and cultural movement. The thrust to go to "the uttermost ends of the earth" is intrinsic to certain religions like Christianity and Islam and, earlier than these two, to Buddhism as well. Marxism too, until recently, pursued its globalizing ambitions with relentless zeal.

Three stages are identified in the march of globalization in recent

centuries.[1] The first stage began with the European voyages and exploration that brought Vasco da Gama to the western shores of India (1498). During subsequent centuries colonization reached its height when it was taken for granted that "the Europeanization of the earth", "the westernization of the world" and "the Christianization of all people" were beneficial to the entire globe. This period ended with the conclusion of world war II (1939-45), but its ideological, theological and cultural consequences are alive even today.

The second period lasted for a much shorter period from 1945 to 1989 when the Berlin wall came down, and when subsequently with the weakening of Marxist ideology, the socialist states in Eastern Europe disintegrated. This was the period when nations of Asia and Africa resisted globalization on the basis of the plurality of their own particular cultures. Plurality changed globalization, and particularities fought against the creeping tide of uniformity. This, however, has proved to be a short period of struggle torn between enthusiasm and helplessness.

We are now at the beginning of what may be considered as the third stage when, with the removal of socialism as an alternative, the whole world is thrown open to the claim of market economy, liberal democracy and the powerful march of Western cultural values all over the globe. This claim, in theory and practice, is as exclusive as any made by certain religions in history, and has the same tragic consequences on the life of other people who refuse to accept such claims. Religious fundamentalism and secular fundamentalism are not too far apart in their intentions and consequences.

Anthony Giddens points out that to discuss globalization today we need a wider conceptual framework than sociology can provide because, according to him, sociology has a tendency to study societies as "boundaried" communities whereas globalization cuts across all boundaries of time and space. Globalization is a matter of relationships across the whole earth. He writes, "Globalization refers essentially to that stretching process, in so far as the modes of connection between different social contexts or regions become networked across the earth’s surface as a whole."[2]

This results in an intensification of worldwide social relationships which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring thousands of miles away. The visual impact of images sent instantly through electronic media networks shapes the

consciousness of the global community in such a way that the local becomes the global and the global local. The global and the local are now inextricably related. Akio Morita, chairman of the Sony Corporation in Japan, has invented a new word to describe it: "globalization" or looking in both directions.[3] Certain features of globalization need to be noted here.

Its most obvious feature is the advocacy of the free market system allied with liberal democracy or authoritarian rule, as the only way of economic management for the entire globe. Political leaders of Third World countries are simply told that they have to adjust themselves and fit into this new global economic order. The manner in which India is being pressured to accept certain mega power projects costing millions of rupees and to sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) are examples of this. According to Dilip S. Swamy, "A genuine search for a new vision, a new paradigm of development, is pre-empted by the very process of globalization, to which all countries are expected to adjust or conform"[4]

Closely connected with this is the regionalization of manufacture and the division of labor made possible through the worldwide diffusion of machines and industrial techniques, and the training given to people from different countries so that people in their own countries can provide "cheap" labor for the manufacture and distribution of goods which most people of developing countries cannot afford to buy. The developing countries may protest but they are in no position to decide on this matter because they depend on economic resources and techniques from developed countries.

Furthermore, there is a centrist political pull that seeks to draw nations together within a new political order or geo-political system, defined not in terms of national sovereignty or cultural identity but in terms of the economic well-being and styles of life of certain powerful nations. This is backed by a massive and menacing military power. The notion of "national sovereignty" is declared to be an outmoded concept. This negates the politics of democratic dissent within the political life of nations, particularly the poor ones, and creates a gaping void in the collective morality of nations because it prevents them from evolving a political system that can better respond to their own political needs.[5]

In the absence of an alternative the whole world is now suddenly thrown open to a global culture symbolized by Western ways in drinks, clothes,

movies and music, styles of life and value systems, all of which have a powerful influence on the minds of people, particularly of the younger generation. The embeddedness of power and its close ties with the economic and political forces, enables it to enter the cultural homes of other people without restraint. K.C. Abraham points out that "Globalization has become a vehicle of cultural invasion", leading to "a mono-culture that suppresses economic, ecological and cultural diversity, and has a tendency to accept efficiency and productivity without concern for justice and compassion towards people".[6]

The word "culture" here stands for a whole range of ways in which people embody and express their reality. A religious faith gives culture categories of ultimate meaning, purpose and hope. "As authentically human, culture is the tilling of history by human self-expression," remarks John F. Kavanaugh, "it is also the friendly and symbolic dwelling place of the human spirit, whereby new generations are cultivated rather than suppressed. It is, finally, sacred: a revelation of the Spirit in time".[7] In Asian societies religions and cultures are inextricably woven together in the fabric of a multi-layered reality. There are cultures that threaten and enslave and there are cultures that liberate and enhance life. The threat in the globalization of one dominant culture must be resisted; the promise of the new in the intermingling of cultures must be accepted.

The combination of two factors, namely, the enormous advances made in electronic technology and the widespread use of the English language, has greatly increased the range and strength of globalization today. There is no defense against the invasion from the skies. "The new media have the power to penetrate more deeply into a receiving culture than any other previous manifestation of Western technology", writes Anthony Smith. "The result could be immense havoc, and intensification of social contradiction within developing societies today.[8]

Language has always been used as an instrument of domination. The global spread of the English language, used by the four major networks, ABC, NBC, CNN and BBC, is the most powerful medium of cultural penetration. It is estimated that there are more people speaking English in India today (60 to 70 million) than in Britain (56 million). No Indian language is spoken by more than 10% of the people except Hindi which is spoken by 39%. English has become the *lingua franca*, the medium of communication, of about 200 million newly created and growing middle class people in India.[9] Equally significant is the importance of English

as a *global* language. In more than 70 countries English is the official or semiofficial language. It is estimated that 70% of the world's mail is written in English.[10]

Asian theologians are in a dilemma here. If they write in their particular regional language they cannot communicate with their own colleagues in other language areas or with theologians in other countries of the world. This state of affairs cannot be changed but has to be accepted. Globalization does not prevent Indian theologians from writing in their own languages but imposes on them an obligation, at least on some of them, to write in English as well because, without doing so, their insights cannot be shared with other theologians in the world. If language, like labor, is a socially responsible expression of self, then English has to be regarded as a *functional* language in a *multilingual* society.[11] We have to gain cultural freedom by going through the experience of cultural bondage.

2

Three paradigms of culture change have been identified in the ongoing process of globalization.[12] One is the notion of "a clash of civilizations" based on "a self-image of the West" and "enemy images of the rest" that makes conflict between civilizations inevitable until one overcomes the other. There is a mood of certainty, even historic inevitability, about this because of the recent collapse of socialism.[13] Another is described by the term, "McDonaldization," a word taken from the fast food industry in USA, to indicate a process of standardizing a particular commodity throughout the world. A strict uniformity is imposed through control of labor, ingredients and appearance. It becomes familiar and predictable; there are no surprises.[14] There is a third paradigm -- Hybridization -- quite different from those two because it affirms a plurality of cultures against the domination of one, rejects the move towards uniformity and, by drawing attention to the mingling of cultures in history, facilitates the emergence of the new. It rejects the theory of "a clash of cultures" and draws attention to "dialogue between cultures", based on the "resurrection of subjugated knowledges". It springs from the experience of the poor, the Oppressed and the marginalized people and is based on their actual experience in daily life. Fast food stalls, part of a culture in most cities of Asia, are for the poor, where the mingling of menus is a common experience. Pieterse describes these three paradigms in the following words:

> Cultural differentiation or lasting difference, cultural convergence or growing sameness, cultural hybridization or on-going mixing -- each of these represents a particular politics of difference: as lasting and immutable, as erasable and being erased, and as mixing and in the process of generating new, translocal forms of difference. Each involves different subjectivities and larger perspectives. The futures evoked by the three paradigms are also dramatically different.[15]

The assumptions behind the paradigms of domination and uniformity need to be questioned. A few years before the Second World War (1939-45) E. Husserl, invoking the spirit of Europe, wrote:

> Europe alone can provide other traditions with a universal framework of meaning. They will have to "Europeanize" themselves, whereas we; if we understand ourselves properly will never, for example, "Indianize" ourselves. . . . The "Europeanization" of all foreign parts of mankind is the destiny of the earth.[16]

Plurality is the dominant mark of the post-modern era. All exclusive claims -- economic, political, religious and cultural -- are under attack. The Judeo-Christian tradition is no longer the norm for the whole globe. The enduring plurality of religions and cultures, of languages and ethnic roots, provides the basis to reject domination and uniformity. A diversity of cultures and an open-ended view of the possibilities of cultural exchange provide an antidote to the forces of cultural globalization.[17] In India, the ideology of *Hindutva* seeks to define "Indianness" and to dominate the whole nation. It fails to see the enduring multi-cultural character of Indian civilization over the centuries. Not just the Hindu, but also the Buddhist and the Jam, the Christian, the Muslim and the Sikh, and even earlier than these, the primal cultures of dalits and tribals provided both a defense against cultural domination and possibilities of mutual enrichment. "Any culture which has demonstrated survival value for a society over centuries", writes Pjotr, "is equally valid as every other culture which has proven its survival."[18] In the present context of globalization it is not only necessary to reject "the Western pretence of universalism," writes Rajni Kothari, "but also for non-Western cultures to seek answers to their problems from *within* and, in the process, not only provide pluralism in techno-cultural system but, through such pluralism, help Westerners

themselves to deal with the new crop of problems they now encounter. This is a perspective that is widely being shared."[19]

3

h what ways can the Church respond to the plurality of religions and cultures is a question that has engaged its attention for a long time. Sometimes, it is discussed under the term "inculturation" and sometimes under "indigenization." Today the question is how the Church can respond theologically to the challenge of globalization. For some years a wide ranging study on "Gospel and Culture" has been going on in the World Council of Churches, that led to a world conference in 1996 on the theme "Called in One Hope: the Gospel in Diverse Cultures."[20] One is struck by the plurality of cultural contexts in Asia, Africa and Latin America, from which the authors of so many articles speak about this matter. The gospel of Jesus Christ provides substance and direction to Christians in different cultural contexts to resist forces of domination and uniformity. So too, the religions of neighbors of other faiths help them in a similar manner. Faith has a critical-creative function in all cultural contexts.

In this connection S. Wesley Ariarajab draws attention to a pertinent point. He observes that in the earlier decades of the ecumenical movement the emphasis was on the Gospel and *religions,* and that after the Tambaram conference 1938, attention shifted to Gospel and *cultures.* He suggests that, one reason for this shift was the inability of the missionary movement to come to an agreement on a theological response to religions.[21] This remains true even to this day in the ecumenical movement. Once again now, the attention has shifted to *cultures.* In the contemporary debate on globalization and culture change religions are hardly mentioned. An inability or unwillingness on the part of the missionary movement to respond *theologically* to the plurality of religions seems to drive it more and more to studies on culture.

Two comments are made here. One is the most obvious one, namely, the persistence of religion in human life and its intimate connection with cultures, particularly in Asian societies. Even in such a highly technological society like that of Japan it is reported that there are 81,511 Shinto shrines, 77,186 Buddhist temples and 6,446 Christian churches, well attended by people.[22] Second, the strongest defense against the creeping tide of a secular global culture today is based on

religions -- Hindu, Buddhist and Muslim. In India, for example, *Hindutva,* is not just a political ideology against what is called "pseudo-secularism", but also a cultural movement against what are regarded as alien values of globalization. If this observation is correct, then, the question is not just one of the relation between church and cultures in the context of mission but also of the relation between church and other communities of faith in the context of globalization.

Among Indian theologians, K.C. Abraham has given considerable attention to this matter[23] As his theological starting point he affirms that "a Christ-in relation" framework is more helpful in supporting the church's efforts to transform and renew the process of globalization than "an exclusive Christo-centric-universalism". He writes, "if radical inter-relatedness is the characteristic of reality and therefore of the divine, the openness to the other is the essential mode of response to God. This openness becomes the seed for creating new relationships and a new order."[24]

There are three components in his theological response to globalization. One is to provide a foundation for it in the experience of the poor, and in the message of the cross because it is the poor who suffer most by the economic effects of the globalization of the market. He remarks, "The growing inequality between the rich and the poor nations, and between the rich and the poor in each nation, is the fundamental threat to global harmony. Globalization and marginalization go together."[25]

Another is the link between the renewal of society and the renewal of the earth. According to Abraham, without accepting this inter-relationship between the two any Christian theological response to globalization would be impoverished.[26]

The third component is the undergirding of this theological response by a "spirituality" that is "not elitist or other worldly, but that which is dynamic and open". It is encouraging to note that to Abraham, this spirituality is not exclusively based on Christian resources but also on the resources of other religious traditions. He writes,

> Only when communities live in mutual respect, when they together eliminate all caste atrocities, when they together remove hunger, when all their religious sing the song of harmony, when they together celebrate God-given unity -- then the Spirit is free. Towards that global solidarity let us

commit ourselves.[27]

Thus, while recognising the need for a "Christic-sensitivity" in order to discern the work of the spirit in the world, Abraham rejects a "Christcentred exclusiveness" which ignores the faith-commitments of other people and prevents Christians from co-operating with their neighbours in the common struggle against the harmful consequences of globalization.

A recent article suggests a different theological approach to globalization. Stating that "a contemporary theology of catholicity provides an understanding of the church that is strikingly similar to that which is emerging from reflection on globalization", Richard Marzheuser argues that "globalization" and "catholicity" are two modes of one ecclesiology; that "globalization" can find a home in "catholocity" and *vice versa;* and that therefore, rather than opposing it, the church must use globalization to promote its own catholicity. According to him, there are at least four referents in the theological usage of globalization: mission and evangelism, ecumenical reconciliation, dialogue between Christianity and other world religions, and the worldwide struggle for justice. Catholocity demands that all these be integrated into the fabric of the Church's life and identity.[28]

The world "catholocity" has a long history, and churches in the world have interpreted it in different ways. Marzheuser affirms that "two characteristics of divine catholocity are inner diversity and fullness: a diversity of persons and a fullness of being that makes them one"[29] He quotes Avery Dulles with approval with remarks, "Catholic suggests the idea of an organic whole, of a cohesion, of a firm synthesis of a reality which is not scattered, but, on the contrary, turned towards a centre which assures its unity, whatever the expanse in area or the internal differentiation might be." And Dulles adds, "the entire cosmos has in Christ its center of unity, coherence and fulfillment."[30]

4

To avoid any misunderstanding it must be stated that ecclesiology and the nature of catholocity are not under discussion here. The question is about the implications of the suggestion that there is no clash between globalization to gather together scattered elements to its own center and integrate them into the fabric of the Church's life.

A couple of observations are in order. One is that globalization is not "a neutral" or "value free" process. Earlier discussion has indicated that it has both beneficial and harmful consequences on the life and cultures of other peoples. Therefore a critical stance towards it is required on the basis of the concern of the gospel of Jesus Christ for fullness of life. A second observation is about the plurality of religions and cultures which endures in history in spite of all efforts to draw them into one center and integrate them into the fabric of one religious community.

Each of the four referents or areas of theological concern in globalization-mission, ecumenism, dialogue with world religions, and the struggle for justice -- has within it a persistent plurality that seeks to obliterate their identities, draw them around one center, and integrate them into the life of one single community.

The use of the word "mission" in the singular goes against the ground reality of "missions" throughout history. There are people who ignore the connection between Christian mission and the forces of colonialism in the previous era. Colonialism facilitated the efforts of the Church to "globalize" itself through mission. The use of the word "mission" in the singular ignores the plurality of "missions" in history. Earlier than Christianity the Buddhists had their "mission" which continues even to this day without allying itself with any kind of colonialism or globalization. A Roman Catholic scholar in India, George Soares Prabhu, draws attention to the hermeneutical implications of "two mission commands" the earlier one of the Buddha and the later one of Christ, to their respective disciples.[31] If the Buddhist mission came earlier the Muslim mission came later than Christianity. If the Christian mission allies itself with the forces of contemporary globalization what happens to these "other missions"? If the *ecclesia* globalizes itself what happens to the Buddhist *sangha* and the *Muslim ummah?*

Plurality persists within the ecumenical movement itself. "After a century of intense theological activity, the churches in most places seem no closer to unity," reports Alan Falconer, the director of the Faith and the Order Commission of the WCC to a major meeting in Tanzania.[32] Konrad Raiser, the General Secretary of the WCC, has called on the main Christian traditions -- the Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Protestant and Pentecostal churches -- to start preparations in the year 2000 for "a universal church council to reconcile the main issues, including the authority of the Pope." Monsignor Eleuterio F. Fortino, under-secretary at the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, has

stated that the proposal was "fully shared" by the Vatican.[33] This means that in spite of all efforts for unity the plurality of churches persists in history.

"Hybridization" has been mentioned as the third paradigm of culture change in globalization in contrast to the trends of domination and uniformity. The term has always been suspect partly because of its racial overtones and partly because of a fear of "syncretism." But it is widely discussed in post-colonial and post-Orientalist studies on cultures and religions. It stands for an intermingling of cultures, a border-crossing, that sometimes leads to the emergence of the new. "Related notions are global *oikoumene,* global localization, and local globalization . . . as a rich and creative approach to globalization and culture."[34] The intermingling and "creative mix-up" of religions and cultures have occurred throughout history. In India, for example, through the intermingling of many religions, languages and cultures, new forms have emerged not only in styles of life, in food, clothing, music and architecture but also in religion. Sikhism is a fruit of the interaction between Hinduism and Islam. In the ongoing competition between tender coconut water and coca cola, between tandoori chicken and Kentucky fried chicken, between the *saree* and the blue jeans the indigenous components are most unlikely to disappear. On the contrary, new mixing up of menus is already taking place. The pizza base might look the same but the "toppings" are now a creative mixture attractive to the eye and succulent to the taste.

Christian dialogue with people of other living faiths and the world wide struggle for justice are the other two areas referred to in the process of globalization. Here too there is an ongoing cooperation, of people of different religions and cultures coming together for common purpose in global society, without surrendering their identities or centers of faith. At the centenary celebrations of the Parliament of Religions in Chicago (1993) a statement on "Global Ethic" was signed by the leaders of world religions which highlighted their commitment to a culture of solidarity and a just economic order; a culture of non-violence and respect for life; a culture of equal rights and partnership between men and women; and a culture of tolerance and truthfulness."[35]

So too, the issue of justice has brought together people of different religions and cultures without destroying their identities. For example, Christian dalits in India, who were earlier fighting for justice as *Christians,* basing themselves exclusively on biblical resources, now

realize that there are resources in other religious traditions as well to undergird the struggle for justice. The recently established Dalit Solidarity Programme has brought together Hindu, Buddhist, Christian, Muslim and Sikh people.[36] Their centers of faith are not obliterated. The boundaries of their communities are not disturbed. Their identities are recognized. There is traffic across the borders. People recognize the urgent need to fight *together* against injustice in society. Justice is a human need but its roots are in the righteousness of God.

The plurality of religions and cultures, of languages, ethnic identities and social systems, is the best defense against the forces of domination and the push towards uniformity. Mere diversity is not plurality. Diversity often leads to fragmentation of life, conflict and confusion, at best, to a sullen co-existence. But when diversities are accepted within the wholeness of life that holds together all things in its embrace, then, new possibilities emerge in history. To reject exclusivism and to accept plurality, to be committed to one's faith and to be open to the faith-commitments of our neighbors, to choose to live in a global "community-of -communities", sharing the ambiguities of history and the mystery of life -- these are the imperatives of our age.

Globalization is a process that is inescapable and irreversible. People in developing countries have to go *through* it, and come out of it, not subdued or vanquished, not tamed, manipulated or controlled, but *transformed* as a people to meet a new future with hope.

Notes:

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2 Anthony Giddens 'The Globalization of Modernity" quoted in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory* (Eds.) Patrick Williams and Paula Chrisman, Harvester Wheatsheaf, New York 1993 p. 181. See also his book *The Consequences of Modernity,* Polity Press Cambridge, 1990 pp. 52-78.

3. K. Ohmas *The Borderless World: Power and Strategy in the Global Marketplace*, Collins, London 1992, quoted by Jan Nederveen Pieterse "Globalization and Cultures: Three Paradigms" in *Economic and*

Political Weekly Vol. XXXI No. 23 June 8. 1996 p. 1389-1393.

4. Dilip S. Swamy, "Alternative to Globalization", *Mainstream* XXXII No. 20, April 8, 1995, p. 16. This was a paper presented to the Christian Conference of Asia on the theme ‘Towards a New Economic Vision", Quezon City, Philippines, November 23, 1994. A great deal has been written about this matter by Indian thinkers, for examples, MA. Oommen, "Anatomy of Globalization: More a Moral Crisis than a Development Dilemma", *Mainstream Annual 1995* pp. 23ff; Chakravarthy Raghavan. "Globalization Model: An Uneven Development", *Mainstream* XXXIV No. 32 July 13, 1996 pp. 8 if; Madhu Limaye "Globalization and the Third World" *Mainstream* April 9, 1994 pp. 5-6, etc.

5. "Intellectuals Against Globalization" *Times of India* New Delhi, April 28, 1995, p. 8, a statement prepared and signed by 70 intellectuals in India.

6. KC. Abraham, *Liberative Solidarity: Contemporary Perspectives on Mission*, Christava Sahitya Samithi, Tiruvalla, Kerala, India, 1996 pp. 147 ff.

7. John F. Kavanaugh, *Still Following Christ in a Consumer Society*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, revised edition, 1991, p. 71.

8. Anthony Smith, *The Geopolitics of Information: How Western Culture Dominates the World*, Oxford University Press. New York, 1980, p. 176.

9. Kumar Ketkar, "Do We Really Need English?" in *Sunday Times Review*, Bangalore April 17, 1994, p. 1.

10. *Times of India*, Bangalore, March 28, 1996, p. 8.

11. See Anvit Abbi, "Language as Social Truth" in Review of *Explorations in Indian Socio-linguistics: Language and Development series*, WI. 2 Sage Publications, New Delhi 1995 in *The Book Review* Vol. XX No. 8 August 1996 New Delhi, pp. 30-31.

12. Jan Nederveen Pieterse "Globalization and Culture: Three Paradigms", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XXXI Jan 22, 1996 p.

1389-1393.

13. Samuel P. Huntington, ‘The Clash of Civilizations" *Foreign Affairs,* 1993 No. 72 (3) pp. 22-49. Quite a few Indian thinkers have criticized this notion e.g., Nilesh Kumar, "And Never the Twain Shall Meet", *Mainstream* January 22, 1994, pp. 33 if. Avjit Pathak, ‘Thoughts on Cultural Invasion", *Mainstream,* February II, 1995, pp. 23 if.

14. George Ritzer, *The McDonaldisation of Society,* Pine, Forge/Sage, Thousand Oaks, London, 1993, p. 19.

15. Pieterse *op. cit.*, p. 1.

16. Quoted by Wilhelm Halbfass, *India and Europe: An Essay in Philosophical Understanding,* Motilal Banarsidas, Delhi, first Indian edition 1990, p. 167.

17. See Hajime Nakamura, *Ways of Thinking of Eastern People,* revised English translation (Ed) Philip P. Winter, East West Centre Press, Honolulu, Hawaii, 1966.

18. Hesseling Pjotr. *Organizational Behaviour and Culture,* 1971 quoted in Claude Alvares *Homo Faber: Technology and Culture in India and China,* and the West 1500 to the present day, Allied Publishers, Bombay 1979 p. 11.

19. Rajni Kothari in Foreword to Claude Alvares’s book *Homo Faber op. cit.*, xi.

20. See *International Review of Mission* Vol. LXXIV Nos. 332/333 January/April 1995 and subsequent issues.

21. S. Wesley Ariarajah, *Gospel and Culture,* WCC Publications, Geneva, 1994, "Gospel and Religion" pp. 1 ff and "Universality and Particularity" pp. 28 ff.

22. N. Krishnamoorthy, "Religion in the Land of Non-Religion", *The Hindu Magazine,* Bangalore, Sunday May 8, 1994 p. XIII.

23. KC. Abraham, *Liberative Solidarity: Contemporary Perspectives in Mission,* Christava Sahitya Samithi, Tiruvalla, Kerala, India 1996 see

esp. chapter X "Globalization and Liberative Solidarity" pp. 138 ff.

24. *Ibid.,* p. 154.

25. *ibid.,* p.145

26. *Eco-Justice: A New Agenda for the Church's Mission,* BUILD, Bombay n.d. pp. 2 ff; see also his article, "Globalization: A Gospel and Culture Perspective" in the *International Review of Mission,* LXXV No. 336 January 1996, WCC Geneva, pp. 85-92.

27. *Liberative Solidarity* p. 157.

28. Richard Marzheuser, "Globalization and Catholicity: Two experiences of One Ecclesiology", *Journal of Ecumenical Studies,* Vol. 32 Spring 1995 No. 2 pp. 179-192.

29. *ibid.* p. 184.

30. Both quotations are from Avery Dulles, *The Catholocity of the Church,* Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1958 quoted by Marzheuser on p. 168.

31. George Soares-Prabhu, 'Two Mission Commands: An Interpretation of Matt.28-16-20 in the light of the Buddhist text Mahavagga 1:10-11:1," in *Voices from the Margin: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World.* (Ed) R.S. Sugirtharajah, Orbis/SPCK, new edition, Maryknoll and London, 1995, pp. 319-336.

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32. *Ecumenical News International* Number 16, 21 August 1996 Bulletin 96-04555.

33. Both quotations are in *Ecumenical News International* Number 157 August 1996 Bulletin 96: 96-0405.

34. Pieterse *op. cit.,* p. 1996.

35. *One World*, WCC Geneva, No. 190. November 1993 p. 10.

36. See *Dalit Solidarity* (Ed.) Bhagavandas SPCK, Delhi, India, and James Massey, 1995.

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Ethical Issues in the Struggles for Justice by Daniel Chetti and M.P. Joseph

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Chapter 16: Self-interest and Justice in Development, by C.T. Kurien

(C. T. Kurien, an economist and writer, is Professor-Emeritus at the Madras Institute of Development Studies, India.)

1

Apart from personal friendship, my interactions with K.C. have been through the discussions on development, especially on justice in the context of development. For long justice had a prominence in what the Papal encyclical had referred to as "the development of people". Recently, however, it would appear that questions of justice have been relegated to the background. With the apparent triumph of capitalism over its rival economic arrangements the view is gaining ground that whatever may be the content of development, there is only one route to it and that is growth. Increasingly, the writings of Adam Smith are being evoked to rehabilitate what may be called a "growth first" approach to development. It is also held that according to Adam Smith, it is the self-interest of the individual that results in growth and wealth, and not any organized national effort to achieve them.

In view of these tendencies to go back to the "sources" to justify certain

contemporary positions, it may be useful to examine what the early thinking on "development" was, noting, of course, that the term "development" in the sense in which it is currently used is of relatively recent origin. What I propose to do in this short paper, therefore is to take up for consideration Adam Smith's views on the "development of people" and the role he has assigned to self-interest and justice in it.

2

It is widely held that Adam Smith was not only the founder of political economy, but that the processes he dealt with in his well-known work *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776) were those of the unfolding of capitalist development. This is true up to a point. Though Smith himself did not use the expression "capitalist development" he was indeed dealing with the new economic order that was emerging at that time, especially in England, and undoubtedly that order was capitalism. But when it is claimed that Adam Smith was describing (and defending) the capitalist order, what is generally implied is that he was concerned with the accumulation of wealth. The title of his work gives credence to that view. To be sure, Adam Smith was concerned with the wealth of nations, but what is often overlooked is that for him the wealth of nations consisted primarily of the productive performance of people, the ordinary working people, that is. The opening sentence of The *Wealth of Nations* are: "The annual labour of every nation is the fund which originally supplies it with all the necessaries and conveniences of life which it annually consumes, and which consist always either in the immediate produce of that labour, or in what is purchased with that produce from other nations. According therefore as this produce, or what is purchased with it, bears greater or smaller proportion to the number of those who are to consume it, the nation will be better or worse supplied with all the necessaries and conveniences for which it has occasion".

How to increase the produce of the people is the central theme of Smith's great work. The produce of the people will increase when their productivity increases; the productivity of labour is increased through division of labour; the extent of division of labour is determined by the extent to which the produce can be sold; hence it depends on the market, i.e.., the social organization to facilitate exchange which is based on the principle. "give me that which I want, and you shall have this which you want." Productivity also depends on 'stock', that is, "a stockpile of food and implements" necessary for workers to do their work. It is this stock

which has subsequently come to be referred to as ‘capital’, but in Adam Smith’s thinking it was not abstract value, but specifically designated goods, food and implements made available to those who labour. Smith was also of the view that workers themselves design much of the implements they consider useful. "A great part of the machine made use of in those manufactures in which labour is most subdivided were originally inventions of common workmen" was his considered opinion. He even cited the example of a boy whose task was operating the piston of a fire engine to open and shut a valve alternately, and who found that by tying a string from the handle of the valve to another part of the machine, the valve would open and shut without his assistance, thus freeing him to play with other boys! Smith, however, was not willing to leave the matter to the natural inclinations and institutions of workers. He was convinced that the training of the mind was essential for workers to become creative and productive. In a passage which deserves a great deal of attention in our country, more than two centuries after it was written, he said: "The man whose life is spent in performing a few simple operations, of which the effects are perhaps always the same, or very nearly the same, has no occasion to exert his understanding or to exercise his invention in finding out expedients for removing difficulties which never occur. He naturally loses, therefore, the habit of such exertion, and generally becomes as stupid and ignorant as it is possible for a human creature to become... In every improved and civilized society this is the state into which the labouring poor, that is, the great body of the people must necessarily fall, unless government takes some pains to prevent it" *(The Wealth of Nations* Vol. II, pp. 263-64 in Everyman’s Library Edition). That Adam Smith, considered to be the patron saint of the free enterprise system and the laws of the market should have forcefully asked for workers’ education, and that too at the initiative of the government, may come as a surprise to many. More about this later. But it may be noted that Smith advocated education not only to increase productivity and wealth, but also because he recognized that "an instructed and intelligent people. . . are always more decent and orderly than an ignorant and stupid one.

Smith was also concerned that the labouring classes should be properly and adequately rewarded. As in many other issue he supplied a common sense justification for it. After noting that the labouring classes constitute the greater part of society, he said, "What improves the circumstances of the greater part can never be regarded as an inconvenience to the whole. No society can surely be flourishing and happy of which the greater part of the members are poor and miserable"

(Vol. I p. 70) Apparently, latter day admirers of Adam Smith who put forward the argument that what is important in the development process is that national income must grow, irrespective of what happens to the conditions of the majority of the people are unaware of the position that Smith took on this crucial issue. Indeed, Smith supplemented his common-sense argument with an invocation of the equity principle saying "It is but equity, besides, that they who feed, clothe, and lodge the whole body of people, should have such a share of the produce of their own labour as to be themselves tolerably well fed, clothed and lodged" (Vol. I p. 70)

3

Many more passages can be cited from *The Wealth of Nations* to show that Adam Smith did not advocate the kind of crude growth mania that is becoming something of a cult today and which also suggests, if not propagates, that growth and equity are not quite compatible. But I move on to a clarification of-another issue which frequently comes up in the contemporary discussion on development, the role of the state. Again, the popular lie, ably assisted by a well-orchestrated misinformation campaign, is that Adam Smith is the founder of the "leave it to the market" doctrine. Sure enough, Adam Smith was opposed to an excessively regulated economic regime that the mercantilists were practicing and, in that sense, was a staunch advocate of exchange, markets and trade. But he did not envisage an economic system in which the hand of the state was totally absent. On the contrary, he set the economic in a larger order in which the state ("the sovereign" in *The Wealth of Nations)* has a major role including in the economic sphere.

Smith assigned three specific roles to the sovereign. The first was to protect society from the violence and invasion of other societies and the second to protect every member of society from the injustice and oppression of other members. The first, thus may be considered as the military responsibility and the second the judicial responsibility of the sovereign, the state or the public authority. These may appear to be non-economic functions. However, the third responsibility that Smith assigned to the sovereign was unambiguously economic, namely, "that of erecting and maintaining those public institutions and public works, though they may be in the highest degree advantageous to a great society, are, however, of such nature that the profit could never repay the expenses to any individual or small number of individuals, and which is therefore cannot be expected that any individual or small

number of individuals should erect or maintain" (Vol.1 pp.210-11). He pointed out that what public institution and public works would become the responsibility of the public authority would differ from time to time. As noted already, he brought education under this category of enterprises advantageous to society as a whole but not profitable to those who might try to organize it. And, of course, public works to provide the infra-structural requirements of the economy would constantly call for intervention by the visible hand of the state.

4

Against that background we may turn to an assessment of self-interest in economic activities as envisaged by Adam Smith. Among the passages usually invoked from Adam Smith, particularly by those who consider him to be a champion of self-interest, the most familiar is the one that has the reference to the "invisible hand". The passage reads as follows: "As every individual, therefore, endeavours as much as he can both to employ his capital in support of domestic industry, and so to direct that industry that its produce may be of greatest value, every individual necessarily labours to render the annual revenue of society as great as he can. He generally, indeed, neither intend to promote the public interest, nor knows how much he is promoting it. . . . He intends only his own gain, and he is in this, as in many other cases, led by an invisible hand to promote and end which was not part of his intention... By pursuing his own interest he frequently promotes that of the society more effectually than when he really intends to promote it" (Vol. I p. 400). Nothing could be clearer than that: by following self-interest individuals promote the public interest, and more effectively than when they make conscious attempts to do so. The view is strengthened by another passage which comes from the earlier sections of *The Wealth of Nations.* "It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest. We address ourselves, not to their humanity but to their self-love, and never talk to them of our own necessities but of their advantages" (Vol. 1 p. 13).

These passages show beyond doubt that self-interest plays a crucial role in Adam Smith’s understanding of economic processes. But, then, why did he recognize a significant and positive role for public authority in the functioning of the economy and why did he advocate reasonable wages and living standards for the workers, instead of leaving these to be determined by the economic processes themselves? It is difficult to find answers to these questions from *The Wealth of Nations.* We have to

turn to other writings of Adam Smith, especially an earlier work of his and what he himself considered to be his most important one, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments.* This work was first published in 1759. A second, revised edition appeared in 1761. Two more editions appeared before the publication of *The Wealth of Nations* and a fifth came out in 1781, five years after *The Wealth of Nations* was published.

It may be recalled that Adam Smith was a professor of moral philosophy. It is legitimate to consider that *Moral Sentiments* contains the basic social philosophy that informs *The Wealth of Nations.* Smith was well versed in all systems of (Western) philosophy, but Stoicism, possibly, had the greatest influence on him. It has been suggested that his personal philosophy was probably a combination of Stoicism and the virtue of benevolence which Francis Hutcheson, his predecessor at the University of Glasgow, had demonstrated to be a philosophic version of the Christian ethic of love. There are frequent references in *Moral Sentiments* to a "divine Being", "the great Director of the universe" , "the all-wise Author of Nature" to obey whose will is considered as the first rule of duty of human beings; even their vices and follies fitted into the grand design of the Author of Nature whose hand always brought about a cosmic harmony. The opening sentences of *Moral Sentiments* are as follows: "How selfish soever man may be supposed, there are evidently some principles in his nature, which interest him in the fortunes of others, and render their happiness necessary to him, though he derives nothing from it except the pleasure of seeing it. Of this kind is pity or compassion, the emotion which we feel for the misery of others, when we either see it, or are made to conceive it in very lively manner."(The passages quoted are taken from Adam Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, edited and annotated by D.D. Raphael and A.L. Macfie, Clarendon Press. 1976. The above quote is at p. 9.) This principle is sympathy and Smith considered that it was a quality not only of the virtuous and humane, but "of ruffians and the most hardened violator of the laws of society". Moral Sentiments shows also what for Smith was the principle that could be considered as the foundation of society, "Society may subsist," he wrote, "though not in the most comfortable state without beneficence, but the prevalence of injustice must utterly destroy it . . . (beneficence) is the ornament which embellishes, not the foundation that supports the building . . . Justice upholds the edifice. If it is removed, the great, the immense fabric of society. . . must in a moment crumble into atoms" (p. 86).

In *Moral Sentiments* self-interest is situated within such a larger system

of virtues consisting of sympathy, benevolence and justice. In such a system the role assigned to self-interest bears close resemblance to duty or ambition. "We would despise a prince who was not anxious about conquering or defending a province. We should have little respect for a private gentleman who did not exert himself to gain an estate, or even a considerable office, when he could acquire them without either meanness or injustice. A Member of Parliament who shows no keenness about his own election, is abandoned by his friends, as altogether unworthy of their attachment. Even a tradesman is thought a poor-spirited fellow among his neighbours, who does not bestir himself to get what they call an extraordinary job, or some uncommon advantage" (p. 173).

5

In this short account I have tried to elucidate Adam Smith’s views on self-interest and justice in the economic sphere not to suggest that he can be relied upon to guide the contemporary quiet for the development of people. Its limited purpose is to correct the notion which is gaining currency of late that the gospel according to Smith is that the economy is a realm where self-interest reigns supreme and that considerations of justice are extraneous to it. On the contrary, it is quite legitimate to say that for Smith the economic order is part of a larger social order in which there is a prominent role for the public authority and that social order itself is situated in a moral order where sympathy and justice are the cardinal principles. Our Constitution reflects the same principle when it exhorts the state to "promote the welfare of the people by securing and protecting as effectively as it may a social order in which justice, social, economic and political, shall inform all the institutions of national life". But, of course, principles alone are not enough to ensure that the development of people takes place along the right lines. Only an appropriate institutional milieu and carefully worked out policy measures will succeed in combining and balancing self-interest and justice in development. It is very much a contextual task.

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Chapter 17: Two Interviews with K. C. Abraham, by Bhargavi Nagaraja & P. N. Benjamin

Dr K.C. Abraham, an authority on Third World theology, a Marxist scholar and propounder of the theory of "liberative solidarity" shares some of his thoughts on faith and politics in the current scenario with two journalists -- Bhargavi Nagaraja and RN. Benjamin. Both interviews appeared in the Deccan Herald.

Bhargavi Nagaraja: After experimenting with political militancy in the country's recent history by several political parties, the electorate is by and large demanding a separation of politics from religion. However, one finds that political parties are in no mood to do so. Instead they are creating a façade of myths and half-truths for purposes of justifying their ideological stand of "holier than thou:' and this has totally confused the voter. How would one deal with this conflict on a personal and societal level?

K C Abraham: The emergence of the modern state, thanks to British rule and the impact of the West on the elite, has changed the political scenario. A secular framework largely based on the liberal humanist traditions of the West was adopted by the elite as a common, centralized political authority. Recent developments have shown that this framework has failed to unite the different religious communities, rather, it has divided them, generating antagonistic feelings, violent conflicts and even bloodshed.

The search for a common political framework based on human and secular values should be rooted in the religions and cultures of peoples. Religions with their liberational strands have the potential for creating a new culture through the 'humanizing of myths'. Such culture is necessary for providing a new orientation to the political process. The theses assumes that the peaceful coexistence of different religious communities is possible only if religion and politics will make a preferential option for the suffering victims of this suffering earth.

BN: India is essentially a pluralistic society. Why then is it difficult for pluralism to permeate politics in a fair and free manner?

KC: Religious pluralism is a fact of life. It needs to be affirmed and celebrated. That is the only way to achieve and practice coexistence in a multi-religious context. Our everyday life and relationships in rural areas are plural. But the reality of pluralism comes in for a severe test in the political realm, which is governed by a monolithic state structure and rigid ideologies.

BN: Despite the fervour that infused the independence movement, our current brand of nationalism barely inspires and has come under severe attack from the various quarters, among them globalization and the new economic order -- both domestic and global. As such is it possible to revive nationalism?

KC: Yes, nationalism was a powerful ideology that brought people from different backgrounds together against a common enemy, namely, the British. But after the enemy was driven out, it ceased to be an integrating force. A national consciousness with positive contents did not emerge. On the other hand the self-consciousness of separate groups and communities emerged with greater force than before.

When hitherto subjugated people are awakened to their political rights and become conscious of the power, they wield by their number and influence, there comes along a resurgence of their separate religious and cultural heritages. Values enshrined in old traditions and customs are subjected to critical scrutiny. Some are rejected, some reinterpreted and others reaffirmed with renewed vigour. This process of going back to the origins is important and can be a genuine movement for self-hood.

However group identities can be a source of endless conflict, when each group tries to absolutize its past identity, as has happened largely in India. Memories of past domination or exploitation of one group by another and the conflicts between them come alive with a new force, causing group tension and disharmony.

BN: Where does fundamentalism figure in all this?

KC: Today's upsurge of fundamentalism is in the name of identity in all religions. This has detracted from the essence of religion. And fundamentalist ideology in any religion generates hatred, suspicion and fears in the minds of its adherents towards other religions.

Organized in a militant way, fundamentalist groups are determined to capture political power and this has distorted our political process. When blind religious passion rules people, all norms of justice and law are cast aside. Politicians of all colours dabble with communal forces, succumb to their pressures and deviate from the path of secular politics. The virtual collapse of the very foundation of our political life caused by fundamentalist forces and the politics of opportunism creates a serious situation.

BN: Modernity is seen widely as a factor that has weakened tradition. What is its impact on religion?

KC: Modernity's influence on traditional societies involves the emergence of the nation-state with secularization brought about by western technology and science. Traditional cultures in Asia have been religious cultures where there has been an unbroken unity between society, politics and religion. It has been a communitarian society, a decentralized sociopolitical existence. Religion provided the integrating principle, and both social structure and political authority were legitimized by it. The break up of this traditional integration has been a conspicuous aspect of the modern awakening of people to the ideas of justice and freedom and rationality, the foundations of a secular framework.

Religious reactions to these changes are complex. An extreme one is the 'traditionalist' approach. It is characterized by refusal to accept this break up of traditional integration and the relative autonomy of society and politics, and a desperate attempt to bring them again under the tutelage of religion. The Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh and other communal ideologies in India are following this line. Such revivalism fails to see the personalistic and dynamic elements of the emerging situation and very often ends up as a struggle to preserve the interest of the elite, which had traditionally enjoyed all privileges, and this can easily lead to communal frenzy. Even more disturbing is that the so-called 'secular' politicians whipping up communal and religious sentiments.

Democratic institutions come under serious assault through such manipulations of state power for narrow ends. The political process now obtaining in ethnically divided Third World countries is a task of reordering political equations among the

ethnic groups. The state rather than addressing itself to the creation of civil society, has become largely a mediator of ethnic political equation; whereas what we really need is a dynamic re-interpretation of the past, taking seriously into consideration, the new elements of change.

BN: Where do marginalized people and disadvantaged groups figure in this scenario?

KC: The good news is that the hitherto submerged groups are organizing to fight for their rights and this exerts tremendous pressure on the system. Their legitimate demands are met with staunch resistance from the wielders of power. A class solidarity of the poor in pure form has not been sustained in traditional Asian societies for various reasons. Where resources are scarce, people use religion or communal grouping as the focal point for their share. Secular ideologies and parties, however militant they may be, have not succeeded in providing such rallying points for the struggle; yet the dominant "identity source" for the majority is religion or community. The fight grows intense when resources become scarce, or one group finds itself alienated from the mainstream, etc. What we see in India today is a political process in which regional and other groups are struggling for their share of the cake and disappointment causes clashes.

Even as the poor are used as pawns by fundamentalist groups, benefits go to the powerful in each group. To quote Paul Brass in his essay on ethnicity and nationalism, "The cultural and religious forms, values and practices of South Asian countries have become political resources of the elite in competition for political power and economic advantages."

Andre Beteille’s study on caste, class and power conducted in 1965 is still relevant today: power has shifted from rich landlords and other traditionally rich groups not to the poor, but to a middle group, mostly politicians who with the support of the rich, continue to use the system to further their interests. The landless, the labourers and other lower strata of society do not share political power. They are onlookers at a game played by the new elite. Caste alliance still plays a prominent role and may be easily exploited for one’s own ulterior motives.

RN: What model of development would you recommend for a pluralistic society like India?

KC: Having followed the technological growth model steered by elite controlled planning and programming, serious questions arise now about an alternative model of development. Ideally it should go beyond the classical capitalist-socialist models, to develop a society appropriate for the multifaceted nature of human

beings and their social and transcendent dimensions. Thus the pressures that impinge on us are political, cultural and religious. As diversity is our natural state, plural identities should be the basis for the state. What we need is a new confederative perspective of unity from bottom up.

BN: Notwithstanding compulsions of religious faith, is it possible for us to move on towards a mature democracy and polity?

KC: Right from the days of Plato's *Republic* politics has been controlled by a powerful minority. The nexus between the elite of politics and religion continues to oppress people. If Marxism and secular ideologies of liberal democracy were turning points, the collapse of socialism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe has been historic too. All this compels us to search for a new political culture which is rooted in the experience of the poor.

The transition from religion to the liberative form of politics is still a moot question. But if all of us work to recover the essence of religion which is neither against the poor nor against other religions, we can certainly build liberative solidarity. The idea is not entirely new, but echoes what the mass movements of the indigenous, environmentalists, feminists and all grassroots people have been saying for a long time. They are already generating a new political culture based on spiritual and cultural visions of tradition. They challenge us to live by plurality of culture, demand justice as a prerequisite for meaningful human solidarity, urge for commitment to communitarian values, etc.

We need to see through the facade of myths propagated as religious truths. This may be done by embarking on a process of demythologization and remythologization. Our religions are themselves repositories of such liberative myths and can mobilize people for building a community of communities where there is no fear or domination. People are religious, not secular, so religion has to be given an orientation that is life-affirming and value-based. The existing vacuum in secularism should be filled with a new interpretation of religion that is universal and inclusive.

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The following interview by P.N. Benjamin was conducted in the context of Christmas. It is brutally frank assessment of the deplorable conditions in the Indian Church and the urgent, indispensable need for it to re-orient itself to the challenges of the day if it is to continue to be an effective instrument for individual liberation and the ushering in of a happier tomorrow and a better society.

Does not the traditional celebration of the birth of Christ remain a mere ritual for the Church, obscuring the liberationist content of the event when it occurred so long ago and giving it a comfortable capitalistic twist today?

I suppose the answer is an obvious yes. Where is the baby Jesus of the cattle shed in all the gaiety and opulence of modern Christmas celebrations? But, then, people always want a cultic figure to satisfy some of their urges. The rituals, doctrines, institutions and other paraphernalia of religions, including Christianity, have been evolved to meet this cultic expectation of people. They are one form of response to what gives security to their life. This process in itself would not have been bad, but the tragedy is that it has been developed in close collaboration with another production process in society -- economic. The classes that control the production process make use of politics, religion and other structures of society to maintain their dominance and to further their vested interests. The interdependence of these two production processes, the cultic as well as the economic, stifles the dynamism and the liberational content of Christian faith.

The Christianity that we have built up bears no similarity to Jesus' vision and the movement he inaugurated. It is important to remember that Jesus never founded a religion with all ritual and institutional trimmings. He brought a new vision of God and built a new community of men and women based on love and freedom. Most of the people that responded to him were poor and ordinary. To the oppressed and marginalized, he brought a sense of dignity and hope. His teaching constituted a threat to the establishment. Religious leaders branded him as a rebel. The Church supposedly stands in this tradition, although it has often betrayed its founder or held him captive.

Christianity, especially that which is associated with the Saint Thomas tradition, is as old as Christianity in its homeland. If Christ has been present and active in this country in and through his Church, how is it that basic human rights had continued to be grossly violated within the Church these 2,000 years? Can you give an honest to God answer to this?

I cannot agree with your sweeping comment that human rights have always been grossly violated within the Church. It is well known that the Church accepted within its fold, people of all castes and provided educational and health services to all regardless of their social or economic position. Of course, I must agree that the Church, at least in India, is never known to be a defender or champion of human rights. In the official statements of Churches, you will see a lot of pious declarations about human rights and justice. But in actual practice, especially in the institutional functioning, they are seldom adhered to. The gap between precept and practice is often attributed to man's sinfulness and somehow or the other explained

away by Church people.

We need to look at this critically. The violation of human rights is the consequence of the power being in the hands of a few and its misuse by them. By power, I mean, not only the institutional power -- the control over money, employment and other resources -- but also the ritual power which has a tremendous potential for controlling masses. The rituals and symbols of religions exercise profound influence over the consciousness of people and they mould their values and give approval or disapproval to their behaviour. One who presides over the ritual, priests and others, therefore, have tremendous power at their disposal, although in a secularized society some of it is being eroded. In both these areas, the leadership exercises power disregarding the rights of others. Only by a devolution of power and by establishing a better system of accountability can we change this. In this, Jesus himself set an example.

He consciously rejected the power that enabled one to dominate over the other. He taught his disciples to be servant to one another. His own life was an example of the liberative force of self-emptying power.

Would you deny that within the Church during these many centuries no liberationist impulse manifested itself, that there was no room for it as "there was no room in the inn" in Bethlehem when Christ was born?

I generally agree with you, but I must add there are outstanding exceptions. The Church has provided at times of course, space for men and women who lived in solidarity with the poor and supported them. What surprises us is why this is only an exception but not a norm. I have already indicated some of the reasons. As you have suggested, by the use of the symbol of ‘no room,’ the Church has developed itself into an exclusive community, a caste if you will. But that was not the intention. The Church was meant to be an open community in a situation where humanity is sharply divided. In his birth, life and death (he died in the company of criminals) Christ demonstrated his solidarity with the outsiders.

Would you not agree that Indian Christianity, ancient or modern, orthodox or protestant, not only failed to recognize the need to liberate the oppressed in its midst but built up its structures essentially as exploitative and oppressive structures?

I must point out here that the record of the Indian Church in this area, participation in social reform, is not altogether dismal. It is part of the social history of this country. To give two examples: One, the missionary involvement in the Indigo disputes in Bengal in the later 19th century. Missionaries organized a heroic fight

against the system of cultivation whereby the poor farmers were forced to cultivate Indigo plants against their wishes by European planters. They fought much to the displeasure of some of their fellow missionaries, out of their conviction that the Christian faith is opposed to unjust structures. And two, the missionaries in South Kerala identified themselves with the untouchables and unleashed a process of social revolution. One may go on listing other examples. It is true that such efforts met with stout opposition from the conservative votaries of the faith. To a large extent, the latter have succeeded in controlling the Church in subsequent years and thus suppressed the liberational impulse created by the Church in the early days. Although the Church in India deserves credit for sowing the seed of social revolution, it could not recognize or own its own offspring. The institutional framework it has built up over the centuries are being used to prop up exploitative and oppressive structures. It is true there are groups and movements within the Church which are its liberating missions. They need to be strengthened.

Would you not concede to the thesis that effective liberationist impulses, as different from those which sought to mitigate the plight of the poverty-stricken and outcastes were stirred and given an institutional framework by Marxist movement especially in Kerala which has the largest Christian population in the country?

Yes, Marxist movement has in some sense consolidated and given concrete shape to the stirrings of the outcastes. What is ironic here is that Christian missionaries were in a way responsible for creating this ferment in Kerala. But it was the forces outside the Church who fostered it and gave institutional expression to it. That certainly is an indictment on the Church. While the churches in Kerala were preoccupied with litigation and the erection of institutional edifices, the Marxists organized the poor to fight for their rights. Even those Churches which were engaged in serving the poor through their charitable organizations could not provide the needed stimulus and concrete structures for revolutionary change. What is relatively unknown is that a large number of Christian converts from scheduled castes in Kerala joined the Communist movement. In a brief survey I conducted in some areas in Kerala I came to know that several of them, while retaining a nominal membership in the Church, were committed to the Communist parties in their struggle for social and economic justice. They continue in the Church's fold for preserving their communal identity. Some have severed their link with the Church altogether.

Is it not true that the Church -- its councils and synods -- has tended at first to ignore the Marxist-Christian stirrings within it and now begun to oppose, stifle and subdue them?

I agree. The Church, especially the ecclesiastical wing of it comprising the formal councils and institutions, has always opposed any Marxist-Christian encounter. Some of this opposition was born out of genuine fears, but to a large extent they felt threatened by the presence of Marxists, whose aesthetic philosophy is the bone of contention for many. Instead of facing this challenge in a constructive way, the Church has always succumbed to the propaganda by interested parties which equates a theism with immorality and unscrupulousness. The only way the Church can counter the attack of atheism is by showing forth in its life the fruits of its faith in God. From a Christian point of view, one does not prove the existence of God, a Christian lives by the reality of faith and one's values are influenced by one's faith.

There are differences in matters of belief and practice between Marxism and Christianity and they drive them into opposite camps. But the negative reaction of the Church hierarchy is not always guided by these honest differences. The Communist movement has posed a serious threat to the vested interests and securities of the elite within the Church. It is feared that the mass organizations led by Communists would take possession of the vast lands, properties and rich institutions of the Church.

It is however, wrong to assume that Christian-Marxist encounter is totally influenced by the negative anti-Communist attitude of the Church leadership. A creative and a constructive approach is initiated by groups and movements within the Church which are committed to social justice. Notable contributions have been made by some of the Christian thinkers in this area. We also know of Christian leaders who collaborated with Communists in specific struggles.

What must the Church now do in the face of the present challenges to recapture the liberationists impulses of the Christian gospel and let them have their legitimate impact upon its own life and the life of the nation?

The only way the Church can change its direction is by actively identifying with the struggles of the poor and marginalized. There has always been an awareness about the poor in the Church. Most often response to their needs has been in the form of providing charity and service. They are legitimate to some extent. But in the long run, charity will not help change unjust structures and the poor and the oppressed will continue to be dependent on the rich. We also see how the service institutions, ostensibly for the poor, have become agencies for catering to the needs of the rich. Recently, the Churches have launched development projects that hopefully help raise the level of the poor. But they are heavily dependent on external sources and some of the structures and institutions built around this are there to serve the interest of mediators and managers of such schemes.

The Church is yet to find a more convincing way to relate itself in the struggle for justice. Today, in our country, the marginalized sections of society, (women, dalits, tribals, landless, laborers, etc.) are organizing themselves. They demand nothing short of upper class/caste domination in our society to end and strive for a new order wherein the wealth of nations is no longer concentrated in the hands of a few, but wherein people actively participate in the development and well-being of the nation.

The Church can be sensitive to this new fervour and at least be a support structure to people's struggle, even if it cannot enter directly into them. Some outstanding efforts are being made today, for example, the involvement of priests and nuns in the fishermen's struggle in Kerala and the participation of Christian action groups in organizing landless laborers in Tamil Nadu. It is quite obvious that the Church alone cannot and should not do this. They have to cooperate with other agencies and movements engaged in fighting for justice. That is why increasing cooperation on the level of struggle along with Marxists and others are a necessary form of Christian service.

In Latin America where the present day version of liberation theology originated, the oppressor and the oppressed are both by and large within the Roman Catholic fold. In India Christians are a tiny minority. Should they proclaim liberation on the basis of the Bible, it may bring a severe backlash. Is there a remedy to this?

It is true that the Latin American situation is different from ours. Christianity is a minority religion here. The symbols and concepts which the Church uses may appear to be alien, however much it wants to put new content into them. In our multi-religious society it is therefore natural for people to brand the liberational message couched in Christian language as a covert effort to 'sell' Christianity and to add new converts to the Church. I look at the question in this way. I am increasingly becoming convinced that in every religion there are two streams. One stream can be characterized as the religion of the establishment or the institutional religion. It is often *status quo* oriented and invariably stifling. The original message, rituals and doctrines are cleverly twisted by the elite to suit their needs.

Much of the theology as it is developed is a padding to this. But in every religion there is a minority stream, the religion of the people which strives hard to break out of the domination of the elite. It is this stream which is liberational. It is seldom conceptualized and intellectually articulated. It is a living tradition influencing the ordinary people through its symbols, folk stories and myths. In their own way they protest the dominance of the elite, they dream dreams of a new order and relation. One may include the emergence of Buddhism and the Bhakti movement in this

tradition. I also believe that the people's stream in all the religions have a common language. Together they struggle for their humanity. My hope is that the liberational stream in all religions will come together. Christian priests and nuns in the fishermen's struggle in Kerala and Hindu Swamis working among the bonded laborers in Madhya Pradesh have one language and one concern -- liberation of the oppressed. What prevents them from coming together?

There is an enormous potential here. This solidarity alone is the best form to counter the obscurantist communalism, a game played by the elite and the state and the religion of the establishment.

Should the clergy be in the forefront of the movement to end oppression? What kind of clergy? What will equip them for the task? Bible and Capital -- Christ and Marx?

The clergy can play a leading role in the struggle against oppression. They are the educators and leaders in Christian communities. But we are ill-equipped to do this. I do not know whether by reading *Capital* alone we will be better equipped. Perhaps we should begin by re-reading our own Bible from the perspective of the poor and the oppressed. Certainly we need tools that help us analyze the hidden currents and the patterns of injustice in our society. What is needed is also a new orientation to the preaching and piety. Much of our theology and Church life is oriented to the needs of the individual. This in itself is not bad, but we tend to forget how the individual is part of a web of relationships whose dynamism is determined by certain structures and processes of society. This awareness is slowly coming to us. Perhaps we have not fully discovered a way to hold together the traditional emphasis on interiority -- the inner motive, a sense of meaning and personal commitment to Jesus and the new thrust on exteriority, social action, involvement and struggle. Experience shows how with actual involvement in the struggle of the oppressed one's commitment becomes real, one's faith stronger and authentic.

Has Marxism, in its origin or modified forms influenced you?

Yes, Marxism has influenced my thinking. I have read a lot of Marx and re-read some of his writings. I try to interpret Marx to my Christian audience. Some of the basic insights of Marxism help us understand the exploitative mechanism of society. Even before reading Marx I had developed a great concern for the poor. I suppose that is true about many of us. On the gut level we have sympathy for the poor but when I read Karl Marx's analysis of history and society, I have radicalized my concern. I was able to see poverty as a faulty system and even a spiritual problem.

We are indebted to Marx for his insight that the economic production process and relations decisively influence the values and structures of our relationships. I take seriously Marx's criticism of religion. Any religion which makes people subservient to the forces of oppression is to be rejected.There are several other insights of Marx which are important for us.

But I must admit that a literal dogmatic approach to Marxism is abhorrent to the dynamic spirit of Marx himself. For example, it is difficult to apply literally, the stages of historical development which Marx outlined from his European experience directly to the Indian situation. I also feel that Marx's criticism of religion although valid in some respects, does not exhaust the full meaning of religion. We also know that there are new issues which Marx could not have visualized. Some aspects of technology, and some dimensions of women's question do not fit into Marxist analysis. This does not mean that Marx's insights are irrelevant. These are all matters which need further enquiry from the perspective of the people. It is disconcerting that a rigid and authoritarian framework of the parties that supposedly follow Marx is incapable of expressing the authentic Marx and for this reason, some of the contemporary efforts often outside the parties, to understand and interpret Marx in terms of Indian realities are important for me.

I want to make it clear. In a situation like ours where a majority of our people are victims of all forces of oppression -- economic exploitation, caste domination and sexual domination -- their liberation from them assumes priority for our religious faith. But as a Christian I also want to affirm that the total meaning of my faith cannot be fully realized by participation in such struggles. What I need is a faith that sustains me in an ultimate sense, even if my concrete struggle fails me. I find this faith in the Christian tradition which celebrates the ultimate victory of humanity which God continuously creates.

Christian revivalists and fundamentalists oppose the liberationist approach, so does the power-holders, the old guard, within each Church. How can they be won over? If not, how to contain and confound them?

This question has low priority in the list of my agenda! My approach to the question is more positive. As I have indicated earlier, if the Church could commit itself to the poor, and interpret the scriptures and faith from their perspective, then the so-called fundamentalist opposition will not have staying power. It is well known that some of these groups thrive on resources drawn from certain Western countries. Such help is not ideologically innocent. It is part of a campaign to demolish communism. For me, the central concern should be the integrity of

Christian faith itself. How seriously can we follow Christ who lived in solidarity with the poor and the oppressed, whose message was good news to the poor. The salvation God brings includes social transformation. Response to the gospel of Christ in a given context and the struggle for justice are integrally related.

Can an Indian Christian theology of liberation emerge from within the four walls of our teaching and training shops, especially the seminaries? If not what is the alternative? Is it always to be imported?

Certainly not. A theology of liberation can emerge only in and with the struggle of the people. I am afraid the theological training of the Church is far removed from the situation of struggle and therefore ill-suited to produce any creative theological reflection. To a large extent they are also dependent on the category of thought and methodologies developed in the West; they are deeply entrenched in the institutional framework of the Church.

We need to free theological training from these shackles. Involvement is the key here. The spirit of a person who has suffered and experienced the ruthlessness of the system has a vibration which cold abstract theology seldom has. Involvement is not head long plunge into a situation. One should have some equipment and tools to analyze the situation. Marxism is one such tool. There are a few notable experiments in theological education. Some of the theological seminaries have closed down their formal training and encourage students to plunge deeply into the conflict situation of society and to reflect on the faith. We hope that their experience will provide the data for further theological reflection. Imported theology is unreal, even the liberation brand of it. Certainly, experiences of people in other countries can inspire and stimulate us and that is what the Latin American Christians have done. But I believe that we need to discover the liberative Christ in our context.

Do you advocate the use force to liberate, if other means seem to fail?

I always refuse to discuss academically the question of the use of force. It has to be answered from within the context by the participant in a struggle. Any senseless use of force is no solution to social problems. Even Marx rejected it. He compared the use of force to the role of a midwife. In any liberation struggle, especially when we are up against the entrenched force, certain eruptions of violence are inevitable. Every effort should be made to minimize it. We are faced with violent situations although conflict is beneath the surface. Sometimes a dogmatic adherence to pacifism amounts to condoning or supporting the entrenched violence. That is why I said the question of the use of force can be answered only in relation to the context and not theoretically.

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Ethical Issues in the Struggles for Justice by Daniel Chetti and M.P. Joseph

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