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Foreword

Our Liberation Tradition, Church, and Theology : Minjung - Dalit Theological Dialogue

An Ecumenical Conference with theme of "Our Liberation Tradition, Church, and Theology: Conversations between the Minjung Theology and Dalit Theology (Date: October 17th - 22nd October, 2007; Place: Korea Church's Millennium Hall)" was held in Korea.

Dalit Theology in India has emerged in the midst of the reality of Dalits.

Dalit is thus not a mere descriptive name or title, but an expression of hope for the recovery of their past identity. The struggle of these "outcastes" has given the term dalit a positive meaning. The very realization of themselves as Dalit, the very acceptance of the state of "dalitness," is the first step on the way towards their transformation into full and liberated human beings (James Massey).

Minjung Theology has emerged in the context of their struggle for justice in Korea. Through the mediation of Christian Conference of Asia and Congress of Asian Theologians (CATS) the Dalit theologians and the Minjung theologians met with each other for conversation, dialogue and mutual learning.

The most recent conference in Korea has reached a new level of rich conversation after several years of mutual consultations. We have a wonderful feeling that the Dalit theology has evolved into a diverse strands of development, into a diverse themes of identity, ethnicity, tribal cultures, and gender justice as well as socio-economic and political issues. The Dalit theology has been expanded into a broader horizon of liberation theology, as it developed into rich and diverse contents and methodologies. It is clear that there is an emerging convergence of these divergent stands of development.

The history of the conversation between the Korean liberation theology and the Indian liberation theologies is entering into a new stage in new global context of the domination by the global market regime and by the global reality. This global reality makes direct impacts upon the realities of the Dalit and the Minjung. The Minjung theology is searching for a fresh direction in this new context.

It is our contention that liberation theologies needs to evolve a perspective of convergence on local, national and global levels. Convergence of liberation traditions on all levels would include a process of convergence among Asian liberation theologies as well as a process of global convergence. The convergence would enhance the intensity and richness of liberation discourse in diverse situations and at the same time it would open a new horizon for a new and fresh discourse of liberation. This would also include a convergent process of divergent philosophies and religions at the OMEGA point of liberation of all living beings on earth.

What we have learned of a remarkable development:

1. Indian ecumenical movement is deeply committed to the Dalit Struggle.
2. The theological studies are both academic and praxis oriented to support the Dalit struggle. There evolved several centers of Biblical and theological studies in Chennai, Madurai (TTC) and New Deli and so on.
3. The tribal peoples, the women, the youth and other groups are engaged in the struggle for identity and liberation as well as justice and wholeness.
4. Theological education system of India (Board of the Serampore Senate) has taken the Dalit Theology into the official theological curricula.

Korean counterpart of the Minjung theology has been carrying our theological studies; but its evolvment is less visible. The perspective of the Minjung theology has permeated into various social movements such as peace and national reunification, ecology and interfaith dialogue. There are several centers of study of the Minjung theology has been established; and its impact on the ecclesial and social issues are weakened. Under the “progressive government” it took a back seat. During the conference, there rose a new resolution to revive a passion for the study of the Minjung theology in the new context.

Convergence of liberation discourses may be a fresh agenda in the ecumenical theological enterprise. This convergence would be directed against the global power of the world market regime and the global empire on the one hand and it would be inclusive of the cosmic and ecological dimension for the conviviality of all living beings.

Chief Editor, Kim Yong-Bock

Convergence of Liberation Discourses for Conviviality of All Living Beings

Yong Bok Kim*

Korean Minjung theology is a process of the convergence of the liberation discourses in Korean history. The first religious convergence was that of the Donghak Revolutionary Peasant Movement. This does not mean it was the only one. There were many historical precedents throughout the history of the Korean people. It means that the Donghak discourse is the most prominent revolutionary convergence of liberation traditions in the modern history of the Korean people.

Let me tell the story of the convergence of the liberation traditions in Korea that is connected to our theological task. It goes back to the history of the early church, that is, the Nestorian church. There is real and circumstantial evidence of the presence of Nestorian Christianity in China and in East Asia.¹⁾ Then there is East Asian Catholicism in China, Korea and Japan.²⁾ Nestorian Christianity had converged with the Buddhist

This article was presented in the 7th Minjung-Dalit Theological Dialogue Conference, October 17th-22nd, 2007, Seoul, Korea.

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1) Kim Yong-Bock, *Christianity and Buddhism in East Asia*.

2) Kim Yong-Bock, *Historical Transformation, People's Movement and Christian*

Maitreya discourse; and East Asian Catholicism had converged with the Confucian discourse. Out of these convergences there emerged fresh liberation discourses that had revolutionary impact. This experience does not represent any political success; but it created a remarkable “mutation” in the liberation discourses in East Asia.

Korean History of the Convergent Movements

There are three outstanding cases in the convergence of liberation discourses in the modern history of Korea, which are closely related to Minjung theology.

The Donghak Convergence

The Korean religious movement, the Donghak Movement, arose in the 1860s. The revolutionary dynamics and the process of social transformation had been triggered by a religious convergence of Minjung Confucianism (The heart of the people is the heart of heaven), Minjung Buddhism (All embracing compassion), Minjung Taoism (the Tao), Minjung Christianity (Equality of all before the heavenly lord) and Minjung Shamanism (Resolving the *han* among the oppressed and exploited). The vision of society, like the T'aiping Kingdom of Heaven, emerged out of this convergence of religious wisdom and vision. The Donghak vision surpassed all divergent visions, enhancing them to a new plane and to a new horizon. Its vision was that “All living beings are one body(同歸一體).”

This convergence was a radical alternative to the ruling ideology of patriarchal Confucianism. In the first place it was an emergence of a radical social vision that there should be no discrimination between the Yangban and the commoners (Sangnom) in terms of social status, between the genders, between the ages, and between the political, social and economic classes. All humans have the divine within their being. Any harm to a human being is precisely a harm to the divine (God). There should be a wholeness and unity among all living beings without any discrimination between human beings and natural beings. This divine contained very concrete ethics and was designed to be practiced and constructed. This was an alternative order of all living beings, and was named as the second

Koinonia, (1976).

creation (Hucheon Gaebyeok = 後天開闢).

Convergent Vision of National Liberation

The March First Independence Movement brought another Kairotic moment of such convergence. Buddhism, Donghak religion, Christianity, Confucianism, Taoism and Shamanism, including the national religions emergent among the Korean people as the Minjung faiths, together brought a new historic vision of freedom, justice and peace - a convergent vision. It was a convergent political vision out of the divergent religious faiths of resistance against Japanese imperial domination. These faiths brought their messianic visions to converge in the struggle and resistance against colonial domination.

This vision was concretized into political declarations such as the March First Independence Declaration of 1919, which became later the basis of the constitution of the Korean people for their government in exile and in the Republic of Korea. The political self-determination and independence of the Korean people, freedom from feudalistic social relations, economic and social equality, the sovereign participation of the people, and above all, liberation from the colonial powers of the outside had converged in this declaration. One can easily detect the revolutionary vision of the socialist philosophy and of the liberal philosophy in this vision. In this sense there was a process of conversion of the East and West. This vision was under-girded by the divergent faiths of our people and yet it reached a new plateau of imagination reaching into the future.

The People's Movement for Justice, Freedom and Peace in the 1970s and 80s

The Minjung movement in the last quarter of the 20th century brought about a convergent vision of democracy and human rights, justice and reconciliation and peace and national re-unification for the Korean people. In the Minjung movement the various religious faiths and social philosophies reached a pivotal point of a Kairotic convergence. This dynamic inherited the dynamics of convergence in the history of the Korean people. In the making of such dynamics there arose activities for visiting the Minjung Buddhist traditions (Metraiya at the Pure Land), the Minjung Confucianism (the heart of the people is the heart of heaven = 民心天心), the Christian politics of the messianic movement, the Tonghak

revolutionary heritages, and the popular religions such as Shamanism.

In this stream there were the Minjung arts and songs and Minjung literature and poetry. The revolutionary socialist vision was deeply undercurrent in the dynamics of convergence.

One can detect the creative and emergent convergence dynamics against the powers of dictatorship, the global capital and the geo-political hegemony that oppressed, exploited, discriminated against and divided our people, causing their suffering in multiple dimensions. The Minjung theology arose in the midst of this convergent movement of the people for a whole new vision of a new future.

Why the Convergence?

1) The universe contains one whole order of conviviality of all living beings on earth under heaven. This convergence is the essential dynamic of all things. Every moment in time, in every point in space, meets at the point of every event of life of all living beings. All diverse and divergent dimensions and factors meet at every point of act of life. This is an Omega point which is an end point of the Alpha of life. Between the Omega and the Alpha there is an infinite and permanent change. Convergence takes place as a Kairotic time and space.

Unless this convergence in a perpetual flux and in a decisive moment is understood, it is not possible to understand life and the universe. This is true of Western physics and of the Eastern *I-Ching*. In a way there is a convergence between the laws of quantum physics and the Li of *I-Ching* (the Book of Changes). Yet these two are fundamentally different in that the one is objective and the other is ethical.

2) There is already an emergence of a convergent movement among the peoples on earth and among all living beings against the powers that destroy life on earth under heaven. At the same time the convergent vision for the convergence of movements of liberation is aspired for by all living beings in the universe, just as “the cosmos is groaning for liberation from all principalities and powers of this world” (Romans 8).

3) There is a convergence of the dynamics of domination in the matrix of the global market and the global empire in various forms, especially in the form of technological convergence at the core of this matrix. This demands a fresh discerning of the signs of times and a fresh vision for the new world.

Definition of Convergence

In general, convergence is a coming together of two or more distinct entities or phenomena.³⁾ Convergence is increasingly prevalent in the technocratic world.⁴⁾

Braman (1998) notes that economic convergence occurs when an industry becomes dominated by oligopoly. This is when the individuality of an organization yields to a more collective form due to networking relationships. There is also a blurring of industrial lines. For instance telecom companies are converging through series of mergers and acquisition deals and are moving into new telecom markets in addition to their traditional ones. This is a new industrial technocracy.

3) There are five forms of convergence, these forms are not totalities; however, they cover, to a large extent, the noticeable forms of convergence:

- Functional convergence
- Technological convergence
- Economic convergence
- Political convergence
- Geographical convergence

Technological convergence points to the way technologies are increasingly converging into one. The availability of carrier technology with high bandwidth means that transmission is not limited to voice only; now data, pictures and other multimedia and interactive media can be transported in one single carrier technology like the fiber optic cable and satellite technology. One other noticeable technology that perhaps is the epitome of convergence technology is computer technology. This technology provides the most striking convergent service: the internet. This combines all known communication media into one single service on a computer screen.

4) In this context the term refers to the combination of two or more different technologies in a single device. Taking pictures with a cell phone and surfing the Web on a television are two of the most common examples of this trend. Webster's Dictionary defines the act of *converging* as moving toward union or uniformity; especially the coordinated movement of the two eyes so that the image of a single point is formed on corresponding retinal areas. Convergence is the combination of all these different media into one operating platform. It is the merger of telecom, data processing and imaging technologies. This convergence is ushering in a new epoch of multimedia, in which voice, data and images are combined to render services to the users.

Geo-political Convergence

The end of the Cold War marked the closure of a distinct era in geopolitics and international relations. It changed not only the relations between states and rival blocs of states, but the very boundaries and definitions of states and thus the component parts of the international system. The consequences of this rapid and dramatic transformation constitute the premises upon which international politics are now conducted and the foundations on which a new global order is being built or from which a pattern of controlled disorder emerges. This is the political convergence of the global empire.

New military technocracy is being forged, enabled by integrating developments in nanotechnology, information and cognitive technologies (such as an integrated helmet with tunable hearing, night vision, communications, physical and auditory protection providing tactical awareness and cognition of “in-field” activity). **The global military order is a Matrix of Convergence.** A matrix is a complex idea which is used in various fields from biology to electronics including mathematics and logic. Altogether it suggests a “supporting structure” and an “enclosing structure,” a structure that encompasses diversity by interconnecting many structures.

The Convergence of Technologies⁵⁾

Information technology and communication technology have already

5) The Vision and Power of Convergence

Rapidly advancing technologies with potentially disruptive implications include:

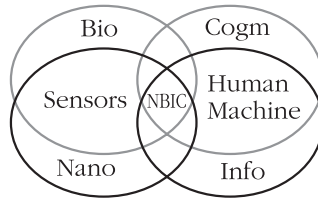
- Nanotechnology;
- Biotechnology and Biomedicine;
- Advanced Computing and Information Technologies; and
- Cognitive Neuroscience.

New developments in each of these technologies will have a significant impact on society, but the most disruptive innovations will likely occur at their intersections. The convergence or synergy arising from their combination is expected to lead to such capabilities as:

- Expanded human cognition and communication enabled by brain implants, new drugs, rapid learning and direct brain-to-machine interfaces;
- Improved human health and physical capabilities enabled by nano-biosensors to monitor and repair bodily functions, and systems that enhance human

converged leading to Information and Communication Technology (ICT).⁶⁾ Information Technology combined with bio-technology has led to bio-informatics. Now, nanotechnology is knocking at our doors. It is the field of the future that will replace microelectronics and many fields with tremendous application potential in the areas of medicine, electronics and material science. When nanotechnology and ICT meet, integrated silicon electronics and photonics are born and it can be said that material convergence will happen. With material convergence and biotechnology linked, a new science called Intelligent Bioscience will be born which would lead to a disease-free, happy and more intelligent human habitat with longevity and high human capabilities. Convergence of bio-nano-info technologies can lead to the development of nano robots. Nano robots when they are injected into a patient, my expert friends say, will diagnose and deliver the treatment exclusively to the affected area and then the nano-robot will get digested as it is a DNA based product. This process leads to an industrial stage of creating trans-human beings and agencies.

Nano-Bio-Info-Cognitive (NBIC) Technologies



sensors; and

- Responsive and collaborating autonomous intelligent systems to support decision-making, and nano robots for surveillance and medical applications.

The National Science Foundation and the US Department of Commerce envisage Nano-Bio-Info-Cognitive convergence as a means toward improving work efficiency, learning, enhanced sensory-cognitive capabilities, brain-brain interactions, human-machine interfaces, and ameliorating physical or cognitive decline in humans.

- 6) Convergence of ICT, aerospace and nanotechnologies will emerge and revolutionize the aerospace industry and electronics leading to nano computing systems. This technological convergence will enable building of cost effective low weight, high payload, and highly reliable aerospace systems, which can be used for inter-planetary transportation.

Technology to Society - Global Societal Grid

The development of technologies and their convergence has a powerful influence on society in terms of knowledge, governance and economic development. To maximize the synergy between the various components of education, e-governance, rural development and health care, it is necessary to establish connectivities among them. These connectivities will certainly bring seamless access and information flow among the various domains leading to maximization of GDP and productivity; hence, there is a need for establishing the *grids*; namely the knowledge grid, e-governance grid, healthcare grid and so on. This interconnecting grid will be known as the societal grid. Knowledge sharing, knowledge utilization and knowledge re-use is very vital by all constituents of society for promoting non-linear growth. This will take place globally as well.

Based on this technological convergence there will emerge a symbiotic convergence of the power of the Global Empire and the Global Market Regime. This brings threats to the very order of life of all living beings.

The Context of the New Convergence of Liberation

Symbiotic Convergence of Powers: Convergent Power of the Global Empire, the Global Market and the Global Technocracy

- 1) Geo-political situation: Global Empire
 - (1) Global political domination of the United States, the state above states
 - (2) Global military hegemony and permanent and ubiquitous war
- 2) Global economic situation: Global Market
 - (1) The industrial and financial capital: unlimited growth for unrestricted greed
 - (2) Global economic regime: WTO, IMF, World Bank and G-7 to forge absolute domination
- 3) Global political situation: Global Governance
 - (1) The modern nation statehood: modern, industrial and liberal political order
 - (2) The suppression of the sovereignty of the people, the nation and the race
- 4) Global social situation: Global Convergence of Contradictions

- (1) The vortex of contradictions and conflicts: class, gender, caste, race, ethnic people and so on.
- (2) Convergence of contradictions and conflicts
- 5) Global cultural situation: Global Cultural Hegemony
 - (1) The erosion and suppression of identity and values
 - (2) The suppression and corruption of creativity
 - (3) The colonizing of sense-perception, feeling, consciousness and spirit
- 6) Global religious situation: Global Faithdom
 - (1) The erosion of faiths
 - (2) Fundamentalization
 - (3) World Christendom
- 7) Ecological Situation: Bio-Empire
 - (1) The destruction of nature
 - (2) The pollution of nature
- 8) Cosmic situation: Cosmic Empire
 - (1) Conquering of the earth and the cosmos
 - (2) The manipulation, control and destruction of the micro-comic world

Convergence of All Living Beings for their Conviviality: Contours of Convergence Movement in the 21st century

We affirm the Convergence of all Living beings for the Conviviality of Life. This calls for a convergence for liberation of all living beings. The vision should hold the convergence of Participation, Justice, Peace, Creativity and Conviviality for the life together of all living beings on earth under heaven. This would be a convergent vision of Asian peoples.

Often the order of life is determined by the powerful. Now the global market and the global empire and their convergent powers determine the disorder of life in Asia as well as on earth. This has had a great influence on the life of Asian peoples as well as their vision. Now is the time when Asian peoples together with all living beings on earth can forge a fresh and new vision in the context of the vision of history and the wisdom for life in response to the powers of the global empire and global market.

Recovery of the Pivotal Point of Convergence

Jesus of Galilee standing against the Roman Empire is our pivotal point. This triggered a convergent vision of the order of life, overcoming the domination of the Pax Romana, inheriting the prophetic visions of justice, peace and life, overcoming the socio-economic class contradiction, ethnic-national division, gender and cultural injustice, intellectual segregation, power domination and religious discrimination.

However, this vision has been obscured by the Romanization of Christian faith and its subsequent development, the Western modernization of Christian faith and the Christian symbiosis with the Western colonial powers.

Asian Christian faith needs to recover Jesus the Asian who holds the wisdom and the vision of life for all living beings for their conviviality.

The Asian convergence of wisdom and vision of life means a convergence of all Asian wisdoms, religious and cultural, philosophical, intellectual, historical and ecological. This is a multi-faith convergence. It is a multi-cultural convergence. It is a multi-philosophical convergence. Jesus the Asian stands among these convergent movements and dynamics, for Jesus becomes the Alpha and Omega of the convergence of liberation of all living beings for their conviviality.

The ecumenical convergence of Christian faith has been too constrictive. The notion of unity rings the bell of an imperial order. Agreement of doctrines and church order, which has been very much influenced by political regimes, is a too restrictive base for an ecumenical unity of the church as well as of humanity.

An Asian convergence of the people's liberation traditions should be all inclusive of all religious and philosophical wisdoms of life.

- 1) Liberation ecumenism has been fragmentary.
- 2) Liberation ecumenism has been condemned to the localized contexts.
- 3) Liberation ecumenism has failed to forge a universal solidarity.
- 4) Liberation ecumenism needs clearer discerning of the signs of the times.

The Minjung-Dalit Conversation toward a Global Convergence Movement for the Omega Point

Asian Convergence begins here with us.

Asian religious faiths, cultural traditions and philosophies have a long history of creative convergence for life. Asian liberation theologies must inherit this history and embrace all convergent dynamics. The theology of struggle in the Philippines, theologies of Maori and Aborigines and ethnic and tribal peoples, theology of home land, theology against emperor system, theologies of dialogue with Asian faiths, theologies of ecological sustainability, the Feminist theologies, and theologies of the peoples, including the Dalit theology and the Minjung theology, need to find convergent points for the liberation of life. They should not remain in a fragmented or localized state. This convergence will open new theological and ecumenical horizons for liberation.

Asian Liberation Ecumenism needs to embrace social wisdoms and philosophies of justice, peace and life that are indigenous in the Asian soil. Dialogues and cooperation, even solidarity relations are a way toward a macro-ecumenical convergence. Liberation traditions of Asian socialist philosophies, of Asian religious faiths and of Asian cultures need to be embraced in our liberation ecumenism. Already Asian Christian faith has maintained this convergent mode from the beginning at the roots and has born many fruits in an abundant fashion. And yet this convergence had never been recognized due to the theological reductionism of Western Christianity.

An African and Asian Ecumenical Space for Convergence should be boldly explored. There could be a significant convergent dynamic for global convergence and global ecumenism. The demographical, religious, cultural as well as geo-political, economic and political dynamics of African people and Asian people have a great and creative potential for a convergent movement of liberation not only in the African and Asian continents but also in the whole earth.

The Western liberation movements, including the Christian faith, are to be converged into the Asian convergent movement; this is not westernization, nor indigenization, nor contextualization. True Asian Convergence must account for the East-West convergence for liberation toward the global ecumenical convergence. This global convergence for

conviviality of all living beings must be distinguished from the Western convergence under the power of the global empire, the global market and the global technocracy.

Cosmic Convergence for Conviviality of All Living Beings

Modern Western civilization, including Western Christianity, has failed to sustain the conviviality of all living beings in the cosmos. Asian and African peoples, native and aboriginal peoples, and ethnic and tribal peoples have abundant wisdom for the cosmic conviviality which is the foundation of cosmic ecumenism.

The convergence of life of all living beings for their conviviality is the OMEGA point of the universe. It is called Taeguk(太極), which is the ALPHA AND OMEGA of the whole life and therefore of the whole universe. At this point the Dalit and the Minjung meet for the feast of life in the cosmic banquet.

We discern that caste structure and class structure are meeting at the convergence of original social sin and evil. All other dimensions of sin and evil are merging to converge at this point of original evil and sin. The liberation movement of the Dalit and the Minjung is converging as a revolutionary movement for the convivial life of all living beings. Our ecumenical discourse is that of the convergence of liberation. Let us liberate ourselves from the religious, cultural and ideological captivities so that we see a new fresh vision of the universe, full of justice, peace and life.

Abstract

The liberation discourses have been fragmented as they seek unique discourses in their particular contexts. In the face of the global economic regime and of the global empire, in which there is a technocratic convergence for power operates, the article argues that the liberation discourses must seek a convergent point with all and every divergent identity, struggle and situational characteristics for the conviviality of all living beings. It has argued that the Minjung theology in Korea has been a convergent discourse of various Korean religious and philosophical liberation traditions. The article seeks to expose the technocratic convergence, which is an inner logic of the global power of the market and empire. It further argues that the conviviality of all living beings is indeed in a dynamic process of convergence towards the final fulfillment.

Key Words

liberation discourse, Minjung theology, convergence, technological convergence, conviviality of all living beings.

Introduction to our Liberative Traditions and Their Contribution to our Doing Theologies

James Massey*

Introduction

I want to initiate discussion on the paper with a few general observations:

First, the theme of this paper is 'Dalit liberative traditions.' Examples of Dalit traditions will be drawn from my own background and region as those of an Indian Dalit. More examples from other regions, particularly from Tribal and Adivasi traditions, may be added during the discussion by my colleagues present here.

Second, the expression 'tradition' is not used in this paper with the standard dictionary meaning ("the handing down of statements, beliefs, legends, customs etc from generation to generation. esp. by mouth or practice"¹⁾), because very little in that sense is left behind either written or oral by the forebears of the Dalits. What is available in writing is what is left mostly by their rivals in some odd forms, which now is being researched, reconstructed and re-interpreted by the Dalits as well as non-Dalit activists. In this process a number of historical Dalit traditions are uncovered, which not only throw light on the lost human identity of the Dalits, but also reveal

This article is a key note address given on October 18, 2007 at Dalit-Minjung Conference in Seoul, Korea.

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1) *Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language* (New York/Avenel: Gramercy Books, 1994), 1502.

the fact of their being liberative in nature.

The *third* observation is related to the use of the 'Dalit liberative traditions' in the process of theologizing from a Dalit perspective, which in truth is very minimal. Most of the Dalit theologians have been reflecting on the present context of the Dalits by referring to the caste system and the Text. But there are few examples of Dalit theologians who have taken seriously the Dalit liberative traditions in their works. One such example is that of James Theophilus Appavoo, who used a participatory data collection research method to reconstruct the 'Dalit religion.'² Besides, I have my own efforts through which I have been trying to reconstruct the 'Dalit history' by re-reading the written as well as archaeological sources, which were originally not meant for such a purpose.³ These efforts not only have taken us back to the historical roots of the Dalit problem, but also have revealed the lost humanity of the Dalits. Towards the same direction presently some activist-cum-intellectuals, like M.C. Raj and Jyothi, are continuously making efforts to reclaim the Dalit traditions and use the same in the process of Dalit liberation in their works. Among their well-known recent work is 'Dalitology.'⁴

The *fourth* observation is about the works of the dominant Indian Christian theologians, who have been propagating Indian Christian theology or claiming to be "confessing the Faith in India" but have been only concerned with the religious traditions of classical Hinduism, the so called 'Great Traditions.' They have never shown any interest in the religious traditions of the Dalits, Tribals, Adivasi and other subaltern communities of India, which some of the traditional scholars have named as 'Little Traditions.'⁵ Even their reference points are limited to the so-called upper castes; such scholars are Ram Mohan Roy and Keshab Chandra Sen.⁶ And also among the Christians the thinkers and theologians only from the so-called upper caste converts are taken into account. These include: Krishna

2) James Theophilus Appavoo, "Dalit Religion" in *Indigenous People Dalits*, by James Massey (Delhi: 1994), 111-121.

3) James Massey, *Roots-Concise History of Dalits*, 5th ed. (New Delhi: CIS, 2004).

4) M.C. Raj, *Dalitology - The Book of the Dalit People* (Shanthinagar, Tumkur: REDS, 2001).

5) Henry H. Presler, *Primitive Religions in India* (Madras, 1971), 245-246.

6) Robin Boyd, *An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology* (Delhi, 1991 reprint), 19-39.

Mohan Banarjea, A.S. Appasamy, Brahmabandhu Upadhyay and Sadhu Sundar Singh.⁷⁾ But then the thinkers like Jotirao Phule and B.R. Ambedkar, who were also not Christians, yet who took serious interest in the Dalit liberative traditions and also in the Christian faith, are not given any space in the writings of the dominant Indian Christian theologians. This is quite surprising.

The *fifth* observation is about the Dalit engagement to uncover their lost and forgotten liberative traditions. The discovery of these traditions has generated enthusiasm among the Dalits for their fuller liberation.

Dalit Liberative Traditions

Here in this section an attempt is made to summarize under five subheadings, the various Dalit liberative traditions, which have not only created among the Dalits a hope for their fuller liberation, but also have led some of the Dalits and Dalit theologians to enter into the process of doing theology from the Dalit perspective. These subheadings are: Historical traditions, Religious traditions, Spiritual traditions, Prophetic traditions, and Faith traditions (including biblical). There should have been sections on Political and Economic traditions as well, but these I have left for another presentation.

Historical Traditions

As stated earlier when we talk about the ‘Dalit traditions,’ we Dalits cannot talk in the literal sense of something handed down to us from generation to generation by our forebears. This is because our forebears were forced to lose their memory of history. Their opponents, in order to bring them to this state, used many methods, which included: creation of the religious myths, manipulation, divide and rule and even principles of accommodation and assimilation. But despite this, the opponents of the Dalits failed to wholly suppress the humanity hidden deep down in their being, which though ‘wounded,’ was not yet fully dead. This ‘wounded humanity’ hidden in a sub-conscious state has shown signs of life in different forms now and then throughout the long history of their captivity. During the 20th century these signs of life became more and more manifest, which were the sure proof of

7) Kaj Baago, *Pioneers of Indigenous Christianity* (Madras, 1969), 12-70.

the growing consciousness of the Dalits about this state. During their engagement of re-claiming their past lost history, they encountered a number of their liberative traditions as well. These re-claimed traditions today they now address as “our liberative traditions.” These re-claimed traditions are the subject of this paper. In this section we are referring to the ‘historical traditions’ which revealed to the Dalits that once upon a time they owned a most developed civilization. Twentieth century historians and archaeologists have referred to this as the ‘Indus Valley Civilization.’⁸⁾

Today a large number of Dalit and non-Dalit scholars have also accepted that a well-civilized people were living in the cities of Harappa and Mohenjodaro before 1500 BC; cities which were part of the Indus Valley civilization. These views are also supported by the ancient literary as well as archaeological sources.⁹⁾ M.C. Raj gives examples from the legends in native literature to make a point that the kings of these cities like Pari and Sibi not only had good governance systems, but also were compassionate and just. These cities had spacious streets, market places and godowns.¹⁰⁾

It is true that the unearthed and re-discovered story of the Indus Valley Civilization tells us that it had an indigenous origin and the people who owned it belonged to a pre-Aryan race. But the question may be asked if these pre-Aryan people were to-day’s Dalits. This question may be put in a more direct form: Are Dalits indigenous people? Based upon the existing traditions, historical data and archaeological sources, a good number of scholars have looked into this question of ‘Dalits’ as being indigenous people and have ventured an affirmative answer. From among these, the works of three such scholars are referred to here, namely, Ambedkar, Suresh Narain Srivastava and J. Van Troy.

Ambedkar has discussed the question in his 1948 work, *The Untouchable, of who they were and why they became Untouchables*. Ambedkar’s work is based on his thesis that there was no racial difference between the Untouchables (Dalits) and other groups or castes at that time in history. According to Ambedkar, the divisions in Indian society began with a primitive society, which consisted of many local communities (or tribes). In the beginning, all these communities were nomadic. But with time and

8) James Massey, *Roots*, 5-19.

9) *Ibid*, 16-19.

10) M.C. Raj, *Dalitology*, 98.

because of intra-tribal warfare, they got divided into three groups: a Settled Community, a Raider Community (nomadic tribes), and a Broken Men's community consisting of the people of defeated tribes. The last group is important, because it is these Broken Men, according to Ambedkar, who at a later stage, were turned into untouchables and are today's Dalits. These 'Broken Men' were the people of defeated tribes, who got scattered or separated from their original tribes.¹¹⁾

Ambedkar's construction of the tradition of Broken Men, which deals with the roots of the Dalits (Untouchables), is important, because besides throwing light on how the Dalits have reached their present state, it also puts forward another important point - today's de-notified Tribes, today's Adivasis and the Dalits had a common origin.¹²⁾

Suresh Narain Srivastava's work 'Harijans in Indian Society' (1980) adds further clarity to this concern of the 'Dalits being indigenous.' Besides considering most of the possible literary, historical and ancient religious traditions, he also takes into account the archaeological findings concerning Mohenjodaro and Harappa and has come to a conclusion which is very helpful in settling this issue. The following two quotations from Srivastava's work may be sufficient for our purpose:

The pre-Dravidian settlers were the natives of India... The Dravidians were the first to have attacked the aboriginals of India... they did not make aboriginals their own slaves... After the Dravidians, another major attack was made by the Aryans... As the victorious people, the Aryan invaders looked down upon their opponents and called them the Dasa-Dasyus and the Nishadas.¹³⁾

Srivastava in his work further elaborates:

Therefore, defeated aboriginals were made 'slaves' in the social order... These slaves have been included in the fold of Hinduism by placing

11) B.R Ambedkar, "The Untouchable, who were they are why they became untouchable," in *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, writings and speeches, vol.7* (Bombay, 1990), 271-277.

12) *Ibid.*, 239.

13) Dr. Suresh Narain Srivastava, *Harijans in Indian Society* (Lucknow, 1930), 3.

them on the lowest rung of the social ladder... Those who did not accept the offer of becoming slaves were driven away into forests and they remained aboriginals with their social, economic and cultural distinctions. In the course of time, these people were divided into two classes. Some became nomadic tribes and others roaming from place to place. These roaming peoples were called criminal tribes... In this way, an ancient Indian society came to be divided into four parts - the Aryans, the non-Aryans, the aboriginals and the nomadic criminal tribes.¹⁴⁾

In the second quotation, the last two lines make one point clear - while leaving out the first groups of Aryans, the other three groups of people, the non-Aryans (today's Dalits), the aboriginals (today's indigenous or Adivasi people) and the nomadic criminal tribes (today's de-notified Tribes) have the same roots. In other words these three groups are in real sense the people of indigenous origin, and their forebears were the same.

The third work is an article included in "Cultural Chotanagpur - Unity in Diversity," edited by S. Bosu Mullick, "Pre-history and Early History of Chotanagpur" by J. Van Troy, which establishes the historical relationship between the people of Chotanagpur (Adivasi) known as Kurukh or Oraons with their past history. He has taken into account, besides the historical traditions, the archaeological and linguistic evidence. He comes up with two possibilities: first, the forebears of Oraons were the descendants of the Pre-Harappa people; second, the Oraons came from North-West India. The latter view is based on linguistic evidence.¹⁵⁾

Van Troy's article has not proposed any final conclusion, but it certainly raises a possibility of establishing a link between the Adivasi people of Chotanagpur and those who once lived in the ancient part of India known today as North-West India. This attempt definitely points towards a close relationship between the Dalits and the indigenous and ultimately to their having common forebears.

On the basis of this discussion and other views, it may be said that the Dalits share their historical roots with the Adivasis, therefore they, along with the Adivasis and de-notified Tribes, were makers of the Indus

14) Ibid., 9-10.

15) J. Van Troy, "Pre-History and early History of Chhotanagpur," in *Cultural Chhotanagpur Unity in Diversity*, ed. Bosu Mullick (New Delhi, 1991), 34-35.

Civilization.

Up to now we have been concerned with the earliest historical traditions, which revealed that Dalits once had a glorious past and were living with full human dignity and that they also represent one of the sections of the indigenous settlers of India. But even though their opponents made all efforts to destroy their humanity, they still could not succeed fully. To make this point clear, we will refer to the two stories which are narrated in the two great Hindu epics Ramayana (5th century BC) and Mahabharata (600 BC - AD 500).¹⁶⁾

The first story is told by Valmiki, the author of Ramayana, who reveals how far Sudras, (the fourth caste) had become degraded (not to speak of the Dalit or outcaste). According to this story, in Lord Rama's time only the three upper castes were allowed to do *tapasya* (penance and meditation). Yet a Sudra undertook penance in order to attain divinity, as a result of which a Brahman boy of 15 years died. The bereaved father complained to Lord Rama, who after learning the cause of the death, went in search of the Sudra. On meeting him, Lord Rama said to him:

You are indeed blessed. Tell me in which caste you have been born. I am Rama, son of Dasaratha. Out of curiosity I have asked you this question. Tell me the truth. Are you a Brahman, Ksatriya or a Sudra? The ascetic replied, "O King! I am born of Sudra caste. I want to attain divinity by such penance. When I want to attain divinity I won't tell lies. I am a Sudra by caste, and my name is Samvuka." As soon as the ascetic uttered those words, Rama drew forth his sword and severed Samvuka's head.¹⁷⁾

In the continuing narrative it is said that Lord Rama asked the gods to restore the Brahman boy to life and he was told that he had already been revived the moment the Sudra ascetic was killed. But it was the Sudra's yearning for divinity and his being truthful that led him to the point of death.

In the Mahabharata also there is a reference to the degraded state of the Dalits. The story of Eklavya, an indigenous boy, tells how he had to lose his 'right hand thumb' because he had learned archery and became in no way

16) Fr Zacharias, *An Outline of Hinduism* (Alwaye, 1956), 375-376.

17) *Ramayana*, trans. by Makhhan Lal Sen (Calcutta, 1989), 699-702.

inferior to Arjuna in his skill.¹⁸⁾ Again the main point of the story is how at the time of the Mahabharata the low castes or the Dalits did not have even the basic right to education or attaining skill, but still Eklavya represents a Dalit's power of humanity by the use of which he could supersede the so called Ksatriya caste person Arjuna.

Religious Traditions

Because of the Dalits' becoming conscious of themselves and their captive state, (because of which they have named themselves as 'Dalits'), and because of the centuries-old oppression by the so-called caste people, many liberative forces (traditions) have arisen. These include: the protest movements of Lord Mahavira (540 BC - 468 BC) and Lord Buddha (563 BC - 483 BC), Hindu Bhakti (devotional) movements, Muslims Sufi (mystic) movements, Christian and Missionary movements, and the teachings of Sikh Gurus, up to the times of Jotirao Phule and B.R. Ambedkar, who helped in giving a positive shape to the present Dalit liberation movement. Now it will not be possible to deal with all these religious traditions in this paper, but we still will be referring to the contributions of Phule and Ambedkar in a separate section. Here in this section we will be only giving a few examples of our Dalit religious traditions, in order to see how rich these are.

About the existence of Dalit religion or religious traditions, even the oldest Hindu religious literary source, the *Rigveda*, bears testimony to the fact that the Dalits had their own laws to govern their religious life, which as expected, the Aryans regarded as "alien laws."¹⁹⁾ However, we do find remnants of Dalit religious traditions of which some forms have been preserved by the Dalits in different parts of India. The traditional scholars of religion have labelled the religious traditions of the Dalits as 'Little Traditions' and those of their opponents, the Aryans as 'Great Traditions.'

The roots of Dalit religious traditions lie in the veneration of nature, earth, water, trees and animals etc. In contrast to Aryans who worship in a temple or in a building, the Dalits practise corporate worship in an open space. For instance, in my village Zafferwal (Panjab), the Dalits worship a human-made dome shaped mound of earth, called *Bala Shah*. This mound

18) *Srikhipat Mahabharata*, ed. Jayadal Goyandaka (Gorakhpur), 69-72.

19) *Rigveda* 10.22.8.

faces eastwards and is placed under a tree or on an open spot with an earthen lamp (*diya*) burning over it and also a red flag on top of it. On an auspicious day, the devotees worship here with their offerings. The burning lamp and the red flag are for security from all kinds of evil forces.²⁰⁾

The other example which we want to refer to is of a song sung by a Dalit community, *Pulayas* in North Malabar (Kerala), which they used from ancient times to worship a god named Pottan Teyyam. This song is known as ‘Tottom (song) of Pottan Teyyam’ and it contains a very powerful message against the practice of untouchability and caste discrimination. It also affirms basic human equality. Presently this song has two versions: a Dalit (*Pulaya*) version and non-Dalit (*Brahminised*) version. The later version came into existence during the 11th century as part of the assimilating process by the so-called upper caste. Today both versions are available in the form of long poems. Both forms follow dialogue between a Dalit character and a non-Dalit character. A passage is given here from the Dalit version in which these characters are Chinna Pulayan (a little Dalit) and Chovar, a Sudra. The Dalit version here not only offers a criticism against religious beliefs and practices but also brings the message how all human beings belonging to different groups (even so-called castes) are the same and equal. This passage reads thus:

Why you Chovar quarrel over caste?
Suppose Chovar and we break a coconut
Shan't we find inside the same kernel?
The knives of the Chovar are sharp
And also are our knives
When you are wounded blood comes out
When we are wounded blood comes out
Why you Chovar quarrel over caste?
We planted a plantain tree

In the rubbish heap
With the fruit thereof

20) James Massey, “Popular Religious Beliefs among Rural and Urban People,” in *Popular Religious in the Panjab Today*, ed. John C.B. Webster (Delhi, 1974), 81-82.

You make offering to god.
 Yes, we planted a Tulasi
 In the rubbish heap
 With the same Tulasi
 You make offerings to god
 Why then distinctions
 Between us.”²¹⁾

Beside the ancient remnants of Dalit religious traditions, from which we are only able to give two examples, we also have a great number of Dalit liberative traditions available from the 15th century onward from which a large majority can be listed under the religious traditions. Some of these are in literary form and some represent the spirituality of the Dalits. We have labeled them as ‘spiritual traditions’ in the sense of ‘Dalit spirituality,’ which actually is the ‘spirituality of liberation.’ In the next section some of these Dalit liberative traditions are briefly reflected upon.

Spiritual Traditions

Most scholars, when they refer to the Indian spiritual traditions, refer to the religious traditions drawn from the classical Hindu writings such as *Vedas*, *Upanishads*, *Purans* and the two epics - *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, and the *Manusmriti*. Two passages from *Rigveda* (1500-1000 B.C) and other from the *Vishnu Purana* A.D. 1045) are given here as examples of these traditions.

Dominant Myths and Stories

- (a) When they divided Purusa (creator god Brahma),
 how many portions did they make?
 What do they call his mouth, his arms?
 What do they call his thighs and feet?
 The Brahman (priest) was his mouth,
 of both arms was Rajana (Ksatriya warrior) made.
 His thighs became Vaisya (trader),

21) Abraham M. Ayrookhuziel, “Chinna Pulayan: The Dalit Teacher of Sankaracharya,” in *Religions of the Marginalized*, ed. Gnana Robinson (Delhi, 1998), 24-25.

from his feet the Sudra (serving caste) was produced.²²⁾

(b) From the arm of Vena, thus rubbed, sprang a celebrated monarch named Prithu, by whom, in olden times the earth was milked for the advantage of mankind... when he (Vena) was inaugurated, by the Rishis or sages, a monarch of the earth, he caused it to be everywhere proclaimed, that no worship should be performed... no gifts bestowed upon the Brahmans. "I, the King, said he, am the Lord of sacrifice..." Then those pious Munis (Brahman sages) were filled with wrath, and cried out to each other: "Let this wicked wretch be slain" ... and they fell upon the King... slew him... And the people... said "Now that the Kingdom is without a king..." The sages, hearing this consulted, and together rubbed the thigh of the king, who had left no offspring, to produce a son. From the thigh, thus rubbed, came forth a being of the complexion of charred stake, with flattened features..., a dwarfish stature... His descendants, the inhabitants of the Vindhya mountains... By this it means the wickedness of the Vena was expelled; those *Nishadas* (a title for Dalits or indigenous) being born of his sins, and carrying them away... The Brahmans proceeded to rub the right arm of the king, from which friction was engendered the illustrious son of Vena, named Prithu... And thus was born the mighty Prithu... the Lord of the earth... was the first ruler to whom the title of Raja (King) was ascribed.²³⁾

If one reads carefully these two passages, the most important point that will become clear is that the classical Hindu (*Aryan*) spiritual traditions were oppressive in nature, because of their exclusiveness. On the other hand, some examples of Dalit liberative traditions are being given here also, which will show that in contrast to the Aryan traditions, the Dalit spiritual traditions were liberative in nature, because of their inclusiveness. These examples are:

Dalit Bhakti Saints:

(a) God in the beginning created Light

22) *Rigveda*, 10:97:11,12.

23) *The Vishnu Purana* (A.D.1045), Book 1:13.

all human beings belong to Him.
 Since from one Light is the whole world created,
 Here who is noble or who is inferior?²⁴⁾

- (b) You considered upper caste well-known is my cobbler's caste.
 But still in my heart, I continue to praise my Lord.
 You should know even the wine made with sacred Ganga water,
 the real devotees will now drink.
 Even after impure liquids,
 if gets mixed up with the sacred Ganga water, is not different from it.
 The Tar tree is considered impure.
 So also the paper (made from it) is considered such.
 But when words of the Lord's devotion over it are printed,
 it is worshipped and bowed to.
 People of my caste are hide-beaters and binders,
 carrying dead animals around Banaras.
 Yet upper caste Brahmins to me make obeisance.
 As Ravidas, Thy servant with Thy Name has taken shelter.²⁵⁾

In Panjabi language there is a saying, "*Jis tan lage, soi jane*" (the real pain is known by the victim). The two examples given above reflect the harsh truths of Dalit spirituality and the anguish felt by saints and poets as Dalits.

The two passages are quoted from the Sikh scripture *Guru Granth Sahib*. The first passage is written by a Dalit Muslim saint, Kabir, who has boldly declared that all human beings are equal as they share one source of origin (Light). Therefore he questioned, "who is noble or who is inferior?"

The second passage represents a testimony of a Dalit conscience in the middle ages, that of Ravidas, whose spirituality even the Brahmins respected. His poetry clearly shows that the Brahmins respected him and therefore attempted to elevate his status in the hierarchy, though on their own terms. This is reflected in the line: "Yet upper caste Brahmins to me make obeisance." The reason for this was because Ravidas' relationship with God had been set right.

24) Kabir, *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, 1389.

25) Ravidas, *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, e.p.1293.

Jashuva Kavi, A Dalit Christian Poet²⁶⁾

- (a) I have heard that four sons were born to Old Brahma
But tell me, O Savithri,
who is this *Panchama* (fifth)
who is worse than faeces?
- (b) Having waved farewell to the setting sun
He sat down to eat his meagre meal of gruel.
At the end of a long day's back-breaking toil
And stretched on a cot, resting his weary limbs.
Welcome Queen of Bats, resident in sacred Shrines,
Enjoying honour we lowly men can't have,
Convey our greetings to your kinsfolk too
Meditating head down in the awnings of temple towers.
- (c) Crying I told her of the incident,
Hugging me to her breast and kissing me
She said, 'Son, this is an awful country,
But don't complain of caste discrimination;
You'll lose your food, as a *Panchama*
You have no claim to human rights or your life.
These gods here won't grant their favours
They will not accept a *Panchama* worship
The Lord Jesus Christ is your refuge,
Adore Him, He'll be merciful.'
- (d) Justice has never been a coward
Truth cannot be put to death
There is no need of fear for
A creature to speak to the Creator.
- (e) Equality and friendship are mere words
Rules and regulations are only slippery knots
Mercy and kindness are but crocodile tears

26) Jashuva Kavi: "Gabbilam (The Bat)," These passages are quoted in an article "Christian Dalit Aspirations" by Swarnalata P Ranjan, in, *Indigenous People*, ed. James Massey, op.cit, 324-325, 327-329.

I condemn these strange ways of religion.
 Jesus sacrificed Himself, For the good of the world
 How come the divisive doctrines and denominations
 Caste factions, communal problems and troubles Preaching words
 without doing good works is not Salvation.

(f) You have demonstrated to all equality,
 Eating with the poor and despised tax-collectors
 You have shown to the world, your humility
 Washing and wiping your disciples' feet...
 Come to my house too, great teacher.

Gurram Jashuva (1895-1971) is known as Jashuva *Kavi*. The word *Kavi* means poet. His works are originally written in his mother tongue, Telugu, and have been translated into English by M.E. Prabhakar. He was a poet of the Old Testament prophetic traditions, for whom the suffering of Christ was symbol of equality.

Jashuva questioned the authority of the Rigvedas on the mythical explanation given for the caste structure. In doing so he raised a question of the very 'Root of Dalit Spirituality' when he asked: "I have heard that four sons were born to Old Brahma. But tell me, O Savithri, who is this Panchama who is worse than faeces?" The title for Dalits is *Panchama*, and means the fifth. Jashuva questioned the identity of the Dalits who according to Brahmanical Hindu traditions were a 'no people' or non-existent. The Creator had nothing to do with the Dalits and they were therefore non-spiritual.

Jashuva *Kavi* compares a Dalit with a bat. The latter is neither an animal nor a bird. This is precisely the reason why *Kavi* chooses the bat as a symbol of his messenger to God. He asks the bats (who unlike Dalits, have access to sacred shrines) to extend the greetings of the Dalits to other kinsfolk, who are 'Meditating head down in the awnings of temple towers.' This also reflects Jashuva's inner thirst for spirituality.

Jashuva *Kavi*'s mother was spiritually rich and she laid the roots of spirituality in him in his childhood. When he was alienated by his upper caste mates she was his companion. She told him, "as a Panchama" he had "no claim to human rights or your life." Since a Dalit has no place in the religious and social systems of the country, he had to look for an alternate

spirituality. She told him, “The Lord Jesus Christ is your refuge. Adore him, he’ ll be merciful,” for only Jesus Christ demonstrated equality to all, including “the poor and despised and tax collectors.”

Like the Old Testament prophets, Jashuva had complete faith in divine justice. Every creature can speak without fear to the Creator and no one can put Truth to death.

He questioned the structure of the Christian Church, and the preaching of the pastors, as he felt that they did not practice what they loudly preached. His spirituality was deeply rooted in his Dalit experience and life and it was this that gave him that courage to question the existing religious and social structures. Here we see in Jashuva’s poetry the foundation of Dalit theology getting laid down.

This much about the Dalit liberative poetic traditions. Now we move to discussion on the next section.

Prophetic Traditions

In this section we reflect on the contribution of Jotirao Phule and B.R. Ambedkar to the process of doing theology from a Dalit perspective.

Jotirao Phule

We find Phule’s major contribution to Dalit theological thoughts in his interpretation of the personhood of Jesus Christ by linking his coming into this world as part of the fulfillment of the oldest Dalit legend based prophecy. This has reached us through a folk song sung by the women of Maharashtra, with the following opening sentence in Martathi, “*Ida pida jao anni Balliche rajya yeo*” which means, “let all troubles and misery go, and the kingdom of Bali come.” Phule saw in Jesus Christ the second coming of Baliraja, who according to the legend was the most righteous non-Aryan King. He ruled a larger part of ancient India at the time of the Aryans’ coming to India.²⁷⁾ Phule’s own words about this read as follow:

Thus the prophecy of our venerable old ladies “May Bali’s Kingdom Come!” seems to have materialized (partially). When Baliraja (Jesus

27) Jotirao Govindrao Phule, *Slavery (In the Civilized British government under the clock of Brahmanism)*, trans. by P.G. Patil (Mantralaya, Bombay: Government of Maharashtra Education Department, 1991), xxx (First Introductory Essay).

Christ) was crucified by a few wicked desperadoes a great moment of liberation was set in motion in Europe, and crowds of people became his followers (embraced his teachings) and they strove ceaselessly to establish His Kingdom on earth in consonance with the dictates of our creator.²⁸⁾

Based upon these views of Phule, we have given the heading of this section 'prophetic traditions.' But before moving to our discussion further, we may have to briefly narrate the Baliraja's story (legend), which will also introduce to us his personhood and characteristics, because of which Phule saw his second coming in Jesus Christ.

If one reads Phule's work 'Slavery' as translated from Marathi into English by P.G. Patil, one will see that Baliraja and his second coming in Jesus Christ is one of the main themes of his work. After introducing who are the Aryans and their origin (part one to five), he gave the details of their coming to India and their battle with Baliraja (parts five to nine). In part six he tells about the extent of Baliraja's Kingdom. According to Phule, beside his rule in the whole of western India and part of today's North India up to Ayodhya and Kashi (Banaras), it was also "spread over wide areas of other parts of India." He also adds, "It may be conjectured that he controlled some islands round about Ceylon (i.e. in South-East Asia), one of the islands was 'Bali' (in Malaysia)." ²⁹⁾

About the Baliraja's righteousness and truthfulness, according to Phule, he never attacked his enemy from the back, "he always hit them on their fronts or faces. Hence, he came to be known as 'hitter on the front (mouth)' ... He was a friend of the downtrodden. He was fond of music also." ³⁰⁾

How did Baliraja's end come? Phule narrates a legend in this regard, according to which it was Adi-narayan (the Aryan supreme God) who got incarnated and took the form of a poor and short Brahmin (priest) Waman in order to banish Baliraja into the nether world. Waman appeared before Baliraja as a poor beggar and asked him the gift of three steps (of the earth). He knew Baliraja was very kind and compassionate in heart, and would

28) Ibid., 36.

29) Ibid., 13-15.

30) Ibid., 13-14.

never say 'no' to the needy and the poor. So according to his nature, Baliraja told Waman to take three steps from anywhere in his kingdom. At that moment the size of the wicked Waman increased and reached to the skies, so much so by his first step, he could cover the whole earth and by his second step the whole sea, then he asked Baliraja, where he should put his third step. He made Baliraja helpless, but then Baliraja offered his own head for Waman's third step. At that moment the treacherous Waman after putting his step on Baliraja's head, pressed him down to the nether world. This is how the end came of a righteous king Baliraja, about whom the Marathi Dalit women pray 'May Bali's Kingdom come'!³¹⁾

About the second coming of Baliraja in Jesus Christ and about the fulfillment of the prophecy of old ladies and its purpose, Phule says:

The universal Creator of us and our universal Father the Almighty God - so ordained that the sacred knowledge of the Truth and human rights that he generously bestowed on us all should be enjoyed by us all in amity and harmony. To translate this desire of the Almighty into reality, Baliraja, the champion of the oppressed, the holy, the repository of the wisdom, and always spoke the truth - manifested himself on this earth after a few years. He undertook the great mission of emancipating his depressed, oppressed and weak brethren from the trammels of the treacherous, wicked and cunning ensnarers - the Bhats (Brahmins) - and strove to establish the 'Kingdom of God' in this land of ours.³²⁾

The first part of this passage is already quoted earlier. Phule says here that it is in Jesus Christ that Baliraja has come again to establish God's Kingdom on this earth and here he added that "in this land of ours" means India. Phule also has seen the Christian missionaries' work in India as an actualization of the mandate to preach "the true teaching of their Messiah."³³⁾

B.R. Ambedkar

Unlike Jotirao Phule who tried to find the link between the religion of Jesus Christ and the Dalit liberative traditions, Ambedkar on the other hand

31) *Ibid.*, 20-21.

32) *Ibid.*, 36.

33) *Ibid.*, 38.

proved to a constructive critic of both Hindu and Christian religious traditions. In that way he falls within the Old Testament prophetic traditions, which always were outspoken against the religious traditions of their time; either to bring back the followers to the right understanding of their faith, or to pronounce upon them the divine judgment. Some examples from Ambedkar's works are given here.

B.R. Ambedkar was the first person who, though not a Christian, yet looked upon Christianity and its message seriously from the perspective of the Dalits, particularly the Dalit Christians. This was the reason he used in his writings (directly and indirectly) illustrations from the Bible to clarify a number of his beliefs. Along with Christianity, he also used other egalitarian religious traditions. In one of his essays, 'A Warning to the Untouchables,' he told the Dalits in very clear terms that they should not "expect the Hindu religion to perform the mission of bringing about social justice. Such a task may be performed by Islam, Christianity, or Buddhism. The Hindu religion itself is the embodiment of inequality and injustice to the Untouchables. For it to preach the gospel of justice is to go against its own being."³⁴) Ambedkar used the Christian religion to explain the meaning of a number of important concepts and principles, which he even introduced in the Constitution of India based upon his vision of a 'just society.' For example to explain the meaning of 'fraternity,' he gave a quotation from the Bible (Galatians 3:28) and from the writings of a Christian Order, 'Pilgrim Fathers' as follows:

Fraternity is the name for the disposition of an individual to treat men as the object of reverence and love and the desire to be in unity with his fellow beings. This statement is well expressed by Paul when he said, 'of one blood are all nations of men. There is neither Jew nor Greek, neither bond nor free, neither male nor female; for yet are all one in Christ Jesus.' Equally well was it expressed when the Pilgrim Fathers on their landing on Plymouth said: 'we are knit together as a body in the most sacred covenant of Lord... by virtue of which we hold ourselves tied to all care of each others' good and of the whole.' These sentiments are of the essence of fraternity.³⁵)

34) *Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar, Writings and Speeches, vol.5* (Bombay: Education Department, Government of Maharashtra, 1980), 398.

Again, how important is an ‘individual’ and one’s moral responsibility? This aspect of life is important, because it gives due place to an ‘individual as centre of social purpose.’ To make this point clear he quoted a passage from the Book of the Old Testament Prophet Ezekiel (18:4, 20) in which God recognizes the worth of an individual person in these words:

Behold! All souls are mine; as the soul of the Father, so also the soul of the son is mine; the soul that sinneth it shall die... the son shall not bear the iniquity of the Father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked upon him.³⁶⁾

Ambedkar also compared two religious traditions about the creation of human beginnings in the Bible and the *Rigveda* and raised an important question concerning the explanation of the origin of the four social castes. He wrote:

No theology has made it its purpose to explain the origin of classes in society. Chapter I of the Genesis in the Old Testament, which can be said to be analogous in intention and purpose to the *Purusha Sukta*, does nothing more than explain how man was created. It is not that social classes did not exist in the old Jewish Society. Social classes existed in all societies. The Indo Aryans were no exception. Nevertheless, no theology has even thought it necessary to explain how classes arise. Why then did *Purusha Sukta* make the explanation of the origin of the social classes its primary concern?³⁷⁾

Ambedkar in another essay explained that the so-called higher castes would never accept Christianity because it meant surrendering their power and prestige drawn from the system of Chaturvarn. In this regard he said:

35) *Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches*, vol.3 (Bombay: Education Department, Government of Maharashtra, 1987), 97.

36) *Ibid.*, 99.

37) *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches*, vol.7 (Bombay: Education Department, Government of Maharashtra, 1990), 28.

Applying this analysis of the working of the human mind it is clear that the Brahmin and the higher classes could never be receptive to the Christian doctrine. It preaches brotherhood of man and when applied leads to equality of man. Now the interests of the Brahmin and the higher classes is to maintain the system of *Chaturvarna* which is system based upon inequality and which in the scale gave them a higher rank, greater opportunity to dominate and exploit the others. How can they be expected to accept Christianity? It means a surrender of their power and prestige.³⁸⁾

One final example of Ambedkar's views is about the Dalit Christians: how as Hindus they were oppressed by the use of *karma* doctrine and when they became Christians they had to face the doctrine of *original sin* according to which they have to suffer because of the sins of the ancestors, Adam and Eve. In either case there is no escape for them.³⁹⁾

Faith Traditions (including biblical)

The Faith traditions, which I am going to refer to in this section, are common to all of us. In my case, I am the third generation as a Christian to receive these, because my grandfather, the late Mr. Bhagh became a Christian during the second decade of the 20th century. I still remember my father, the late Rev. Jalal Masih (22 March 1907-18 September 1980) used to gather all our family members to read the Bible every day followed by singing psalms in Panjabi and prayer led by my father or mother (the late Mrs. Fazl Bibi, died 26 March 1983) and these ended with the Lord's prayer said by all the members of the family. I continued to take part in the family gathering till the age of twenty-one. Then I went to higher study from my village to university, where I lived in different hostels. But the practice of reading the Bible and saying prayers every morning has continued till today. The extension of my Bible reading today has taken other forms, namely reading the Bible from the perspective of the Dalits.

Secondly, the 'faith traditions' instill in us the 'faith commitment,' which in truth is not only the first proof of an authentic believer, but is the first requirement or step to enter into the process of doing theology from

38) Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: *Writings and Speeches*, vol.5, op.cit., 444.

39) For detail discussion see: *Ibid.*, 471-472.

any subaltern perspective, including the 'Dalit.' In the case of a Dalit theologian, he or she has to bring into the process a personal commitment, on one side with God and on other side with the (fellow) Dalits and the world around (which needs transformation). Now this personal commitment is not possible without getting grounded in one's 'faith traditions' and in the various 'Dalit liberative traditions.' But then these faith traditions are what we inherit from our parents (the family) and the communities called the Church, within which we move, live, think, worship and act. This faith commitment also demands us to pass on these traditions to our children from generation to generation (Deut 6.20-25, 1Cor. 1:26-28).

One main source of our faith traditions is the Scriptures (the *Bible*), which also need the same personal commitment. When we read them, they actually give us a perspective from which to read the Text. Once this happens even our way of reading the Text also changes and we will not only start perceiving the new meaning of the Text and its relevance to our specific context, but also start perceiving the Word getting incarnated in that context and finally becoming a liberative force for bringing about a change in the given context.

Now how does this happen? I will answer this question by giving an example of my personal experience of reading the text while working on the commentary of the Gospel according to Luke.

While reading the text of Luke, I found myself dialoguing with him. Sometimes instead of dialoging with Luke, I suddenly found myself in dialogue with some of the characters of his Gospel. These characters sometimes helped me to perceive the meaning of phrases and words. But in these dialogues, I always tried not to lose myself and the situation of my people, the Dalits. These dialogues sometimes take the form of hopping flights and I find myself journeying between two worlds, that of Luke and the biblical world, and that of the Dalit. The purpose of these hopping flights is to search for the meeting points or relevance between two worlds. In the process many times I was directed by a text to another text to perceive the intended meaning of the text and to see its relevance to the world of the Dalits. Here I share an example of such a dialogue which I experienced while reading Luke 2:8-20. The title given to this experience is "Divine Encounter with an Excluded Community" which reads as follows:

Here a direct encounter takes place between the divine and a group of

shepherds. The main occupation of shepherds, as it is even today, was to care for their sheep. In Greek the name 'shepherd' is drawn from the term *poimen*, which means to 'care.' In the same way in some of the Indian languages also a name is taken from the occupation or certain function that is performed in the society, to identify a person or his group. For example in Panjabi language the title of a person who takes care of animals is '*palee*' because his function is 'to take care' (*palana*). In most of the Indian contexts these *palees* are Dalits. They are more or less in a similar situation to that of the shepherds of the biblical times. For example, all the shepherds were "abhorrent to the Egyptians" (Gen 46:34). Most of the times, like our animal caretakers in the villages (*palees*), the shepherds in the biblical times had to work on a contract basis (Gen 31:41). They had to protect their charges from all kinds of dangers including those of fierce jungle animals (Amos 3:12). In case of loss of any animal/sheep it was they who had to bear the loss (Gen 31:39). Sometimes they kept dogs to assist them in protecting their animals (Job 30:1) when they went far in search of grass and water for their charges, in dry and stony land (Ps 23:2) When these shepherds went far from human locality they kept a bag in which they carried their immediate necessities (1 Sam 27:40, 49). After work, these shepherds returned to their home which was situated outside the village or town (v 8). This fact brings the shepherds of the biblical times closer to the Dalits in India, who are also forced to live outside a village or a town. But the shepherds in the biblical times seemed to be always on the move, because their taking up a permanent abode in a town or city was considered a sign of destruction and disaster for such places through divine judgment (Jer. 4:3; 33:12, Zeph. 2:11 15).

Such in brief, is the profile of a shepherd community in the biblical time. There is yet another side of this profile. At that time, the profession of the shepherds was considered one of the oldest and one which began with Adam's son Abel (Gen 4:2). Almost all the Patriarchs were shepherds. The famous king David, with whose family Jesus had a direct link, was also a shepherd (1 Sam 17:15). A common title used for Lord (God) is also 'shepherd' (Ps 23:1). So while on the one hand, in the biblical times, the shepherds did not enjoy full respect in society, yet on the other hand, God considered them as his people (3:7-12) and himself as their shepherd.

It is in this dual background that one has to see the encounter that took place between the shepherds and the divine messenger (vv 2-20). Prior to this encounter, a long time ago, another similar encounter took place with a shepherd called Moses. It was through him that God decided to liberate his people who were enslaved in Egypt (Gen 3:1-6). However, in the present encounter, the good news for the shepherds had a twofold message: one, the salvation for "all the people" (v 10), and two, for the shepherds "a Savior" was born in the city of David in Bethlehem (v 11). The shepherds were given the sign that they "will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger," (v 12). Possibly the bands made of ordinary or used cloth, and manger - a place of animal food - were the two realities of the life of poor shepherds which connected them directly with their future Savior. It was because of these circumstances that they found that without any hesitation they could approach him. Had the Savior been born in rich or royal surroundings, the shepherds might not have dared to visit him. But the Savior had chosen a place of their level. Therefore after the divine messengers left them, without any delay they went with "haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger" (v 16). So the shepherds, having 'heard' (vv 10-12) and 'seen' (v 17), returned satisfied to their place (v 20). It seems they also understood the second part of the message, which was in the form of a song of praise by the heavenly hosts. Here a reference to the heavenly hosts comes as a testimony to the divine meaning of Christ's birth (v 3) and what it contributes to human history - "on earth peace among those whom he favors" (v 14). Certainly the first favored group/community was of the poor and the excluded shepherds.

But the situation of the Dalits is worse than that of the shepherds of Jesus' time because most of the shepherds in our country do not own sheep and cattle. Dalits very rarely will have their own animals. So Dalits in India normally take care of animals that belong to others. But certainly like the shepherds of Jesus' time, they are economically poor and excluded.⁴⁰⁾

40) James Massey, *The Gospel according to Luke: New Testament, Dalit Bible Commentary* (New Delhi: CDS, 2007), 48-51.

This is one example of reading the text as part of my commentary on Luke's Gospel from the Dalit perspective. But I have similar experiences every morning at the time of my brief personal devotion and reading of the Text.

Concluding Observations

I want to close this paper's discussion, with two concluding observations:

My *First* observation is about the various sets of Dalit liberative traditions. In brief the historical and religious traditions reveal to us that the Dalits once were also full human beings - enjoying all the benefits of a normal human being - land and property, natural resources, dignity and freedom. Their ownership of the 'Indus Valley Civilizations' is the proof of this fact. They had their own religious and social rules to govern their life. This is what we learn from the Dalit religious traditions. But the main point which these traditions reveal is how the opponents of the Dalits made efforts by creating myths and stories and through various forms of manipulations separated the Dalits from other human beings on one side and on the other side severed their relations with God. But then in the sub-section on 'spiritual traditions' of the Dalits we also saw how the early Dalit saints like Ravidas sought to re-establish the relationship of their community with God. All the movements of conversion to Christianity and other religions grew out this quest.

The Dalit Christian poet Jashua goes for an alternative Dalit spirituality, because of his mother's strong assertion that as a *panchama* (Dalit) he had no claims to human rights, nor to his/her own life, therefore he had to go for an alternative, and that he found in the friend of the poor and despised tax collectors, Jesus Christ. Phule's seeing the righteous king Bali's second coming in Jesus Christ according to the plan of Father the Almighty God to emancipate (liberate) the depressed and oppressed from the yoke of the caste system endorsed the views of Jashua Kavi and his mother. B.R. Ambedkar as a constructive critic of both the Hindu and Christian religious traditions and how they are interpreted. This challenges the Dalit and non-Dalit theologians to go back to the methods used by Jesus and his disciples and in this light to approach the problems of the poor and the Dalits. Ambedkar's raising questions about the mission methods, Jashua Kavi and Phule's seeing Jesus Christ as a 'refuge' and emaciating' source for the

Dalits - these are all part of the laying down the foundation of doing theology from the Dalit perspective.

The second concluding observation is drawn from the reflection on the Dalit liberative traditions, particularly the 'faith traditions,' which directly lead to the process of doing theology from the Dalit perspective. Because the theologians of various liberative theologies hold that 'theology' is a critical reflection on the relationship of God and human beings in different historical circumstances, we can trace the roots of Dalit theology back to the very dawn of the history of the Dalits. By looking to the contents of the Dalit liberative traditions, we not only come to know the lost human identity, but also the truth that it is the Dalits of Indian society who represent the undivided humanity of the created world. Dalit theology's role includes enabling them to recover this original state of theirs, which their opponents tried intentionally to destroy. At this point I want to conclude my observation of the theme.

Abstract

This article is about Dalit liberative traditions with linking with Doing theologies. As a results, the first observation is about the various sets of Dalit liberative traditions. In brief the historical and religious traditions reveal to us that the Dalits once were also full human beings - enjoying all the benefits of a normal human being - land and property, natural resources, dignity and freedom. Their ownership of the 'Indus Valley Civilizations' is the proof of this fact. They had their own religious and social rules to govern their life. This is what we learn from the Dalit religious traditions. The second concluding observation is drawn from the reflection on the Dalit liberative traditions, particularly the 'faith traditions,' which directly lead to the process of doing theology from the Dalit perspective. Because the theologians of various liberative theologies hold that 'theology' is a critical reflection on the relationship of God and human beings in different historical circumstances, we can trace the roots of Dalit theology back to the very dawn of the history of the Dalits. By looking to the contents of the Dalit liberative traditions, we not only come to know the lost human identity, but also the truth that it is the Dalits of Indian society who represent the undivided humanity of the created world. Dalit theology's role includes enabling them to recover this original state of theirs, which their opponents tried intentionally to destroy.

Key Words

Dalit, liberative traditions, Doing theology, Dalit spiritualiy, the Untouchable, Indus Valley Civilization, R.B. Ambedkar

Theology of the Multitude: Between Suffering and Hope

Jin Kwan Kwon*

Introduction

Good and relevant questions help construct a good and relevant theology. Questions provide a key to the understanding of the subject matters of a theology. That is, in order to reach a good answer or understanding, we must ask appropriate questions. The first and foremost question is: Is the theology of minjung (the multitude) still relevant today? In other words, can the theology of minjung (the multitude) create insight into today's situation and provide corrective contribution to the ministry of the church today? Another fundamental question is: Does minjung (the multitude) exist in such a significant way that talking of minjung (the multitude) is not only meaningful but necessary? I am employing the term the multitude here, because I believe that in the current situation it most expressly shows the characteristics of minjung. Hardt and Negri correctly argue that the concept

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of “the people” reduces social differences into one identity, while “the multitude, by contrast, is not unified but remains plural and multiple.” In the postmodern pluralistic worldview, the term multitude represents minjung more adequately than people, nation, and the proletariat, which have often been used to explain who minjung are. The multitude not only values differences and singularities, but also values solidarity before the common enemy, Empire.¹⁾

Some derivative questions can be thought of as follows. Can we justifiably say that we witness the action of God in the experiences of minjung (the multitude)? In other words, can we detect divine elements such as “revelations of God” or “Spiritual power” in the experiences of minjung (the multitude)? Can we define the experience of minjung (the multitude) in such way that we can detect wonders and spiritual power in the experience of minjung (the multitude)? Does the experience of the suffering of minjung (the multitude) give the minjung (the multitude) a special status in the economy of God?

Are there criteria by which we can distinguish minjung (the multitude) from non-minjung (the multitude)? Who are minjung (the multitude) and who are not minjung (the multitude)? We cannot tell minjung (the multitude) by their ontological structures but by their action and experience. Again, the point is whether our questions are appropriate and thus become a key to an appropriate and meaningful understanding of the subject matter of the theology of minjung (the multitude).

The theology of minjung (the multitude) is a reflection on the experience of minjung (the multitude). Minjung (the multitude) tell who they are by their experiences and by their actions as their subjects. Minjung (the multitude) are subjects. Minjung (the multitude) become minjung (the multitude) not by their existence but by their actions and experiences. Minjung (the multitude) become subjects in history as they act in history. Then our question is this: what kind of action (or more broadly speaking, what kind of experience) makes minjung (the multitude) actors and subjects in history? Minjung (the multitude) emerged in history as actors but in different consciousness in each different historical phase, because minjung (the multitude) have acted upon and transformed their different historical

1) Refer to Michael Hardt, Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (N.Y., N.Y.: Penguin Books, 2004), 99-100.

and social situations in different times and places. Amidst these differences there are, however, two constant elements in the experience of minjung (the multitude). They are suffering and hope. Minjung (the multitude) uphold and inflame the torch of hope in the midst of suffering. Minjung (the multitude) maintain hope while they suffer from their social, political, economic, and cultural alienations. Minjung (the multitude) is ontologically characterized by suffering. Minjung (the multitude) are the suffering people. The structure of the experience of minjung (the multitude) includes suffering.

Minjung (the multitude) do not suffer passively only but also actively suffer. The latter points to the struggles and movements of minjung (the multitude). As minjung (the multitude) engage in the minjung movement, their suffering may be intensified. But in their intensified suffering in their struggles for liberation, minjung (the multitude) discover illuminating rays of hope. The social movement of minjung (the multitude) creates hope in minjung (the multitude). In this sense minjung movement has a divine element in it.

The subject matter of the theology of minjung (the multitude) is connected to the questions that we raise in seeking to construct a the theology of minjung (the multitude) for today. The main convictions of the theology of minjung (the multitude) are revealed as it tries to answer those questions. I would like to explain some major convictions of the theology of minjung (the multitude). The first is related to the question of who minjung (the multitude) are. Minjung (the multitude) are suffering beings. Minjung (the multitude) are suffering human and non-human beings. They cross border lines of nation, gender, race, and species. Thus, minjung (the multitude) are not limited to Korean people. The concept of minjung (the multitude) includes all suffering people in Asia and all other continents and nations. It also includes water, air, animals, plants and all ecologically suffering beings. The theology of minjung (the multitude) is not, however, submerged into the theology of ecology, because the theology of minjung (the multitude), unlike the latter, presupposes that suffering people are the carriers of history. It puts special emphasis on the subjective and conscious power of the suffering minjung (the multitude) capable of changing the course of history. The theology of minjung (the multitude) has its basic conviction that the all-encompassing life-destructive march of current history can only be stopped and reversed by the power of awakened

suffering people. The theology of minjung (the multitude) presupposes that the suffering people, while not exclusive of other groups such as elites, must play the prime role of changing the current trend of environmental and politico-socio-economic causes destroying the life of the world.

Here we are talking of suffering, not pain. The idea of pain does not comprise the whole meaning of suffering. Pain means the sensation of discomfort caused by physical and emotional disease and wounds. Pain is a derivative idea. I am using the term suffering to refer to the feeling aroused by the endurance of discomfort which is mainly caused by political and economic oppression. Pain can be relieved by taking medicines, and the cure of pain is prescribed and carried out by outsiders (experts like doctors). Social suffering can be overcome in a genuine sense when the sufferers overcome it by their own initiatives and powers.

Suffering can be increased as the sufferers engage in actions to overcome the situation. Such suffering is called a voluntary suffering. The Kingdom of God and a society of justice demand a voluntary suffering. Suffering, especially a voluntary one, is a key experience of minjung (the multitude). Hope is another key experience for minjung (the multitude); it is derived from suffering. Suffering is a primary experience of minjung (the multitude). In this sense resurrection cannot stand by itself, but it has its meaning only as a reality after the crucifixion and suffering. I think that the Apostle Paul understood it very well when he states in Romans, "More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us" (5:3-5).

Hope seems a divine experience. It seems divine because it arises out of the impossible. It betrays our ordinary experience and common sense. Something positive arises from something negative. It is hope against hope. Also, hope has a transcendent dimension. It allows us to see beyond the present. Minjung (the multitude) theologians encounter wonder when they discover hope and life rekindled in the life of the suffering creation.

In the Bible, it is witnessed that God has a special concern and care for the suffering people. The theology of minjung (the multitude) goes further to assert that the suffering people are the carriers of history and that it is the suffering minjung (the multitude) that have received a call to the mission of God in history. The theology of minjung (the multitude) does not regard

elite groups as the genuine carriers in God's history. The theology of minjung (the multitude) believes that suffering people are the genuine subjects of God's reign and that suffering minjung (the multitude) are the proprietors of God's history. Of course, there is no division between God's history and secular history in the actual world. The two belong to the same actual history, although the two represent different meanings of the same history. Then what is the destiny of the powerful sectors of society in God's history? Don't they have any positive place in God's history? They have a positive place in God's history only when they begin to participate in God's special concern and care for the suffering people.

Minjung (the multitude), however, are "weary and burdened" (Matt. 11:28), and rely for their life on their own bodies and manual labor. They are most vulnerable to natural disasters and social upheavals, because they lack means of self-protection such as property. If their bodies grow old and weak, they become helpless. The more helpless minjung (the multitude) are, the poorer and weaker they become, and the more vulnerable they are to physical diseases and natural disasters such as drought and floods, and environmental deteriorations.

Minjung (the multitude) inherit poverty from their forebears. Minjung (the multitude) most fear that they would hand down their poor destiny to their posterity. In the situation of the neo-liberal globalization, minjung (the multitude) are the first to become helpless and the degree of despair in minjung (the multitude)'s living is getting heightened. See the protest of casually and informally employed workers and their resulting despair. Global neo-liberalism hinders them from overcoming such a perennial and persistent fate. In this situation, the search of hope for minjung (the multitude) becomes a most vital issue not only in theology but also in actual social life.

Minjung movements are attempts to overcome the systems of the scapegoating of minjung (the multitude). Many scholars agree that the global neo-liberalism creates the sacrifice of scapegoats. The hope of minjung (the multitude) is revealed in the process of minjung movements.

Theology is a discipline that aims at the knowledge of God. The doctrine of God in the theology of minjung (the multitude) is not of theism or mono-theism or polytheism, but of trinitarianism. There can be different types of trinitarianism. The theology of minjung (the multitude) believes that there is an ultimate divinity, incarnated One (Christ) and the Spirit. The

traditional Eastern mode of the thought on trinity is that there are three most fundamental divine beings: heaven, the spirit and the human being. In the Eastern mode of thought, heaven is parallel to God, the spirit to the Spirit, and human beings to the Christ. In the Eastern mode of thinking of divinity, human beings are thought of so highly that they are thought to assume the role of the Christ, the Son of God. It is very natural for minjung (the multitude) theologians to assert that minjung (the multitude) are the Messiah. According to the teachings of *Donghak* (the Eastern Learning), human beings (minjung (the multitude)) are the most spiritual of the world. Human beings (minjung (the multitude)) are the Sons and Daughters of God. God is dependent on minjung (the multitude); and minjung (the multitude) on God. In the eastern mode of thought, the world is made from the spirit (*Qi, Ki*). The world is spiritual. Even stones, dust and other natural beings are spiritual and precious; they must be treated as our brothers and sisters, according to Haewol, a spiritual leader of *Donghak* (the Eastern Learning). Heaven, the earth, and the human beings are one through the spirit (*Qi, Ki*). Heaven, God, is the most supreme spiritual being.

Donghak taught that if minjung (the multitude) hold on to the innate “God-given” mind and do not be shaken, and keep the spirit (*Qi, Ki*) uprightly (*sooshimjongki*, literally, keeping the mind unmoved and the spirit upright), everything will be done harmoniously and spontaneously (*muuihwa*). *Sooshimjongki* is the most important element in the teachings of *Donghak*. History can be transformed when the suffering minjung (the multitude) practice *sooshimjongki*. *Sooshimjongki* upholds minjung (the multitude) to be actors upon their own destiny and history. *Sooshimjongki* is a powerful spiritual force of minjung (the multitude). Soowoon, the founder of *Donghak*, realized this. Soowoon pronounced in the late 19th century (in the age of western imperialism) that the Western Learning (the doctrines of Catholicism) was so ritual-entered and formalistic that it was futile and unable to infuse minjung (the multitude) with divine life-giving or life-organizing energy (*kihwachishin*) (Soowoon, *Nonhakmun*).²⁾ The *Donghak* religion is not juridical like Lutheranism, nor ritualistic like Catholicism. Rather, it is experiential and practical because it presupposes the active life-giving forces that organize the world and humans into full harmony and

2) Choi Jeawoo, *Nonhakmun*, in *Ch'ondokyo-kyungjon* [The Scripture of the Heavenly Way Religion] (Seoul: Central Headquarter of Ch'ondokyo, 2001), 31.

peace. Such life-giving divine energy is *kihwachishin*.³⁾ *Kihwachishin* is equivalent to *Ruach* or *Pneuma* in Judaic and Christian thought.

Minjung (the multitude) theologians cannot imagine a liberator or a savior who does not suffer. It is the suffering people that can save the world, the suffering fellow creatures. It is through the minjung movement that suffering creatures achieve their liberation. In this sense, God depends on minjung (the multitude) and vice versa. In practice, however, the former is truer than the latter. In actual history, God depends on Jesus, and later on the churches and the peoples (minjung (the multitude)). But in the actual history of Korea, Christian churches are getting less reliable in the “eyes” of God. Minjung (the multitude) and the minjung movement emerge as more dependable divine agents to carry out God’s eschatological and liberative work (the Kingdom of God) in the world than the churches. The God who encountered Soowoon said to him, “I have been futile in my work before I meet you. Now I will be great because you will work for me and your mind is my mind.”⁴⁾ Minjung (the multitude) starts a new history and God with a great design guides and supports minjung (the multitude).

We find a prototype of the minjung (the multitude) event or movement in the movement of the Kingdom of God by Jesus and his people. Jesus and his people were the most dependable and significant agency of God.

Categories for The theology of minjung (the multitude)

Having discussed some important aspects of the theology of minjung (the multitude) in the above, I now would like to suggest some important categories that I may use with to construct a the theology of minjung (the multitude) for today in a more cohesive way. I understand categories as concepts or ideas that would help to explain the subject matter that I want to explore. In this context, the subject matter is the theology of minjung (the multitude) for today. I will introduce some categories that I have tested to be useful for explaining my understanding of the theology of minjung (the multitude) for today.

3) I follow the interpretation of *kihwachishin* given by *Donghak* scholars such as Choi Donghee and Lee Kyungwon. Refer their book, *Donghak Understood Newly* (Seoul: Jipmundang, 2003), 233.

4) *Ch’ondokyo-kyungjon*, 28 (*Nonhakmun*) and 19 (*Podokmun*).

Categories for Minjung (the multitude)

It is presupposed that there can be categories for the understanding of minjung (the multitude). Some useful categories for understanding of minjung (the multitude) are: suffering, hope, history, social movement, event, concrescence (mutual growth, mutual living), and *Sooshimjongki*. Minjung (the multitude) are suffering but hopeful. In the actual life of minjung (the multitude), suffering is predominant over hope. Suffering may increase when minjung (the multitude) engage themselves in the minjung movement; but paradoxically hope increases in the movement. Minjung (the multitude) are protagonists of history, especially when they activate social movements for the change of historical orientation. In the life experiences of minjung (the multitude) concrescence of many factors takes place

Categories for The theology of minjung (the multitude)

I would like to suggest some categories that would help construct an authentic the theology of minjung (the multitude). These categories help us not to omit integral elements in the theology of minjung (the multitude) and require us to demonstrate an innate causal relationship among these categories. They will help construct a integrative and enriched the theology of minjung (the multitude). I think the following categories have proved fruitful and necessary throughout the history of the theology of minjung (the multitude). They are: suffering, event, hope, story, God, and revelatory sources such as the Spirit of life, sacrament, salvation, the Christ/Messiah, and many other stories in the Bible. These categories constitute the general direction of our life and history and then become reasons and sources of hope and the empowerment of minjung (the multitude).

Derivative Categories that connect the two groups of categories

They are confluence or concrescence, organic world view, etc.⁵⁾ When I talk

5) I adopted the term concrescence from Alfred North Whitehead's monumental work, *Process and Reality* (New York: The Free Press, 1978). As a thoughtful reader may have noticed, I am partly indebted to Whitehead for some categorical

of confluence or concrescence, I presuppose that there are two or more different elements working together in each and every life and experience.⁶⁾ These different bodies of elements (e.g., traditions, experiences) interact and integrate one another and end up with growth and advancement to a newer or higher stage, or end up with decay and deterioration to a lower and worse condition. In minjung (the multitude) different traditions and experiences, past and present, work together and yield positive or negative results. The theology of minjung (the multitude) seeks to produce positive, novel and creative results from such confluence and concrescence in the life of minjung (the multitude). The idea of the confluence of two stories or two traditions of Suh Namdong, a prominent first-generation minjung (the multitude) theologian, is relevant and related to the category of confluence or concrescence. When we consider that confluence and concrescence take place without ceasing in the real experience of minjung (the multitude), Suh's idea of the confluence of two stories and traditions can be defended as tenable. Furthermore, in order to avoid ending up with negative confluence, its structure must be disposed to move toward liberation and beauty.

Some Observations of The theology of minjung (the multitude) by Some Categorical Concepts

In the 1970's and 80's, the theology of minjung (the multitude) was a "cape of good hope" for minjung (the multitude). Minjung (the multitude) sailed through the big water of suffering, and the theology of minjung (the multitude) was a sign post of hope for minjung (the multitude). Today the theology of minjung (the multitude) no longer creates hope for minjung (the multitude). It no longer casts rays of hope for suffering people. Minjung (the multitude) theologians do not participate in the suffering of minjung (the multitude). Neither do they work with minjung (the multitude). The theology of minjung (the multitude) should overcome itself and find a new way to respond to the new situation of minjung (the multitude). The

concepts for constructing a minjung theology with.

6) I adopt the concept of confluence from the late minjung theologian Suh Namdong in his well-known article, "The Confluence of Two Stories," *Minjung Theology: People as the Subjects of History*, ed. Kim Yong-Bock (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1983).

theology of minjung (the multitude) is still valid, however, because although it has been a failure during the last twenty years of time, it is still much better than West-oriented, abstract theologies. It still has more possibility of authentically responding to realities than any other type of theology. That should not, however, be understood as that the current the theology of minjung (the multitude) is good and valid.

The suffering of Minjung (the multitude) and the Righteous

The Christian Bible identifies the suffering of the weak with the suffering of the righteous. Because they are powerless, the Scripture says, minjung (the multitude) are righteous. Suffering and poverty are not themselves a value and a goal. They are means to a higher goal. The poverty and helplessness of Lazarus, the beggar, was not praised as a venerable value; but, he enjoyed eternal life in the bosom of Abraham (Luke 16,19ff). The higher men, because they avoided taking suffering to save the man robbed on the highway, were not accepted by Jesus Christ (Luke 10:25-37).

If the suffering minjung (the multitude) are accepted by God as righteous and the objects of God's special care and love, does this mean that suffering itself has a positive value, or is a goal? Does suffering itself guarantee salvation and favor from God? No way! Suffering people are the objects of God's special care. They are under God's care, because their sufferings are caused by social evils. For example, the Dalits of India were born equal to other groups and castes of India. But the caste system forced dalits into severe sufferings. Dalits had been in equality in the ancient times before the caste system was introduced to India by Aryans who invaded India and became rulers. Minjung (the multitude) also had lived as equal members peacefully before the introduction of a hierarchical system. Minjung (the multitude) and dalits were sons and daughters of God who created the world with the intention of good. But the world became distorted and worse because of the wrong doings of humans and human-made structures. The current structures hinder minjung (the multitude) from becoming full humanity with dignity, and furthermore even kill or drive into death the innocent people, such as is taking place in areas like Iraq. The structures themselves are evil, satanic, and anti-Christ forces. It is a major task of the theology of minjung (the multitude) to discern, identify and attack them theoretically and practically. They increase the sufferings of all

creation to the point of its total extinction and destruction. Minjung (the multitude) theologians give attention to the fact that these forces are internalized into themselves and the minjung (the multitude). The enemies are within us waging a spiritual power over us. I am using a plural noun when I talk of the enemy. The enemy cannot be a monolithic being. Empire, neo-liberalism, patriarchalism, and the caste system are among the enemies, to mention a few. They are sometimes interconnected and coalesced into a single satanic power. (This is also a kind of convergence.) This power kills and sacrifices the already suffering beings.

Facing such forces and enemies active in our lives, private and collective, the theology of minjung (the multitude) proclaims that the God of Jesus is a God of life, peace, and liberation and that the Bible must be read in this perspective, and that the stories and words of the Bible must be interpreted in such a way that they become incarnated and alive in the present life of minjung (the multitude), as Dalit theologians such as James Massey and Busi Suneel also strongly affirmed in their papers for this conference.

Additionally, I would like to affirm or reaffirm the following basic assumptions for the theology of minjung (the multitude), which, I believe, are valid and helpful. First, the theology of minjung (the multitude) must start from minjung (the multitude)'s experience. This entails the two derivative considerations. One is that this does not mean that the theology of minjung (the multitude) does not start with a theoretical framework, or abstract theories and ideas. The other is that the theology of minjung (the multitude) starts with the ordinary experiences of minjung (the multitude) and approaches them in a common sensical way. This means that the theology of minjung (the multitude) does not impose pre-conceived assumptions upon minjung (the multitude). The theology of minjung (the multitude) values the ordinary experiences of minjung (the multitude) and therefore their stories. The theology of minjung (the multitude) does not attempt to explain and analyze them in a socio-scientific or human-scientific way. The theology of minjung (the multitude) interprets them and finds their meanings by employing hermeneutic methods. The living and incarnated words of the Bible and other Scriptures and traditions help us reach their new meanings.

Secondly, the theology of minjung (the multitude) regards highly the value of Eastern teachings such as *Donghak* and other traditions, because it

believes that the Holy Spirit has worked in and left its vestige and footprints in these traditions. Among those teachings, I find the teaching of *sooshimjongki* is helpful for the life and movement of minjung (the multitude). *Sooshimjongki* allows mind and spirit to be kept clear and upright in the midst of sufferings and distractive forces. *Sooshimjongki* is a disposition of mind that allows the Spirit to work within minjung (the multitude).

Thirdly, Suffering has an ambivalent dimension. It has positive and negative sides. Suffering is to be avoided, but also to be accepted as well. Suffering has the value of being means, not that of a goal. It is a bridge to a goal, not itself a goal. That is why the Apostle Paul says that belief in Christ requires a certain extent of suffering (Phil 1,29). If faith in Jesus Christ requires messianic suffering, it seems logical to say that the sufferings of minjung (the multitude) must be turned into messianic ones. *Sooshimjongki* enters in this phase. *Sooshimjongki* is one of the ways to change the meaning of suffering and make the suffering public. *Sooshimjongki* is not a spiritual exercise for private interest. It helps overcome the interest in our egoistic wellbeing and promote and enlarge the public dimension of the spiritual power. *Sooshimjongki* produces an inner disposition that enables the minjung (the multitude) to discern and even create the potentialities and possibilities for a new creation from their past and present experiences. Thus, *sooshimjongki* should be an integral part of the minjung movement, because movement with social and public dimensions has more spiritual sides than simply material sides. The ultimate goal of social movement is a new human being in a new world. The creation of new human beings must be emphasized.

Fourthly, suffering and hope come together in the events and movement of the minjung (the multitude). A rare but precious experience of hope in the midst of suffering takes place in the minjung movement. The practice of *sooshimjongki* helps minjung (the multitude) to experience hope. Collective efforts for a new world in the minjung movement become reasons for the hope of minjung (the multitude).

Fifthly, Jesus is the representative of minjung (the multitude). He suffers before minjung (the multitude) suffer. He overcame the Empire by his death and resurrection. His death represents the suffering of the minjung (the multitude), his resurrection their hope. He demonstrated the way of salvation in advance, salvation by way of suffering and hope. Jesus shows

this and the minjung (the multitude) follow him. The theology of minjung (the multitude) rejects the doctrine of substitutionary sacrifice and atonement, because the doctrine keeps us from actively participating in transforming the structures that cause the suffering of minjung (the multitude). The doctrine falsifies the reality by falsely affirming that the sinful structures have been destroyed by the merit of Christ's sacrificial work, although they remain intact in actuality. The theology of minjung (the multitude) affirms the doctrine of salvation by discipleship and following.

Abstract

The author attempts at demonstrating minjung theology for today in a coherent way by employing some crucial categorical concepts such as concrescence, suffering and hope. He argues that in the current postmodern times the term multitude is useful for showing the characteristics of minjung. He also argues that the teachings of *Donghak* (the Eastern Learning) such as *sooshimjongki* are also useful for minjung theology. The state of *sooshimjongki* points to the state of men and women who are collaborating with the divine life-giving energy (*kihwachishin*) to lead the world into harmony and liberation. He argues that although suffering is the most characteristic activity of minjung, it does not carry the value and aim in itself, but it can serve as a creative means to the aim of liberation and hope when minjung actively participate in the movement for their own liberation. In connection to this, the author criticizes the traditional doctrine of substitutionary sacrifice and the church's attempt to apply it to suffering minjung.

Key Words

the multitude, minjung (the multitude), *Donghak*, concrescence, *sooshimjongki*, *kihwachishin*, Dalit, suffering, hope.

Hermeneutical Issues in Using Traditional Sources - Where Do We Draw our Spiritual Sources for our Liberation?

Limatula Longkumer*

Introduction

In the West the Church had to develop its hermeneutics in response to developments in science, philosophy and historiography and other secular movements. The Church in the West had no scripture of other faiths to take into account. Therefore, its hermeneutics inevitably had to be a mono-scriptural hermeneutics. Today, however, Christians in a multi-religious world cannot ignore other scriptures that provide spiritual support and ethical guidance to millions of their adherents.¹⁾

- S.J. Samartha

Biblical interpretation in Asia to a large extent is still dominated by a western model of historical-critical approach. However, one should realize that in Asia, we are not dealing with mono-scriptural hermeneutics but with multiple scriptures and religious traditions because ours is a context of multi-culturalism and multi religions. The Bible, scriptures and traditional sources, both the written and oral traditions - it could be folklores, myths,

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1) See *One Christ-Many Religions* (Maryknoll: N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1991), 67.

dances, songs, ritual, etc., - are developed within a social location, cultural background, economic environment and political situation. Therefore, in hermeneutical issues in Asia the Bible, other faith scriptures and indigenous resources should be taken seriously to make the Bible contextual and meaningful to our people. Condemning other religious sources and clinging only to the Bible is a serious offence. The focus of the paper is not on the issue of written texts; rather I would like to concentrate on oral traditions of indigenous/tribal people of India, particularly from North East India and thereby to show that traditional resources help us to understand the truth of the Bible better for our liberation today.

Tribal religious traditions

The Tribals in North East India are different from Adivasis or tribals in other parts of India due to two reasons: (i) No Hindu caste has influence particularly in the hill tribes, (ii) Racially different - ethnically, culturally and linguistically different from other Indians - they may be closer to other Asian Indigenous people.

Tribal religion, known today as primal or indigenous religion, does not have a written scripture like other religions. Though we did not have a written text, which could be called 'holy scripture,' the oral traditions and customs are accepted as holy and authoritative for the faith and practice of the people.²⁾ The religious ethos is contained in the people's hearts, minds, oral history, myths and rituals. People themselves are a living scripture. For tribals, creation is a part of the scripture because creation is the exegesis of God.

Tribal religion does not have a founder or a reformer. Our religion is centered on earth/creation. For example, most tribes in North East India have the legends of their ancestors emerging from the earth, under earth or from the stones. Like other religions, the tribals too have a tradition of divine birth and manifestations, but they are not worshipped.³⁾ Hence, our

2) Renthly Keitzar, "A Study of the North-East India Tribal Christian Theology," in *Good News for North East India: A Theological Reader*, ed. Renthly Keitzar (Guwahati: CLC, 1995), 34.

3) A. Wati Longchar, *The Tribal Religious Traditions in North East India* (Jorhat: Author, 2000): 4.

tribal religion is basically a community religion based on oral scripture. It is a distinct religion, having all the basic features of religious beliefs, practices and moral teachings based on oral traditions and customs.

How the Bible was received in Tribal lands

Missionaries brought the Bible to us as the revealed authoritative word of God to our people, and they condemned our living religions as devilish, our religion and culture as inferior, “heathen,” a religion without any system of thought, devoid of morality and spirituality.⁴⁾ The core beliefs of our people were rejected as devilish, and our songs, dances, folklores and myths as paganistic. They looked down on our tribal worldviews as backward and inferior and they promoted western culture as superior. They taught us what to do, and what to think. Hence, the present inherited reading and interpretation of the Bible do not take the tribal social and cultural contexts seriously. The present reading of the Bible is otherworldly, pietistic and male centered which fails to address the present realities of the people. As a result, the Bible continues to contribute towards alienation of tribals from our culture. The tribal theologians resist traditional interpretations of the Bible which tend to be an integrationist approach into a homogeneous and universal hermeneutics.⁵⁾ God does not speak to us first and foremost through western theology. God accepts us as we are. Our people need to be free of the terrible burden of believing that they need to think and believe like westerners. We need to hear the Gospel expressed in our own language and culture.

The Outsider’s Interpretation of Tribal Resources

Until recently the interpreters of the tribal/indigenous resources were outsiders. Many missionaries, anthropologists and sociologists came to our land and through their little research on tribal people claimed ownership of the tribal ways of knowing. Most of the outsiders doing research on our tribal people and culture ignored everything we own - our tribal likes and

4) A. Wati Longchar, *The Tribal Religious Traditions*, 6.

5) K. Thanzauva, *Theology of Community: Tribal Theology in the Making* (Aizawl: MTC, 1997): 96.

dislikes, our hopes and fears, our struggles and aspirations, our intellects, our values, traditions, etc - but at the same time assumed to know everything possible about the tribals, on the basis of their brief encounters with some of the tribals. Non-indigenous people claimed their rights on indigenous people based on their research and indigenous voices have been silenced or Othered in the process.⁶⁾

Most of the outside researchers came to our tribal land with an attitude of western scientific method as 'serving good for humankind,' or with 'saving them,' and with a 'rescuing them' attitude. However, in such works one see how outside researchers look at the research problems through the eyes of the invaders. This is so because whether it is travelers' tales or other academic research, all have contributed as much to the West's knowledge of itself as has the systematic gathering of scientific data, without having even an iota of how damaging their research and records are for our tribal peoples' dignity and history.⁷⁾

In the interpretation of the outsiders, one of the supposed characteristics of our tribal people was that 'the tribals could not use their minds or intellects,' 'could not invent things,' 'could not create history,' nothing worth can be learned from us. In other words, for outsiders, the tribals did not practice the arts of civilization. Since humankind is measured from such a biased worldview and standards, and by lacking such virtues, our people disqualified themselves in terms of our tribal values, our tribal standards, beliefs, language and worldviews, etc. In short, we were told, and we too believed, that we were not 'fully human.'⁸⁾ In this regard, tribal religion was called "Animism," "Primitive Religion." This type of popular western value judgment places the tribal religion at the bottom of the supposed line of religious evolution and creates an inferiority of tribal religion as underdeveloped and primitive.⁹⁾

Having the consciousness of how our tribal history and culture has been researched and written by outsiders with a superior mindset itself is the beginning of doing research in tribal cultural studies from our tribal

6) Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous People* (London: Zed Books Ltd., 1999), 139.

7) L. Imsutoshi Jamir, "Developing Tribal Face in Tribal Cultural Studies: Few Footnotes" in *JTCA*, No. 6, (2007): 26.

8) *Ibid.*, 27.

9) A. Wati Longchar, *The tribal Religious Traditions*: 6.

perspective. In any interpretation process of tribal resources we need to ask: 'Whose interpretation is it?' 'Whose interests does it serve?' 'Who will benefit from it?' 'Who will interpret it and for whom?' 'How will its interpretation be disseminated?' It is crucial to re-read, re-right, and to re-write, i.e. to set right the tribal history, resources from the position of the tribal. There is a need to decolonize the western scientific research methods.

Hermeneutical issues in Asia

It is a fact that Biblical interpretation in Asia is influenced by the western model. The Bible has not only been constructed as a western text and used as an instrument of colonization, but also the predominant method of Western biblical interpretation since the Enlightenment, historical criticism, has itself colonized the Bible by constructing the books of the Bible as western texts.¹⁰⁾ Bible reading and interpretation are never value-neutral but reflect the values of the readers. Since both the text and its readers are social products manifesting the ideologies encoded in their respective social worlds, reading of the Bible cannot proceed in a detached and singular manner.¹¹⁾

God speaks to different people in different contexts. It must be recognized that the sacred text(s) is culturally conditioned by socio-religious traditions of a given context. So, there is no absolute and only one way of interpreting the scripture, no single reading strategy and interpretive method which can be applied to all contexts in all times. Each context needs a particular method for a particular people. Each context needs to read the Bible from his/her own perspective. Hence, the tribals must read the Bible from tribal perspectives.

In Asia the Bible and other faiths' scriptures and oral traditions exist together. Recognizing the dissonance between the kind of biblical interpretation we inherited and the Asian reality we are facing, we need to develop new hermeneutical principles to connect between the Bible and our lives.¹²⁾ All reading and interpretation are contextualized and perspectival so

10) Edgar W. Conrad, "How the Bible was Colonized," in *Scripture, Community and Mission*, ed Phillip L. Wickeri (Hong Kong: CCA/WCC, 2002), 92.

11) *Ibid.*, 101.

12) Kwok Pui Lan, "Discovering the Bible in the Nonbiblical World," in *The Bible*

that multiple voices, and multicentered and multilingual ways must be emphasized.¹³⁾ Hence, biblical interpretation in Asia must create multiple ways of reading. Kwok Pui Lan says, “If the Bible is to work for liberation instead of domination, biblical themes can be allowed to interact with Asian resources in a process of “dialogical imagination.”¹⁴⁾ Folk tales and legends cultivated for centuries among the common people “have the power to illumine many biblical stories.” Our fellow Asians who have other faiths must not be considered as our missiological objects, but as dialogical partners in our ongoing search for truth. Reading the Bible in a multi-cultural and multi religious world means that no one community can co-opt the meaning of the biblical text. To touch the other faiths we have to strengthen the power of theological imaging. This can only be done when each one of us takes seriously the Asian reality, the suffering and aspiration of the Asian people, so that we can share our religious insights to build a better society.

Resources in Traditional Religion

Next to Africa, Asia has the highest number of adherents of traditional religion. Though the traditional religion is the oldest religion in the world, as mentioned above it does not have a written sacred scripture yet it continues to survive. Unlike other religions of the world, it does not have a founder(s) or a reformer(s), and yet this religion has provided and continues to provide spiritual support and ethical guidance to millions of their adherents till today. One cannot ignore the spiritual heritage of indigenous people if we have to look for a new way of doing theology in the context of globalization, poverty, economic injustice, gender issue, fundamentalism, ethnic crises and ecological problem.

I would like to draw our attention to myths and folklore and culture for our deliberation here.

and Liberation, Political and Social hermeneutics, eds. Norman K. Gottwald, & Richard A. Horsely, (Marknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 22.

13) Segovia, Fernando F., *Decolonizing Biblical Studies: A View From the Margins* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2000), 90.

14) Kwok Pui Lan, “Discovering the Bible in the Nonbiblical World,” in *The Bible and Liberation, Political and Social hermeneutics*, eds. Norman K. Gottwald, & Richard A. Horsely, (Marknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 17.

Oral tradition is a literature: Oral traditions are considered as the foundation of literature. They serve as one of the most valuable sources of information about people, their lifestyles, belief systems and of their experiences of the manifestations of supernatural powers.¹⁵⁾ For the tribals, oral tradition is the 'sacred scripture' because it serves as the sources for tribal history, religious beliefs, social ethos and mores and cultural milieus. Therefore, oral tradition is a text and a literature which should be considered seriously.

Myth/Folklore and Gospel: For the tribals, the myth and folklores are the foundation of religion. Their whole religious ethos is embedded in myths, oral history and rituals. They teach how the Sacred Being works and reveals his/her mysteries through creation; it uncovers the place of the animal kingdom in this universe. Thus myths and folklore are their scripture and creed. Mircea Eliade says that,

Myth narrates a sacred history; it relates an event that took place in primordial time, the fabled time of the beginnings ... Myth tells how through the deeds of Supernatural Beings a reality came into existence, be it, the whole of reality, the cosmos or only fragment of realities - a species of plants, a particular kind of human behaviour, an institution. Myth, then, is always an account of a 'creation,' it relates how something was produced, began to be. Myth tells only what really happened, which manifested itself completely. The actor in myths are Supernatural Being.¹⁶⁾

Similarly, David Scott also explains that,

A myth is a story that is sacred to and shared by a group of people who find their most important meanings in it; it is a story believed to have been composed in the past about an event in the past, or, more rarely, in the future, an event that continues to have meaning in the present because it is remembered ... Myth, then, is a story ... about the sorts of

15) Sashikaba Kechutzar, A Discursive Reading of the Oral Traditions: A Tribal Woman's Perspective," *No More Sorrow in God's garden of Justice* ed. Limatula Longkumer (Jorhat: ETC-WSC, 2007), 64.

16) Mircea Eliade, *Myth and Reality* (London: George Allen & Uniwin Ltd., 1963), 1.

question and religions ask, stories about such things as life after death, supernatural/divine intervention in their lives, transformations, the creation of the world and of human nature and culture - and, basically about meaning itself.¹⁷⁾

Myth/Folklore simply means ‘people’s expression,” There are varieties of folklore: some explain the mysteries of the supernatural, some teach about the mysteries of the world and some contain ethical values. Folklore is the people’s expression of faith, beliefs, struggles, sufferings, fears and hopes. Therefore, it is an inevitable tool in understanding a society/community - its past, its traditions, culture and worldview.

A peculiar character of myth/folklore is that it does not have an individual author. It is a collective creation of the folk. People themselves are interpreters of it; people do not depend on the experts to interpret it for them. It is common people’s property and folk themselves control it. Thus, a myth/folklore loses its credibility when it loses its communitarian character. It is never static and fixed. It undergoes changes according to the context, performance and the audience.

For the tribals, there is a myth/folklore behind every object, every event, every name, every character, every sound, every shape, every sickness, joy and sorrow. Some myths/folklores are long, some are medium, and some are short and some may be just one sentence. Yet they all convey meanings to the community. Till today myths/folklores have very strong influence among the people. However, if we apply the modern scientific method of interpretation to understanding tribal/indigenous myths, their true meaning will be dissipated. The use of modern hermeneutical tools is crucial in the discernment of the truth, but this is not adequate to undercover the full truth.

God-human-nature relationships.

A human, a tiger and Spirit lived happily, ate together and lacked nothing when their mother earth was alive. In those days, human beings knew nothing of death or fear of death. God, human and animal spoke

17) David C. Scott, “Stories as Methodological Issues in Primal Visions,” A Paper Presented at the National Seminar on Theological Implications of the Primal Vision, Sponsored by BTESSC/Gurukul (9-12 September, 1993, Madras), 7-8.

the same language.

The human represents people, the tiger represents creatures, the spirit represents the Creator, the sustainer and the cosmic power. They all had a mother and that mother represents the land, the nourisher of all living beings and the symbol of unity of all life including the Supreme God.¹⁸⁾

In the tribal religion the concept of God appears both in feminine and masculine genders. An example of the feminine concept is *Ukepenoupfii* in Angami Naga and *Ma'gipa Jagring* in Garo which means the mother image who is perceived to have given birth to all creation.

God as nurturer, caring and loving God, God as sustainer and eco-friend are found in many myths. Myths, folk tales, and legendary stories shared from generation to generation among the common people have the power to illuminate many biblical stories and other theological motifs. C. S. Song said that Asian resources can provide a very rich impetus to understand the depths of Asian humanity and God's action in the world.¹⁹⁾ Using our own resources radically appropriates our own history.²⁰⁾ Use of one's cultural and religious tradition indicates the respect and pride of one's heritage. Hence, it is authentic to draw on this tradition as a source for theologizing.

Culture and Gospel: "Culture" is the worldview of the people. While the Gospel frees people from their bondage, it is culture that sustains and nourishes people's identity. In spite of its ambiguous nature, the work of God is imminent in all culture. God's presence is manifested in land and in every culture, albeit differently and imperfectly. There are no peoples and cultures without God and every culture possesses some form of divine manifestation. Therefore, culture is one of the most important resources for doing theology. There is no authentic theology without culture.

As in other communities, the indigenous people also uphold a very distinctive cultural value system. Culture has both liberative and oppressive elements. The task of theology is to challenge and transform the oppressive elements, and recover, affirm and integrate the life affirming values into our

18) A. Wato Longchar, *An Emerging Asian Theology: Tribal Theology* (Jorhat: TSC, 2000), 73.

19) C.S. Song, *Theology from the Womb of Asia* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1986), 16.

20) Kwok Pui Lan, "Discovering the Bible in the Nonbiblical World," 22.

life. The indigenous worldviews differ from one community to another; however, it may be relevant to point out a few common elements of traditional culture to show the importance of culture in doing theology.

- a) The land is the basis of all realities - human selfhood and identity. Perceives all realities from creation perspectives;
- b) No sharp dualism. There is no clear cut distinction between sacred and secular, religion and non-religion, etc. Holistic in thinking;
- c) The self of the Supreme Being is seen in creation and an inseparably relationship is maintained;
- d) No historical person in which their religion is centered. The earth is the focal point of reference and all religious activities are centered on the soil;
- e) Though the oldest religion, there is no scripture or creed. The earth is sacred and central for life;
- f) We cannot perceive the Supreme Being apart from creation. God is in creation;
- g) Person orientation. Relationship between individuals in society is more important than the simple performance of tasks. Cooperation is valued more. Giving over saving;
- h) Adaptation to environment. The world is sacred. It is our mother. How can we sell and exploit our mother!;
- i) Highly group-oriented.

Such a view of life is not primitive and uncivilized. It is just a difference of emphasis and priority. The indigenous people give more priority to community and preservation of land/space. These values are also not mere abstract concepts, but are part of people's life and existence. In spite of the process of Christianization and modernization, such value systems continue to liberate, sustain and nourish life. Those cultural resources, by creatively co-relating with the Gospel, can empower and transform people in their historical struggle for social, political, economic justice and identity. Honestly speaking, the indigenous scholars have not given sufficient attention to cultural values in doing contextual theologies. This neglect has been one of the most serious obstacles for the churches in their attempt to be truly rooted in land and people. Theology will still remain a stranger among the indigenous people without integrating those liberative traditions. The challenge is great for us.

Cross-cultural Interpretation

Having described the above mentioned traditional values, we realize that it is not possible to interpret scripture without taking into consideration Asian cultures and traditions. In a multi-cultural, religious context where we have both sacred written scripture and non-written scripture, Archie Lee proposed 'cross-textual interpretation,'²¹⁾ I would prefer 'cross-cultural interpretation' since his proposed term would undermine non-written scripture traditions. Besides putting two cultures side by side, it also denotes the enlightening of one culture by using the point of view of others. Through 'encounter' and 'interaction,' new meanings can be discovered. Such a meaning and view-point may never be found by reading or listening to only one text or culture alone. Archie Lee further noted that "interpretation will not stop at one 'crossing' for there can be many crossings, nor will it start from only one text (culture) and end with another."²²⁾ The use of multiple crossings does not aim at merely comparative studies but to reach transformation and enrichment. In this, the transformation of the whole life is involved, a process of self-discovery. The end result turns out to be an "enrich-transformed existence."²³⁾ By doing so, the vitality and spirituality of Asian Christians can be made more distinguished in their context, which in turn provides the resources for coping with social and political complexities and helps to humanize Asian societies and beyond.

Many Asian scholars argue that biblical interpretation from Asian perspectives must not be a mono-scriptural oriented hermeneutics. We need to develop a cross-scriptural approach that allows 'scriptures' or even unwritten traditions to enter into dialogue to facilitate the transformation of the two or more 'scriptures,'

The interpretation of the Bible in Asia will take a different shape and be enriched by the effort to take into account the scriptures and oral histories of other living religions. This shows us that biblical studies in Asia cannot be

21) Archie Lee, "Plurality of Asian Religio-cultural Tradition and Its Implications for Asian Biblical studies" in *Doing Theology with Tribal Resources*, ed. Wati Longchar and Larry Davis, Tribal Study Series No. 3, (Jorhat: Tribal Study Centre, 1999), 35.

22) *Ibid.*, 36.

23) *Ibid.*

separated from the study of Asian religions and culture.

Changing Asian context

Asian societies are now in a new context. The most outstanding sign of our times is the suffering and cries of human persons and other living beings throughout the world, as their victimization proceeds in a systematic and unprecedented manner under the global market regime. The global empire and the greed of global capital are making tremendous impact on the geopolitics of the world, and destroying and threatening all life, especially the poor and marginalized like the indigenous communities. In today's world, 'growth' is considered as the only principle for liberation in the capitalist economy of globalization. The concepts of 'care for one another,' 'just economy' and '(sabbath) rest for creation,' etc. are considered as non-productivity and the root of all human problems from poverty to sickness to political instability.

One may argue that everything that touches the life of all living beings, from spirituality to sexuality, ethnic politics, the oppressed communities' resistance movement, ecological movement, human rights movement are inter-related to capital control. This control intensifies the division and increases the conflict among various religious and ethnic groups, nations, and also leads to gender oppression. It would be appropriate to give some examples of how hegemonic power and mammon intensifies conflicts by reducing people and nature to being a mere commodity.

Growing Religious Fundamentalism and Conflicts: The escalation of tensions between the Muslim world and the West, as well as terrorist activities sponsored by religious sectarian groups in Asia and elsewhere, and the revival of many sects, with a fundamentalist tendency within the living religions and cultures, stands witness to rising religious fundamentalism. Some political leaders consider indigenous people's resistance movements in Asia as Christian-instigated movements led by Western Christians. Prohibition of religious freedom and the state sponsored religious terrorism testify to this reality. They all continue to challenge us in the way we think and act as Christians.

Gender Justice Issues: Militarization and globalization intensify

marginalization of women. In some places, rape is a part of war-games. The expanding international tourism accompanies the increase of sex tours of men of many countries²⁴⁾ with many young boys and girls sexually abused and cruelly treated. Globalization has opened the door for many women to leave their home countries to work as domestic workers, factory workers or entertainers. There are many stories of violence, and even killing of those migrant workers.

Environmental Degradation: The greed for capital leads to control and manipulation of strategic economic locations like Iraq, Palestine and so on. The uncontrolled and one-sided exploitative economic development projects have brought with them various ecological crises. The rape of Mother Earth is manifested in uncontrolled logging, indiscriminate use of chemicals in agriculture, inconsiderate disposal of non-biodegradable waste. Many other 'ecocidal' acts due to negligence, ignorance or greed destroy the ecosystem. The indigenous communities who depend on earth's resources are the most affected people.

Loss of Spirituality: With the increasing influence and impact of materialism, secularism, and liberalism in the postcolonial era, the indigenous people continue to experience challenges and stagnation in spirituality. These include loss of focus in discipleship and spiritual formation, loss of indigenous wisdom, character and values, and infiltration of western culture and ideology through the influence of neo-Pentecostal and new religious movements. Information technology and military power contribute to the decline of the indigenous cultures and increase discrimination against minorities.

Identity and Power Struggle: Most communities in Asian countries have experienced and continue to experience identity crises through history. In the process, some develop a 'meeting-place' identity in which post-colonial nation-state and economic policies have denied justice for many indigenous communities, thus leading them to armed resistance. Ethical

24) It exposes not only the issue of gender discrimination but also that of North-South inequality. Recently, the demand for younger women and girls as targets for prostitution tourism is remarkably increasing, due to the fear of AIDS.

problems such as corruption, abuse of power, prostitution, communal problems such as ethnic conflicts, racial tensions and breakdown of family structures and continued marginalization of poor people continue to rise in such a 'meeting place' identity.

All of this is our reality. The future of contextual theologies in Asia such as indigenous people's theology, dalit and minjung theologies will determine their ability to create counter movements and theologies against hegemonic power and a life-threatening free market system.

Protection of Cultural Life - Integrative Principle of Interpretation

Contextual theologies call for a life-centered theology in contrast to the old and dominant theological discourse which supported imperialism. From the time of Constantine, the theological metaphors which developed supported the male rulers and oppressors. In other words, the theological concepts which developed under the imperial regime not only legitimized a religion for the one who is the master and the ruler, but also sanctioned the exploitation and manipulation of all segments of God's creation for the extraction of maximum profit. There is no place for the people who have been ruled and oppressed for centuries and for the protection of Mother Earth. This dominant theology includes its *concept of God*. The dominant images of God that developed during the imperial power were images such as Ruler, Lord, Master and Warrior. All patriarchal, political and military images made Christianity a religion of, and for, the ruler, elite and the upper-class. They are not capable of liberating the poor and marginalized people from unjust systems and practices. Such ruler's theology supported colonial governments, war, invasion and unprecedented exploitation of earth's resources. The imperial construct of the concept of God will not be able to liberate the people and earth who have become the victims of power.

Likewise the *understanding of mission* fails as the discourse on God as ruler and master reinforced a success oriented or triumphalistic mission. Language like 'Mission Crusade,' 'Mission Campaign,' 'Home Penetration,' 'Mass Evangelization' etc. are all military language and concepts. Christians, by and large, engaged in denominational expansion rather than God's mission. Success was measured by how many churches were planted, and how many people converted and baptized. Mission

became very exclusive and never recognized God's revelation in other religious traditions. But, mission is God's mission. God is the owner of the mission, not the churches. The churches are sent to be missionaries to witness compassion and justice with the poor and the victims. We are called to witness compassion and justice with the poor. But Christians have manipulated and acted as if we are the owner of mission.

Finally, in the *understanding of creation* is another seed of imperialism. Western Christian interpretation of creation is anthropocentric - humanity is the reference point of all realities. Nature exists for humans. Apart from rational beings, the other segments of God's creation cannot come under the scheme of salvation. There is no sacred mystery in nature, but nature can be manipulated and controlled for the benefit of human beings. To exploit nature is the divine will. This one-sided theological interpretation justifies expansion of colonial power and exploitation of nature. The ideology of globalization and the expansion of the global capital market are deeply rooted in this interpretation. The unprecedented exploitation of nature and present ecological crisis testify to the failure of the Christian understanding of creation.²⁵⁾

Therefore, we need a new theological paradigm in which God is perceived as a fellow sufferer, a great comforter, divine power and not as a dominating or controlling power. This must not be understood as a dialectical power in weakness but as a liberating and transforming power that is effective in compassionate love, care and service. Mission is also to be understood as 'servant-hood' in God's liberating act.

Discourse on Asian theology can make a difference in our times by turning and rerouting to the Jesus of Galilee movement. In the Jesus movement, we see a decisive reversal from power and money to people in pain, from ruler to ruled, from oppressor to the oppressed. Jesus' movement was a life-centered movement against the power of destruction and death. He stood for a different value system - peace, love, service and liberation of poor and earth were the message of Jesus - but not of power in the sword and in mammon. Jesus became the voice of the oppressed and voiceless. Jesus' paradigm was life-centered theology. This option, for protection of

25) For more details refer to my work on *Tribal Worldview and Ecology*, and *Traditional Tribal Worldview and Modernity* (Jorhat: Tribal Study Centre, 1997).

life as the locus of people's theology, requires sacrifice and a radical departure from power, institution and mammon.

Summary

Theology is Doing: How?

1. Theology of People based on Social and Historical analysis from Asian perspective.
2. Based on struggle and experience with the people.
3. Considering local culture and beliefs
4. Must be biblical
5. Constructed with the people, especially with the poor
6. Cultivating the spirituality of people in struggle
7. Enabling to give answers to the issues of injustice
8. Promoting human and inter faith living

How to communicate theology?

1. Through love, concrete action and struggle for justice and peace
2. Using people's story and drama
3. Using and considering local environment and nature
4. Using oral means and media
5. Practicing in daily life and attitudes

New ways of doing theology

1. New ways of seeing church: Not as institution but movement
2. New ways of understanding salvations: not personal but all God's creation
3. New ways of understanding sins: not personal but also social
4. New ways of seeing reality: Not status quo but social transformation
5. New ways of understanding mission: not propagating dogma but action by faith
6. New ways of reading the Bible: not caught up by the written word but discovering the meaning of Bible in daily life, not only past story by also present experience and reality.

Abstract

Tribal religion does not have a written scripture like other religions, but oral traditions and customs are accepted as holy and authoritative norm. The religious ethos is contained in the people's hearts, oral history, myths and rituals. Therefore, the hermeneutical issues in Asia must go beyond cross-textual or inter-textual approach because cross-textual approach has no room for indigenous people who does not have a written scripture. Hence, the Bible, other faith scriptures and indigenous resources-oral traditions should be taken seriously to make the Bible contextual and meaningful in Asia. Hence, cross-cultural interpretation approach is important from tribal/indigenous perspective.

Key Words

Hermeneutic, tribal religious traditions, outsiders, liberation, cross-culture, contextual theologies, doing theology, Asian theology

Liberation, Women, and Nature: The Past, Present and Future of Liberation Theologies

Yoon Jae Chang*

Introduction

Sallie McFague, one of the leading ecofeminist theologians today, says that there have been two major shifts in twentieth century theology: First, from the “How can we *know* God?” enterprise to the “How can we *change* the world?” theologies of liberation; Second, from “How can we *change* the world?” project to “How can we *save* the world?” theologies of nature.¹⁾ She presents the second shift not as a rupture but as a widening or

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1) Sallie McFague, “An Earthly Theological Agenda,” *Ecofeminism and the Sacred*, ed. Carol Adams (New York: Continuum, 1993), 84.

deepening of the focus of liberation theologies, whereby all oppressed creatures as well as the planet earth are included in addition to all oppressed human beings.²⁾ However, is this genealogy of shift - “know-change-save” - linear? Is the second transition simply *widening, deepening, and in addition to?*

Ivone Gebara, who has deeply devoted herself to liberation theology in Latin America, presents it differently. In an interview about her “conversion” from liberation theology to ecofeminism, she says straightforwardly: “We are tired of the struggle, which is often violent and which promises our liberation at the end.”³⁾ Something must be wrong here. Where has her deep frustration come from? What is it that made her so exhausted and even furious about liberation theology? Two different expressions about the second shift tell us something about it. Gebara’s groaning outcry suggests explicitly that the second shift was not actually as smooth as McFague describes it.

As we will see, there are more discontinuities than continuities in the second shift. Like the first one, the second shift equally remarks a fundamental paradigm shift in our whole God-talk. It is not simply a stylistic change but a profound transformation of the whole way of our doing theology. Only when we first and correctly understand the radical hermeneutical rupture that took place in the second shift, we will be able to grasp the heart of its meaning. In order to understand the true nature of the second shift, let us revisit to the first shift and examine what had happened there.

Liberation

All Third World theologies of liberation began as a reaction to the dominant theologies of Europe and North America.⁴⁾ The rise of Third World theologies, with their keen interest in liberation, was directly related to the emergence of national and political liberation movements in their countries

2) McFague, *Ibid.*, 85.

3) Ivone Gebara, “Cosmic Theology: Ecofeminism and Panentheism,” in *Readings in Ecology and Feminist Theology*, eds. Mary Heather MacKinnon and Moni McIntyre (Kansas City: Sheed and Ward, 1995), 210.

4) James H. Cone, *My Soul Looks Back* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1993), 99.

of origin.⁵⁾ What then were the most distinctive characteristics that marked the distinction of Third World theologies from the traditional Western theologies? Seven points could be abstracted from the inter-continental dialogue among liberation theologians in the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT).⁶⁾

First, it is their theme of “liberation” that replaced the traditional focus on the divine economy of human “salvation”; Second, their prime concern on the humanity of “non-persons,” not the faith of “non-believers”; Third, their open claim not to be neutral but to side publicly with the poor and the oppressed like Minjung and Dalit; Fourth, their seeking of the transformation of socio-politico-economic structures, for the immensity of the suffering of the people demands the elimination of the structural root causes of oppression; Fifth, their consideration of social analysis as a critical component to define the root cause of all forms of oppression; Sixth, their commitment to the liberation of the oppressed as the very first act of theology, through which theology becomes a critical reflection upon prior political commitment in solidarity with the oppressed; and Seventh, their claim of the poor/Minjung as the subject of doing theology and the affirmation of the hermeneutical privilege of the poor/Minjung. In short, the most original and truly creative insight of Third World theologies of liberation was to see the world from the *underside* of history - i.e., from the perspective of the poor, the oppressed, and the losers in history - and to respond to this vision by searching for effective strategies to transform the structures of societal sin which are the root causes of their suffering.⁷⁾

As a matter of fact, liberation theologies introduced not so much a new theme but a *new way* to do theology.⁸⁾ Like any other theologies, liberation theology talks about all the topics of theology (e.g., God, Trinity, Christ, the

5) Cone, *Ibid.*, 100.

6) Unlike the author, Robert McAfee Brown identifies six overlapping emphases of liberation theology: (1) a different starting point: the poor; (2) a different interlocutor: the nonperson; (3) a different set of tools: the social science; (4) a different analysis: the reality of conflict; (5) a different mode of engagement: praxis; and (6) a different theology: the second “act.” (Brown, *Theology in a New Key*, 60-74).

7) Alfred T. Hennelly, ed. *Liberation Theology: A Documentary History* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1995), xvi.

8) Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 15.

Spirit, grace, sin, and the church, etc.), but the radical originality of liberation theology is its methodology in that it talks about all these topics from the perspective of the poor and the oppressed. This theological methodology of the “option for the poor,” to use Latin American jargon, is the key to liberation theologies. What is equally important is that this option for the poor was made possible because of “the fundamental datum of Christian faith”⁹⁾ that God has been revealed in the Bible as the God of the poor and the oppressed. One cannot find in any other religion, teachings that parallel the perspective of the Lukan beatitudes that God has a special concern for the poor *simply because they are poor*. As Aloysius Pieris affirms, the biblical revelation, which has no explicit doctrinal parallel in other religions and thus connotes a Christian specificity, is “the irrevocable covenant between God and the poor.”¹⁰⁾ It is indeed liberation theologies that rediscovered and recovered the perennial Christian themes of God’s salvific activity in history as recorded in the *biblia pauperum* (the bible of the poor), which have often been hidden by the ideologies of Christendom. The option for the poor is not a new theory introduced by any radical economists but the clear thrust of the biblical message.

We can identify one more important characteristic of Third World liberation theologies by reviewing the battle between Latin American liberation theologians and German political theologians more than 30 years ago. The battle between liberation theologians and German political theologians, who saw themselves as the “kindred to Latin American liberation theology,”¹¹⁾ particularly Juergen Moltmann, who was recognized as “the theologian to whom liberation theology is most indebted and with whom it has the closest affinity,”¹²⁾ can be summarized as the dispute regarding the “relation between God’s eschatological order and man’s political action in history.”¹³⁾ This theological dispute was in fact derived

9) Victorio Araya, *God of the Poor* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1987), 30.

10) Pieris, “Monastic Poverty in the Asian Context,” in *Love Meets Wisdom*, 90. He argues that there are “two radical convictions derived from [biblical] revelation: (1) The irreconcilable antinomy between God and Mammon; and (2) the irrevocable covenant between God and the poor.” The former finds a corresponding doctrine in non-Christian religions, assures Pieris.

11) J. Moltmann, “Political Theology and Theology of Liberation,” in *Liberating the Future*, 60.

12) Miguez Bonino, *Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation*, 144.

from the political economic issues regarding the Latin American option for socialism and its use of Marxist analysis. For Moltmann, in order to avoid sacralizing a particular ideology or power structure, it is important to refuse to “materialize” God’s presence in history and keep “critical freedom” in theology.¹⁴⁾ For Miguez Bonino, however, this conception of critical freedom, which is allegedly “above right and left, ideologically neutral,” only meant option for *another* particular ideology, which is liberalism or one form of the liberal social-democratic project.¹⁵⁾ On the part of liberation theologians, the problem with German political theology is that its supposed neutrality, on the pretext of affirming the relativity of all political orders, only offers an ideological justification of the established system of the capitalist West.¹⁶⁾ Therefore, for liberation theologians, Moltmann’s “promise of hope” only looked “too vague, a tantalizing mirage unable to inspire concrete historical action,” unable to give concrete content to the identification with the oppressed.¹⁷⁾

On the part of Moltmann, however, the Latin American effort to reflect on the praxis of liberation is only to “limp after reality.” As we know, the key to Moltmann’s theology of hope is that “the future must be redeemed from the power of history.”¹⁸⁾ Therefore, the subject of Moltmann’s

13) Bonino, *Ibid.*, 147.

14) Moltmann, “An Open Letter to Jose Miguez Bonino,” in *Liberation Theology: A Documentary History*, 197-200.

15) Miguez Bonino, *Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation*, 144-150. Thus Gutierrez faulted Moltmann for being caught in a “European liberal syndrome” which accepts the present socioeconomic order, engages in “reformism from within,” and seeks to move by gradualism to a more just social order, which is a luxury Latin Americans can no longer afford. (Gutierrez, *Teologia Desde el Reverso de la Historia*, 59.)

16) Thus, for Segundo, political theology is “revolutionary only in name.” (Segundo, “Capitalism-Socialism: A Theological Cruc,” in *Concilium* (1974): 111-113, 117.

17) Miguez Bonino, *Doing Theology in the Revolutionary Situation*, 144-147.

18) Moltmann, “Liberating and Anticipating the Future,” in *Liberating Eschatology*, 190. Moltmann’s “theology of hope” was in fact developed in the context of the twentieth-century renaissance of eschatology in Christian theology, initiated and promoted by Schweitzer, Barth, and Bultmann in reaction to the effort to conform Christianity to modern trends and ideas. Influenced by Tillich, Moltmann criticized both the “conservative syndrome”

eschatology is not chronological “future time,” in which the future “develops,” but “God’s future,” in which God’s Advent is “expected” (thus “anticipation”).¹⁹⁾ Central to Moltmann’s theology of hope is the affirmation that only a redeeming and fulfilling future can give consolation and meaning to suffering and acting in history, and that it is only this kind of future that can be “the new paradigm of transcendence.”²⁰⁾

On the part of liberation theologians, however, hope is not coming from the future but pregnant in the present. For Boff, the Kingdom is “the presence of the future within the present”;²¹⁾ for Gutierrez, the present in the praxis of liberation, in its deepest dimension, is “pregnant with the future” and therefore there is in Moltmann’s theology of hope the danger of docetism, since the “Promise” is not related to any specific situation.²²⁾ It can be seen that Asian and feminist theologians share this stance. For C.S. Song, “The future has to be the growth out of the present, fulfilling it, changing it, and carrying it forward. The future is not the negation of the present but the fulfillment of it and then the transformation of it.”²³⁾ For ecofeminist theologians like Rosemary R. Ruether, eschatological hope, although useful and important for keeping history itself open, has been

and “progressive syndrome” of the modern eschatological paradigm, and assured instead the “God of hope” as the power of the future, as a “new paradigm of transcendence,” qualitatively different from the progress of the world developing out of the present. (Moltmann, *The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996], 98.)

19) Moltmann, “Liberating and Anticipating the Future,” 189.

20) Moltmann, *The Coming of God*, 192.

21) Boff, “Salvation and Liberation,” in *Concilium* (1974): 80-80, 87.

22) Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 11-12, 124-135. For Gutierrez, “Despite all his efforts, Moltmann has difficulty finding a vocabulary both sufficiently rooted in human concrete historical experience, in an oppressed and exploited present, and yet abounding in potentialities. The hope... must be rooted in the heart of historical praxis; if this hope does not take shape in the present to lead it forward, it will be only an evasion, a futuristic illusion.”

23) Song, *Jesus & the Reign of God*, 157. Song goes on to say: “We must, then question the word ‘coming’ in ‘the coming of God’s reign,’ implying that the reign of God is to be introduced into the present world from outside it. The fact of the matter is that the reign of God struggles to be born in conflict situations.” (Ibid., 158).

related to an alienation from and disappointment with bodily life and tended to despise its processes of seasonal and generational renewal; for these reasons, the idea of *eschaton* itself must be rejected, for it is fundamentally based on “a model of endless stretching forward into the future and on an understanding of God who exists only in the unrealized future.”²⁴) Women and Third World theologians are careful not to replace “a Christianity of the Beyond” with “a Christianity of the Future,” for the former tends to forget the world, while the latter runs the risk of neglecting a miserable and unjust present and the struggle for liberation.

Women

In the course of the development of Third World liberation theologies, however, women theologians have initiated a serious renewal to liberation theologies. Their challenge, which was called “an irruption within the irruption,” was so radical that the emphasis, paradigm, and style of Third World theologies of liberation could not remain unmodified. Seven common characteristics of these new thrusts could be abstracted: First, women theologians have become suspicious of the efficacy of the traditional objectives, conceptions, and methodology of liberation theologies in general; Second, they unanimously affirm pluralism of Third World theologies; Third, they generally abandon the idea and hope for an immediate socio-political-economic transformation in history, exploring instead a long-term strategy and possibility; Fourth, they emphasize the concrete daily life of the people as the new source and locus of theology; Fifth, they no longer rely exclusively on sociology, once the traditional partner of social analysis, and prefer various other disciplines, such as anthropology, cross-cultural studies, and natural sciences, etc., as their new dialogical partners; Sixth, their scope and areas of concern are expanded beyond human history to include the whole creation; and Seventh, they began to explore the possibility of a reconstruction of Christianity itself

24) Ruether, *Womanguides: Reading Toward a Feminist Theology* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985), 219-224; Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983), 238, 244-245, 253-256. Ruether actually proposes a reverse model of historical hope, i.e., “conversion” to the “starting point” or the “roots in an ontology of creation and in God/ess as ground of creation.”

apart from its patriarchal foundation.

Not surprisingly, one of the most radical forms of these renewal thrusts took place in Latin America. Diego Irarrazaval, who is from indigenous villages in the Chilean mountains, says that theology should no longer be done in terms of subject and object, but rather in terms of correlations among all living beings.²⁵⁾ Latin American ways of doing theology, according to Irarrazaval, should be a journey into life's mystery, and the heart of theology is nothing other than openness to this mystery.²⁶⁾ Contending that the radical transformation of society is no longer possible, Pablo Richard argues that we should move from political theology to civil theology, from marginalized liberation theology to a theology working inside the churches, from option for the poor to option for the excluded, beyond a strategic context of confrontation to a consensus and reconciliation.²⁷⁾ It seems that these examples are nothing but a direct reaction to the inadequacy of the previous Latin American liberation theology's rigid emphasis on exclusive socio-economic analysis that heavily relied on Marxist tools. Could I say that an extreme has brought another extreme on itself?²⁸⁾

Ivone Gebara speaks in this context: "We are tired of the struggle which

25) Diego Irarrazaval, "How is Theology Done in Latin America?," in *Liberation Theology: A Documentary History*, 61.

26) Irarrazaval, *Ibid.*, 61, 76.

27) Pablo Richard, "Liberation Theology in Latin America in Dialogue with Theologies from Africa, Asia and the Minorities in the United States: A Historical Perspective," in *Voices From the Third World*, Vol. XVIII No. 2, (December 1995): 38-43.

28) We are to remember that in the context of Latin American dominance, Aloysius Pieris declared in 1979 at the EATWOT sponsored Asian Theological Conference (ATC) that "Asian context is a coalescence of religiosity and poverty," that is to say, "The religiousness of the poor and the poverty of the religious masses together constitute the complex structure of Asian reality that is the matrix of an Asian theology." Therefore, for Pieris, the theological attempts to encounter Asian religions with no radical concern for Asia's poor and the ideological programs that would eradicate Asia's poverty with naive disregard for its religious dimension are both misdirected zeal. (See Pieris, "Toward an Asian Theology of Liberation," *Asian Theology of Liberation*, 89; "A Theology of Liberation in Asian Churches?" *Ibid.*, 113; "Western Christianity and Asian Buddhism," *Love Meets Wisdom*, 36.)

is often violent and which promises our liberation at the end.” This implies that her “conversion” to ecofeminism is not simply widening, deepening, or in addition to as Sallie McFague describes it; rather, it is a sort of total “renunciation” of the existing paradigms of Latin American liberation theologies. She reproaches liberation theology for not challenging the underlying patriarchal structure of Christianity itself, and thus urges that the anthropological and cosmological basis upon which Christianity itself is built must be changed.²⁹⁾ Ynestra King seems to articulate very well what Ivone Gebara would have meant in her “renunciation” of both Christianity and liberation theology all together:

At this point in history, there is no way to unravel the matrix of oppressions within human society without at the same time liberating nature... All hitherto existing philosophies of liberation... accept the anthropocentric notion that humanity should dominate nature and that the increasing domination of non-human nature is a precondition for true human freedom. No socialist revolution has even fundamentally challenged the basic prototype for the nature/culture dualism - the domination of men over women.³⁰⁾

What does liberation theology have to say to this challenge?

Nature

The God of the poor in liberation theology is also the God of history - history understood as the locus of and the road to God (Minjung theology is also a world-affirming theology, and it strongly affirms that “God acts in history” and in current situations.). In this history-centric hermeneutics, however, the realm of creation/nature is by large excluded or neglected. Liberation theologians, particularly those in Latin America, conceived of history as a process of human liberation and considered freedom as “a

29) Gebara, “Cosmic Theology: Ecofeminism and Panentheism,” 209-210.

30) Ynestra King, “Healing the Wounds: Feminism, Ecology, and the Nature/Culture Dualism,” in *Reweaving the World: The Emergence of Ecofeminism*, eds. Irene Diamond and Gloria Orenstein (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1990), 109.

historical conquest," characterized by a dynamic conception of the human person as the agent of his/her own destiny.³¹⁾ This particular notion of history, which emphasizes human creativity toward the future, is nothing but the nineteenth-century philosophy of history, developed in the lineage of Descartes, Kant, and Hegel which was later taken by Marx within an economic framework and by Teilhard de Chardin within an evolutionary social philosophy.³²⁾ The notion of the poor as a collective and active subject or agent actually comes right from this idea of history.

Liberation theologies in general and Latin American liberation theology in particular are epistemologically indebted to the nineteenth-century European philosophy of history. This philosophy, needless to say, holds a Promethean attitude to nature, in which "conquest of nature" is taken for granted in the idea of history as "conquest of human freedom." In this view, humankind liberates itself in the acquisition of genuine freedom which through work transforms the world/nature. However, as ecofeminists will immediately stand up and point out, such a notion of freedom is typically the idea of "man's freedom" which depends on an ongoing process of "emancipation from nature by the power of [human] reason and rationality."³³⁾ Such a freedom understands human activity as transformation of nature for the sake of unlimited progress without any consideration for the internal logic of nature. Needless to say, this freedom is the freedom of Enlightenment, which is common to both capitalism and socialism.³⁴⁾

In this vein, Moltmann was not wrong to charge Latin American liberation theologians that the liberation in liberation theology is "not Latin American enough" but "too European."³⁵⁾ Deservedly, "even in the light of

31) Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 17-19, 21-22, 24-25, and 56.

32) Hegel wrote in his *Philosophy of History* (837): "The history of the world is none other than the progress of the consciousness of Freedom," and freedom is "the absolute goal of history." (G.W.F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History* [New York: Dover Publications, 1956], 225.)

33) Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva, *Ecofeminism* (New Jersey: Fernwood Publications, 1993), 6.

34) Thus, Moltmann was not wrong to criticize latin American liberation theologians who present the process of liberation in Latin America as "the continuation and culmination of the European history of freedom." (See Moltmann, "An Open Letter to Jose Míguez Bonino," 197-198.

'this' gospel of liberation," as George Tinker, the Native American theologian, criticizes, "indigenous peoples are yet non-persons," for to put the means of production into the hands of the poor eventually makes the poor exploiters of indigenous peoples and their natural resources.³⁶⁾ Accordingly, Latin American liberation theology is viewed by Vine Deloria, Jr., another Native American thinker, as merely "the latest gimmick to keep minority groups circling the wagons with the vain hope that they can eliminate the oppression that surrounds them," without seeking to destroy "the roots of oppression" but merely to change "the manner of oppression."³⁷⁾ Indeed, Ivone Gebara was not wrong to reprimand liberation theology for being only a revolutionary theology "inside the Western patriarchal tradition."³⁸⁾

We have to admit that Third World liberation theologies in general and Latin American liberation theology in particular are theologies of "liberation without creation." However, the biblical memory of liberation includes not just oppressed people, but also oppressed lands; that is, the redemption of humanity and the redemption of the entire created order will be one intertwined story rather than two separate ones.³⁹⁾ In order to destroy

35) Moltmann, "An Open Letter to Jose Miguez Bonino," 196, 200. It is significant to remember that liberation theologians rejected capitalist developmentalism but not the developmentalism itself. Development was rather taken for granted. Both capitalist developmentalism and socialist developmentalism can be seen as "a family quarrel among western ideologies."

36) George Tinker, "The Full Circle of Liberation," in *Ecotheology: Voices from South and North*, David G. Hallman, ed. (Geneva, Switzerland: WCC Publications & Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1994), 220.

37) Deloria, "A Native American Perspective on Liberation," in *Mission Trends*, No.4, 262.

38) Gebara, "The Face of Transcendence as a Challenge to the Reading of the Bible in Latin America," 178. Gebara agrees that liberation theology has surely introduced novelties, especially in the effort to reread theology on the basis of love of the impoverished in Latin America, and to derive practical consequences from it. But, she criticizes this effort for being carried out within patriarchal "orthodoxy" and still retaining the same tradition and the same field of religious imagination that have been present for centuries in Latin American culture.

39) One example is the Jubilee that required the liberation of the poor and land.

the roots of oppression, not merely change the manner of oppression, liberation theology must vigorously incorporate ecology, nature, and creation for serious self-renewal. For the future of liberation theologies in the Third World, liberation theologians must liquidate their intellectual debt to the nineteenth-century European ideology of history, which is mechanistic, triumphalistic, anthropocentric, and androcentric.

Toward a Point of Convergence

“Is there still room for a theology of liberation in the light of the conclusion of liberation struggles in various parts of the Third World?,” asked Frank Chikane in Nairobi, in 1992, at the third general assembly of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT), convened after the collapse of the Berlin Wall.⁴⁰⁾ Indeed, the revolutionary excitement of the 1960s, 70s and 80s has dimmed, and after the *Wende* - the German term that refers to the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 - liberation theologies could not remain the same as they were before. What theological changes, modifications, and renewals have followed after the *Wende*?

Third World liberation theologians have worked hard to renew their theological reflections themselves. I have identified three eye-catching trends within this theological renewal. First, although liberation theologians still believe that the socio-economic aspect of poverty is significant, they began to give new attention to the racial and cultural world, and the discrimination against women.⁴¹⁾ Secondly, they began to speak of the human complexity and ambiguity, warning against even the “idealization of the poor.” The poor are also human beings and as such they participate in grace and sin.⁴²⁾ Thirdly, liberation theologians began to see the significance

40) For more about this EATWOT conference, see K.C. Abraham and Bernadette Mbuy-Beya, eds., *Spirituality of the Third World* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1994).

41) Gutierrez, “Liberation and Development,” in *The Density of the Present*, 130f.

42) Gutierrez, “Liberation Theology and the Future of the Poor” in *Liberating the Future*, 117-118, 123. This is indeed a provocative statement, for it is Gutierrez himself who has insisted persistently that liberation theology must emerge directly from the experience of the oppressed so that Segundo was forced to critique Gutierrez’s theology for its lack of criticism toward popular phenomena. (See Segundo, “Two Theologies of Liberation,” in *Liberation*

of ecology in theological reflections on liberation: For instance, broadening the perspective on social solidarity to include “a respectful relationship with nature,” Gustavo Gutierrez states, “A theology of creation and of life can give much oxygen to the struggle for justice,” and this is “a task that without doubt provides fertile ground for theological reflection on liberation.”⁴³⁾

Indeed, by virtue of these efforts, one of the alarming features of 21st century Christian theology is that liberation theology and ecological theology have moved toward a point of convergence. To give an example, James H. Cone, the “founding father” of North American black theology of liberation, admits that the fight for justice cannot be segregated but must be integrated with the fight for life in all its forms.⁴⁴⁾ Liberation theologians have actually opened themselves and begun to incorporate ecological consciousness as one of their vital concerns. Ecological theologians, too, have made vigorous efforts to incorporate the perspective of justice in their reflection on sustainability. For instance, John B. Cobb, Jr., one of the most articulate theological voices of process and ecological thought today, accepts that there cannot be a reversal of patterns of destroying the Earth that does not involve the liberation and empowerment of oppressed people everywhere as much as there cannot be liberation and empowerment of oppressed people without restoration of the Earth.⁴⁵⁾ Indeed, liberation theology and ecological theology have already taken steps toward a point of convergence.

Theology: A Documentary History, 353.

- 43) Gutierrez, “Liberation theology and the Future of the Poor,” in *Liberating the Future*, 121-122. It is in fact Leonardo Boff who, among many other liberation theologians in Latin America, has firmly endeavored to develop an ecological theology from the perspective of liberation theology. What is noteworthy is that Boff takes ecological reflection as “a second critique of political economy” that can check capitalist developmentalism and correct the Marxist optimism on the development of the forces of production. (See Boff, *Ecology and Liberation*, 89, 115, 117; *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, xi-xii, 3, 4, 11, 68, 101).
- 44) James H. Cone, “Whose Earth Is It, Anyway?,” in *Risks of Faith: The Emergence of a Black Theology of Liberation, 1968-1998* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999), 138.
- 45) John B. Cobb, Jr., *The Earthist Challenge to Economism: A Theological Critique of the World Bank* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, Inc., 1999), 179.

Nonetheless, a question remains: As Paul G. King and David O. Woodyard ask: “Can a theology that is primarily focused on social transformation by infusing the historical order with a Liberative God address ecological disaster *with the same force*?”⁴⁶⁾ I would like to add another question here: Can a theology that is primarily focused on ecological sustainability by infusing the evolutionary order with a deity of cosmic matrix of matter/energy address social injustice *with the same force* as well? Nobody denies the necessity to connect “the cry of the poor” with “the cry of the Earth,” to link the earth’s crisis with the crisis of humanity. Still, the remaining question is how we can ensure the interlocking and interpenetrating connection between liberation theology and ecological theology without diminishing the original forces in each. Unfortunately, as H. Paul Santmire observes, the ecological theologian sometimes falls prey to the traditional romantic danger of submerging the distinctively human dimension of the created order in nature, thereby undercutting the biblical norm of social justice; on the other hand, political/liberation theologians are sometimes prone to the opposite danger, so historicizing their conceptualization of reality that nature comes to be treated, as it generally was in the nineteenth century continental Protestant thought and on into the twentieth century, as a mere stage for history.⁴⁷⁾

I do not think that creation/sustainability and liberation/justice are two separate things. Indeed, as Rosemary R. Ruether affirms, the God/ess who underlies creation and redemption is one and indivisible.⁴⁸⁾ However, to secure and reinforce the perspective of justice, I would like to propose with the late Dorothy Soelle that we interpret creation *in light of liberation*, that we apprehend the creation tradition from a liberation perspective. This way of dialectic, in fact, has a good biblical ground, as Soelle herself explicated:

Biblical faith originated from a historical event of liberation, not from belief in creation. For the people of Israel, the Exodus... was... a “root

46) Paul G. King and David O. Woodyard, *Liberating Nature: Theology and Economics in a New Order* (Cleveland, Ohio: The Pilgrim Press, 1999), 11. Emphases added.

47) H. Paul Santmire, “Ecology, Justice and Theology Beyond the Preliminary Skirmishes,” in *Readings in Ecology and Feminist Theology*, 59.

48) Ruether, *Sexism and God-talk: Toward a Feminist Theology* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983), 215.

experience.” ... In Gerhard von Rad’s opinion, faith in creation was a comparatively late development and decidedly an ancillary and secondary belief... In the words of Coratto, “Genesis is an ‘interpretation’ of Exodus.” ... If liberation precedes creation, then soteriology precedes cosmology... It is not creation that grants us our freedom; rather, we are enabled to understand creation in light of our memory and experience of liberation.⁴⁹⁾

Indeed, the domination of the earth is never unrelated to social domination.⁵⁰⁾ Nature is the product not only of natural evolution but also of human development.⁵¹⁾ This means that nature is a historical actor that interacts with human beings through mutual ecological relations.⁵²⁾ Therefore, as Ruether rightly affirms, “An ecological ethic must always be an ethic of ecojustice that recognizes the interconnection of social domination and domination of nature.”⁵³⁾ In other words, as Korean-born ecofeminist Chung Hyun Kyung puts it, the envisioning of right relationships among God, human beings, and nature cannot just remain at the level of empowering image in a world of poverty, but it “should be incarnated in our people’s struggle for survival and liberation, empowering their life and movement.”⁵⁴⁾ In short, the ecological spirituality - i.e., the union of renewed awe and reverence for God’s presence in nature - should be accompanied by the prophetic demand that all God’s creatures have their rightful share in the flourishing of life.⁵⁵⁾

Creation faith *alone* is susceptible to the danger of “cheap reconciliation,” whereby we are asked to live as if we did not require freeing from present, unjust orders, as if the God of creation/nature had triumphed over the God of liberation/history.⁵⁶⁾ I strongly believe that we

49) Dorothee Soelle, *To Work and To Love: A Theology of Creation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 7-11.

50) Ruether, *Gaia and God* (HarperSanFrancisco, 1992), 2f.

51) Ruether, “Toward an Ecological-Feminist Theology of Nature,” in *Readings in Ecology and Feminist Theology*, 89, 93.

52) Merchant, “Ecofeminism and Feminist Theory,” 105.

53) Ruether, “Toward an Ecological-Feminist Theology of Nature,” 93.

54) Chung Hyun Kyung, “Ecology, Feminism and African and Asian Spirituality: Towards a Spirituality of Eco-Feminism,” in *Ecotheology*, 177f.

55) Ruether, *God and the Nations*, 91.

must move beyond a mere ecological rhetoric of interconnectedness. “Restoring and deepening connection” alone cannot be the commitment to the correction of historical injustices, for the real problem is not that we are disconnected at all but that we are *badly* connected after all. What we need is therefore “a socially and historically responsible ecocentrism.”⁵⁷⁾ What we desperately need is “a liberated and liberating relationship,”⁵⁸⁾ i.e., the right relationship among all beings based on justice.

Conclusion

Liberation theologies are the articulated cry of the oppressed, and they were born when “faith confronted the injustice done to the poor”⁵⁹⁾; and, as such, they exist wherever there is oppression. As long as the poor are with us, as long as oppression remains with them, we need such theologies whose foundational insight is the biblical inspiration of “the intimate relationship between the God of life, the poor, and liberation.”⁶⁰⁾ In this sense, I believe

56) Soelle, *Ibid.*, 7-11. As Larry L. Rasmussen affirms, unlike many others in the god-rich world of the ancient near East, the Hebrew God was not recognized as simply a power or force in the universe which transcended human powers and suffused all nature with its energy; rather, this sacred power was a moral force that rejected the inevitability of oppression and injustice and commanded and made possible transformation of the world on the terms of community. “God is the uncreated energy of the created, energy-suffused universe,” says Rasmussen; and yet, this God is “a power-sharing God.” The *raison d’être* of the sacred itself is nothing less than marking, evoking and channeling extraordinary power; therefore, whatever else theology of life, nature, or cosmos might mean, it must invoke moral responsibility on the part of human beings. (Larry L Rasmussen, “Theology of Life and Ecumenical Ethics,” in *Ecotheology: Voices from South and North*, ed. David G. Hallman (Geneva, Switzerland: WCC Publications & Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1994), 113, 24-125.)

57) Catherine Keller, “Women against Wasting the World: Notes on Eschatology and Ecology,” in *Reweaving the World*, 262.

58) Call for Jubilee Year 1998, *African and Asian Spirituality (Cosmic and Indigenous): New Awareness and Orientation*, Consultation Statement, Colombo, June 18-25, 1992 (Quezon City, Philippines: Milcar Enterprises), 22.

59) Leonardo and Clodovis Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology*, 3.

60) Leonardo Boff, *Ecology and Liberation*, 120.

that liberation theologies are not circumstantial theologies but contextual theologies that have universal implications. After all, did Jesus not say that “For you always have the poor[/Minjung] with you”? (Mark 14:7) A Theology of the poor/Minjung, by the poor/Minjung, and for the poor/Minjung will always be with us, if Jesus’ words are true.

Let me conclude my paper by quoting David K. Suh who best captures what Korean Minjung Liberation Theology was, is, and shall be:

Theology of minjung or minjung theology is an accumulation and articulation of theological reflections on the political experiences of Christian students, laborers, the press, professors, farmers, writers and intellectuals as well as theologians in Korea in the 1970s. It is a theology of the oppressed in the Korean political situation, a theological response to the oppressors, and it is the response of the oppressed to the Korean church and its mission. Theology of minjung is a socio-political biography of Korean Christians in the 1970s. This is the way in which Korean Christians have lived and acted, prayed and participated in the Lord’s Supper. It was a search for a contextual theology in Asia.⁶¹⁾

Minjung theology is one of the liberation theologies, and it is a contextual as well as political theology, for it is to do with the liberation politics of God.⁶²⁾ Of course, theologies like this will not sound nice, will not smell good to many; what is more, these theologies, whose basic inspiration is a faith that transforms history will not be acceptable by all. Indeed, this approach to theology from the viewpoint of the poor/Minjung and suffering of the world was destined from the very beginning to generate opposition and conflict from other sectors of society that seek to maintain the status quo or even to increase their share of economic and political powers.

Nevertheless, Korean people and Christians will continue to live, act, pray, and participate in the struggle for justice and sustainability. They will continue to search for a more nuanced contextual and political theology in

61) David K. Suh, “Minjung and Theology in Korea: A Biographical Sketch of an Asian Theological Consultation,” 18.

62) David K. Suh, “Telling a Story of Doing Theology in Asia: Korean Minjung Theology,” Tainan Seminary and College/SEAGST, June 14, 2004.

Asia. What is good to know is that such a theology of liberation is now more urgent than ever and a radical aspiration for integral liberation of the poor still remains a valid vision and daunting task *in light of* the contemporary challenges from economic neoliberalism, globalization and the “Empire.”⁶³⁾

63) Regarding economic neoliberalism and globalization, refer to the author’s article: Yoon-Jae Chang, “Economic Globalization and the Neo-liberalism of F.A. Hayek: A Theological Critique,” in *QUEST*, Vol. 2, No. 2, November 2003.

Abstract

Is there a future for Third World liberation theologies in general and Korean Minjung Theology in particular? Are they not dead after the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989 along with the arrival of “New World Order” defined by economic neoliberalism, globalization, and the “Empire”? After recapitulating the history of development of liberation theologies, particularly by recapturing the significant hermeneutical ruptures that took place in the paradigm shifts from traditional theologies to liberation theologies as well as from liberation theologies to ecological and feminist theologies, the author argues that in order to ensure the interlocking and interpenetrating connection between liberation theologies and ecological theologies, we interpret the creation tradition from a liberation perspective, and that this kind of a more nuanced contextual and political theology of liberation is now more urgent than ever as people continue to live, act, and participate in the struggle for justice and sustainability.

Key Words

liberation, creation, nature, women, ecofeminism, sustainability, option for the poor, kingdom of God, minjung, and contextual theology

Korean Minjung Women's Liberative Hermeneutics of Praxis

HyeRan Kim-Cragg*

Introduction

It is impossible for me to do justice to the Korean Minjung Women's perspective and their praxis in this limited space and with my little knowledge. However, this paper attempts to provide a brief (yet a clear, hopefully) picture of Korean Christian Minjung women's praxis in terms of their contextualizing (action) and theologizing efforts (faith). Since there are not much literature on Christian Minjung women, this paper heavily depends upon the publications of the Korean Association of Women Christian for Women Minjung (KAWCWOM). To review this most recent literature, I believe, is an important task for understanding the liberative hermeneutics of Korean Christian Minjung Women. It can be said that KAWCWOM has contributed to constructing Korean feminist

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theology from Minjung women's perspectives from a range of various denominations.

While introducing KAWCWOM's work as interpreted by some feminist theologians I will elaborate the doubled identities of Minjung women and draw insights for liberative hermeneutics for this group's praxis in the concluding section.

Identity of "Minjung" as Minjung Women

KAWCWOM began its journey as a women's Christian organization in 1986 in response to the Korean democracy liberation movement. Its first members were also the members of the social committee within the Korean Association of Women Theologians (KAWT) which was particularly concerned about democracy and economic injustice at that time. From its beginning, KAWCWOM had its identity expressed in its logo, "Jesus, Women, Minjung." Although there were many debates and disagreements surrounding what to call themselves, KAWCWOM emphasized "Minjung Women," according to Han Kook-Yom.¹⁾ To emphasize "Minjung" means that the organization places those women who are economically marginalized (e.g. women workers), and socially marginalized (e.g. single mothers) as theological subjects. By enhancing this disadvantaged group as theological subjects KAWCWOM fundamentally challenges the traditional way of doing theology, initiated by the upper-middle class (mostly male) elites. Park Kyung-Mi points out this as she claims that the ethos of the Jesus movement is **not to make Minjung as the recipients of social welfare but to foster them as the Subjects of their life** as they voluntarily help one another and share what they have.²⁾ Furthermore, this organization is aware that the "Minjung" (as a theological subject) is neither a unitary group nor an exclusion of certain women. The praxis of the KAWCWOM,

1) Han Kook-Yom, "Like the women around Jesus," in *The History of Life Written by Their Feet, 20 Years of Korean Association of Women Christian For Women Minjung (KAWCWOM)*, KAWCWOM, ed. (Seoul: Korean Christian Literature Society, 2007), 27. Having acknowledged its difference, that is, MinJung Women emphasizes "MinJung," class issue and "Women MingJung," focusing on gender issue, this paper will use both terms interchangeably.

2) Park Kyung-Mi, "The Ethos of Jesus Movement and KAWCWOM," in *The History*, 72. Emphasis mine.

in other words, extends to embrace those of who are from broken families, delinquent teen-age youth, disabled, abused victims, foreign migrant workers, to name just few. Lee Eun-Sun shares her experience of meeting so many different people who are involved in and benefited from KAWCWOM's work as she reviews materials and interviews people from KAWCWOM for the last 20 years.³⁾ It is no wonder, then, to discover KAWCWOM leaders and members practicing their faith in the context of shelters for delinquent teenagers and homeless women, and in centres for disabled. These women leaders, while moving beyond their gender-oriented perspective, have embraced those who are powerless so that they could be empowered.

Moreover, being centred in "Minjung Women" means that dealing with poverty and class issues, or in other words economic injustice issues, is KAWCWOM's major mission. "The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor" (Isaiah 61:1). KAWCWOM interpreted this passage as the one that paved the way of Jesus' first ministry after his 40 day-wilderness experience and decided to work for proclaiming good news to the poor as its priority mission.⁴⁾ We can draw an insight here of their principle of biblical hermeneutics that is praxis-oriented for the poor. With this biblical foundation, KAWCWOM proposes an alternative, "voluntary spirituality of poverty and sustainable life of Minjung women," while challenging current neo-colonial consumer-driven globalization.⁵⁾

Such liberative and alternative hermeneutics, however, requires a deeper understanding of the current economic order often referred to as globalization. Park notes that the current situation of globalization and its effect is actually similar to the Hellenistic globalization which swept

3) Lee Eun-Sun, "Experiencing the Coming of Korean Women Christ," in *The History*, 78.

4) Bae Young-Mi, "The Process of Making the Journal, 'Good News,'" in *Good News* (Winter 2002): 38-42. Bae points out the fact that the changing of the name of the journal over the first 10 years implies a quest for this group's identity. To decide on "Good News" as its name indicates their mission to focus on the poor as per Jesus' reading of Isaiah.

5) Lee, "Experiencing," 89. In 2002 the group decided to study the meaning of "voluntary poverty," questioning whether poverty is not just an economic matter but also a spiritual matter.

through Palestine in the 1st century.⁶⁾ Therefore, efforts need to be made to analyze the context of the Jesus movement and to interpret it in the context of KAWCWOM's vision for the 21st Century in order for us to fight against current imperialism and to propose a more just approach based upon the volunteer community movement. Her analysis of the 1st century globalization context in comparison with the 21st century context which drew on the work of Karl Polanyi and Richard Horsley, however informative and innovative it is, was not easy to understand for Minjung women. At the meeting with the authors (feminist theologians) and the leaders who were involved in publishing this project, some confessed that it was difficult to read and to understand.⁷⁾ This comment challenges us, then, **to develop an educational project that may draw insights from both ancient and contemporary world economic orders in such a way as to be accessible to ordinary (possibly not well-educated) Minjung women.** The pedagogy of Paulo Freire may be useful to consider and employ here.⁸⁾ This does not mean, however, that the academic research is unnecessary. While continuing to theologize and theorize complicated and multi-layered contexts in an academic manner we also need to make special efforts to find channels and methods that can communicate with groups of women in a more everyday language.⁹⁾ **The work of searching for such channels and developing educational methods, I believe, is the work of liberative hermeneutics and praxis, itself.**

6) Park, "The Ethos," 37.

7) The Epilogue Meeting, "The Place Where Life and Literature Meets," in *The History*, 199.

8) Paulo Freire, *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, translated by Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: Continuum, 1985).

9) Musa W. Dube, "Divining Ruth for International Relations," in *Other Ways of Reading: African Women and the Bible*, ed. Musa W. Dube (Atlanta/Geneva: Society of Biblical Literature/WCC Publications, 2001), 179-95. Dora R. Mbuwayesango, "How Local Divine Power Were Suppressed: A Case of Mwari of the Shona," in *Other Ways of Reading: African Women and the Bible*, ed. Musa W. Dube (Atlanta/Geneva: Society of Biblical Literature/WCC Publications, 2001), 63-77. Both Dube and Mbuwayesango attempt to use a method that is derived from ordinary people (Botswana and Zimbabwe's) daily life and language in order for the ordinary to interpret the Bible.

The Identity of Women as “MinJung Women.”

Although KAWCWOM underlined the importance of the Minjung identity, their gender identity as women was also critical from its very beginning. Choi Young-Sil claims that the birth of KAWCWOM resulted from the fact that the progressive movement of Korean male leaders in the 1980s did not pay attention to the reality of Minjung women who were the “Minjung of the Minjungs.”¹⁰⁾ While looking at the reality of Korean women who have suffered from colonialism, division of the peninsula, militarism, and patriarchy in society as well as discrimination against women in churches, we can easily see why these women are called as such. To enhance gender identity in the process of forming the Minjung women identity has enabled many women to work together in solidarity. This solidarity is a fragile reality with many challenges. Park No-Sook, the president of this organization, shares her story of listening to one of the members' stories who had to leave the organization because she could not find a cheap place to live nearby.¹¹⁾ Her poverty prevented her from participating in KAWCWOM. As the leader of this group, Park felt helpless and faced the distrust or even resentment from the members towards those who have more than themselves.

Kim Eun-Hye warns of the danger of homogenizing women's gender identity as if it only comes from biological difference. In order to be free from such danger, she claims, we need to re-discover women's spirituality (including feminist spirituality) embedded in life-centred spirituality enhancing care, nurture, and relationship.¹²⁾ To some extent, however, women's spirituality, although it does not belong to women exclusively, contains such features of femininity as giving birth, being mothers, and being responsible for “SahlLim” (a Korean word meaning house managing, a typical role of women for the most part even in this day). Kim further

10) Choi Young-Sil, “With Minjung Women, being Minjung Women,” in *The History*, 157.

11) Park No-Sook, “Do You Know My Life?” in *Women Who Are Plowing the Bottom Place*, KAWCWOM ed. (Seoul: KAWCWOM Publications, 2001), 124.

12) Kim Eun-Hye, “The 21st century women spirituality and the spirituality of life,” in *The History*, 141.

ponders the Korean meaning of “SahlLim” and its connotation for “giving life” or “keeping life alive.”¹³⁾ SahlLim, in other words, is more than house cleaning, cooking, washing, and raising children. **It is a work encompassing all the activities of valuing life, caring for life, nurturing life, and connecting with life. However invisible or tribal it is considered, however undervalued or humiliating it may be, the work of “SahlLim” is sacred work because it values life the foremost and serves the Divine, the Creator in a most fundamental way.** Kim attempts here to develop a liberative hermeneutics, reflecting on the Jesus movement as a work of doing trivial and humble jobs, jobs which many Minjung women do. While doing such humble work as playing with kids, cooking rice, doing dishes, feeding mouths, putting children to bed, and washing the floor all day long, these women realize that this ordinary work is a holy work because it sustains, renews, and recreates life.

Conculsion: Insights for Liberative Hermeneutics from Minjung Women

We have thus far introduced the work of KAWCWOM and their identification with Minjung women. We learned that to emphasize the socio-religio-economic identity of Minjung is equally to underline gender identity. An insight drawn from this finding is, therefore, that their theology, their theological reflection and practice, cannot be fully understood without considering the multiple identities that are pertinent to the complicated contexts of Korea. The task of articulating the differences among Minjung women and coping with challenges that arise because of these differences, as briefly mentioned above, is critical in envisioning KAWCWOM’s future tasks.

The second insight that can be drawn from this Minjung women’s work is that a future direction for liberative hermeneutics lies ahead, leading them into the promised land as subjects who can assert their identity with confidence and self-esteem. Choi sums up this point well, “the ultimate goal of KAWCWOM is not simply helping those women but empowering them as subjects of their life rather than being powerless, as they together fight for justice.”¹⁴⁾ This task of fostering self-confidence and self-esteem against the

13) *Ibid.*, 143.

stereo-typing of Minjung women as inferior and hopeless is important.

Finally, the insight drawn from the work of KAWCWOM is a spirituality of suffering and life. This spirituality is a spirituality leading them to move around lower places for lower people. Kim Eun-Hye calls it "a nomadic spirituality" as they keep moving to find the needy people and places.¹⁵⁾ As Jesus movement went down towards the lower people, those from KAWCWOM, went down to be with Korean Minjung women and children. The journey of finding lower people led KAWCWOM to encounter those foreign immigrant workers, who are becoming "Minjung of the Minjungs" in this day and age in Korea. Here we can identify that Korean liberative hermeneutics of Minjung women goes beyond nation, class, and gender. It extends across divisions of race and ethnicity. KAWCWOM provides a profound insight to us here by asserting, "Bordering, dividing countries, is a human-made hypocritical reality, the place where we live is, in fact, one co-living sharing place."¹⁶⁾

In conclusion, liberative hermeneutics of Minjung women's praxis is enriched as those of us who are in solidarity with Minjung women's struggles for full humanity raise awareness of multiple identities and their differences within Minjung women, empower them as theological subjects, and explore their spirituality of life that overcomes national barriers and sustains all creation.

14) Choi, "With Minjung Women," 162.

15) Kim, "The 21st century women spirituality," 125

16) <http://www.kosian.co.kr>

Abstract

Much Christian feminist work has been carried out in Korea over the last three decades. This work has contributed to empowering Korean Christian women and enhancing their self-esteem. However, not much work has been done for Korean Christian women who are Minjung, identified as women who are socially, economically, and politically marginalized. This paper attempts to draw attention to these women as it examines one of the most updated publications of the Korean Association of Women Christian for Women Minjung (KAWCWOM). KAWCWOM, an ecumenical and long-standing organization, has contributed to constructing Korean feminist theology from Minjung women's perspectives, while participating in the action of bringing democracy, peace and justice. One of the purposes this article is to describe what Korean Christian Minjung women do and say to make sense of their faith from where they stand, or in other words, how they contextualize their theology. This is an important task for understanding the liberative hermeneutics of Korean Christian Minjung Women. As a way of framing KAWCWOM's work this paper will elaborate the doubled identities of Minjung women and draw insights in hopes of contributing to the liberation of Minjung women. Finally, this paper argues that the liberating meaning of Minjung women's lives comes from their struggles for full humanity. This struggle occurs in the context of multiple identities, the differences between Minjung women. Raising awareness of these differences and multiple identities empowers these women as theological subjects to explore their life-centered spirituality. Most importantly, liberative hermeneutics of Minjung women's praxis is not limited to one nation or gender but overcomes all barriers so that it sustains all creation.

Key Words

Minjung women, praxis, hermeneutics, voluntary spirituality of poverty, life-centred spirituality, multiple identities, Korean feminist theology

Combatting the Global Empire

: Exploring a Theology of Resistance and Subversion

I. John Mohan Razu*

Introduction

In this paper I will in the **First section** explain how the United States emerged as an empire¹⁾ and advanced its vision; one which is gradually

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1) The initial controversy over the use of the word “empire” in relation to American power is over. Increasingly in the mainstream media and in political discourse, the concept of “empire” and “Pax Americana,” is frequently and prominently mentioned. The shift in terminology of “dominance” to “hegemony” and “empire” is significant because it highlights the classic concept of direct political control by an imperial centre. Of course, the mechanics of implementing the empire are not the same as the past where vulgar territorial conquests have been replaced by security guarantees, treaty obligations, small wars, and open-ended peace-keeping and nation-building operations. Yet, the underlying logic of empire remains the same. Empires operate, not in terms of conducting relations with states, but prevailing over the relations amongst states; i.e., empires try to abolish the structural anarchy of the international system by assimilating states

being realized. This empire doctrine is aided by the neo-liberal market economy that has taken place in the world in the last two decades. Therefore, the world empire envisioned by the U.S. and global capital connive and thus translate this vision through different means and mechanisms. In the **Second section**, I will deal with conceptual and theoretical clarifications of the terms 'subversion' and 'resistance' that are to be considered as bases for a theology of resistance and subversion. In the

into an overarching order.

Further the empire is built on increasing and expanding military relationships of various kinds with a number of countries as well as stationing hundreds of thousands of US troops around the world. These military bases, numbering hundreds, are today's version of the imperial colonies of the world. For further reference, see Ninan Koshy, "The global empire: an overview," *EMPIRE, Reformed World*, Vol. 56, 4 (December 2006): 335-347.

Similarly, Muto Ichiyo, states that empire is the appropriate concept to help comprehend the global situation since the end of the World War II. In other words, the American hegemony in the post-World War II world was largely shaped and can be characterized as imperial hegemony, instead of imperialist hegemony. For more details, refer to his article, "The American empire in historical perspective," *Ibid.*, 348-354.

In this paper I use the term Empire both as a noun indicating the present U.S. hegemonic order and also as an adjective as being distinct from the word imperial for the reason that these two have distinct characteristics and mechanics of operation. For instance, of course, the mechanics of implementing empire today are different from what they have been in the past: vulgar territorial conquest has been generally - but not always - replaced by security guarantees, treaty obligations, forward deployments, small wars, and open-ended peace-keeping and nation-building operations. Yet the underlying logic of empire remains the same. Empires operate, not in terms of conducting relations *with* states, but in terms of prevailing over the relations *among* states; that is, empires try to abolish the structural anarchy of the international system by assimilating states into an overarching order.

Concurring with the above quotation, Richard Falk says,

USA is by circumstance and design an emergent global empire, the first in the history of the world. Prior empires had frontiers and boundaries, although occupying large expanses of territory, frontiers and boundaries, although occupying large expanses of territory, and exercised control from a distant centre that due to available technologies of communication and transportation were further away in time than is any part of the global world from Washington.

Last section, I will explore the resistive and subversive movements' dynamic rooted on praxis as a countervailing theology to the growing phenomenon of empire-expansion.

Mapping the Global Empire: An Overview & Analysis

Empire is one of the most prominent terms, a common vocabulary and an accent of our times. Over the last 120 years preceding the end of the Cold War, there was never the kind of domination exercised over the sovereignty of nation-states that the U.S. exercises today. In conjunction with this, Joseph Nye, Dean of Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, wrote in *The Washington Post*, "Not since Rome has one nation loomed so large above the others. Indeed the word 'empire' has come out of the closet."²) When we re-visit world history, Britain was the dominant imperial power from 1870 to the First World War. Between the First and Second World Wars, Britain and France lost their dominance and were challenged by the U.S., Germany, Japan and the Union of the Socialist Soviet Republic (U.S.S.R.). After 1945, U.S. dominance was challenged by the Soviet Union ideologically-politically-strategically-militarily. Interestingly, despite total devastation and humiliation in World War II, Japan and Germany resurged economically.

The end of the Cold War and the collapse of the former U.S.S.R. gave the U.S. the space to exercise an absolute power that has never been witnessed by any one single country within the nation-states system. This has erased all kinds of speculation and uncertainty about the Post-Cold War era. Those voices who had argued for establishing a new, egalitarian, just, humane order and for deploying co-operative forms of security arrangements with other countries were silenced. Consensus emerged amongst the American military and financial establishments that the U.S. must consolidate and expand the hegemony it enjoys after the Post-Cold War scenario. Differences arose in terms of tactics, means and methods, but not with respect to the strategic goal or direction itself.

The global scenario has changed. The current global canvass portrays entirely a different arrangement and order. Zbigniew Brzezinski with

2) Cf. Ninan Koshy, "The Empire: Some Preliminary Reflections," *QUEST*, 3. 2 (November 2004): 65.

characteristic bluntness has divided today's world of unique American hegemony into "vassals" (all of Western Europe and Japan), "tributaries" (most of the rest), and those who by virtue of capabilities or inclinations must be more carefully watched as potential challengers. These are Russia, China and Iran but not India, whose elite is thoroughly Americanized and where the NRI factor provides additional powerful glue for ensuring that it becomes a strong "tributary" with ambitions, however, to becoming a "vassal."³⁾

By looking into the trajectories of history that took place in the twentieth century, it was undoubtedly termed as the "American Century." Neo-conservatives can see themselves as 'victors' by the way in which the re-ordering of Europe and the Pacific was carried out. Further, the Pacific was once again re-ordered after the surrender of Germany and Japan, followed by Eastern and Central Europe who went through a process of reformulation after the collapse of the Soviet Union. All these configurations culminated in the model for a new world order carefully designed and executed under the aegis of the United States.

The empire adventures in Afghanistan and Iraq at the beginning of the 21st century clearly posit U.S. military and cultural dominance. The U.S. exhibited to the world at large that empire rule consists of control over the internal and external policies of weaker nations. In today's era of asymmetric warfare, military might is the determining factor more than ever before. The maxim that dominates today's world is "wars that can make the world better." The empire doctrine pulled down Saddam Hussein's regime, which is a supposedly sufficient argument for the justification of waging war. This doctrine was conceived and developed by neo-conservatives long before the terror attacks on the twin towers. Cleverly manipulated mass-psychology of 9/11 certainly helped to create the initial climate in which the new doctrine found widespread support followed by an improvised version of a "war against terrorism." This has given a new twist and a new phenomenon moving beyond conventional warfare where an economy could be attacked and seized.

The new doctrine clearly points to hegemonic unilateralism with a justification of self-defense. But this demands new burdens of proof. The

3) For more details see Achin Vanaik "Building a World Empire-II," *The Hindu* (16.1.2002): 10.

forces of the empire convinced a section of the global public sphere that Saddam had weapons of mass destruction and was in contact with the Al-Qaeda. Having failed to provide evidence, the Bush doctrine failed also to offer a plausible explanation for the preventive use of military force but rather opted for a pre-emptive strike. In this way, the Bush doctrine offered new legitimacy for the pursuit of an empire world order. By pulling down Saddam's regime in Iraq, Empire and its allies seem to have established a global order that "symbolizes" a new arrangement for that region.

Nonetheless, the way in which the empire went about its task of expansion, both in monetary and military terms, provides a link in the chain in bringing about a new world order. The empire claims that it tends to replace the ineffective human rights policy, irrelevant polity of some nation-states, and the out-moded functioning of the world organizations such as UNO, and thus justifies its unilateral role in the world to-day. The emergent empire kept aside the individual and collective moral appeals because of its immunity to the individual scenes and ghastly images of death, destruction and devastation caused by the war. However, were there reasons to justify the war in Afghanistan and Iraq? Although there were no reason-based justifications through international law and instruments, the Bush doctrine of empire building replaced the international covenants and statutes by the unilateral world-ordering politics of a self-legitimized hegemony.

Empirical projections clearly show that the American vision of an empire is cleverly devised and articulated. As envisioned, its tentacles are moving and spreading across the world. Over the last few years the "war on terrorism" has mutated into the more generic "war on terror." By using this generic term the Bush doctrine clearly sends a signal that "either you are with the empire or with the enemies."

It is apparent that the emergent world order has generated vigorous debates all over. Some look at the recent phenomenon as positive, while others view it as disastrous. The neo-cons look at it with optimism because the U.S.-led empire 'unilaterally' takes over the 'global mandate' that extends absolute power to intervene in the affairs of any country on the pretext of dismantling tyrannical, dictatorial regimes, military juntas, and weapons proliferation for the promotion of human rights and establishment of democracy and global stability. The critics look at the emergence of the American empire as a serious threat to democracy, civil society and the sovereignty of nation-states, especially weaker nations and international

organizations/ institutions.

The consolidation of American empire power that is gained by its military might is strengthened by its collusion with the global capital and the forces of market economy. The empire and capital collude and connive with one another. Therefore they need to be viewed as the two sides of the same coin. The current market-ushered economic order is overwhelmingly a web of power complexes consisting of handful of wholly unaccountable corporate oligarchs having scant respect for corporate social responsibility. In such an arrangement, markets assume greater power and those in control become the economic actors and others continue as non-economic actors standing outside the market forces. The uncontrolled and unregulated market is nothing but an alibi of the empire. Neo-liberalism thus serves as the sharp cutting edge of the monstrous international economic and political power of the empire-capital. In a world of neo-liberal economic order two hundred giant transnational corporations clutch global business in their grip and thus control global trade and investments. More accurately,

The Mega Corporation in its headlong drive for world supremacy embodies the grim exploitative complex - economic, political, military, cultural - of world corporate power and its sectoral distribution. Compounding the power of the global corporation is the underpinning by NATO's military reprisal capability. They straddle the spectrum of economic activity: from manufacturing to banking; wholesaling to retailing; from large plantation agriculture to every conceivable niche of licit and illicit financial services. In the real world of big banking finance and insurance the phony distinctions between clean and dirty money have long since been obliterated.⁴⁾

Capital in the twenty-first century has assumed new forms and expresses itself in amazing ways. Capital and empire have become part and parcel of the grand design of U.S. empire building. To substantiate,

...the implication is clear. There is an integral relationship between American-style free market economics and American security in the

4) Frederic Clairmont, "The Global Corporation: Road to Serfdom," *Economic and Political Weekly* (January 8, 2000): 26.

world. Globalization and imperial security go together. Global capitalism, enforced militarily if need, is integral to empire building.⁵⁾

The United States usurps power with unequivocal claim, posing as the only power on earth that can save the world from terrorism. Accordingly, the United States along with its allies employs all forms of tactics to act unilaterally against any nation that defies them by both military and economic intervention. In the name of “war on terror” the United States unleashes its military power and thus enforces global comity to follow the free-market ideology of global capitalism. The modes employed, the strategies followed, policies pursued and ideology used are toward building ‘one world,’ ‘one economic unit,’ ‘one culture’ and ‘one language’ under the American empire.

To prove this point, President George Bush in his opening remark on the National Security Strategy of the USA said, “The United States will use this moment of opportunity (i.e. the war on terrorism) to bring democracy, development, free market and free trade to every corner of the world.”⁶⁾ In a similar vein, Klaus Schwab, President of the World Economic Forum echoes that “The events of September 11 are a turning point to international economic and political order and to the globalization process itself.”⁷⁾ The current phase of globalization manifests entirely the grand scheme and vision of global capitalism and American empire respectively. It is a turbo that unleashes a tremendous force and power. Force is an integral part to the process of globalization.

Therefore the ‘invisible hand’ and the ‘invisible fist’ are inter-locked in such a way that global capital could maximize its profits only if its affiliates and subsidiaries are duly protected. For this it needs the support of the empire. The United States has been using its hegemony for its economic and political expansion. In the name of democracy, growth, development, human rights, progress and prosperity, all the nations of the world are forced to follow the neo-liberal economic principles of free market and free trade. The doctrines of the neo-liberals and neo-cons have infiltrated into the

5) Ninan Koshy, “The Empire: Some Preliminary Reflections,” 75.

6) Quoted from Ninan Koshy, “The Present Phase of Globalization,” *QUEST*, 2.2 (November 2003): 75.

7) *Ibid.*, 75.

domains of global economy and geo-politics. U.S. oligarchs and their Foundations with enormous money power have set up think tanks and bought up ideologues by setting up business schools and transforming university economics departments into bastions of almost totalitarian neo-liberal thinking. For example, the Heritage Foundation, the Hoover Institute, the American Enterprise Institute and many others in the United States, the Institute of Economic Affairs, the Centre for Policy Studies and the Adam Smith Institute in the United Kingdom are all involved in promoting this project.

“Resistance” and “Subversion” as Ethical Categories & Bases: A Rationale

In such a scenario, how do we discern the global empire? What are the ways by which we measure and on whose side is God whom we affirm and profess? Both the President of the United States as well the victims invoke God by saying that “God is on their side” ! What are the bases by which we discern God’s presence and intervention in history? So what does public power mean in the Age of Empire? Does it mean anything at all? Does it actually exist? More importantly, has Christianity exhausted its avenues of resistance against life-negating forces? Do we have any resources of hope? These are the questions that surface before us.

The context clearly portrays that defiance cannot be expected by the governments; it can only be enforced by people who link hands across national borders. So when we speak of public power in the Age of Empire, I mean the power of a dissenting public, a public that disagrees with the concept of empire building. What are the avenues of protests available to people who wish to resist the Empire? Mass and peoples’ movements in the secular world keep protesting and are involved in subversive actions locally, nationally and globally based on their ideological and political convictions. By resistance I do not mean only to express dissent, but to force effective change.

In this historical, ideological, and theological situation, where global empire claims absolute power and total control over and against the sovereignty of God and gospel claims, a mandate is called for - a mandate that is critical and necessary for the integrity of our faith and one that warrants a faith stance. As theologians, the emergent context warrants us to

respond to the empire-building design of the United States. Therefore, one of the pragmatic and plausible options before us is to construct a context-based theology which would play a supportive and contributive role to those mass resistive and subversive movements that are engaged in thwarting the nefarious designs of the U.S.-led empire building in different parts of the world today. A Christian theology of resistance and subversion must take the form of a counter-discipline to empire. Theology of resistance and subversion could even perhaps be considered as a natural continuum to liberation theology.

Before entering into that domain, I would like to clarify the definitional and conceptual meanings and understandings of “resistance” and “subversion.” For me, **subversion**⁸⁾ and **resistance** are moral categories. It is important to know the meaning and content of these categories.

Orlando Fals-Borda**, an organic intellectual, an active protestant layman committed to social change, and a leading Colombian sociologist was invited to join other notable intellectuals such as Buckminster Fuller, Norman Cousins, Lester Pearson, Pietro Nenni, Jan Tinbergen, and others to a consultation group on the future of the United Nations. He declined to be part of this by citing as one of his reasons the urgent need to return to Colombia in order to contribute “as far as I can, to the liberating effort to make my country a better place for its people, and to its search for autonomy and dignity. For me this task is of the highest priority.”⁹⁾ He happens to be an ardent follower of fellow sociologist, Camilo Torres, whom he labels “a moral subversive.” However, Fals-Borda’s life has

8) **‘Subversion’** is perhaps a more difficult term to justify since it is often conjures up ideas of armed or violent protest and revolution. There is little, if any, call to armed resistance in the Old Testament. The tendency is to overthrow of powers deemed evil to God, although there is a good deal of quiet satisfaction gained from contemplation of just what it is he will do to them, with, or without, the help of human agencies. However, ‘subversion’ means literally ‘overturning,’ from the Latin *subvertere*. I have used it to describe the criticism, which seeks to deny the validity of the claims to power of those in power (cf. Rex Manson, *Propaganda and Subversion in the Old Testament* (London: SPCK, 1997), 174.

**Orlando Fals-Borda, an organic intellectual and an active protestant layman committed for social change.

9) Denis Goulet, *A New Moral Order* (Maryknoll, New York, Orbis Books, 1974), 52.

exemplified three crucial choices:

- 1) To be a detached scholar or an active revolutionary intellectual.
- 2) To be an institutionally successful professional or a marginalized outcast. (One thinks instinctively here of Byron's tragic figure, "self-exiled Harold.")
- 3) To be a "maker of history" or a Christian witness to transcendence.¹⁰⁾

The above scheme sets a stage for theological dilemmas and political choices. The labelling of those who are against empire as "terrorists," "militants," "anarchists," and "subversionists" is to justify the nefarious design of empire. Those who challenge, resist and subvert injustices, exploitation and unjust order are branded as terrorists. These utterances and attributes are value-loaded and ought to be de-mystified. "Accordingly, subversion, as newly defined, is the moving power behind a wide range of efforts at radical correction of social ills."¹¹⁾

However, "Change becomes subversive only when it is fostered by rebel groups committed to the transition from one social order to another."¹²⁾ We have a number of people who belong to this stream, namely, Gandhi, Bhagat Singh, Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King Jr., Paulo Freire, Fidel Castro, Mao, Guevara, Ho Chi Minh, Marighela, Cabral, Torres, and Bonhoeffer.¹³⁾ Their models of resistance and subversion are of course profoundly moral as evidenced in their lives, witness, writings and sacrifices so that others may have life in all its abundance. "Hence the counter violence they are obliged to employ does not destroy social welfare; rather, it removes obstacles to the construction of authentic social good..."¹⁴⁾ On these lines, Fals-Borda warns,

The guardians of the established order often forget that many

10) *Ibid.*, 53.

11) *Ibid.*, 57.

12) *Ibid.*,

13) To counter the state violence, the victims employ arms or "non-violent" means to realize the hopes and aspirations of the victims. Although the non-violent espouses physical non-violence it violates the mechanisms of the oppressor causing psychological violence and physical impotence toward the oppressive forces.

14) Denis Goulet, 62.

subversives have in time become the heroes of a new society and the saints of a revitalised Church. Their attitudes and beliefs had not been accepted in their own time because these threatened vested interests. With historical perspective, the anti-social elements are seen to be others: those who defend an unjust social order, believing it to be just only because it is traditional.¹⁵⁾

Subversion has been defined and explained by the forces of empire as “unconstitutional,” “extra-judicial,” “violence-prone,” “anti-rights,” “anti-democratic” and so on. Subversion is usually connoted to be a militant and violent way of sabotaging the state apparatus. In general, the very word ‘subversion’ has been understood as a negative term that expresses and creates resentment and fear psychosis amongst the people. On the contrary,

Not only is subversion the forerunner of social construction; it is the vital moral force, which transforms passivity and exploitation into human dignity and liberation. A supreme sense of moral worth pervades the subversive enterprise in Latin America. “Subversion represents a real possibility for renovation, freedom and collective fulfilment...¹⁶⁾

Therefore subversionists should not be viewed as “deviants,” “aberrants,” or “marginals” as characterized by the Empire, but rather as moral interlocutors or as constructive agents of social change. Resistance is a dimension of protest or defiance or mobilization. ‘Resistance’ and ‘subversion’ refer to the way a group or community or a coalition or a union might tackle a context of a given system from outside employing tools or strategies developed outside the system. At the same time, resistance and subversion could also work from within the system with tools or strategies fashioned from inside. Sometimes resistance and subversion could also be extra-constitutional and extra-judicial. The means and ends employed do not concur with constitutional propriety; however the means employed justify the ends. The interplay between resistance and subversion could lead to entirely different propositions.

Let us recollect for instance a series of global resistance and protests

15) *Ibid.*, 62-63.

16) *Ibid.*, 63.

that took place in different sites thus far against the forces of empire. A chain of events clearly fashioned for human emancipation from the clutches of empire. Whether this global resistance and protest succeeds in the long run or not is not the point. The point is that ordinary people garnered the courage to speak out and protest in millions their capacity to participate in the making of history. But history can be made only if people have both the vocabulary and vision of another world possible or an alternative world to struggle for. Those who believe in making history and raising a question: Is another world possible and how do we need to take note of the depoliticizing and incapacitating agency of the Empire that creeps in masquerade as a visionary of another world?

By the last two decades of the twentieth century, however, a gigantic process was set in motion - a process of taming unruly and recalcitrant civil societies; a process of depoliticisation of people who had once been made aware of the possibilities of history ...

No longer do we find any idea of struggle and emancipation in these political vocabularies, only ideas of resignation. In the middle of these political languages that call for social capital and for building networks of trust - vocabularies that conjure away the fact of political, social and economic oppression through semantic engineering - anti-war protests and also the anti-globalisation protests stand alone. And we all know what happens to political struggles when they stand alone and bereft of support from attendant ideas of solidarity against anti-imperialism, they become isolated.¹⁷⁾

The categories such as 'subversion' and 'resistance' although interchangeably used, for Christians these terms ought to be grounded biblically, theologically and ethically. However, from the scriptures what we derive is that 'subversion' and 'resistance' are not mutually exclusive, but instead intimately intertwined and interrelated. In other words, it simply means that subversion-resistance syncretism entails a complex interplay where they are tried out in the context-specifics. These two categories supplement and complement one another. Therefore, they are pragmatic

17) See Neera Chandhoke, "A text without a context," *The Hindu* (16.4.1993): 10.

terms. In short, these two undergo numerous forms as and when the context demands.

Combating Global Empire: A Theology of Resistance and Subversion

The Need & Necessity, Nature & Character of a Theology of Resistance and Subversion

The empire's ideology claims that it is absolute and omnipotent, thereby demanding perennial sacrifices from the vulnerable and defenseless. As against this, I would like to propose a theology that would play a significant role. A theology of resistance and subversion is a theology with a dialectic comprising word/flesh, human/divine, material/spiritual, this-worldly/other-worldly, immanent/transcendent elements. This theology acts as the base, source, power, critique and a principle of alternative hope and vision. In view of this, our theological task is to look at the ground realities and offer alternatives to the life-negating force, which is the empire. I think that the crucial theological factor that should be taken into consideration for us is to identify, discern, and locate the right "place-time" and appropriate "movement-momentum" of divine transcendence. It means, as Chang puts it,

...in other words, ...to rethink how we can reclaim God's transcendence in a way that does not negate our physical world ... but as the "intimate ground of being" ... that sustains and enlivens the whole of creation and, at the same time, as the "ultimate ground of being" (Tillich) that shakes the foundations of the earth, that challenges our rigid disbelief in the "heavenly" possibilities. Probably, once again, our generation needs a "Barthian" reaction against what is taken for granted by the neo-liberal utopianism of today, although by "Barthian" we should no longer mean a dichotomy between God and the physical world. As a process, ... there is an ontological interdependence, not independence, between God and the physical world ... and therefore we are not only spiritually but also physically connected with God ... we need a "strategic transcendentalism," if you will ... "God-with-us" is always and must be the "God-beyond-us," the God beyond the infinite chain of market evolution ...¹⁸⁾

Therefore, theology ought to place the victims, the weak and the vulnerable nations at the centre, since the majority of people of these countries are disempowered and disfranchised, but certainly represent an *imago dei*. In *God's* being we derive *our* being. In *our* being we manifest *God's* being. These two statements complement each other. They are dialectically and inherently linked with one another. Any doctrine or system vis-à-vis such an empire that relegates human beings or nations to be non-entities should be countered. Any attempt by empire to minimize human worth, human dignity, or sovereignty, ought to be challenged. Since the existence of a vast majority of the people across the world is in jeopardy it is essential to explore and evolve a theology that would oppose the doctrine of empire building. In that we ought to explore the God who empowers and instills hope in those who live in desperation and hopelessness.

We are constantly told and reminded that resistance and subversion is futile. The proponents of the empire reiterate and reinforce that the emergence of empire is out of a “natural process” to combat a “war on terror” in order to bring stability and democracy to a world which is gripped with fear and terrorism. In the process they have co-opted god to their imperial expansion by legitimizing the empire as part of God’s order. In conjunction with this rhetoric, the massive “Christian following” and “church” follows the imperial rhetoric and chanting. The claim of the Empire that God is with them in the Empire expansion legitimizes the Empire as being part of God’s order and God’s agent in history. The “Church” and its congregation pray for the success and advances of the Empire. For them, there is no God transcendent over “the empire” and they firmly believe in “the cosmos of the market” - a demi-god. This is not something new. People at different epochs of history faced similar rhetoric, hardships, and bore brutal violence meted out by the powerful. Forms and modes of oppression may be different, but people survived because resistance and subversion marks the entire period throughout human history and continue even today. Resistance and subversion continue and should go on when the quality of life and sanctity of life is affected.

In such a context, Christian faith propels and the Christian mandate prompts us to respond and act upon the current state of empire building

18) Yoon-Jae Chang, “Economic Globalization and the Neo-liberalism of F.A. Hayek: A Theological Critique,” *Quest*, 2.2 (November 2003): 32.

because it emits evil, sinful exclusion, and cruel enslavement. However, in our despair and vulnerability we derive the courage to speak as well as to act since we believe in hope and resurrection. It is this process that facilitates confronting the powers of oppression, dehumanisation and the idols of death, which try to rule over the world; a world which is not theirs, but of the Lord. Hence, the targets of resistance and subversion may be direct and take on a tangible form or they may be indirect in the sense of process. The issue at the bottom is control. The impetus for resistance and subversion politics is not only material or technical, but spiritual and decidedly intertwined with the overarching theological principle. Apparently the creatures and the created order bleed. Precisely because of these reasons our God of the Bible and history acts in an opportune time, which is beyond human comprehension. “When” and “how” ought not to be our purview.

The Subversive Voice of God in the “Word of God”

The notion of a certain race, class, caste, community or nation claiming to have a divine right to a particular geographical area of territory or beyond was prevalent in ancient societies and also prevails in the modern age too. On these lines, a forthright and uncompromising theological expression of the right of Israel to the land of Canaan is also found in the Deuteronomic literature. It is nothing other than the subversive voice of God that we find in the book of Deuteronomy. The Deuteronomists admonished those who acted against the violators and negators of God’s law; the Deuteronomists’ acts could be considered as subversive. In this sense Deuteronomy is by and large subversive. To substantiate,

Indeed, it is in this matter that Deuteronomy introduces another of its ‘subversive’ elements. We have seen how strong is its propaganda about the right of Israel to the land of Canaan. But, just as the Deuteronomists make the Davidic covenant a conditional one, so the Deuteronomists emphasize that the Sinaitic covenant, made with the whole community of Israel, is a conditional one. In another real sense, the land is not their by right. It is God’s land and it is his gift to his people. But the gift has conditions attached to it. If they fail to observe his laws, those laws which make every man and woman among them responsible and all members of the community, especially the poor and

the weak, the responsibility of all, they will not find the land the prosperous place they expected and, ultimately, might even lose it. This is expressed most clearly in the blessings and curses which form the sanctions in chapter 28 for their behaviour in the land. The threats of loss of fertility of the land and of defeat by invaders lead up to the ultimate climax threatening that the miracle of the Exodus from Egypt will be reversed: 'Yahweh will bring you back to Egypt in ships, by that very way which I promised you would not see again, and there you will offer to sell yourselves to your enemies as male and female slaves, but no one will want to own you' (28.68). Thus there is an element of subversion even about the main plank of Deuteronomy's propaganda.¹⁹⁾

The Deuteronomists clearly point out that whoever, whether kings or priests, is in a position to exercise a mediatory role to enforce law, can be observed by anyone and everywhere. This would help to bind the factions and divisions in the community. How the law is to be followed and put into practice becomes the new force to be reckoned with.

By and large in the Old Testament we find a clear slant that God is in favour of the vulnerable and the afflicted. The prophetic books particularly deal with the structural injustices especially abused by the monarchical and religious institutions. This is where the 'prophetic subversion' takes a pivotal role to point out abuse of power and authority. The state always uses the ecclesiastical structures and religious institutions as a means of control. In spite of it, the prophetic books elucidate that God uses prophets to warn and instruct God's people. By these acts God exercises God's control over history.

For example, Nathan tells David a parable. There were two men in the same city. One was very poor, owning only one lamb, and the other very rich owning flocks and herds. When a guest came to the rich man's house he took the poor man's lamb for the feast rather than one of his own. David the king and the ultimate arbiter of 'justice' came out in righteous anger and passed a verdict that the rich man should die or should make reparation of four times the amount he stole. Then follows the most famous indictment that we find in the Old Testament: 'you are that man,' says Nathan. The

19) For more details and information see Rex Mason, *Propaganda and Subversion in the Old Testament* (London: SPCK, 1997), 88.

prophet uses this parable cleverly by trapping David to pass judgement on himself. It is a clear case of a prophet standing up to the abuse of a king's power and privilege.

The other incident features Elijah, which appears in I Kings 21. Naboth, one of the citizens of Israel owned a vineyard that he inherited from the previous generation. The vineyard was within Ahab's royal domain. He wanted to own Naboth's land, offering another piece of land located on the edge of town. Naboth rejected Ahab's proposition on the ground that the family ownership of land was a sacred inheritance and thus refused to move out. This act of refusal was in conformity to the covenant relationship with God, and of having equal rights.

Moving on to Amos, Amos's activity of prophecy especially extends during the reign of Jeroboam II. The first half of the 8th century was considered as a period of considerable security and prosperity for Israel. But then a period of internal crisis kept Assyria busy at home and delayed her imperial expansion. At this time, Jeroboam occupied the throne and faced no threat from outside. So he indulged in military expansion. 2 Kings 14:25 speaks of his expansionism and Amos (6:13) alludes to the boasting of his contemporaries about their military victories. So Amos 'subverts' the religious claims of the nation state of Israel; whoever and whatever may be the person, God judges all on the same moral and ethical basis of action.

But Amos subverts those claims also in another way. God intends to dispense with the whole political and religious establishment of Israel. He has passed sentence on it. The wealthy will not live in the stone houses they have built or the great estates they have wrested from their rightful owners (5.11). The nation will be defeated in battle (2.13-16; 3.11; 6.1-7). In particular, the royal house of Jeroboam will be destroyed (7.9) together with the official sanctuaries whose cult supported that royal power (3.13f; 5.4f; 7.8f.).²⁰⁾

In a similar vein the prophet Micah who belongs to the later part of the 8th century BCE could be grouped along with the others. Micah's words and Isaiah's as well could concur with one another. Both the books have almost similar oracles. Nevertheless, their critique of Judah's social and

20) *Ibid.*, 106.

political life posits a number of commonalities as we find in Isaiah 5:1ff and Micah 2:1. Both of them attack the greedy acquisition of land and property, at the expense of the poor which Isaiah and Micah describe in Isaiah 2:2, 5:8 and Micah 3:1-3. Micah in his oracles drives a clear message that the leadership ought to ensure fairness and justice for all. Instead of protecting the poor who relied on the leaders, the rulers protected the rich and the affluent allowing them to amass wealth. God describes those who have been negated and ruthlessly crushed as 'my people.' Such a description of them was not only ominous for the leaders, but is highly significant for our understanding of the enormity of the prophetic subversion.

The Scriptures, especially the prophetic texts, contain "subversion" and "resistance" tones. In conclusion, the prophets cited above engaged in their critical vocation and countered the dominant order. This critical vocation is nothing but 'subversive' and 'resistive,' derived not only from divine right, but by divine right exercised in varied modes. Therefore, in the Old Testament we could discern 'prophetic subversion and resistance' and these two have proved to have powerful and lasting relevance then and also now.

From the New Testament perspective, God shall not tolerate the way in which his *cosmos* is managed. This presupposes that God is unhappy with the management of his cosmos. God's true intent and motive towards humanity and his created order has been abused and fractured. In view of this, we see in John 9:39; "Jesus said, 'For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind.' This verse could probably be interpreted differently as that humans have plundered and indiscriminately exploited God's *cosmos*, which bleeds and is wounded. Even the religious authorities in the process have reduced religion by including those who are financially privileged and who pose as morally upright. Jesus gives a clear statement that the rich and the powerful and the religious authorities have become blind because of their power and wealth, whereas others clearly see what they are up to. In view of this, Jesus warns that 'For judgment I came into this world.'

The Domination System is filled with greed and an expansionistic attitude. As faith communities we are given the responsibility to build a new order so that the power and privileges enjoyed by the rich world will be toppled. The protest and revolt by the oppressed, as we see in Exodus, portrays that God sees, judges and liberates. Jesus says, "I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). Jesus conquering the world in spite of Satan's

tempting offer to him shows that the Domination System has the capacity and capability to subordinate anyone with tempting offers. But Jesus refuted all that Satan promised. His act exemplifies the negation of the negations of the Domination System. The New Reality eschews exploitation, oppression and subjugation.

The Subversive- Breath and Resistive-Resilient Spirit of God

When empire preaches the false “gospel” of “absoluteness” and the “supremacy” of the empire-god, and declares the death of nation states, welfare, protest and people’s power, the task of resistance and subversive theology is to “prophesy to the breath” and “resist to the death” the “blows from different directions” so that dry bones may raise from the valleys and margins and come back to life with renewed vigor and added resilience so that they may stand firmly on their feet. It is like the tornado or typhoon or gale that blows from all directions raising the valleys and the dry bones to life and hope.

The valley full of dry bones that we read in Ezekiel 37: 1-28 is indeed a good metaphor. God took Ezekiel to a valley. In this vision he saw the white bones of an army killed in battle. They were scattered across the valley and made white by the sun. God instructed the prophet to speak to these lifeless bones. When he did this there was a noise and the bones came together. As he looked, flesh came on the bones and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them. At God’s command, Ezekiel called on the four winds to breathe into the dead bodies that they might become alive. In his vision, he did this and the dead men came to life before his eyes.

This has a historical connotation. In Babylon the sons of Israel felt like dry bones. They had lost their hope. Their spirit felt dead. God had to awaken them to new life before they could be one people again and return to their own land. This may be a picture of Israel and Judah coming together again as one nation. The context we live in is almost similar to that. The current global context is one of despair, hopelessness, and humiliation. A vast majority of people and nations are under the clutches of the United States and mega corporations. Nations and people are told to fall in line and to follow their doctrine stringently. In this way, the empire is acquiring supreme power leading to being a demi-god. As against this, the biblical vision extends a picture of hope and a great promise. It means that the victims and the subjugated people around the world shall come back to life

with renewed spirit. The wind blows with force from all the directions and the silenced and exploited people rise up like a mass or huge force from four different corners of the world with renewed rigor and strength like a world army to combat the forces of empire.

Undoubtedly a theology of resistance and subversion is the locus of our very being and becoming as we respond to diverse powers and principalities. These two are nothing but normative principles that negate life and thus become the focus of one's faith articulation and theologizing. A theology of resistance and subversion is grounded in a redemptive activity of the silenced nations and uprooted communities. It is embedded in a particular philosophical/ideological and theological mooring. It is a theology of the present, where the past and the future meet. Its primary focus is to translate the sovereignty and dignity of nations from the domination of the forces of empire. It identifies with the life-affirming forces and shows solidarity with the forces that work against empire building.

Where we live is a dwelling place of God, and therefore we *become* a dwelling place of God, since God became incarnate in Jesus. We are filled with Christ-ness of flesh and blood, an incarnate God. In this way the finite bears the infinite. A theology of resistance and subversion revolves around moral agency and closer relationship with the indwelling God. This moral agency generates and instills resistance and subversion in the face of systemic domination and expansion of empire. It bridges indwelling communities of the faithful and dismantles structures and ideologies of empire. The working concepts of "moral agency" that entail "resistance" and "subversion" are central to theologizing. Christ's indwelling is the locus of a theology of resistance and subversion that extends moral identity, purpose, vision, norms, and agency. The centrality of resistance and subversion as ethical categories posits moral agency that draws sustenance in the crucified and living Christ dwelling in and gradually transforming the community that yearns for freedom, equality, and dignity. Resistance and subversion impinge upon one another and are thus linked with Christian-praxis.

The indwelling Christ, mediated by the moral agency, invigorates the elements of resistance and subversion that eventually transform individuals and communities to get involved in struggles for the establishment of a better world order. In this sense moral agency is "subversive." There is no

going back, because the world we live in is a dwelling place of Christ crucified, who lived and died for the sake of abundant life for all, and whose saving-activity for human beings could not be stopped by any force on earth; including the entire cosmos. God's dwelling place is where the powerless and the humiliated stay because this is where God revealed and vivified compassion and suffering.

The theology of resistance and subversion is both a categorical ethical imperative and the moral power for faith communities to develop resilience in order to oppose empire. Resistance and subversion to empire requires courage. Courage is an ingredient of subversive moral agency. It is a theology that unleashes the power of God who is righteous and tolerant, and who vindicates justice. It is a theology that is premised on a moral agency for living toward the flourishing of creation and resists and subverts empire building that renders death and destruction and which flows from embodied communion in which God incarnate is received and given.

The empire as an idol or demi-god is given and granted the ultimate loyalty and devotion by many countries of the world. It is nothing but idolatry of the empire. On the contrary, it is not absolute; as the First Commandment says: "You shall not have any other gods before me." The empire and those who run it have become gods. Is the global empire led by the United States a new manifestation of the Holy Roman Empire in the 21st century? Those who defy the supreme authority of the empire shall be considered as infidels and enemies, and so they should be annihilated. The *imago dei* clearly means that we represent God's image and whoever or whichever force damages and tampers that *imago dei* should be resisted, and if need arises, we should evolve subversive ways and means to counter that force. This understanding of *imago dei* resonates with a human dignity and human worth which is fuller or total or complete. In this connection the empire must be prophetically resisted with righteous anger.

The Gospel mandate and ethical imperative demands that the idols of our time, (i.e. empire), must be named and exorcised. As we read in the Book of Revelation, the beast, dragon, hydra, devil, Satan, and all the forces of empire are exposed and subverted. The power of the Spirit that raises the dry bones to life with flesh and blood instills courage and resilience which spreads like wild fire to all directions countering, subverting, and destroying the evil and satanic forces of the empire by establishing a new heaven and new earth here and now. The force that is unstoppable flows from the

indwelling spirit of the resurrected Christ, which is a historical continuum that sustains and revitalizes power for countering and resisting the forces of empire, thereby enabling a resilient new flourishing life.

In history no kingdom, no empire, and no civilization that subverted, manipulated, and acted against God's order, design, and arrangement has been spared. God intervened and acted in human histories in numerous ways that could never be predicted. It is that "beyondness" we could hardly discern, but without fail in his own time and at the right moment. And those who fail to heed that warning would have to meet the disastrous consequences.

Conclusion

A theology of resistance and subversion entails conflictual and confrontational politics. This we see in Jesus who was filled with a righteous Spirit and righteous anger that empowered him to question the life-negating forces. All these confrontational politics against the empire led Jesus to suffering and death. The theology of resistance and subversion is grounded on this confrontational Spirit. It is this confrontational aspect of Jesus' life and witness, mission and ministry, death and resurrection which occupies the center position, because it demands "risk-taking" and daringness leading to "death." Those who fail to recognize this factor cannot be partners. A theology of resistance and subversion extends solidarity at a time where the global empire is forging resistance. Our faith is challenged by the emergent empire phenomenon. A theology of resistance and subversion is both prophetic and movement oriented. It involves resistance and subversion till empire is dismantled. It is possible by joining hands with life-affirming movements, effecting alternative global politics and economic arrangements.

Abstract

The corollary of the global empire is the natural alignment of the ideology of neo-conservatism and neo-liberalism. Hence, any discourse on empire building will have to take into consideration the convergence of socio-economic, politico-cultural and religious dimensions. Through an analysis I have pointed out the inter-connections between empire and capital, neo-conservatism and neo-liberalism of the present era of empire building. Though these two are separate categories, in the process they are connected and thus reinforce and consolidate their logic of control, expansion, and domination. In a context like this, what ought to be the response of Dalit and Minjung theologians?

This article shows that convergence arguments and discourses from the proponents of empire-capital is contested by the writer and apparently proposes a counter-veiling subaltern theological convergence that could perhaps become one of the prescriptive theological modes. Further, this paper interrogates and critiques the empire-building project of the United States and its allies which should be resisted by all means in view of the deeply engrained universal principles premised on sovereignty, mutual respect, co-habitation, inclusivity, equality analysis, and global ethical principles. In this paper, it is apparent that interrogation and examination of the convergence arguments in the debate of empire building faces strong resistance from the deeply engrained Biblical and theological principles of subversion and resistance rooted in praxis as a countervailing theology to the growing phenomenon of empire-capital expansion.

Key Words

global empire, globalization, resistance, subversion, Deuteronomist, Gospel, idolatry, Roman Empire

Eco-Citizenship, Technology and Aesth/Ethics

Sigurd Bergmann*

Life-Embracing Spaces of Peace

“Peace on earth and reconciliation between the sexes presupposes peace with the earth.”¹⁾

Is the claim of Elin Wägner, the Swedish writer and pioneer of women’s right to vote (b. 1882), still justified today, also in North East Asia?

While, at the beginning of the 20th century, Elin Wägner and many with her departed from a distinction between human and other beings in

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1) Elin Wägner/Elisabeth Tamm, *Fred med jorden* (Peace with Earth), rev.ed. Knivsta 1985, (Stockholm 1940).

nature, my perspective will be embedded in a more ecological view, where Life is regarded as a manifold of the circles of birth, evolution and passing away.

Life in this sense is understood as a process in natural space, which embraces human as well as other beings in time. Space is in this way not a life-less container but a life embracing existential. Sociocultural processes are in such a space specific parts of Life. Even thinking must in this sense be regarded as a natural process: "Denken ist ein Naturprozeß."²⁾ Social events can never be separated from life processes, even if humans are marvellously creative to construct artefacts and systems and a whole 'modernity,' which gives us the illusion that society can exist without nature. Who would like to live without a body in a world of pure ideas?

A bank account e.g. does not have a physical existence, but it still needs built environments and human bodies to be used for what it has been created for. A military missile e.g. can be used to transcend territorial borders, but it still needs human persons who could map its location, and it needs a target in place. Globalised economic processes are, at the same time as they are mainly characterised by radical 'de-spatialization' and 'disembeddedness,' even more dependent on capacities to connect back to bodies, places, regions and the Earth. The disembeddedness of financial capital, which on the one side guarantees its success, makes it on the other side very vulnerable. If the monetary system fails to be embodied again on Earth, it will immediately lose its power, due to its purely religious character. If one cannot 'believe' in the value of a money-based price for a transaction - and belief still has to do with embodied processes of valuation in market space - then money will lose its value, and the belief in the vehicle for valuation will be turned from money to other artefacts for exchange.

Anthony Giddens has characterised the process of modernisation as an increasing 'dis-embeddedness,' and Arjun Appadurai has described this process as 'despatialization.'³⁾ It is of course correct that globalisation speeds up the dissolution of relationships that individuals and groups have

2) Georg Picht, *Der Begriff der Natur und seine Geschichte*, Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta 1989, 12.

3) Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, 3. ed. Cambridge 1992, (Stanford 1990); Arjun Appadurai, *Globale ethnische Räume*, in: Ulrich Beck (ed.), *Perspektiven der Weltgesellschaft*, Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp 1998, 11-40.

to specific places and spaces, but one cannot ignore that the contemporary despatialization also triggers countering forces in the form of re-localising movements, which take many different forms.

The de-spatialization assisted by monetary and technology systems provokes the emergence of a countervailing power, where re-localisation stands against de-spatialization and where citizens all over the planet develop a new multiple longing for belonging. Try to uproot a plant and it will do everything to send its roots back to Earth. Uprooting provokes re-rooting.

To express it in a patristic theological metaphor: As a human being “I flow downward and yet am borne upward.”⁴⁾ Humans do grow from above to below. At the same time, their bodies are rooted in the Earth, which gives the ‘Imago Dei’ a unique potential to root oneself both in heaven and on Earth. What happens to him/her when both roots loose their soil?

There seem to be many good and strong reasons to mine the concept of peace for life in a way that does not only start with the threats and conflicts of security, but to start the other way around and ask what concepts, practices and visions of Life could help us to reconstruct the sources for peace-keeping. How do the conditions and landscapes look like, where reconciliation of those who are different and strange to each other could take place?

My essay will focus on the three themes of eco-citizenship and globalisation, technology and aesth/ethics. Its aim is nothing more than to offer a suggestion for to widen the discourse on Peace for Life in Asia with these themes. Before we dive into them, although, I will first discuss what North East Asian movements could (or could not) expect from European power constellations at present.

What is Europe?

The immaturity of Europe in geopolitics

Europe is not a kind of the ‘United States of Europe,’ as some would have

4) Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio* 28.22. Cf. in this regard Plato, *Timaeus*, 90A, who describes the human being as a plant rooted in heaven rather than in earth. Cf. S. Bergmann, *Creation Set Free: The Spirit as Liberator of Nature*, (Sacra Doctrina), Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans 2005, chapter III.

liked it. Therefore, North East Asian movements seeking for peace should approach the peoples of Europe and the EU in a different way than for example the USA. They should try to involve both the European countries and the European Union (EU), which in fact only gathers 25 of the 46 countries who are members of the 'Council of Europe.'

Europeans have never in their history before acted as a *common* political unit. Certainly, monistic ideologies and practices have characterised European history. Europe has been the dwell of several colonialising processes of suppression, where different alternating empires have conquered and ruled over lands and peoples. Certainly, in more than five hundred years Europeans have developed power constellations, which have colonised large parts of the Ameri-Indian, African, Australian and Asian continents. Also the ideology of the global financial system, which colonises all of us at present, has its origin in European history.⁵⁾

My point is here, that Europe itself never has been a united continent, and it has never developed a *common* foreign policy for its relation to the other continents. This, although, is the case today. Recently, the EU has begun for the first time in its history to take international actions outside the Non-European sphere of world politics, and it has therefore put on the top of its agenda the so called "common politics of foreign and security affairs."

Both in the political affairs of military security and trade, the European institutions have begun to develop a self-understanding beyond their former empires in antiquity, the medieval times and the enlightenment's so called progress.

Or have they not? Might they sooner like to give new skins to the old dragon of colonisation? How do they transform European history with its dark and bright sides in the ongoing globalisation, and what could this mean for peace in Asia?

Unfortunately, I cannot offer an answer. Here, it would be enough for me to state the ambiguity of the present EU's foreign politics. The fresh appearance of the EU on the stage of global politics might offer new chances to find partners in the present power constellation, which Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt rightly have described as "Empire."⁶⁾ The

5) Cf. Ulrich Duchrow, *Europe in the World System 1492-1992: Is Justice Possible?* Geneva 1992.

6) Cf. Michael Hardt/Antonio Negri, *Empire*, Cambridge Mass./London: Harvard

immaturity and inexperience of the EU as a new player in global peace politics might not only offer a hinder but rather a chance for creative experiments of alliance building.

Communicative political culture

A significant skill for such a new alliance building between Europe and Asia can be found in the political culture and history of the European nations after the Second World War. While citizens and institutions in the USA usually debate internal national issues, they avoid critical debates about external issues of common national interest. Not even unjust wars seem to be able to provoke self-critical public debates in their own media. Europeans, on the contrary, love to rhetorically argue about nearly everything.

Jürgen Habermas has delivered the well-known theory for understanding the whole society as a process of communicative action. His theory is widely achieved both in North America and Europe. Though the methods of discourse ethics are applied also to foreign affairs in Europe, in the USA they seem to me to be limited to internal affairs, while international affairs often are negotiated without any interest or sensitivity for the perspectives of the many others who are affected by the superpower's decisions. Sensitive business-makers in the USA have noticed intercultural disabilities like this and they complain over loosing chances on the global market. Maybe one of the deeper reasons behind this difference of Europe and the USA can be found in the educational systems where every European country almost offers two or three foreign languages (compulsory) to every young citizen, while schools in the USA do not provide their citizens with even one compulsory foreign language.

What Europeans really could contribute with in Asian processes of reconciliation might be the depth and constancy of communicative negotiations around small and large round tables, where all those who are affected by substantial problems also are acknowledged as the experts and

University Press 2000, and Ulrich Duchrow/Franz Josef Hinkelammert, *Leben ist mehr als Kapital: Alternativen zur globalen Diktatur des Eigentums*, Oberursel: Publik-Forum 2002, (English ed. *Property for People, not for Profit: Alternatives to the global tyranny of capital*, Geneva/London: WCC and the Catholic Institute for International Relations).

architects for the solution of their problems. Reconciliation and peace for life needs to be modelled and designed in verbal discourses as well as in transcultural practices *before* it is transferred into formal contracts. The post-war experience of European social and green movements offered many significant instruments after the Helsinki process, like the smooth and non-violent revolutions in the GDR, the former USSR, and at latest in Ukrainia. These social transformations have clearly shown, that the communicative power of words is a much more sufficient tool to achieve peace than military interventions. In order to achieve constellations like this, military tools for the de-militarization of the conflicting parts are needed sometimes.

It is, of course, not my intention to profile good old Europe on the cost of the USA. Deep ideologies of political communication, supported by pragmatist philosophy, are strongly characteristic in the American History through the Ages. It might be that the best of the European political ideals have been applied rather in the early history of the US than in Europe itself. In this context, I only want to draw our attention to the need of a political philosophy and culture where communication about common problems is a key for solving problems rather than by military wars against this and that, which fits into all kinds of ontologies of evil. In the classical Christian doctrine of sin, we pray to the Father to redeem us from evil, and we do *not* pray for the strength to redeem ourselves by starting war against the demons. This would have been in fact be regarded as a heresy in the Early Church because it is a sin to replace God the Redeemer with ourselves in the drama of the creation's liberation. Violence only gives birth to more violence. Conflicts are always signs of common problems, where the one is the problem of the other and vice versa, and where common problems need to be solved by common solutions.

Multiple alliances

A second problem with Europe is the contemporary democratic deficit in the EU. At the same time as the elites of the membership nations and the EU commission would like to enter the global political scene, the institutions of the EU are revealing a remarkable democratic deficit. While the European parliament still not has a satisfying mandate for decision-making, the Commission is a strange hybrid, which represents the governments somehow but without mandate from the peoples.

Obviously we face a development of citizens' disenchantment of

politics. The political processes themselves are not any longer experienced as a social sphere where human persons can negotiate, exchange and develop a meaningful life with regard to their ordinary life worlds. Shifts in patterns of voting for decision-making bodies are only one of many signs of this disenchantment.

While many European citizens in fact behave as if they were members of a common culture, they have voted against a new constitution, which after the denial has been revised and shortened. The distance between elites and citizens in Europe seems to be all too great. In spite of what I discussed above, the political communication between power sharing constellations and ordinary people is unsatisfying. Furthermore the experiences of unemployment and increasing exclusion and social violence against the poor affect also the middle class. The permanent crisis of Social Democrats and Conservatives, who both believe in the taming of the dragons of capital by a mixture of more or less neoliberal and Keynesian economic strategies, makes it difficult for citizens to partake in elections, which now usually do not attract more than 60% of the voters. Green and euro communist parties are successful as far as they are not responsible in governments; populist and racist ideologies are increasing due to social exclusion and frustration.

This picture makes it even more complicated to expect a strong mandate for a common foreign politics from an institution like the EU. Nevertheless, I do not want to be negative in my vision. Asians should develop a *manifold* of alliances with Europeans. Both critical social movements, which seek long-term alternatives to the contemporary state of late modern capitalism, and national institutions should at the same time be involved in Asian peace politics. A multitude of alliances on problems of common political, environmental and social issues in Asia would probably be the best way to promote the inner Asian development as well as it would strengthen the inner European democratisation of the EU.

Globalisation and Eco-Citizenship

Transculturation

The term 'globalisation' describes the economic dynamics in world trade and financial markets, which erodes the territories of the national states and promotes a cultural globalisation that affects and changes the understandings of the human person, the human community and its natural

surroundings and nature. The ongoing globalisation without any ‘telos,’ except the accumulation of finance capital, catalyses a homogenisation of the manifold of cultures in the world as well as it at the same time stimulates a pluralisation of intercultural encounters. The ongoing cultural changes, which are determined by the information technology and its use in economics, which break through the borders of space and time, cannot be grasped by older theories of culture.

Instead, they need to be understood in the frame of a theory of transculturation.⁷⁾ Identity in late modernity is not any longer a question of a single belonging but a phenomenon of developing multiple longings and belongings, which the human person can construct with different kinds of tools, such as education, profession, nomadism, life-style, or ideological tribe. The understanding of the Christian community is challenged deeply by this cultural transformation, but it should not in the first place be regarded as a threat but better as a challenge to renew and reconstruct the essentials of belonging to the “communion of the saints” in a sighing creation.

The inner differentiation of culture, its external networking and the hybridization of individual and collective identities makes it necessary to look for new concepts of ‘culture’ and religious correlations of tradition and situation. Religious traditions are regarded as cultural elements in a dialectics of both renewal and continuity.

The old concept of *single cultures* is characterized by social homogenization. Culture is here understood as that what gives meaning to the whole of life for a limited population. Culture is meant to be the culture of one people, which could be clearly differentiated from other cultures.

Modern differentiated societies cannot be understood by this concept. They are not any longer characterized by uniformity. Gender distinctions, generation distinctions, different working contexts are some of the aspects that makes life meaningful in a lot of different ways for people in the same

7) Wolfgang Welsch, *Transculturality: The Puzzling Form of Cultures Today*, in: Mike Featherstone/Scott Lash, (eds.), *Spaces of Culture: City - Nation - World*, London: Sage 1999, 194-213. Cf. S. Bergmann, *Transculturality and Tradition - Renewing the Continuous in Late Modernity*, (in Russian) in: Evgeny Arinin (ed.), *Candle 2000*, Arkhangelsk: Pomor University 2001, 13-18, and (in English) in: *Studia Theologica: Scandinavian Journal of Theology* 58, 2/2004, 140-156.

area and population. The concept of a single culture does not highlight the aspect of intermingling and cultural exchange.

The classical concept of culture is not only analytically wrong but it is also politically dangerous. Unfortunately it is still used in many contexts as a tool for power construction.

Samuel Huntington's famous and influential but nevertheless controversial and untrue claim of a 'clash of civilisations' is founded on the idea of clearly identifiable civilisations. The idea of single cultures as a conceptual tool of contemporary world politics is obviously not in accordance with the processes of global migration, cultural hybridisation and economic unlimited flows, which are characterising globalisation in late modernity. With regard to religion Huntington's thesis has no empirical evidence at all, and it has been faulted with reference to the same kind of political processes going on in fundamentalist approaches in different religious and cultural traditions as Hinduism, Islam and Christianity as well as in different political ideologies.

Another concept is centred on the term of *multiculturality*. This vision of one society that is built up by several different cultures is perhaps the only concept that is applied in the political ideologies of the European nation states today. But also this concept presupposes the idea of a single pure culture as an isolated island with clear characteristics. Even if the values and intentions of promoting this concept are rooted in humanistic traditions for the best of all it necessarily leads to ghettoization and cultural fundamentalism.

All these concepts of culture are analytically incorrect and normatively deceptive. Cultures do not any longer have the forms of homogeneity and distinct identities. Present cultures are passing through the classical cultural boundaries. They are characterized by mixtures, fusions, synergies and exchange processes. That is why we need a concept of transculturality.

Cultures today are much more externally connected than the single culture concept shows. The modern society is complex and highly differentiated, also in the economic silent zones of the world. Migration processes do not any longer make you belong to a single territory. Mobility makes people more or less global or regional. Cultures are in late modernity characterized by hybridization.

The understanding of transculturality does not encourage the capacity to become different and exclusive in a hierarchical power system but the

ability to relate to each other, to communicate and to exchange ideas and action patterns and to undergo transition.

Discussing processes like this on the peninsula of Korea seems a bit anachronistic, due to the fact that transculturating processes are specifically characteristic of the Korean history, which has taken place in the location between Japan, Siberia and China through the ages. Here, the encounters of the local and the translocal, the familiar and the strange, the outside and the inside have been, even if they have caused many blood and pain, transformed into many peaceful life enhancing syntheses.

As a stranger, it seems evident to me that Kim Yong-Bock's thesis is right, that Korea due to its location in the midst of global conflicts today also might offer the central area for solving these conflicts, which in fact also affect Europe and other continents. A significant question then would be, how the interpretation of Korea's history and its spiritual and cultural transculturation could strengthen peace processes today and tomorrow.

Could the traditional Korean meal with all its many colourful dishes, which are inspired from several different cultures, offer both a metaphor and a bodily being together that holds a strong potential of care for life?⁸⁾ A simple anthropologic insight says, that the last taboo in late modernity that still exists everywhere, is the rule: Do not eat up those with whom you eat together!

In other words, we should not threaten those with war and violence with whom we would like to share a meal. Slowly learning the lessons from global environmentalism, we understand that the food, which we need in order to stay alive, should grow in an interconnected world of ecosystems from which we never can escape. Food production and food sharing takes us directly into the discourse of geopolitics. Kinhide Mushakoji used in our discussions (the Korean dish of) the Bibimbap as a metaphor of cultural pluralism. It signals that a local identity never only can be local but needs to be embedded in a translocal belonging. For Christians, this should not be a problem remembering classical theology, which makes it very clear that all human beings in the first place must be understood as God's creatures at

8) Cf. Maria Jansdotter, *Makten och måltiden: Ett ekofeministiskt perspektiv på nattvarden*, [Power and the Meal: An ecofeminist perspective of eucharist] in: S. Bergmann/C. Grenholm, *MAKT i nordisk teologisk tolkning*, Trondheim: Tapir 2004, 181-192.

home in creation. Cultural and natural diversity must be regarded as a revelation of being “*imago Dei*.” Cultural identity, therefore, is subordinated to belonging to the Earth and its Triune Creator and Liberator.

This takes us to my second point. The disembedding and de-spatialization processes of globalisation make it necessary to develop new modes for the “production of locality.”⁹⁾ The new locality production, which is not necessarily related to places and communities but sooner results in translocal “ethnoscapes,” furthers the development of a global citizenship, where the embedding of the self, the land and its people is rooted in a general mood of belonging to the sacred Earth.

An explosive question today is how this cosmopolitan Earth citizenship interacts with local and national identities. Should we talk about the emergence of a terrestrial eco-citizenship and its diversity unfolding in different regions and contexts of the planet?

Eco-citizenship in globalised space

The ongoing change in processes of becoming-a-citizen is especially significant in the field of human interaction with *nature*. The understanding of ‘nature’ has been crucially though the ages, and it has been at the heart of the self-understanding of European civilisation through its whole history.

In the perspective of the history of ideas we could characterise the so-called Western civilisation in comparison with others by locating the concept of nature at the very centre of the understanding of reality and the concept of the human person. Citizens have identified themselves as both parts of nature internally and externally, and they have also acted as rulers and/or guardians of it. The notions of ‘physics’ and ‘nature’ have made it possible to develop connections between the subjective and sociocultural spheres on the one hand and the surrounding space of life on the other. The dialectics of inside and outside is crucial for the evolution of citizenship in general and it should be regarded and investigated as an elementary dimension of the identification of the human person. Especially with regard to the moral understanding of reality the so-called doctrine of ‘natural law’ represents a basic code in the European culture by determining an inner

9) Arjun Appadurai, *The Production of Locality*, in: Peter Beyer (ed.), *Religion im Prozeß der Globalisierung*, Würzburg: Ergon 2001, 99-123, (originally published 1995).

connection between moral order and natural order that has been reflected in fundamental theories of ethics and law which still form a strong civic foundation of the European integration process.

Human progress for example has been understood in general as emancipation from nature affected by ruling over the natural world that surrounds us, and by dominating our inner nature. Ideas of a return to nature have been circulated in modern theories of society, even if Rousseau himself never idealised the so-called original state of nature. German philosopher Gernot Böhme formulated in his latest works the demand to reflect the human 'being-nature' (Natur-sein) as a main challenge. Not the emancipation from and against nature but the 'bodily-being-nature' in him/herself must be the main task of the human self-understanding.¹⁰⁾

With regard to earlier and contemporary research one could state that the elementary dimension of how the understanding of citizenship and the civil society is influenced by different concepts of nature constituting the evolution of citizenship has not been dealt with to a satisfactory extent. Theories of citizenship and civil life cannot be analysed in a satisfactory mode without including 'nature' as a concept.

With regard to common theories of citizenship we have to conclude in fact an ecological deficit, in that they appear to make too little reference to the human being as a political animal: as sustaining and developing itself through ecological change. "The environmental debate has exposed the very restrictive way in which mainstream political theory has conceived of the nature and extent of political community."¹¹⁾

The common concepts of citizenship have been developed under the authority of the state. In the last years these have been contested and broadened by the inclusion of various struggles around the themes of difference and identity. Claims in these discourses have been articulated as claims of citizenship, and the discourse on environmental issues together with Gender, Postcolonial, Immigrant and Urban Studies creates a crucial

10) Gernot Böhme, *Die Natur vor uns: Naturphilosophie in pragmatischer Hinsicht*, Kusterdingen 2002, 10. Cf. Gernot Böhme, *Leib-Sein als Aufgabe*, Kusterdingen 2003.

11) Noël O'Sullivan, *Introduction*, in: Noël O'Sullivan (ed.), *Political Theory in Transition*, London: Routledge 2000, 11. This analysis is in detail worked out by Andrew Dobson, *Political theory and the environment: the grey and the green (and the in-between)*, in: O'Sullivan (ed.), 211-224.

challenge to the Studies of European citizenship which is shown by a spectacular growth of books, articles and theses.¹²⁾ The theme of ecological citizenship therefore should not be regarded as a marginal phenomenon but as a central part of a crucial challenge to transform and renew the established concepts of citizenship.

Not only human rights for a healthy and good environment but also the rights of the not yet born future generations and even the so-called rights of nature (aiming at the rights of organisms and ecosystems to exist and to develop in accordance with their place in evolution) offers a highly explosive agenda to the understanding of moral order in the concepts of active and inclusive citizenship.

“Becoming an ecological citizen requires a transformation in our moral identity.”¹³⁾ The Enlightenment conception of moral agency might be in itself problematic if one wants to achieve new forms of active citizenship. If the understanding of citizenship is defined by public practises, the question is whether these should only aim at the accumulation of individual wealth or whether they should aim at the achieving of cooperative goods for the more-than-human community.

The emergence of environmentalism is only just one of several signs of the significance of this constitutional force with regard to the strategies for how citizens could increase their governance with regard to the sustainability and life-worthiness of their built and natural environments in Europe. Environmental problems encourage in a strong way the development of global citizenship, even if the problems themselves always appear in local and particular contexts.¹⁴⁾

Historically the understanding of citizenship has passed through three phases, from civil through political to social citizenship. Within the term of social citizenship experiences such as unemployment, sickness, etc have become subject to state interventions. Each of these forms of citizenship is

12) Engin F. Isin/Bryan S. Turner, *Citizenship Studies: An Introduction*, 2, in: Engin F. Isin/Bryan S. Turner (eds.), *Handbook of Citizenship Studies*, London: Sage 2002.

13) Deane Curtin, *Ecological Citizenship*, in: Engin F. Isin/Bryan S. Turner (eds.), *Handbook of Citizenship Studies*, London: Sage 2002, 293-304, 302.

14) Cf. Robin Attfield, *Global Citizenship and the Global Environment*, in: Nigel Dower/John Williams (eds.), *Global Citizenship: A Critical Reader*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press 2002, 191-200.

connected to a particular idea of justice as well as to ideas of the distinction between public and private. Ecological thinking, however, breaks through this distinction and we now face the challenge of a fourth phase: ecological citizenship.¹⁵⁾ Ecological citizenship transforms the nature of moral community itself, and it widens the idea of justice in a complex and radical way. Anthropocentric ways of dividing society and nature are questioned by ecocentric understandings, which would involve significant shifts in human assumptions, behaviours and institutional structures.

The metaphor of the 'global village' and its success in ruling ideologies shows clearly how the understanding of sovereignty, political authority and communal identity has gone through a shift from a nation-based to a global mode of identity construction. It seems to be not any longer the national identity to be at the ground of the human person, but his/her localisation as a citizen in the global horizon. An important question arises from this: Is a conception of political community and citizenship mainly built on the central basis of cosmopolitan or terrapolitan identity?¹⁶⁾ The global village is mainly understood as the Earth itself and that the views of nature, life and Earth are at the heart of the changing self-understanding of persons, also citizens in political and moral communities.¹⁷⁾

A consideration of democracy would be vital at this point. How does the practice of democracy interact with the theme of citizenship? How should democracy be developed in ecological directions? How might religious communities contribute to the development of democracy as a place for learning a political language other than that of the state?

The concept of imaging the rights of not yet born human beings is a new but strongly emphasised tool to resist the uncontrolled growth of

15) Mark J. Smith, *Ecologism: Towards Ecological Citizenship*, Buckingham 1998, 96-100.

16) Cf. Daniel Deudney, *Global Village Sovereignty: Intergenerational Sovereign Publics, Federal-Republican Earth Constitutions, and Planetary Identities*, in: Karen T. Litfin (ed.), *The Greening of Sovereignty in World Politics*, Cambridge Mass.: MIT 1998, 299-325, 303.

17) For a differentiated systems approach on responsible global citizenship with great significance for European developments see Chris Blackmore/John Smith, *Living with the Big Picture: A Systems Approach to Citizenship of a Complex Planet*, in: Nigel Dower/John Williams (eds.), *Global Citizenship: A Critical Reader*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press 2002, 201-212.

technological human power over and against life. Already the idea that not yet born generations could make a claim on those who are living at present is a very exciting phenomenon, which makes it even more interesting and necessary to investigate the religious and cultural conditions for the distribution of such an argument in ongoing debates in several spheres of politics. Is such an argument just rhetorical speculation, or are human beings also as ecological citizens religiously capable of imaging their heirs not yet born, and are they able to let them generate moral obligations? How are images of our common future developed from images of those not yet born but already, in our imagination, alive in their common future?

My suggestion is to explore the power of eco-citizenship especially in North East Asia. What, for example, happens when the majorities of people move from the rural human ecology into urban settlements? Do they transform the best of their former traditions and culture in the development of their new built surroundings?

How could for example, regional and local national institutions support small-scale perm-culture? Is there a potential for what social movements in the USA have developed as a "bioregionalism"? How could a Christian theology of Creation and creativity in urban built surroundings be developed?¹⁸⁾ And how could the cultural and religious manifold of Asia be transculturated into a new urban colourful religiosity?

What happens with religion in the city and what will be the new meaning and function of rural areas after the majority of the population has left? Will rural areas offer significant places for recreation, memory and encounters with the ancestors and the land of the past? Will they offer protected places for endangered non-human species? Will the mountains become even more holy when the majority of people work and live their ordinary life indoors and in dark valleys in the shadows of skyscrapers? Would the Earth with all its complex forms and colours become even more sacred for believers, whose only straight lines and heavy blocks normally

18) Cf. T. J. Gorringer, *A Theology of the Built Environment: Justice, Empowerment, Redemption*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2002; S. Bergmann (ed.), *Architecture, Aesth/Ethics and Religion*, Frankfurt am Main/London: Verlag für interkulturelle Kommunikation (IKO)/Transaction Publishers 2005, and S. Bergmann, *Making Oneself at Home in Environments of Urban Amnesia: Religion and Theology in City Space*, in: *International Journal of Public Theology* 2, 1/2008, 70-97.

surround eyes? What would Seoul be without the woods, waters and the shrines of the hills, which still proudly raise their bodies out of the mouldering city? Can Geomancy work on larger scales of urban planning?

If peace is not only about the reconciliation of peoples, who transform their swords into ploughs, but if it is also about the reconciliation of natural and built surroundings in our common natural life space, then the challenge to explore what ecological citizenship means in Asia would be a crucial challenge. Especially the Christian churches and other religious denominations should commit themselves to such a task, due to their belief that the world always is more than man-made and that Life is nothing else than a gift. Gifts can only be received in gratefulness and shared with each other; they can never be ordered and dominated.

Exploring the potentials of earth cosmopolitanism in Asia would imply an important strengthening of global environmentalism and the marginalised ecological movements in the West. Needless to say, that the spiritual traditions of religion offer a significant deepening and crucial driving forces for global and local environmentalism.¹⁹⁾

Life-Enhancing Technology

Technology and social transformation

One of the essential characteristics of modernity and globalisation is found in technology. The history of human inventions turned into technical artefacts has, as we know, changed the history of humankind and the planet several times.

The invention of ploughs, for example, and the use of animals have accelerated human ecology to step from nomadism to agriculture. The development of the printing press supported the religious Reformation in Europe. The printed texts and their Lutheran theology moved into the centre of the culture, where the Reformer's translation of the Bible from the translocal elitist Latin to the regional popular German broke through social borders with the assistance of the Gutenberg press.

The introduction of technical systems for mobility in the 18th century have changed the whole landscape of Europe, where the straight lines of

19) Cf. Gary Gardner, *Invoking the Spirit: Religion and Spirituality in the Quest for a Sustainable World*, Worldwatch Paper 164, Washington, December 2002.

railways cut apart the curved lines of paths and windy roads. The straightification of the complex landscape forms was further developed when automobiles were introduced. These are radically changing both landscape and urban planning and the global climate at present. The so called 'selfsubsistant movers' (Greek 'auto' means self) represent nowadays the main cultural symbol for identity formatting and belonging to a modern tribe and place. This might be seen in continuity with Aristoteles' metaphysics where he regards the highest state of divine being to be able to move others without being moved itself.²⁰⁾

Grey perception

We can ask whether humans today have achieved this state of full divinity by moving around - like disabled beings with distorted bodies - in their wheel chairs taking them from one computer terminal to another, where they sit on similar wheel chairs using only eyes and finger tops. Have we really reached "the end of geography," as the French media philosopher Paul Virilio calls it? Have we lost the ability to experience the distance and route where we move bodily and slowly from one place to another?

In a modern city, the inhabitants have almost no influence over the spatial design of their living environment. Even the countryside is ruled by socio-economic factors, which affect mobility, and a common late modern experience is a great loss of control over and responsibility for one's natural and local surroundings. Thus it is not surprising that so many people are interested in gardening, their homes, parks and trees nowadays.

The loss of a connection to the natural and local surroundings creates a special kind of alienation, and Virilio's much discussed 'end of geography' expresses that this alienation is continually reinforced by the current global economic trends.

Virilio has shown how the desire for the contemporaneous destroys the ability to experience the unique. The electronic communication media restrict in a spatial sense people's experience of complexity and also destroy the permanence of things. The principle of the contemporaneousness destroys the uniqueness of place and the uniqueness of contemporary time.²¹⁾

20) Aristotle, *Metaphysics* XII,8,1073a.

21) Paul Virilio, *Fluchtgeschwindigkeit: Essay*, Frankfurt/M.: Fischer 1999 (1995), 19.

The sensual experience of, for example, physical movement along a certain path in the physical world is reduced²²⁾ because we mainly move through the world with the help of technical artefacts. Humans have become computer terminal citizens.²³⁾ Perception becomes imprecise. When everything becomes blurred, out of focus, and intermingled, differences and the other becomes difficult to detect. The technical dominance of spatial boundaries, and our freedom of movement within them, does not in any way contribute to making the world larger. On the contrary, we shrink the world, make it uniform, and change it into a withered windfall apple, which in the end is threatened by destruction.²⁴⁾ Virilio demands that we rediscover our existence in the physical world.²⁵⁾

While Virilio suggests a minimalist type of resistance, by refusing to adopt a certain type of perception, I wish to promote the value of aesthetic education as the most important tool for critics of civilisation. Education and pedagogic within the fields of art, museums, religion, and environmental studies offers unforeseen and rich possibilities for making citizens aware of the moral problems of space. Besides, the process of developing the human senses is highly enjoyable and pleasurable for the individual and the community before it reaches the politically troublesome arenas of social and environmental ethics. If one cannot feel a moral problem personally, then one is not suited to find its solution either. If the desktop is turned into something like a home and 'Heimat' for global nomads how should and could we perceive, negotiate and solve our common moral problems?

22) Virilio, op.cit., 28.

23) Virilio, op.cit., 34.

24) On the acceleration of time and the shrinkage of space through modern technologies of transport see Michael Carley/Philippe Spapens, *Sharing the World: Sustainable Living & Global Equity in the 21st Century*, London: Earthscan 1998, 149ff. Mobility, however, does not only shrink space but it also widens it. Cf. S. Bergmann, *The Beauty of Speed or the Discovery of Slowness - Why Do We Need to Rethink Mobility?* in: S.Bergmann, T.Sager (eds.), *MOBILITIES IN TRANSIT: Rethinking the artefacts, images and surroundings of human motion*, forthcoming Aldershot: Ashgate 2008.

25) Virilio, op.cit., 96.

The normativity of technology

With regard to the crucial dimension of technology in modernity it seems hard to understand why ideologies of technology are so seldom mined in critical intellectual discourses. Even if already Socrates has criticised the use of the pen and writing as a threat to human memory, and even if Herbert Marcuse has delivered an excellent analysis of “the materialisation of values” in technology,²⁶⁾ the ethics of technology is still at the margin while its applications rapidly changes Life.

The dominant ideology for technology today is poorly reductionist and simplistic. Artefacts are seen as tools for humans who would like to realise purposes. Technology, although, is more than that. Artefacts are part of a complex and dynamic interaction of humans and their surroundings.

They are both a tool for the human body to reach out and they transcend bodily limits. Artefacts, furthermore, are part of the human surrounding, which the artefact transports from the outside to the inside of the human and his/her embodied mind.²⁷⁾ Nevertheless, an artefact is, in a similar way as an art object, also a piece with a ‘life’ of its own. Artefacts are able to create atmospheres, which influence both our surrounding and us. They are in some kind living beings that develop an autonomous potential to influence those who use them and those who are used by them.

Technology should not be reduced to a simple tool as it develops a dynamic power of a specific kind, which even manages to steer and dominate social and individual powers, which cannot longer control the self-going dynamics of technology. Do I really drive my car, or does the car drive me? Does the nuclear power plant produce energy for us, or is it rather a hungry monster which imposes decision making bodies to throw the food of rare minerals from the Earth into its mouth? Does the machine exist for the engineer or does the engineer live for the machine?

What kinds of gardens do we enjoy to flourish, those of flowers or those of robots and chemicals? Why are technical artefacts often decorated

26) Cf. Andrew Feenberg, *Heidegger and Marcuse: The Catastrophe and Redemption of History*, New York/London: Routledge 2005, 199. Cf. S. Bergmann, *Technology as Salvation? Critical Perspectives from an Aesth/Ethics of the Spirit*, in: *European Journal of Science and Theology* 3, 4/2007, 5-19.

27) Cf. James J. Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin 1979.

in harmony with aesthetical design principles? Do they need to get a skin of beautiness in order to hide their ugliness? Are we still able to experience “the ugliness of capitalism” ?²⁸⁾ What does the aestheticisation of economy do to our senses and how does it change our skills of perception?

Questions like these can hopefully open the reader’s eyes for the perception of another approach to bodily-seeking peace for life.

The most problematic example of life-threatening technologies has already been discussed in other contributions, namely the nuclear and other military weapon systems, which have only been constructed with one single purpose, i.e. to destroy life.

While weapons are easy to critique, other technologies strangle life to death in a slower and smoother way, as for example private car use is catalysing the majority of global climate change, which offers a much more significant threat to secure survival than terrorism. Why start a “war against terrorism” and ignore the “human warfare against natural surroundings” ?

Ethically some say, referring to the tree of life in the biblical paradise, technology can never be good or bad in itself. Moral judgements can only be valid for humans and their usages, virtues and purposes. This is a dangerous simplification. It is often expressed in public discourses but still it remains simply rubbish, because it excludes a critical investigation of an essential element of our social body.

Decision-making processes on what kind of technology will get the large resources to be developed are heavily normative. In spite of their explosive social relevance, although, they are seldom discussed publicly. No national government really controls the subpolitical sphere that gives birth to new high technology developments.

If a technical system, as for example biogenetics, once has been developed in the subpolitical dark sphere, and if it starts to promise financial profits, it is often all too late to discuss its ethical implications and consequences. Sometimes, public discourses can limit some of the worst consequences, but often technology represents a power of its own, which usually does not fit into the essential democratic principle: All power emerges from the people. The power of technology is definitively not in harmony with the power of the people. The many poor of the world are

28) Cf. Camille de Toledo, *Die Toleranz der Goldfische: Oder: Warum ertragen wir die kapitalistische Hässlichkeit?* in: DIE ZEIT Nr. 26, 23.6.2005, 44.

definitively not the ones who influence the decisions about what technology needs to be promoted for the survival of their lives.

New alliances

I will not continue this reflection any longer here, but only offer a preliminary conclusion. For the peace seeking processes in Asia it seems to me crucial to develop alliances that do not fall into the gap of either technology reductionism or technology pessimism. Instead, it seems much more fruitful to experience how technical skills can be transformed for the enhancement of Life. This could be experimented in alliances of critical engineers, architects artists, craft artisans and scientists. The academic institutions sometimes offer a creative space for such transdisciplinary programmes, sometimes they assimilate them into old fashioned utilitarianism where inventions are turned into simple tools for accumulating capital through so called innovation. Innovation must not be interpreted as knowledge or even wisdom. Innovation, as it is used in present academic discourses is a reductionist anthropocentric mode of controlling technical development. Wisdom, instead, means the complex criteria of judgement and evaluation of what is life enhancing in opposite to the commodification of life.

A wonderful example for a life-enhancing technology is the composting practice of gardeners and farmers.²⁹⁾ Compost is a mixture of decomposed vegetable or animal matter that is collected in an open or closed container in order to transform “dead” matter into fertilizing substance. In earlier agriculture, composting was a natural part of the recycling of substances. In the criticism of modern society the compost also serves for the re-valuing of garbage, shit and waste that environmentalists are turning into nearly sacred artefacts representing the flow of nature.

Premodern religions include differentiated understandings of the planet's surface, e.g., the earth as mother, while modern worldviews have forgotten or eliminated these. A look at biblical and classic traditions in

29) Cf. my essay *Erde, Kultur und Heiliger Geist: Praktische Theologie des Kompostierens*, in: S. Bergmann, *Geist, der lebendig macht: Lavierungen zur ökologischen Befreiungstheologie*, Frankfurt/M.: IKO-Verlag für interkulturelle Kommunikation 1997, 296-328, and for example the investigation of composting in agriculture by prof. Lee in Jirisan.

Christianity shows that the earth was regarded as in cooperation with God in regard to the history of salvation. The earth took care of the dead bodies until their final resurrection. The Early Church transformed Antique beliefs in the goddess Gaia to an understanding of the Earth as a holy element of the Spirit's life-giving. The late modern culture of composting in the rich and poor countries should be regarded as a strong religious symbol for a new cyclic way of understanding life in general and the human bodily being in particular. The cycle of life from birth to flourishing to a death, which gives new conditions for furthering life, could easily be experienced as a transformative material, social and religious praxis.

Composting is strongly encouraged and legitimized through green ideologies in the nations' environmental policies in Europe. Garbage volumes can be reduced with up to 80%. The diminishing layer of productive earth for farming could especially in the third world be again increased. Pedagogical programs for the education of teachers and children have been developed around the compost.

Transdisciplinary research of life-enhancing technologies should be developed in alliances of academic institutions, and national and international bodies in cooperation with committed social movements and religious communities. One of my suggestions for the ideological and theological support of such an approach is found in my programmatic concept of 'aesth/ethics.'

Towards an Aesth/Ethics of Life

Global ethics and cultural difference?

One of the main contributors to the concept of a universal or global ethics in the pluralist society was the German Catholic and Ecumenical theologian Hans Küng, who published a proposal for a global ethics 1993.³⁰⁾ It was received positively and widely, and rendered a lot of discourses. The small and efficient foundation "Weltethos" distributes the concept all around the

30) Hans Küng/Karl-Josef Kuschel (eds.), *Erklärung zum Weltethos: Die Deklaration des Parlamentes der Weltreligionen*, München: Piper 1993. Cf. also the approaches to develop a global ecological ethos in: Hans Kessler (ed.), *Ökologisches Weltethos im Dialog der Kulturen und Religionen*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft 1996.

world.

What could such a universal consensus contribute? Should we try to formulate universal human norms and standards, which could guide us in practical discourses about normative problems? Or should we reject all kinds of universal values because these can and have been used as oppressive tools to discipline and control from above?

Küng's position is that universal norms and standards are necessary for a global ethic in harmony with culturally divergent contexts. Some think that they can be founded ontologically, for example in the Stoic and Christian doctrine of the natural law, while others offer a more pragmatist argument for the need of social conventions shared by a majority. A critical objection says that modern ethics lifts the responsibility of human persons from their shoulders by offering universal codes that make it unnecessary for the individual to feel, think and act morally him/herself. What about moral intuitions, conscience and moral individual impulses? Does a universal ethic continue the tradition of a moral code above, which minimises the individual responsibility of citizens? And what about the significance of contextual differences? Can a universal ethics become more than a minimalist consensus on a few standards for the regulation of human interaction?

I do not want to step into the investigation of the pro et contra of a global ethics, which has been discussed for a while, but draw our attention to a dimension, which is not at all developed in such a concept.

To start with, I do not believe in 'the human' or 'the humanity' in general, but I do believe in other humans who exist in my surrounding. Born after the Second World War in a Germany that somehow has managed to learn almost something from its responsibility for two world wars, it seems for me unappealing to speculate about the essence of humanity, while some are starving and others are struggling with obesity due to all too much of food. It seems more exciting to reflect about the sameness and difference of human and other beings than to understand 'the' human nature.

While philosophers in Europe for more than thousand years have developed anthropology by explaining 'the human nature' in the Stoic frame of one humanity, it might be the time to break with the central Greek antique principle of knowledge, that only the same recognises the same. Can the same recognise the strange? Or does it simply project itself to the strange? What can we learn about human beings when we start with the

differences of people and cultures that in a common encounter create a community? Is it possible at all to start immediately with an image of the unity? Are visions of unity rather dangerous than healthy for the good community?

This sociophilosophical agenda has an interesting root in Eastern Church patristics where the Eastern theologians have claimed that the triune community only could be understood as a full and perfect community of the three who are different and the same, The Spirit, the Son and the Father.³¹⁾ In the West, on the contrary, the image of the triune God was immediately described as a perfect unity, where the difference of the three was regarded a secondary. European worldviews operate since then with two different models understanding communion with regard to difference: either from unity to difference, or from difference to communion. Church leadership ideologies reflect this split by choosing either the monistic papal line or the communitarian line of a group of spiritual leaders.

The present dispute between those who defend the sameness of all humans and those who defend the opinion that we all differ seems even more destructive than an old fashioned universalism. Also the ideology of identity and difference has its dangers. It might be the case that the so called postmodernism designs a new uniform that is oppressed to us from above: Now, we all should be different, while we earlier were made into the same!

Is this uniform of difference more comfortable than the old of sameness? Or is it sooner a new sublime form of "alterity control"³²⁾ that can use cultural differences as tools to manipulate a growing market of exchanges?

In the same way as it is problematic to depart from 'the human nature' in general it seems problematic to depart from 'nature' in general, which in fact has been one of the deep essentials of the European worldview through the ages. Can I really perceive nature purely, or do I only see, hear, smell and touch life that surrounds me?

In my elaboration of an 'Aesth/Ethics' it is important to differ theoretically between the natural and the built surroundings, which offer the concrete conditions for life on the one side and the Nature, Life and Earth in

31) Cf. S. Bergmann, *Creation Set Free*, op.cit., chapter III.

32) Michael Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses* (New York/London: Routledge 1993), 249.

general on the other side.

Of course, we do live on one single planet, and we are affected by one single climate and now also by one common climate change. I do not at all want to get rid of the universal method. The capacity of the image of belonging to one common earth, one humanity and one common history of life are crucial for our self-understanding, especially for our production of localities.

But in the same way as the classical Christian theology in its Eastern patristic apophaticism clearly states that it is impossible to know anything about God 's essence, it is crucial to develop the same argument with regard to nature. Human beings cannot produce full knowledge about the essence of Life and its space and time. This can only be a preliminary and limited knowledge. Science and technology, therefore, should learn the lesson from religion and theology that the longing for perfect knowledge about nature leads to its destruction. The famous question of German philosopher Georg Picht has not been answered yet: How can a science be true, when its applications are destroying its object, life?³³⁾

This does not mean that we should stop to seek for knowledge about God and nature. The same apophatic principle of the limits of knowledge about essence offers furthermore a second sentence: knowledge about God is only available through the experience and reflection about God's *works*. Therefore, while being conscious about the *negative* knowledge about God's nature, we can and should produce positive knowledge about God through the experience of his/her works.

The same epistemology should be made valid also for human knowledge about Life. Nature reveals itself as a manifold of surroundings for the living creatures. These surroundings are highly complex and different. The octopus, for example, perceives it's surrounding and acts in it in another way as the fish. Their surroundings overlap, cross each other and they are radically different and sometimes also in some aspects identical.³⁴⁾ They are both the same and different. According to ecology, this diversity of interactions of organisms and surroundings seems to be one of the

33) Georg Picht, op.cit., 5.

34) Cf. Jakob von Uexküll/Georg Kriszat, *Streifzüge durch die Umwelten von Tieren und Menschen, Bedeutungslehre*, new edition Frankfurt am Main 1983 (1970).

foundational patterns of life, which also can help us to interpret sociocultural processes among humans.

With regard to our discussion about universalist or contextual ethics, my point is here to focus much more on the aesthetical dimension of ethics than to only seek to agree on minimalist universal standards. Standards could help, but moral problems usually emerge in contexts, and contexts are surroundings for the bodily being of human and other creatures where normative and moral problems of survival take place.

That is why I programmatically have started to develop the concept of aesth/ethics.³⁵⁾

Aesthetics is here understood, not as a theory of beauty in the narrow philosophical sense, but as a discursive and artistic reflection and production of practices and discourses on synaesthetic perception, creation and reception. The scientific branches and genres of Arts, Culture and Images offer for me new prioritised partners for a transdisciplinary dialogue in environmental science beyond 18th and 19th century's philosophy or 20th century's sociology dominating the concepts of knowledge and society.

If ethics is defined as a discursive reflection on moral problems, it becomes difficult to exclude people's mental capacities and to separate aesthetic competence from moral competence. The challenge to create aesthetic sensibility in human beings through a specially designed pedagogy of art seems to me to be a very relevant ethical requirement, especially in today's society, and especially if we want to counteract the steadily increasing mystification of the moral problems of our human and non-human neighbours.

It takes a sharp mind and the ability to see our neighbour's misery, to answer Cain's question 'Lord, am I my brother's keeper?' There are strong forces at work seeking to impose a media-structured reduction on our ability to perceive social and ecological injustice in the world. For this reason aesthetic sensibility is needed in order to create a counterbalance to our contemporary and ongoing superficial aestheticization.³⁶⁾ We can thus

35) S. Bergmann (ed.), *Architecture, Aesth/Ethics and Religion*, Frankfurt am Main/London: Verlag für interkulturelle Kommunikation (IKO)/Transaction Publishers 2005.

36) On the contemporary processes of "aesthetization" see Welsch, 9ff., and on their relevance for pictorial theology cf. Bergmann (2008), chapter IV.3. Wolfgang Welsch, *Grenzgänge der Ästhetik*, Stuttgart: Reclam 1996; S.

discover an ethical function in aesthetics, both in theory and in practice.

Aesthetical justice

Theodor W. Adorno's reflections on justice can guide us in the challenge to re-integrate ethics and aesthetics.

Adorno's well-known work "Ästhetische Theorie" discusses theories of justice in the horizon of aesthetics. He offers a challenging and provocative argument with regard to the encounter of different cultures in pluralistic contexts. This could also be applied to problems in the encounter of humanity and nature. Adorno criticises the conventional understandings of justice and he offers a widening of them in an alternative way by linking aesthetics and heterogeneity to each other:

"Ästhetische Einheit empfängt ihre Dignität durchs Mannigfaltige selbst. Sie läßt dem Heterogenen Gerechtigkeit widerfahren."³⁷⁾

(Aesthetic unity receives its dignity through the manifold itself. It does justice to the heterogeneous.)

Rightly, he enlightens us about the need of every conception of justice to integrate the strange and the stranger. But neither Adorno nor Levinas offer a reflection about the human person as a natural and environmentally embodied mind. Therefore, the question how the natural surrounding or the space in and around us affects our practices and discourses about justice still remains an open one.

Should we regard nature as "the other of mankind"? Is heterogeneity in justice only about strange brothers and sisters? Surely not, but it is not either enough to confess the ecosophical credo that everything is connected to each other and that a butterfly could cause an earthquake.

Holism tends easily to turn into a fascist projection of human ideologies unto the screen of what we define as nature, where life is reduced to be a mirror of ourselves. The intrinsic value and autonomous power of space is violated then.

Bergmann, *In the Beginning is the Icon: A Liberative Theology of Images, Art and Culture*, forthcoming London: Equinox 2008.

37) Theodor W. Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, 13. ed. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 1995), 285.

Should we, therefore, regard natural space both as the strange of ourselves and at the same time as our inner and surrounding existential? A human being is never integrated in all world places at the same time. He and she never exist in general but only in particular. How should an aesth/ethics of space be worked out in a contextualist mode and at the same time stay in connection with Earth in different scales?

Adorno can teach us to include heterogeneity into a concept of justice. Also ecojustice needs to learn this, so that the dialectics of the one and the other, the own and the strange is integrated in the human ecological model of religion. Such a model would analyse the quality of just relations between those who are strangers for each other in a reciprocal interplay. In such a model worlds are prior to words, and the image of God is reflected in nature sooner than in a dogmatic of the Word as in Barthian systems. The worlds that embed, carry and nurture the gardens where also the words flourish, would in such a model offer the vision of longing for justice and belonging to just communities.

Following Adorno's demand to anchor ethics in aesthetics and to do justice to the strange allows us to develop a truly post-modern model of relating autonomy and heteronomy to each other. His concept of an aesthetical justice would imply an important step beyond the limitations of modernist moral philosophy, and by the way, also of communitarian or virtue based late modern ethics. But the concept of an aesthetical justice still needs to be transformed into an ecological approach.

Following Zygmunt Bauman,³⁸⁾ we can see how the subordination of some over the many others - and the subordination of spaces for the few in contrast to the poor places for the many - is affecting the chances of survival and the development of territories.

The accumulation of finance capital on some places called bank accounts transforms not only the living spaces and the blood and earth of the many poor, but it transforms also the eye of the rich. It furthermore changes radically the communities where some are not any longer able to perceive what others experience as violating their rights.

Sharing or not sharing place affects directly our modes of bodily being and moving. It affects our body languages, our liturgies, rituals, and

38) Zygmunt Bauman, *Globalization: The Human Consequences* (New York: Columbia University Press 1998).

festivals. It also changes radically our planning processes as we are designing and building city space and landscapes.

The potential for a deep critique of globalisation, which departs not only in economic or ideological arguments, is found in a metanoia of our minds and sensitive bodies. The religious and the aesthetic offer deep dimensions of ongoing globalisation processes, both to those who are accumulating capital and to those who are longing for an alternative vision of belonging to the Earth.

If such an Aesth/Ethics could contribute to eco-justice and an aesthetical justice that promotes heterogeneity, we could use it as an analytic tool to resist and transform the ongoing homogenisation of the world in the hegemony of the Empire of money and weapons. "Empires need gods," Nina Koshy formulated in his contribution. Also the idols of homogenisation have their own specific aesthetics. Kinhide Mushakoji has formulated it already in our discussions straight up to the point: "Homogenisation is the real threat to Life."

On the other side it must also be asked whether all kinds of heterogenisation are good. To reflect further about the criteria for a good heterogeneity would make the agenda of geopolitics more constructive. How do we promote the practices and ideologies for a life-enhancing manifold in opposite to the systems of homogenisation and alterity control?

My final conclusion from this, somehow preliminary and fragmented, discussion is that peace-seeking processes in North East Asia should not place bodily and aesthetical aspects in the margins of the discourse. Instead, they should regard them as prioritised areas of fertilising the development of countervailing power. How can we explore the dynamics of the strange and the familiar? How could you develop your aesthetical skills of perception so that you really can see, hear, smell, touch, feel and understand the sufferings of your sister and brother? What would it mean to develop a spiritual aesthetical education programme for the love of the strange in society and nature?

Abstract

The essay approaches Life as a process in the natural space. Space is not a life-less container but a life embracing existential. Financial capital and the global market appear in such a perspective as disembedded and despatialized artefacts, which are totally dependent of living environments as well as of humans who believe in the power of money. The de-spatialization assisted by monetary and technology systems provokes the emergence of a countervailing power, where re-localisation stands at the core and where citizens all over the planet develop a new multiple longing for belonging.

After an introductory discussion of the history and potentials of a common European foreign politics in alliance with Asian social movements, three themes are investigated.

a) Departing from a theory of transculturation, ecocitizenship is analysed as a continuation of the development from civil through political to social citizenship. How could earth cosmopolitanism in Asia imply an important strengthening of global environmentalism? How are the spiritual traditions of religion offering a significant deepening for global and local environmentalism?

b) The dominant ideology for technology today is simply reductionist and poor. Artefacts are seen as tools for humans who would like to realise purposes. Technology, although, is more than that. Artefacts are part of a complex and dynamic interaction of humans and their surroundings.

How can life-threatening technologies be separated from those which enhance life?

c) A central suggestion for the ideological and theological support of such an approach is elaborated in the programmatic concept of 'aesth/ethics.' Aesthetics is here understood not as a theory of beauty but as a discursive and artistic reflection and production of practices and discourses on synaesthetic perception, creation and reception.

Aesthetical justice is about the need of ethics to integrate the strange and the stranger, and to include heterogeneity into the concept of justice. The potential for a deep critique of globalisation, which departs not only in economic or ideological arguments, is found in a metanoia of our minds and sensitive bodies. How could you develop your aesthetical skills of perception so that you really can see, hear, smell, touch, feel and understand

the sufferings of your sister and brother? What would it mean to develop a spiritual aesthetic education programme for the love of the strange in society and nature?

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Key Words

Life, space, theology, religion, environment, globalisation, (eco)citizenship, technology, aesthetics, ethics, transculturation, Europe

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