



**Living Together
in The Household of God
Asian Reflections**



14th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
CHRISTIAN CONFERENCE OF ASIA
Jakarta - Indonesia, 20 - 27 May 2015

**Living Together
in The Household of God
Asian Reflections**

Contents

Foreword	5
<i>Dr. Henriette Hutabarat Lebang</i>	
1. Mission of the Asian Churches in the Household of God	7
<i>HG Dr. Yakob Mar Irenaios</i>	
2. Human Security in Asia and Challenges to Living Together in the Household of God in Peace with Justice	21
<i>Dr. Mathews George Chunakara</i>	
3. Peace and Life Security in God's Household	41
<i>Dr. Yoon-Jae Chang</i>	
4. Vulnerability, Resistance and Solidarity in the Household of God - Theological Reflection on People on the Move and Human Trafficking in Asia-Pacific	59
<i>Dr. Mery Kolimon</i>	
5. Climate Change and Eco-justice: Reading the Signs of the Times	73
<i>Dr. Hope S. Antone</i>	
6. Ethics of Reciprocity: Indigenous Perspective on the Household of God	85
<i>Dr. Atola Longkumer</i>	
7. Revisiting Inter-faith Relations in the Context of God's Oikos	101
<i>Dr. Huang Po Ho</i>	
8. From the World House to an Oikopoetic Interreligious Imagination	111
<i>Dr. Joas Adiprasetya</i>	

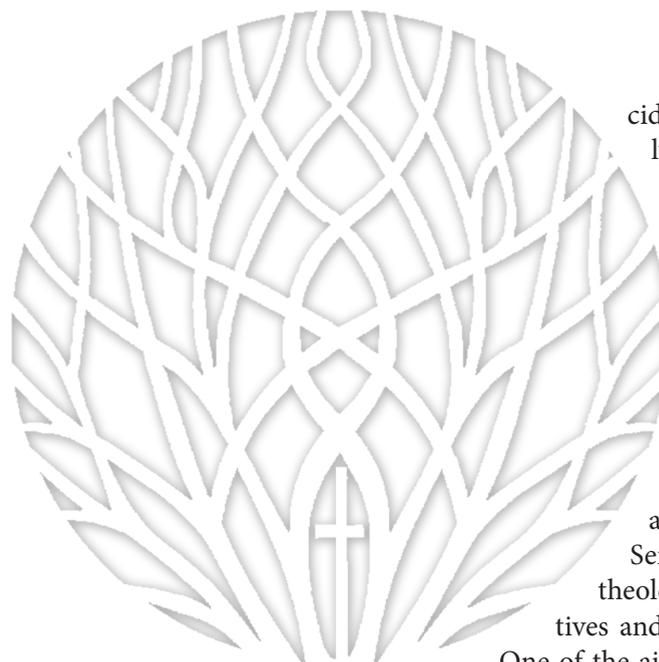
Published in Jakarta
March 2015

Christian Conference of Asia
Muang, Chiang Mai 50000
Thailand
Email: cca@cca.org.hk
www.cca.org.hk

Copyright © Christian Conference of Asia

Cover design and layout : MJA Nashir

Foreword



The CCA General Committee in February 2014, decided on the theme of the 14th General Assembly, namely *“Living Together in the Household of God”* after much discussion on Asian realities and the challenges they pose to the life and ministry of Asian churches. The Committee also accepted the invitation of the Batak Christian Protestant Church (HKBP) in Indonesia to host this General Assembly which is scheduled to be held in Jakarta from 20-27 May 2015.

As part of the preparation of this Assembly, a theological workshop with prominent Asian theologians and church leaders, was held at Jakarta Theological Seminary from 22-25 July 2014, to reflect biblically and theologically on the Assembly theme from various perspectives and from a wide range of experiences of Asian people. One of the aims of this workshop was to produce study materials to stimulate and assist the churches, seminaries, church institutions and individual members to discuss the theme of this Assembly and to reflect on what and how this theme is relevant to the ministry of Asian churches and to the life and struggles of Asian people in the coming years.

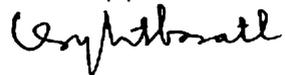
It is with great pleasure that we are now presenting to you this collection of some of the papers presented and discussed at that workshop. The workshop, however, went beyond papers. It facilitated

participants to interact with each other through Bible Studies and theological deliberations on the theme of the Assembly, as well as through exposure programs to understand the pluralistic realities of Indonesia that are common to Asia, and its challenges to the witness of the churches. The workshop also went a long way in brain-storming and planning an initial format for the plenary sessions, articulating the focus and structure of Bible Studies; and designing the liturgy and worship service for the Assembly.

Let me take this opportunity to express my deep appreciation to friends who graciously spared their time to attend and participate in this workshop. A special thanks to Jakarta Theological Seminary (STT Jakarta) for the support they provided for this workshop. The inspiring daily worship they conducted is unforgettable and gratefully acknowledged. I record my gratitude to Rev. Paul Swadling for his editorial touch and Mr. M J A Nashir for his assistance in designing the layout.

May God bless our preparation for this Assembly, guide the deliberations during the Assembly and renew the commitment of the churches in Asia to continue their ecumenical journey to witness the love of Christ. May we look forward to seeking together a new vision and a new praxis for living together in the household of God.

Sincerely yours,



Henriette Hutabarat Lebang
General Secretary

Mission of The Asian Churches in the Household of God

HG Dr. Yakob Mar Irenaios¹

“As you go, proclaim the good news; ‘the kingdom of heaven has come near. Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You have received without payment, give without payment” (Matt. 10:7-8).

“Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19)

The Holy Church is the Household of God with a divine assignment to work for the transformation of the world, in which it finds itself. Thus the vision becomes inclusive to see the whole world as the Household of God. A message of this responsibility of humans is obvious in the beautiful discovery of the psalmist: *The heavens are the Lord’s heavens: but the earth he has given to human beings* (Psalm 115:16). In fact, St. Paul talks about the *family in heaven and earth, which is named of the Father* (Ephesians 3: 14-15). Thus the household of God consists of all the inhabitants of heaven and earth. Our concern for the earth, which we are called to share with God (cf. Jonah

¹ HG Dr. Yakob Mar Irenaios is Metropolitan of Kochi Diocese, Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, India.

4:11), is not to harbor any discrimination in terms of faith, language, culture, ethnicity, gender or financial security. In fact, the significance of the 'household of God on earth' in the context of the inalienable relationship between heaven and earth is clear and loud in the Lord's Prayer: "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven".

Household of God

Household is a beautiful term: a house becomes a 'household', only when its inhabitants ('partners' in modern jargon) are 'held together' by some unseen but strong, affinity, which may be described as spiritual. If any family fails to 'hold together' its members, it ceases to deserve this appellation. In God's household, what holds everything and everybody together is unselfish and unconditional love, and not mere survival instinct; for, *love binds everything together in perfect harmony* (Col. 3:14). The **one principle of life** that the creator God writ large on the face on creations was this: **one should serve the other**. Even to this day the entire edifice of life on this planet is sustained by this cardinal principle. This principle is behind "living together" and sustenance as well as the essential awareness that this household is owned by God. A faulty understanding and execution of mission is liable to violate this principle.

Two Biblical metaphors of perfect household may be cited here to illustrate the idea of "living together" in the household of God. Both these are from the 'in the beginning" portions of Old Testament history.

The first obviously is the first ever household known to us – the community life in the Garden of Eden. It was the ideal household of God; where the presence of God was felt, the Tree of Life (symbolizing the Son of God, in Orthodox theology) was at the centre of the 'household', the possibility of temptations loomed large, and also the possibility of defeating temptations; and the God-given responsibility to tend and protect the earth (a responsibility in which modern man has miserably failed!). If we borrow from the Bible and the Desert

Fathers, what held the inhabitants of that household together was the observation of the twin commandments: Love of God and Love of others. There, they all 'lived together': there was zero enmity between human beings and animals; all the creatures could communicate with each other. Perhaps there was one common means of perfect communication for all, known in theological parlance as "Paradisiacal Language'. In that household everyone had to care for everyone else; otherwise they could not continue to exist. Their 'living together' was ordained by God, and they enjoyed it too. They knew (but later faltered to honour it) that God was the head of the household, and they had to depend on him for everything: life, sustenance, safety, consummation and so on.

Man's disobedience and the "Fall" upset the whole apple cart: humans lost their "innocence"; 'being good' was replaced by mere 'knowledge of good and evil'; mutual love and respect among the members of the 'household' diminished; mutual suspicion and enmity replaced perfect mutual understanding; exploitation emanating from selfishness ruled the roost; 'privacy' replaced 'openness'; even the presence of God was looked askance – in short, there were very few essentials to 'hold the house together'.

The second instance is that of the "corporate" life in Noah's ark. It was a household seemingly by 'compulsion'. Yet it is a strong metaphor of living together, despite the fact that it was a conglomerate of myriad disparities. Here was a real commune, where the needs of every one were met. No one could claim superiority over any one else; all of them felt the need to hold together; and there absolutely was no scope for exploitation. They all need each other; they had all shed their 'natural' ferocity, if they had any. Such an understanding called for mutual respect and concern. As we say, 'all were in the same boat', meaning that they had to live with the principle 'live and let live'. There is no record of any rancor or struggle among the Ark-dwellers!

Once the deluge was over, they forgot the principles of the 'community life' they enjoyed in the Ark of their 'salvation'. Noah was inebriate before long; the remnant who survived the Flood by the grace of God soon came together to 'rebel' against God.

Life in Asian Countries Today

The general life situation in the 47 Asian countries today is one of unease; and in a few of them, there exists a civil war like situation. It is not assumed here that only Asian countries are experiencing ethnic or political turmoil. Some of the Western countries too are passing through war like situations. Political unrest is not something new in Eastern countries. Today, West Asia and North African (WANA) and Gulf region are no longer citadels of peace, despite material prosperity. The much orchestrated *Arab Spring* has only brought the greatest social, ethnic and political unrest to some of them. Actually those states which have not been affected by the movement live in mortal fear of its unwelcome visitation. However, the Asian polity has survived so many vicissitudes, but life goes on despite all kinds of unrest with amazing resilience. The latest in order is the descent of the movement called SISI (State of Iraq and Syria), in Iraq.

The international media tell us that there exists a kind of 'cold war' between China and Taiwan. Within China, the elaborate precautionary measures taken by the state to 'meet' the Anniversary of the Tiananmen Square incidents a quarter century ago, and the continuing incarceration of votaries of democracy, are ominous enough to reveal the state of things there. Again, there is no love lost between the two Koreas! There appear few parallels for what is really happening in North Korea, as surmised from what little is leaked out from behind the iron curtain. The tension and lack of trust between China and Japan, China and India, India and Pakistan, Indonesia and Malaysia etc. on territorial issues are only too pronounced.

The unrest in the WANA and Gulf region tells on the whole world for several reasons. After the failed Iraqi invasion, Kuwait is apparently calm; Egypt is not yet free from the commotion that has been going on there for a few years now; Syria and Iraq are literally boiling. A recent UN press release says "one family flees Syria every 60 minutes"², echoing one of the bloodiest civil wars in this generation. Lebanon, a country no bigger than the North Eastern state of

² Priyanka Bhattacharya Dutt, "A Syrian Tragedy of many Dimensions", article in *The Hindu*, Daily, Kochi, India, dated 20, June 2014.

Tripura in India, is today home to a million Syrian refugees. Today one in every four people in Lebanon is a Syrian refugee. These blood-letting events have their international repercussions. Echoing this sentiment, Swamy wrote an article titled: "War in Iraq Hurts Every Home in India"³. If the twitter images are to be believed, the militant group's squads gunning down Iraqi air force recruits in Tikrit, some 1700 of them, was one of ghastliest images this generation has seen.

And there is the 'perennially' unresolved problem between Israel and Palestine. The 'liberation' of the Tamil dominated north by the security forces appears to boomerang on the Sri Lankan regime with the proposed U.N. enquiry commission into the alleged human rights violations in place. The Nobel laureate democracy icon in Myanmar is kept out of bounds from the democratic process she loves and stands for. Ukraine has proved to be the latest in the lingering spirit of Glasnost and Perestroika; whether it is in the right or wrong direction, history alone would prove.

In India, a new federal government has taken over following the national General Elections, amidst fears of a right wing Hindu extremist backlash. For the time being, everything is quiet; but the attacks from terrorist groups working from across the border with its northeast neighbor continues.

Apart from these political and military details, there are other factors vitiating life in Asian countries. Ethnic or caste conflicts, corruption, gender exploitation, substance abuse, and the latest- "honour killings" (family members or community taking revenge on youngsters for love marriages cutting across caste barriers, in some parts of central and north India) are the hallmarks of Asian Reality today. This is apart from the overwhelming poverty in certain patches in Asia, lingering into the present century.

A word about the churches and Christians in Asian countries today: in several Asian countries, not only Christians, but religious minorities are discriminated against; and do not enjoy the rights of regular citizens; it would be worse, if we talk about religious freedom in such countries. The notion of a 'state religion' is not a bygone idea!

³ Praveen Swamy, article published in *The Hindu* dated 18 June 20, 2014.

This is a brief, but very incomplete, picture of human life in Asia today. No wonder, if somebody would exclaim that some places in this continent are the most unlivable on the earth!

We need to brood over how the Church could discharge its God-assigned task of 'mission' in such a scenario. The assignment is to "baptize the nations"! There is likelihood to misunderstand this command to mean that 'conversion and giving baptism' is what the Lord meant. Aggressive movements of preaching mission and conversions are discouraged, if not banned, in several states in Asia. In this context, Churches in Asia need to go after the real meaning of "baptizing the nations". We call it as the real mission of the Church.

Mission – an Orthodox Point of View

To put it briefly, the Church exists in the world to work for its transformation. Here is a poignant statement from an Oriental Orthodox theologian:

The ministry of the Church consists in carrying forward the work which our Lord did while he was on earth. As the gospels testify, he came to the world to do the will of the Father who sent him, and to fulfill his work, and he enjoined on the Church to complete what he had initiated in himself with reference to the world as a whole, in the power of the Holy Spirit.⁴

Thus we have before us a world, to be specific in the context of this paper, 'an Asia, to be transfigured'. This is the core and principle of the mission of the Church in Asia. This process has two aspects:

1. To build up the Christian community on the basis of the life and ideals of Jesus Christ.
2. To work for the transformation of the world at large in the light of the life and ideals of Jesus Christ.

The former emphasizes the fact that the Church is a community organized by God, in which we are members by God's grace; and this community, which is and has to be a fellowship which reflects

⁴ Rev. Dr. V. C. Samuel, *An Orthodox Catechism on the Faith and Life of the Church*, Kottayam: MGOCSM Bookshop & Publishing house, 2008, 111.

the fellowship in heaven, has to have unique characteristics becoming the household of God. The central point is that this community has the duty to keep herself faithful to her Lord. Jesus had exhorted his disciples to be his witnesses everywhere (Acts 1:8). The archetype of life style before them was the life of Jesus himself. Their life style and spirituality were to transcend those of the Pharisees and Sadducees (Matt. 5:20). They were asked not to hate or take revenge on those who hated them or created trouble for them, but to love those who hated them and to pray for those who caused them harm (Matt.5: 43-48). Therefore, it would appear to suggest a suffering community. This ideal of not hating those who oppose us and praying for those who put us in trouble was dear to the heart of Mahatma Gandhi, who had great respect for Jesus Christ.

The latter is the second part of mission; while the former asked us "to be". The heart of the matter is that the presence of a Christian or the Christian community is expected to be a transforming presence in this world of violence, exploitation, corruption, discrimination and injustice. The greatest example is the early Church which was a 'suffering' Church, for the sake of Truth and justice. Martyrdom which was the distinguishing feature of the Church of the first four centuries is reckoned as the greatest force, along with asceticism, in the witness and spreading of the Church. The small mission minded community that was the early Church was convinced that it was 'called and elected' to be the salt and light of the earth (Matt. 5:13-14).

The theological bases for these ideas are the following:

1. God made the world in the beginning and guides it to the final goal of reflecting his will only. Though the world as a whole and man in particular have fallen away from this divine plan, God is working unceasingly to accomplish his purpose. The Church is the pre-eminent instrument for realizing this goal.
2. St. Paul says that he is completing in his flesh what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his Body, the Church (Colossians 1:24). The sufferings of Christ should become the means of salvation through the entire human race

through the Church; and we, the members of the household of God have got a role to play in the attainment of this goal. The risen Christ, before he ascended to heaven said to his disciples that they would receive power when the Holy Spirit came up on them, and they would be his witnesses to the end of the earth (Acts 1: 7-8).

3. The Christian understanding of God and the work of Christ imply the need for the transformation of the whole creation, not merely the human race. The creation itself, he says, would one day be set free from its slavery to decay and would share the glorious freedom of the children of God. Thus the mission of Christ is not merely for a section of the human race, but for the entire human race, i.e. the household of God. He is the Lord of the entire world and the human race as a whole. His concern is not limited, but is cosmic.
4. Jesus did not act or pray for the external conversion of people into the Church. On the contrary, his prayer was that his disciples may be united with him and with one another in love, as he himself was with the Father in love. It is such unity among them, and their being together united with the Triune God that will lead the world to believe in the Christian message (cf. John 17:21).

This community is asked to heal the sick, cast out demons, raise the dead and to preach the Good News of the Kingdom of God. This community is asked to feed the hungry, instead of sending them away famished after feeding them from the Word of God (Matt.14:16; Mark 6:37; Luke 9:13). This community is asked to be perfect as the heavenly Father is perfect (Matt 5: 48). The members of this community are asked to wash each other's feet as a sign of humility and mutual service (John 13:14). This community is asked to love each other to prove that it belongs to God; and is told that the greatest expression of love is to lay down one's life for the sake of others (John 15:14). These were the major and attractive features of the life of our Lord. In other words, the household of God is one with a difference, though it is in the world.

Mission of Asian Churches

Asian Churches cannot run away from their responsibility to minister unto this household of God as God wills, which means simply 'to be' and 'to do' what He would have said and done in this complex and formidable environment.

Conflicts, Civil War, Border Disputes, etc.

Churches together, for instance, through the National Councils, could engage the political regimes, whether democratic or authoritarian, as regards the safety of innocent people, especially because of the fact that children and women bear most of the brunt of conflicts and wars. Churches and Church agencies could offer free services to the affected population. Churches shall try to win the confidence of the authoritarian regimes by their sincerity of intent, and commitment to Justice, Truth and Peace. There might come instances where the Churches themselves would be the afflicted group. It is in such circumstances that the moral and spiritual mettle of the Church is tested, and its commitment to Peace and Justice verified. Prominent examples for the recognition won by Christian mission services are the work of the Red Cross/ Red Crescent Society, Mother Teresa's Sisters of Charity, and the like, in every society.

Poverty and Luxury

Alleviating the misery of the poor is fundamental to Christian mission. Situations of poverty and starvation have not been effaced from certain parts of Asia. Assurance of food security is still a mirage in several Asian countries. Recently, the Indian Parliament has approved a National Food Security Act. Public Distribution network of essential commodities does help to ameliorate poverty in backward states.

As a foil to the issue of poverty alleviation, the sin of luxury raises its head. Christians and Churches have not extricated themselves from the sin of luxury and worldliness. A recurring theme in the speeches and writings of the late Metropolitan of the Orthodox Church, Geevarghese Mar Osthathios was about "the sin of being rich in a poor world". Church history bears witness to the prevalence of luxury in the Churches and monasteries of Europe in the Middle

Ages, that led to corruption and to their obvious decadence. The mission of the Asian Churches in the household of God has to seriously ponder over this, i.e. whether history is being allowed to get repeated!

Corruption, Authoritarianism, Gender discrimination, Exploitation, etc.

One hallmark of life in Asian countries is corruption that eats into the vitals of polity. However, it is no consolation to bask in the thinking that this bane is worldwide. Poor, illiterate villagers being exploited by bureaucrats is a common phenomenon in several Asian states. (of course, this can hardly be generalized). Harassment of women in workplaces, ill-treatment of migrant workers, denial of human rights etc. are problems that stare into the conscience of the Asian people and Churches.

In this situation, several Churches have started educating the poor as to their rights as citizens and the right to enjoy the welfare measures provided by the state. In some places this programme is being resisted by the rich, who exploit the poor.

Again, some Asian countries are still under some form of authoritarian or military rule, which rarely respects human rights. In Pakistan and Afghanistan, 'rule of law' has become what the military or some tribal war lords dictate. Minorities are far from secure in such states.

In some Asian states, women are not as independent as their counterparts in other countries; so much so that it has become a slur on womanhood. In these situations the value of human life is degraded to a totally unacceptable low. Christianity teaches that life is God-given and it is precious; and blatant violation of this shall be confronted in a 'Christian' manner, through education, coercion, counseling, legal measures, and through whatever other means possible. "Almost all women in India, from the most docile and submissive to the seemingly liberated, are forced to lead lives that straddle the extremities of brash sexual objectification and abject domestication", said the Toronto-based documentary film maker Nisha Pahuja, whose award winning documentary, "The World Before Her" was screened in the city of Kochi recently. This situation may not be duplicated as such elsewhere in Asia, but this is a reflection on the patriarchal culture

still in vogue in many places. The Church has to show the way by respecting womanhood and resisting atrocities against woman in an enlightened manner.

Religious Persecution and Ethnic Cleansing

This malady usually based on religious beliefs or caste considerations is not unknown in history, and it continues to our times. Certain states in Asia, take pride in declaring that they are founded on religion; the laws in such states correspond to their specific religious beliefs; any citizen in that state who harbours some other religious persuasion will be in mortal danger of being arrested for 'blasphemy' charges, for some flimsy reason or the other. Such an environment is current in many of the 'Islamic States', and also a few other Hindu and Buddhist majority states.

The situation in the pronounced Communist countries is different; they allow neither individual nor religious freedom to their citizens. One may or may not call it oppression, for no religion which does not toe the line of the ruling class, is 'visible'. (At the same time it is acknowledged that there are underground churches in mainland China). Besides, some states have reported instances of regional ethnic cleansing.

A dispassionate look at these situations gives the constraint to the Asian Churches to be aware of the Asian realities and device Christian responses as part of its mission. Here are a few suggestions:

1. The Church has the basic missionary duty to take the gospel to the 'unreached'. Having said so, it is only too obvious that such initiatives are not generally welcome in a religiously awakening Asia. Therefore, the Christian dispensation, as it did in the past, needs to engage other faiths in dialogue, without condemning them as 'demonic' or false. In turn, such dialogic engagements are certain to give a new life to the Christian faith as it enters the thought world of different religious and cultural situations. Amartya Sen, the Nobel Laureate economist, a non-resident Indian, living in the U. K., talks about the time-tested method of fruitful dialogue that was the hallmark of India of old. India could welcome every

new thought or philosophy, but there was always room for dialogue. In such dialogical situations, instead of fighting and hate which are the familiar “mode” in modern times, people of different religious or thinking persuasions would engage in a healthy “talk” without undermining the human dignity. Asian Churches today, are in a vital situation to engage other faiths in dialogue.

2. The Orthodox Church, as different from the Augustinian teaching, emphasizes that human nature is “good” (cf. Gregory of Nyssa), and respect for the ‘person’ is the crux of human relations; and that every individual is precious. Therefore human freedom, which is a gift from God, has to be respected at every initiative - mission, peace or “Good Samaritan” activities.
3. The Orthodox Churches consider the liturgy as inseparably related to all mission activities. Liturgy is the soul of Christian life; history says that the Church did sustain itself through the centuries of persecution solely through its liturgy. What is meant is not an over dominance of the liturgical part, for Orthodox theology talks about “liturgy after liturgy’, referring to works of love.
4. A related and beautiful corollary is a distinguishing feature of the Indian “psyche”, that “always there is room for one more person”. This supreme sense of accommodation seems a unique characteristic of the “household of God”. “Mission” has to consider this seriously- Asia is not just the ripe field for “converting” people by any means, but it is the household of God, waiting to be transformed by the “salt’-like presence of the Church. One instance of accommodation among Churches themselves is the short-lived cooperation of the Orthodox Church in India with the CMS missionaries in theological education, which, of course, did bear some good fruits.
5. Asian Churches need to shed their “foreign tag”, if any; and transform themselves to be the “serving” Church to mil-

lions of Asians.

6. Asian Christians, along with their brothers and sisters in the West, need to be worried about the decadence of Christianity at the level of holiness - its credibility and practice. Perhaps Asian Churches might claim to be relatively better placed on this point, but still, there remains the indelible “foreign” tag attached to it owing to various reasons. One would ask: “What is Christian in the Christian Church of today? “We may recall a joke of a bygone era regarding the “Holy Roman Empire”- that it was neither “Holy” nor “Roman”. Divisions and faulty witnessing are to be taken seriously.

Perhaps, mission in Asian countries is more challenging and formidable than in other countries!



Human Security in Asia and Challenges to Living Together in the Household of God in Peace with Justice

Dr. Mathews George Chunakara¹

The complexity of the challenges of today's world prompts renewed attention and reflection on human security and its interrelatedness to peace with justice. Since the end of the Cold War the world has been witnessing new developments in geo-politics, geo-economics and in geo-strategic areas. The developments that have emerged in these areas have been changing the paradigm of peace and security. The world has become more globalised. Multilateralism has become the system of the day. The new dynamics in international relations have given way to the advent of a global order different to the one existing in the preceding decades. The new global order has contributed to new drifts in security, especially when it is considered from a perspective of human security. In its totality, human security is an essential component and a paramount yardstick of ensuring peace with justice. Security has traditionally been defined as 'national security' and military defence of territory. The traditional state-centric notion of security has changed since the Cold War tensions have receded.

¹ Dr. Mathews George Chunakara is CCA General Secretary elect (2015). Before being elected to this position, he was the Director of the Commission of Churches on International Affairs (2009-2014), and Asia Secretary (2000-2009) of the World Council of Churches. He served as CCA Executive Secretary (1993-2000).

Subsequently several governments have enacted laws in the name of the War on Terror that curtail human rights. Civil liberties and human freedom have been limited or restricted in the name of combating terrorism. These contexts now warrant the need to review issues related to security in their entirety, especially in the wider contexts, on the affirmation that human security is an essential component for ensuring peace with justice in the household of God.

The new dimensions of security have been defined and analysed in different contexts. While analysing the factors of international security, Prof. Curt Gasteyger says, "Our concern about the changing face of international security is not entirely new. What seems to be new, however, are at least three factors: the range of the threats has become more global, the threats have become more varied, and they are more interdependent". The second change has to do with the fact that in the current globalized world the number of potential issues of conflict is growing: the protection of minorities; access to ever scarcer resources – water, oil, land - , resurgence of religious intolerance, drug wars, persecution and discrimination of ethnic and religious minorities. The contemporary world scenario contributes to the expansion of this list by adding numerous other factors that are constantly threatening human security.

A decade ago the United Nations identified "four burning issues" that threaten human security around the world - "poverty, HIV/AIDS, deadly conflicts and political violence". The U.N. also affirmed that "the common thread that connects all these issues is the need to respect fundamental human rights". Today, more than a decade after the U.N. General Assembly discussed these issues in 2001, the world faces even more problems that affect human security. During the past few years, the world has been confronted with a series of unparalleled crises which have direct impacts on human security: from the environmental crisis to the energy crises, the food crisis, and economic and political crises. Still, these are not the only crises by which to assess the magnitude of the impact or define the contemporary notion of security.

The concept of human security values individuals, communities and states as well as being concerned about the security of life

within and across borders. However, the fact is that national security and international security cannot be achieved without respect for individual security which is the core value of fundamental freedoms, human rights and human dignity. This provides the reason to argue that "individual security must be the foundation for national security and national security rooted in individual security must be the basis of international security". Human security cannot be achieved in situations where peace is threatened, justice is denied and respect for human rights and dignity do not prevail.

The factors that contribute to the increased level of insecurity today stem from the denial of justice and peace to individuals and communities which denies their human rights, their right to live in peace. Once synonymous with the defence of territory from external aggression, the requirement of security in today's world is understood as a way of embracing the protection of individuals and communities, ensuring their security and protecting their dignity. Threats to security are the result of the failures of prevailing power structures in performing their duties and responsibilities. The vulnerability of people fosters fear which undermines security at all levels in their daily lives.

The principles of human security underscore the significance of freedom from fear and freedom from want, security of individuals and communities, safeguarding the security of human welfare and wellbeing. In the absence of human security, the integrity of the creation has degenerated. Ecological balance is destroyed; environmental justice is denied. Human beings forget or ignore the fact that they are accountable to God and responsible for protecting and preserving the household (*oikos*) of God in good shape. This is why Larry Rasmussen, a professor of social ethics, says, "Environmental justice is also social justice and all efforts to save the planet begin with hearing the cry of the people and the cry of the earth together". The thesis of Rasmussen's 'Earth Community, Earth Ethics' is that without an earth ethics governing humankind, the possibility of creating a world community and peace is weak.

Today, the world is divided, polarised, polluted and destroyed due to vivid reasons. Security at all levels is devastated; peace is absent and justice is negated; human dignity is not valued and human

rights are violated. These trends lead to situations where human security is threatened today as never before in the history of the world.

Genesis 1.31 says, "God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good!". Mary L. Coloe, from St Paul's Theological College in Brisbane, in her study on 'Johannine Ecclesiology and Spirituality Dwelling in the Household of God', indicates what "dwelling in the household of God" might mean. She describes the characteristics of "household" (*oikos*), leading to a deeper grasp of the divine *economia* ("the order of the household") and the *ecologia*, a term suggesting the communal living and inter-relationships that make up the life of the household. Mathai Zacharia, a prominent spokesperson of wider ecumenism and a leader of the Indian ecumenical movement in the last century was of the opinion that, for a balanced household situation "economy and ecology must work in cooperation, rather than in combat and this can happen only if justice is done to all the inhabitants of the earth". Mathai Zachariah says, the neglect of this truth by human beings explains the terrorism that has surfaced in the world during the last few years, and terrorism, the weapon of the powerless has today assumed alarming proportions.

The household of God destined on the basis of the foundation of proper order of the *oikos*, collaborative living, rightful relationships based on equality and security, the indispensable components of human existence. This message was more explicitly conveyed by Samuel Rayan, a prominent Roman Catholic theologian, as "Our common origin in the heart of God; our common nature, all of us having the same basic needs and identical power to love; and our common destiny, all being called to life in God and life with another". Rayan observes that all human beings in this world are created by God with equal rights for dignified human existence. The right to live in peace in the world God has created and to use the common earth is a fundamental right vested in each human being entering the world. According to Rayan, basic human equality forbids concentration and privatisation of God's earth. The earth is God's provision for His entire family on this planet. This is what the church fathers call '*ta koina*', common goods destined for the benefit of everyone. It is not '*ta idia*', the fruit of somebody's labour. The church fathers

interpreted the state of affairs in the household of God as a common universe where earth, air, light and water are the cause of life of which nobody may be deprived, for which nobody may be forced to radically depend on somebody else.

It is also a matter of concern that we are forced to live in the midst of the greed of powerful nations and individuals, a situation which excludes others. The accumulation of wealth and the exploitation of resources leave others dispossessed and impoverished. The domination of the rich and the powerful causes discord and adds deprivation. All these factors increase domination, marginalisation, violence, conflicts, wars, poverty and sufferings in human life. It is not God's will that is fulfilled in such a situation, but it contradicts the rules and purposes of God's ways of living together in the household of God. The purpose and relevance of the *oikos* have to be fulfilled in harmony and in just relationships. Living together in the household of God, with such a collaborative, mutually recognised and respected atmosphere, can only amount to life and order in the household where peace with justice and security prevail. Such a situation requires a radical reversal of the existing systems and conditions so that "justice will roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever flowing stream" (Amos 5:24). The world can never be peaceful and just unless human security is attained in an atmosphere where everyone can "sit under their own vine and fig tree and no one will make them afraid" (Micah 4:4).

Challenges to human security and peace with justice in Asia

The twenty-first century is being widely touted as the Asian Century. The end of the Cold War, the growing impacts of globalisation and rapid economic growth are causing several Asian countries to reposition and redefine their roles, both at the regional and at the global levels. While the pivot of international politics is shifting towards the Asian region, the new century also poses several questions related to human security in Asia. Many factors and key stakeholders from within the region as well as outside the region are contributing to threats to human security and the denial of justice and peace in Asia. When we agree that human security has a significant Asian ped-

agree, it is also increasingly evident that insecurity at different levels continues to be a pervasive phenomenon in various Asian countries. Hence, peace and justice as well as human security are in peril. Asia today faces an ever increasing level of multifaceted social, economic, political and security challenges that pose serious threats to peace and security, human rights and human dignity and thus negate human security.

Human security in Asia is threatened due to various factors; millions of people are denied their basic human rights. A wide array of issues are causing threats to human security and denial of peace with justice: increasing poverty, inadequate health care, economic exploitation, environmental degradation and exploitation of natural resources; armed conflicts and violence, militarization, arms build-up, nuclearisation, spread of small arms and light weapons; domination and intervention of major powers from outside the region as well as within the region, ethnic and religious conflicts, communal violence, and political unrest; violations of human rights in various forms: torture, custodial death, human trafficking, violation of rights of migrant workers, denial of the rights and dignity of stateless people, suppression of people's legitimate right to self-determination, lack of the rule of law and democratic governance.

Basic human needs are denied to millions of Asians, although fundamental rights are constitutionally guaranteed by different governments. Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights stipulates that: "Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control". The basic human needs approach was re-emphasised by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) when it presented the Human Development Report: basic/critical economic, food, health, personal, environmental, community, cultural and political security. This concept states: "For most people today, a feeling of insecurity arises more from worries about daily life than from the dread of a cataclysmic world event. Job security,

income security, health, environmental security, and security from crime – these are emerging concerns of human security all over the world". Asia is not an exception to these problems.

On the one hand, Asia's economic development and growth have been appreciated and applauded in recent years. At the same time, amidst economic growth and developments there are emerging threats to human security and peace with justice. Here, a more significant question is raised about the real meaning of Asia's development while a considerable number of Asians confront enormous problems which affect their peace and security in day today lives. Prof. Amartya Sen, renowned economist and Nobel laureate, articulates the essence of development, arguing that, "development can be seen as a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy" and human security as a critical component in affirming the foundations of development. He is of the opinion that "human beings should be able to lead lives of creativity, without having their survival threatened or their dignity impaired". We experience a dearth of basic factors essential to reaching this goal in today's Asia. This context raises pertinent questions on the viability of sustainable peace with justice in Asia for ensuring human security.

Armed conflicts and violence

Today, many parts of Asia are witnessing armed conflicts and violence. There is a range of reasons for the occurrence of these conflicts and this violence. The fight between armed forces and insurgent groups or militant outfits has caused many deaths, including civilians and members of armed forces, in several Asian countries. The Human Security Report of 2012 reported that South Asia (Afghanistan, Pakistan and Sri Lanka) alone accounted for two-thirds of the world's total battle deaths from state-based armed conflict. The region had four times as many battle deaths as the next deadliest region, sub-Saharan Africa. Terrorism and counter-terrorism have also been taking the lives of hundreds of people in South Asia every week. Although President Obama unveiled his new drone policy and often repeated that he would curtail the use of drones to limit civilian casualties, during the past several years the C.I.A. has carried out hundreds of drone strikes

in Pakistan that have killed thousands of people. Obama announced that the oversight of the programme would be shifted from the C.I.A. to the Pentagon. But the C.I.A. still maintains control of drone strikes and innocent people are being killed in northern Pakistan.

Economic, political, developmental, religious, ethnic and social factors contribute to most conflicts and violence in Asia. Armed insurgency is widespread in different South and South East Asian countries. The influx of small arms and narcotics are considered major reasons for conflicts and violence in some Asian countries. In certain other contexts, greater autonomy and reorganization of the state or provincial structures are demanded along ethnic lines. The nature of armed conflicts in certain other contexts concern power sharing incompatibility over territory and governance, as well as exploitation of natural resources by private, State sponsored or multinational companies. When control over natural resources by local and/or multinational companies force local communities to leave, the original owners of the land are driven out from their ancestral land. Indigenous communities in several countries in Asia are the ones most affected by this.

Religious intolerance and religious conflicts occurring in many parts of Asia are hindering peace and communal harmony. Ethnic conflicts and sectarian violence in Rakhine state and Shan state in Myanmar are examples of racial and religious intolerance plaguing a deeply fractured nation still struggling to emerge from half a century of its self-isolation and military rule. Ethnic Muslims have been the victims of the violence since it began in Myanmar's western Rakhine state last year and it has also spread to eastern Myanmar's Shan state. Hundreds of people died in clashes between majority Buddhists and minority Muslims belonging to the ethnic Rohingyas. The violence that occurred has so far driven more than 140,000 people, mostly Muslims, from their homes. Most are still living in camps. This is in addition to a large number of Rohingyas who were forced to leave Myanmar and have now been living in Bangladesh as stateless people for several years.

Bangladesh has consistently experienced a spate of violence and killings. In recent years, politicization of religion has become a

way for political parties in Bangladesh to take law and order into their own hands. Minority religious communities in Bangladesh – Hindus, Buddhists and Christians - live in a state of fear and terror. Ethnic and religious conflicts and violence kill people in different parts of Pakistan almost every day. Conflicts and violence in the name of religion and ethnicity have become a common trend in other Asian countries too. Indonesia, traditionally a tolerant society, is now in the grip of religious hatred and intolerance. Sri Lanka is again facing experiences of religious intolerance and conflict. Thailand also experiences a similar situation. Discrimination of people on the basis of caste and denial of their human dignity continues to cause social deprivation and marginalization in India and Nepal. Militarization of politics and society is another hallmark of Asian countries, especially in countries such as Thailand and the Philippines.

Arms build-up and geo-strategic concerns

Militarisation and escalation of arms-build up have been on the increase in Asia. The increase in defence spending has now become a wider Asian phenomenon. According to the International Institute for Strategic Studies (London), for the first time in modern history, the military spending of Asia overtook that of the European members of NATO last year. While Asia witnesses all kinds of strategic and security challenges and threats - from 19th century style territorial disputes to economic rivalry and potential new nuclear weapons states - several Asian countries are witnessing new waves of arms build-up and increases in defence budgets. Asia's defence spending rose 4.94 per cent last year. A variety of factors explains the new wave of increased military budgets in Asian countries. China's rising clout in the region, the "return to Asia" strategy of the United States, growing territorial and border disputes and related inter-states tensions are certain reasons.

Despite the negative impact of the global financial crisis, almost every country in South-East Asia is now involved in arms build-up, which makes it one of the fastest-growing regions for defence spending in the world. According to IHS Janes' military analysts, South-East Asian countries together increased defence spending by

13.5% to \$24.5 billion in recent years. The figure is projected to rise to \$40 billion by 2016. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) has estimated that the arms purchases of Malaysia jumped eightfold in 2005-09, compared with the previous five years. Indonesia's spending grew by 84% in that period. Indonesia spent \$8 billion last year on defence which was an increase from \$2.6 billion in 2006. The country has acquired Russian and American warplanes, including F-16 fighters, vessels for its navy, and spare parts for its C-130 transport planes. Indonesia signed last year a U.S \$1.1 billion deal for three German-made diesel-electric submarines. Domestic political calculations are another factor behind the region's defence splurge. Defence spending in recent times has increased in countries such as Vietnam and the Philippines too, especially in the context of China's claims over disputed Spratly and Parcel Islands in the South China Sea, where China demonstrated its assertiveness. Vietnam last year ordered six Kilo-class submarines from Russia and decided to buy seven new Frigates and Corvettes over the next decade. The Philippines almost doubled its defence budget last year to \$2.4 billion.

South Korea is developing its cruise missiles, planning a high-speed military communications network, building bigger warships, and boosting its space exploration program. Australia vows to spend more than \$70 billion over the next twenty years to renew its military. Japan is rated now among the top military spenders in Asia and the Japanese defence budget is now the fifth-largest in the world. Its defence spending recorded an increase of 10.04% in the years 2007-2011. The Bangladeshi government increased the country's defence budget by over 11 per cent for the fiscal year ended in June 2012. Pakistan's defence budget hiked ten per cent for the fiscal year 2012-2013. The Union Budget of India for 2012-13, allowed for a hike in its defence, which spends US\$ 40.44 billion. This represents a growth of 17.63 per cent over the previous years – one of the highest increases in recent years. India successfully tested another Intercontinental Ballistic Missile, Agni V in April 2012, which has a capacity of blowing up targets at a distance of 5,500 kilometres and beyond. Subsequently Pakistan, on 6 June 2012, tested a fifth nuclear-capable missile, Hatf VII. The Hatf VII cruise missile has a range of 700 kilometres (440

miles), can carry conventional warheads and has stealth capabilities. In another significant move, China and Pakistan last year outlined their space cooperation plan for the next eight years. In 2011, China assisted Pakistan in successfully launching Pakistan's communication satellite, Paksat-1R, into space from its Xichang Satellite Launch Centre in Sichuan province.

According to a report from SIPRI, Singapore, a tiny island-state, home to just over 5 million people, is now the fifth-largest arms importer in the world, surpassed only by much bigger countries such as China, India, Pakistan or South Korea. Singapore accounts for 4% of the world's total spending on arms imports. Its defence spending per head beats every country bar America, Israel and Kuwait. In 2012, Singapore allocated \$9.7 billion, or 24% of its national budget to defence. Singapore's ulterior motive also has another dimension. It is the only country in the region building its own high-tech arms industry. Singapore has been selling weapons to other developing countries for a long time, but in recent years it has been getting large orders from Western armies too. Singapore Technologies Engineering (STE), the only South-East Asian firm listed in SIPRI's top 100 defence manufacturers, has sold over 100 Bronco armoured troop carriers to the U.K. for use in Afghanistan.

The shifts in policies of purchasing the most modern arms is leading to a situation in which the Asia region is sliding into an arms race. The surge of military expenditures in the region these days, by its very nature, reflects the vulnerability of peace and security in Asia. More precisely, it reflects the susceptibility and the challenges faced to live together in the household of God in peace and security.

North East Asia's peace and security conundrums

The issue of peace and security in North East Asia has been a major concern during the past several decades. However, the developments in recent months have become reasons for more serious concern, especially amidst rising tensions after North Korea successfully launched a long-range ballistic missile in December 2012 and conducted a third nuclear test in February 2013. The fear that North

Korea's nuclear weapons can now potentially reach the continental United States and can pose direct threats to the Republic of Korea (ROK) and Japan has produced a concern that a localized skirmish between North and South Korea could ignite into a major military conflict on the Korean Peninsula.

The other main issue that threatens peace and security of North East Asia is due to maritime territorial disputes. There are three disputed areas involved in North East Asia. China has increased its maritime presence and heightened tensions with neighbouring countries in the East China Sea and the South China Sea: in the South China Sea between China (and Taiwan in this case) and four of its neighbours; in the East China Sea between China (and Taiwan) and Japan; and in the Sea of Japan between Korea and Japan. Since the Japanese government nationalized the Senkaku Islands (called Diaoyu Islands in the PRC) in the East China Sea in September 2012, China has frequently sent its ships to waters near the islands. In January 2013 a Chinese navy warship directed a fire-control radar at a Japanese Maritime Self-Defence Force destroyer in these waters, causing tensions to escalate.

The root causes of all these maritime territorial disputes include a combination of fundamental issues such as access to fisheries and underwater oil and gas deposits, conflicting definitions and interpretations of maritime law, conflicting principles for asserting claims, as well as national pride and interests and geopolitics. Often these maritime territorial disputes reach a high level of contention and acrimonious behaviour. All this has wider implications beyond bilateral issues. For example, the Sea of Japan dispute involves two US treaty allies and a serious incident would complicate the matter greatly as Japan, under the terms of their mutual defence treaty, would have to request US military assistance against China.

While China's economic strength is growing, the influence of China is also growing in many Asian countries. At the same time, China's involvement in territorial disputes and other contentious issues are affecting its relations with neighbours. China's territorial expansionist ambitions, growing defence budget and military strategies are seen as potential threats to peace and security in Asia. China's

more assertive territorial claims have caused anxieties among the ASEAN nations and the provocative strategy has strained China's relations with its neighbours. This has led to a situation described by Aaron Friedberg, professor of politics and international affairs at Princeton University, when he commented last year in another context, "China's economic pull remains, but the smile has faded". The territorial disputes China has with Japan and India too are examples of its fading smile in recent times. Li Keqiang, during his visit to India last year spoke of "strategic" and "maturing" relations of mutual trust and of shared regional interests between China and India. However, it was obvious that the recent establishment of a Chinese military camp 19 kilometres inside the Indian side of the Line of Control (LoC) had become a thorny issue. The annual increase in China's military budget is another factor causing dissatisfaction among its neighbours. China revealed its latest official defence budget in 2013: a 10.7% increase to \$114.3 billion for 2013, the second largest in the world.

As part of broader agreements between China and Pakistan, the Gwadar port of Pakistan is now under the direct management of China. Gwadar, located in the south-west of Pakistan's Baluchistan province, is at the juncture of three regions, Central Asia, the Indian Ocean and the Middle East. As observed by Marco Giulio Barone, a researcher and columnist of Italian journal "Il Caffè Geopolitico", Gwadar is seen as the latest strategic choke point of China in a strategic hub of Asia. Gwadar adds a further pearl to China's "encirclement" strategy, which was conceived as providing Beijing with the possibility of access to raw materials and energy supplies from the Middle East and Africa through a series of choke points along South Asia, from mainland China to Port Sudan. However, China faces a certain vulnerability because of India's increasing naval presence in the Indian Ocean, hindering China's plans. The move by China provided India with legitimacy in strengthening its sea power. This could be another reason for the potential security threat in the region.

U.S strategy of "Pivot to Asia"

With the new strategic initiative, widely known as the "pivot to Asia" which was launched in November 2011, the U.S is progres-

sively assessing the strategic importance of the Asia-Pacific region. This new initiative was also considered a shift of U.S. global strategic posture from Afghanistan and Iraq towards the Asia-Pacific. At the same time many interpret it as a bid to counteract China's influence in the region. The transformed strategy of the U.S. towards Asia has already raised eyebrows and anxiety in Asia as it might affect peace and security in the region. Many instances have been pointed to in order to prove that the U.S. has been responsible for internal divisions in recent times, particularly where the U.S. has been intervening in bilateral disputes within Asia.

When Hillary Clinton was Secretary of State, she took up a mission of whirlwind tours to China's neighbours in July 2012 as part of the U.S. pivot to Asia strategy, which took her to Afghanistan, Japan, Mongolia, Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. It was seen by many in Asia as "nothing but an apparent 'diplomatic encirclement' ". China considered Hilary Clinton's trips a move by "the U.S. overtly irking China". Hilary Clinton's comments further aggravated the South China Sea issue when she repeatedly highlighted America's interests in the South China Sea. During the visit Hilary Clinton talked about the East China Sea, clearly recognizing during the visit to Japan that the Diaoyu Islands fell within the scope of the 1960 Japan-U.S. Security Treaty. When the dispute over Huangyan Island between Beijing and Manila flared up, Washington held joint military drills with the Philippines, and sold two Hamilton-class warships to the Philippines. China felt it a provocation when there had been a lull in the South China Sea issue, especially when the claimant States had been engaged in solutions based on bilateral negotiations. China felt that tensions had been seething below the surface since Hilary Clinton announced at the ASEAN foreign ministers' meeting two years ago that the U.S. had a "national interest" in the South China Sea and would return to Asia. The announcement in June last year that the U.S. was doubling its foreign aid to the Philippines came when the Philippines, a strong U.S. ally, remained locked in a maritime standoff over a territorial dispute in the South China Sea.

Despite concerns over the United States' strategic goals and plans in Asia, one may argue that the American military has never

been more welcome in Asia than it is today. This argument is true when we analyse the emerging trends and responses by Asian countries. For example, during the International Security Conference held in Singapore in May 2013, Japanese defence minister Itsunori Onodera praised the U.S military presence in the region calling it "indispensable". America has more than seventy-five thousand military personnel deployed in Asia and the Pacific (excluding Guam, a US territory). This is mainly in Japan and South Korea, but spread throughout seventeen countries in the region. America has maintained bilateral alliances with Japan, South Korea, Australia, Thailand, and the Philippines, in addition to its close links with Taiwan. It has a close security relationship with Singapore, a longstanding security partnership with Malaysia, and is re-forging a partnership with Indonesia. All of these countries offer America generous access to bases, ports, and sovereign sea-lanes, and openly support America's military and diplomatic presence in the region. Even former adversaries also now appear to be friends. Since the final approval of the U.S.-India nuclear deal in 2008, which effectively legitimized India as a nuclear power, naval cooperation between the two countries has deepened. Vietnam, a former adversary, is also embracing the American presence, having offered Cam Ranh Bay as a repair-and-supply facility for US naval vessels with the promise of more regular access in the future.

The importance of the U.S. to peace and stability in Asia, and of Asian countries to the US, is often highlighted and assessed on the basis that the Asia-Pacific region holds seven of the world's ten largest armed forces and five of the seven US mutual defence treaties (with Japan, South Korea, Thailand, the Philippines, and Australia). Except for China and North Korea, these bilateral security relations generally enjoy support as stabilizing arrangements in the region. With the U.S now explicitly refocusing its strategic attention on Asia, it is expected that a major historical shift is underway and that will have wider repercussions in Asia's strategic security realms.

On the occasion of the celebration of sixty years of bilateral partnership between the U.S and the Republic of Korea (ROK), President Obama and South Korean President Park Geun-hye issued a

joint declaration on 7 May, 2013. This declaration reiterated both nations' commitment to the U.S.-ROK Mutual Defence Treaty, U.S.-ROK Free Trade Agreement, and Joint Vision for the U.S.-ROK Alliance, and Six Party Talks with North Korea. The declaration claims that, "for six decades, the U.S.-ROK Alliance has served as an anchor for stability, security, and prosperity on the Korean Peninsula, in the Asia-Pacific region, and increasingly around the world".

The declaration expressed the deep concern of both the U.S. and South Korea that North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missiles programmes pose grave threats to the peace and stability of the Korean Peninsula and North East Asia. While raising and affirming this concern, the declaration also commits the partners to adapt the Alliance to serve as a linchpin of peace and stability in Asia in order to meet the security challenges of the 21st century. It also confirms the commitment of the U.S. to the defence of the ROK, extending through deterrence and the full range of U.S. military capabilities, both conventional and nuclear. In other words, the joint declaration has cemented the U.S. security strategy in North East Asia in the name of defending and protecting the interest of South Korea where a large number of American soldiers have been deployed in these last sixty years. The joint declaration is an indication of how much the ROK values the U.S. military presence in its territory, although it is a known reality that this is not a viable option to guarantee peace and security in the region.

Human Security: Peace with justice for All God's people

Human security is a condition in which one should feel safety and protection. In a society where gross and systematic violations of human rights are taking place and justice is denied due to various causes – poverty and human suffering, conflicts, violence, lack of democratic governance, rule of law, statelessness, human trafficking, forced migration, displacements, environmental destruction and ecological imbalances – human security becomes an illusion. Former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Bertrand Ramcharan's comment is very pertinent in this context when he says, "The challenges facing the international community at the present time are

such that, without respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, the attainment of lasting peace would be impossible and human security would remain illusory". He is of the opinion that a peace that is not accompanied by strategies for the promotion and protection of human rights is unlikely to be a lasting one. This points to the cardinal principle that only a society that is committed to protect human rights, that is imbued with the spirit of respect for human dignity can recognise and uphold the values of human security and peace with justice. Such is the household of God, where peace with justice succeeds and human security is protected. In this setting, God's justice is not simply considered as a matter of fair dealing or compensation for all. Justice reigns in favour of those who suffer and who need deliverance; it is for the needy, defenceless and the weak. When people are forced to experience vulnerable situations in their lives, the household of God is disfigured.

Moral instructions have been given for the protection of people who are denied justice and these directives have been practiced at different times in history and have also failed many times. However, these instructions have been guidance to live in harmony and security in the household of God. For example, the Hebrew moral codes were expressions of the Israelite community's understanding of justice and human dignity provided for the security of individuals in their society. There was provision to free a slave, but it was instructed that those were only applicable to people from the same community or clan - "If your brother, a Hebrew man or a Hebrew woman, is sold to you, he shall serve you six years, and in the seventh year you shall let him go free from you" (Deuteronomy 15: 12); "If any of your fellow Israelites become poor and sell themselves to you, do not make them work as slaves" (Leviticus 25:39). Compassion towards fellow human beings was also expected to be expressed to those belonging to other communities, provided they should be sojourners among the Israelites. In an attempt at developing contextual theological import, M.M. Thomas says, "the gospel of Jesus Christ brought revolutionary changes into the theology of the Old Testament law. The most important alteration is that the principle of brotherhood is universalised... Jesus extended the principle of brotherhood to encompass

members of all communities.” When Jesus asked the question in the parable of the Good Samaritan, “And who is my neighbour?” (Luke 10:29-37), he was talking about a Samaritan, a non-Jew who was not a fellow Israelite. Here, Jesus was conveying the message that compassion or fraternity should transcend beyond communal or class boundaries so that it is universalised. M.M. Thomas further adds that a feeling towards a fellow human being and the concern which Christian believers express among themselves is only the means to manifest the fraternity to be experienced among the wider human community. Christian fraternity basically includes all humans. This is why St. Paul encourages the Christians in Galatia to “do good to all men, and especially to those who are the household of faith” (Gal 6:10). Christian understanding of justice transcends Mosaic justice. The condition favourable to the act or work of justice in this context is for all in the community where everyone’s dignity is respected and security is guaranteed.

A prerequisite for human security and peace with justice: *Shalom*

As we agree that the concept of security should not be defined or understood in terms of national security or military defence, we also agree that it should be seen from a perspective of human security. Our Biblical and theological reflections and understanding of human security lead us to envision security based on the concept of *shalom*, a vision of justice, peace, security and reconciliation. The meaning of *shalom* is interpreted in multiple ways in Biblical and theological terms. *Shalom* is a ‘situation’ or ‘state’ representing the well-being of the individual and of communities. The meaning derived from the Hebrew root interprets it as a collective experience of people and communities.

Shalom is used to indicate the well-being of people received from the faithfulness of God and in this context, this is one of the most commonly used words. *Shalom* is seen in reference to the wellbeing of others (Genesis 43:27, Exodus 4:18), to treaties (I Kings 5:12), and in prayer for the wellbeing of cities or nations (Psalm 122:6, Jeremiah 29:7). *Shalom* is used to refer to and wish for a safe and untroubled journey (Exodus 18:23, Genesis 26:29, Isaiah 55:12); a restful and

sound sleep free from the threats of evil forces (Psalm 4:8, Ezekiel 34:25); a secure dwelling that is free from the threat of beasts or unfriendly forces (Leviticus 26:6, Ezekiel 28:26); or life of health and well-being (Isaiah 57:18). The wholeness of *shalom*, through justice and truth, inspires the words of hope for the work expected by the messiah, and is used to refer to its revelation as the time of peace (Haggai 2:7-9, Isaiah 2:2-4, 11:1-9), and even to grant this anointed one the title, Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6, Micah 5:4-5).

The Hebrew term *shalom* is translated into Roman languages as peace. *Pax*, in Latin, means ‘peace’, but it was also used to mean ‘truce’ or ‘treaty’. When it is derived from the definition and use in Latin, the Roman term usually means a relational application, a state of mind and affairs. *Shalom*, in the liturgy and in the transcendent message of the Christian scriptures, means more than a state of mind. *Shalom* envisages a safe, well, happy or complete state, and by implication, an approach of friendship or reciprocation. On a more abstract application, its use points to welfare, health, prosperity, and peace - all of which are needed for a state of safety formed in confidence and well-being, which is security. The message of *shalom* is hope of wholeness for the individual and the community. Fullness of life in all its forms seems to be at the centre of the concept of *shalom*. Despite all these interpretations and definitions, it is also a fact that the Biblical word *shalom* does not have a single, adequate equivalent to convey its depth. Mathew V. Kuzhivelil, an Old Testament scholar from India says, the word peace is a poor rendering for *shalom*. He says, “peace is a positive, dynamic, constant state of human existence created by a right relation with God, experienced, shared and communicated by the people of ‘Righteousness’ in the world”. *Shalom* is not a divided state, but harmony and unimpaired wholeness. In human relations it does not mean merger of the two, but provides scope for uninterrupted flow of mutuality without reservation or inhibition. That which separates ceases to exist. *Shalom* creates a new equilibrium in relations, sustains the balance, promotes growth and expansion of the created order. The cosmos is thus set in order in accordance with the plan of the creator.

If *Shalom* is the substance of the Biblical vision of the community embracing all of creation, then it is ensuring security and protection for all. *Shalom* best describes the vision of peace which is the “effect of justice”. *Shalom* is also the most all-embracing and comprehensive description and concept of human relations and community that is projected both as a future hope and as a concrete condition of attainment. Dr. Kuzhivelil explains that “peace enjoyed by an individual experienced in isolation will not have positive response in the life of the community. *Shalom* of the community in relation to God is productive and communicative”. *Shalom* also involves the equanimity and harmony of economic, social and political life, as in the freeing of a people, the feeding of the hungry, the giving of sight to the blind, the overcoming of economic injustice and oppression. There is no *shalom* where the resources of the community are distributed inequitably so that some eat and others go hungry, or where a ruler treats people unjustly or people live in a situation where there is no peace and security and their dignity is not recognised. In this situation, *shalom* involves the overcoming of attitudes and conditions of human behaviours that disturb, distort and devalue the human community. Here we need to see *shalom* as the all-embracing and comprehensive vision of well-being as the basis, the goal and the generating power of peace on earth and security of all and God’s entire creation. This concept of peace and security is what every person aspires to in one’s life time. An international ecumenical Consultation of the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs of the World Council of Churches held in 2001 in Kyoto, Japan stated, “ From the perspective of faith, the security of all shall be judged by the *shalom* security of the poorest, the weakest, the excluded, the subjugated, the minjung. The plumb line of people’s security is abundant life for the least of those in a globalised economy affected by extreme poverty, division, injustice, environmental degradation and military hegemony”.



Peace and Life Security in God’s Household

Dr. Yoon-Jae Chang¹

Introduction

The 10th Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) was held last year in Busan, Korea under the theme, “God of Life, lead us to Justice and Peace.” For the first time in the history of the WCC, “justice” and “peace” have become the key words of the Assembly. “Life” was chosen as a theme before (6th Assembly in Vancouver), and “Justice, Peace, Creation: JPC” have been dealt with since the Seoul Convocation in 1990, but this was the very first time that justice and peace have risen as the key words of the entire Assembly. This may be seen as a small achievement amongst the efforts of conservative groups who try to reduce the ecumenical movement to a problem of “unity” or “diakonia without justice.”

The theme of the 10th Assembly of WCC was in fact suggested by Korean churches in consultation with other Asian churches. In November 2010 about 50 theologians, ministers, and ecumenical activists from Korea and other countries in Asia gathered together in Seoul to hold a conference to suggest the theme for the Busan Assem-

¹ Dr. Yoon-Jae Chang is Professor of Systematic Theology, Christian Studies Department, Ewha Womans University, Seoul, South Korea.

bly. After a thorough review of the realities of Asia today, the participants came to suggest the theme statement “Living Together in God’s Justice and [God’s] Peace.” I remind you of this original suggestion of Asian churches, because it has many points of likeness to the theme of CCA’s coming Assembly which is “*Living Together in the Household of God.*”

The WCC’s 10th Assembly theme lost the theological insight and connotation in the original suggestion of Asian churches. The point was that it is through “God’s Justice” and “God’s Peace” that everyone/every being enjoys the fullness of life together in God’s household. In fact, the participants of the conference in 2010 felt strongly that every day on the Asian continent, justice is being denied, peace is being fundamentally threatened, and life is continuously being destroyed. Thus we confirmed that we are required to work for life, justice and peace all at the same time, in an integrated manner. And yet, the participants declared that “justice is the most outstanding aspiration of the people of Asia and the world today,” and that “justice is the precondition, the foundation for peace and life.” The point was that emphasis on justice would give us a deeper insight for churches all over the world to contribute to life and peace.

“Living [Life] Together in God’s Household” is an appropriate and timely theme for Asia today; still, what are the methods and the way to get there? In order for us to live together – human and all other forms of life together - , we must seek God’s justice and build God’s peace. Any talk of “living together (life)” without discussing “justice” is not a discussion of the true peace of all but the privileges of a few; and any talk of “peace” without talk of justice is not “God’s peace” but false peace that only conceals injustice.

I was asked to speak on “Peace and Human Security” in this consultation; however, I have changed the topic by replacing “human security” with “life security” in order to include all forms of life in God’s household which is bigger than the human household. The peace I am about to speak about is not the peace we used to think and talk about, but the peace of God (God’s peace) which “surpasses all [human] understanding.”(Philippians 4:17) It is this peace, which is

based on God’s justice, that can lead us to “living [life] together” in God’s household. To speak for that peace, however, we must begin with critiquing the idea of “Just Peace” which came to the fore at the 10th Assembly of WCC in Busan.

“Just Peace”

The idea of “just peace” was first introduced to the ecumenical movement as the WCC finished the Decade to Overcome Violence (DOV, 2001-2010) and explored ways toward another peace initiative. In 2011, Jamaica, Kingston, the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation was held and it adopted The Ecumenical Call to Just Peace together with its thick *Companion* book.

When Korean Christians were first informed of this new concept, however, we had many problems with it. In the first place, it was hard to translate “just peace” into Korean, for the “just” in “just peace” could mean many different things in the Korean language. Is it the same “just” in the theory of “just war”? Is it an adjective form of “justice”? Or is it identical with “only” or “solely” - i.e., *sola paz*? We were even more confused, because there is no compound noun like “just peace” in the Bible. In the first place, we translated “just peace” as the symmetry of “just war” but it did not make sense. After closely reading the companion, we translated the “just” in “just peace” as an adjective from “justice”, realizing that the concept of “just peace” - by emphasizing “justice” - is an alternative to “just war” and more like “pacifism”. Still, after even more closely reading the Companion book, we realized that there are only strong pacifist voices but prophetic voices are weak. We agreed that “just peace” is surely different from “just war,” but we were not persuaded beyond doubt that it is also different from “pacifism”.

For example, the Call and the *Companion* emphasize the “rule of law” as a way to promote justice. However, it was not easy for Koreans to accept it, for we experienced the suffocation of democracy and legal violence of the strong in the very name of the “rule of law.” As a matter of fact, the “rule of law” in the international arena often meant the “right” of the strong to conquer and control the land and

the weak. In a word, it used to be a term of Empire. Furthermore, the Call and the Companion promotes the idea of “just policing” after differentiating “violence of military” and “protection by police.” But, many Koreans, who have experienced the violence of the police did not feel comfortable with this notion.

The Call and the *Companion* insist that “just peace” emphasizes justice; however in reality it gives weight to non-violence. I do accept non-violence as the philosophy of peace. Nevertheless, I could not understand why the Call and the Companion emphasize non-violence to the weak, who have become victims of the violence of the powerful, rather than to the strong. Don't we have to speak to the “powers and principalities” of the world and teach them the way of Jesus Christ's peace, which is non-violence?

What is more, the Call and the *Companion* say nothing about human violence against nature, particularly against animals, the creatures of the same God, while they give weight to non-violence. Every year, some 50 billion animals are being killed by humans to become human food, clothes, shoes, experimental objects, and sometimes only to become an object for entertainment. During the winter of 2011 the Korean government slaughtered 13 million cows and pigs – and buried many of them alive – to prevent foot-and-mouth disease. Last year another 13 million chicken and ducks were again buried alive with the excuse of Bird Flu. I have witnessed two Auschwitz of mass destruction of life in recent years! Nevertheless, the Christian idea of non-violence still focuses on human-to-human action and behaviour.

The Call and the *Companion* do not talk about the violence of churches either. I was greatly impressed by the fact that the Call and the Companion have expanded the horizon of peace by developing the idea of four significant and interconnected dimensions of peace – i.e., “peace in the community,” “peace with the earth,” “peace in the marketplace,” and “peace among the peoples.” But I felt that one more dimension is missing - which is “peace in the church.” During the 10th Assembly of the WCC in Busan, hundreds of anti-WCC demonstrators surrounded the meeting place and shouted “WCC Devil,

Go Home!” My heart was broken when I saw so many young mothers who brought their babies to the demonstration. They are ordinary and peace-loving Christians, but they are misinformed and agitated by their divine-like and fundamentalist-oriented pastors who made all these noises to promote their status among conservative groups in Korea. Indeed, we have no peace in the church.

The key to the Ecumenical Call and its *Companion* is that “just peace” is not simply another peace theory or theology but an alternative, or third way, to two existing Christian peace traditions – i.e., “just war” and “pacifism.” They insist that “just peace” is “a transformed ethical discourse, a fundamental change in ethical practice, and a new peace methodology.” It is so because, according to them, “just peace” does emphasize “justice” which the two existing peace traditions lack. Now, the Call and the *Companion* will stand and fall by their advocacy, authenticity, and commitment to justice. Not an abstract justice in words, but concrete justice in practice; not the justice of Empire, but the justice of God who “upholds the cause of the oppressed” (Ps 146:7, 103:6), “defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the alien” (Deut. 10:18, Ps. 82:3, Is. 1:17) and restores their rights. This justice is the key to peace and life. Asian churches must go beyond “just peace” to talk about true peace and security of all life in the household of God.

“Peace and Shalom”

Human history has started and ended with warfare. During some 3,500 years of recorded human history, only during some 300 years or 8% of that time was there no war, and through 3,200 years or 92 % of that time humans ceaselessly continued slaying each other. Thus, in truth, humankind does not abide in the era of peace, but temporarily experiences a moment of peace while at war.

Peace is therefore a matter of vital concern among human beings. At the same time, it is God's significant concern. Jesus, while on earth, taught his disciples: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God” (Matthew 5:9). However, later in the same Gospel, Jesus proclaims a statement that is rather difficult to

decipher: “Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword” (Matthew 10:34). When we move onto another Gospel, we encounter a horrific statement that leads us to doubt whether this has actually proceeded from Jesus’ lips: “I came to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! ... Do you think that I have come to bring peace to the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division!” (Luke 12:51-53). How can this be? Could Jesus be contradicting his own proclamations?

Only when the term “peace” defined in the Bible is perceived, can the riddle-like two statements by Jesus be understood. The Hebrew Bible or the Old Testament uses the word “shalom” in depicting peace. Shalom is not a theological jargon; it is an ordinary greeting that Israelites use. Examining the greeting of a foreign country usually enables visitors to penetrate into the life and the history of its inhabitants. For example, what were the usual greetings that Koreans used in the past? “*Jin Jee De-sheot-seum-ni-kha?*” (Have you taken your meal?) and/or “*Bamsae An Hyung Ha-shot-seum-ni-kha?*” (Were you OK over the night? / Are you still alive this morning?) are some of the greetings that Koreans have exchanged in the past. Due to foreign invasion, military operation and riots, how many have died during the nights? How many have skipped their meals? Because of war and poverty, so many have died and starved. Thus, do such greetings reflect the critical conditions of Korea’s past. For Israelites, surrounded by powerful countries always instigating wars, nothing must be considered as valuable as peace. Shalom, which is the sacred term of the Hebrew Bible, signifying peace, must have derived from these desperate yearnings of the suffering people.

However, the Bible’s shalom does not have exactly the same meaning as the word peace that we use today. Indeed, shalom connotes the state of peace. And yet, even at peacetime, if there are social injustices and oppression that might initiate war, then it is not thought to be a time of shalom. Shalom implies an active peace. First, shalom asserts justice. Yahweh, who looks after the socially underprivileged like orphans, widows, and uprooted people, demands “peace based on justice.” Secondly, shalom underscores the integrity of all the members of society. The antonym of shalom is “sheda,” which means

“fragmented,” “broken,” and/or “spoiled.” If one member of the society, i.e., God’s household, gets fragmented, broken, and/or spoiled due to oppression and injustice, even if the rest of the members of society live a blissful life, then the Bible will not consider the situation as shalom. If we do not “live together,” it is not shalom. Does not the Daegu subway tragedy in Korea in 2003 prove such is the case?

In that year, I was given an opportunity to teach at a university at Daegu, the third largest city in Korea. I used the Daegu subway to get there. Even though a few months had passed, with a sensitive nose I was able to smell the dreadful incident from the subway. I have called it the “scent of hell” ever since I experienced 911. I was there in New York City when two airplanes hit the World Trade Center in Manhattan. Everybody remembers 911 in images or in the sense of sight; but I remember it in the sense of smell. The latter lasts longer than the former. Until I left the city, I suffered the smell from “Ground Zero.” I called it the “scent of hell” for it was the smell of burnt bodies and of all things that human beings have ever created. In Daegu City in 2003 a man of 57 years, who had suffered from poverty after the financial crisis that hit Korea in 1997 started a fire on the subway, claiming that he could not die alone. Due to this insane reasoning, hundreds of innocent lives were sacrificed. The case is self-evident. Since an individual had been “fragmented,” “broken,” and “spoiled,” the peace of the whole society had been violated; in other words, shalom had been broken.

Some people said that the guy who committed such a crime must have been mentally unstable. This was not the case, unfortunately. According to the statistics of Korea’s National Police Agency, due to the stark gap between the rich and the poor, the number of arsonists objecting to social inequality had increased. What attracts our attention is that while the crime rate of the affluent class had decreased by up to 17% after the financial crisis, the crime rate of the poor had dramatically escalated. Prior to the financial crisis, the convicts were of a young age but the age of the criminals had also changed. Now they were aged in their 40s to 60s. As these facts add up, it is possible to discern the fact that a 57-year old arsonist was “created.” The society where justice had collapsed, where shalom had

broken was where such frightful crime was hatched. In “Now is the Time to Light up the Candle,” the Korean poet Tae-Soo Lee wrote after the Daegu subway tragedy:

Who can be free from this humiliation? Who can we blame for such chaos? We have neglected embracing with love and have taken when we should have shared. We knew only of ourselves. We have nurtured the tragic fire.

Indeed, we have “nurtured” the tragic fire within ourselves. If a society or a household is being “fragmented,” “broken,” and “spoiled,” therefore, the Bible will not call it shalom. Shalom, which is God’s peace based upon God’s own justice, connotes “living together.” No one or no being is forgotten at the table; instead, every being or everyone including “the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame” are invited to join the Great Banquet of God. (Luke 14:16-24) Justice and inclusion are one and the same; they are two sides of the same coin which we call peace. They are the means to establish true peace and security for all in the household of God. No one or no being is secure until everyone or every being is secure. Security without justice is not true peace for all but the privileges of a few; peace without justice is not God’s peace of shalom but false peace that only conceals injustice. The prophets of the Hebrew Bible disapproved such peace as “faux peace.”

Romans - ruling over the world during the era of Jesus Christ - announced, “Peace has come.” They called this peace “Pax Romana.” Still, is this really the peace that we want? Authentic peace is not something that is forced upon us. We call such peace the “peace of a dead forest.” It is peace of submission and silence obtained after killing all the birds singing and all other animals moving in the forest. It is faux peace; it is rather injustice disguised as peace. Peace of shalom asserts security of all and just relationships between all living being in the household of God.

Now then Jesus’ “two” statements can be understood with ease. The peace that Jesus will “cut,” “burn,” and “divide” is the faux peace - a peace created by force and oppression. However, blessed are the peacemakers, i.e. shalom makers, for they are the children of God

whose name is justice. Thus Jesus’ words are in perfect harmony in the Holy Scriptures. We are called to make shalom peace by “cutting,” “burning,” and “dividing” the false peace and security forced upon the world by the “powers and principalities.”

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, “True peace does not mean the absence of conflict but the presence of justice.” So in order to stop violence and prevent destruction of life, we must work for justice. Interestingly enough, the word “peace (平和)” in Chinese ideographs has a thread of connection with shalom of the Hebrew Bible. It is composed of “balance (平),” “rice (禾),” and “mouth (口).” This composition of various letters indicates that when we all have equal amounts of rice or bread passing through our mouths, peace and security will come. This letter contrasts greatly with the definition of the word “cancer (癌).” It is composed of three “mouths (口),” and a “mountain (山)” and “sickness (疾).” You get sick, because you eat, eat, and eat mountains of food alone. This is indeed true! Sacrificing others in order to secure one’s life can be termed as “cancerous”. Economic monopoly, greed, social inequity, and inequality bring about war and destruction. If this is so, the two terms shalom and peace (平和) intensively exhibit what we believe in and need to pursue. Justice is the basis for creating peace and security.

Two thousand years ago, when the Roman emperor Julius Caesar declared that he was the son of God and assured “Roman Peace” to those who submitted to his powers, a minority group who believed in Jesus Christ publicly stated “Pax Christi.” They had a firm belief in the words of Jesus: “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives.”(John 14:27) Due to their beliefs, they were cruelly persecuted by being burnt to death or fed to lions. However, they formed a community of shalom, distributing justice, love, and life, and have passed it on to us. At this moment, there is no Pax Romana, but as its alternative, shalom communities shout out the peace of Christ all over the world. We desperately yearn for peace; however, the peace that we desire is not the peace of this world. We do not wish for Pax Romana, Pax Americana, Pax Japonica, Pas Sino, or even Pax Koreana. What we do aspire to is the

heavenly peace of shalom, nothing but the peace of Christ, our Lord. “Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an overflowing stream” (Amos 5:24) is the everlasting slogan for shalom peace.

“Exodus to a New Earth”

To build this peace and security, we have to participate in the mission of God, who is creating “new heavens and a new earth.”(Isa. 65:17) I am not interested in heavens, for they are always in good shape; the problem is the earth. To create a new earth, we must depart from the old earth. Peace, from this perspective, means an exodus journey for Christians. And if we are to arrive at the true peace and security of all, we need to make three related exodus journeys. Let me start from my own context first.

The first is an Exodus into *new peace* in divided Korea, where the Cold War has still not ended. The Armistice signed in 1953 stopped the immediate fighting, but did not end the war. We are now the pivot for the Obama administration to contain China, we are caught up in a new Cold War, in an arms race that includes nuclear weapons. The consequences of this will be catastrophic. The US Department of Defence has estimated that an outbreak of another war in Korea would result in 1.5 million casualties within the first 24 hours and 6 million casualties within the first week.

The year 2013 was the 60th anniversary of the Armistice, and no peace treaty has replaced it. These past 60 years have been a time of great anxiety, knowing war can break out again at any time. I don't want to live with the constant fear of war any more. 60 years of this uncertain armistice is enough! 60 years of pseudo peace is enough! Koreans now need another Exodus – not only an Exodus from the Japanese colonialism of 1945 but an Exodus from an unfinished war to a permanent peace, for Korea and for all of East Asia. The Central Committee of the WCC met in Moscow in 1989 and adopted a statement on the Korean peninsula which recognized that Korea's situation is “a microcosm for the division of the whole world.” Then the realization of peace and reunification of Korea will be an eschatological event, a sign of the coming reconciliation of all humanity.

To realize it, churches around the world are requested to advocate with their governments for the lifting of all sanctions against the DPRK (North Korea), including those imposed by the UN Security Council, the cessation of military exercises around the Korean peninsula, the ending of all hostile policies against the DPRK and the need for an international campaign for a Peace Treaty to replace the Armistice Agreement. (Communique of the International Consultation on Justice, Peace and Reconciliation on the Korean Peninsula, Chateau de Bossey, Switzerland, 17-19 June 2014).

The second is an Exodus into *new light*. This is an Exodus from the blinding flash of nuclear bombs and deadly glow of nuclear reactors to a world free of nuclear weapons and power plants. Northeast Asia has become the “global ground zero” of nuclear dangers. First, it is the only place in the world where nuclear weapons have actually been used. Hiroshima and Nagasaki lie just across a strait from Busan, the venue of 10th Assembly of the WCC. Secondly, more than 1,000 nuclear tests have been conducted in adjoining areas of Asia and the Pacific, all with no regard for the local inhabitants. Thirdly, all states in Northeast Asia either possess nuclear weapons or are protected by an ally's nuclear weapons.

Since the last WCC Assembly in Asia met in New Delhi in 1961, the number of states with nuclear weapons has more than doubled. Unbelievably, Asia has become the home to six of the nine states recognized as being in possession of nuclear weapons, and the 4 biggest armies in the world. In 1961 there were no nuclear power plants in Asia at all; however, in East and South Asia today, there are 117 in operation, and 344 under construction or planned. All these nuclear plants are powering our growing economies and consumerist lifestyles. To our surprise, South Korea has the highest geographic density of nuclear power plants in the world. East Asia including the Korean peninsula is the world's most dangerous minefield of nuclear power plants. If another accident happens, there is a high possibility that it will take place in East Asia again.

I believe that nuclear weapons and nuclear power plants are two sides of the same coin. The distinction that nuclear weapons are

for military use and nuclear power plants are for peaceful civilian use is a false one. Nuclear energy was first and originally developed for the purpose of manufacturing atomic weapons. Countries develop nuclear weapons under the cloak of so-called peaceful civilian nuclear energy programs. Therefore, if we regard nuclear weapons as problematic, we must also regard nuclear power plants as problematic. Nuclear weapons and nuclear power cannot coexist with peace. It is hard for me to understand why we have allowed them to coexist with Christian faith.

When we entered the 20th century, despite our previous assumptions, we found that we were able to split the nuclear atom. We discovered that in doing so a massive amount of energy was emitted. Humankind took possession of this great power that could destroy the whole world, including all life in the household of God, by artificially breaking the basic structure of material. In this way, humans became “Death, the destroyer of the worlds” as in the passage from the Bhagavad Gita. In 1942, scientists proudly announced that they had entered “the creator’s territory” in building Chicago Pile 1, the world’s first reactor, in a squash court located in the south corner of the playfield at the University of Chicago.

However, from a Christian perspective, our sin is not to admit our finitude. As Augustine taught us a long time ago, our sin lies in the arrogance of human beings, who do not admit that they are not gods. In our life, there is a “line” we should not cross. Even if we are able to, there is a “boundary line” we should not cross. Thinking that we can cross this line is arrogant and haughty. In fact, Japan was arrogant about its “technical ability” to maintain the safest nuclear power plants in the world. Japan built the Fukushima nuclear power plants assuming that no tsunami over 10 meters would ever come. However, a 17-meter high tsunami struck Fukushima. Japan thought it could predict nature, and this was its very arrogance. But, God told us through the prophet Ezekiel in the Old Testament, “Son of man, say to the ruler of Tyre, ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord says: In the pride of your heart you say, I am a god; I sit on the throne of a god in the heart of the seas. But you are a man and

not a god, though you think you are as wise as a god.” (Ezekiel 28:2)

Therefore, nuclearization can be compared to “the modern day fruit of the tree of knowledge.” In the Bible, God allowed Adam to do everything in the Garden of Eden except for one thing. God permitted everything but imposed one single restriction. A restriction was imposed on human beings who were “like emperors.” They could eat all other fruits but were forbidden to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge. This order was like a “boundary stone” which represented God’s ownership of Eden. What was the Serpent’s temptation? “For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” (Gen. 3:5) This meant that Adam wanted to become the owner of Eden like God so that he could do all he pleased. The fruit of the tree of knowledge represents the fact that Adam is not the owner of Eden and therefore cannot do whatever he likes. It represents a “boundary” which he should not cross as a human being. However, Adam wanted to cross it. He wanted to be like God. For this reason, the story of Eden is our own story today.

Having eaten the forbidden fruit and upon hearing that God was walking in the Garden of Eden, Adam hid himself behind a tree. In the Bible, God called out for Adam, asking, “Adam, where you are?” (Gen. 3:9). This is the very first question God asked of human beings in the entire Bible. God did not ask Adam about his geographical or physical location. God was asking the greedy human who had tried to become like God, or the owner of the Garden of Eden, where he was supposed to be. Even today, God asks us where we should be. Disobeying God’s order to “work it [the Garden of Eden] and take care of it” (Gen. 2:15), we came to cities and civilized this world having played with nuclear weapons. “Adam (human beings), where are you?” Even today, God asks the same question to us all who, through arrogance, delude ourselves that we can become controllers of the world through nuclear weapons and energy.

Nuclear weapons and power plants cannot coexist with Christian faith. Nuclearization is a combined system of technocracy and imperialism, which is used to rule nature and to pursue profit maximization and geopolitical supremacy based on weapons of mass destruction and endless economic development. In short, it is a system

of death. Such a system cannot possibly coexist with Christianity, nor with any other religions that cherish the value of life. Buddha taught us not to murder and not to pursue avarice. Nuclearization is equivalent to committing murder to satisfy one's avarice. For this reason, all religions that teach life and peace cannot exist alongside nuclearization. Biblically, nuclearization is the sin of abusing God's order of creation and denying Jesus Christ's way and truth, and of refusing the Holy Spirit that bears the fruit of life and peace. It denies Jesus Christ who brought peace by serving and sharing with people in the face of rulers who ruled the world through their own power.

Nuclearization is indeed the path of our self-destruction. It threatens not only us but also real security for all forms of life. What we need is not a security based on nuclear weapons and energy, but one without them. What we need is not the security of the status quo of nuclear-armed states but the security of life for all humanity and creation. The Statement on Peace and Reunification of the Korean Peninsula, adopted by the 10th Assembly of WCC in Busan, emphasized that "shared human security must become a greater priority on the Korean peninsula than divisive, competitive and militarized security" and called for the elimination of nuclear power plants and nuclear weapons in North East Asia. Indeed, as the Statement "Towards a Nuclear-Free World", adopted by WCC central committee, 2-8 July 2014, emphasizes, "The voices of the *hibakusha*, *pi-pok-ja* (Korean atomic bomb sufferers) and test site victims cry out for an exodus from the nuclear age. We must listen to all who suffer nuclear harm – those whose bodies are deformed by genetic mutations, whose lands and seas are poisoned by nuclear tests, whose farms and cities are fouled by nuclear accidents, whose work in mines and power plants exposes them to radiation." We are called to work together for the promotion of "new nuclear weapon-free zones, particularly in North-east Asia and the Middle East, and to take steps to strengthen existing zones in Southeast Asia, the Pacific, Latin America and Africa against any presence or threat from nuclear weapons."

The third is an Exodus to *new earth*, i.e., an Exodus from the industrial age to an ecological age, or what Thomas Berry calls the "Eozoic Era." Indeed, the climate change is the "signs of times" today.

What concerns us most is the acceleration of its speed, which seems now beyond human control, and the vicious circle it engenders. As the climate gets warmer, we see the permafrost melt rapidly; and as the permafrost melts due to global warming, we see methane being emitted into the atmosphere. Methane, as we know, is even more dangerous than CO₂. It will be deadly, indeed.

We might have already crossed the critical point of no return. Still, the real challenge before us is this: While human beings co-operate when they are faced with temporary disasters like flood and earthquake; they compete and go to war when faced with long-term emergencies, like the food and/or water crisis caused by climate change. The real challenge is therefore how to get humanity to cooperate in the face of climate change, and work together to make peace and enhance life. In other words, the challenge is how to "live together" in the household of God. This question is indeed posed to the whole of humanity, particularly to the church.

Those victims of the so-called carbon civilization, especially those who live in small islands in the Pacific, Caribbean, and Bay of Bengal, are "the least" of our times, and the justice they ask for ("eco-justice") is actually the key to real peace. We need civilization change not climate change. The present human civilization of greed and conquest, which is based on rationalism, anthropocentrism and androcentrism, run by fossil and nuclear energy, is no longer sustainable and justifiable. Two hundred years of the industrial age is enough! We need an Exodus from the industrial age to the ecological age. This, I believe, is a global Exodus, and the church should be the sign that points the way along this Exodus to new earth.

Sixty years of armistice is enough! Seventy years of nuclear captivity is enough! Two hundred years of the industrial age is enough! It is time for the world to liberate itself from this fossil and nuclear-based civilization with its endless greed for power and energy. The Fukushima nuclear catastrophe is a clarion call from God alerting humanity to the urgency of transformation. We must exodus out of these regimes of war, death, and destruction and make a pilgrimage towards God's justice and God's peace so that all may have life and

have it to the full (John 10:10) in God's household.

Conclusion

The 10th Assembly of the WCC has invited churches worldwide to join and strengthen an Ecumenical Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace. We, the Asian churches, will joyfully accept this invitation, for this emphasis on justice and peace was originally suggested by us.

A "pilgrim," I think, is someone who walks the land on foot. You get out of the car and walk on the land. Pilgrimage, however, is not wandering, nor is it a picnic or a morning walk for leisure. You leave home on pilgrimage, leave behind your comfortable and familiar places. Pilgrimage is a journey towards God's peace, which according to Philippians 4:17 "surpasses all [human] understanding." We have all been captive to our times, and our imagination of peace is always limited and self-centred. St. Paul admonished us not to be conformed to this age, but we are all trapped in a system of injustice, war, and greed. We are walking through the valley of death indeed. Therefore, our pilgrimage is an Exodus to life.

Before the Israelites entered Canaan, after surviving in the desert for 40 years and crossing the Jordan River, God said, "I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live." (Deut. 30:19) Heaven and earth witness that we are faced with this same covenant and challenge. "Now Choose Life" is God's Word to us here and now. The 21st century, which was expected to be a time of hope, has begun as a time of unprecedented war and violence, economic injustice, climate change and ecological destruction, religious conflict, division between cultures and generations, and spiritual and psychological chaos. Our age is one in which human enmity and greed hastens the collapse of civilization and even the cosmic end. Indeed, "we know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time." (Rom. 8:22)

In the midst of this chaos and crisis, God speaks to us: "Now Choose Life." God says "Now." This "Now" is the eschatological time;

it is a kairotic time, the time of metanoia, determination, and of grace in fullness. To choose life is to determine to live together on earth; to choose to live together is then to give up the desire to privatize what is public (God's household); to choose to give up to privatize what God has given to us all for fullness of life is therefore to seek first God's kin-dom and God's justice (Matt. 6:33), which "defends the cause of the fatherless [and motherless] and the widow, and loves the alien" (Deut. 10:18, Ps. 82:3, Is. 1:17); to choose to seek first God's justice is to become the agent of shalom peace which guarantees true security that leads all life to flourish. God has already prepared for us a path towards life, and commands us to turn our feet away from the path of war, violence, and self-destruction and make pilgrimage along the path of life, justice, and peace in order that all may enjoy the bliss of life in the household of God. Amen.



Vulnerability, Resistance and Solidarity In The Household of God

Theological Reflection on People on the Move
and Human Trafficking in Asia-Pacific

Dr. Mery Kolimon¹

Our world is changing very fast. Thanks to science and technology, much progress has been made. In particular, communication and transportation technologies give us more and more chances to interact and move more easily compared to the past. Opportunities to go abroad to study, for a holiday, to look for a better job, or to do business have become more accessible. However, the mobility of people is not always a free choice. Many times people are forced to move. In many cases people on the move are vulnerable people.

The grand promise of modernity to bring prosperity to human civilization through the offering of science and technology has failed. Instead of wealth for all, the world population now lives with an increasing gap between the few who are rich and the masses who are poor. The household of God is in serious trouble because of this unjust condition.

¹ Dr. Mery Kolimon is lecturer in Missiology, Contextual Theology, and Theology of Religions in Artha Wacana University in Kupang, West Timor. She is also the Director of Postgraduate Program of the University and Coordinator of Eastern Indonesia Women Network for Study on Women, Religion, and Culture.

Biblical traditions teach us that God created the world and human beings in an orderly manner and wants the members of God's creation to live in harmony and to take care of one another. But what we see and experience today is that human beings tend to exploit one another and take advantage of each other's suffering. One blatant expression of this is the practice of human trafficking.

In this paper, I'll share with you my reflection on human trafficking² in Asia. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, a feminist theologian, once said, "what you see depends on where you stand"³. So do my view and reflections; these are very much influenced and limited by the context I come from and the experiences I share with the victims of human trafficking in my life and faith journey.

People on the move in Asia and the Pacific

Many people of Asia and the Pacific are still seeking political asylum, or seeking refuge from wars, civil strife or environmental disasters. Asian and Pacific nations have become both destinations and transit sites for refugees. Every year, thousands of people from conflict areas such as Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, try to escape to Australia. Some of them manage to reach Australia, but many of them fail. Their ships run aground in many places in Indonesia and other countries. Even if they reach Australia, it is not easy for them to be accepted.

Since the 1990s, a large number of Muslim Rohingya have fled from Burma to escape the Burmese military junta. The civil war in Sri Lanka, from 1983 to 2009 has generated thousands of internally displaced people and refugees who have fled to India and some Western countries. Thousands of East Timorese people are still living in very poor conditions in West Timor. After the referendum of 1999 resulting in independence for East Timor, Indonesian military and militias burned houses, offices, and other public facilities. Thousands

² Another term used to refer to the same thing is 'trafficking in persons'. Some United Nations documents use these two terms, human trafficking and trafficking in persons interchangeably. See, for example, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2012*, New York 2012.

³ As quoted by Kwok Pui-lan, *Post-colonial Imagination and Feminist Theology* (London: John Knox Press, 2005), 72.

of people were forced to leave their country. Now they hesitate to go back because they fear for their own security.

Apart from physical wounds and starvation, a lot of internally displaced persons (IDP) and refugees develop symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or depression. PTSD involves anxiety, over-alertness, sleeplessness, failing short-term memory, amnesia, nightmares, and sleep paralysis.

Child refugees are also vulnerable to human rights violations, child labor, sexual exploitation, and human trafficking. In these cases, parents tend to turn a blind eye because accepting sexual exploitation sometimes becomes a survival mechanism in the camps.

Reasons for becoming refugees and seeking asylum are not limited to politics. The actual environmental and climate disaster affecting most Asia-Pacific countries has exacerbated the movement of people. A number of Pacific islands, for example, are living face to face with climate change and its effects, with more frequent and severe natural disasters. Without decisive climate action, sea levels could rise by 50 centimeters to a meter, resulting in the loss of fresh water on many islands.⁴ If there is no change minimizing carbon emissions, the Asia-Pacific regions will suffer many of the effects of global warming, including the problem of climate refugees.

Stories from home

I come from West Timor in East Nusa Tenggara Province, Indonesia. The province is one of the so-called poorest provinces of Indonesia. Every day hundreds of women and men are going from the islands in my province to other parts of Indonesia as legal as well as illegal migrant workers. Many of the girls also go to Malaysia and Hong Kong to work as domestic workers. Most of them usually go there without enough education and skills needed for their jobs. Many cannot speak the Indonesian language very well, let alone English. Therefore they are very vulnerable to mistreatment and exploitation,

⁴ Chrispin Maslog, Asia-Pacific Analysis: Averting Climate Refugees, <http://www.scidev.net/asia-pacific/climate-change/analysis-blog/asia-pacific-analysis-averting-climate-refugees.html>, accessed 6 July 2014.

first during the application process to get a job and later on in their work places.

Last March, within a week, members of the Alliance Against Human Trafficking, of which I am a member, received the bodies of two migrant workers who died in Medan, South Sumatera. Marni Baun and Rista Botha left their homes in South Central Timor about three years ago without telling their parents. A woman promised them work in a factory in Medan that would pay a big salary.

Their families had been trying to look for them without any results. It was their deaths that opened up the tragedy of their lives and the lives of more than twenty of their friends who had been mistreated for more than three years on the top floor of a multi-storied building. In that place they cleaned the nests of a rare bird for use in Chinese birds' nest soup and medicines. Their working conditions were very poor. They were made to clean dirty nests in a closed room without ventilation so that some of them eventually suffered from bad lungs. The salaries of some were withheld; some were beaten. They all lacked mobility or means of communication outside the factory walls. They were not allowed to use their cellular phones, even to contact their families back home. They were starved, usually given only white rice and a shrimp cracker so that many of them lost a lot of weight and became vulnerable to illness.⁵

One year before the death of Marni and Rista, their friend, Eri Ndoen, escaped from the same place. When she returned to West Timor, she filed a report with the police with the support of a local NGO. However, the police did nothing. It was not until the death of Marni and Rista that the police started to pay attention to the case. Nevertheless, until today the families of the deceased girls and their friends who have returned home to West Timor are still waiting for the results of the legal case brought against the owner of the birds' nest factory.

⁵ See Karen Campbell-Nelson, Caring for Victims of Human Trafficking, <http://www.globalministries.org/sasia/overseasstaff/caring-for-victims-of-human.html>, accessed 5 July 2014.

Table: Elements of human trafficking (according to Palermo Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, 2000).

Acts	Means	Purpose
recruitment transportation transfer harboring receipt of persons	threat or use of force or other forms of coercion abduction fraud deception abuse of power abuse of another's position of vulnerability giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person	exploitation, including the prostitution of others sexual exploitation forced labor or services slavery or other slave-like situations removal of human organs

Increase of human trafficking

The tragic stories of Marni, Rista, and their friends tell us something about a wider picture of people on the move and human trafficking in Asia. Freedom of movement is one of the basic rights of human beings. However in many cases people do not move freely or by their own choice. Many girls are trapped in the poverty of their family's life. Some people take advantage of their miserable condition.

Internal trafficking from rural to urban areas in Indonesia is increasing. Women and children are exploited as domestic workers, commercial sex workers, and as forced labor in rural agriculture, mining, and fishing industries. It is estimated that 3.2 million children from 10 to 17 years old in Indonesia are engaged in employment with some involved in the worst forms of child labor.⁶

Indonesian migrant workers are estimated to be from 6.5 to

⁶ See Child Labor in Indonesia, <http://www.ilo.org/jakarta/areasofwork/child-labour/lang--en/index.htm>, accessed 5 July 2014.

9 million people. Many of them migrate voluntarily but are later coerced into abusive conditions. The International Organization of Migration (IOM) estimates that 43–50 percent, or some 3 to 4.5 million Indonesian migrant workers, are victims of conditions indicative of trafficking.⁷ Indonesian women are particularly vulnerable to trafficking for sexual and labor exploitation. It is estimated that 69 to 70 percent of all overseas Indonesian workers are female. The vast majority of them are domestic workers. A survey conducted in 2010 by a respected Indonesian NGO noted that during that year, 471 Indonesian migrants returned from abroad pregnant as the result of rape.⁸

The increase in human trafficking is not only a phenomenon in Indonesia and other parts of Asia; it is a global tendency. For example, according to statistics there is a growing number of cases worldwide of trafficking children. Twenty percent of trafficking victims from 2003 to 2006 were children; from 2007 to 2010 that percentage rose to 27%.⁹

From the gender and age profile of victims of human trafficking worldwide in 2012, we learn that men were 14% of all victims, boys: 10%, girls: 17%, and women: 59%.¹⁰ This data shows us that victims of human trafficking are both men and women, but that a greater percentage of girls and women are vulnerable to trafficking.

Stories of the household of God: stories of vulnerability

Human trafficking is a story of vulnerability. The victims of human trafficking are among the most vulnerable people in society. According to the Global Report of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2012), women and children are the two most frequently reported groups of trafficked persons.

7 Human Trafficking in Indonesia, <http://www.humantrafficking.org/countries/indonesia>, accessed 6 July 2014.

8 Ibid.

9 Yuri Fedotov, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2012* (New York: United Nations, 2012), 10.

10 Ibid. Statistical analyses also show that women are not only victims but also traffickers. Women's involvement as perpetrators of trafficking is more frequent in the trafficking of girls. Qualitative studies suggest that women involved in human trafficking are normally found in low-ranking positions of trafficking networks and carry out duties that are more exposed to the risk of detection and prosecution than those of male traffickers.

Women comprise the bulk of victims detected globally, which suggests that being a woman in many parts of the world is connected to those vulnerabilities that lead to victimization through trafficking in persons.¹¹

This shows us that human trafficking remains a crime with a strong gender indication. As shown above, women comprise 76% of all victims. Men are more likely to be vulnerable to trafficking if they have a minority ethno-linguistic background, a low standing in their own country, or if they lack legal status abroad. However women are clearly the most vulnerable group.

The question now is why women are more vulnerable to human trafficking than men? If we look at the motives of human trafficking both from the perspective of the victims and of the traffickers we can find some explanations.

First of all, human trafficking is related to poverty and unemployment in a victim's own context. An analysis of trafficking flows shows that victims are trafficked from poorer areas to richer areas.¹² In time of economic crisis or harvest failure, poor people will migrate to richer areas or countries to look for better jobs. In most cases, women go without enough preparation in terms of legal status, skills, language, cultural knowledge and social networking so that they are vulnerable to exploitation.

Poverty puts people in a vulnerable condition. Analysis shows that human trafficking is a crime committed by people who abuse their power to exploit vulnerable persons for profit. Status as a migrant is a status susceptible to harm. About 73% of the victims of human trafficking are exploited in a country not their own.¹³

According to global records, the trafficking flow that originates in (East) Asia continues to be the most prominent transnational flow at the global level. East Asian victims have been detected in large numbers in many countries around the world.¹⁴ In other words, Asians are the people most vulnerable to human trafficking.

11 UNODC, *Global Report*, Ibid. 25

12 Ibid., 40, 44.

13 Ibid., 40.

14 Ibid., 52.

We can relate this fact to what some Asian theologians say, namely that Asia is a continent marked especially by two things: poverty and religious pluralism.¹⁵ In Asia, women are the group most vulnerable to poverty. The inequality of power gives poor women an inferior status that, in turn, makes them susceptible to exploitation and discrimination.

The fact that Asia is the most vulnerable place for human trafficking should also be analyzed in relation to its colonial past. Most Asian nations got their political independence in the 1940s. However, that political independence was not accompanied by economic and cultural autonomy. In the contemporary world, the old colonial power still exists in the world economic structure as shown by Sugirtharajah:

*Neo-colonialism is a new form of hegemony exercised by former colonizers through international banks and multinational corporations, after territorial freedom had been gained by newly independent countries. This is much more subtle and less visible than colonialism. This neo-colonialism tendency is injurious not only to the dominated but also to the dominating countries.*¹⁶

In this globalization era, neo-colonialism presents itself in the disproportionate involvement of modern capitalist businesses in the economy of a developing country, whereby multinational corporations continue to exploit the natural resources of the former colony. This neo-colonial practice goes hand in hand with capitalism in which trade, industry, and the means of production are owned and operated mostly for profit. This global economic system puts poor people in a very weak position because they are trapped in economic dependence.

Another aspect of global capitalism that makes women more vulnerable to human trafficking is the fact that the global economic system spreads its influence culturally. One element of globalization

¹⁵ Aloysius Pieres in Samuel Amirtham and John S. Pobee (eds.), *Theology by the People* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1986), 75; cf. A. A. Yewangoe, *Theology Crucis in Asia* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1987), 9.

¹⁶ Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonialism and Biblical Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 23. Many people say that the term neo-colonialism was first coined by Kwame Nkrumah, a former president of Ghana (1960-1966).

that influences people worldwide is a modern lifestyle. This glamorous and expensive way of life spread by information technology sends the message that if you want to be part of the modern world you have to adjust yourself to its lifestyle. This pressures people into trying to earn enough money to reassure themselves that they are “part of this world”. The longing to become part of the world designed by capitalist powers makes the poor become more vulnerable to an exploitative system that harms them. This whole economic system pushes poor people into an abusive condition. They must work very hard, often above standard working hours, with small salaries that will not be enough for their needs. This then becomes a vicious circle. In this sense, human trafficking is really a practice of modern slavery.

As stated at a Round Table Meeting of CCA in January 2014:
*The global market's need and desire for labor, albeit cheap and docile, has been fed by poverty, unemployment and unsustainable wages in sending countries, driving much of migration in many Asian and Pacific countries. As migration is increasingly instrumentalized as a tool for development, migrants are indiscriminately commodified and their labor commoditized. As commodities, their human rights have been violated and subordinated to market conditions. Amidst commoditized labor and services the true worth and value of their work have become cheap and unsustainable.*¹⁷

The next thing that needs to be identified as opening the doors for human trafficking is the system of patriarchy that also makes women more vulnerable to human trafficking. Patriarchy itself is the name commonly given to a sexist social structure. It is a form of social organization in which power is always in the hands of the dominant man or men, with others ranked below in a graded series of subordination.¹⁸

Patriarchy makes men superior to women in terms of power, authority and access to resources. In such a condition, leaving circum-

¹⁷ CCA, *Becoming the Churches for the Nations*. Statement of the Mission Round Table Meeting on People on the Move in Asia Pacific, <http://cca.org.hk/home/2014/02/people-on-the-move-in-asia-pacific/> accessed 17 July 2014.

¹⁸ Elisabeth Johnson, *She Who Is. Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Crossroads, 1996), 23.

stances of domination and repression becomes a choice for women. However, because poor women's access to education is often limited they are easily trapped by other situations that are equally patriarchal.

In their own villages, women are dominated by men in their families, such as fathers, uncles, brothers, and sons. Culturally they are trained to obey them and submit to their power uncritically. In the work place this submissive attitude is replicated in others who have power above them. So, even if women cross geographic boundaries to leave the discrimination and domination in their own place and to look for more economic and cultural dependence, in fact they are still living in an environment of domination and even slavery.

The huge problem of human trafficking in Asia signifies the vulnerability of Asian people. The household of God in Asia (and the Pacific) is marked by its vulnerability. In this site of vulnerability we are living out our faith and doing our theology. Vulnerability is part of our theological identity in Asia. This theological identity has its two sources. In the first place, it reflects the daily life of our people. It tells about the wound of our people. At the same time it tells us about our faith in Christ. As put by Dorothee Soelle: “. . . in Christ, God makes Godself vulnerable . . . Christ is God's wound in the world”.¹⁹

Stories of the household of God: learning struggle and resistance

Vulnerability is not the only story of Asia. Asia is also a site of struggle and resistance. The anti-colonial movement that brought Asian nations to freedom is part of the Asian identity of struggle and resistance. By getting their independence and proclaiming their liberty, Asian nations have told the world that they resist slavery and condemn oppression.

Unfortunately, slavery still exists in Asia until today. Human trafficking is one method of obtaining slaves. Victims are typically recruited through deceit or trickery. It includes false offers of a job, migration, and/or marriage; sale by family members; and recruitment by former slaves, or outright abduction. Victims are forced into

¹⁹ Dorothee Soelle, *The Window of Vulnerability A Political Spirituality* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press 1990), xi.

a “debt slavery” situation by coercion, deception, fraud, intimidation, isolation, threat, physical force, or even force-feeding with drugs in order to control them.

Part of living out the Gospel in the Asia-Pacific context is to condemn human rights violations and practices of slavery in our modern world. As the church, we are called to be an instrument of the Kingdom of God by continuing Christ's mission in the world, specifically to be engaged in a struggle for the growth of all human beings into the fullness of life. This also means proclaiming God's judgment upon any authority, power or force that would openly or by subtle means deny people their full human rights.²⁰ Human trafficking is a complex system that involves a syndicate of actors with multitude of interests. The church in Asia and the Pacific should have good analyses to understand how various levels of interest play in human trafficking syndicates. Moreover the church should engage in a network of mission that resists evil acts and seeks to dismantle demonic systems that harm poor people.

*The affirmation of God's mission (missio Dei) points to the belief in God as One who acts in history and in creation, in concrete realities of time and contexts, who seeks the fullness of life for the whole earth through justice, peace, and reconciliation. Participation in God's ongoing work of liberation and reconciliation by the Holy Spirit, therefore, includes discerning and unmasking the demons that exploit and enslave. For example, this involves deconstructing patriarchal ideologies, upholding the right to self-determination for Indigenous peoples, and challenging the social embeddedness of racism and casteism.*²¹

Another part of this mission of resistance is to educate people (both church members and others) to resist domination and exploitation. This can start from building self-esteem and respecting one's own dignity. As Christians we talk about human dignity as the basis for our

²⁰ Cf. Mery Kolimon. Theological Basis for Human Rights, Paper for CCA Human Rights Training, Bangkok, 6-11 June 2013

²¹ The term mission as resistance can be found in a recent statement of the WCC on mission and evangelization. See WCC, *Together Towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes*, <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-commissions/mission-and-evangelism/together-towards-life-mission-and-evangelism-in-changing-landscapes> .7, accessed 5 December 2013.

support of human rights. As creatures of God, human beings are good and valuable. The first chapter of Genesis affirms that God looked on God's creation and saw that it was good. God recognizes creation's own inherent value. Human beings are to be esteemed. The fact that we are created by God in God's own image is a surer and more secure ground for respecting all people than any appeal to common qualities or capacities, like intellectual capacity, moral quality, physical characteristics, social standing, or economic possessions. The respect for human dignity, therefore, has no eligibility requirements. If one exists, one is due respect since it is simply as one exists that one falls under God's creative, providential, and salvific concern.²² So one element of church *marturia* should include education for respecting one's own dignity and building self-esteem in order to resist exploitation and discrimination.

In this sense, the narrative of obeying one's parents (Exodus 20:12) and honoring people of authority (Romans 13) should be told together and completed with Biblical narratives that challenge authoritarian power, for example, the parable of Jesus about the persistent widow (Luke 18:1-8). Obeying God means resisting any corruptive power that seeks to replace the authoritative power of God and to harm human rights and dignity. This includes doing advocacy for law enforcement and protection of the rights of marginalized people by governments and states.

Part of the church curriculum of resistance is to confront mammon/capitalism and its greed. We need to learn as a church how to live the prayer of Jesus: "Give us today our daily bread" (Matt. 6:11). This means we should practice the spirituality of enough in order to resist greed and materialism. This will also bring us to solidarity with the poor.

Stories of the household of God: stories of hospitality and solidarity

As put correctly by Pope Francis, human trafficking is "an open wound on the body of contemporary society."²³ We can add that hu-

²² Kathryn Tanner, *The Politics of God: Christian Theologies and Social Justice* (Minneapolis, US: Fortress Press 1992), 166-167.

²³ Human Trafficking an open wound on society, Pope Francis tells conference, <http://www.interpol.int/News-and-media/News/2014/N2014-063>, accessed 7 July 2014.

man trafficking is an open wound in the body of Christ; that is an open wound in the church. In such a context, the church is called by God to perform its mission of healing wounded people and wounded societies.

In the new way of understanding and doing mission, we have already changed our perspective and paradigm from mission for the marginalized to mission with the marginalized.

Mission from the margins seeks to counteract injustices in life, church, and mission. It seeks to be an alternative missional movement against the perception that mission can only be done by the powerful to the powerless, by the rich to the poor, or by the privileged to the marginalized. Such approaches can contribute to oppression and marginalization. Mission from the margins recognizes that being in the center means having access to systems that lead to one's rights, freedom, and individuality being affirmed and respected; living in the margins means exclusion from justice and dignity. Living on the margins, however, can provide its own lessons. People on the margins have agency, and can often see what, from the center, is out of view. People on the margins, living in vulnerable positions, often know what exclusionary forces are threatening their survival and can best discern the urgency of their struggles; people in positions of privilege have much to learn from the daily struggles of people living in marginal conditions.²⁴

If resistance belongs to our *marturia*, then hospitality and solidarity are part of our *diaconia* and *koinonia*. Doing mission from the margins in the context of human trafficking will urge us not to treat victims of human trafficking only as objects of our diaconal charity work, but will encourage us to take a missional journey together with them. This will become a transformative process where the victims of human trafficking can reconstruct their identity from victims to survivors, and from survivors to become agents of mission. This can be done by creating secure space and hospitality where victims can tell their stories and where the rest of our *koinonia* may acknowledge

²⁴ WCC, *Together Towards Life*, 7.

the evil that has been done to them. By sharing their experience of pain and suffering, victims of human trafficking can participate in preventing human trafficking and so become agents of mission. This can also become an act of healing the church and healing the wounds in the body of society.

The church as the body of Christ is blessed by various capacities, and by community and ecumenical networks that have their own potential for dealing with the complex problems of human trafficking. The Christian Conference of Asia should translate the words of Paul in I Cor. 12:12-31 into practice. We need to find ways where the churches in West Timor, for example, can work together with the Church in Medan, South Sumatera or the churches in Hong Kong and Malaysia in order to prevent and overcome human trafficking and its complex systems and syndicates; and to offer hospitality and solidarity with the victims. By doing so we can strengthen each other on behalf of the fullness of life and the glory of God.

In doing such work, we, as church, cannot work alone. We need to open ourselves to be part of God's mission network on earth. This means we must participate in networks of resistance and solidarity with people of other faiths and even no faith who are also working for justice, peace and the dignity of people and for the integrity of creation.



Climate Change and Eco-justice: Reading the Signs of the Times

Dr. Hope S. Antone¹

Introduction

How interesting that the CCA theme for the 14th General Assembly in 2015 is exactly the same as the theme of the 8th Quadrennial General Assembly of its member church, the United Church of Christ in the Philippines, held in 2006. It only affirms the timelessness of the theme.

I still remember the time I was with CCA, and how our concept of wider ecumenism was often met with questions, if not opposition by certain groups. Since wider ecumenism pushed us to enlarge our traditional focus on the movement to Christian unity (an intra-religious movement only), I remember how some church leaders complained that we were confusing the issue. It was because of this kind of reaction that I came up with a framework of the four needed shifts in ecumenical understanding and engagement, grounded in a deeper study of the root word *oikos* in *oikoumene* for the house/home/

¹ Dr. Hope S. Antone serves as Program Officer of the United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia based in Hong Kong. She previously served as Joint Executive Secretary for Faith, Mission and Unity of the Christian Conference of Asia.

household of God. The shifts affirm that the oikoumene is not limited to Christianity alone, but encompasses all creation in God's whole oikos. The following are the needed shifts of the wider ecumenism framework: (a) from competition to cooperation among denominations; (b) from condemnation to dialogue with other religions; (c) from isolation to collaboration with civil society and people's movements; and (d) from disintegration to integrity of creation.

I have been tasked to share on "Climate Change and Ecological Justice." The United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia recently organized with partner universities in central Visayas, Philippines an International Service Learning (ISL) program. Its theme was "Learning from Yolanda: Disaster Response, Community Resilience and the Role of Asian Universities."² It included a 3-day conference and 8-day service with the Haiyan affected communities in Panay and Negros. During the conference, we had speakers representing various sectors to shed light on their experience of disaster response, while during the service with the communities, our Asian service-learners tried to learn about resilience. The United Board had hoped that this program could address an urgent issue in Asia, since many of our partner institutions come from disaster-prone areas in Asia.

The following questions came to mind while we were preparing for this ISL program – questions that are also relevant for church people, ecumenical workers and theologians: What can we learn from so-called natural disasters, such as Haiyan/Yolanda? Was that super typhoon a natural calamity or was it brought about by anthropogenic climate change? How do we understand ecological justice (eco-justice or ecojustice) in the face of climate change? What are the implications of climate change and ecojustice on our work/mission?

Scripture Passage

As I pondered these questions anew for this CCA theological workshop, the following biblical passage came to mind:

The Pharisees and Sadducees came, and to test Jesus they asked

² The International Service Learning was on 28 June-11 July 2014, with the conference held at Central Philippine University in Iloilo City and the service with the communities spread in Northern Panay and in Suyac and Sagay, Negros Occidental.

him to show them a sign from heaven. He answered them, 'When it is evening, you say, "It will be fair weather, for the sky is red." And in the morning, "It will be stormy today, for the sky is red and threatening." You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times. An evil and adulterous generation asks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah.' Then he left them and went away. (Matthew 16:1-4, NRSV)

This passage is about Jesus' encounter with a group of Pharisees and Sadducees who had come demanding for a sign from heaven. Jesus had done many things – like teaching, feeding crowds of people, healing the sick. He was gaining a following so he must have become a threat to the ruling class of society. The Sadducees were more the political leaders while the Pharisees were more the religious leaders at the time. These two groups did not agree on many matters, especially doctrinal or theological matters of the faith, but their coming together in this instance showed that they were one in their opposition to Jesus. They put their opposition to Jesus by way of a test: a demand for a "sign from heaven" (which means a miracle). They must have heard so much about Jesus' miraculous acts. Perhaps the demand for a sign was really a proof of disbelief among some of them, to the point of belittling Jesus. Perhaps some of them were just curious and wanted to see an act for themselves. Or, perhaps it was a way for some of them to find fault with Jesus. Jesus, in his own way of dealing with such kinds of people, resorted to talking about the weather, contrasting their ability to read weather signs with their inability to see the signs of Jesus' acts of compassion. For indeed and in fact, the signs were already there. The Pharisees and Sadducees could not see or simply refused to understand them.

Since this passage also talks about reading weather signs and interpreting the signs of the times, it has inspired me to consider other signs of the times in our present context today. I understand sign as something that is different from the way things used to be but has become a part of our lives; or that sign is something that points to some important changes happening in our world. So I would like to suggest that today, **Climate Change** is among the most urgent "signs

of the times” that we need to consider seriously. Yet, it is also the sign that many would rather not see or understand. Here are some lessons that we can glean from the biblical passage in relation to climate change.

The first lesson we can glean from the passage is the recognition of the presence of many signs, especially in nature. The passage makes a reference to weather signs which one can easily make out by being observant about things in nature, such as the color of the skies. Jesus quotes a saying that is similar to the age-old adage for sailors: “Red sky at night, sailors delight. Red sky at morning, sailors take warning.” Farmers also have their own way of reading weather signs, based on the moon and stars. But today, is it still that easy to read the weather signs? It used to be that seasons for planting, harvest and letting the land fallow were easily determined by the predictable alternating wet and dry seasons. But now, many subsistence farmers have to deal with prolonged drought that affects their farming schedule; or of a sudden heavy rain when their crops are almost ready for harvest. As many people say, the weather has become so unpredictable these days. In many cities in Asia, the colors in the skies are mostly shades of gray from smoke or smog. But these changes in the patterns of the seasons and fluctuations of temperatures are already signs that something is different with the world today.

Indeed, the signs of Climate Change are everywhere. While it is often used interchangeably with global warming, climate change is a broader term that refers to changes (increases or decreases) to long-term weather patterns such as temperature, rainfall or snowfall; while global warming is a specific term that refers to increases in the earth’s average temperature because of greenhouse gas build-up in the atmosphere. But while global warming is a cause of climate change, a warmer earth leads to changes in rainfall patterns, rise in sea level, wide impacts on plants, wildlife and humans. So they do affect each other.

According to the 2006 Briefing Note for the European Parliament on “Climate Change and Natural Disasters: Scientific evidence of a possible relation between recent natural disasters and climate change”, “Climate change is predicted to have a range of serious con-

sequences, some of which will have impact over the longer term, like spread of disease and sea level rise, while some have immediately obvious impacts, such as intense rain and flooding.”³ The same report cited other predicted consequences of climate change as extreme weather events, e.g. extreme temperature highs – heat waves, storms, including windstorms, hurricanes, etc., high levels of precipitation, and associated flooding, lack of precipitation, and associated drought. Such extreme weather events, the report said, are responsible for natural disasters.⁴

So the signs of the times – which point to the reality of global warming and climate change – are indeed everywhere. But are we able to see and recognize the signs?

The second lesson we can glean from the passage is the ability to read or interpret the signs. Old signs and new or subtle signs are there alright, but are we able to read or interpret them properly? This was the case with the Pharisees and Sadducees – they could read the weather signs but not the more spiritual signs of God’s presence through Christ. And instead of reading the signs that were already out there, they demanded another sign.

According to BBC reports, Haiyan/Yolanda started as a tropical storm over the Pacific Ocean. According to Australian scientist Will Stefen, “Once (cyclones) do form, they get most of their energy from the surface waters of the ocean. We know sea-surface temperatures are warming pretty much around the planet, so that’s a pretty direct influence of climate change on the nature of the storm.”⁵

A team of Australian scientists reported in Nature Geoscience in 2010 that since the atmosphere can hold 4-8 per cent more water per degree of warming, rain events (typhoon, cyclone, hurricane as they are called in different places) have the potential to become more extreme. Hence the risk of intense rainfall and flooding when they hit land and drop their water.⁶ Haiyan indeed had packed more

3 Briefing Note on “Climate Change and Natural Disasters: Scientific evidence of a possible relation between recent natural disasters and climate change”, a study requested by the European Parliament’s Environment, Public Health and Food Safety Committee, Brief02a/2006, 2.

4 Briefing Note, 2.

5 Peter Hannam, “Typhoon Haiyan influenced by climate change, scientists say” in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, November 11, 2013.

6 Hannam.

punch in terms of wind and rain, thus turning into a super or monster typhoon just before hitting the Philippines. It had tornado-like winds, which lasted longer than a usual tornado; it also had 20-foot tsunami-like storm surges (described now as walls of waves).

But reading the signs of the times can be very political and meanings can differ depending on where you are on the equation. As a Filipino, Mr. Yeb Sano, the Philippine representative to the UN Climate Change Summit in Warsaw, said in his address, “Typhoons such as Yolanda (Haiyan) and its impacts represent a sobering reminder to the international community that we cannot afford to procrastinate on climate action. Warsaw must deliver an enhancing ambition and should muster the political will to address climate change.”⁷ The U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change Executive director Christina Figueres was also quoted as saying in her opening statement that Haiyan was part of the “sobering reality” of global warming.⁸ But there were those who dismissed such statements as casually linking Haiyan to global warming without scientific evidence.⁹ The Special Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), titled “Managing the Risks of Extreme Events and Disasters to Advance Climate Change Adaptation,” stated:

The uncertainties in the historical tropical cyclone records, the incomplete understanding of the physical mechanisms linking tropical cyclone metrics to climate change and the degree of tropical cyclone variability provide only low confidence for the attribution of any detectable changes in tropical cyclone activity to anthropogenic influences.¹⁰

What this means is that it has not been scientifically established that human-made (anthropogenic) climate change has direct causal relations with the tropical storm turning into a super typhoon.

⁷ UN News Center, November 11, 2013.

⁸ Quoted in “Did Climate Change Cause Supertyphoon Haiyan?” at TIME.com, November 11, 2013.

⁹ Michel Chossudovsky, “Climate Change: The Philippines Haiyan Typhoon is not the Result of Global Warming,” in *Global Research*, November 15, 2013.

¹⁰ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), “Managing the Risks of Extreme Events and Disasters to Advance Climate Change Adaptation” (New York: Cambridge University Press), 2012, p. 9. Anthropogenic influences result from or are produced by human beings such as emissions of greenhouse gases associated with human activities, e.g. burning of fossil fuels, deforestation, land use changes, livestock, fertilization, etc.

But in another part of the same report, the IPCC noted:

Observed changes in climate extremes reflect the influence of anthropogenic climate change in addition to natural climate variability, with changes in exposure and vulnerability influenced by both climatic and non-climatic factors.¹¹

The debate on whether a tropical storm turning into monstrous super typhoon is caused by natural or anthropogenic climate change can go on endlessly. We can take the stance of the Sadducees and Pharisees who asked for more explicit signs, solid scientific evidence. But where, or with whom, does the burden of proof lie? Just as Jesus departed from the Sadducees and Pharisees, we too cannot waste our time waiting for the results of the debate or of scientists’ fool-proof research. Climate change is too real to ignore.

The third lesson we can glean from the passage is the need to act on the signs. Signs are wasted, even rendered useless, when they are not understood properly or heeded right away. Needed actions on climate change can be diverse and multiple, touching on various areas such as environmental policy, research, advocacy, education, campaign and mobilization, community and personal commitments to lifestyle changes, etc.

It is a fact that Climate Change affects everyone, but its impact will vary depending on the wealth/poverty, technology, and government institutions’ capacity to deal with such impact. The findings contained in “The Environmental Justice Dimensions of Climate Change”¹² are quite telling:

While developed nations have historically emitted far more greenhouse gases than developing nations, the effects of global climate change are predicted to be felt most severely by poor, developing nations.¹³

The report cites two reasons why this is so: (a) the geographical location of many developing nations, i.e. they are mostly located close to the equator and are therefore closer to their upper temperature

¹¹ IPCC, 7.

¹² Marie Lynn Miranda, et. al. “The Environmental Justice Dimensions of Climate Change,” in *Environmental Justice*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (2011): 17.

¹³ Miranda, 17.

tolerance; and (b) their relative lack of infrastructure, technology, and governance institutions to help them adapt to climate change. (I would also add that the tropical small island states have become even more vulnerable, given the reality of rising sea-levels.) Naming this inequality an **environmental justice issue**, the report concluded with a recommendation for the developed nations to “provide targeted aid to developing countries with the goal of improving their adaptive capacity to handle climate change”.¹⁴ Many organizations from the North have been following carbon footprint offsetting as part of their commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

In their paper, “International Environmental Justice: Building the Natural Assets of the World’s Poor,” Krista Harper and S. Ravi Rajan described the environmental inequalities between the industrialized countries of the ‘global North’ and the developing countries of the ‘global South’ as due to the exploitation by the former of the environments of the latter. They explained such exploitation happens in three main ways¹⁵: (a) treating the South as a **source** of raw materials for the North; (b) treating the South as a **sink** for the North to dispose of wastes and engage in polluting activities; and (c) treating the South as **wilderness** with the North demanding coercive conservation that aims to preserve wild ecosystems and biodiversity, with little or no consideration for the human communities living in or near these protected areas. However, the authors fell short of calling on the global North to take account of their exploitation of environments in the global South and to address the inequality. They simply enumerated the efforts of poor communities in various places to defend their rights to healthy environments and sustainable livelihoods based on access to natural assets. Such efforts are of course notable and worthwhile.

But what happens when a calamity of enormous intensity and impact hits the country? What lessons can be learned? So back to Haiyan – let us take some lessons from the Philippine experience.

The Philippines had about 5 days’ notice that a tropical storm was on its way and that it was evolving into a super typhoon. As Silliman University President Dr. Ben S. Malayang III said in his keynote

¹⁴ Miranda, 25.

¹⁵ Krista Harper and S. Ravi Rajan, “International Environmental Justice: Building the Natural Assets of the World’s Poor” (Working Paper Series, No. 87, August 2004), 2-3.

address at the International Service Learning program, the country did try its best to brace for the typhoon – including tracking by satellite its movements and landfalls, wind speed, amount of rains, and mapping its predicted storm surges; relief goods were pre-positioned and Disaster Response Plan was made, including regular rescue training. But as Malayang pointed out –

CALAMITIES that are by themselves already deadly and destructive become, tragically,

DISASTERS, when – because of human failures to be at peace with nature and with each other – the calamities become deadlier and more destructive.¹⁶

He said such failures included the following: we did not look at topographic maps – to check the low and high grounds relative to predicted rains, winds and storm surges¹⁷; we failed to anticipate the logistical nightmare of moving relief goods and supplies across islands with limited ports, roads and airports; we failed to keep our forests and mangroves intact, which would have been good “bio-shields” – as windbreaks and flood mitigating vegetation; relief response and rehabilitation were hampered because of the legacy of politics that put personalities over rescue and relief; also there were no ready housing and institutional rehabilitation packages (no ready designs) to help people rebuild and recover.

Malayang also mentioned the earthquake that hit central Visayas just a month before Haiyan. He said the Philippines was ready with seismic mapping (locating active faults and trenches, earthquake generators, and plotting the epicenter); in place were calamity response plans, monitoring of buildings and housing constructions and regular rescue training; there were immediate responses to help the affected; monitoring of aftershocks and taking stock of what we lost. But again, what turned the calamity into disaster were the following failures: not much public appreciation and/or political recognition that the Philippines is seismically complex – no public policy to match our seismic complexity and vulnerability (seismic study capacities in a country with a lot of underwater have always been

¹⁶ Notes from the power point slides of the keynote address of Dr. Ben S. Malayang III at the International Service Learning program, July 1, 2014, Iloilo, Philippines.

¹⁷ Low-lying areas like Tacloban City could easily be covered by the storm surges as high as 20 feet and the resulting chest-high flooding.

persistently low); we've been keeping the old, old (no structural rehabilitation, upgrading and reinforcement of heritage buildings); poor and limited distribution capacity of the relief goods, with "big personalities" complicating it further; no standard rehabilitation packages to help people recover.

Malayang spoke of the need to build appreciation among the people that the Philippines, while beautiful and hopeful, is among the world's most "hazardous" environments. Created by extensive tectonic activities, it lies smack center in a region of many natural conflicts, with many typhoons, highly vulnerable to climate change-driven hydrologic and meteorological risks such as rising temperatures and rising sea levels. And thus, we must understand the complexities of our calamities, *including how we might be magnifying their deadliness and destructiveness*.

Based on the two cases of the October 15, 2013 earthquake and the November 8, 2013 super typhoon Haiyan, Malayang makes the following conclusions:

1. Science has powerful potential to mitigate disasters – e.g. atmospheric and climate sciences, geosciences, social sciences.
2. Evidence- and science-based policy and planning are critical elements to diminishing the "tragic disastrousness" of calamities.
3. Politics must serve relief and rehabilitation, not the other way around.
4. Peace with people and nature – and a good respect for them – are a powerful buffer against calamities becoming tragic disasters.
5. Responses must be systemic, multifaceted, pre-emptive, pre-packaged and always prepared.

Implications for Faith Communities

For faith communities in Asia, reading the "signs of the times" means gaining more knowledge on Climate Change. Reading the "sign of the times" includes an appreciation for or knowledge of the geology of our respective countries – many of which are located close to the equator, or along the earthquake belt, and which include many

islands which are most vulnerable to the rising sea-levels. Acting on the "signs of the times" means building the capacity of people to understand and respond to climate change. It means moving beyond capacity building for disaster response and disaster recovery, to disaster preparedness and disaster reduction. Acting on the "signs of the times" means a solid commitment to Ecojustice,¹⁸ whose basic norms include the following:

- Solidarity with other people and creatures – as companions, victims, and allies – in the earth community, reflecting deep respect for diverse creation;
- Ecological sustainability – adopting environmentally fitting habits of living and working that enable life to flourish, and utilize ecologically and socially appropriate technology;
- Sufficiency as a standard of organized sharing, which requires basic floors and definite ceilings for equitable or "fair" consumption;
- Socially just participation in decisions about how to obtain sustenance and to manage community life for the good in common and the good of the commons.

For those in theological education, promotion of ecojustice means reading scriptures from an ecological perspective. The following are the Guiding Principles for An Ecojustice Hermeneutic¹⁹, which was developed by the Earth Bible Project spearheaded by a team of scholars from Australia:

- The Principle of *Intrinsic Worth*: The universe, Earth and all its components have intrinsic worth/value.
- The Principle of *Inter-connectedness*: Earth is a community of inter-connected living things which are mutually dependent on each other for life and survival.
- The Principle of *Voice*: Earth is a living entity capable of voicing its cries against injustice.
- The Principle of *Purpose*: The universe, Earth and all its

18 Christopher Lind, "Ecojustice: Past and Present," *The Ecumenist* (Summer 2008): 2. See also Dieter T. Hessel's Eco-Justice Ethics accessed at <http://fore.research.yale.edu/disciplines/ethics/eco-justice/>

19 Norman Habel, "Guiding Principles for an Ecojustice Hermeneutic: An Introduction" accessed at <http://www.webofcreation.org/earth-bible/related-speeches/39-guiding-principles-for-an-ecojustice-hermeneutic-an-introduction>

components are part of a dynamic cosmic design within which each piece has a place in the overall goal of that design.

- The Principle of *Custodianship*: Earth is a balanced and diverse domain requiring responsible custodians who function as partners with, rather than rulers over Earth to sustain its balance and diversity.
- The Principle of *Resistance*: Earth and its components not only suffer from human injustices but actively resist them in the struggle for justice.

An example of an ecojustice hermeneutic is found if we critically revisit the image of Earth in the Bible. One of the passages that needs re-reading is Isaiah 6:3 which says, “Holy, holy, holy is YHWH God of hosts; All of Earth is full of God’s glory.” Our dualistic mindset tends to put Heaven in opposition to Earth (spirit vs. matter), regarding the former as superior to the latter. The tendency of many churches is to prepare souls for the after-life in heaven rather than for life right now on earth. What does God’s glory mean? In the history of the biblical Israel, God’s glory – i.e. the visible expression of God’s presence – appeared as a cloud (Ex 16:10) and then as a fire (Ex 24:17) during their exodus journey. Later in their history, God’s glory appeared again as a cloud that filled the tabernacle (Ex 40:34-38); and again at the holy of holies in the temple built by Solomon in Jerusalem (I Kings 8:1-11). But in Isaiah 6:3, the visible presence of God is seen throughout the Earth – “The whole earth is full of His glory”. According to Norman Habel, this means that “just as the tabernacle and temple were sanctuaries of God’s glory, signifying God’s presence, Earth is also a sanctuary of God’s glory, God’s visible presence.”²⁰ More than a ball of water, dirt and air spinning through space, Earth is a sacred site where we can see God’s presence all around us, in everything that God created. As God’s sanctuary, Earth has been entrusted to human beings, who, like priests, have “the responsibility to keep it sacred and prevent it from being desecrated.”²¹

20 Norman C. Habel, *Seven Songs of Creation: Liturgies for Celebrating and Healing Earth* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2004), 28.

21 Habel, *Seven Songs...*, 28.

Ethics of Reciprocity: Indigenous Perspective on the Household of God

Dr. Atola Longkumer¹

“much of the indigenous peoples’ worldview and ethos is compatible with the Christian faith, [hence the] traditional beliefs, rites, myths and symbols of indigenous peoples provide material for developing indigenous theologies and liturgical ceremonies.”²

“Native Christian narrative discourse is only the latest expression of an enduring struggle over worthwhile and honourable goals: respect, equality, independence, peace. [Native Christian narrative] is a hallmark of patient persistence and a herald of spiritual healing...”³

Introduction

Different groups and sources as they represent, the two quotations cited above nevertheless share in common their commitment to the theological recognition and articulation of theology from the context/s and history of Indigenous peoples. It can be claimed, with

1 Dr. Atola Longkumer is a freelance writer in Theology and visiting professor at SAIACS, Bangalore.

2 Federation of Asian Bishops' Conference (FABC) *The Spirit at Work in Asia Today* (Hong Kong, 1998).

3 James Treat, *Native and Christian: Indigenous Voices on Religious Identity in the United States and Canada* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 22.

considerable evidence from history that the Indigenous peoples are a group of people most excluded, ignored, suppressed and exploited.⁴ Indigenous peoples and cultures have resisted and survived, despite challenges of encounters with modernization/globalisation forces and centuries of oppression. In the process of these historical and cultural encounters with modern, globalised economy Indigenous communities around the world provide an oasis of an alternative way of life.⁵ The main argument of the present paper is the resources available in the traditions, practices and ways of life of the Indigenous peoples. This is undergirded by the general notion that Indigenous cultures present a way of life relatively more egalitarian, common good more equally shared and a responsible neighbourliness that is undergirded by a habit of reciprocity.⁶

If the two quotations affirm the experience and wisdom of the Indigenous peoples in articulating a way of life that embraces an inclusive and just vision, the theme chosen by the CCA leadership: Living in the Household of God, exemplifies the commitment and vision of the Christian community in Asia for a world that is just and embracing of all God's creation. It is important that the Church continue to make itself relevant to the peoples and contexts in Asia, and meaningful witness for the Church becomes possible with dialogue and constructive engagement. Peter Phan, provides wise insight as he writes, "Asian Christianity need triple dialogue" – first, a dialogue with Asian people, especially the marginalised and the impoverished, secondly, a dialogue with Asian cultures that includes contextualisation and enculturation, and thirdly a dialogue with Asian religions that includes robust interfaith dialogue.⁷ The "triple dialogue" of

4 See for instance, Kirsteen Kim and Andrew Anderson, eds., *Edinburgh 2010: Mission Today and Tomorrow* (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2011), 142-149; See also, C.R. Joy, "The Tribals and Adivasis of India-A History of Discrimination, Conflict and Resistance" in Hrangthan Chhungi, ed., *Hearing the Voices of Tribals and Adivasis* (Nagpur/Delhi: NCCI/ISPCK, 2014), 3-16.

5 A word of clarification is necessary here, that advocacy and articulation from Indigenous peoples' ways of life is not to be understood as an absolute discourse. It is understood that Indigenous communities today are challenged from a multi-layer of forces consequent of encounter with dominant and exploiting ways of life. There are obviously, strata of hierarchy distinct to Indigenous communities that needs to be analyzed from the perspectives such as feminist, gender etc. Since the present emphasis is on the resources that may be drawn in building the Household of God, it takes a posture of affirmative reading of Indigenous cultures and their ways of life.

6 See, John A. Grim, ed., *Indigenous Traditions and Ecology: The Interbeing of Cosmology and Community* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001).

7 Peter C. Phan, ed., *Christianities in Asia* (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2011), 257.

Asian Christianity needs to take place beyond the persistently dominant categories and identities and include the diverse identities often ignored and invisible.

Today's Asia is a context of extreme contradictions; oppositional forces and circumstances exist together: abject poverty and humungous wealth, tolerant-pluralistic traditions and contesting powers, ancient civilizations and ultra-modern societies are socio-economic binaries manifest in Asian nations. It may be noted that the usage of Asia as a regional bloc is more a rubric term that encompasses the diversity and plurality of peoples and cultures of the region, and need not be understood as a monolithic society sharing a homogeneous culture.⁸

Household of God in Asia: Resources

Asia with its heritage/s of rich and varied civilizations and cultures has inherent resources to draw upon towards the project of ensuring the Household of God among its peoples. Among these resources are the Indigenous cultures of Asia. For long the Indigenous cultures in Asia have been ignored, ridiculed, obliterated and negated by dominant forces of conquest, imperialism, religious conversion and predatory capitalism. Indigenous cultures are often subsumed within the so-called world religions or dominant culture both in academic work as well as governmental policies. In the recent years, however, there are relatively more awareness and recognition of the Indigenous cultures and their alternative ways of life. Let me hasten to clarify, that this is not to ignore the persistent oppression, threats, and exploitative mechanism faced by many Indigenous groups in different countries of Asia. The threats to the survival of the Indigenous peoples in the global scale as well as in the Asian region are daily existential struggles for many Indigenous groups. The relevant point to note is the fact there are vibrant forums and movements advocating and re-claiming the traditions and practices of the Indigenous

8 The fact that Asia is a continent of diverse religions, cultures and economic conditions is discussed in earlier writings by the present writer, for example, see, Atola Longkumer, "Together towards Life": The New Mission Statement 2012 of CWME/WCC and its relevance to Asian Ecumenism and Mission" in Antone, Hope S., Wati Longchar, Hyungju Bae, Huang Po Ho, Dietrich Werner, eds., *Asian Handbook for Theological Education and Ecumenism* (Tainan: PTCA, 2013, for Regnum Studies in Global Christianity).

peoples in Asia. The declaration of the Federation of Asian Bishop's Conference affirms the worldview and ethos of the Indigenous peoples as "compatible with the Christian faith." It is a significant affirmation and a prophetic assertion that the executive leadership of the Christian Council of Asia (CCA) recognise the Indigenous peoples as a category of identity possessing ways of life distinct from the dominant cultures/religions of the continent. Contestations of powerful identities often relegate the Indigenous peoples/cultures into the ignored margins, consequently, their ways of life as viable resources for a Christian spirituality towards remain ignored at best or obliterated by aggressive discourse at worst.

According to the International Work Group of Indigenous Affairs, there are about 260 million indigenous peoples in Asia, making it the most culturally diverse region in the world.⁹ Excellent resources exist on the discussion and defining criteria of the term Indigenous; I shall not repeat them here.¹⁰ Suffice it here a broad description of the Indigenous peoples and cultures by identifying some features shared in common: experience of invasion and subjugation by dominant group, proximity and tuned to nature, centrality of land, oral based knowledge vis-a-vis written knowledge, a spirituality that is not institutionalised neither possessing canonised sacred texts, a social structure based on clan and kinship hence a community-centric society.¹¹

9 www.iwgia.org/regions/asia 3 July 2014.

10 For a comprehensive discussion on the term indigenous see, Christian Erni, ed., *The Concept of Indigenous Peoples in Asia: A Resource Book* (Copenhagen, Denmark: International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, 2008).

11 There are excellent resources on critical engagement with the value of cultures in relation to the liberative dimension of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. See, Steve B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1992, 2004); Kathryn Tanner, *Theories of Culture: A New Agenda for Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1997). It is important to note that while appreciation and appropriation of Indigenous cultures is vital to the recognition of the people, it needs to be tempered with a pragmatic view that Indigenous communities are not without its own flaws, therefore it is vital to be guarded against romanticization, reification, and glorification of any cultures, without abrogating the history of victimisation and subjugation. There is need for internal critique of any culture or society, I have argued this perspective elsewhere, see, Atola Longkumer, "Not all is well in my ancestor's house: An Indigenous Theology of Internal Critique" in *The Ecumenical Review* vol 62, No. 4 December 2010, pp. 399-410. The need of critical appropriation of Indigenous cultures that takes into account internalized identity-normative is also persuasively argued by scholars from a feminist perspective.

Household of God in Asia: Who is not in the Household?

The social structures of Asia are often described with the general characteristic of filial bond and obligations shared in common across the many languages, religions and cultures in Asia. The sacred texts of the many world religions traced to Asia inform the centrality of social units and community, be it caste, lineage, clans or class. Social units and their underpinning values of enforcing obligations, cohesion, exclusive rights and identity need to be critically evaluated. While on one hand these social units help form household and community that ensure the security and flourish of the individual within a specific social unit, on the other hand, these social units and communities' stipulations have produced resistance to the Other, outside the exclusive social group identity. Hence, for instance, the oppressive caste hierarchy and its evils of exclusion and discrimination. Another rigid division is between dominant religions and the Indigenous communities posing persistent threat to an inclusive society in Asia. Gender and economic class are also categories that continue to create oppressive and exclusive boundaries, keeping the vulnerable from equal access to resources and unhampered participation in the society.¹²

Therefore, it is crucial that the re-imagination of Household in Asia includes critical awareness of the potent underlying tendency of exclusivity and rigid socio-cultural boundaries that have produced brutal inequalities. The imagery of Household in Asia needs to be guarded against the perils of continuing parochialisms and rigid social structures. Caste discrimination, gender exclusion, class barriers, economic inequalities, religious fundamentalism, cultural parochialisms, continue to contribute a fragmented and hierarchical Asian household. Without cautious critique of these mentioned Asian oppressive cultural manifestations, the concept of Household in Asia can be exclusive and discriminating of the Other.

Together Towards Life (TTL) the new mission document produced by the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism

12 Among many resources that articulate feminist theological analyses drawing from the discrimination and exclusion of women in the region, the work of the following Asian women scholars are significant: Kwok Pui Lan, Monica Melanchthon, Namsoon Kang, Angela Wai-Ching Wong

(CWME) of the World Council of Churches (WCC) has also highlighted the contextual realities, wherein the persistent systemic exclusion and inequalities produced oppressed Margins and counter the vision of an abundant life and flourish of all creation as God intent. The TTL defines the margins as those who are excluded from the centre, where power, influence and possibilities reside. Margins are those far removed from the position that has access to system of affirmation and dignity. The Margins are the victims of societal structures and even ecclesial traditions. Margins are those people whose dignity and human rights are negated when the dominant defines the rights and limits of privilege. Margins are those excluded from the table of decision making because of their gender or caste. Margins are those that are ridiculed because of their sexuality. Margins are those that are excluded because of clan and traditional practices that are oppressive. Life for the Margins are characterised by struggle, hunger, suppressed voice, neglected gifts, exploited bodies, humiliation, human rights denied and without freedom to own agency of self.¹³

The Margins are not included in the Household of God in Asia, neither do they participate as equal members of the Household. The Indigenous peoples whose very identity and survival are at risk; women in Asia across the diverse socio-economic spectrum continue to struggle to be equal members; migrant workers are exploited and discriminated; sexual minorities are victims of conventional prejudice and bias; caste, class, language group discrimination; the religious Other are negated; the poor are rendered vulnerable by the predatory market economy. Geo-political contests between nations create insecurity and instability of communities, which leaves the largest impact on the most vulnerable in the society.

There are many excluded and kept away from the Household of God in Asia. Socio-economic, geo-political, religious and cultural forces persistently demarcate boundaries and barriers, engendering a Household that is limited to the powerful elite and the self-designated cultural guardians. It is within this backdrop of Asian society that the Household of God needs to be pursued and created, drawing

¹³ Jooseup Keum, ed., *Together Towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes* (Geneva: World Council of Churches Publications, 2013), 36-42.

resources and wisdom from different traditions and cultures of the continent, including the myriad of Indigenous cultures.

The Indigenous communities and ethics of Reciprocity

During the CCA Workshop on the CCA Assembly held at Jakarta, Diana Tana, described the concept and practice of Keti among the Maori people. Keti is a common basket, shared between persons, wherein both are committed to provide food into the basket which is shared in common. The practice of Keti sums up neatly the marked characteristic shared commonly by Indigenous cultures: the collective solidarity. Collective solidarity may be defined as a social commitment that every member of a community shares for the good of the collective. The social commitment ensures an ethics of reciprocity is practiced and promoted among the members of the community. Indigenous communities' notion of collective solidarity stipulates that every member lives in cognizant of the collective principles of social responsibility and accountability. In other words, individual's behaviour, attitude and pursuit are tempered with the collective good and welfare. Collective solidarity entails the right and freedom of the individual is exercised in tandem with the vision of good of the community. Therefore, collective solidarity is a counter-culture to individualism and pursuit of self-interest. The collective solidarity among the Indigenous peoples is sustained by an ethic of reciprocity, which checks and balances the inherent exploitation and selfish pursuits of few powerful individuals.

A word of clarification is necessary at this point, that while principles and values of collective solidarity and reciprocity are highlighted from the Indigenous peoples in Asia, it needs to be emphasised that as in any cultures, there are inherent flaws and parochial hierarchical structures within the Indigenous cultures; gender injustice, rigid clan boundaries among others are few cultural practices that need to be critiqued. While appreciations of certain values are necessary it needs to be guarded against romanticisation and glorification of cultures. Another point to be noted is the reality of the rapid changes and transition to modernization and market oriented lifestyle taking place among all Indigenous cultures. These encounters

of the Indigenous peoples with the modernity, either via education, conversion, market economy or globalisation remain a goldmine of academic discourse and governmental policies. And it is within such backdrop of challenges and changes wrought among the Indigenous peoples, that discourse of re-claiming the Indigenous ways of life are urgently needed.

What has Indigenous people's way of life to offer to the vision of Household of God in Asia? I shall identify three areas that are undergirded by the ethics of reciprocity, by way of which an inclusive and embracing Household of God may begin to take shape and become a reality in a fragmented, contesting and contrasting society. The three areas are: practice of neighbourliness, continuum with nature, and action of mutuality.

The neighbour is a kin

"Not without my neighbour" is the title of an important book by S. Wesley Ariarajah on inter-faith concerns and challenges for Asian Christians.¹⁴ The book is almost a memoir of someone living in a multi-religious context and has an underlying sensitivity to neighbours and their religious persuasions. Many of Indigenous communities in Asia have a reverence and responsible relationship with neighbours. In Indigenous communities like the Ao Naga of Northeast India, every child is socialised to consider one's neighbour as one's own kith and kin. Special meals, festivities as well as moments of misfortune and grief are first shared with the neighbours, before the extended family and clan are informed. Between neighbours, it is common to have the lines of private space blurred and common concern and sharing of resources assured as normal social expectations. This concept and practice of neighbourliness is more than a common sense of etiquette, it entails a deeper relationship and accountability between neighbours. One's immediate neighbour even takes precedence over one's social group such as clan in many daily lived ways. Neighbour as kin is also undergirded by a shared ethics of reciprocity. To be a neighbour is to uphold another's welfare, and

14 S. Wesley Ariarajah, *Not without my neighbor: Issues in Interfaith Relations* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1999).

be accountable to the protection and flourish of the other person. To have a neighbour as kin is to accept them as equal members sharing reciprocal hospitality.

The market economy spread and supported by the powerful force of globalisation, cultural imperialism, consumerism, culture of competition elevated by market driven values, political domination, religious contestations are crippling forces behind the many victims, margins and excluded in Asia societies. The misery of economic migrants, the exploitation of workers, the evil of human-trafficking, the enslavement of women and children in sex industry and victimisation of the religious Other are evidence of a selfish society, wherein self-interest and self-promotion of the powerful elite apparently have overtaken the vision of an inclusive and just society. The inversion of the wisdom "not without my neighbours" is creating exclusive boundaries, and the Household of God remains fragmented.

Continuum with nature

Another defining feature of Indigenous cultures in Asia is their shared lifeway that is lived in awareness to the nature around them. Melba P. Maggay, discusses this sensitivity towards the natural world among Indigenous peoples with examples from the Philippines of a woman attending to the bleating of an injured goat in the mountains in the dark of the night, and divining with the natural elements in the surrounding.¹⁵ The writings of ethnographers and Christian missionaries have emphasized sufficiently the proximity of Indigenous peoples to the forest and mountains. It is not only a geographical location highlighting often the backwardness of the people vis-à-vis urban industrialized lifestyle; proximity to nature also has a sacred and existential value for the Indigenous peoples. Being tuned to hear the cries of animals, chirps of birds, the dance of the fire flames, and the intricate designs of leaves are not only romanticization of a pristine way of life but an ingrained reality in Indigenous peoples' worldview. The continuum shared with the natural world is a marked

15 Melba P. Maggay, "Towards a Sensitive Engagement with Filipino Consciousness" in *International Review of Mission* (IRM), Vol. LXXXVII No. 346, July 1, 1998, 361-373. See also, Ferdinand Anno, "Indigenous Theology: Sources and Resources Perspectives from the Philippines", in *The Ecumenical Review* Vol. 62. No. 4, December 2010, 371-378.

identity of Indigenous peoples' existential being. This shared solidarity with the nature is observed even in Indigenous communities who have been influenced by modern lifestyle, in that, many Indigenous Christians continue to "listen" and "hear" directions by behaviours of animals, dreams and the role of shamans, etc.¹⁶ This profound inter-relationship with the land and its resources, land with its creatures is the empowering reason that Indigenous peoples zealously guard against haphazard developments that strike at the very root of their existence.¹⁷

The continuum with nature have directed Indigenous peoples through millennia with an ethics of sufficiency as oppose to a culture of greedy accumulation seen today in modern economy. For many Indigenous peoples accumulation was unknown, they lived sufficient from one annual harvest to the next. Cultivation was undertaken with just enough land for the household. Admittedly, the introduction of mechanical cultivation and cash crop altered this ethic of sufficiency among many Asian Indigenous peoples. The point to note, however, is the attitude Indigenous peoples held, where individual greed and accumulation was not a general practice.

The ethics of reciprocity is the governing principle in the continuum with nature a shared outlook of Indigenous peoples in Asia. Most Indigenous scholars have noted the keen awareness and profound relationship with the nature that is undergirded by recognition that the natural world sustains our very being. In other words, the natural world gives humans their basic needs, directs the living in their daily affairs and receives them at the end of time. The land that produces the harvest, the forest that provides resources for living, the rivers that sustain life are held sacred. Because the land provides and sustains, humans reciprocate by accountable stewardship that guards

16 Among many, for instant, see, Olivier Lardinois and Benoit Vermander, eds., *Shamanism and Christianity: Religious Encounters among Indigenous Peoples of Asia* (Taipei: Taipei Ricci Institute, 2008). The fact that Indigenous or Primal (as some scholars prefer) religiosity has continued to provide a substratum to vibrant Christianity is discussed by the mission-historian and culture ecumenist, Andrew F. Walls with helpful typologies of response. See, "Primal Religious Traditions in Today's World" in Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 119-139.

17 See, Wati Longchar, *Returning to Mother Earth: Theology, Christian Witness and Theological Education: An Indigenous Perspective* (Tainen/Kolkata: PTCA/SCEPTRE, 2012).

itself against greed and accumulation beyond the need of the immediate.

The Indigenous peoples shared ethics of reciprocity with the nature provides an alternative attitude and behaviour to the culture of greed, accumulation, ecological destruction, wastefulness and consumerism which threatens the planet earth and its survival.¹⁸

Common Good is Mutuality

Another shared feature among Indigenous peoples is the collective solidarity as noted earlier. The collective solidarity entails mutuality among the members. Collective solidarity bonds the Indigenous communities into social group that is inter-dependent with mutual accountability. There are social obligations and responsibilities expected from every member of the community by the principle of collective solidarity. The good of the collective is the driving force for decision and action of every member. Hence, individualism and its manifestation in selfish endeavours are addressed in rather parochial manner. Individual dissent and pursuit are controlled by the collective voice.¹⁹ Actions and endeavours of the individual are only for welfare of the community. Among Indigenous cultures, common good and common welfare take precedence over individual flourish. By the same token, the flourish of the individual is the responsibility of the collective. For instance, among Indigenous communities, it is common for every member including women (who by traditional customs cannot inherit ancestral land) is given land to cultivate crops, build house. No individual is left homeless, landless, and isolated (except during rituals of retribution for transgression of clan/custom/rituals stipulations). Another instance of collective responsibility is the practice

18 This theme of learning, reclaiming Indigenous or traditional societies is discussed in a critically acclaimed book by the environmental biologist Jared Diamond. Drawing mostly from New Guineans and Latin American Indigenous communities, Diamond argues that modern society can learn from these communities how to look after the elder, resolve conflicts, mutual care. See, Jared Diamond, *The World Until Yesterday: What can we learn from Traditional Societies?* (London: Penguin Books, 2013).

19 Indeed, there is a critical discourse here, the prominence of collective over the individual freedom. The debate continues in extremely nuanced level, and the issue remains a lightning rod between the so-called traditional and modern-post-modern societies, often assuming categories such as progressive and conservatism in many aspects of individual freedom versus collective identity.

providing shelter, before modern methods of building house were introduced, it was the practice in many Indigenous communities, to build house for individuals by the all members of the community.

In fact, even today, some residue of this collective responsibility for providing shelter is found in among Indigenous peoples, where money, resources and community day of work are shared. Where Indigenous peoples are engaged in agriculture, the footpath and the water springs are protected and maintained by participation of every member of the community. Common good is pursued together as a community which is fed by the ethics of reciprocity shared. In the Indigenous ways of life, despite some of the cultural flaws, which are not to be ignored, exploitation of the mass by a few for their privilege was not common. The selfishness and greed of few were curbed by the collective. Hence pursuit of common good was a mutual effort.

In his book *Journey to the Common Good*, Walter Brueggemann writes, “The great crisis among us today is “the crisis of the common good,” the sense of community solidarity that binds all in a common destiny – haves and have-nots – the rich and the poor. We face a crisis about the common good because there are powerful forces at work among us to resist the common good, to violate community solidarity, and to deny a common destiny.”²⁰ Household of God presents an imagery of a reality where barriers are removed and every member partakes in the common good, however, the contemporary conditions are far from this vision of God’s Household. Many are excluded, exploited and denied equal access to the resources. Distortion of common good takes different forms: gender-based inequalities, caste-based violence, ethnocentrism, religious fundamentalism. These distortions and myopic divisions contribute to a fragmented Household of God, wherein selfish concerns thwart collective solidarity and flourish. Tracing the journey of common good from the narratives of Pharaoh of Egypt to Joseph, Brueggemann argues that the peril to common good is fed by fear of scarcity as oppose to a faith

20 Walter Brueggemann, *Journey to the Common Good* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 1. For a detailed analysis of the present economic system and its inherent value of the individual versus the good of the community, see, Herman E. Daly and John B. Cobb Jr., eds., *For the Common Good: Redirecting the Economy toward Community, the Environment, and a Sustainable Future* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), 165 ff.

that trust on God’s abundance and generosity. In the midst of fear of scarcity the provision of man’hu (meaning in Hebrew “What is it?” from which the term ‘manna’ is derived) in the wilderness (Exodus 16:12-18) attest to the abundance and generosity of God.²¹

God’s offer of abundance finds its ultimate expression in the life and work of Jesus, who lived a life that exemplifies a generosity that knew no boundaries and no scope for exclusive laws in the socio-economic and political world of his time. The mark of discipleship promoted by Jesus is re-iterated by James Dunn, as one characterised by open table-fellowship and absence of boundaries. Contrary to existing socio-religious and political practices of the Pharisees and the Essenes, Jesus “sought to break down these boundaries [purity laws] and to create a fellowship which was essentially open rather than closed.”²²

The people of God committed to the nurture of God’s Household are called to a radical lifestyle that counters a fear of scarcity. A fear of scarcity produces greed, accumulation, hoarding, exclusive ethnocentrism, religious fundamentalism, exploitative system and closed boundaries. A fear of scarcity need be countered with a faith that acknowledges and depends on the generosity of God. This trust in God will enable us to be “people who are committed to the common good that reaches beyond private interest, transcends sectarian commitments and offers human solidarity.”²³

Nurturing God’s Household can draw from the Indigenous peoples ethics of reciprocity practiced in mutuality which may engender a lifestyle characterised by common solidarity, wherein every member is respected, provided equal access to resources and included as a cherished member. Because the ethics of reciprocity binds the members to collective concerns, selfish interest, selfish privilege of few do not flourish, rather, the common good of the collective is pursued by every member. Hence, returning to Indigenous peoples ways of life, which erstwhile was considered demonic, uncivilized,

21 Brueggemann, 14.

22 James D.G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered: Christianity in the Making Vol 1* (Grand Rapids: William B Eerdmans, 2003), 605.

23 Brueggemann, 1.

backward may provide viable resources to re-interpret the good news of Jesus of Nazareth.

Conclusion

In the above discussion, I have presented a lifestyle that may be found to be shared in common by the many Indigenous peoples across Asia. The Chin, Naga, Ilongot, Ainu, Amis, Karen, Sherpa, Toraja, Maori, Oraon, etc are some of the Indigenous peoples in Asia, and may be scattered across the many nation states in Asia, divided by geographical location, linguistic differences, religious rituals, economic and political conditions, however, a shared feature would invariably be the community-centric society they live. This community-centric would be found sustained by an ethics of reciprocity, which entails the behaviour and attitude of each member to be guided by the good of the community. It is, indeed an ethics that guards against self-interest and exclusive individualism of privileged few at the expense of the majority. To be sure, this ethics of reciprocity is challenged by the market economy, modern lifestyle of consumerism and individualism forcing tremendous changes.²⁴

To understand this reading and appropriation of Indigenous peoples' way of life as naïve romanticisation would be a disservice to the Indigenous peoples, who continue to encounter existential struggle both from within and without its community. Indigenous peoples persist to adapt yet many resist market oriented forces that render them vulnerable. Our commitment to Indigenous people's resistance is best translated when we recognise their lifeways as viable alternative and participate in re-claiming it in creative ways such as liturgy and lifestyle. In doing this, together with the Indigenous peoples, the church in Asia makes the Household of God a reality for all creation.

²⁴ As in any system in the function of society, the ethics of reciprocity among the Indigenous cultures is vulnerable to abuse and misuse by individuals and groups for variety of reasons from domination, manipulation and self-interest.

Abstract

Drawn from their socio-cultural repositories, the Indigenous peoples imagine the Household of God is marked by an ethic of reciprocity that entails every member of the community is taken care and provided equal access to resources. A sense of shared solidarity undergirds the ethic of reciprocity, which binds the members to practice hospitality, to be inclusive, and ensure empathy towards the vulnerable. The ethic of reciprocity entails exploitation and greed as reprehensive and destructive to the community ways of life. The paper identifies three areas of Indigenous peoples' community, wherein the ethic of reciprocity is manifest.



Revisiting Inter-faith Relations in the Context of God's Oikos

Dr. Huang Po Ho¹

Introduction

The issue of inter-faith relations has existed since human consciousness of religious differences was shaped and the tensions arising from these differences were generated and experienced. Traditional studies of inter-religious encounters and inter-religious dialogues are attempts to respond to and solve the tensions and conflicts which have taken place between religions. Based upon these inter-religious encounters, the comparative studies of religion have been developed as one of the academic disciplines, taught in university curricula.

It is a matter of fact, however, that the concepts of different religions and the ways to relate to them from the Christian point of view are not without challenges and struggles.

Derived from the self-understanding of Christianity as a religion of revelation (God's divine self-disclosure), traditional Christian thinkers have tended to distinguish Christian faith from other religions. A typical definition given to faith and religion has stressed

¹ Dr. Huang Po Ho is Professor of Theology and Vice President of Chang Jung Christian University in Taiwan, Dean of Programme for Theology and Culture in Asia (PTCA), Co-Moderator of Congress of Asian Theologians (CATS).

that Faith is a gift revealed by the divine and that religion is but product of sinful human experiences. It follows therefore that “faith” must be exclusively devoted to Christianity or the so-called monotheistic Abrahamic faiths, including Judaism and Islam, while all other religious traditions are considered to be in the category of “religions”, i.e. human invention. It follows, therefore, that in some cases interreligious relations have been distinguished from interfaith relations. According to the webpage of the Office of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the Archdiocese of Chicago, the definition of Ecumenism, interfaith and interreligious relations are defined as follows² :

- Ecumenical – relations and prayers with other Christians
- Interfaith – relations with members of the – Abrahamic faiths (Jewish and Muslim traditions).
- Interreligious – relations with other religions, such as Hinduism and Buddhism.

Hendrik Kraemer, a well-known Dutch missionary who was once working in Indonesia, considered Christianity as a religion to be as human as any other.

However, he could not avoid giving, at least by implication, a unique place to Christianity in so far as it had become the vehicle through which the unique revelation of God is lived and proclaimed.³ Following Karl Barth, Kraemer insisted that the biblical faith, based on God’s encounter with humankind, is radically different from all other forms of religious faith.⁴

Despite the influence of Hendrik Kraemer and his subsequent Barthian missionary position, there were many dissenting voices among Christian communities around the world, particularly those from Asia. They challenged Kraemer on his position of “discontinuity” between the Christian gospel and other religious traditions. Instead they advocated for a “two-way traffic” between the creator God confessed by the Christian faith and the human soul in the life of

² See webpage of Archdiocese of Chicago: <http://www.archchicago.org/departments/ecumenical/Relations.htm>

³ Wesley Ariarajah, Dictionary of Ecumenical Movement Article on Interfaith Dialogue: <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/interreligious-dialogue-and-cooperation/interreligious-trust-and-respect/ecumenical-dictionary-interfaith-dialogue>

⁴ Ibid.

faith, on the one hand, and the experience of other religions, on the other⁵. To these Asian theologians it was inconceivable that God, as creator of heaven and earth, has no relationship with the nations of the earth.

Interfaith relations have been understood and envisaged as encounters between people who live by different faith traditions, undertaken in an attitude of mutual trust and acceptance. An encounter with people of a different faith tradition does not require either side to give up or hide one’s religious conviction. On the contrary, an interfaith encounter is a platform to encourage people of different faith traditions to each become rooted in their own tradition, engaging with each other in a meaningful interaction and dialogue in order to search for their common humanity and to build a harmonious community. Through interfaith encounter, civil society is not only given an opportunity for mutual understanding of different faith traditions, but is also challenged to rediscover the natures and missions of faith traditions and their roles and social responsibilities in a human community.

Religions and God’s Creation

Religion can have various definitions. Anthropologists inform us that “A religion is an organized collection of beliefs, cultural systems, and world views that relate humanity to an order of existence.”⁶ Through religious narratives, symbols, and sacred histories, religious adherents intend to explain the meaning of life and/or to perceive the origin of life and the universe. Based on these world views and convictions about the meaning of life, people is develop their morality and ethics and shape their preferable lifestyle. In other words, religions are spiritual methods (ways, Dharma) to guide the human journey through the troubled waters of earthly life. A common mission of religions is to provide a way for people to overcome suffering, to comprehend the mystery of life and death and to envisage a harmonious life within the divine order of creation.

To put this another way, religion is a human attempt to ad-

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Talal Asad, *The Construction of Religion as an Anthropological Category*, 1982 see also the webpage on: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion>

vocate for a particular understanding of the cosmos (creation), and thereby develop teachings of wisdom to guide believers through their earthly life. Viewed from this perspective, religion is thus a way, and the most intimate way, for human beings to connect with the cosmos. There are of course other ways to comprehend the cosmos and God's creation, such as sciences, philosophies etc. However, religion with its teachings, liturgies and moral demands has imperceptibly shaped its adherents' value systems, mentality and life styles, providing ways for human beings to manage their life in response to the order of creation comprehended within the household of God.

The household of God - in biblical translation "Oiko Theo" - has traditionally been understood and referred to as the Church⁷. However it was given a wider meaning by the Biblical authors when it was put in different contexts. For instance, in the Gospel according to Luke (2.1, 4.5), the Acts of Apostles (17.6) and in Revelation (16.14) the terminology of "oikoumene" clearly referred to the "inhabited earth" or the "whole world". While in the book of Hebrews (2.5) the term was even used to refer to the expected reign of God. The relationship between religions and the household of God is thus not only about relations between religions and the church or Christian community but, from a creation viewpoint, also concerns different approaches to understanding and managing the one household created by God.

Interfaith Relation and God's Oikos

The attempt to comprehend the relationship between Christian faith and other faith traditions has been a critical task for the church and individual Christians from the beginning of the church's history. Christian faith was derived from the Jewish cultural background, in the time when Palestine was under colonization by the Roman Empire. Therefore, it was inevitable that Christianity had to confront the Greco-Roman world in its initial period. In The Acts of the Apostles we are informed that in the history of the early church, when the gentiles gradually became part of the Christian community, confrontations and conflicts between Christian Jews and Gen-

7 | Timothy 3.15; Hebrew 3.6, 10.21; | Peter 4.17

tiles erupted constantly and became one of the major divisive issues threatening the common life of the Christian community⁸.

The Book of Romans, admired as "one of the most profound books in existence; and the most valued parts of the Holy Scriptures,"⁹ a book which coined cathedral Christian faith for the following centuries, is a letter in which Paul seeks to theologially clarify the relationship between the Jewish religious tradition and the Christian faith, which by then were beginning to be seen as two distinct religious groupings.¹⁰ The cardinal Christian doctrine of "Justification by Faith", developed in the book of Romans, was generated from a discourse in which Paul argues for Christianity to accommodate both Gentile and Jewish religious traditions. By positioning the religious traditions and ritual orders into relative status, Paul was able to claim both Gentiles and Jews equally share the same identity as Christians and members of the household of God:

Nevertheless, each person should live as a believer in whatever situation the Lord has assigned to them, just as God has called them. This is the rule I lay down in all the churches. Was a man already circumcised when he was called? He should not become uncircumcised. Was a man uncircumcised when he was called? He should not be circumcised. Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. Keeping God's commands is what counts. Each person should remain in the situation they were in when God called them.¹¹

In the context of the complicated relations between the newly formed Christian community and its preceding Jewish religious tradition, extended if not shifted, Paul derived the concept of the household of God from the racially bound Jewish clans and developed it into that of ecclesia community. By focusing the historical and spiritual hopes accumulated from the Jewish religious tradition on the person of Jesus Christ, his intention was to broaden the

8 See Acts. Chapter 15 and Gal. chapter 2.

9 Allan Ross, Introduction to the Book of Romans, see <https://bible.org/seriespage/introduction-book-romans>

10 S. Wesley Ariarajah, Dialogue, Interfaith, Dictionary of The Ecumenical Movement, Edited by Nicholas Lossky, Jose Miguez Bonino, John S. Pobee, Tom F. Stransky, Geoffrey Wainwright, Pauline Webb, WCC publications (USA: Eerdmans Publishing Co. 1991) p. 281.

11 | Corinthians 7.17-18

frame of the household of God in order to bring together both Jews and Gentiles in the church based upon faith in Jesus Christ. For Paul this was essential because he understood the Church as the Body of Christ¹². To the Gentiles he advised:

Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called “uncircumcised” by those who call themselves “the circumcision” (which is done in the body by human hands) – remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people and also members of his household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit. (Ephesians 2.11-22)

While to the Jews he asserted:

Now you, if you call yourself a Jew; if you rely on the law and boast in God; if you know his will and approve of what is superior because you are instructed by the law; if you are convinced that you are a guide for the blind, a light for those who are in the dark, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of lit-

¹² Ephesians 1.23

tle children, because you have in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth— you, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself? You who preach against stealing, do you steal? You who say that people should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who boast in the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? As it is written: “God’s name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.” Circumcision has value if you observe the law, but if you break the law, you have become as though you had not been circumcised. So then, if those who are not circumcised keep the law’s requirements, will they not be regarded as though they were circumcised? The one who is not circumcised physically and yet obeys the law will condemn you who, even though you have the written code and circumcision, are a lawbreaker. A person is not a Jew who is one only outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a person’s praise is not from other people, but from God. (Romans 2.17-29)

Reviewing Paul’s arguments to both Gentiles and Jews in order to draw them into the Christian community, we can see that he did not treat them as opponents; instead, he laid down a new criterion to identify the genuine people of God and encouraged both sides to converge, according to this criterion, into the household of God.

Revisiting Interfaith Relations in the Household of God

The world has been reshaped to an intensive global village¹³ through the globalization process which has taken place in last three decades. A common definition of Globalization is “the process of international integration arising from the interchange of world views,

¹³ Global Village is a term closely associated with Marshall McLuhan, popularized in his books *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* (1962) and *Understanding Media* (1964). McLuhan described how the globe has been contracted into a village by electric technology and the instantaneous movement of information from every quarter to every point at the same time. In bringing all social and political functions together in a sudden implosion, electric speed heightened human awareness of responsibility to an intense degree. See: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Global_village_\(term\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Global_village_(term))

products, ideas, and other aspects of culture. Advances in transportation and telecommunications infrastructure, including the rise of the telegraph and its posterity the Internet, are major factors in globalization, generating further interdependence of economic and cultural activities.”¹⁴ Scilicet, thus the inhabited earth is experienced as an intimate household of God.

While noting that in several aspects, the emergence of the global village has contributed to human society by shortening geographical distance, creating intimate human relationship, and providing efficient and convenient communications, the globalization process has also resulted in challenges of economic exploitation to both the unprivileged and mother earth, as well the intensive experiences of pluralism – pluralism, both cultural and religious.

Ecumenical movements launched by contemporary churches have been responses to this phenomena and to challenges of these experiences of pluralism. Varied in their conception and definition of the household (oikos) of God, ecumenical movements have developed different concerns and directions. Ninan Koshy finds the following definitions of “The Word ‘Ecumenical’ – Its History and Use” in Visser’t Hooft’s book, “A History of the Ecumenical Movement, Vol. I” :

In the course of history we can distinguish seven meanings of the word “ecumenical”.

- a) pertaining to or representing the whole (inhabited) earth;
- b) pertaining to or representing the whole of the (Roman) empire;
- c) pertaining to or representing the whole of the Church;
- d) that which has universal ecclesiastical validity;
- e) pertaining to the world missionary outreach of the Church;
- f) pertaining to the relations between and unity of two or more Churches (or of Christians of various confessions);
- g) that quality or attitude which expresses the consciousness or and desire for Christian unity.¹⁵

¹⁴ See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Globalization>

¹⁵ Willem Adolf Visser’t Hooft, —The Word ‘Ecumenical’ – Its History and Use, in A history of the Ecumenical Movement, vol. 1, Ruth Rouse and Stephen Charles Neill (eds), World Council of Churches, Geneva, pp 735-738, cited from Ninan Koshy, A History of the Ecumenical Movement

Different purposes, strategies and methods have been and are being developed for the movements to attain the unity of these various concepts of the Oikos (household of God). Nevertheless, regardless of the varied scopes of concepts of ecumenical, all the ecumenical movements remain “anthropocentric”¹⁶, particularly where the area of interfaith relations is concerned.

A household does not only consist of human beings. Arthur Sullivan and Steven M. Sheffrin provide the following definition of the concept: “A household consists of one or more people who live in the same dwelling and also share at meals or living accommodation, and may consist of a single family or some other grouping of people. A single dwelling will be considered to contain multiple households if meals or living space are not shared. The household is the basic unit of analysis in many social, microeconomic and government models, and is important to the fields of economics, inheritance.”¹⁷ This definition has echoed the Greek prefix of oikos regarding the three major areas of theological concern in contemporary society, i.e. oikonomous (economy), oikologia (ecology) and oikoumene (ecumenism).

According to the literal meaning of the Greek language, the three words are closely interrelated with the healthy operation of a household. Economy, as a norm for the household (Oikonomous), should not be understood only as monetary exchange or financial accumulation. Instead, it has to do with resource distribution within the Household. Economy thus is deeply rooted in the background of ecology, which has its literal meaning as Logic of house (oikologia/ecosystem). Ecology in this sense does not simply concern the environmental threats to human survival, such as protection from land and air pollution, climate change or biodiversity. Instead, these are but components of the complete ecological system, which takes in the entire planet, including the human species, as an organic system. To talk on the issue of ecology, one thus has to shift away from the standpoint of anthropocentric mentality and humbly position the human species into the ecological system of the creation order. And thus,

in Asia, vol. 1 (Hong Kong: WSCF, YMCA, CCA, 2004) p. 26

¹⁶ See Huang Po Ho, Embracing the Household of God – A paradigm shift from the Anthropocentric Tradition to Creation Responsibility in Doing Theology (India: PTCA series no. 7, 2014).

¹⁷ Sullivan, Arthur; Steven M. Sheffrin (2003). Economics: Principles in action. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey 07458: Pearson Prentice Hall. p. 29

the ecumenism (oikoumene/ the earth, the whole world) should become a community united according to the order ordained by divine creation, which inevitably means taking account of the issues which include gender, race, class, tribal minorities, the differently abled and, of course, war and peace in all sorts of confrontations. My argument here is that a healthy and peaceful household can only be sustained when “justice” is prevailing in all aspects that sustain the house, i.e. economic justice (justice of resources distribution), ecological justice (justice of life system) and ecumenical justice (justice of relationships – relationship between different human communities and between human species and other species in the midst of the ecosystem). Is not this the promise of “the covenant of the rainbow” that God made with Noah that symbolizes the household of the new creation after the destruction of the flood?

Interfaith relations put against this background, thus have something new to say. The traditional purposes ascribed to interfaith dialogues or interfaith relations which include mutual understanding, conflict resolution and cooperation, are nevertheless, human-centered, and thus fragmented and deficient. If, as previously mentioned, religion is a way, and the most intimate way, for human beings to connect themselves with the cosmos, providing ways to manage their lives in response to the order of creation as understood within the household of God, different faith traditions are not to be viewed as opponents but complementary partners. By the concept of “complementary” here I mean “mutual enrichment through fraternal critiques”. Interfaith relations in the household of God, are therefore, neither an adversary competition and strategy of proselytism nor just a diplomatic fellowship between different religious communities, but an important and critical common effort from the human side to build together a household of justice, peace and integral creation with the creator God.



From the World House to an Oikopoetic Interreligious Imagination

Dr. Joas Adiprasetya¹

Global Vision : Milk's World House

Prior to his assassination in 1968, Martin Luther King, Jr. published *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?* that includes a chapter titled “The World House.” He begins the chapter by maintaining vibrantly,

Some years ago a famous novelist died. Among his papers was found a list of suggested plots for future stories, the most prominently underscored being this one: “A widely separated family inherits a house in which they have to live together.” This is the great new problem of mankind. We have inherited a large house, a great “world house” in which we have to live together—black and white, Easterner and Westerner, Gentile and Jew, Catholic and Protestant, Moslem and Hindu—a family unduly separated in ideas, culture and interest, who, because we can never again live apart, must learn somehow to live with each other in peace. (King 1968, 167)

Such a beautiful statement demonstrates King’s mature idea as the result of a shift from his earlier passion for the freedom of his

¹ Dr. Joas Adiprasetya is the President of Jakarta Theological Seminary, where he also teaches Systematic Theology and Theology of Religions.

African-American fellows into a wider vision of global solidarity. The shift is obviously demonstrated in the next sentence, when he maintains, “However deeply American Negroes are caught in the struggle to be at last at home in our homeland of the United States, we cannot ignore the larger world house in which we are also dwellers ... All inhabitants of the globe are now neighbors” (King 1968, 167). King also argues that the shift requires “a genuine revolution of values,” in which “our loyalties must become *ecumenical* rather than sectional” (King 1968, 190; *italic mine*).

King introduces here an idea that the scope of ecumenism should be widened beyond the Christian community. In other words, the true ecumenism must also embrace people from other faiths. To be sure, King’s imagines the “world house” as a creative product of his Christian perspective after being enriched by his deep encounter and friendship with non-Christians, such as the Hindu Mahatma Gandhi, the Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh, the Jewish rabbis Abraham J. Heschel (Baldwin, Dekar, and Crawford 2013, 18; Heckman and Neiss 2008, 117).

However, I have some reservations against King’s imagination. The first one is more theoretical. King’s global vision of the “world house” seems to come closer to the pluralistic model that assumes the necessity of a single ultimate reality and a single unifying value applicable to all particular religious traditions. He argues,

This call for a world-wide fellowship that lifts neighborly concern beyond one’s tribe, race, class and nation is in reality a call for an all-embracing and unconditional love for all men. This often misunderstood and misinterpreted concept has now become an absolute necessity for the survival of man. When I speak of love, I am speaking of that force which all the great religions have seen as *the supreme unifying principle of life*. Love is the key that unlocks the door which leads to *ultimate reality*. This Hindu-Moslem-Christian-Jewish-Buddhist belief about *ultimate reality* is beautifully summed up in the First Epistle of Saint John. (King 1968, 190; *italics mine*)

By combining theocentric pluralism (“ultimate reality”) with a more ethical pluralism (“the supreme unifying principle of life”) and applying both to all religions, King is confident that the once closed

“world house” is now unlocked, using the universal key, to welcome all people. The key, however, is found in the Christian tradition that is later claimed to be universal and applicable for others as well.

One of the most recent trends in theology of religions has shown dissatisfaction with such a pluralistic model. While I will not discuss the issue at length, suffice it to say that pluralistic theologies propounded by some contemporary theologians are in fact not pluralistic enough and are in need of serious revision in order to be even more pluralistic.²

What interests me more is actually King’s scope of picturing the religious and cultural diversity. While I praise King’s vision of the pluralistic “world house,” I would argue that his global vision still needs to be exercised toward a more down-to-earth level of everyday life, in which interreligious encounter is tied with concrete pain, real struggle, and particular complexity.³ Any idea that bears the wiff of globality—such as the “world house”—must be placed under suspicion of building an empire by the subjugation of the others. Of course, such a critical stance pertains not only to King’s “world house” but also many Christian slogans, including our workshop’s central key themes: God’s household, ecumenism, etc.

This criticism also resonates with the rejection against any *theo-logy* of religions by comparative theologians. The comparativists argue that theologians of religions always talk about non-Christian religions vaguely, theoretically, and “globally,” without firstly having real encounter and relationship with their non-Christian fellows. They argue further that any theological *theoretization* of religious plurality must result from living encounter and interreligious *friendship*, not vice versa (Fredericks 1999, 173-177). For Christians, Fredericks argues, “interreligious friendship” is a skill “for living responsibly and creatively with non-Christians” (Fredericks 1999, 167). In short, friendship is the most basic value for living together with the religious others in daily life, in concrete encounter with them.

2 For a deeper criticism of pluralism and a proposal for post-pluralistic theology of religions, see (Adiprasetya 2013)

3 I believe, that is the reason of why in the following chapter, titled “Appendix: Programs and Prospects,” King applies his global vision to more practical programs for his African-American fellows: education, employment, rights, and housing (King 1968, 193-202).

Interreligious friendship is certainly offered as an ideal virtue that needs to be skillfully nurtured and exercised. However, we also have to deal with the fact that such an ideal friendship is not the only story in our concrete encounters with the religious others. In many parts of Asia and the rest of the planet, people from different religious backgrounds are also facing hurting competition or committing religious violence—often done in the name of God. For many, interreligious friendship has become too ideal a virtue, where in reality they live in interreligious enmity with one another. Based on this realism, what I offer in the following section is a loose and reflective re-reading of the story of Stephen in Acts 6-7, which happened as a very concrete and face-to-face experience.

Local Encounter: The Story of Stephen

A Pentecostal theologian Amos Yong argues that Luke and Acts together offer a continuous story of pneumatological hospitality applicable to the interreligious context (Yong 2008). Yong's perspective of interreligious hospitality makes an addition to the classical agreement that Luke and Acts, specially the latter, focuses on the mission of the early church to Gentiles. In such a larger context, I try to understand that the story of Stephen's speech and death serves two goals. First, it triggered the scattering of the believers but the apostles, who remained in Jerusalem. Soon after the death of Stephen, "... a severe persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout the countryside of Judea and Samaria ... Now those who were scattered went from place to place, proclaiming the word." (Acts 8:1, 4). Thus, the death of Stephen became the seed for missional activities of the early church outside Jerusalem. Secondly, Stephen's speech and death seem to justify the disconnection of the believers from the temple in Jerusalem. He was charged as having said "things against this holy place and the law" (6:13) and saying that Jesus "will destroy this place" as well (6:14).

In chapter 7, Stephen gave his lengthy defence, which has confused many modern interpreters as to what is the purpose of the speech in the context of the entire book (Gealy 1962, 442; Marshall 1980, 131, 137). I would not discuss the issue any further but to make

my point that Stephen's speech is the key to understanding the importance of God's cosmic household, which is unnecessarily related to the temple—God's ritualistic and political house—in Jerusalem. To do so, the author inserted the work *oikos* and its several paronyms thirteen times throughout the speech of the martyr.

Stephen began his speech by retelling the history of the Jews' ancestors, trying to make a connection with his accusers. He told the story of Abraham who was in Mesopotamia before living (κατοικῆσαι; *katoikēsai*) in Haran (7:2). He repeated the story of Abraham in a more detailed way,

Then he left the country of the Chaldeans and settled (κατώκησεν; *katōkēsen*) in Haran. After his father died, God had him move (μετώκισεν; *metōkisen*) from there to this country in which you are now living (κατοικεῖτε; *katoikeite*). (7:4)

The dialectic between settling or living and moving is introduced here. But then another paronym of *oikos* emerges as Stephen continued his story of God's promise to Abraham that his descendants "would be resident aliens (πάροικον, *pároikon*) in a country belonging to others" (7:6). The story of the faith ancestors continued with Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. It was Joseph who was marginalized and victimized by his brothers, but then he was appointed by Pharaoh to become the ruler over Egypt "and over all his household" (καὶ ὅλον τὸν οἶκον αὐτοῦ, *kai holon oikon auton*) (7:10). Stephen carried on with the story of Moses in verse 20 forward. "For three months he was brought up in his father's house (ἐν τῷ οἴκῳ τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτοῦ, *en tō oikō tou patros autou*)," before being adopted by Pharaoh's daughter (7:20-21). Therefore, similar to Abraham, Moses also experienced living in his own house and being dehouseed to live in the house of his people's enemy.

Other variations of *oikos* occurs in the fragment of Israel's disobedience when they became sojourners in the wilderness. Interestingly, Stephen employed the image of "church in the wilderness" (τῆ ἐκκλησίᾳ ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ, *tē ekklēsia en tē erēmō*) to describe the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob who escaped from Egypt (7:38). Citing Amos 5:25-27, Stephen expressed God's disappoint-

ment toward “the house of Israel” (οἶκος Ἰσραήλ, *oikos Israēl*) who have rebelled against God (7:42). Therefore, God removed (μετοικιῶ, *metoikiō*) them beyond Babylon (7:43). In verse 47, after telling the story of David, Stephen told his audience about Solomon who built a house (ᾠκοδόμησεν αὐτῷ οἶκον, *ōikodomēsen autō oikon*) for God.

We have seen the usage of *oikos* and its paronyms throughout 47 verses. The climax of Stephen’s story, however, is his argument against any *oikos* built by human hands, as expressed in verses 48-50 (citing Isa. 66:1-2).

48 Yet the Most High does not dwell (κατοικεῖ, *katoikei*) in houses made with human hands; as the prophet says,
49 ‘Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. What kind of house (οἶκον, *oikon*) will you build (οικοδομήσετε, *ōikodomēsete*) for me, says the Lord, or what is the place of my rest?
50 Did not my hand make all these things?’

Interreligious Oikopoetics

The speech of Stephen to some extent reflects the interreligious conflict between Christians and Jews, although the disconnection or separation between both has not been settled completely. Unlike the ideal of interreligious friendship suggested by the comparative theologians, Stephen’s speech reveals the reality of interreligious conflict. Stephen strongly reacted to the charges that have been made against him, but at the same time he did it theologically, through an imaginative and constructive form or argument, especially through the re-imagining of *oikos* and its paronyms.

Now, what I would like to offer is a constructive reflection on Stephen’s interreligious oikopoetics. The oikopoetic reading of the text, as suggested by Nirmal Selvamony, informs us that there are three different images of *oikos*: integrative, hierahic, and anarchic. To begin with, there is a strong impression that the author of Acts favors with homelessness as the true identity marker for those who believe in Christ, either as resident aliens or strangers in other land (v. 6; *par-*

oikov) or sojourners in the wilderness (v. 38). Stephen calls them “the church in the wilderness” (*tē ekklēsia en tē erēmō*). Each of the two images is related differently with the word *oikos* referring to national and religious identities. As resident aliens (v. 6), the descendants of Abraham received hospitality from Pharaoh, that is, when Joseph was entrusted to be the ruler over Egypt and over all Pharaoh’s household. As sojourners in the wilderness (v. 38), “the house of Israel” rebelled against God (v. 42).

If we employ the oikopoetic method,⁴ the encounter of Israel with other nations leads to the invitation for both nations to struggle for an *integrative oikos* (the first *oikos* in Selvamony’s oikopoetic model). The integration thus requires the encounter between two groups or houses who were once strangers to one another. On the contrary, we find the model of *hierarchic oikos* (the second *oikos*) in both the house of Pharaoh and the house of Israel itself. There is an obvious difference, however, between both houses. While integration of the house of Pharaoh is done through hierarchy, the house of Israel turns to be an *anarchic oikos* (the third *oikos*) through their rebellion. Thus, for Stephen, the house of Pharaoh is better than the house of Israel; but at the end, both use *oikos* in a more hierarchical sense.

Another interesting note is that the true identity of Israel as resident aliens or sojourners occurs only after God moves them for their house. In verse 4, God de-housed or removed (*metoikizō*) Abraham from Haran; in verse 43, God de-housed or removed (*metoikizō*) the house of Israel and led them to Babylon. This is to say that God did not want Israel to reside as inhabitants of a static *oikos*. Stephen expressed the divine will to de-house Israel as rooted in God’s unwillingness to dwell in houses made with human hands (v. 49; here the word *metoikizō* occurs again). In this sense, Stephen justified his argument against the Jews by undermining the building (*oikodomeō*) of a house for God by Solomon (v. 47; cf. v. 49). Verses 48-50 thus become Stephen’s basis for rejecting *katoikeō* (residing) and *oikodomeō*

⁴ The oikopoetic method that I use here loosely is proposed by Nirmal Selvamony. He attempts to read specific texts through the lens of *oikos* that he understands as a nexus in which the sacred, the humans, natural, and cultural phenomena stand in an integrated relationship. Selvamony distinguishes three types of *oikos*: integrative, hierarchic, and anarchic. See (Selvamony n.d.)

(building), because the whole world is God's oikos for everyone, every nation, and every religion.

In conclusion, first, interreligious oiko-logy must begin with the global vision of God's inclusive *oikos*, which is non-hierarchical, yet still integrative. Any theology of religion that assumes the construction of *oikos*, dominated by a single religious entity, including the Christian one, must be rejected, because it always tends to become an empire for all with one single religion dominating the hierarchic *oikos*. Of course, the hierarchic *oikos* could be either generous (as in the Pharaoh's *oikos*) or anarchic (as in the *oikos* of Israel). But, either one is far from our vision of the non-hierarchical and integrative global *oikos* or "world house," which is rooted in the multiplicity of inhabitants. Secondly, the Christian oiko-logical theology of religions must function as a reminder for all Christians that they are sojourners in the wilderness and resident aliens in the strange land. We are always de-housed from our comfortable Christian house, so much so that we are always invited to live in the wider "world house" with all other strangers. In such a way of life, we must favor a spirituality of wilderness over a spirituality of temple, hospitality over hostility, and friendship over hierarchy. Thirdly, from the oiko-logical perspective, the fluid identity of being sojourners is important in interreligious encounter, because it enables us to always question critically our own idea of truth, goodness, and beauty within our own *oikos*. Theology of religions in the context of God's household invites us to "denaturalize"—meaning, criticizing any socio-religious construction that we take for granted as "natural"—our fixed identity and our religious grandeur.⁵ The result would hopefully be comforting: the wilderness is our house, the journey is home!



⁵ It is important to see Susan S. Friedman's work on the issue of denaturalization of home and homeland; see (Friedman 1998)

SOURCES

- Adiprasetya, Joas. 2013. *An imaginative glimpse: The Trinity and multiple religious participations*, Princeton theological monograph series. Eugene, OR: Pickwick.
- Baldwin, Lewis V., Paul R. Dekar, and Vicki L. Crawford, eds. 2013. "In an inescapable network of mutuality": Martin Luther King, Jr. and the globalization of an ethical ideal. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock.
- Fredericks, James L. 1999. *Faith among faiths : Christian theology and non-Christian religions*. New York: Paulist Press.
- Friedman, Susan Stanford. 1998. *Mappings: Feminism and the cultural geographies of encounter*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Gealy, F.D. 1962. "Steven." In *The interpreter's dictionary of the Bible*, edited by George Arthur Buttrick. New York,: Abingdon Press.
- Heckman, Bud, and Rori Picker Neiss. 2008. *InterActive faith: The essential interreligious community-building handbook*. Woodstock, VT: SkyLight Paths Pub.
- King, Martin Luther, Jr. 1968. *Where do we go from here: Chaos or community?* Boston: Beacon Press.
- Marshall, I. Howard. 1980. *The Acts of the Apostles: An introduction and commentary. 1st American ed, The Tyndale New Testament commentaries*. Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co.
- Selvamony, Nirmal. *Oikopoetics and Tamil poetry* n.d. Available from <http://www.angelfire.com/nd/nirmaldasan/oikos.html>.
- Yong, Amos. 2008. *Hospitality and the other: Pentecost, Christian practices, and the neighbor, Faith meets faith series*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.



LIVING TOGETHER
IN THE HOUSEHOLD OF GOD



Christian Conference of Asia