



NCC REVIEW

Vol. CXLI
No.01

January-February 2021



National
Council of
Churches
in India

The National Council of Churches Review (NCC Review)
The Organ of the National Council of Churches in India
UGC approved Journal
 Formerly published as *“The Harvest Field”* since 1862

Vol. CXLI**No.01****January-February 2021***Contents***EDITORIAL**

- Abraham Mathew 3

ARTICLES

Mission as Everyday Virtuous Activity
- Shiluina Jamir 5

Missionary Consciousness of St. Thomas Christians:
 Starting point of Educational Revolution in Kerala
- Jijo Varghese 13

The Dalit Christian Fights a Battle on Three Fronts
- John Dayal 27

Forgiveness as the basis of Reconciliation from
 Womens' Perspective
- Sribala Mylavarapu 32

The “Meghalayan Covenanters” call for an
 Ecological Commonwealth!
- Anand Veeraraj 44

BIBLE STUDY

He Loved Them to the End
- P. R. Hmuaka 55

Editor, Publisher & Printer: Rev. Asir Ebenezer, National Council of Churches in India, P.B. No.: 205, Civil Lines, Nagpur - 440 001, Maharashtra India, **Phone:** +91-712-2531312, 2561464 **Fax:** +91-712-2520554 **Email:** <nccreview@ncci1914.com> **Managing Editor:** Communication Secretary **Printed at:** Shyam Brothers, Near ST Stand, Ganeshpeth, Nagpur **Owner:** Rev. Asir Ebenezer, National Council of Churches in India **Place of Publication:** National Council of Churches in India, P.B. No.: 205, Civil Lines, Nagpur-440 001, Maharashtra, India **Place of Printing:** Shyam Bros, Near ST Stand, Ganeshpeth, Nagpur **Website:** <https://ncci1914.com/ncc-review/>

Views expressed in the NCC Review do not necessarily reflect the official position of the
 National Council of Churches in India

Registration No. 33/2019

EDITORIAL

It is a sad reality that this year too, the Lenten season is being observed with restrictions like physical distancing as the fear of COVID-19 still lingers just as it did through most of last year. While the arrival of the vaccine has raised some hopes, the presence of variants of coronavirus in many places has dampened the optimism. Meanwhile we need to also observe how the pandemic has become a political tool to aggravate tension between states and how states have become aggressive in the exertion of state authority over citizens. The deplorable condition of the victims of the pandemic, mainly the migrant workers, daily wage labourers, small scale industrialists etc. still remain largely unalleviated.

In the midst of the pandemic, we also witnessed the agitation of people on the streets in different countries against their respective regimes. One source that tracks global protests states that 78% of authoritarian or authoritarian-leaning countries have faced significant protests. Agitations are still continuing in Hong Kong, Thailand and in Myanmar. Myanmar is dominating news headlines these days, after the Myanmar military detained civilian government leaders including Aung San Suu Kyi, state and regional authorities, ethnic leaders, writers, and democracy activists.

Discussing majoritarian states, Angana P Chatterji and others observe that many democratic countries are also witnessing a new dispensation that employs a combination of four features ie. populism, nationalism, authoritarianism and majoritarianism (Majoritarian State, Harper Collins, 2019). While nationalism is a subject of interpretation, majoritarian dispensations always cater to the interests of corporates and those who have bargaining capacity in the electoral politics. In this context, one recalls Max Weber's observation about the danger of concentration of power in a powerful person or a group. The irony is that this new dispensation emerges through democracy and its structures even as it challenges basic democratic values and principles. This in turn generates a sense of hopelessness and fear among the marginalised groups and minorities.

In this context of hopelessness and fear let us observe Lent with a hope that there will be an end to the power nexus which brutalises the common masses and hence plunges people into newer forms of 'passion' experiences. Nevertheless, we are encouraged by the assurance that the resurrection enhances our hope of the defeat of the powers and principalities which nail down the aspirations of the vulnerable.

On the night before Jesus was crucified, he sat with his beloved disciples who would betray and deny him, and he said of the cup of salvation, "Drink from this, all of you." This magnanimous act stresses God's universal love and salvation. This kind of love can be called radical love. In the midst of betrayal and unfaithfulness, Jesus still wanted to express the possibility of liberating his disciples from the clutches of a self-centred life. This love is an embodiment of grace. We are called to move from grace to grace...

Christian mission history tells the stories of grace-rooted mission expressions. Unfortunately, dominant Christian paradigms prevailing today seldom recognise the grace of God, but rather their convictions are often shaped centred around power and possessions. Proxy to power and possessions are an assumption of self-centeredness and superiority. Those claiming to be progressive Christians are not immune to the same temptation either. Our actions reveal our mission.

During this season of Lent, let us introspect about our mission and ministry. We are called to witness God's universal love and grace. This is not an easy task because this universality beckons us to extend grace in unexpected directions and to unexpected people.

This issue of *NCC Review* carries a few articles on mission. While one article exposes some aspects from history of mission, another points towards mission as an act of faith, continuously renewed by the grace of God. The contradictory nature of the church in India is the subject of another article which highlights the role of the church in perpetuating caste-based discrimination in India. Since this contradiction weakens the witness of the church, the author urges a powerful reformation directed against vestiges of untouchability and discrimination that are sapping its strength from within. The article '*Forgiveness as the Basis of Reconciliation from Women's Perspective*' argues that the moral virtue of forgiveness can enhance the claim of justice, leading it to reconciliation. The article which stresses the need for a commitment to a new *world-loyalty* through evolving an ecological commonwealth challenges us to be open to fresh visitations of cosmic, planetary, and ecological gestalts that can facilitate the renewal of creation. Identifying the role of faith and religion in this process, the author envisions "Meghalayan Faith." as a new paradigm of mission to move forward.

With a grateful heart I acknowledge the efforts of the contributors of the articles to this issue. Wishing you all a thought-provoking reading experience.

Sincerely,

Rev Dr Abraham Mathew

Executive Secretary,

Policy, Governance and Public Witness



Mission as Everyday Virtuous Activity

- Shiluinla Jamir*

COVID-19 has brought out the vulnerability of all human lives and our inter-dependence on each other for our wellbeing. Pope Francis, in his recent Encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*, spelled out that “a worldwide tragedy like the COVID-19 pandemic” has “revived the sense that we are a global community, all in the same boat, where one person’s problems are the problems of all.”¹ Drawing upon the parable of the “Good Samaritan,” he calls for love in a time like this; a love that “is more than a series of benevolent actions,” that seeks “the best for the lives of others.”² The World Council of Churches also, in its document *Serving a Wounded World in Interreligious Solidarity*, suggested adopting “new forms of solidarity reaching across all boundaries,” in the event of the “heightened awareness of our *shared* vulnerability.”³ This realization of a sense of shared vulnerability has “created an openness to each other and towards the divine.”⁴ But the virus has also exposed the multiple facets of vulnerability, including; the “scandalous gap”⁵ between the rich and the poor and the “scandalous” impact the virus has had on marginalized people. It is this “scandalous” impact that provides us the theological imperative to look for a new mission paradigm in Asia.

Mission in Asia an everyday virtuous activity

Mission in Asia needs to be seen as an everyday virtuous activity shaped by the realities COVID-19 has generated. COVID-19 has

*Ms Shiluinla Jamir is a Christian ethicist and a feminist. She is a member of the Ao Baptist Church Council.

¹ Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti: Encyclical Letter on Fraternity and Social Friendship* (Mumbai: St. Paulist Press, 2020), Chapter 1:32.

² Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, Chapter 3: 94.

³ World Council of Churches, *Serving a Wounded World in Interreligious Solidarity: A Christian Call to Reflection and Action during COVID-19 and Beyond*, (Italics mine), accessed November 18, 2020, <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/serving-a-wounded-world-in-interreligious-solidarity-a-christian-call-to-reflection-and-action-during-covid-19-and-beyond>

⁴ Eleonora Dorothea Hof, *Reimagining Mission in the Postcolonial Condition: A Theology of Vulnerability and Vocation at the Margins* (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum Academic, 2016), 300.

⁵ World Council of Churches, *Serving a Wounded World in Interreligious Solidarity*

made every life vulnerable. But what is peculiar to Asia is that it has also exposed the sharp disparity that exists between communities and people. Moreover, countries like India, Sri Lanka, the Philippines, and others have used this time to silence democratic voices and have capitalized on preventive measures like “lockdown” and “curfews” to strengthen state power. There has also been an increased militarization and securitization since the onset of COVID-19, with many Asian countries using military and other security apparatuses for both preventive and relief measures.

The suspicion that people have about Christianity in Asia, the rise of aggressive nationalism, the intrusion of the state into civic spaces, and the shrinking religious freedom have made public proclamation of the gospel increasingly difficult. Therefore, in a repressive yet a demanding context like this, “witness to the power of God demonstrated in healing and transformed lives will carry its own power of persuasion.”⁶ It is in the light of these realities that mission in Asia needs to be seen as virtuous activity reflecting “the breadth of His creativity.”⁷ Virtuous here will mean activities that are in line with God’s plan for the created order, centered on the “restoration of our full humanity.”⁸ Our activities can be called virtuous activities and missional only if they are motivated, informed, and colored by the reality of God’s coming kingdom, centered on Jesus the Son, and empowered by the Holy Spirit.⁹ Any action that leads to an experience of redemptive life in God can be considered a virtuous activity.

The complexity and enormity of the problems presented by COVID-19 calls for missional action that cannot be separated from one’s day-to-day life. Providing food to migrants stuck under flyovers, informing the police and district administration of girls being locked up by landlords due to their racial features and rescuing them, using the church newsletters as means of comforting people during isolation, conducting online worship, checking on elderly people during

⁶ S. Tan, “Witness,” in *Dictionary of Mission Theology: Evangelical Foundations* edited by John Corrie (Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 2007), 432.

⁷ Tan, “Witness,” in *Dictionary of Mission Theology: Evangelical Foundations*, 432.

⁸ Jonathan P. Pennington, “A Biblical Theology of Human Flourishing,” *Institute of Faith, Work & Economic*, March 4, 2015, <https://tifwe.org/resource/a-biblical-theology-of-human-flourishing-2/>

⁹ Pennington, “A Biblical Theology of Human Flourishing,” 17.

lockdown, comforting the grieving families who have lost their loved ones to COVID-19, writing letters of dissent to the people in power are all everyday virtuous activities. Through such diverse activities our actions become the good news of Christ, a light in the darkness and the salt of the earth.

Considering mission as an everyday virtuous activity also means creating a conducive environment for realizing human dignity. I draw on the work of Joseph Prabhakar and Peniel Rajkumar to explain this assertion further. Writing about the role of missionaries amongst the Dalit community in India, particularly in Andhra Pradesh, they concluded that mission involves a “midwifery role—a role which involves both *creating* those conditions which give birth to new realities which people yearn for as well as *eliminating* the various impediments which impose constraints on the flourishing of the communities.”¹⁰ This means respecting the agency of the people and consciously delinking oneself from the idea of paternalism and a mentality of benefactor and beneficiary. It involves seeing people neither as *objects* nor *targets* of our mission activities, but as partners and companions in collectively furthering the purpose of God’s mission. The youth department creating jobs for the migrant returnees in their small rural town is a fine example.

Theologically, mission in Asia during COVID-19 as a virtuous activity is founded on the understanding of mission as God’s mission. C.S. Song rightly says, “God is the chief actor in this drama. It was initiated by God, is carried out by God, and is to be brought to fulfillment by God.”¹¹ This indicates that we have been called to participate in that mission, a call that was first extended to Abraham, to Israel, and then to the Gentiles through the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. All those who enter into faith in Jesus Christ are called to participate in that mission. Such a theological understanding of mission as God’s activity serves two purposes: first, it assigns mission work to every Christian, thereby rescuing God’s mission from the exclusive “monopoly of the ecclesiastical Christianity” and “transcends being an enterprise which can be solely in the service of the church.”¹² Secondly, and more importantly, it calls for the involvement of all people at all times.

¹⁰ Dayam and Peniel Jesudason Rajkumar, “Mission At and From the Margins: Patterns Protagonists, and Perspectives,” in *Mission At and From the Margins: Patterns, Protagonists, and Perspectives* edited by Peniel Jesudason Rufus Rajkumar, Joseph Prabhakar Dayam and I.P. Asheervadham (Oxford: Regnum Books, 2014), 8.

¹¹ C. S. Song, *Jesus the Crucified People* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 210.

Mission as God's activity also enables us to recast mission as a process "which offers itself to further the liberative agendas" of the people.¹³ Such thinking helps us to depart from collapsing mission as a "development package" or a "scheme," but to see it as an activity centered in the love of God for all, until the end of time. Such a mission thinking also ensures that we rely on God in humility, with deep acknowledgement of our own limitations, therefore always in need of His grace to carry out a missional life and commitment. Our conceptualization of mission as *missio Dei* also helps us realize that we are participating in the line of saints and sinners who have gone before us.¹⁴ Such an acknowledgement helps us overcome our dependence on our human ability, abandon our triumphalism, move beyond paternalism and desist from caricaturing the poor as objects.

Mission as everyday virtuous activity means mission needs to be seen as translating the work of God. Human participation in God's redemptive work is a translation. Translation means an enactment on our part of what God intends "for the life of the world." Understanding human participation as translation helps us realize that our works are never perfect, but we are at the same time striving to live like and do like Him. Looking at our participation through the lens of being translators saves us from the danger of looking at mission as our initiative and the tendency to rely too much on our human endeavor. Mission ultimately is an act of faith, continuously renewed by the grace of God. Mission as translation informs us of our shortcomings, our struggles as human beings and yet being open to be transformed for the redemption and transformation of God's beloved creation.

Mission as Proclamation and Witnessing through Demonstrative Living

COVID-19 provides us with an opportunity to tend to the body and the soul, the personal and the communal, with compassion, in words and action, both in witness and in proclamation. Witnessing and proclamation are practices that are central to God's mission. They are

¹² Dayam and Peniel Jesudason Rufus Rajkumar, "Mission At and From the Margins: Patterns Protagonists, and Perspectives," 8.

¹³ Dayam and Peniel Jesudason Rufus Rajkumar, "Mission At and From the Margins: Patterns Protagonists, and Perspectives," 8.

¹⁴ Scott W. Sunquist, *Understanding Christian Mission: Participation in Suffering and Glory* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2013), 25.

practices that belong together. While our mission schools, colleges, and other mission enterprises bring empowerment and liberation, however, we are to pay attention to witness and proclamation through demonstrative living. This involves living a life which reflects the righteousness of God, at home, and workplaces, and in the public sphere.

Demonstrative living means living a lifestyle “modeled on the life of Jesus” and shaped by the patterns of biblical narratives.¹⁵ The purpose of this should be to communicate the message of salvation so that others with whom we interact might respond in faith and be saved.¹⁶ Proclamation and witnessing through demonstrative living involves bringing out the connection between ethics and mission. Wright provides an example through exposition of Genesis 18:19 and informs us of how this connection can be employed in our missional living. Abraham was to teach his descendants “to walk in the way of the Lord, by doing righteousness and justice.”¹⁷ It is to be “a community who live by the ethical standards of the ways of God, so that God can fulfill his promise to Abraham and bring about the blessing of all nations.”¹⁸ From this, one can deduce that God’s election of Abraham was to bring about a community who are taught and committed to ethical life that reflects the character of God and the existence of such a community is the fulfillment of God’s mission.¹⁹ Through our ethical life, we proclaim and witness so that others are brought to the realization of the love of God. This raises a fundamental question, how come in Christian state like Nagaland, we have people tithing for mission work but we are one of the most corrupted state in India. This shows that there is a problem in the way we understand mission. We think giving money is all that we should do. But COVID has created a situation which calls us to live our lives as mission lives.

¹⁵ John Barton, *Ethics and the Bible* (London: SCM Press, 1998), 21.

¹⁶ M. M. Thomas, *Salvation and Humanisation: Some Crucial Issues of the Theology of Mission in Contemporary India* (Madras: The Christian Literature Society, 1971), 2.

¹⁷ Christopher J.H. Wright, *The Mission of God’s People: A Biblical Theology of the Church’s Mission* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2010), 83.

¹⁸ Wright, *The Mission of God’s People*, 83.

¹⁹ Wright, *The Mission of God’s People*, 93.

Human Flourishing as the Purpose of God's Mission

Human flourishing is at the heart of God's mission. Throughout the Old Testament and the New Testament, we find "God is at work redeeming his broken, sinful, and rebellious creatures."²⁰ From the promise of redemption enacted in Genesis through God's revelation, he "reveals himself to be actively and graciously redeeming his people, saving them from oppression, forgiving their disobedience and dishonoring acts, and leading them into a time and place of his full presence."²¹ Informed by these realities, we are called to turn to the world and engage in the mission of redemption so that our missional actions contribute towards our flourishing.

The fundamental purpose of mission as virtuous activity should be to realize human flourishing, including the flourishing of all creation. Our understanding of human flourishing should be measured by our love for God and our love for our neighbors.²² Such an understanding of flourishing, points towards embracing our beloved community in compassion.

What then does human flourishing in the Christian sense mean? A Christian vision of human flourishing address every person and the entire world.²³ They claim:

For one person to truly flourish the entire world must flourish; for the entire world to truly flourish, every person in it must flourish; and for every person and the entire world to truly flourish, each in their own way and all together must live in the presence of the life-giving God.²⁴

This shows that the Christian understanding of human flourishing involves the interconnectedness and interdependence of our lives with

²⁰ Pennington, "A Biblical Theology of Human Flourishing," 16.

²¹ Pennington, "A Biblical Theology of Human Flourishing," 16.

²² Miroslav Volf, "Human Flourishing," *Institute for Theological Enquiry*, accessed September 2020, 5. https://huwhumphreys.files.wordpress.com/2012/10/miroslav_volf-human-flourishing.pdf

²³ Volf and Matt Croasmun, "Six Traits of a Pluralist Christian vision of Human Flourishing."

²⁴ Volf and Matt Croasmun, "Six Traits of a Pluralist Christian vision of Human Flourishing."

each other, and the need for all to flourish together. It is the preservation of the self along with the preservation of the other, growing together. Our idea of human flourishing should be informed by the values of the kingdom of God. This necessitates a shift from a church-centered theology to a kingdom-centered theology. That way one can be more concerned about loving the neighbor than living with exclusivist interests.²⁵ Balasuriya claims that when priority is given to the values of the kingdom of God, disciples of Jesus will also be concerned with the common good of all in their personal and social lives. This change in accent in kingdom values will also enable the church to direct communities to common good.²⁶

Claiming human flourishing as the purpose of mission is also about claiming hope in the midst of the interruptions in life. According to Volf, “Hope, in a Christian sense, is love stretching itself into the future.”²⁷ It has to do “with good things in the future that come to us from “outside,” from God.”²⁸ This hope is an impossible possibility because of what God has already done before.

To claim human flourishing as the purpose of mission is also to acknowledge the contradiction that surrounds our lives. The early Christian community found that there had been a tension between the delay in the eschatological experience of resurrection and the initial radical expectations. There has been a tension between what is and what will be. Similarly, our work will be tempered by such contradictions; however, with patience and perseverance, we are to work towards the realization—or at least the approximation—of that idea. We are to continue to seek the possibility of experiencing the kingdom of God under the current conditions of darkness and despair. Despite the contradictions, what is important is that Christian understanding of human flourishing generates hope.²⁹ These contradictions point us toward the cross. Through the cross we come to

²⁵ Tissa Balasuriya, *Jesus, Kingdom, Church, Mission* (Colombo: CSR Pmphet, 1990), 6.

²⁶ Balasuriya, *Jesus, Kingdom, Church, Mission*, 6.

²⁷ Volf, “Human Flourishing,” 1.

²⁸ Volf, “Human Flourishing,” 1.

²⁹ A discussion about the difference in ideals and the existential contradictions in early Christian community can be seen in Dale T. Irvin and Scott W. Sunquist, *History of the World Christian Movement-Volume 1: Earliest Christianity to 1453* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2001).

understand that the worst events can be meaningful and that disappointments and tribulations are part of the course of life in the fallen world.”³⁰ The cross also “enables us to see that every disappointment and suffering we now face can be integrated into the story God fashions.”³¹ The paradoxical nature of the cross reminds us that the contradictions that exist in our lives are realities that we encounter with grace and wisdom, with the hope and assurance that these contradictions will lead us to better possibilities.

Conclusion

Christian mission comprises those actions by which the will of God is proclaimed and demonstrated to the world and in the world.³² Mission is about being a new humanity, a distinctive community made up of people that is formed by the character of God. It is a sign of the kingdom, a community that embodies the new life.³³ As a community that reflects God’s redemptive activity manifested in and through the life of Jesus Christ, Christians are to practice a certain lifestyle that orients them as participants in God’s mission. The COVID-19 pandemic has created a situation for Christians in Asia that requires a re-orientation of mission embedded in the everydayness of one’s Christian life. This calls for conceiving mission in Asia as everyday virtuous activity.



³⁰ Roland Chia, “Eschatology and Hope in Asia,” in *Asian Christian Theology: Evangelical Perspectives* edited by Timoteo D. Gerner and Stephen T. Pardue (Cumbria: Langham, 2019), 174.

³¹ Chia, “Eschatology and Hope in Asia,” 174.

³² Wilbert R. Shenk, “Foreword,” in *Mission from a Position of Weakness* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), xi.

³³ Michael W. Goheen, *The Church and its Vocation: Lesslie Newbigin’s Missionary Ecclesiology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2018), 78.

Missionary Consciousness of St. Thomas Christians: Starting point of Educational Revolution in Kerala

- Jijo Varghese*

Introduction

Scholars are divided among themselves when they highlight the missionary consciousness of the Kerala Christians. The same division of opinion also prevails regarding the early direct missionary activities of these Christians. Some of them are of the opinion that the Church of St. Thomas Christians, the fruits of the direct missionary proclamation of St. Thomas the Apostle, never made any effort to propagate the faith. But a large number of others are of the opinion that the Thomas Christians were very actively involved in evangelisation and even earned the epithet “*the Church on fire*”. A thorough study of the history of the St. Thomas Christians leads us to the fact that they carried the faith to the different parts of the country, and even sent missionaries to both neighbouring and distant lands.

The subject matter of this paper is mainly divided into two parts: (1) The Church and Her Evangelizing Mission and (2) A Historical Overview of Evangelization Efforts of St. Thomas Christians. In the first part we have a general outlook at the concept of Church and her evangelizing mission. It is necessary to have a proper understanding about the concept of Church and evangelization to understand better the missionary consciousness of St. Thomas Christians of India. The second part discusses the history of St. Thomas Christians’ missionary activities till the autonomous period (1887). The second part is divided into two phases and the first phase deals with the missionary consciousness of St. Thomas Christians before the 16th century. Here we deal with the different historical events and facts, which clarify our assumption about the missionary activities of St. Thomas Christians during this period. The second phase, missionary consciousness of St. Thomas Christians under Latin domination, deals with the East -West encounter and the missionary enterprises of St. Thomas Christians under the Latin rule.

*Mr. Jijo Varghese is a Research Scholar, Department of Education, Central University of Kerala, Kasargod. He can be contacted at <jmecheril@gmail.com>

1. THE CHURCH AND HER EVANGELIZING MISSION

The Church and her evangelizing mission are inseparable and interconnected. Just as the Church is united with Christ as the mystical body of Christ, the evangelizing mission stems organically from this union and constitutes one of the major reasons for the existence of the Church. Here, we see the relation between the Church and her evangelizing mission.

1.1. Church is Missionary

The Second Vatican Council declares that the Church is the ‘People of God’ (LG Ch. 2)¹. This ‘People of God’ is a community of believers (Acts 4:32), since they are people who believe in Jesus Christ. The Church is gathered or united by God through Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit. The Church is the Universal Sacrament of Salvation (CCC 849)². She is the sign and instrument of Christ to continue his salvific mission here in this world till the end of the world. That means the Church is not only a community of believers but also a community with a mission, a mission to be fulfilled in this world. Hence, her mission is to continue the mission of Christ here in this world.³ In *Ad Gentes* we read: “The Church is missionary by her very nature” (AG2).

1.2. The Meaning and Origin of the Evangelizing Mission of the Church

In the secular sense of the term *mission* means the act of sending someone with a mission to accomplish or a function to perform. The Greek word for missionary, *apostello*, comes from the root *stelo* which means to equip or prepare somebody for the purpose of sending away. So, a missionary can be a person or a group or community of persons with a special mission.⁴ In a Christian understanding “mission” is everything that the Church does in service of the Kingdom of God. In a more restricted sense, however, “mission” refers to the ‘missionary

¹ Lumen Gentium, Vatican II Council Document

² Catechism of Catholic Church

³ Joseph Puthiyedath, *Catechesis of an Evangelizing Church*, St. Thomas Academy for Research, Alwaye, 1994, 31.

⁴ Cf. Collin Brown (ed.), *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Vol. 2, Pater Noster Press, 126-137 as quoted in Joseph Puthiyedath, *Catechesis of an Evangelizing Church*, 38.

activity' (evangelizing mission) of the Church, the preaching of the Gospel among peoples and cultures where it is not known.⁵

In the Gospels we see that Jesus called the twelve as apostles, whom he selected to be with him and to be sent out to preach. He sent them with authority to heal the sick and to cast out demons (Mk 3:13-19). Again we read in the Gospel of John, "Jesus said to them again, Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me even so I send you" (Jn 20:21). Also we see, "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teach them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Mt 28:18-19). From the above citations we can understand that the evangelizing mission of the Church has its origin in the very mission of her Heavenly Master, Jesus Christ.

1.2.1. Evangelisation: the Prime and the Primary Duty of the Church

"Since the Church is missionary, and the work of evangelization the fundamental task of the people of God, this sacred synod invites all to undertake a profound interior renewal so that being vitally conscious of their responsibility for the spread of the Gospel they might play their part in missionary work among the nations" (AG 35). In *Lumen Gentium* we read: "Henceforth, the Church endowed with the gifts of her founder and faithfully observing his precepts of charity, humility and self-denial, receives the mission of proclaiming and establishing among all peoples the Kingdom of Christ and of God, and she is on earth, the seed and the beginning of that kingdom" (LG 5). Evangelization is the process of establishing the kingdom of God by witness and proclamation (EN 59). In other words, it is the process of bringing the Good News into all strata of humanity, and transforming it from within by its influence (EN 18).

The missionary nature of the Church is the very basic nature or quality of the Church rather than an act of the Church. Evangelization is not just one of the activities of the Church. It is inextricably and inseparably related to the very nature and existence of the Church.⁶ Hence the Church is missionary whenever and wherever she is. That

⁵ William McConville, "Mission" in Joseph A. Komondak, Mary Collins and et al. (eds), *The Dictionary of the Theology*, TPI, Bangalore, 1996, 664-668, 664.

⁶ Clement J. Godwin, *Spend and Be Spent*, ATC, Bangalore, 1977, 48.

means the Church is missionary not only in mission lands but also everywhere she exists. And she is missionary not only in the past, but also in the present and in the future. This missionary vocation or nature belongs to all the Christians who are baptized into the Church.⁷

1.2.2. Evangelization: Duty of Every Christian

Since, the Church is the people of God (LG Ch 2) and missionary in its very nature (AG 2), each and every member of the Church is a missionary. Hence, everyone is called and sent by the Lord to proclaim the Good News of Salvation to the whole world. Thus, the mission to evangelize becomes the very essence and identity of every Christian. The individual missionary preaches in the name of the Church, not in his own name. It is an ecclesial act. “Evangelization is for no one an individual and isolated act; it is one that is deeply ecclesial...” (EN 60). The very heart of mission spirituality is manifested in the natural and supernatural love towards non-Christians in order to offer them in our witnessing word and life, Jesus Christ as true God and true man, the ideal image of man.⁸ But we should bear in mind that it is God the Father who is the real subject of every witnessing to Christ, whoever be the agents. The Father’s witness to the Son is interior to man and continues, after the death and resurrection of Jesus, through those who believe in Christ. Hence witnessing or evangelization essentially consists in the sharing of one’s faith experience.⁹

1.2.3. Goal of Evangelization

After the death and resurrection of Our Lord, he entrusted his mission to the Church, after having promised the power of the Holy Spirit. The goal of proclaiming the Gospel to all people (evangelization) is to establish the kingdom of God by the power of the Gospel. This evangelizing mission of the Church is not limited to any time, place or people. She is sent to all creatures of the whole world of all times to announce the Good News of Salvation. From this mission she cannot depart. When she goes away from her mission entrusted to her by her

⁷ Joseph Puthiyedath, *Catechesis of an Evangelizing Church*, 38.

⁸ J. Masson, “Vatican II and Post-Conciliar Theology of Evangelisation” in Joseph Patrapankal (ed.), *Service and Salvation*, TPI, Bangalore, 1973, 41-51, 50.

⁹ L. Legrand, J. Patrapankal and et al., *Good News and Witness: The New Testament Understanding of Evangelization*, TPI, Bangalore, 147.

Divine Master she will become a reality other than the Church. Hence, if she wants to be the Church of Christ, she needs to be a missionary Church.¹⁰ The working document of the Synod of Bishops in 1974 says: “The word (evangelization) is used to mean the priestly, prophetic and royal activity whereby the Church is built up according to Christ’s intention”.¹¹

2. A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF EVANGELIZATION EFFORTS OF ST. THOMAS CHRISTIANS

We can now turn to the important issue of evangelisation by this Church, down through the centuries. Here our questions are: what was the missionary consciousness of these Christians? What was the nature and the method of its evangelisation? Taking into consideration these various factors and instances we may conveniently divide the history of St. Thomas Christians’ missionary enterprises into two phases: Missionary Enterprises before the 16th Century and Evangelisation During the Padroado and the Propaganda periods.

2.1. The Missionary Consciousness of the St. Thomas Christians till 16th Century

We have ample reasons to suppose that there were missionary undertakings by St. Thomas Christians during this period. There were around 30000 families of St. Thomas Christians at time of the arrival of the Portuguese in Kerala and their bishop Mar Jacob wrote to John III, the King of Portugal, from Cochin in 1523: “And further I have won all these Christians on this country for thy service, so that when thou shalt be in need of them, thou shalt find in it over 25000 warriors.”¹² We could reasonably think that not all these Christians were descendants of the few original converts of the Apostle Thomas or of subsequent immigrants but that some among them descended from those who were later converted and incorporated into their community. According to Roz S.J (1604), the northern Thomas Christians were

¹⁰ Joseph Puthiyedath, *Catechesis of an Evangelizing Church*, 48.

¹¹ As quoted in Joseph Puthiyedath, *Catechesis of an Evangelizing Church*, 57.

¹² As quoted in Paul Thenayan, *The Missionary Consciousness of the St. Thomas Christians: A Historico Pastoral Study*, Viani Publication, Cochin, 1982, 84.

eager to increase the membership of their Church and hence received into their community many pagans whom they baptised.¹³ He stresses this point, showing that the southern ones did not mix with other Christians and that they did not accept anyone into their community.

The kings were tolerant toward all religions. K. M. Panikar observes, “In fact the most significant feature of Kerala life from the earliest times has been the wide sense of tolerance and mutual respect between the different communities who had made their home there. Christians and Muslims, Jews and Konkans lived side by side with the Kerala Hindus in a perfect state of understanding and unity, respecting each other’s customs and prejudices and scrupulously avoiding all interference.”¹⁴ Buddhism seems to have formerly flourished in Malabar. Jainism also flourished till the 8th century. Muslim merchants propagated their faith from the 7th century onwards and they settled down and even built a mosque in Cranganore.¹⁵ These situations emphasise the fact that conversion work was possible in Kerala and people of many religions actually settled there and converted their neighbours.

We can divide the first phase of history into two: the early apostolic period and the East Syrian period. First, we take up the question of evangelisation started by St. Thomas and his immediate successors.

2.1.1. Apostolic Period (52-72 AD)

It is, however, quite reasonable to believe that St. Thomas might have organised the community he founded in India. According to *Rabban Song*, the Apostle himself ordained as his successors two men by name Kepa and Paul.¹⁶ St. Thomas preached the gospel and he initiated a simple form of worship, which grew in the Indian soil. This earlier liturgy might not have been Chaldean or Persian. But it might not have been an entirely Indian liturgy either. However, we see a very remarkable feature in the process of evangelisation during this period.

¹³ Paul Thenayan, *The Missionary Consciousness of the St. Thomas Christians*, 84.

¹⁴ K. M. Panikar, *A History of Kerala 1498-1801*, The Annamalai University, Annamalai, 1960, 16.

¹⁵ Paul Thenayan, *The Missionary Consciousness of the St. Thomas Christians*, 85.

¹⁶ A.M. Mundadan, *Sixteenth Century Traditions*, Dharmaram Publications, Bangalore, 1960, 63.

The Indians received the gospel and believed in Christ, but they continued to live the same socio-cultural life as before. They were Christians in faith but were Indian in culture.¹⁷

So we conclude that the evangelisation in the early period was fruitful in the sense that the gospel of Christ was preached in India and was received with enthusiasm. Thus, an indigenous Church was established in the Indian soil.

2.1.2. East Syrian Period (400-1600 AD)

According to a tradition among the Christians of St. Thomas, growth of the early community stagnated due to some grave crises. And it was the healthy relationship with the East Syrians that saved the Indian Church from extinction.¹⁸ The cordial relationships between these two Churches opened a new phase in the history of the evangelizing mission of St. Thomas Christians.

2.1.2.1. Missionary Collaboration with the East Syrian Church

The missionary zeal of the East Syrian Church with which the Thomas Christians were hierarchically related from the 4th century onwards, is another proof of missionary mindedness of St. Thomas Christians. One of the greatest and most extensive missionary enterprises in history of Christianity, often altogether ignored or given scant attention by Church historians; even discarded by some as the work of non-Catholics or heretics is the unparalleled missionary adventures of the East Syrian Church. The East Syrian missionaries had brought the faith to remote regions of Turkistan, Mongolia, Siberia, China, Japan and India. Such was the missionary charism of the Church that it was known in history as a “Church on fire”.¹⁹

As the Thomas Christians were hierarchically related to this highly zealous missionary Church, we conclude with certainty that the East Syrians have influenced them in propagating the faith in the Indian sub-continent.

¹⁷ Xavier Kochuparampil, *Evangelisation in India: A Theological Analysis of the Missionary Role of the Syro Malabar Church in the Light of Vatican II and Post-Conciliar Documents*, OIRSI, Kottayam, 1993, 248.

¹⁸ Xavier Kochuparampil, *Evangelisation in India*, 248.

¹⁹ J. Stewart, *Nestorian Missionary Enterprise: History of a Church on Fire*, T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 1928, xxvi.

2.1.2.2. The Work of Indian Missionaries

Now, there remains an important question that if Christianity was widely spread in India, who were the missionaries that worked hard for the spread of the Christian faith here? We know that the Church in India was organized under the patriarch of Persia but it is mainly Indian Christians themselves who had preached the faith to their brethren.²⁰ Fr. Thomas Paremakel confirms this fact more clearly in his travelogue *Varthamanapusthakam*: “Do you think that the Christians whom your predecessors saw in Malabar had come from your country, Europe? No. No. It is a fact that before you and your forefathers came to Malabar there were in Malabar those who announced the faith.”²¹ He continues:

We have, therefore, to take into account the difference between the converts of these olden days and these of modern times. In olden days, the people belonging to the honourable, to the prominent and also to the poor families, houses and races of Malabar generally used to accept the holy faith with no aversion or dislike for it. Those who accepted it as children of the same father procured everything, needed for the whole community, in the spirit of Christian charity and unity without any quarrel or misunderstanding.²²

Cardinal Tisserant writes about it admiringly thus:

Already in these remote days, the Syrians of India possessed a genuine missionary spirit, the more so because it was spontaneous. In point of fact they had always made proselytes among their non-Christian neighbours. No wonder, then, that the preaching during those two years provoked conversion more numerous than was as usually the case. Unhappily such zeal was to be hampered, if not hidden under a

²⁰ A.D. Mattam, *The Indian Church of St. Thomas Christians and Her Missionary Enterprises before Sixteenth Century*, 35.

²¹ Thomman Cathanar Praremmakkal, *Varthamanapusthakam*, Janata Services Edition, Ernakulam, 1977, 306 (English tran. by P. J. Podipara., *Orientalia Christiana Analetica*, Rome, 1971, 246.)

²² Thomman Cathanar Praremmakkal, *Varthamanapusthakam*, 327.

bushel, during the following centuries, because the Christians lost their normal independence and therefore, their religious spontaneity.²³

2.1.2.3.1. Indian Missionaries in Foreign Lands

Thomas Christians preached their faith experience not only to their neighbours or to their countrymen but also in their neighbouring countries and cultures. We have historical evidences to prove this fact.

Quoting from J. Gonzales' *The History of China*, Fr. Francis Poire says, "And the Bishop of Japan affirms having found in the Record of Mylapore that, more than a thousand years before, preachers had been sent from thence to China to announce the Christian faith. From authentic sources it is known that from the days of St. Thomas, Churches were established in China."²⁴ Dr.J.E. Edkins, writing about the religion of the Chinese people, states that there was a tradition among them, that an Indian missionary was the first to preach the Christian faith in their country.²⁵

The 'Hsianfu Stone Monument' casually unearthed in 1625 A.D gives a brief account of Christianity in China in the 7th and 8th centuries. Written in Chinese and Syriac, the account begins with the coming of Alopen, a missionary from Tachin in 635 A.D. The description ends with a description of the erection of the monument in 781 A.D.²⁶ The Chinese Church experienced a severe persecution from 845 A.D at the hands of Emperor Wu Tsung. His edict of 845 A D after dealing with Buddhists contains this decree concerning the Christian missionaries: "As for the foreign boozes (monks) who came here to make known the law which is current in their kingdom, there are about 3000 of them, both from Tachin and from Mu-hu-po. My command is that they also return to the world so that in the customs of our Empire there be no mixture."²⁷

²³ E. Tisserant, *Eastern Christianity in India: A History of the Syro Malabar Church from the Earliest Time to the Present Day*, Longmans, London, 1957, 38.

²⁴ Cf. Souvenir, *Tricentenary of San Thome de Mylapore*, Price Current Press, Madras, 1906, 1.

²⁵ See A.D. Mattam, "The Indian Church of St. Thomas Christians and Her Missionary Enterprises before Sixteenth Century", 21.

²⁶ Cf. A.D. Mattam, *The Indian Church of St. Thomas Christians and Her Missionary Enterprises Before Sixteenth Century*, 42.

²⁷ Cf. H. Hosten, *Antiquities from San Thome and Mylapore*, 295; Xavier Koodapuzha, *Bharathasabharithram*, 216.

There is also a strong tradition that St. Thomas himself preached in China and founded Churches there. The prayers of the Divine Office of the Church confirm this. In the Night Service (Lelia) of the feast of St. Thomas, we find the following hymn: "... The Chinese and Ethiopians were converted to the truth by St. Thomas. Through St. Thomas, the splendour of a life-giving faith flourished through all India. Through St. Thomas the kingdom of heaven took wings and spread its flight to the Chinese."²⁸ Whether St. Thomas visited China or not, it is quite reasonable to surmise that his disciples in India went to China during his lifetime and thereafter carrying the Christian message.²⁹

2.2. The Missionary Consciousness of the St. Thomas Christians under Latin Domination (1600-1887 AD)

The second phase of evangelisation in India begins with the arrival of Portuguese missionaries in the beginning of the 16th century. From then these two individual Churches can be seen engaging in propagating the gospel in the Indian sub-continent. The St. Thomas Christians were organised under the combined leadership of the East Syrian metropolitan and the Portuguese missionaries functioned under the leadership of the Goan Archbishop. Here we concentrate only on the missionary activities of St. Thomas Christians during this period.

2.2.1. The East-West Encounter

The first encounter between the Portuguese and the Thomas Christians was of mutual understanding and appreciation. The approaches of the Thomas Christians and of the Portuguese were quite different. The Thomas Christians could appreciate the Latin usages and disciplines while the Portuguese failed to recognise the law of Thomas. The Portuguese wanted to absorb the ancient community into their own while the latter stood for cooperation and coexistence.³⁰ Their missionaries failed to understand the particular pattern of the religions

²⁸ As quoted in A.D. Mattam, *The Indian Church of St. Thomas Christians and Her Missionary Enterprises before Sixteenth Century*, 39; Cf. Counba Cary Elwes, *China and the Cross: Studies in Missionary History*, Longmans, London, 1957, 12.

²⁹ A.D. Mattam, "The Indian Church of St. Thomas Christians and Her Missionary Enterprises before Sixteenth Century", 20.

³⁰ A.M. Mundadan, *The Arrival of the Portuguese in India and Thomas Christians under Mar Jacob*, Dharmaram Publications, Bangalore, 1967, 149.

culture of the people among whom they were living. Their relation with the local Christians was characterised by conflict and confrontation rather than dialogue and appreciation.³¹

Rodrigo, a Dominican missionary who accompanied Albuquerque in 1503, was specially charged with the pastoral care of the Thomas Christians of Quilon. This attitude of cordiality took a new course by the coming of a diocesan priest, Alvaro Penteado into the mission field in 1517. He condemned everything other than Latin practices as error of heresy. More and more missionaries penetrated into the Thomas Christian community. Being ignorant of the Eastern tradition, the missionaries wanted to make them conform to the western ways in everything including the liturgy.³² In order to establish perfect harmony with the west the Franciscans undertook the task of priestly formation of the Thomas Christians. A seminary was built at Cranganore in 1540 and Thomas Christians' students were admitted for clerical training. They were wholly alienated from their own proper traditions including their liturgy. The community reacted in such a way that they would not allow their sons to work among them.³³ In the opinion of Stephen Neil, the missionaries were committing a grave error. They thought that by latinising a few boys, they could easily latinise the whole Church. But no human art or device would be able to latinise the Thomas Christians completely.³⁴ Evangelisation of the missionaries among the Thomas Christians meant nothing other than latinisation of the ancient Church of St. Thomas. This process had its climax in the Synod of Diamper. The events that followed the Synod completed the process of latinisation and subjugation of the oriental Church.³⁵ As Bede Griffiths notes, the Thomas Christians have suffered severely from latinisation and the case of the Malabar Church is one of the great scandals of Church history.³⁶

³¹ A.M. Mundadan, *The Arrival of the Portuguese in India and Thomas Christians under Mar Jacob*, 157.

³² Cf. C. Brown, *The Indian Christian of St. Thomas: An Account of the Ancient Syrian Church of Malabar*; Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1982, 19.

³³ A.M. Mundadan, *The Arrival of the Portuguese in India and Thomas Christians under Mar Jacob*, 142.

³⁴ Cf. Neil, *A History of Christianity in India*, 199.

³⁵ P.J. Placid *The Thomas Christians*, 139.

³⁶ Bede Griffiths, *Christ in India, Essays Towards a Hindu-Christian Dialogue*, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1966, 237.

2.2.2. Attempts of Evangelisation by the Thomas Christians

As seen above it was a time of tension and turmoil in Malabar. Much of the time and energy of the community was spent in self-defence and the protection of its own identity and individuality. But this does not mean that they had lost all their missionary spirit. They had never given up their work among the low caste Hindus. Even after the arrival of the Portuguese, they took interest in the evangelization of low castes. In the beginning, a few of them positively cooperated with the Franciscan missionaries in the spread of the Gospel.³⁷ Later on, some of the Jesuit missionaries like Alexander Valignano and Gomez Vaz sought the help of the Thomas Christians in their work among the high castes. The high castes were attracted more to the Thomas Christians than to the Portuguese.³⁸ The Thomas Christians who had their training in the Vaipicotta Seminary were helping the missionaries in their work among the Thomas Christians as well as among the new converts. In the 18th and 19th centuries, we meet occasionally with the Thomas Christian priests serving in the Lain parishes as far as Madura.³⁹

2.2.2.1. Ecclesial Dimension

The very survival of the community admits those tensions and troubles are to be taken as the best sign of its missionary spirit.⁴⁰ In the Eastern Churches the ecclesial aspect of the Church was stressed above all other considerations. It is the fact of the Church being a living organism or body that distinguishes it from other similar bodies. The salvation offered by God is a salvation in the community.⁴¹ This unity is maintained through the liturgical life of the Church as well as through her ecumenical outlook.

2.2.2.2. Liturgical Dimension

Wherever a Christian community proclaims its faith through its liturgical celebration, the community becomes dynamic and

³⁷ Cf. A.M. Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India*, Dharmaram Publications, Bangalore, 1984, 319.

³⁸ Cf. Paul Thenayan, *The Missionary Consciousness of St. Thomas Christians*, 134.

³⁹ E.R. Hamby, *The Catholic Thomas Christians 1653-1970*, 187.

⁴⁰ Xavier Kochuparampil, *Evangelisation in India*, 311.

⁴¹ Xavier Kochuparampil, *Evangelisation in India*, 311.

missionary in nature.⁴² The sense of unity and the oneness of the St. Thomas Christians were imparted to the community through the Qurbana, the Eucharist, celebrated every Sunday. More than anything else, this celebration held the community together through the dark centuries.⁴³ Furthermore, liturgy is an imperative for missionary work. It makes the community alive and dynamic. It gives its members the courage to endure hardships and even martyrdom.

2.2.2.3. Inter-Religious Dimension

St. Thomas Christians had a unique mode of evangelization which became a commonly accepted norm in the Church only in the 20th century. The cordial relation these Christians maintained with their Hindu and other neighbours, and the respect which they accord to other religions and their practices and at the same time the zeal they had to preserve their own faith are some of the unique elements of the missionary approach of the St. Thomas Christians.⁴⁴

The Thomas Christians never failed to keep a brotherly concern for their non-Christian brethren. They could exert considerable influence in the society. Their contribution to religious and moral values, to socio-economic development and to cultural, educational and charitable activities has been unique and disproportionately large relative to their demographic strength within the broader population. Their fidelity to the deposits of faith expressed through the East Syrian liturgy, the ecumenical outlook they possessed, their attitude of coexistence with the non-Christians and the spirit of co-existence and accommodation with regard to Hinduism are to be taken as the best signs of the dynamic spirit of evangelisation.⁴⁵

Conclusion

From the historical analysis we could understand that the accusations levelled against the missionary consciousness of Thomas Christians

⁴² Xavier Kochuparampil, *Evangelisation in India*, 313.

⁴³ Cf. C. Brown, *The Indian Christian of St. Thomas: An Account of the Ancient Syrian Church of Malabar*, 213.

⁴⁴ Xavier Kochuparampil, *Evangelisation in India*, 113.

⁴⁵ Cf. R. Keitzer, "General Survey of Evangelisation in India" in G. Menacherry (ed.), *The St. Thomas Christians Encyclopaedia of India*, Vol. I, Trichur, 1983, 190.

are groundless. First of all it arose from a sheer misunderstanding regarding the missionary activity of St. Thomas Christians. The Indian Church of St. Thomas was fairly widespread all along the east - west coastal regions and the central India before the 16th century. They carried the gospel to different parts of the country as well as to their neighbouring countries. Even in the period of constant struggle, they had preserved and nurtured the deposit of apostolic faith with fidelity. The very fact of their survival through the history is something unique in itself. The secret of their survival thus lies in their unique mode of evangelization.



NCCI-IDEA campaigns for

**Rights of persons with Disability, and
Accessibility and Inclusion in Physical and Mind space**

Need HELP?
Call **7028 400 222**
or Write to **idea@ncci1914.com**



The Dalit Christian Fights a Battle on Three Fronts

- *John Dayal**

Exactly seven decades on, the Dalit Christian does not seem to be winning her, or his, battle for human dignity, political rights and a level playing field. And it is not surprising that this is so, for the Christian of Indian Dalit origin fights a battle on three fronts, unaided, with few resources, no allies, and armed with little more than in the justness of the cause.

The first front is against the Constitution of India by law established, as they say.

The Presidential Order of 1950 devastated the new-born Constitution of India far more severely than could have been imagined by its makers - who had laboured more than two years through the bloodshed of a religion-based partition of the land which possibly left a million men and women dead, many more raped and maimed, and crores forced to migrate to the safety of a Muslim majority Pakistan, or a largely Hindu, but still secular, India.

Despite the trauma and the memories, the Constitution promised secularism, respect for all religions, and opportunity. Above all, it guaranteed to the Dalits freedom from their bondage, equality they had been denied in the Code of Manu three thousand years ago, and a say in governance through reservations in the political process, from the grassroots to the Parliament of India.

The 1950 Order, later made permanent as Article 341 part 3 of the constitution, told the Dalits they had no freedom of choosing their faith. They had to remain Hindus if they wanted political rights, economic and educational rights, and special protection of law from the brutality of caste vindictiveness, abuse, and violence. It is still so. Most people cannot imagine how this could have happened when Jawaharlal Nehru, an agonistic liberal, was prime minister and Baba Bhimrao Saheb Ambedkar, chair of the Constitution making committee, was the minister in charge.

*Dr. John Dayal is an author and activist. He is a former President of the All India Catholic Union, and Member, National Integration Council.

It brings no credit to the freedom loving but casteist members of the ruling party and others to have second thoughts, to keep their erstwhile vassals in control, and to build a barrier against philosophical and theological challenges by liberal religions, not just Christianity and Islam as one would think, but the revolutionary dictum of Buddha and the modernity and equality of Sikhism. It would take Sikhs and Buddhists decades of struggle to regain their rights.

Even then, the price they had to pay was to dilute their identity as distinct religions, and to be counted under the umbrella or shadow of the majority Hindu definition. That too would have repercussions, bloody ones, later.

Ambedkar himself became a Buddhist, fulfilling his prophesy that he would though born a Hindu, not die as one. The Sikh's identity struggle is reflected in the often blood-soaked politics of the Punjab.

For the Dalit Christian, the legal battle to undo Article 341 part 3 continues in the Supreme court, with little indication that something concrete will come from it in the near or middle future. The current political dispensation, like, the ones over the last 70 years, are loath to shed the hegemony of the upper castes, and afraid they will open the flood gates of an exodus seen in religious history. The Article is, in reality, a nation-wide, powerful anti-conversion law. It is a big deal.

The second front of the battle for justice is with the Dalits who are forced to remain Hindus, and now neo Buddhists and Sikhs. The governments and the upper caste political parties - and that means every party other than those professing Marxist ideology - have been successful in persuading the 'Dalits Hindus' to believe that the Christians, arguably better educated, would eat away their piece of the cake, take away their jobs, their scholarships, and their opportunities.

This is a ridiculous argument. The cake is not finite. Stronger political presence can enlarge the cake. The Christian Dalits face the same social infirmities, as caste discrimination is in the very soil of India. Judicial enquiry has confirmed what sociologists have always known. Caste discrimination, casteism, is osmotic, it crosses barriers of religion and even of ideology. But so deep has the belief been ingrained that the biggest resistance comes not from the upper caste leaders - who remain in the background - but from the Dalits in the Hindu frame.

How will the Dalit Christian ever convince his brother in the Buddhist, Sikh and Hindu faith that he means no evil, that the political field will be strengthened, and that collectively the community would progress. The Dalit Christian leadership is still not educated in the refined political action that is required. There is no real effort at collective building of a civil society, or sharing of resources, supporting educational effort, and other visible confidence building measures, as they are called in diplomacy.

But, of course, the final frontier is within the Christian church, the Christian community. Ethnic-based churches, denominations and Rites, are singularly ill-equipped to even begin understanding the situation. Into the third decade of the 21st century, the "Christian" region of the North east, as well as the Christian belt of the west coast from Gujarat to Kerala, has not only no clue as to the situation, but at the grassroots, is actually resistant to the idea of treating the Dalit Christian as an equal, much less joining him in the struggle for constitutional rights. Ethnic memory and the pride of upper caste origins, real or imagine, sharpens this divide. Theological boundaries, especially as professed by certain evangelical and Pentecostal groups, range Christ himself against the Dalit struggle, disowning their very existence in the community as an aberration, if not an act of blasphemy against the Word of God

The "political leadership", in reality people of Christian birth who rise to positions of political power on the basis of family, land, or local concentration, as in central Kerala and parts of Karnataka, do not feel they owe anything to the community outside their constituency. Parliamentary debates are evidence of the silence of the representatives.

The religious leadership pays little more than lip service, going by four decades of a study of the situation on the ground. At their best they are embarrassed that caste exists in the community. This writer was in court when the chief justice of the day, a Dalit, Justice K G Balakrishnan, asked the counsel of the Christians if the Bishops would say caste was still practiced in the church and the community. It was a Catch-22 situation. The community chose to fall into the trap by maintaining silence. It would have been possible to say they were ashamed to admit that it in reality, it did exist. The moment was lost.

Forgetting that truth would set them free, was expensive. And perhaps morally degrading.

The community had to struggle for decades before persuading Rome, and the Anglicans at the Lambeth conference that caste discrimination existed even if the walls in the Tamil cemeteries were theoretically erased on paper.

The last three Popes have been vehement in giving a tongue lashing to Indian Bishops, telling them to eradicate all vestiges of casteism. Pope John Paul II in his many addresses to ad limina visits of Catholic bishops from India told them that Christians must reject divisions based on caste, saying such prejudice "denies the human dignity of entire groups of people. He had first made such a statement during his 1986 .The pope said caste-based prejudice violates "authentic human solidarity" and is "a threat to genuine spirituality. "Customs or traditions that perpetuate or reinforce caste division should be sensitively reformed so that they may become an expression of the solidarity of the whole Christian community," he said.

The single visible movement in the church is the Catholic Bishops Conference of India's policy document on Dalit empowerment, in which it acknowledges centuries of caste based discrimination as a 'grave social sin' and commits to ensuring that the practice of 'untouchability' will not be tolerated within the church. "I whole heartedly urge the Bishops, priests, religious and lay leaders to internalise and implement the policy at all levels. We should consider it as our obligation based on Christian faith to empower our children, sisters and brothers of Dalit origin and other marginalised people," said Baselios Cardinal Cleemis, Major Archbishop-Catholicos and President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India.

As has been reported in media, the 'Policy of Dalit Empowerment in the Catholic Church in India: An Ethical Imperative to Build Inclusive Communities', issued on 13 December, includes commitments such as ensuring that Dalits are given equal employment opportunities; more competent and cohesive lay leadership development for Dalit men and women at regional and diocesan levels in the Church; dedicated funding and scholarship structures to assist marginalised Dalit

students to further their education and to facilitate the Dalit community's access to social justice.

This writer had welcomed the document as a powerful commitment to a seminal struggle against birth-based discrimination that corrodes human dignity..

But there are few, if any signs, that the document has been implemented in the Catholic church in letter, and in spirit. Perhaps a survey would expose the hollowness of official claims.

But then the church, all denominations, has so far fought shy even of a simple economic and social situation survey often community. Such data would have quipped them better in their discussions and negotiations with the government, and their arguments in court. The only studies have been by outsiders, and they are based on dated empirical data.

Information and data is power, even political and legal power. It is time for the community and its leadership to case ranks, admit their faults in Christian spirit. Despite untouchability being outlawed, many in the Hindu community still practice it in everyday life. But the reform movement is also strong.

The church in India also needs a powerful reform movement against vestiges of untouchability and discrimination that are sapping its strength from within. Without this, there can never be real and meaningful solidarity with the struggle of the Dalit Christians.



***NCCI Dalit And Tribal/Adivasi concern
campaign against Caste in Church***

**"No One can serve Christ and Caste"
Practise of Caste is Sin, and Untouchability Crime**

Discrimination based on Caste in your Church?
write to : dataconcerns@ncci1914.com

Forgiveness as the basis of Reconciliation from Womens' Perspective

- *Sribala Mylavarapu**

Introduction

There is growing discrimination, atrocity and violence committed against women, young girls and girl children in India and many parts of the world. For such violence, someone has to take a moral responsibility, because victims require an apologetic justice. For a woman to move ahead in life after being victimized, it is extremely challenging. It involves two major factors. Firstly, to continue to fight with the inefficient system of justice which quite often fails in providing justice to the victim, in which process the victim loses her time, energy, money and perhaps life itself. Secondly, to realise her own capacities to overcome anger, hatred, resentment and grudge to get justice by adapting an attitude of forgiveness for her own well-being and starting a new life by 'living with the past but not living in the past'. Reconciliation will help in restoring broken or disturbed relationships. Here we can understand both 'Forgiveness' and 'Reconciliation', how they are inter-connected. Forgiveness is an internal process that happens within the victim while the reconciliation process takes place between two individuals or two groups. Therefore, forgiveness opens the door for reconciliation and restorative justice provides women with stringent advocacy initiatives for meeting their basic need for security and safety. In fact, this process is augmented by women's relationship building in order to close the 'interdependence gap,' that can be achieved by forgiveness of past wrongs in order to move forward peacefully.¹

In this context, this article tries to explore the meaning, process and significance of forgiveness in women from the victim's perspective, which in turn forms a basis for reconciliation. For a clearer understanding of the issues involved, I would like to present a real-life story as a case-study.

*Ms. Sribala Mylavarapu is a research scholar in Satya Nilayam Research Institute of Philosophy and Culture, Chennai.

¹ Chandler, "Women and Reconciliation: A Path Way to Peace," p. 26.

A True Story of Swetha....

The news that Swetha's niece's wedding was fixed to be performed this year on 18th of March 2020 greatly excited her. However, a few days later disappointment set in because her brother told her that the wedding had to be postponed to April due to a close relative's death. A week passed by and the lockdown due to the Corona pandemic was announced by the govt. All her excitement was dampened by the news. Then came a call from Swetha's brother to say that the bridegroom and his parents were insisting that the wedding should be performed as planned earlier because of the non-availability of leave for the boy later. They added that only the boy and themselves would come over to their place and have a simple marriage ceremony. She wondered why they were so eager and expressed the same to her brother. He agreed to their proposal.

According to the South Indian tradition, the bridegroom's family comes to the bride's home for the wedding, and once the formalities are over, the girl is taken to the boy's home. Accordingly, the bridegroom and his parents came the day before the wedding. Swetha's brother received and welcomed the bridegroom and his parents with great honour and they were lodged in more than comfortable independent accommodation. The wedding took place with 20 family members in the house. The boy's parents went back to their home in Vijayanagaram on the third day after the marriage.

The newly wedded couple continued to live in the same house on the ground floor. But all was not fine. On the very third day after the marriage the boy started physically abusing Swetha's niece and finding fault for every trivial thing, and this increased gradually. Her parents noticed that the smile on the girl's face had vanished and she started losing weight. One day she developed high temperature, and surprisingly did not reveal this to the mother until 15 days later. They talked to the boy and thought that any misunderstandings between the couple would be settled in due course of time. After a month they sent the girl to her in-law's house after obtaining assurance of her safety from the parents and the boy.

Three months passed. Swetha's niece texted her on Whatsapp about her life with her husband and mother-in-law, the physical abuse she was facing and her response of tolerating and adjusting herself to the physical and mental pain. Even while facing a lot of torture the girl did

not reveal the brutality she was being subjected to either to Swetha or to her parents as she was concerned for their wellbeing and for the prestige of the family.

One day Swetha got news from her brother that her niece who was four months pregnant by then, was driven out of the house by her husband after being physically assaulted. They were shocked and overcome with grief and anger to see the horrible bruises on her body. A police complaint and an FIR against the husband and his parents were filed which meant that they all would have to face trials in the form of loss of job and punishment. Even as her niece was going through this ordeal along with her parents, because of the delay in lengthy legal procedures, Swetha heard her saying that she felt sad that the boy's parents would have to suffer because of his misdeeds. It made her wonder whether this was forgiveness and whether it was justified.

I have narrated this true story to draw attention and reflect upon,

- 1) What are the limitations of forgiveness in the context of such young victims?*
- 2) Is forgiveness meant to aid reconciliation or personal wellbeing?*
- 3) To examine and explain how the lives of ordinary people have been touched by the practice of forgiveness.*

Meaning and Significance of Forgiveness

'Forgiveness' has different meanings in psychology, sociology, philosophy and theology. However, forgiveness is practised differently by different people; therefore, forgiveness cannot be defined as one view. Forgiveness means, forgiving someone who caused pain through his or her actions or words, which means that one gives up grudge or anger against the wrongdoer. Grudge and anger depend on the intensity of the pain. For example, in general, pain caused by hurting the ego or pain caused by losing life itself. However, the study shows that forgiveness is possible and it will be a practical help to the affected regardless of the particular religious beliefs one has or even when one has no religious belief. Therefore, forgiveness is understood and practised differently depending on the context, culture, tradition, and religion in which women live or even on humanitarian grounds.

Enright Robert says, “Perhaps forgiveness will never become so scientific that all scholars in all disciplines will use common labels to denote movement toward a forgiving posture. In terms of development, you should not view any of the models as fixed in that a forgiver moves rigidly from point A to point Z. There are many twists and turns in any person’s forgiveness journey.”² As Enright’s points out, forgiveness does not have one particular meaning and method. But forgiveness is an important virtue adopted by all disciplines. There is no fixed step by step process which can be applied in every context such as, conflict between two individuals, two societies, or a wife and husband where two families are involved. However, it is a proven fact that a woman’s life after any conflict is vulnerable. Therefore, this article tries to focus on forgiveness in the context of victimised and traumatised women and how forgiveness can be used as a coping mechanism.

Forgiveness from Womens’ Point of View

Theoretically, the meaning and understanding of forgiveness for both men and women is not much different in general. However, according to a psychotherapy study, when therapists work with couples it is often found that women are more willing to volunteer to participate in therapy than men.³ Also, women experience forgiveness differently. For instance, in the context of domestic violence due to socio-cultural pressure, the girl has to compromise and ‘let go’ and continues to live with the spouse. Accepting and tolerating violent situations is common for women in Indian society, due to a dominant patriarchal society and the lack of economic empowerment.

Forgiveness is not just wiping out the wrong or undoing of what has been done. But how can this be achieved without requiring the victim simply to give up on her angry and hostile feelings toward the wrongdoer? These bitter feelings are common and extremely difficult to overcome. They are natural and indeed justifiable reactions towards the wrongdoer as difficulty in forgiveness depends on the seriousness

²Robert D. Enright, Joanna North, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, *Exploring Forgiveness* (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1998) p. 8.

³Wanda Malcolm, Nancy DeCourville, Kathryn Belicki, eds., *Women’s Reflections on the Complexities of Forgiveness* (New York/London: Routledge, 2007), p. Xix

of pain caused by the wrongdoer.⁴ But the fact is, even though the victim says that she has forgiven those who have hurt her and has tried to forget the past, the past keeps haunting, returning and repeating itself subconsciously. The result is that most of the victims live in grudge and anger towards offender or wrongdoer and may have feelings of defeat, guilt and shame, or fear themselves in facing society.

This brings us to another aspect of forgiveness. According to Joanna North, human beings are originally spiritual beings by nature, in whom desires, hopes, and fears are expressed and experienced. Forgiveness is a spiritual component and has moral relevance to human beings irrespective of religion or culture.⁵ So, this spiritual side is to be connected, in a complex way, to our capacity for morally significant feelings and actions. Thus, forgiveness is of profound spiritual and moral relevance to all of us.

The Indian philosophical view, as delineated in Shandilya Upanishad (1.1), is “The forbearance of pleasant and the unpleasant, the praise as well as the abuse is termed as ‘*Kshama*’”.⁶ The general tendency of humans is to accept appreciation and to be willing to listen to good things about themselves; therefore, people cannot tolerate even a little criticism or humiliation. The consequences of hurt are challenging to overcome as people find it hard to forgive, to control their mind, thoughts and emotions because bitter memories linger for a long time and cause repeated pain. Therefore, forgiveness (*Kshama*) is not just about forgiving someone for their mistakes or offenses. It is about handling the good and the bad, sorrow and happiness in a patient and self-restrained manner.⁷ *Kshama* is the key to unburdening the mind

⁴ Suzanne Freedman, “Forgiveness and Reconciliation: The importance of Understanding How They Differ,” in *Counselling and Values* 42/3 (April, 1998): 202, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/232575384_Forgiveness_and_Reconciliation_The_Importance_of_Understanding_How_They_Differ(accessed on 12 Dec 2020).

⁵ Joanna North, “The ‘Ideal’ of Forgiveness: A Philosopher’s Exploration,” in *Exploring Forgiveness*, edited by Robert D. Enright, Joanna North, Archbishop Desmond Tutu (Wisconsin: The University Of Wisconsin Press, 1998), p.17.

⁶ Nithin Sridhar, “Kshma: The Importance of forgiveness in life,” <https://www.newsgram.com/kshama-the-importance-of-forgiveness-in-life>, 2015 (accessed on 18 Nov 2020).

⁷ Sridhar, “Kshma: The Importance of forgiveness in life.”

from burdens like frustration, hate, anger, and enmity and must not be perceived as a sign of weakness; instead, it is a sign of strength.

Writing about the anger present in a victim, Martha Nussbaum says, “most people carry anger till the offender gets justice, it is common but often, normative irrationality of anger; a reasonable person shifts his/her anger towards more productive forward-looking thoughts, asking what can actually be done to increase either personal or social welfare. This forward-looking anger is called Transition-Anger.”⁸ This forward-looking emotion, however, is less common. According to Nussbaum, anger is useful to tackle three components in everyday life: 1. Anger is necessary to the protection of dignity and self-respect; 2. Anger is essential to taking the wrongdoer seriously rather than treating him or like a child or a person of diminished responsibility; 3. Anger is an essential part of combating injustice. Therefore, transformational anger turns to a great strength of forgiveness and such forgiveness will be a tool for coping strategy.

The above different viewpoints emphasize that, it is so common to get angry for every victimised woman. However, because a human being is originally a spiritual being it is practical and possible to practise forgiveness in everyday life by transforming one’s anger into strength to find the way forward to regain self-respect, self-confidence and to combat injustice. For example, in the above narrated true story of the girl after experiencing all sorts of abuse, her parent’s efforts in approaching legal and judiciary support went in vain. The girl and the parents became helpless. As the days passed by, the girl with her own conscience and self-realization, forced herself to be bold and regained strength to overcome certain emotions to start her life again. Definitely the meeting with psychiatrists helped her realise her inner strengths. This proves that therapists also use forgiveness as a tool to overcome negative emotions in their clinical practices. These practices aim not so much to make the affected women forget what had happened to them but to help use their experiences as a coping mechanism to reduce the negative feelings and increase self-empowerment and self-esteem. Therefore, it is very important to understand the emotional, physical and mental condition of the victim before applying the idea of forgiveness.

⁸Martha C. Nussbaum, *Anger and Forgiveness: Resentment, Generosity, Justice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), p.6.

Forgiveness from the Victim's Perspective

As far as women victims are concerned, asymmetric power equations, gender stereotyping, and discrimination, contribute to violence against women. In case of sexual violence, the victims often tend to hide it due to the “shame” of the experience, the fear of losing status and of being excluded from their communities.⁹ Patriarchal society and an inefficient judicial system impose the idea of ‘letting go’ or ‘tolerance’. A common occurrence in Indian society is that the victim is compelled to forget the incident as well as the perpetrator of the crime. Finally, she loses all hope of getting justice.

The general tendency of most of the victims is to approach the police for justice. But unfortunately, many who are working within the system itself, are unclear about the aims and goals of legal sanctions and penalties.¹⁰ For example, when we deliver a prison verdict upon an offender, what exactly are we trying to do? Are we simply asking to punish him and make him suffer? Or demanding monetary penalties from the offender? Otherwise, is it that we are trying to rehabilitate the offender to make him a better and more socially useful member of the society? Further, are we trying to do all these things at once? Does this approach alleviate the victim's pain and help in getting relief? And, finally, what remedy is there for the victim's trauma and stigma that she has to live with?

Surely there are no concrete answers for the questions related to the offender because of an inefficient and lengthy legal process that fails to deliver justice. Therefore, even after a number of legal acts to stop crime against women, statistics show that the crime rate is increasing due to the lack of fear among offenders. It is to be noted that even if the victim is the recipient of justice, she still needs to work on herself to overcome her trauma, the ignominy of stigma and many negative emotions. One kind of trauma is psychological wounds suffered by the individual as a consequence of violence inflicted on her. It can change a person's psychological well-being, and lead to depression, anxiety, reliving of the experience, vigilance and the inability to trust or connect to with people. The second kind of trauma where the victims

⁹ Nussbaum, *Anger and Forgiveness: Resentment, Generosity, Justice*, p. 6.

¹⁰ North, “The ‘Ideal’ of Forgiveness: A Philosopher's Exploration,” in *Exploring Forgiveness*, p15.

suffer are wounds not merely based on personal harm but based on an injustice done to the member of the family or representative of the victim. In the second kind of trauma wounds that stem from injustice to groups can be experienced in this personal psychological way too, through intrapsychic and private reactions to trauma such as nightmares, obsessive thoughts, and depression. Therefore, the Forgiveness Advocacy Movement in the field of psychology focuses on relief from different kinds of trauma.

Wanda Malcolm is of the view that “it is always the victim’s right to determine if, or when, she might forgive a hurtful other.”¹¹ She argues that much pressure on women to forgive could invalidate the victim’s experience and undermine the client’s perception of the self as strong enough to come to terms with the pain and suffering involved in experiencing an interpersonal injury at the hands of a loved one or the offender. Therefore, victim has to be given enough time for self-repair work and to achieve the kind of forgiveness that leads to good physical, mental, and spiritual health. According to Joanna North, forgiveness does not, indeed cannot, wipe out the fact of wrong having been done. Nor is it a matter of simply giving up one’s right to punish (although this decision may in fact be a result of one’s forgiveness of another person). Nor do we excuse the wrongdoer in forgiving him. We still see him as the perpetrator of the wrong and as the one who is responsible for it.¹²

A contrary view is that the idea of forgiveness in the context of the victim may not always be the best alternative for women to recover from the trauma of sexual abuse or any violence against them, if it prevents them from asserting themselves as undeserving of the abuse or discourages them from holding the abuser responsible for his or her actions¹³. Reduction of negative feelings help to increase self-empowerment and self-esteem. Forgiveness does not remove the fact or event of wrongdoing but instead relies upon the recognition of

¹¹ Malcolm, DeCourville, Belicki, eds., *Women’s Reflections on the Complexities of Forgiveness*, xxiv.

¹² North, “The ‘Ideal’ of Forgiveness: A Philosopher’s Exploration,” in *Exploring Forgiveness*, p. 15.

¹³ Helen Chagigiorgis and Sandra Paivio, “Forgiveness as an Outcome in Emotion-Focused Trauma Therapy,” in *Women’s Reflections on the Complexities of Forgiveness*, edited by Wanda Malcolm, Nancy DeCourville, Kathryn Belicki (New York/London: Routledge, 2007), p. 121.

wrong having been committed in order for the process of forgiveness to be made possible.

True forgiveness does not take place with strong sentimentality and sympathy at the expense of justice and dignity. There is certainly no justice or dignity if, in the name of forgiveness, one ignores the seriousness of a few human actions. Forgiveness involves faith, a willingness to risk being hurt again. But it does not demand that you knowingly lay yourself open to certain abuse. You can forgive but then limit or even end the relationship. Also, the one who is forgiven has no obligation to the forgiver as a condition of forgiveness. Forgiveness is not a *quid pro quo* (Latin Phrase meaning a favour or advantage granted in return for something) deal. But if there is to be an ongoing relationship, then the one who is forgiven must try to learn from his mistakes and not reinjure the people that have offered their forgiveness.

Enright provides a helpful definition of forgiveness as the “willingness to abandon one’s right to resentment, negative judgment, and indifferent behaviour toward one who unjustly injures us, while fostering the undeserved qualities of compassion, generosity and even love.”¹⁴ If we want to move forward, we cannot live in the past because we will get stuck with things. The fundamental principle of Forgiveness is that it is an evolving process. As a first step, it is important to introspect, “Where is it that I am stuck or why am I stuck? I have been able to forgive, but as a result of it I am not able to move forward.” The next step involves developing compassion. With compassion, one learns to let go. Lastly realization enables the victim to move forward. In my opinion, if I have been able to forgive myself it is more likely that I can learn to forgive others around me. If I haven’t forgiven myself inside out, then whatever I do to myself is what I am going to do for others and I won’t be able to forgive either. In this process there is a scope for forgiveness as a basis for bringing one towards reconciliation.

Forgiveness for Reconciliation

Men and women experience conflict differently. Women often become victims of any kind of violence but at the same time they try to access different sources to resolve and come out of the conflict situations, so

¹⁴ Walter J. Dickey, “Forgiveness and Crime: The Possibilities of Restorative Justice,” in *Exploring Forgiveness*, edited by Robert D. Enright, Joanna North, Archbishop Desmond Tutu (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1998), p. 107.

they comprise the very backbone of peace and reconciliation initiatives.¹⁵ Therefore, for women peace-building is a part of everyday living, one which cannot be separated from their life.

However, forgiveness is not for reconciliation always and it is possible to forgive without reconciling, without coming together again in love and friendship. But it is not possible to reconcile truly without forgiving. Nevertheless, forgiveness is an important virtue for peaceful coexistence in a family or in society. If there can be no reconciliation, forgiveness is the process that enables the forgiver to get on with his or her life with the pain of betrayal. If the goal is to reconcile, then forgiveness provides a new context which nurtures the relationship. For example, in case of a victimised woman, forgiveness allows her to let go of all that has been difficult to bear and begin again without forgetting the past. Admittedly, her anger may not vanish immediately and it will take some time to heal. When she forgives, she may not approve of what was done, but at the same time she will not reject the others outright as will. This can be called transformational forgiveness. Therefore, transformational forgiveness helps her to take a decision to act strongly to analyse her present mental, physical and social situations. This will help her reconcile herself and the other to a just path. Such empowering strengths for the victimised woman will elevate her status in family and society, enabling her to contribute positively to society.

Transformational forgiveness is an act of maturity, for it indicates a high degree of balance, self-awareness, self-possession, and willingness to connect with others.¹⁶ With this, for a woman in a time of transition, there is the possibility of change for the better and the instinct to be connected to oneself and others. From such connections forgiveness, empathy, compassion, and mercy can flow with the natural results of restoration of balance. If balance is restored in the

¹⁵ Elisabeth Rehn and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, "Women, War, and Peace: The Independent Experts' Assessment on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Women and Women's Role in Peace-building," https://genderandsecurity.org/sites/default/files/Rehn_Sirleaf_-_W_War_Peace_-_the_Independent_Experts_Assessment_on_the_Impact_of_AC_on_W_Ws_Role_in_Pbldg.pdf (accessed 8 Dec 2019).

¹⁶ Walter J. Dickey, "Forgiveness and Crime: The Possibilities of Restorative Justice," in *Exploring Forgiving*, edited by Robert D. Enright and Joanna North (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1998), p. 118.

affected woman's life it will take her through this period of transition to a healthier world. Therefore, forgiveness for reconciliation is implicit in the nature of woman's problems and the reasons for optimism is the change that will come largely from individual effort, from participation, and better understanding of her interdependence and her connections.

Conclusion

Forgiveness is for reconciliation and transformation of women from feelings of anger, hatred and grudges to personal wellbeing, in order to overcome demotivation, discrimination, and injustice.

The objective of forgiveness from a woman's point of view is a transformational anger where negative emotions get converted into strengths and act as a useful instrument to move forward from a state of trauma to self-realization. Self-realization has two important aspects of forgiveness, i) to live with the past but not live in the past which means not living by recollecting past memories repeatedly which leads to depression, unhappiness and misery, rather even while not being able to forget what has happened in the past one can find the root cause and solutions which leads to personal wellbeing; ii) compartmentalization of the action and the person (wrongdoer) is important since otherwise we often see wrong action and the person who commits wrong as one unit and thus we hate and try to take revenge on the wrongdoer. Transformation anger will help women gain strength to separate the wrong action from the person and deal with the action alone which will lead to the overcoming of grudges, anger, resentment and help one move towards reconciliation for the welfare of individual or society.

Through forgiveness, the pain and hurt caused by the original wrong are released, or at least they are not allowed to mar the whole of one's being for all time. Once we recognize that an act of wrongdoing can have long-lasting and far-reaching effects, then we can see at least one aspect of the value of forgiveness as a response to having been wronged. If the young woman in the narrated story can forgive her attacker, she will, at the very least, be doing something of great value for her own self. In refusing to allow the wrong to cause her any more pain, she will be asserting her own value as a person.

The outcome of justice, forgiveness and reconciliation are one and the same. However, Justice happens in the practical world that is provided by the judicial system; whereas, forgiveness is one of the highest moral virtues which may be inculcated and practiced by one's own self. When practised by the victim, she stands on a high moral ground counterbalancing the hurt and suffering that have been meted out to her. So, in the moral world, forgiveness enjoys an equally high place on par with justice. Reconciliation, however, is not a moral virtue. Efforts have to be made between two people, but there is no guarantee that reconciliation can actually happen. It may or may not take place. Nevertheless, forgiveness is the basis of reconciliation and it plays a crucial role in the reconciliation process.

If every victimised woman practices this sort of forgiveness, and leads a transformed life empowering herself with strength to face any challenge in the society on her own, she will emerge as an empowered woman.



NCCI Women's Concern promotes

THURSDAYS IN BLACK

Campaign

in Churches and Christian/Ecumenical Organisations

To address

GENDER INJUSTICE

particularly Domestic Violence and Rape

Need Help?

Feel Free to call: 9455059522 / mail us your concern:

jyoti@ncci1914.com; ncci@ncci1914.com

The “Meghalayan Covenanters” call for an Ecological Commonwealth!

- Anand Veeraraj*

I. Meghalaya, the Garden of Eden in the East

Meghalaya is a small state in North India, adjoining the country of Bangladesh. The word, “Meghalaya” in *Sanskrit* means, “An Abode of Clouds;” in *Tamil*, “A Temple of Clouds.” Indeed, it is a fitting moniker for the place and the people who live in Meghalaya. The scenery is breathtakingly beautiful, especially during the monsoon seasons. Travel brochures promoting tourism to Meghalaya depict a region with low hanging rain clouds, embracing the rocky hills, hamlets, and valleys with scores of waterfalls, streams, and lakes. About 70% of the state is subtropical forest ecoregion, with a biodiversity of rare mammals, birds, and plants. A small portion of the forested area is preserved as “sacred groves” for religious rituals, protected from commercial exploitation. Indeed, Meghalaya is a template for an “ecological commonwealth” -- an abode made for gods, people, and nature to live in harmony and in sustainable ways. If ever there was or is a Garden of Eden in the East, it is here in Meghalaya. Interestingly, the garden swarms with scores of serpents, especially the King Cobra, one of the most venomous snake species on earth. If you ever happen to hike through the forest trails in Meghalaya, don’t stop to talk with any of these serpents!

Meghalaya is an exceedingly small state, with an area covering 8,660 square miles, roughly 2/3rd the size of Rhode Island. It has a population of about 3.7 million people. As tribal people, Meghalayans have historically followed a matrilineal system where the family lineage and inheritance are traced through women. The youngest daughter inherits all the family’s wealth and takes care of her parents in their old age. About 75% of the Meghalayans are Christians – Presbyterians, Baptists, and Catholics. English is the official language of the state.

*Rev. Anand Veeraraj is an ordained minister in the Church of South India and serves as the Pastor-emeritus of the New Jersey Indian Church/Trinity Community Church [UCC & PC-USA. He lives with his family near Princeton, New Jersey.

In December 1986, I published an article in the journal, *The National Council of Churches Review [NCCR]* entitled, “Environmental Mission of the Church.”¹ The article highlighted the alarming environmental crisis that was engulfing the Indian subcontinent. It began with a developing story about the drinking water scarcity encountered in Cherrapunji Hills and the surrounding regions in Meghalaya. [Cherrapunji Hills received an annual rainfall of about 500 inches. Now the rainfall has dwindled down to annual average of 470 inches]. Meghalaya, which was called, “the wettest place on earth,” was now nicknamed, “the wettest desert on earth.” The reasons were obvious. Large scale commercial felling of trees had not only denuded these green hills making them barren, but also caused extensive soil erosions leading to massive flooding at the foothills, especially in Bangladesh during monsoon seasons. That article in the *NCCR* journal on India’s environmental crisis was perhaps the first of its kind published in any ecumenical journals in India. Since then, major Christian journals in India began highlighting the growing environmental crisis on the Indian subcontinent and called the local churches to address the issue as their missional calling.

II. The Meghalayan Golden Spike

Meghalaya has been in the news lately. On July 18, 2018, the International Commission on Stratigraphy (ICS) -- a subcommittee of the International Union of Geographic Sciences (IUGS) which is tasked with defining the geologic time scale -- voted to create a new geological age labeled as the Meghalayan Age. The Meghalayan age is the youngest, newest unit of the geologic timescale that arose about 4.2 ka (thousand years) ago. The age was marked by extreme global warming, followed by widespread drought leading to the collapse of ancient civilizations.

The ICS divides earth’s 4.6-billion-year geological history into eras, periods, epochs, and ages. Holocene Epoch, the current geological epoch began at the end of the last ice age c. 11,700 years ago. Until recently, the epoch did not comprise precise labels demarking the geological stratification within its timelines. Now the epoch is divided

¹ Anand Veeraraj, “Environmental Mission of the Church,” *NCC Review* (Nagpur, India) vol. CVI#. 11, December 1986, 733-740.

up into three ages: the Greenlandian, the Northgrippian and the Meghalayan. The first two ages of the Holocene epoch – Greenlandian and Northgrippian were identified, not from the customary rocky layers, rather from the isotopes detected in the ice core drilled from the depths of the earth’s ice sheets. The Greenlandian age experienced the rising of warming trends with copious precipitation. The middle phase of the Holocene epoch -- now referred to as the Northgrippian age -- continued with the ripple effects of the melting ice sheets, runoff from c. 8,300 years ago to the start of the Meghalayan age.

The Meghalayan age was marked by uptick in global warming and a megadrought that lasted two decades or longer, followed by a sudden dry cool down. The Meghalayan golden spike is epitomized in isotopes of oxygen atoms present in the layers of a stalagmite growing from the floor of the Mawmluh cave in Meghalaya. [Mawmluh cave, located at an elevation of 1,290 meters, is one of the longest and deepest caves in India]. Prof. Mike Walker of the University of Wales, UK, who led the international team of Holocene scientists says, “The two most prominent shifts occur at about 4,300 and about 4,100 years before present, so the mid-point between the two would be 4,200 years before present (2018), and this is the age that we attribute to the Meghalayan golden spike.”²

How did the ICS scientists nail down these geological timelines? “This is the first time,” writes Malavika Vyawahare, *Hindustan Times*, “a geological time scale change has been linked to cultural event – in this case the collapse of civilizations.”³ For this reason, the geological stratigraphy of the Meghalayan age is now defined, not only by the global warming and its effects on the environment, but also by the repercussions of human activities – pastoral-agrarian pursuits, mass migration, organized warfare, rise and fall of ancient civilizations, etc.

² Steve Petsch, “Welcome to the new Meghalayan age - here’s how it fits with the rest of Earth’s geologic history.” <http://phys.org/news/2018-09-meghalayan-age-rest-earth-geologic.html> (theconversation.com).

³ Malavika Vyawahare, “Meghalayan Age makes the state a part of geologic history” *Hindustan Times/Science*, July 18, 2018. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/science/meghalayan-age-makes-the-state-a-part-of-geologic-history/story-bvbKrd33IXgMD1o6BaSjmM.html>.

III. Karl Jaspers and the “Axial Age”

The Meghalayan Age⁴ and the Axial Age (the first religious and philosophical turning-point in history)⁵ are in dialogue here. The science of ecology and the traditional philosophy of religion are like water and oil; they do not jell. These topics deal with global climate changes and how they affect human-world relations; their perceptions, and approaches are diametrically atypical. Ecosystems are organic, relational, ever evolving with human communities imbedded within. Contrarily, most axial religious traditions and formulations are monadic, thrive on exclusivity and singularity; or else they will not be reckoned as faith traditions.⁶

The Axial Age, [*die Achsenzeit*] was observed by the German philosopher, Karl Jaspers (1883-1969).⁷ Jaspers propounded that the age was a global religious phenomenon that emerged during the six centuries, from 800 to 200 BCE. Prominent religious luminaries -- philosophers, prophets, and sages rose on the world stage to grapple with issues of ultimate reality, nature of humanity, and the world in fresh new ways. These religious leaders and philosophers, together with their cohorts became centers of new religious movements and schools of philosophies.

Until recently, scholars of Axial Age were oblivious to global environmental changes and climate catastrophes that visited ancient civilizations. We would need to query whether the Meghalayan Age geological markers have the grit to index the complexities of the Axial

⁴ “Meghalayan” and “*The Meghalayan Covenanters*” - The International Commission on Stratigraphy has embraced the term – “Meghalayan Age,” to mark the 3rd phase of the Holocene Epoch. We have adopted these terms and expanded their meaning to index the emerging new faith communities in this ecological age.

⁵ “Axial Age” - The word “axial,” for our purpose here means, “relating to or resembling an axis of rotation.” [*Princeton's WordNet*]. In this paper, we prefer to use these terms: “axial revolution” or “axis of history” or “axiality.”

⁶ Anand Veeraraj, “Christianity and the Environment” in O.P. Dwivedi, ed., *World Religions and the Environment*, (New Delhi, India: Gitanjali Publishing House, 1989), 36-118.

⁷ Karl Jaspers, *Vom Ursprung und Ziel der Geschichte*, (Zurich: Artemis, 1949). Translates as *The Origin and Goal of History* (Hew Haven: Yale University Press, 1953).

Age traditions, philosophies and spiritualities. How do the metaphysics of axiality (religion, philosophy, and spiritualities) mesh with the science of ecology, geology and climate change? At the moment, science and religion seem to run amok, independent of each other. No meaningful dialogue exists between the protagonists of the Meghalayan Age and the Axial Age theologians, philosophers and historians. The recent pronouncement of the ICS scientists on the “Meghalayan Age” offers us the opportunity to bring these camps together for a dialogue.

On the other hand, we would also need to query the fundamental axial enigma as to how the axial religions and philosophies rose simultaneously without any concord with similar movements elsewhere around the globe? And why some groups were left out from participating in the axial advances or its foibles? For instance, women and dark-skinned folks were generally excluded from the axial graces and privileges. Primal, tribal, and indigenous societies were often bypassed from marching in the axial parade. While every scholar sought to expound the axial phenomenon from their own academic expertise, no one offered a credible, all-encompassing rationale as to why axial movements rose around the world simultaneously in the first place. Neither did they offer any credible rationale as to why some groups and societies were left out in the process. Nevertheless, almost all scholars studying the “Axial Age” concur on a single “axis of history” – a phenomenon which Max Weber called, the “religious rejection of the world,”⁸ – conversely, the “human alienation from the world” – a sentiment common to all post-axial religions and philosophies. This post-axial stance was diametrically divergent from the virtual “acceptance of the world” found in pre-axial societies that had lasted for thousands of years prior to the advent of axial revolution. What caused the post-axial disenchantment with the world, while at the same time exalting an otherworldly realm as truly worthy and infinitely valuable?⁹

⁸ Max Weber, “Religious Rejections of the World and Their Directions” in *From Max Weber*; ed. Hans H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946).

⁹ Robert N. Bellah, *Beyond Belief: Essays on Religion in a Post-traditional world* (First Ed.), (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1970), 22-23.

IV. The New Green Hermeneutics - “The Meghalayan Monocles”

The saga is narrated in my book, *Green History of Religion* published in 2006.¹⁰ Writing a review of the book, John Cobb says,

*This is a truly groundbreaking book! Despite all our talk of overcoming dualism, our historical and systematic accounts of the history of religion rarely take the relation of human beings and their natural environment seriously into account. [The book] devotes several chapters to recent interpretations of what Jaspers calls the Axial Age to show how oblivious most of them [scholars on religion] are to the natural world. . . . Taking the changing relation of human beings to their natural environment into account deeply transforms the understanding of the history of religion.*¹¹ [Emphasis mine].

Cobb went on to invite scholars of different disciplines to take on parallel projects. The book raked in unintended dividends, not so much in monetary returns [we hardly made any profit from publishing/marketing the book]; but its contribution to the study of the history of religions and for developing the tools crucial for biblical hermeneutics, was enormous. For us, it was immensely ingenious, ground-breaking, and gratifying. By coincidence, this was the first time that any student of religion has ever tried their luck with Green Hermeneutics!

We have therefore, for the first time, opted to christen this New Green Hermeneutics as the “Meghalayan Monocles” (MM). And we call for the advancement and refinement of this discipline for the study of religion, theology and the reading of sacred texts. Until recently, hermeneutics has remained a specialized discipline, narrowly focused within the confines of linguistics or epistemology, primarily employed in interpreting sacred texts. Such constrictions have made hermeneutics an autonomous discipline, at times spinning into a spurious discipline with banal outcomes as witnessed in our Sunday sermons. Lately the boundaries of the discipline have been extended

¹⁰ Anand Veeraraj, *Green History of Religion* (Bangalore, India: Centre for Contemporary Christianity, 2006).

¹¹ John B. Cobb, Jr., “Process Resources: Critic’s Corner: Books: *Green History of Religion*, by Anand Veeraraj” in *Creative Transformation*, vol. 16, No. 2, Center for Process Studies, Claremont, CA, (Spring 2007), 26-27.

to include philology, philosophy, theology, history, jurisprudence, psychology, and social sciences, but it has yet to venture out to extend its boundaries to embrace human-world relations, the disciplines of ecology and environmental sciences.

What we now call for is to enlarge these established hermeneutical margins to embrace other fundamental disciplines for the study of the history of religion and theology. We read our sacred scriptures side-by-side with the climate models charts, population genomics, DNA signature maps of human migration, philological graphs etc. to plot when and where in the evolution of human societies, momentous historical events -- warfare, plagues, social unrests, mass migration, rise and fall of civilizations transpired, and how and why, in that milieu, did religious luminaries, prophets, philosophers, sages, ascetics, and wisdom traditions emerge, and what tenets, rituals, liturgies, scriptures, creeds and the multi-various religious and cultural paraphernalia and products were fabricated.

V. From “Rejection of the World” to “World Loyalty”¹²

A critical component of the MM is the concept of “gestalt.”¹³ Religions also trade in meanings, sifting through myriads of gestalts acquired from ecological and social environment, selectively employing them to construct their respective world hypothesis. Every religion and philosophy seek to comprehend the universe and the immediate habitat for positing a *raison d’être* for human presence and experience within it.

Human engagement with the natural world takes many different forms – from artistic appreciation to ruthless exploitation for economic gains. Some of the vital components that go into the makeup of human-world relations and the concomitant world hypothesis are

¹² Alfred North Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, 1926 (New York: Fordham University Press, 2003, 1926), 60.

¹³ *Gestalts* – is a German word, tricky to define precisely what it means. The closest definition of the term refers to human ability to perceive patterns and forms in events, situations, and environments as organized whole, i.e., the “whole” is more than the sum of its parts. Our minds often fill in the missing information to complete a cohesive whole.

land,¹⁴ topophilia,¹⁵ biophilia,¹⁶ landscape gestalts,¹⁷ human ecology,¹⁸ and climatic changes and their effects on the environment and human societies. John Hick defines religion “as a self-regulating response of the human animal to the pressures generated by its particular niche within the biological system.”¹⁹ The pressures on human societies and human-world relations exerted by biological niches also shape the worldviews and the archetypes of the collective consciousness.

Religion by nature is selective; it filters multitude of gestalts offered by the natural world, the universe, neighborhoods, communities at large and one’s own intuitions, absorbs what fits its scheme while opting for imagined ideas of “misplaced concreteness.”²⁰ Through the lenses of the MM, any student of history can now easily observe the tell-tale signs of the axial revolution or what we wish to call, “the first axial paradigm shift.” The “world-accepting,” organic-relational existence of the primal world which lasted into the pre-axial age was usurped by the world-rejecting axial mentality of the Meghalayan age. Strangely though, scholars who studied axial phenomenon did not connect the dots, because their approach to the study of the history of religion or hermeneutics of the sacred texts was highly anthropocentric and dualistic. They rarely took the natural world seriously; and much of their works came to a dead-end.

It must be reckoned that tenets like “cosmic homelessness,” “transcendence,” “soteriology”²¹ etc. are of recent origin, in comparison to the long-lasting histories of *homo sapiens* on the planet

¹⁴ Herman E. Daly and John B. Cobb, Jr., *For the Common Good: Redirecting the Economy toward Community, the Environment, and a Sustainable Future* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989), 97-117.

¹⁵ Yu-fu Tuan, *Topophilia: A study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes and Values* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1974).

¹⁶ Edward O. Wilson, *Biophilia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984).

¹⁷ Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac: And Sketches Here and There* (Oxford University Press, 1949); Walter Brueggemann, *The Land* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1977).

¹⁸ Murray Bookchin, “What is Social Ecology?” in Michael E. Zimmerman et al., *Environmental Philosophy: From Animal Rights Radical Ecology*, (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1993) 355-373.

¹⁹ John Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion: Human Responses to the Transcendent* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 1-6.

²⁰ John B. Cobb, Jr., and WM. Andrew Schwartz, eds., *Putting Philosophy to Work: Toward an Ecological Civilization* (Anoka, Minnesota: Process Century Press, 2018) 9-25.

²¹ Soteriology – the doctrine of Salvation/Liberation.

earth. Axial world-hypothesis has been in existence for a mere four thousand years while *homo sapiens* have inhabited the planet as hunters and foragers for over two million years. The dominant disposition of the primal and indigenous societies has been one of being “at home” in the natural world. Primal myths and cults affirmed the providence of nature and integrated human presence and experiences with the processes and cycles of nature.

Alfred North Whitehead called this disposition, “*World Loyalty*.”²² If ever there was a phase in human evolution when some modicum of “*world loyalty*” was extant, it was the primal times when *homo sapiens* lived as hunter-gatherers – the longest-lasting of any structures of human existence. Those primal societies could do so with their implicit trust in the benevolence of the world processes. We may vicariously identify the “*world loyalty*” of the primal times in contrast to the “world-rejection” of the axial traditions. “*World Loyalty*” is constituted by God, Creativity, the Cosmos, and the Present. It is ultimate, irreducible,²³ wholistic, consistent, complex, organic, relational, experiential, and creative. Sadly, from the onset of the Holocene epoch, there has been a steady erosion of the values of “wholeness.” If religion is ultimately about ‘the whole,’ then any lesser loyalties – even commitments to any strains of parochial monotheism – is falsehood or idolatry.²⁴

VI. “The Meghalayan Covenants”

Conversations on envisioning an ecological commonwealth will undoubtedly call us to dabble not only with the gestalts of our immediate environment, our neighborhood, communities, the natural world, and the planet, but also with the atomic world, celestial spheres, and the cosmos. We call this as the New Cosmology -- the Cosmic Immortality.²⁵ We who live in the space age are one of the propitious

²² Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, 58-59.

²³ John B. Cobb, Jr., et al., *Putting Philosophy to Work*, 125.

²⁴ Mark Johnston, *Saving God: Religion after Idolatry* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), Chapters 2 & 5; Herman E. Daly *For the Common Good*, 398.

²⁵ Deepak Bansal, “Whitehead’s Cosmology – Process Relational Perspective to Relativity and Quantum Mechanics” *Cosmos and History: The Journal of Natural and Social Philosophy*, vol. 14, no. 1, 2018; <https://www.cosmosandhistory.org/index.php/journal/article/viewFile/681/1161>.

people with acumen for comprehending anything and everything in depth and breadth scientifically, philosophically, psychically, rationally as well as religiously. For the first time in human history, we glimpse down at our planet on our desktops via signals beamed from the outer space. Astronaut Michael Collins said,

I remember so vividly what I saw when I looked back at my fragile home – a glistening, inviting beacon, delicate blue and white, a tiny outpost suspended in the black infinity, Earth is to be treasured and nurtured, something precious that must endure.²⁶

Indeed, several astronauts who observed the planet Earth from outer space have expressed similar sentiments. Some of them even claim to have had some sort of religious conversion.²⁷ Indeed the sheer beauty of the planet which sparkles like a blue diamond set against the dark velvety space enchants all of us. For postmodern humans who are at the cusp of a new space age, entry into such ecstasies occurs from viewing the “Blue Planet” and the cosmos through all means available to us. Whether we gaze into the starry heavens or view the earth through space telescopes, or peek into the subatomic world through Hadron Collider, one thing is certain – that we are beginning to live out our religious or spiritual existence at several frontiers [and dimensions] rather than clinging precariously to our own parochial religious histories and traditions. Increasingly we are made aware that our destinies and that of this planet are contingent upon the forces that are outside the planet and beyond human control, and those that are of our own making. Therefore, our religious imaginations, existence, experiences, and engagements in the world must come to rest on the knowledge we absorb from multi-varied disciplines of science and arts – cosmology, astrobiology, astronomy, and planetary-climatological and environmental histories. “The whole Earth is aesthetically stimulating,” wrote Holmes Rolston, “philosophically challenging, and ethically disturbing.”²⁸

The need of the hour is for humanity to be open to the fresh visitations of cosmic, planetary, and ecological gestalts that enchant the world of

²⁶ Michael Collins, “Foreword,” in Roy A. Gallant, *Our Universe* (Washington D.C.: National Geographic Society, 1980), 6.

²⁷ Veeraraj, *Green History of Religion*, ix.

²⁸ Holmes Rolston, III., *A New Environmental Ethics: The Next Millennium for Life on Earth* (New York, NY: Rutledge, 2012), 194.

nature anew and aid humanity to envision and nurture the emergence of a new paradigm – a new faith which we have christened here as the “Meghalayan Faith.” Meghalayan Faith is universal, transaxial, transecumenical, transCatholic. There is no one prophet, or messiah, or redeemer. This ancient new faith warrants a sustainable future – an “ecological commonwealth” for all living beings -- animate and inanimate, and the planet. It will revolutionize our understanding of the phenomenon of religion altogether, not to mention the study of the history of religion. We will also find ways to cleanse every Living World Religion of its world-negating loyalties formed during the seminal days of the axial revolution. If the underlying paradigms of misplaced concreteness of our faiths and practices change for the better, they would transform our hearts and minds triggering seismic shifts of our social, political, and religious thoughts, ideologies, and institutions, moving us toward anticipating and embracing this universal faith.

The time is ripe for another major paradigm shift to be ushered in the religious life of global human communities. We, the postmodern Meghalayans therefore call for a covenant with the Meghalayan Faith – a commitment to a new *world-loyalty* in sizing an ecological commonwealth. To this end, we call all those who wish to be radicalized by the new faith to come together to draft and frame the “Meghalayan Covenant” that envisions an “ecological commonwealth,” and go out to witness to its gospel. What comes of this endeavor could be exhilarating, adventurous, audacious, subversive, and ethically challenging.

Postscript:

In the light of this presentation, we propose that we call for a congress in Shillong, [the capital of Meghalaya] in the summer of 2022, specifically to articulate and draft the Meghalayan Covenant. Participants must be drawn predominantly from the countries in South and East Asia regions. Leaders of the environmental movements, inter-religious orders, grassroot NGOs and activists from the region, together with selected resource leaders and sponsors from overseas may be invited to participate and contribute to the success of the congress. Pre-congress preparations must include selection of participants, planning groups, distribution of study materials etc. and these efforts must begin in earnest as soon as possible. Drafting of the Meghalayan Covenant must be a team effort, ratified by all participants, and widely disseminated. We are hopeful that the participants would be open to embrace this new faith, confess its creed, and commit themselves to propagating and living by the gospel of the ecological commonwealth in their communities, regions, countries, and around the world.



BIBLE STUDY

He Loved Them to the End

- P. R. Hmuaka*

*“Having loved his own in the world,
he loved them to the end.” (Jn 13: 1)*

How did Jesus love them to the end? This Lenten season we shall meditate on Jesus’ love for his disciples as found in the Gospel according to John. John states that Jesus loved his disciples to the end. What does this mean?

It was before the Passover feast. Jesus, like any other Jewish pilgrim, was in Jerusalem. He and his disciples were reclining for supper. “And Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from the world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.” (Jn 13:1).

This was Jesus’ last supper with his disciples. He must have been apprehensive given the tense situation he and his disciples were in. Earlier, when Lazarus his friend in Bethany had died and he had proposed that they go to Judea, his disciples were amazed for those in authority in Judea had tried to stone him there before.

Jesus knew that he was not going to be with his disciples for long. The hour of his death, which John the evangelist says is also the hour of his being glorified, because it is also the hour of his return to the Father, has finally arrived. Now in our last moments, when life’s sun is setting and the shadows draw closer, we do things that are of the utmost importance, things that we hold dearest in our hearts.

It is at this moment of the imminence of his departure from the world and his return to the Father, that John tells us that he loved his own, who were in the world, till the end, to the uttermost.

*Rev. Dr. P.R. Hmuaka is an ordained minister of the Presbyterian Church of India, Mizoram Synod. He has served in the Pastorate for six years and now teaches New Testament at Aizawl Theological College, Mizoram. He is also presently the Secretary of Association of Theological Teachers in India.

He knew he came from God and he was going to God. He knew that the Father had given all things into his hands. Yet he acted like a slave to his disciples and washed their feet and rubbed them dry with a towel leaving an example that they were to follow. He knew where he came from, unlike the world and the Jewish leaders who would consider him only from a worldly point of view. For them, he came from the despised Galilee, from Nazareth an unknown and insignificant town of which Nathanael had asked, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" (Jn 1:46). And Galilee? Well, had not those from the Jerusalem crowd asked, "surely, the Messiah does not come from Galilee, does he?" In the same manner, had not the Pharisees, on seeing Nicodemus wanting to have justice done to Jesus, tauntingly warned, "Surely you are also not from Galilee? Search and you will see that no prophet is to arise from Galilee?" (Jn 7:52). So, because of their preoccupation merely with the outward, and because their judgment of him stemmed solely from a human point of view, they did not know where he came from. They did not know him and nor did they know God who sent him. Therefore, Jesus had reprimanded them earlier not to judge "according to the flesh," that is, according to mere appearances, but to judge with right judgment (Jn 7:24).

He knew he was going to the Father. This further prompted him to act like a slave to his disciples. For Jesus, going to his Father was glorification. It was not a moment of defeat and humiliation that he sorrowfully anticipated and had to endure with a sense of resignation. No, it was for him the hour in which the Son of Man, as he had said earlier, was to be lifted up so that whoever believes in him will have eternal life (Jn 3:14). He was to be "lifted up," literally and metaphorically, that is he was to be exalted, glorified. And it was only when he was glorified that he could send the Spirit. It was for this same reason he had said to his sorrowing disciples, "it is for your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Comforter will not come to you, but if I go, I will send him to you" (Jn 15: 7).

He was going to his Father from where he had come. He could not be with them in the world any longer and this causes him to have concern for them. For the world hated them just as it hated him, for they were not of the world, just as he was not of the world. The world hated him and his Father and now it will hate his disciples whom he will be

leaving behind. So it is till today. Do you see a devoted man or woman of God? The devil with all his powers and deceit prowls around them like a lion, seeking to devour such a child of God. Yet Christ has overcome the world. And therefore, he grants us peace, his peace, unlike the peace which the world gives. Therefore he tells his disciples, "Let not your hearts be troubled, nor let it be afraid." With his coming, the Prince of the world has been cast away. For the light is already shining and darkness is passing away. So he bids them not to be discouraged at his going away to his Father. He bids them to rather rejoice, for the Comforter, the Spirit of truth whom the Father will send in his name, and who will be with them forever, will come to them.

They needed to be equipped with courage and comfort before he left them. They needed to be taught how to love and serve one another and by washing their feet this was the *hopodeigma*, the model which he has left for these disciples, then and today, to emulate. He was no longer going to be with them, but he has left them an example to follow: to love one another as he has loved them, and that calls for a readiness to lay down one's life for one's friend as he did for them. For it is precisely in this love for one another that the world will recognize them as Christ's disciples and that the world would believe that God has sent him into this world. How much the world in need of this! In a world of violence and greed, of lust and avariciousness, of envy and jealousy, of hatred and enmity, how badly do we need disciples of Christ, who in their lives and teaching, by word and by example, give the world a sense of direction and meaning and purpose that it so much needs.

Do we realize that many are secretly hungering for this peace, for a sense of meaning and purpose in life? Despite all the façade of worldly success, pomp, and grandeur, people, young and old, secretly long for and silently weep for this and this is found in Christ. "I am the light of the world," he had said, and if anyone follows me he will not walk in darkness. He will not live in the darkness which is characterized by hatred for one's brother and sister, for one's fellow human. Instead, the disciple's life will be characterized by love and peace that is Christ-like.

Knowing then, that he came from the Father and he was going away to the Father he loved his own that were in the world to the uttermost, to the end.

Now, what more can we say? He has acted like a slave to them. Knowing all these he rose from his place of reclining at the table and began to serve them. Setting aside his tunic and wrapping a towel to rub and dry the feet of his disciples, he pours out water on a basin and begins to wash their feet.

Now, this is loving his disciples to the uttermost. Even at his last supper, he is among them as one who serves. Now, there is more to it. The Evangelist as he narrates this event seems to break the flow of his reporting when he states, early in the narrative, that Judas one of his disciples was going to betray him.

One of his disciples was going to betray him and he knew that. How distressing it could have been for Jesus, yet how calm and composed and most importantly, how loving and sacrificial was he to his disciples. I am sure Judas must have felt very uncomfortable throughout this. In fact all the more so when it was his turn for Jesus to wash his feet. Judas! Ah! Is there not a Judas in me? Haven't I betrayed him not once, not twice, but several times for a much smaller cause? How often must I have grieved him and how often must I have not even realized that I have grieved him. But for the mercy of God, I would have perished! How many of us would find ourselves saying this once in a while. If not openly, at least secretly!

Now, it is interesting to observe how patiently Jesus deals with Judas as we see them in the Gospel according to John. When Jesus says, "one of you will betray me," the disciples were perplexed. Them of all people? Betray Jesus? They were asking one another by gestures who among them would Jesus have meant. And Peter, the impetuous and the robust disciple who takes the initiative, gestures to the beloved disciple to ask Jesus whom he meant. Jesus then said, "the one to whom I will give bread after dipping it," And Jesus gives the piece of bread he dipped into the wine to Judas. Judas takes it and he goes away. John crisply states, "And it was night."

Jesus' dealing with Judas was noble, quite becoming of the King of Israel, and of the Rabbi to his disciples, both of which he indeed was. He did not denounce him to his face nor did he speak a word of threat, warning the consequences of his betrayal. Instead, Jesus takes the initiative and tells him, "Friend, do what you have to do quickly." So

toned down was Jesus' confrontation with Judas that Peter and the other disciples thought that Jesus had told him to go and buy some provisions for the festival or to give something to the poor.

What a model of leadership! Jesus in effect prods Judas to go ahead and do what he has to do quickly. He knew what had entered Judas' mind—the plan to betray his Teacher and Lord. Later on, after Judas left, did Jesus name and shame him? Did he condemn him in front of the other disciples? No, he sees everything from the perspective of God. Therefore, he said that “Now is the Son of Man glorified and in him, God is glorified” (Jn 13:31). For Jesus, all this happened so that the scriptures might be fulfilled” (Jn 13:18). Majestic Jesus: no malice or bitterness against one of his own who was to betray him, and also, total submission to the will of God as revealed in the scriptures. His death was already looming large on the horizon, yet he could have faith in God and the scriptures and therefore he concludes that his betrayal by one of his disciples takes place so that the scriptures might be fulfilled. For as Jesus had said, “the scripture cannot be broken.” How he loved his own in the world to the end.

Now we turn to Peter.

As though the betrayal by Judas was not enough for Jesus. Peter, his foremost disciple was going to betray him, not once but three times, and Jesus knew that. As for us, dear readers, we may point an accusing finger at Peter, but what are we? Haven't we in moments much less dangerous and demanding betrayed Jesus before the world? Haven't we acted as though we have never known him? Haven't we often acted as though he was a stranger to us? Haven't we ignored him when he got in our way and haven't we acted as though he were not present? Would that God have mercy on us and that we repent of our betrayals, open and secret, in our public life and our private life and that we kneel before the cross this Lenten season, so that he may raise us and send us forth to witness with a strong resolve and commitment.

Now, Peter loved Jesus. He had decided to follow him and Jesus had spotted the “rock,” in him and had named him thus, “Cephas” which in Hebrew means “rock.” Yet he was a human and even the rock shook and trembled in the face of danger, and on that cold wintry night, as he stood with the guards and warmed himself before the charcoal fire they

had arranged, he denied his master. That would have been easy, for he was alone and the opponents were in the majority. We may secretly condemn him in our hearts, as we see our weaknesses reflected in him. Yet, before we point another accusing finger at Peter, let us consider his actions and ask ourselves whether we measure up to the level of courage he had mustered in following his master.

As Jesus washed his disciples' feet, he came to Simon Peter. Peter was unwilling to let Jesus wash his feet. "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" What did Jesus say? "Unless I wash your feet, you have no share with me." Peter was an outspoken man. The other disciples must have felt the same. Yet do we not also feel the same? We would not let Jesus wash our feet. Peter speaks not only for his fellow disciples that evening but for all of us today. Shall we let Jesus have his way? We serve Jesus but will we also let him serve us? If we do not let him serve us, then we too would not have a share with him. May we be humbled by our Lord serving us as a slave. And the Lord tells Peter, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand" (Jn 13:6).

Peter loved Jesus. He was willing to die for him. When Jesus said, "Where I am going you cannot follow me," Peter would not accept it. "Lord, why can I not follow you now, I will lay down my life for you." Peter sincerely meant it. Jesus knew that Peter would not be able to keep his word. He told him that that very night, he would deny him thrice before the cock crows. And true to Jesus' word, Peter denied him. Yet none will deny that Peter loved Jesus. He followed Jesus into the courtyard of the High Priest's house and that would have taken a lot of courage. Peter tried all that was humanly possible, he tried his best. At the garden in Gethsemane, he had drawn his sword and had struck Malchus, one of the High Priest's servants on the right ear. He had followed Jesus when the rest of the twelve had deserted him. He was willing to die for Jesus. Yes, he loved Jesus.

Indeed, Peter loved Jesus. When Jesus appeared to the disciples at the sea of Galilee and they realized it was Jesus he wrapped himself with his clothes and jumped into the water, so eager was he to meet Jesus. And when Jesus asked him, "Simon son of Jonah, do you love me more than these?" Peter said, "Lord, you know that I love you." Peter loved Jesus more than all the miraculous catch of the fish that morning. He loved Jesus more than his livelihood as a fisherman. He loved him

more than all the success he had as he had obeyed Christ. Therefore, he felt hurt, when for the third time the Lord asked him, “do you love me?” Peter loved Jesus and Jesus believed him. Therefore, he gave him the charge to take care of his sheep. He also knew what it meant when the Master told him that when he was younger, he would gird himself around his waist and go where he will, but when he is old others would gird him and take him where he wasn’t willing to go. And the evangelist tells us that Jesus said this to signify by what kind of death Peter was to glorify God. Dear readers, commitment to Christ would involve going to places where we are not willing to go. It is a surrender to God and his will and this would involve giving up our own will. Jesus loved his own to the end. Shall we also not love him to the end?

Jesus loved his own to the uttermost. He loved them even when they had all forsaken him in the moment of peril when he needed them most. He had gone ahead and had asked his captors, who came in the cover of darkness with lanterns and clubs to seize him, to let his disciples go, if it was only him they were seeking.

When he was raised from the dead, he loved them and appeared to them and showed them the marks of the nails on his hands and his side where the soldiers had pierced him. No closed door was too strong to keep him from those whom he loved. They had looked upon him and their doubts and fears melted away and they were filled with joy unspeakable. He loved the doubting Thomas and so appeared again before them when Thomas was present. And today Jesus' pronouncement of blessing is on all those who have not seen, but believed.

He loved them to the uttermost. To Peter who had denied him thrice, he gave the charge to feed his lambs and tend his sheep. If we, like Peter, love Jesus, he would give us the charge of tending and feeding his sheep, of seeking the hurt and the lost, of protecting them from all harm. He would make us once again a rock, like Peter. A rock that stands towering against all the storms of life, of the fierce winds of temptations and trials that come our way, so that standing firm, we can restore our brothers and sisters who are fallen. Yes, Jesus loved his own who were in the world to the end. Yes, he also loves you and me, who believe in his name, to the uttermost. ● ● ●

NCC Review Subscription and donation

NCC Review is published eleven times a year. In 2016, the overarching theme of NCC Review is the NCCI quadrennial theme "*Towards a Just and Inclusive Communities*" which provides orientation to its content. The subscription rates are highly subsidized. Further discount is available for bulk subscriptions and for Pastors, students and theological educators. Please refer to the table inside cover page of the journal.

Seminaries, Churches and institutions can avail of the bulk discount to gift-subscribe employees and students as a meaningful expression of concern, sharing and appreciation. In addition to your subscription amount please consider donating additionally towards the publication of NCC Review.

Articles are invited for publication in NCC Review. Please note:

Article can be 3000 – 4000 words in length in MS Word (.doc) format;

Reviews of recent theological or related books and Bible studies are also published not exceeding 1500 words each;

Article submitted must be unpublished and original work of author;

References (bibliography, footnotes/endnotes) in standard format;

Send article to ncci@nccindia.in with "Article for NCC Review" written in the subject line.

Each article accompanied by brief bio of author as well as the postal address where they'd like their complimentary copy mailed;

NCCI reserves the right to publish the submitted article, or not;

NCCR is posted on 20th of every month except January.

- Editor

The Bible Society of India

invites application from

residents of Maharashtra/Goa who are dynamic, result oriented, enterprising and committed to the Bible Cause for the post of

AUXILIARY SECRETARY FOR THE BOMBAY AUXILIARY.

The applicant should be an ordained person from an established Church who should also have completed BD/M.Th. along with a secular University Degree from recognized and reputed Universities. He/She should have administrative experience in a senior position in Churches/Christian Organizations. Extensive tour of entire Maharashtra and Goa would be involved.

Candidates should be between 40 and 50 years of age and fluent in Marathi, Konkani, Hindi and English. This post is in the salary scale of Rs. 10800-680-17600-760-29000-840-37400. Additional allowances like DA - 82% of basic, CCA – Rs. 1500/-, Medical – Rs. 1700/- and Children’s Allowance - Rs. 1500/- per child for children upto the age of 21 years who are unmarried/unemployed will be paid. Residential accommodation and a vehicle for official use will also be provided. *Age/Salary/Qualification will be relaxed in deserving cases.*

Application on plain paper with detailed resume including age, education, training, experience, salary now drawing and expected, contact details, Church background etc., along with copies of certificates/testimonials, two reference letters and a passport size photograph should be mailed to:

The General Secretary, Bible Society of India,

LOGOS, 206 Mahatma Gandhi Road, Bangalore 560 001

in a sealed envelope superscribing ***“Application for the post of Auxiliary Secretary, Bombay Auxiliary”***, to reach him by **March 31, 2021**. Those who are presently working with Churches/Christian Organizations should apply with the endorsement of the concerned Head of the Church/Organization only. Selected candidates need to undergo a thorough medical examination at own cost in a hospital recommended by the BSI particularly to see if the appointees suffer from any pre-existent illness and whether she/he is fit to take up the position offered.

Henry Martyn Institute:
International Centre for Research,
Interfaith Relations and Reconciliation
Affiliated to the Senate of Serampore College (University)
 Offers

1. POST-GRADUATE DIPLOMA IN ISLAM AND INTERFAITH RELATIONS

Post-Graduate Diploma on Islam and Interfaith Relations programme is open to students from all religious and ideological backgrounds. No prior significant understanding of Islam is required. The course covers Islamic Theology, Muslim History, Introduction to Muslims in South Asia, Major religions, Indian Philosophy, and Interfaith Relations, etc. is based on class room lectures, group discussions and field exposure. The course enables students to go on to engage in the interfaith dialogue and for the pastoral life of the Church in the context of India's plural society.

- *Duration of the course:* 10 months
- *Eligibility:* Bachelor degree from any university
- Classes scheduled to start from **1st July, 2021**
- Last date for submission of application form is on **31st May, 2021**

2. M.TH QUALIFYING PROGRAMME

Language programmes for those students who wish to write Qualifying exam of **Arabic** and **Sanskrit** in the month of March/April in order to enroll in the **Master of Theology** (Islam & Hinduism) under Senate of Serampore College (University).

- *Duration of the course:* 10 months
- *Eligibility:* Bachelor of Divinity degree with 60% (B grade) from Senate of Serampore College (University)
- Classes scheduled to start from **1st July, 2021**
- Last date for submission of application form is on **31st May, 2021**

Note: The ARRC (Advanced Institute for Research on Religion and Culture) is a joint programme of ACTC, CIT and HMI, Hyderabad (Affiliated to Senate of Serampore College) offering **M.Th in Religions** (Hinduism & Islam).

3. LANGUAGE PROGRAMMES

Customized Intensive and Non-Intensive Language Study Program is helpful to scholars in their field as indispensable requirement for academic study and research.

- *Languages Offered:* **ARABIC, SANSKRIT, URDU & PERSIAN**
- *Duration of the course:* Minimum one month
- *Eligibility:* Scholars, Volunteers, and anybody who is interested
- Last date for submission of application form: Any Time

Contact: PG ACADEMICS, Henry Martyn Institute, 6-3-128/1, Beside National Police Academy, Shivrampally, Hyderabad-500052, Telangana Mob: 08374190385; Email: pgacademics@hmiindia.org



Presbyterian Theological Seminary
Accredited by Asia Theological Association (ATA)
 Established 1969

*Invites applications from men and women
 called for ministry in South Asia*

- Emphasis on Biblical, Evangelical and Reformed Theology
- Mission and ministry-oriented education
- Qualified Professors and Teachers
- Well-equipped library, computer lab and spacious study hall.
- Accommodation for single men, women and married students.

Courses	Medium	Duration	Entrance Qualification
Bachelor of Theology	English	3 years	10 + 2 pass
Master of Divinity	English	3 years	B.Th./B.A./B.Sc./B.Com or equivalent
*Master of Divinity- (Distance)	English	3 years	B.Th./B.A./B.Sc./B.Com or equivalent
*Master of Theology (Missions)	English	2 years	M.Div/BD
Diploma in Ministry Hindi- Extension (unaccredited)	Hindi	1 year	10 or Equivalent

* Accreditation will be sought from ATA

Classes will begin in July 2021

For further information and application forms, please visit our website www.ptsindia.com or contact Registrar at: admissions@ptsindia.com

The Registrar Admissions
PT Seminary, 51-C, Rajpur Road,
Dehradun, UK 248001
Office-Phone" 0135-2658417



**Gurukul Lutheran Theological College &
Research Institute, Kilpauk, Chennai - 600010**
Affiliated to the Senate of Serampore College (University)

MISSION STATEMENT

"Gurukul" is an ecumenical theological community for communicating the liberative Gospel of Jesus Christ by training and empowering the community of God's people towards Peace, Justice and Integrity of God's Creation

COURSES OFFERED FOR THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2021-2022

I. GRADUATE STUDIES

Bachelor of Divinity (BD)

- 4 Years Residential Degree Programme for Degree Holders
- 2 Years Residential Degree Programme for B.Th. (Senate) Upgraders

II. POST GRADUATE STUDIES

Master of Theology (M.Th.) - 2 Years Residential Degree Programme for BD Graduates of Senate of Serampore College (University)

- | | |
|----------------------------|---|
| 1. Old Testament | 5. Communication |
| 2. New Testament | 6. Missiology |
| 3. Christian Theology | 7. Religion (<i>Subject to approval by the Senate of Serampore College</i>) |
| 4. History of Christianity | |

III. DOCTORAL STUDIES

Doctor of Theology (D.Th.) - 3 Years Residential Programme for M.Th. Graduates of the Senate of Serampore College (University)

1. Christian Theology
2. Communication
3. Religion (*Subject to approval by the Senate of Serampore College*)

IV. EXTERNAL STUDIES (ONLINE & CLASSROOM LEARNING) - ENGLISH & TAMIL

1. MCS (3 Years Non-Residential Course)
 2. BCS (4 Years Non-Residential Course)
 3. Dip. CS (2 Years Non-Residential Course)
- (Admissions also open for Indians living abroad)

IMPORTANT DATES

Submission of Application Form (BD/M.Th./D.Th.) : 14 Jan. 2021

With late fee : 31 January 2021

Submission of Application Form (Dip. CS/BCS/MCS) : 30 Nov. 2020

The Prospectus and Application Form can be obtained from the Registrar's Office. It can also be downloaded from the Gurukul Website (www.gltc.edu) Send the filled-in application form with all the necessary documents and required fees to:

The Registrar, Gurukul Lutheran Theological College and Research Institute, 94, Purasawalkam High Road, Kilpauk, Chennai - 600 010, Tamilnadu, India. Email: registrar@gtc@gmail.com; Phone: 044-42651066

ADVERTISEMENT RATES IN THE NCC REVIEW

	<i>Full Page</i>	<i>Half Page</i>	<i>Inside Cover</i>	<i>Cover</i>
Single	Rs. 1200	Rs. 800	Rs. 1400	Rs.1600
Multiple*	Rs. 900	Rs. 650	Rs. 1050	Rs. 1200
*Multiple rates applicable per insertion for at least three consecutive insertions. All other terms and conditions shall remain same.				

NCC REVIEW REVISED SUBSCRIPTION RATES FROM 4/2016

	1 year	3 year	5 year
Indian Subscriptions (<i>Regular</i>)	INR 250	INR 500	INR 800
Indian Subscriptions (<i>Discounted for Theological Educators, Pastors, Evangelists, Students - Individuals only. NOT for Organisations, Institutions, Librarians, etc.</i>)	INR 200	INR350	INR 550
Bulk order (over 50 copies for Indian Subscriptions)	10% off		
UK Subscriptions	GBP 31	-	-
USA, South America, Canada, Europe, Africa, Asia, Australia, New Zealand, Subscriptions	USD 45	-	-

PAYMENT MODES:

VPP: Place your subscription order by email: ncci@ncci1914.com or nccreview@ncci1914.com (Rs.20/- added to subscription cost)

Demand Draft: To be drawn in favour of "National Council of Churches in India" payable at Nagpur.

Cheque: To be drawn in favour of "National Council of Churches in India" (Please add Rs. 20/- for outstation cheques).

Money order: To be sent to: The Editor, NCC Review, Nagpur.

Bank Transfer: Bank name: INDIAN BANK
 Branch: NAGPUR
 IFSC CODE: IDIB000N007
 A/C NAME: NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES REVIEW
 A/C NUMBER: 496991073

NCCI COMMUNICATIONS

*Get NCCI news updates and stay connected
on our network through your comments*

Website: www.ncci1914.com

Facebook: facebook.com/nccionline

Twitter: twitter.com/nccionline

YouTube: youtube.com/nccinet

SMS: Register your mobile number to get NCCI alerts/updates on your phone. Details on our website

News Update: Register your email address to receive NCCI news updates by email. Registration details on our website

NCCI NEWS app for Android devices
NCCI NEWS app for Android™ devices
on Google Play™

Download the app on your mobile device.

Search for "ncci" on Google Play on your device.



NCC Review : To subscribe to India's oldest (*since 1862*) Ecumenical journal **NCC Review** download the subscription form on the link: <https://ncci1914.com/ncc-review/>