



National
Council of
Churches
in India



NCC REVIEW

Vol. CXLII

No.10

November 2022

EDITORIAL

Churning the Earth Leads to the Choking of Life

A significant outcome of the 27th session of the Conference of Parties (COP) is the decision to create a specific fund that compensates for loss and damage in developing countries that have been the victims of lopsided development. The global south has supported economic growth in the 'West' by supplying abundant natural resources and cheap labour for decades. Since we are confronting the reality that we all live on one planet and since the atmosphere has no borders, those most likely to bear the worst effects of climate change are not the main generators of carbon but the poor and impoverished of the world.

The major portion of carbon emissions comes from the so called 'developed' countries due to the historical concentration of industries and wealth there. Making use of the possibilities of transfer of goods and services in a globalised world, the developing countries started enhancing their own infrastructures and production units with an eye to economic growth. Furthermore, many of the 'developed' countries have transferred ecologically harmful forms of production to the developing countries where ecological laws are not enforced strictly.

While the annual emissions of the US and Australia remain above 15 tons per person, a country like Bangladesh emits merely 0.6 tons per person per year. However, Bangladesh is a country with one of the highest rates of poverty in the world and one cause has been highlighted by some scholars as biodiversity loss, which has mainly affected people dependent on agriculture. Biodiversity loss refers to the decline or disappearance of biological diversity, which includes animals, plants and ecosystems. Biodiversity loss impacts food supplies and access to clean water. Therefore, it is evident that low GDP countries have low CO₂ emissions but high risks for environmental catastrophes. The logic of supporting the poor countries for the ecological damage caused by development could be seen as an effort to support them in overcoming these challenges.

However, there is a bargain at the global level in pursuit of an ecologically sustainable economic growth model. Such

a seemingly attractive model proposes Clean Development Mechanism, carbon credit, bio-fuel etc as alternatives to the factors responsible for the present crisis, but unfortunately these are rooted in the logic of neo-liberal capitalism. Their logic is also based on an economic growth model that neglects the life flourishing model of growth that can always be seen in the common people's understanding of *jal, jangal* and *jameen*, which have been integrated in their daily life. The economic growth model is a linear model which disempowers the moral agency of the community and hence it compels us to re-examine the term 'sustainable development' itself.

Modern science and its technocratic hegemony over nature has been criticised by many. Vandana Shiva, a world renowned ecofeminist argues that multinational corporations impose their corporate frameworks on nature and conservation, which alienate people from land. Technology transforms fertility from a creative process into a form of industrial production. The marginalisation of indigenous knowledge and local communities, and the lack of adequate female representation have all led to the deterioration of our relationship with the earth.

Sebastian Kappen, an Indian Christian theologian, opined that modern technocratic views create a dichotomy between human beings and nature, seeing them in terms of a subject-object binary. Today science itself, which was originally meant for the careful study of the way nature works, has largely been hijacked by vested interests that view everything through a technological lens. This is a paradigm that reduces nature to an object for the benefit of human beings, viewing it as a mere collection of raw materials for commercial exploitation. For Kappen modern science is 'cybernetic' and hence in essence its inherent characteristic is its way of dominating and subjugating nature, which in turn provokes nature to vindicate its true being through resisting outside manipulations. The tendency of humans today is to place whatever is quantifiable above that which constitutes quality of life; modern science also tends to reduce everything in nature to the quantifiable, and so quantity above quality is elevated as a desirable model for the development of the society. Kappen counters this discourse by proposing that we learn from indigenous cultures and see their worldviews as an apt model for development.

The critics point to an ecologically sustainable and equitable world which can be envisioned only with fundamental changes in the way we relate to nature and to each other. The emphasis on incorporating the voice of each citizen and of the community in decision making demands restructuring of existing governing patterns. This is very different from the current representative democracy where we vote once for a particular period and leave all decisions to those in power.

Altogether, our endeavour is to uphold an ecologically sustainable world instead of sustainable development that always ends up in exploiting the earth. Churning the earth to cheer ourselves up is sin and this eventually leads to choking of life and hence has to be stopped. Development is not merely an economic matter but rather it is all about experiencing the fullness of life. This issue of NCC Review includes an article on climate resiliency and peace building, the initiative of building blue communities and a document of decisions made in the COP27 for further discussion.

Rev Dr Abraham Mathew

Managing Editor



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WATER FOR CLIMATE RESILIENCY AND PEACE BUILDING

*-By Isabel Apawo Phiri & Dinesh Suna**

Introduction

“Water is a symbol of life. The Bible affirms water as the cradle of life, an expression of God's grace in perpetuity for the whole of creation. It is a basic condition for all life on Earth and is to be preserved and shared for the benefit of all creatures and the wider creation. Water is the source of health and well-being and requires responsible action from us human beings, as partners and priests of Creation. As churches, we are called to participate in the mission of God to bring about a new creation where life in abundance is assured to all. It is therefore right to speak out and to act when the life-giving water is pervasively and systematically under threat.”

- “Water for life” statement from World Council of Churches, General Assembly, 2006, Porto Alegre, Brazil.

Fresh water is essential to human life. It is not only the human body that needs fresh water to survive, fresh water is also needed for food production. Without water, there is no growth, no food and no life on earth. So essentially water is life! Despite the efforts of over two decades through the MDGs and the SDGs framework, today, we have about 2 billion people in the world who do not have access to safely managed drinking water and about 4 billion people who do not have access to safely managed sanitation facilities. More and more countries are predicted to face water stress and that would mean more people will be added to these statistics. The unsustainable use of water resources is the main cause of water stress. Certain human activities have

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a significant impact on freshwater resources, such as land use, the construction and operation of hydroelectric power plants, the construction of dams and the drainage of wetlands and irrigation etc. Climate change is putting additional pressure on water resources by impacting the water cycle.

Nexus Between Water and Climate Change

According to the 2020 UN World Water Development Report¹ “global water use has increased over the past 100 years and continues to grow steadily at a rate of about 1% per year as a result of increasing population, economic development and shifting consumption patterns”. Water stress already affects every continent of our planet. Physical water scarcity is often a seasonal phenomenon, rather than a chronic one and climate change is likely to cause shifts in seasonal water availability throughout the year in several places, as cautioned by several IPCC reports. Thus, climate change will aggravate the situation of currently water-stressed regions and generate water stress in regions where water resources are still abundant today. Furthermore, climate change manifests itself in the increasing frequency and magnitude of extreme events such as heatwaves, unprecedented rainfalls, thunderstorms and storm surge events, etc. These extreme weather events caused by climate change, lead to natural disasters. According to the UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme) over 90 per cent of these natural disasters are water-related. Water quality, quantity and accessibility are adversely affected because of these natural disasters triggered by climate change.

Water scarcity not only affects human beings but it would adversely affect our ecosystems, particularly forests and wetlands. According to the World Water Development Report 2020 (WWDR), the degradation of ecosystems will not only lead to biodiversity loss, but also affect the provision of water-related ecosystem services, such as water purification, carbon capture and storage, and natural flood protection, as well as the provision of water for agriculture, fisheries and recreation.

¹ Significant trends affecting water availability | World Meteorological Organization (wmo.int)

The Paris agreement emphasizes the need to limit the global temperature rise to an ambitious 1.5 degrees Celsius from the preindustrial level, which with business as usual, seems a distant reality. We probably are headed towards about 3 degree Celsius. However, there is a momentum lately for countries and governments trying to adhere to their commitments through their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). Although water is not mentioned in the Paris Agreement per se, it is an essential component of nearly all the mitigation and adaptation strategies. Water is identified as the number one priority for adaptation actions in most of the NDCs. The WWDR 2020 on water and climate change further underlines the fact that, when it comes to climate change, there has been a long-held belief that mitigation is mainly about energy, and that adaptation is mainly about water. Such a perspective greatly over-simplifies things. Of course, the water sector needs to adapt to climate change. But water management can also play a very important role in climate change mitigation. For example, improved approaches to the treatment of water, and especially wastewater, offer a range of mitigation opportunities. Untreated wastewater is an important source of greenhouse gases (GHGs). Since more than 80% of all wastewater (globally) released to the environment is untreated, treating its organic matter prior to its release can reduce GHG emissions. Thus, water does play a role in both adaptation as well as mitigation in combating climate change.

Water and Climate Crisis Needs a Human Rights Approach

The key to combating water crisis and climate change is a human rights approach to these challenges. It is widely accepted that the most vulnerable communities, including the women, children, indigenous communities and the poor are worst affected by both water crisis and impact of climate change. That is why at the World Council of Churches we promote the concept of Blue Communities. Thereby,

- We respect Human right to water
- We say no to bottled water, where tap water is safe or look for sustainable alternatives
- We promote public control over water operation and services and thereby say no to privatization of water.

After much struggle by the Civil Society Organisations, including that of the World Council of Churches, the recent appointment of a United Nations special rapporteur for human rights in the context of climate change brings back a human rights approach to the heart of the climate change discourses. Furthermore, if the blue community principles are adopted by cities and communities worldwide, we will be able to safeguard the most vulnerable communities mentioned above from lack of access to safe drinking water and also to a great extent from the impacts of climate change, manifested through water related disasters such as droughts, floods, etc.

In the recently concluded UN climate summit, the COP27 (27th meeting of the Conference of Parties) of the UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention of Climate Change), water was on the agenda of the conference for the first time. During the COP27, 14 November was dedicated as the “water day”. This deliberate linkage of water was brought in due to the fact that there is a strong nexus between water and climate change as argued above.

Water for Peace a Faith Perspective

“The next world war will be fought over water” – this statement may be brushed aside as a cliché. However, world war or not, water has the potential of causing a conflict between countries. Historically, civilizations grew around water bodies and rivers for the simple fact that humans thrived when their water needs were met. Historically we have also learnt that communities fought over water. Even in the religious and mythological stories in many religions, conflicts are shown as being caused by water insecurities.

The Christian Bible records one such conflict over ‘Abraham’s Well’, dug by Isaac, Abraham’s son. It was closed after his death. The community around Gerar, where the well was located, disputed over the ownership of the well. Isaac did not fight, but gave it back to them. He dug open another well. That too was disputed by the locals. Then he dug a third well and that was not disputed by the locals of Gerar. He named the well “Rehoboth” meaning “Now the LORD has given us room and we

will flourish in the land.” This could probably be one of the first and ancient “water diplomacy” recorded in the Christian Bible.

In most religious and faith traditions, water is an integral part of physical and spiritual life, symbolizing purification, rebirth, and fertility. This concept continues to play a significant role in present water-related attitudes and actions. The intrinsic value of water and its essential role and relevance in all aspects of life are undisputed. When it comes to Christianity, water is linked with the sacrament of baptism and thus is holy. Furthermore, there are ample references to water in the Christian Bible. It is worth noting that there are more than 700 references to water in the Bible, much more than the word “Christ” or “Love” or “faith”, or “sin”² etc. Water has life sustaining abilities and there is an inherent value of peace, tranquility and prosperity attached to it. However the dichotomy is that for this very reason, water also becomes a cause of conflict.

Water: Cause of Conflict or Peace?

Even in the modern world today, we have witnessed the scenario of water leading either to conflict or to peace. As a matter of fact, more than 260 river basins are transboundary in nature, involving two or more countries. Today about 150 water-related treaties are signed by countries. Water is therefore a cause of conflict, else these treaties would not have been in place. Recent examples of conflict between Egypt and Ethiopia over the waters of the river Nile due to the construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) in Ethiopia, in the upper reaches of the Nile River landed these two countries at the UN Security Council on an emergency special session to avoid further escalation of conflict.³ We, at the World Council of Churches, which has member churches in both Egypt as well in Ethiopia urged them to also dialogue with their respective governments, to keep in mind not just their own country’s water interests but also that of the neighboring riparian country.

2 “Christ” or “Love” or “faith”, or “sin”

3 Egypt addresses UN security council over Ethiopia's continued filling of GERD - Egypt Independent

In September 2020, the World Council of Churches, - Ecumenical Water Network received information from our member churches in Syria that Turkey is cutting water supply to over 1 million people of al-Hassakeh and surrounding region, including extremely vulnerable displaced people in various IDP camps. The WCC- EWN immediately, got in touch with the then UN Special Rapporteur Prof. Leo Heller, who opened a diplomatic channel of confidential communications with parties involved in Turkey and Syria. We provided them facts on the ground realities.

Subsequently the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Madam Bachelet issued a powerful and bold press statement, cautioning countries involved in the conflict in Syria that they should not use **'water as a weapon of war'**. Subsequently water supply was resumed to the affected region to some extent. ⁴

The ongoing conflict between Israel and Palestine also has an element of water in it. The 1993 Oslo accords concerning the two countries has details of access to water in the aquifers of the region and lays out an approach of cooperation between the two countries. However, this accord has not helped to make any significant progress in solving the water conflicts between the two countries. Eco Peace in Middle East, a partner of WCC- Ecumenical Water Network, started negotiating to pluck the "low hanging fruits", even without the full and final solutions of the conflict between Israel and Palestine. There has been significant cooperation of parties between the two countries in local water projects such as cleaning and desalination of the river Jordan.

Consensus is slowly being reached that the all or nothing approach has become part of the problem, and that moving forward on specific and solvable issues like water can help rebuild public trust in the possibilities of peace and the end of hostilities.

Water disputes can not only involve two countries but also two or more states within the same country. Take for instance the Cauveri River in India and the ongoing dispute between the

4 Use of water as weapon of war a direct attack on human rights, says ecumenical water network | World Council of Churches (oikoumene.org)

three south Indian states: Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala. The **Cauvery Water Management Authority** has been mediating between these three riparian states to consider the water needs of the downstream states while putting up any structures upstream that would severely impact the water availability in the downstream riparian states.⁵

Transforming Conflict into Peace Building through Water

There are also many positive stories and good practices including some examples discussed above, such as that of the Swiss Development Cooperation in collaboration with Geneva Water Hub. The “**Blue Peace**” campaign is a case in point.⁶ Blue Peace endeavours to transform destructive competition for limited resources of fresh water into constructive collaboration. Switzerland is making a substantial contribution towards peace and security through this approach.

Therefore, despite the popular belief that water is a source of conflict, shouldn't we be changing the narratives and start pointing out how water can be used for peace and cooperation? For this to happen, water diplomacy is the key. Countries could learn to co-exist with their own water security interests covered through negotiations and cooperations, while at the same time considering the water interest of neighboring riparian countries/states.

Conclusion:

The Bible has several messages and stories that inspire us to transform conflicts into peace building. The one that stands out is the following:

“.....they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more....” (Isaiah 2:3-4) .

Similar stories and messages are also recorded in the holy scriptures of other faiths.

5 Cauvery River Water Dispute (drishtias.com)

6 <https://www.eda.admin.ch/deza/en/home/themes-sdc/water/wasser-ein-element-der-sicherheit.html>

As a concrete response to combat climate change and water crisis, like many other faith actors, the World Council of Churches has furthermore taken many important actions to “walk the talk” to address issues of climate change by divesting from fossil fuel, doing an audit of our carbon footprint and trying our best to offset them. The “green village” mega housing project of WCC which meets the one planet living standards at the ecumenical center, Geneva, is also a case in point of our commitment to “walk the talk”. We can now say that have become a blue community! And now we invite governments, civil society organisations, faith based organisations and, above all, the private sector to walk the talk for promoting water for life over water for profit and thus to ensure a water secure future for all in this era of climate change.

WCC continues to bring the ‘moral imperative’ to the discourse in addressing climate change and water crisis. The Valuing Water, interfaith statement 2020 of the Swedish water house in collaboration with WCC Ecumenical Water Network, called upon decision makers and authorities to embrace faith-based actors as resource persons and partners in all work for justice and sustainability,⁷ because faith communities are one of the first responders and our constituencies, who represent about 80% of world’s population that belong to a faith community, take their faith leaders seriously. Hence, to make the most of this opportunity, it is imperative that we reach out to faith communities.

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7 Interfaith-Statement-on-Water-and-Faith_ENG.pdf (swedish water house.se)

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EPHPHATHA: BE OPENED

-J. John Britto*, Senthil Kumar** & Rajesh SK ***

Introduction

According to the World Bank, 15% of the global population, or around one billion people, are disabled. The number of people living with disabilities is significantly higher in developing countries. Persons with disabilities are more likely to experience negative socioeconomic results such as less schooling, poorer health outcomes, fewer levels of employment, and higher poverty rates than people without disabilities.(1) Helen Keller, who was born deaf and blind, thought that being deaf was more difficult than being blind. Being blind isolates the individual from the world but being deaf isolates the individual from other people.(2) Statistics from the WHO show that more than 5% of the world's population has hearing loss that makes it hard for them to do their jobs.(3) Also, it was thought that, just in India, over 63 million more people have severe hearing loss.(4)

In India, there is a shortage of facilities for schools for the hearing impaired, as well as for other hearing-impaired committees and organizations. The biggest issue with hearing-impaired children in the educational process is that they are subjected to verbal approach techniques in the classroom, where communication with hearing-impaired children using Indian signs is uncommon. Hearing-impaired youngsters aren't exposed to adequate sign languages, which affects their conduct and attitude. Human nature requires communication, but many hearing-impaired

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people face problems every day, such as a lack of specially trained sign language interpreters, a general lack of understanding from the public, intolerance, a reluctance to express themselves, the ability to read lips, and an unfriendly social attitude.⁽⁵⁾ Hearing-impaired people in India's multireligious society confront similar situations in places of worship. The estimate of Silent Blessings Deaf Ministries reveals that up to 4% of Christians worldwide are profoundly deaf. But there aren't enough reliable numbers to give a rough estimate of how many deaf Christians, deaf churches, and deaf clergy there are in India.

Poor research reveals that Greek philosophers were led to the conclusion that people with hearing loss were barbarians because they couldn't acquire Greek and could not communicate with others. Hearing-impaired people, according to Jane Wagner's logic, are essentially living in a verbal abyss because they're unable to hear, speak, or think, and are consequently barbarous and ignorant. People born with hearing loss were considered incapable of having faith during the earlier ages (476-1453) and were therefore barred from attending church. All through the ages, the language barrier has been the only obstacle keeping hearing-impaired people from taking part in liturgical celebrations. Hearing-impaired people's first language is sign language, which itself is distinctive from every other spoken language. Sign language is a way to interact that is adopted not only by people who can't hear but also by a substantial percentage of hearing people. In response to a letter from the committee of the International Catholic Deaf Association, Pope Paul VI granted permission for the Catholic mass to be celebrated using sign language. He stated that it is the one and only method by which hearing-impaired people can participate in the liturgy in a manner that is truly active. Ji-Youn Cho discussed how the translation of the Bible into sign languages for the hearing impaired is obtaining attention all over the world. The current situation presupposes the development of an Indian sign language Bible for the deaf community. Using a critical analysis of Jesus' discourse about healing a deaf-mute (Mark 7.31-37), the study tried to reinterpret the new role of the deaf in his ministry.

Jesus Cures a Deaf Man (Mark 7.31-37)

³¹ Then he returned from the region of Tyre and went by way of Sidon toward the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. ³² They brought to him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech, and they begged him to lay his hand on him. ³³ He **took him aside in private, away from the crowd, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue.** ³⁴ Then looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, "**Ephphatha,**" that is, "Be opened." ³⁵ And his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. ³⁶ Then Jesus ordered them to tell no one, but the more he ordered them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. ³⁷ They were astounded beyond measure, saying, "He has done everything well; he even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak."

Mark narrates the account of healing of deaf man in six verses at middle of the book on chapter 7: 31-37. In the light of the sun, creation is breath-taking, but our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, is beyond compare compassionate and merciful, and it is he who makes everything beautiful. The hymn "Benedictus" demonstrates that those who sat in darkness have now discovered the glorious light. Jesus is the light of the world, and without knowing about God, there is darkness. Jesus embarks on a missionary journey across the region of the gentiles so that he can fulfil the prophecy. Even though Jesus has testified of his Messianic identity up to this chapter, this healing episode reveals Jesus' divinity. At the request of others, he cures a deaf man who had neither heard of Jesus because he was deaf nor requested assistance because he was mute. Perhaps the power of God and the weakness of humanity come together in this passage, and the man who is deaf symbolizes the suffering of humanity, which is unable to hear the voice of its creator but nevertheless prays silently for deliverance. Symbolically, Jesus performs this miracle on a poor man and restores humanity to its original beauty. The method he uses to heal and the gestures he uses convey his compassion and magnanimity toward the underprivileged, as well as his closeness and personal relationship with us. He opens the man's ears with the word "Ephphatha." He also opens the doors of heaven so that a miracle can happen. Do we not need him to unbind our tongues so that we can worship the living God and open our ears so that we may hear the message of God?

Jesus's Gentile Ministry

Jesus and his followers travelled from Tyre to Decapolis, as described in Mark 7:31. Jesus appears to make a massive detour by moving north and through Sidon from Tyre. Tyre was an island city 34 miles northeast of Capernaum in the Mediterranean Sea. A twenty-mile drive north of Tyre on the seashore is Sidon. The narrative does not mention that Jesus entered the towns; it only says that he travelled into the region where Tyre and Sidon were. Most Hellenized Canaanites live in the cities of Tyre and Sidon, which are ruled by Syrians on behalf of the Roman Empire. It's also called Syrophoneicia. Finally, Jesus reached Decapolis: Deca is the prefix for ten, while polis is the Greek word for city. (The ten cities were Hippos, Pella, Scythopolis, Philadelphia, Gerasa, Dion, Kanatha, Damascus, Paphna, and Gadara.) Decapolis, which is located east of Capernaum, is across the Sea of Galilee from the eastern shore of the Jordan River. Many Gentiles lived in the places Jesus visited, especially around Decapolis, which was mostly made up of Gentiles.

Etymology

In verse 32, people brought him a deaf man. Crowds chased Jesus and the Twelve out of this location the last time they visited (Mark 5:17). The same villagers and farmers rush to meet Him, hoping, Jesus can cure a deaf man. The phrase "deaf" appears 14 times in the Old Testament: Exodus 4.11; 38.14; Isaiah 29.18, 35.5, 42.18, 19, 43.8, 44.9; Psalm 28.1, 39.13; Micah 7.16; Lamentations 3.56; Baruch 6.40; and Leviticus 19.14. In these passages, the Hebrew words *vrexe* (cheresh) and *vr;x'* (charash) were used interchangeably. The word *vrexe* (cheresh) for deaf is also referred to as *Leai* (illem: mute or unable to speak) or *ja'* (alam: put into silence, or to stop). The phrase *vrexe* (cheresh) means to cease hearing anything or to prevent hearing. It's related to deficits, unfavorable experiences, or a hidden ailment.

In contrast, there are five similar examples in the New Testament: Luke 7.22, Mark 7.32, 37, and Matthew 11.5. The closest term that the Hebrew word *vrexe* (cheresh) has to an equivalent in Greek is the word *kwfo.n* (kophon), which can be translated as "deaf," "mute," or "dumb." Other Greek phrases such as *mogila*,

which means "difficulty to speak," and a;laloj, which means "speechless," are also used in place of kophon. The exact terms "deaf" and "speech impediment" in this verse allude to the Greek roots kophos and mogilalos. These words indicate that a person has been unable to speak, has trouble communicating, or is complicated to understand, which implies that the individual was not born deaf and that the people in the area like or respect this person.

They bring him to Jesus, just like they did with the man who couldn't walk (Mark 2:1-12) and the man who couldn't see (Mark 8:22-26). Both the man with a legion of demons (Mark 5:1-13) and the blind Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46-52) were not dealt with the same dignity. People also want Jesus to touch their friend, meaning that he might be handicapped because of trauma. Typically, when Jesus heals physical ailments, He touches the patient (Mark 1:31; 5:23; 6:5; 8:25). He casts out demons with the authority and power of His words (Mark 1:25; 5:7-8). Unlike the narrative of the dumb man in Matthew 9:32-34, this deaf person scenario is unique.

The movement away from the crowd in Mark 7:33 follows a similar procedure as described in Mark 8:23, where Jesus held the blind man by the hand, led him outside of the village, and cured him with spit, possibly to avoid distraction and unwanted attention. Jesus' actions of inserting his fingers into the man's ears, spitting, and touching the man's tongue prove that he was moved with compassion and recognized the man's suffering, thereby allowing Jesus to communicate with the deaf man. In Jewish and Greek culture, saliva was a well-known and accepted cure because of how well it could heal.

In the verse 7:34, we have the Aramaic word "Ephphatha," which means "to be opened." Similarly, throughout the New Testament, phrases in Aramaic and Hebrew are recorded in Rom 8:15, Galatians 4.6, and Mark's inclusion of original words like "Talitha koum" ("Little girl, get up") in 5:41 and "Abba" in 14:36 are suggestive of a Gentile audience that would need simplified explanations. When Jesus was giving the blessing over the five loaves and two fish, he had also raised his eyes to heaven in a

posture of prayer (6.41). Jesus groaned, a sound that could have been a form of prayer or a sign of deep feeling and compassion.

Theological Impact

The deaf man's healing was witnessed in verse 35, as his ears were opened, his tongue was unbound, and he spoke perfectly. This healing reveals information concerning Messianic prophecies. Healing the deaf is linked to a direct blessing from God (Isaiah 35:5), and the Old Testament never talks about a person who is literally deaf being healed. Most people who are "deaf" are spiritually hardened.

In verse 36, we have Jesus making a stern plea or issuing an order for the followers not to tell anybody about the miraculous cure. In Mark 5:1-20, Jesus orders the former demoniac to disseminate the word of healing throughout Decapolis, becoming the first Gentile missionary. In Decapolis, the demon's expulsion was to be revealed, but the deaf man's healing was muted. Most of the time, Jesus insisted on keeping quiet because he didn't want people to get the wrong idea about what kind of Messiah he came to be, because he didn't want to be seen as just a miracle worker, and because he didn't want his popularity to grow. Jesus often said, "My hour is not yet come," anticipating his presentation as the Messiah. Both the people and the healed deaf couldn't take Jesus' request and kept telling others about the miracle.

In verse 37, people implored Jesus to lay his hand on the deaf man, possibly for a blessing, but Jesus made everything well. This line parallels God's activity in Genesis 1-2, "He made everything well" (good or beautiful). The messianic prophecy found in Isaiah 35:5-6 is brought to light by the raucous proclamation of the crowd that "he makes the deaf hear and the mute speak." Mark Akin interpreted this as a "grand redemptive storyline" that was shown through a miracle. He did this by comparing the beginning of creation to Jesus making everything good, the fall to the man going deaf because of sin, and Jesus' miraculous healing of the man through the word "Ephphatha" as bringing redemption and proclaiming God's kingdom as restoration. Therefore, it is necessary for us to preach with zeal that Jesus is the one who makes everything beautiful.

Conclusion

Jesus usually heals people by speaking directly to them, but with a deaf man, his healing gestures can be interpreted as sign language. In verse 33, Jesus responds to the man's deafness and inability to speak by "spitting on and touching his tongue" and "putting his fingers into the man's ears." When words are not enough, Jesus uses touch to contact the deaf man's malformed organs and heal them. The passive voice is used in verses 32–35, at the beginning of the discourse, with the noun deaf as the object. Following his recovery, the formerly deaf man becomes the subject or focal point of the narration, and "he spoke plainly" (v. 35). Following that, the deaf can be seen to take on a leading role, ushering in the blessing associated with the time of God's promises in OT prophecies such as Isaiah 35:5–6. Now, a deaf man can hear Jesus' voice for himself and share his experience with the rest of the world (v. 35). Maybe he was one of the disciples Jesus told not to tell anyone about what had happened, the one about whom the Bible says, "the more he ordered them," the "more zealously they proclaimed" (v. 36). As amazed people say, the deaf become a sign of Jesus' healing acts, and He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak (v. 37). God's promised rule entered history and reached the gentiles through the deaf man (v. 31). So, the newly discovered role of the deaf in Jesus' ministry can be seen as proof that God's kingdom is growing because of Jesus' power to change people.(6)

God continues his work of creation, recreation, healing, and restoration in the lives of individuals and the world. His power and might are limitless, and nothing compared to his gentleness and compassion. He touched the deaf in a miraculous way, and he sometimes does miracles with the touch of his grace, making all things beautiful. We've all heard of Helen Keller, a blind and deaf American educator. She was the first deaf-blind person to achieve a Bachelor of Arts degree and went on to become a world-renowned author and speaker, disability-rights activist, and advocate for women's rights and social equality. She had a profound impact on the lives of many people with disabilities. Through her infirmity, she had always been able to see the light of hope. She is a powerful example of how, despite our physical

limitations and geographic location, God always has a purpose for everything and everyone. If we continue to allow him to touch us and let his light enter through us, his kingdom will come to us entirely. We might not understand Jesus in our own lives if we don't see things from his point of view. For example, Jesus used sign language to talk to a deaf man. To help deaf people understand what Jesus said in the Bible and advance God's kingdom through his power, the Bible must be translated into Indian Sign Language. This huge job can make it easier for people who are hard of hearing in India to learn about the gospel.

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**EXISTENTIAL CRISIS
IN THE LIGHT OF PATRIARCHY: A
CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF FEMALE
CHARACTERS IN ANURADHA ROY'S
AN ATLAS OF IMPOSSIBLE LONGING**

Simon Kisku and Ranjit Kumar***

Abstract

Patriarchy serves as the nucleus in almost all the communities in Indian society irrespective of the various social hierarchies. For ages the patriarchal system has been so dominant over women to such an extent that in the process, women themselves have developed the mindset that they are just born to suffer at the hands of men. Life for them is mere existence only for the sake of performing duties and responsibilities, be it in the form of a mother, a wife, a daughter or a sister. In the confinement of imposed patriarchal norms, the women have developed a sense of loss of their individuality as a gender. The patriarchal system is so deeply rooted that it will take years and years to uproot it on the ground level. At least through literature writers are able to express the unexpressed and globalise the issues. Anuradha Roy's observances about the society and women have been so minute that she has been able to address the issue realistically from a female's perspective. Moreover, Roy's characters are realistically drawn and situated within the matrix of a good plotline such that most readers can recognize familiar patterns of life. The paper seeks to address the pain and suffering of women in the realm of patriarchy through Anuradha Roy's *An Atlas of Impossible Longing*.

Keywords: Anuradha Roy, patriarchy, women, Indian society, Literature.

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Introduction

To quote Virginia Woolf (1929): “Women have served all these centuries as a looking-glass possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size”. (p. 35)

The dependence of women on men is not something new to Indian society. The patriarchal model has been in practice for ages. In the process, women have lost their own distinct sense of individuality as a gender. As a result of this women have always been victims of the celebrated masculinity of men. The paper aims to highlight all those issues in reference to Anuradha Roy’s *An Atlas of Impossible Longing*.

The Progression of Decay and Death of Desire in the Character of Kananbala

Kananbala is the lead female character in the novel. For the sake of her husband’s overwhelming desires, Kanabala had to shift from Calcutta to Songarh, a small town in the outskirts of Bengal. Amulya Babu, Kananbala’s husband, rejoices in the rural habitat of Songarh, surrounded by forests and tribal people. On the opposite side, Kananbala feels misplaced and isolated, restricted to their house in Songarh accompanied by the servants only. Amulya Babu never bothers to take her outside be it to his factory or to the tribal festivities. Amulya Babu is pre-occupied with the very idea that women of his community don’t deserve to visit such places as it would tarnish their image. In one of the scenes from the novel, Kananbala broods this way when Amulya Babu returns from a tribal festivity:

Why could she, Kananbala, never be taken? He always laughed with condescension or said exasperated, “I have never met women at these parties, neither do I aspire to.” And what of today, the festival at the tribal village—could she not have been taken? If she were a tribal woman herself, she would have needed no man’s permission. (Roy, 2008, p. 10)

Kananbala had hardly any visitor from her family because of the rural locality. She had no one to talk to. There were hardly any neighbours who were not British and the only language

she knew was Bengali. The three servants who had come along with them from Calcutta were Bengali but she didn't take any interest in talking to them. She was confined to herself while Amulya Babu was out in the factory. Later on, when she became the mother of two sons, she was completely dragged out of her isolation, entering into a new zone of contentment. After the marriage of her elder son Kamal, her younger son Nirmal was the only company she used to cherish. But after the marriage of Nirmal, circumstances seemed to turn worse than the time when Amulya Babu was her only company in Songarh. After being newly married to Shanti, Nirmal devoted much of his time to her, neglecting his responsibility at his workplace. He was a history lecturer in a government college. Now he used to come home earlier and moreover he spent only a few moments with his mother. His sudden change created a sense of rage in his mother which could be traced to the words she used against other members of the family. One day when Shanti and Kamal's wife Manjula were working in the kitchen, Manjula kept requesting Shanti to keep on singing as she really liked her singing. Meanwhile, Kananbala arrived at the door of the kitchen and kept noticing the two while massaging her knee. All of a sudden, being irritated by their activities, she addressed the following words to Shanti: "What a Voice," she said. "You whore, why don't you get a job on the streets?" (p. 40)

This was the point of time where she started developing the thought of seeking revenge in her sub-conscious mind for all the suffering of the previous years as a victim of patriarchal norms. And moreover, she was ageing as well. The very next day, when Amulya Babu was getting ready to go to the factory, Kananbala asked him: "You dandy, who're you fucking these days? Is it a Brahmo lady in a georgette sari?" (p. 40)

She continued babbling such abusive words and no change could be seen in her. Probably she was losing her mind day by day as a result of her miseries. Amulya Babu had no idea as to why a sudden transformation has taken place in her about which she herself was not aware. Now Amulya Babu came to realise his mistakes. He realised now that he should not have brought her to Songarh against her wishes. Moreover, he was filled with the guilt on the very thought that he didn't spend much time with her being over-involved in his work without being

concerned about her. Innumerable times he tried to comfort her and change her by spending as much time as he could but things didn't change a bit. Amulya Babu realised that he was the one and only person behind her destruction but he was helpless now and nothing could change her.

Lerner rightly remarks:

Women have for millennia participated in the process of their own subordination because they have been psychologically shaped as to internalise the idea of their own inferiority...The connectedness of women to familial structures made any development of female solidarity and group cohesiveness extremely problematic. (Lerner, 1986, p. 218)

Portrayal of a Widow and Her Troubles Represented through the Character of Meera

Widow. The word consumes itself –
 Body, a sheet of newsprint on the fire
 Levitating a numb minute in the updraft
 Over the scalding, red topography
 That will put her heart out like an only eye. (Plath, 1981, p. 164)

Meera, a distant relative of Nirmal, was invited by him to look after his motherless daughter Bakul, as most of the time he used to be away from Songarh for his archaeological survey. On the part of Meera, she also needed a house to stay since she did not want to be a burden on his brother and mother. Meera had been widowed young and she was probably no older than twenty-five or twenty-six. At the arrival of Meera in Songarh at Nirmal's house, the neighbours started gossiping about the two since Nirmal himself was a widower. Moreover, Meera was a childless widow. The two didn't pay any heed to all those conversations. In the beginning Meera had shown her inclinations towards Nirmal which she didn't consider it necessary to express, being a widow. As has been described in the novel:

In the early days at Dulganj Road, she had begun to feel that Nirmal, who was not really related to her except by marriage, was a kindred soul. Nirmal did not speak very much to anyone, yet they always seemed to have things to say to each other when they met by chance on the stairs or

in the garden. But who had heard of widows marrying again? Who had heard of a widow marrying a relative? She had overheard people commending Nirmal's compassion in taking her in. (Roy, 2008, pp. 114- 15)

After few years Nirmal finally decided to permanently settle at Songarh and proceed with his archaeological survey at the ruined forts over there. After his return, he and Meera were regularly spotted at the ruined fort. Meera used to go there to amuse herself in isolation with her drawings and with the dogs she kept feeding, while Nirmal used to go digging the ruins for his survey. In the process they started developing a bond between them to fill the gaps in their lives. Their regular meetings at the fort could not remain hidden for long and the people around came to know about their friendship. Even this could not remain hidden from Nirmal's family for so long.

Then after a few days an incident took place in Nirmal's house which broke Meera completely from inside and made her take the decision to leave the house immediately without a giving a second thought to it. Getting to know about the friendship of Meera and Nirmal, Kamal made an attempt to flirt with Meera and even tried to touch her thinking that she could be friendly with him as well since she was a widow. As has been described in the novel:

It struck her like a blow. Of course! He must have caught wind of her friendship with his brother! And decided he too would try his luck. She stood up in agitation. Of course! That was it, it was how men thought: friendliness with a man could be nothing but flirtation, and if you flirted with one you were easy, a slut, game for more. (pp. 160- 61)

Meera was so much helpless about her situation that she didn't even think of sharing this incident with Nirmal. She didn't want to take the risk. She was in confusion about whether Nirmal would support her or Kamal. At the end she considered it wise to leave the house so as not to give the incident a bigger shape.

Analysis of the Characters Manjula and Shanti

Manjula was the wife of Kamal and she was childless. Even after three years of marriage she had never conceived and regarded

her childlessness as evidence that she had, unknown to herself, displeased God. Now that Shanti was pregnant, this made Manjula sigh and take longer over things; something, she found, made her absent-minded. It is very common in patriarchal society that only women are blamed for childlessness and nobody questions men. On an occasion when Manjula comes to know that Nirmal has planned for a trip to Calcutta accompanying Bakul and Mukunda, Manjula got excited and she also wished to plan for a trip with Kamal. And in the process, she burst out expressing her grief to Kamal and asking him the reason behind their never going anywhere for a trip. They broke into an argument, diverting the topic to the issue of childlessness. As has been described in the novel:

In another room, Manjula was saying to Kamal, "When did we last have a holiday? I tell you! What a rotten day it was when my father decided to marry me into this family, so far from any city, any excitement. Why don't we go anywhere?"

"Why we went to Varanasi just three years ago. Have you forgotten already? And that trip to Puri and Dakshineswar? Who took you on that?"

"Those trips were all to pray for offspring, they weren't holidays, just days of fasts and mantras. And the prayers didn't work. Nothing's worked in my life!"

"Stop grumbling," Kamal said. "Stop sounding as if I'm responsible for everything."

"Who is, if you aren't?" (p. 144)

Shanti was the wife of Nirmal. Shanti had to pay the price for following the old tradition giving away her life. If Nirmal's family would have taken a rational decision by not sending Shanti to Mohanpur, probably her life could have been saved. Mohanpur didn't have a hospital nearer than the next town, which was far away. As has been mentioned in the novel:

The first child would be born, as tradition demanded, in her childhood home, even though Nirmal disapproved of the tradition, saying Mohanpur was no place to have a

baby; it didn't have a hospital nearer than the next town, which was far away. (p. 63)

Shanti's house was situated near the bank of a river which seemed to be coming closer each year. During the monsoon the house used to be nearly drowned in the river water. Moreover, the river didn't have any dam constructed over it to prevent floods. During her pregnancy in Mohanpur, when Shanti asked her father about the danger to their house during the monsoon, he replied confidently:

Why it should be? Is it built of clay? ... Haven't you seen with your own eyes how strong the walls are? Don't you remember how the workers' solid iron tools broke when they were trying to take down the old kitchen wall? (p. 71)

Still not convinced by her father's words, Shanti tried to convince her father by saying: "I was just thinking...maybe we could move to..." (p. 71). Still her father was not convinced and told her that he was used to all those situations during the monsoon and there was nothing to be worried about. Just one month before the expected date of delivery, Shanti's labour pain started and on the same day due to continuous rain, the river broke its banks and there were no possible ways to take her to the hospital. Ultimately Shanti had to lose her life because of her father's arrogance.

Simone de Beauvoir (1972) observations are a fitting commentary on situations of this kind:

Representation of the world, like the world itself, is the work of men; they describe it from their own point of view, which they confuse with absolute truth. (p. 161)

Conclusion

As the title of the novel suggests, the novel serves as an atlas mapping several characters, women in particular, whose desires remains unfulfilled. The patriarchal norms followed for ages are so influential that women can neither revolt against it nor can they lead a contented life: a state where one neither lives nor dies but just survives. To quote Lerner (1986): "the sexual

regulation of women...is one of the foundations upon which the state rests." (p. 140) and is "an essential feature of patriarchal power." (p. 140)

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EUTHANASIA: IS GOD AGAINST END OF SUFFERING?

- Danica A.E Lyngdoh*

Abstract

Life's hard truth is that all who are born are destined to die. Death is the inevitable truth that we all shall face but as we do not know when we will die, we also do not know how we will die. These are questions that can cause anxiety in most people. However, these life and death questions seem to have answers for terminally ill patients (to some extent), but the anxiety of death can still disturb terminal patients. Euthanasia is a course of action that is only permissible to terminally ill patients. In states and countries that allow euthanasia, the terminally ill patients will have the option of a 'good death' Stumbling across an article "Dimensions of Religion and Attitudes toward Euthanasia" sparked an interest in me to write this article. The article, "Dimensions of Religion and Attitudes toward Euthanasia", looks into religion and how it affects the attitudes of people towards euthanasia. In my article I will deal with the understanding of 'afterlife beliefs' in the Christian religion and how this plays a role in its disapproval of euthanasia. God knows that there is suffering in this world and that there are people who have a terminal illness but the Bible clearly states that our suffering on this earth outweighs everything that is waiting for us in our eternal home, heaven. Hence, corresponding to Christian belief on 'afterlife' belief, the aim is to get to heaven by doing what is pleasing to God and any effort to actively hasten one's death is not going to please God.

Keywords: Euthanasia, afterlife belief, hell, heaven, Christianity, terminal patient, suffering.

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Introduction

“There is a time for everything,
And a season for every activity under the heavens:
a time to be born and a time to die,
a time to plant and a time to uproot, ...” (Ecclesiastes 3:1-2)

Life’s hard truth is that all who are born will one day certainly die. Death is the inevitable truth that we all shall face but as we do not know when we will die, we also do not know how we will die. These are questions that can cause anxiety in most people. However, these life and death questions seem to have answers for terminally ill patients (to some extent), but the anxiety of death can still disturb terminal patients. Terminally ill patients are persons who are suffering with an illness that doesn’t have a cure and hence, such patients do not have much time to live. What should be distinguished is that terminal illness is different from critical illness. Terminal illness is an illness that doesn’t have a cure while a critical illness is a disease that can be cured. When we speak of terminally ill patients, we realise that such patients can either be in conscious state or unconscious state. Besides this, in cases where the patient is in a conscious state, it can be the case that the terminal patient is not in the right state of mind.

Euthanasia is a course of action that is only permissible to terminally ill patients. In states and countries that allow euthanasia, the terminally ill patients will have the option of ‘good death’. “The word ‘Euthanasia’ is derived from Greek words, ‘Eu’ meaning ‘good’ and ‘thanatos’ meaning ‘death’; put together it means ‘good death’. Euthanasia is defined as the hastening of the death of a patient to prevent further suffering.”¹ Even though euthanasia is understood as ‘good death’, it is not an easy decision for the patient nor for the families and relatives

1 Kalaivani Annadurai, Raja Danasekaran, and Geetha Mani, “Euthanasia: Right to Die with Dignity,” *Journal of Family Medicine and Primary Care* 3, no. 4 (2014): 477, <https://doi.org/10.4103/2249-4863.148161>.

of the terminal patient. The main motivation for euthanasia is to end the pain and suffering that the terminally ill patient goes through so that the patient can die in dignity. A person's decision regarding euthanasia will depend on many factors, namely, his/her medical condition, doctor's advice, medical treatment that is available, a person's religion, religious beliefs and stance.

Reading an article entitled "Dimensions of Religion and Attitudes toward Euthanasia" sparked an interest in me to write this article. The article, "Dimensions of Religion and Attitudes toward Euthanasia", looks into religion and how it affects the attitudes of people towards euthanasia. Any religion is not a single dimension concept for every religion has its own beliefs, traditions etc. In "Dimensions of Religion and Attitudes toward Euthanasia", the authors speak about the 'four dimensions operationalised religion' and one of the dimensions is the understanding of the afterlife beliefs:

Understanding the role of religion in attitudes toward euthanasia requires viewing religion as a multidimensional construct. In this study, four dimensions operationalized religion: religiosity, spirituality, afterlife beliefs (afterlife, heaven, and hell), and religious denomination.²

In my article I will deal with the understanding of 'afterlife beliefs' in the Christian religion and how this plays a role in its disapproval of euthanasia. Religiosity is understood as strong religious belief, while on the other hand, spirituality is an aspect of religion that has to do (in Christianity) with an individual's relationship with God. Religiosity will involve performing the rituals and practices that a religion expects, here Christianity; for example: "For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, after supper

2 Soheil Sabriseilabi and James Williams, "Dimensions of Religion and Attitudes toward Euthanasia," *Death Studies* 46, no. 5 (August 5, 2020): 1-8, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07481187.2020.1800863>, Abstract.

he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." (1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

Spirituality, on the other hand, entails the personal 'spiritual growth' in one's relationship with God and so this will include living a life that is pleasing to God and living according to the will of God, "And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God." (Colossians 1:9-10). "The most important difference between religiosity and spirituality is that spirituality refers to a personal relationship with God, but religiosity is a more social and organizational concept."³

Before moving to the main part of the article, another 'operationalised dimension' is the religious denominations. This can be understood as sub-groups within a larger religion. In Christianity, these are largely Catholics and Protestants. Even though there are certain differences between the varied sub-groups of Christianity, their faith is common and their identity and traditions are similar. Now coming to the focal part of this article, 'afterlife beliefs'. Afterlife beliefs focus on what happens after a person dies. Christianity believes in the existence of heaven and hell and thus answers the question- where do I go when I die? "Jesus spoke of hell as "darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 8:12)"⁴.

Billy Graham in his book *Death and the Life After* speaks about the importance of discussing heaven and hell and not just discussing

3 Ibid, p. 1150.

4 Billy Graham, *DEATH and the LIFE AFTER* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, 1987), p.21.

heaven alone. This is because ignorance regarding the reality of heaven and hell will lead to people being ignorant of sin and evil that is prevalent in the world.

Hell, in the eyes of unbelievers and even some believers, was abandoned. Or it was relegated to some vague concept of “evil in the world.” Even some theologians chose to reject the Bible’s clear teaching on hell. Certainly war, hunger, terrorism, greed, and hatred are hell on earth, but, except for the Bible believer, a future hell became part of the ash heap of ancient history. As hell was becoming for many no more than a swear word, sin was also an accepted way of life. People began to look to science, education, and social and moral programs as possible solutions to the growing chaos of an insane world. If people can ignore what the Bible calls sin, then they can quite logically discount what it says about the reality of hell.⁵

Discussing euthanasia in the light of Christian ‘afterlife beliefs’ will hopefully answer the moral questions pertaining to euthanasia. Understanding that the world we live in is our temporary dwelling place and that we are all bound for our eternal home, that is “....we know there is abundant life after death for the followers of Christ”⁶

Euthanasia vis-à-vis Pain and Suffering in the World

There is no doubt that we suffer in this world, this can either be mental, physical or emotional. Even when we have a stomach ache, it affects our emotional state and physical state, how much more then can we expect this for a person with a terminal illness. A terminally ill patient goes through pain and suffering day in and day out and they get whatever medical help they can knowing that their condition will not get any better; instead everyday their end is nearing. Enduring all this can leave many terminal patients with a sense of frustration and hopelessness. Some

⁵ Ibid, p. 20.

⁶ Ibid, p.23.

terminal patients go through this contemplating suicide while some endure it passively waiting for death. Considering cases of terminally ill patients, there have been few states and countries that have allowed euthanasia and so, terminal patients in these countries and states may hasten their death by euthanasia.

Euthanasia is usually understood as 'good death'⁷ but as good as it sounds, it doesn't come without any moral arguments against it. There have been several arguments for euthanasia and against euthanasia. Some of the arguments against euthanasia include that doctors and family, and in the case of active euthanasia, patients shouldn't play God by favouring death or opting to die. Another argument is the 'slippery slope' argument; Referring to the 'slippery slope argument', Billy Graham gives references as to how euthanasia can lead to deaths of many other people who some might find unimportant or unwanted by the society and one such incident was during the Nazi Germany. Billy Graham then says if such a thing has even a possibility to happen again then we must be 'vigilant against attempts to encourage or promote euthanasia.'⁸

It started with the acceptance of the attitude, basic in the euthanasia movement, that there is such a thing as life not worthy to be lived. This attitude in its early stages concerned itself merely with the severely and chronically sick. Gradually the sphere of those to be included in this category was enlarged to encompass the socially unproductive, the ideologically unwanted, the racially unwanted, and finally all non-Germans. But it is important to realize that the infinitely small wedged-in lever from which this entire trend of mind received its impetus was the attitude toward the nonrehabilitatable sick.⁹

7 Kalaivani Annadurai, Raja Danasekaran, and Geetha Mani, "Euthanasia: Right to Die with Dignity," *Journal of Family Medicine and Primary Care* 3, no. 4 (2014): 477, <https://doi.org/10.4103/2249-4863.148161>.

8 Billy Graham, *DEATH and the LIFE AFTER* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, 1987), p.111.

9 *Ibid*, p.111.

Lastly, it is also said that according to the Hippocratic Oath¹⁰ taken by physicians, the duty of doctors should be to provide care and give the best treatment to their patients and thus euthanasia seems to operate against the duty of doctors. Doctors are humans who are called to a virtuous duty and are often believed to be a blessing to sick and ailing people. Billy Graham writes about how he is left in awe by the God-given skill and talent that many physicians possess in times of crisis after crises.

I believe that God allows physicians to use their modern technology to extend physical life today in a way that is unprecedented in human history. I am constantly in awe of the tenacious qualities in the human spirit, and also of the ability of skilled physicians to treat crisis after crisis and somehow manage to pull the patient through.¹¹

Amongst the many arguments for euthanasia, the key argument is to relieve the pain and suffering of a terminally ill patient and help him/her have a dignified death. When looked closely, a terminal illness in the family doesn't only affect the patient per se but also the family and relatives of the patient and so the decision of euthanasia is of the family and relatives as much as it is of the terminal patient. In addition, the decision for euthanasia will affect the family and relatives too. This suffering is not simply of the terminally ill patient but also the family and relatives of the patient too. Many ask why does God allow suffering? Why is Christianity against euthanasia? The act of euthanasia entails hastening the death of the terminally ill patient and Christian belief says that life and death is in the control of God and no one has any right to take his/her life. Life is a gift from God. As humans we wish and pray to have a life that is without pain, suffering, anxiety and/or anything bad but no one's life is without trouble and suffering. Suffering can be mental and/or

10 William Shiel, "Medical Definition of Hippocratic Oath," MedicineNet, June 3, 2021, https://www.medicinenet.com/hippocratic_oath/definition.htm.

11 Billy Graham, *DEATH and the LIFE AFTER* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, 1987), p.31-32.

physical and it is usually understood that euthanasia applies to terminal patients with physical suffering while mental patients are the ones who give in to suicide¹². Both, euthanasia and suicide, are condemned by Christianity. But if euthanasia is understood as an act of mercy why is Christianity against euthanasia? Is God against the end of suffering?

Euthanasia is broadly divided into active euthanasia and passive euthanasia. Active euthanasia is to deliberately kill a terminally ill patient while passive euthanasia is to let the terminally ill patient die by stopping any extraordinary life-sustaining treatment. It is not an easy decision to choose when to stop or withdraw life-sustaining measures, because the definitions of life-sustaining measures vary and it is an emotionally charged issue; "few topics in medicine are more complicated, more controversial, and more emotionally charged than treatment of the hopelessly ill. Technology competes with compassion, legal precedent lags, and controversy is inevitable"¹³. According to Christian teaching, to actively kill anyone is wrong; "While all must sympathize with human suffering, practicing "active euthanasia," either through the use of lethal drugs or denial of food and water, violates the Judeo-Christian code of moral conduct."¹⁴ There is no mention in the New Testament that justifies killing of anyone, even if the person is guilty of any crime or in this case, a terminally ill patient. The Bible states that our life is not ours to take but of God. He is the creator and He alone sustains us.

To all the questions above, there is no doubt that the terminal patient is in agony and is in need of healing but when we look at life, we see that there is pain and suffering everywhere. There are many forms to suffering, it can be physical or mental or even spiritual but as Christians we believe that our life on earth is temporary and that we are destined to our eternal homes on the day of judgement, "Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgement." (Hebrews 9:27). According to the

12 I will for most part of my article concentrate on euthanasia.

13 Billy Graham, *DEATH and the LIFE AFTER* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, 1987), p.108.

14 *Ibid*, p.113.

Bible, there is a purpose for everything that happens in our life on earth and so during all the good and bad times on earth, we should give praise and glory to God; "Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope." (Romans 5: 3-4)

Euthanasia and Afterlife Beliefs

Jesus never denies nor ignores the suffering of man on earth but He gives hope for a future that is fulfilling in our eternal home in heaven. Coming to the choice of euthanasia (active euthanasia and/or passive euthanasia), to Christians it is clear that the Bible is against it and this can be understood by examining the teaching of Christian afterlife beliefs.

First, let us talk about the world we live in. According to the Bible, we live in a fallen world which one might call hell on earth because there are wars, sickness, terrorism, hunger, poverty, natural calamities and loss of loved ones, which is one of the most difficult things for many people. Some even commit suicide when things get too difficult to bear. It can be argued that why just as it is not right for someone to commit suicide when life gets difficult the same might be said for terminal patients who opt for euthanasia. According to Christian belief to deliberately take your own life is not considered right and that is purely because life is a precious gift from God and no one has the right to take anyone's life or even their own life. Most importantly, we are created by God in His image and He has a plan for our life, "For You created my inmost being; You knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise You because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame is not hidden from You when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, Your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in Your book before one of them came to be." (Psalm 138: 13-16).

God knows that there is suffering in this world and that there are people who have terminal illness but the Bible clearly states that our suffering on this earth outweighs everything that is waiting for us in our eternal home, heaven. During all the difficult and painful times on earth, we must remind ourselves that God is with us always “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.” (Isaiah 43:2). To intentionally opt to kill oneself in the case of a terminal patient, here active euthanasia, is not to do God’s will. There have been miracle stories of people suffering with a terminal illness or of persons who have been in state of coma. We should not give up hope for it is God who gives us life and only He has the right to take it away according to His time.

Jacqueline Cole was forty-four years old when her husband, Presbyterian Minister Harry Cole, had to honor or ignore that agonising request. Jacqueline had suffered a cerebral haemorrhage in the spring of 1986 and had been in a coma for forty-one days. When her case seemed hopeless, her husband reluctantly asked a Maryland judge to order doctors to let his comatose wife die, according to her own wishes. The judge determined that it was too soon to give up hope and six days later Jacqueline opened her eyes, smiled and returned her husband’s joyous kiss. “Miracles can and do occur,” said the happy minister. “I guess we’ve muddied the waters surrounding the question of a person’s right to die.”¹⁵

Another way of looking at the suffering and pain of terminal patients is to consider this as an opportunity for medical teams, family, relatives and friends to care for terminally ill patients, because even a suffering patient has God-given worth and “the Bible does not give us clear-cut answers on how to treat people in a “vegetative” state. However, the Scriptures are very clear

¹⁵ Billy Graham, *DEATH and the LIFE AFTER* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, 1987), p.101-102.

about caring for the weak and defenseless.”¹⁶ In Matthew 25:35-40, Jesus teaches his disciples to care and help people in need and by doing so, it would be just as if we are doing it for Him; “I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.” (Matthew 25:40).

Now, let us talk about life after death. Apart from life being sacred, life being a gift from God and miracles happening, another aspect that stops us from making a decision to opt for euthanasia is the Christian belief of hell and heaven, which is the Christian afterlife belief. As Christians we believe in the judgement day, “Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.” (Revelation 20:14-15). People who do not live according to the will of God, are believed to go to hell where there is eternal suffering and those who do the will of God will have eternal peace and joy in heaven. “He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” (Revelation 21:4). Hence, according to the Christian afterlife belief, suffering in the world is temporary and this should motivate us to care for terminal patients with love, compassion and prayer so that the life of terminal patients on earth is filled with hope and peace. “Remember that it is through “the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope” (Romans 15:4).”¹⁷

Conclusion

In conclusion, God is not against the end of suffering. God sent his only begotten son, Jesus, to this world¹⁸ so that amidst all the pain, suffering and sin in the world, we have hope for an eternal home in heaven. Jesus came and died for our sins and this forgiveness of our sins is the grace of God to all people so

16 Ibid, 113.

17 Ibid, p.134.

18 John 3:16

that we can hope to find deliverance and forgiveness on the Day of Judgement. "Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him." (James 1:12). Hence, corresponding to Christian belief on 'afterlife' belief our aim is to get to heaven by doing what is pleasing to God and to actively hasten one's death is not going to please God. I would like to end by saying that playing God by ending our life prematurely or not waiting for God's timing will lead us to being judged by God accordingly on the Day of Judgement.

We will be judged according to the secret motives and the character of our work. If we have done our work for selfish motives or personal gain, even if the results looked noble to our friends and family, God knows our hearts.¹⁹

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¹⁹ Billy Graham, *DEATH and the LIFE AFTER* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, 1987), p.233.

SHARM EL-SHEIKH IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The Conference of the Parties,

Recalling decisions 1/CP.19, 1/CP.20, 1/CP.21, 1/CP.22, 1/CP.23, 1/CP.24, 1/CP.25 and 1/CP.26,

Noting decision -/CMA.4,¹

Guided by science and principles,

Reaffirming the outcomes of all previous Conferences of the Parties, Conferences of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol and Conferences of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement, including decisions 1/CP.26, 1/CMP.17 and 1/CMA.3 (the Glasgow Climate Pact),

Also reaffirming the critical role of multilateralism based on United Nations values and principles, including in the context of the implementation of the Convention and the Paris Agreement, and the importance of international cooperation for addressing global issues, including climate change, in the context of sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty,

Noting the importance of transition to sustainable lifestyles and sustainable patterns of consumption and production for efforts to address climate change,

Also noting the importance of pursuing an approach to education that promotes a shift in lifestyles while fostering patterns of development and sustainability based on care, community and cooperation,

1 Draft decision entitled “Sharm el-Sheikh Implementation Plan” proposed under agenda item 2 of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement at its fourth session.

Acknowledging that climate change is a common concern of humankind, Parties should, when taking action to address climate change, respect, promote and consider their respective obligations on human rights, the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, the right to health, the rights of indigenous peoples, local communities, migrants, children, persons with disabilities and people in vulnerable situations and the right to development, as well as gender equality, empowerment of women and intergenerational equity,

Noting the importance of ensuring the integrity of all ecosystems, including in forests, the ocean and the cryosphere, and the protection of biodiversity, recognized by some cultures as Mother Earth, and also noting the importance of 'climate justice', when taking action to address climate change,

Emphasizing that enhanced effective climate action should be implemented in a manner that is just and inclusive while minimizing negative social or economic impacts that may arise from climate action,

Recognizing the fundamental priority of safeguarding food security and ending hunger, and the particular vulnerabilities of food production systems to the adverse impacts of climate change,

Also recognizing the critical role of protecting, conserving and restoring water systems and water-related ecosystems in delivering climate adaptation benefits and co-benefits, while ensuring social and environmental safeguards,

Underlines the urgent need to address, in a comprehensive and synergetic manner, the interlinked global crises of climate change and biodiversity loss in the broader context of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as the vital importance of protecting, conserving, restoring and sustainably using nature and ecosystems for effective and sustainable climate action,¹

Acknowledges that the impacts of climate change exacerbate the global energy and food crises, and vice versa, particularly in developing countries,

Stresses that the increasingly complex and challenging global geopolitical situation and its impact on the energy, food and

economic situations, as well as the additional challenges associated with the socioeconomic recovery from the coronavirus pandemic, should not be used as a pretext for backtracking, backsliding or de-prioritizing climate action;

I. Science and Urgency

1. Welcomes the contributions of Working Groups II² and III³ to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change;
2. Recognizes the importance of the best available science for effective climate action and policymaking;
3. Takes note of the 2022 adaptation gap⁴ and emissions gap⁵ reports of the United Nations Environment Programme, and recent global and regional reports of the World Meteorological Organization on the state of the climate;⁶

2 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. 2022. *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*. H Pörtner, D Roberts, M Tignor, et al. (eds.). Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press. Available at <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/>.

3 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. 2022. *Climate Change 2022: Mitigation of Climate Change. Contribution of Working Group III to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*. P Shukla, J Skea, R Slade, et al. (eds.). Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press. Available at <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg3/>.

4 See United Nations Environment Programme. 2022. *Adaptation Gap Report 2022: Too Little, Too*

Slow - Climate adaptation failure puts world at risk. Nairobi: United Nations Environment Programme. Available at <https://www.unep.org/resources/adaptation-gap-report-2022>.

5 See United Nations Environment Programme. 2022. *Emissions Gap Report 2022: The Closing Window - Climate crisis calls for rapid transformation of societies*. Nairobi: United Nations Environment Programme. Available at <https://www.unep.org/resources/emissions-gap-report-2022>.

6 See, for example, World Meteorological Organization. 2022. *State of the Global Climate 2021*. Geneva: World Meteorological Organization. Available at <https://public.wmo.int/en/our-mandate/climate/wmo-statement-state-of-global-climate>.

4. *Reiterates* that the impacts of climate change will be much lower at the temperature increase of 1.5 °C compared with 2 °C⁷ and *resolves* to pursue further efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 °C;
5. *Recognizes* the impact of climate change on the cryosphere and the need for further understanding of these impacts, including of tipping points;

II. Enhancing Ambition and Implementation

6. *Resolves* to implement ambitious, just, equitable and inclusive transitions to low- emission and climate-resilient development in line with the principles and objectives of the Convention, the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement, taking into account this decision, the Glasgow Climate Pact and other relevant decisions of the Conference of the Parties and the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement;
7. *Expresses appreciation* to the Heads of State and Government who participated in the Sharm el-Sheikh Climate Implementation Summit for their support in enhancing and accelerating the implementation of climate action;

III. Energy

8. *Emphasizes* the urgent need for immediate, deep, rapid and sustained reductions in global greenhouse gas emissions by Parties across all applicable sectors, including through increase in low-emission and renewable energy, just energy transition partnerships and other cooperative actions;
9. *Recognizes* that the unprecedented global energy crisis underlines the urgency to rapidly transform energy systems to be more secure, reliable, and resilient, including by accelerating clean and just transitions to renewable energy during this critical decade of action;
10. *Stresses* the importance of enhancing a clean energy mix, including low-emission and renewable energy, at all levels

⁷ Decision 1/CP.26, para. 16, and decision 1/CMA.3, para. 21.

as part of diversifying energy mixes and systems, in line with national circumstances and recognizing the need for support towards just transitions;

IV. Mitigation

11. *Recognizes* that limiting global warming to 1.5 °C requires rapid, deep and sustained reductions in global greenhouse gas emissions of 43 per cent by 2030 relative to the 2019 level;
12. *Also recognizes* that this requires accelerated action in this critical decade, on the basis of equity and the best available scientific knowledge, reflecting common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, in the light of different national circumstances and in the context of sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty;
13. *Calls upon* Parties to accelerate the development, deployment and dissemination of technologies, and the adoption of policies, to transition towards low-emission energy systems, including by rapidly scaling up the deployment of clean power generation and energy efficiency measures, including accelerating efforts towards the phasedown of unabated coal power and phase-out of inefficient fossil fuel subsidies, while providing targeted support to the poorest and most vulnerable in line with national circumstances and recognizing the need for support towards a just transition;
14. *Reiterates*⁸ its invitation to Parties to consider further actions to reduce by 2030 non- carbon dioxide greenhouse gas emissions, including methane;
15. *Emphasizes* the importance of protecting, conserving and restoring nature and ecosystems to achieve the Paris Agreement temperature goal, including through forests and other terrestrial and marine ecosystems acting as sinks and reservoirs of greenhouse gases and by protecting

⁸ Decision 1/CP.26, para. 19.

biodiversity, while ensuring social and environmental safeguards;

16. *Recognizes* the importance of maximizing the positive and minimizing the negative economic and social impacts of the implementation of response measures, and *welcomes* the adoption of decisions -/CP.27,⁹ -/CMP.27¹⁰ and -/CMA.4,¹¹

V. Adaptation

17. *Notes with serious concern* the existing gap between current levels of adaptation and levels needed to respond to the adverse effect of climate change in line with findings from the contribution of Working Group II to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Sixth Assessment Report;
18. *Urges* Parties to adopt a transformational approach to enhancing adaptive capacity, strengthening resilience and reducing vulnerability to climate change;
19. Also *urges* developed country Parties to urgently and significantly scale up their provision of climate finance, technology transfer and capacity-building for adaptation so as to respond to the needs of developing country Parties as part of a global effort, including for the formulation and implementation of national adaptation plans and adaptation communications;

9 Draft decision entitled “Report of the forum on the impact of the implementation of response measures” proposed under agenda item 12 of the Conference of the Parties at its twenty-seventh session.

10 Draft decision entitled “Report of the forum on the impact of the implementation of response measures” proposed under agenda item 9 of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol at its seventeenth session.

11 Draft decision entitled “Report of the forum on the impact of the implementation of response measures” proposed under agenda item 12 of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement at its fourth session.

20. *Highlights* the role of the Least Developed Countries Fund and the Special Climate Change Fund in supporting actions by developing countries to address climate change, *welcomes* the pledges made to the two Funds and *invites* developed countries to further contribute to the two Funds;
21. *Emphasizes* the importance of protecting, conserving and restoring water and water- related ecosystems, including river basins, aquifers and lakes, and *urges* Parties to further integrate water into adaptation efforts;

VI. Loss and Damage

22. *Notes with grave concern*, according to information in the contributions of Working Groups II and III to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the growing gravity, scope and frequency in all regions of loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change, resulting in devastating economic and non-economic losses, including forced displacement and impacts on cultural heritage, human mobility and the lives and livelihoods of local communities, and *underlines* the importance of an adequate and effective response to loss and damage;
23. *Expresses deep concern* regarding the significant financial costs associated with loss and damage for developing countries, resulting in a growing debt burden and impairing the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals;
24. *Welcomes* the consideration, for the first time, of matters relating to funding arrangements responding to loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change, including a focus on addressing loss and damage, under the Conference of the Parties and the Conference of

the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement and *also welcomes* the adoption of decisions -/CP.27¹² and -/CMA.4,¹³ on matters relating to funding arrangements responding to loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change;

25. *Further welcomes* the adoption of decisions -/CP.27¹⁴ and -/CMA.4,¹⁵ establishing the institutional arrangements of the Santiago network for averting, minimizing and addressing loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change to enable its full operationalization, including supporting its mandated role in catalysing technical assistance for the implementation of the relevant approaches at the local, national and regional level in developing countries that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change, and *affirms* its determination to select the host of the secretariat of the Santiago network by 2023 through a selection process conducted in an open, transparent, fair and neutral manner

12 Draft decision entitled “Funding arrangements for responding to loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change, including a focus on addressing loss and damage” proposed under agenda item 8(f) of the Conference of the Parties at its twenty-seventh session.

13 Draft decision entitled “Funding arrangements for responding to loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change, including a focus on addressing loss and damage ” proposed under agenda item 8(f) of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement at its fourth session.

14 Draft decision entitled “Santiago network for averting, minimizing and addressing loss and damage under the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage associated with Climate Change Impacts” proposed under agenda item 7 of the Conference of the Parties at its twenty-seventh session.

15 Draft decision entitled “Santiago network for averting, minimizing and addressing loss and damage under the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage associated with Climate Change Impacts” proposed under agenda item 7 of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement at its fourth session.

in accordance with the process outlined in paragraphs 17-18 of decisions -/CMA.4¹⁶ and -/CP.27;¹⁷

VII. Early Warning and Systematic Observation

26. *Emphasizes* the need to address existing gaps in the global climate observing system, particularly in developing countries, and *recognizes* that one third of the world, including sixty per cent of Africa, does not have access to early warning and climate information services, as well as the need to enhance coordination of activities by the systematic observation community and the ability to provide useful and actionable climate information for mitigation, adaptation and early warning systems, as well as information to enable understanding of adaptation limits and of attribution of extreme events;
27. *Welcomes* and *reiterates* the United Nations Secretary-General's call made on World Meteorological Day on 23 March 2022 to protect everyone on Earth through universal coverage of early warning systems against extreme weather and climate change within the next five years and *invites* development partners, international financial institutions and the operating entities of the Financial Mechanism to provide support for implementation of the Early Warnings for All initiative;

VIII. Implementation – Pathways to Just Transition

28. *Affirms* that sustainable and just solutions to the climate crisis must be founded on meaningful and effective

16 Draft decision entitled “Santiago network for averting, minimizing and addressing loss and damage under the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage associated with Climate Change Impacts” proposed under agenda item 7 of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement at its fourth session.

17 Draft decision entitled “Santiago network for averting, minimizing and addressing loss and damage under the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage associated with Climate Change Impacts” proposed under agenda item 7 of the Conference of the Parties at its twenty-seventh session.

social dialogue and participation of all stakeholders and *notes* that the global transition to low emissions provides opportunities and challenges for sustainable economic development and poverty eradication;

29. *Emphasizes* that just and equitable transition encompasses pathways that include energy, socioeconomic, workforce and other dimensions, all of which must be based on nationally defined development priorities and include social protection so as to mitigate potential impacts associated with the transition, and *highlights* the important role of the instruments related to social solidarity and protection in mitigating the impacts of applied measures;

IX. Finance

30. *Highlights* that about USD 4 trillion per year needs to be invested in renewable energy up until 2030 to be able to reach net zero emissions by 2050,¹⁸ and that, furthermore, a global transformation to a low-carbon economy is expected to require investment of at least USD 4–6 trillion per year;¹⁹
31. *Also highlights* that delivering such funding will require a transformation of the financial system and its structures and processes, engaging governments, central banks, commercial banks, institutional investors and other financial actors;
32. *Notes with concern* the growing gap between the needs of developing country Parties, in particular those due to the increasing impacts of climate change and their increased indebtedness, and the support provided and mobilized for their efforts to implement their nationally determined contributions, highlighting that such needs are currently estimated at USD 5.8–5.9 trillion²⁰ for the pre-2030 period;

18 See <https://iea.blob.core.windows.net/assets/830fe099-5530-48f2-a7c1-11f35d510983/WorldEnergyOutlook2022.pdf>.

19 As footnote 5 above.

20 See <https://unfccc.int/topics/climate-finance/workstreams/needs-report>.

33. *Expresses serious concern* that the goal of developed country Parties to mobilize jointly USD 100 billion per year by 2020 in the context of meaningful mitigation action and transparency on implementation has not yet been met and *urges* developed country Parties to meet the goal;²¹
34. *Emphasizes* that accelerated financial support for developing countries from developed countries and other sources is critical to enhancing mitigation action and addressing inequities in access to finance, including its costs, terms and conditions, and economic vulnerability to climate change for developing countries;²² and that scaled-up public grants for mitigation and adaptation for vulnerable regions, in particular sub-Saharan Africa, would be cost-effective and have high social returns in terms of access to basic energy;
35. *Notes* that global climate finance flows are small relative to the overall needs of developing countries, with such flows in 2019–2020 estimated to be USD 803 billion,²³ which is 31–32 per cent of the annual investment needed to keep the global temperature rise well below 2 °C or at 1.5 °C, and also below what would be expected in the light of the investment opportunities identified and the cost of failure to meet climate stabilization targets;
36. *Urges* developed country Parties to provide enhanced support, including through financial resources, technology transfer and capacity-building, to assist developing country Parties with respect to both mitigation and adaptation, in continuation of their existing obligations under the

21 See J0156_UNFCCC 100BN 2022 Report_Book_v3.2.pdf.

22 IPCC. 2022. Summary for Policymakers. In: H Pörtner, D Roberts, M Tignor, et al. (eds.). *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Available at <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/>.

23 See document <https://unfccc.int/documents/619173>.

- Convention, and *encourages* other Parties to provide or continue to provide such support voluntarily;
37. *Calls on* the shareholders of multilateral development banks and international financial institutions to reform multilateral development bank practices and priorities, align and scale up funding, ensure simplified access and mobilize climate finance from various sources and *encourages* multilateral development banks to define a new vision and commensurate operational model, channels and instruments that are fit for the purpose of adequately addressing the global climate emergency, including deploying a full suite of instruments, from grants to guarantees and non-debt instruments, taking into account debt burdens, and to address risk appetite, with a view to substantially increasing climate finance;
 38. *Calls on* multilateral development banks to contribute to significantly increasing climate ambition using the breadth of their policy and financial instruments for greater results, including on private capital mobilization, and to ensure higher financial efficiency and maximize use of existing concessional and risk capital vehicles to drive innovation and accelerate impact;
 39. *Emphasizes* the ongoing challenges faced by many developing country Parties in accessing climate finance and *encourages* further efforts, including by the operating entities of the Financial Mechanism, to simplify access to such finance;
 40. *Takes note* of the report on the determination of the needs of developing country Parties related to implementing the Convention and the Paris Agreement and in this context *urges* developed country Parties to provide resources for the second replenishment of the Green Climate Fund while demonstrating progression over previous replenishments and in line with the programming capacity of the Fund;

X. Technology Transfer and Deployment

41. *Welcomes with appreciation* the first joint work programme of the Technology Executive Committee and the Climate Technology Centre and Network,²⁴ for 2023–2027, which will facilitate the transformational change needed to achieve the goals of the Convention and the Paris Agreement, *invites* Parties and stakeholders to cooperate and engage with the Technology Executive Committee and the Climate Technology Centre and Network to support the implementation of the joint work programme activities, including on technology needs assessments, action plans and road maps, *acknowledges* the findings in the final report on the first periodic assessment of the effectiveness and adequacy of the support provided to the Technology Mechanism in supporting the implementation of the Paris Agreement²⁵ and *decides* that the main challenges identified therein should be considered under the global stocktake;
42. *Highlights* the importance of cooperation on technology development and transfer and innovation in implementing the joint work programme activities;
43. *Welcomes* the forward-looking conclusions of the Subsidiary Body for Implementation to continue consideration of the Poznan strategic programme on technology transfer at its sixty-first session (November 2024)²⁶ with the aim of supporting the implementation of relevant activities, such as those identified and prioritized in developing countries' nationally determined contributions, national adaptation plans, technology needs assessments and technology action plans, and long-term strategies;

XI. Capacity-building

44. *Notes* that capacity gaps and needs still exist in developing countries and *calls on* developed country Parties to increase

24 See <https://unfccc.int/ttclear/tec/documents.html>.

25 FCCC/SBI/2022/13.

26 FCCC/SBI/2022/L.28.

support for long-term country-driven capacity-building interventions to enhance the effectiveness, success and sustainability of those interventions;

XII. Taking Stock

(i) *Notes* the importance of the periodic review of the long-term global goal under the Convention and *welcomes* the adoption of decision -/CP.27,²⁷ on the second periodic review of the long-term global goal under the Convention and of overall progress towards achieving it;

XIII. Ocean

45. *Welcomes* the outcomes of and key messages²⁸ from the ocean and climate change dialogue²⁹ in 2022 and *decides* that future dialogues will, from 2023, be facilitated by two co-facilitators, selected by Parties biennially, who will be responsible for deciding the topics for and conducting the dialogue, in consultation with Parties and observers, and preparing an informal summary report to be presented in conjunction with the subsequent session of the Conference of the Parties;
46. *Encourages* Parties to consider, as appropriate, ocean-based action in their national climate goals and in the implementation of these goals, including but not limited to nationally determined contributions, long-term strategies and adaptation communications;

XIV. Forest

47. *Recalls* that, in the context of the provision of adequate and predictable support to developing country Parties, Parties should collectively aim to slow, halt and reverse

²⁷ Draft decision entitled “Second periodic review of the long-term global goal under the Convention and of overall progress towards achieving it” proposed under agenda item 13 of the Conference of the Parties at its twenty-seventh session.

²⁸ Available at <https://unfccc.int/documents/615101>.

²⁹ Mandated in decision 1/CP.25, para. 31.

forest cover and carbon loss, in accordance with national circumstances, consistently with the ultimate objective of the Convention, as stated in its Article 2;³⁰

48. *Encourages* Parties to consider, as appropriate, nature-based solutions or ecosystem-based approaches, taking into consideration United Nations Environment Assembly resolution 5/5,³¹ for their mitigation and adaptation action while ensuring relevant social and environmental safeguards;

XV. Agriculture

49. *Welcomes* the establishment of the four-year Sharm el-Sheikh joint work on implementation of climate action on agriculture and food security as well as the establishment of the Sharm el-Sheikh online portal under the joint work by decision -/CP.27;³²

XVI. Enhancing Implementation: Action by Non-Party Stakeholders

50. *Acknowledges* the engagement of non-Party stakeholders in climate action, which complements and broadens it, while recognizing the pivotal role of governments in action on climate change within the framework of the Convention, the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement;
51. *Recognizes* the important role of indigenous peoples, local communities, cities and civil society, including youth and children, in addressing and responding to climate change and *highlights* the urgent need for multilevel and cooperative action in this regard;

30 Decisions 1/CP.16 and 9/CP.19.

31 See https://www.unep.org/environmentassembly/unea-5.2/proceedings-report-ministerial-declaration-resolutions-and-decisions-unea-5.2?%2Fproceedings-report-ministerial-declaration-resolutions-and-decisions-unea-5_2=.

32 Draft decision entitled “Joint work on implementation of climate action on agriculture and food security” proposed under agenda item 3(a-b) of the Conference of the Parties at its twenty-seventh session.

52. *Notes* the adoption of the action plan under the Glasgow work programme on Action for *Climate* Empowerment by decision -/CP.27;³³
53. *Encourages* Parties to increase the full, meaningful and equal participation of women in climate action and to ensure gender-responsive implementation and means of implementation, including by fully implementing the Lima work programme on gender and its gender action plan, to raise climate ambition and achieve climate goals;
54. *Invites* Parties to provide support to developing countries for undertaking gender- related action and implementing the gender action plan;
55. *Recognizes* the role of children and youth as agents of change in addressing and responding to climate change and *encourages* Parties to include children and youth in their processes for designing and implementing climate policy and action, and, as appropriate, to consider including young representatives and negotiators into their national delegations, recognizing the importance of intergenerational equity and maintaining the stability of the climate system for future generations;
56. *Expresses its appreciation* to the Presidency of the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties for its leadership in promoting the full, meaningful and equal participation of children and youth, including by co-organizing the first youth-led climate forum (the Sharm el-Sheikh youth climate dialogue), hosting the first children and youth pavilion and appointing the first youth envoy of a Presidency of the Conference of the Parties and *encourages* future incoming Presidencies of the Conference of the Parties to consider doing the same;

³³ Draft decision entitled “Action plan under the Glasgow work programme on Action for Climate Empowerment” proposed under agenda item 3(b) of the Conference of the Parties at its twenty-seventh session.

57. *Expresses its appreciation* to the children and youth constituency for co-organizing the Sharm el-Sheikh youth climate dialogue with the Presidency of the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties and *notes* the outcomes of the seventeenth Conference of Youth, organized by the constituency and held in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, in November 2022;
58. *Encourages* Parties and non-Party stakeholders to engage actively in the Marrakech Partnership for Global Climate Action;
59. *Welcomes* the leadership of the Presidency of the Conference of the Parties and the high-level champions, in particular in the context of the Sharm el-Sheikh Adaptation Agenda and the Breakthrough Agenda, and the collaboration between Parties and non-Party stakeholders, and *emphasizes* the need for continued acceleration and collaboration;
60. *Welcomes* the recommendations of the High-Level Expert Group on the Net-Zero Emissions Commitments of Non-State Entities, launched by the United Nations Secretary-General in March 2022, which are designed to enhance transparency and accountability related to, and progress in achieving, the climate pledges of businesses, investors, cities and regions;
61. *Invites* the secretariat to ensure greater accountability of voluntary initiatives through the Non-State Actor Zone for Climate Action platform;³⁴
62. *Welcomes* the convening of five regional forums led by the President of the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties and the high-level champions, in collaboration with the United Nations Regional Economic Commissions, on initiatives for financing climate action and the Sustainable Development Goals.



34 See <https://climateaction.unfccc.int/>.

BIBLE STUDY

“DESTRUCTIVE FIRE AND CRITICAL HOSPITALITY”: A LUKAN REFLECTION ON STATE, VIOLENCE, DEMOCRACY (LUKE 9:51-56)

*-Allan Samuel Palanna**

How are the political landscapes of the nation being redrawn? What is the makeup of the political movements which are finding their place in the everyday life of the people? A cursory glance around us would reveal that hostility towards people’s movements, as well as divisive and nationalist affirmations are finding fertile ground.

One sees a deep cynicism in the common perception about whether our vote counts at all! There is, clearly, increasing marginalization of young people from the democratic process. Ideas pertaining to democracy and the State are confined to the dominant few. The ‘young’ faces in the present democratic setup inevitably belong to dynastic regimes. How does one make sense of democracy in a state laced with violent overtures run by hereditary clans? As in any ethical dilemma, state, violence and democracy become misnomers. They are often words that acquire meanings and their interpretations are commanded by particular contexts. The imposition of ideas and meanings derived from one particular context on another would have considerable implications. For instance, this is typical of the way dominant, elitist ideas of ‘state’ and ‘democracy’ have given rise to lopsided governance where communities-within-communities often emerge as disregarded. Violence is permissible as long as it achieves ends that are viewed as just.

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This struggle is summarised by Hardt and Negri, opining in the context of empire, that “today the concept and practices of democracy are everywhere in crisis...And the constant global state of war undermines what meagre forms of democracy exist.”¹ Therefore, talk of a “post-democratic” condition is now being heard in the schools of socio-polity. Representative democracy, at its best, is (supposedly) the only choice of modern governance; at worst, it is an evolved form of a feudal system wherein a dominant few run the State in the name of democracy enforcing (prescribed) ‘order’ through State-sanctioned violence. Ideas of the state or democracy cease to have recognisable human faces. They are, henceforth, a monolith, impenetrable and opaque. Communities and individuals holding views that are markedly divergent from that of the state are gagged, quelled and silenced in the name of treason, sedition and waging war against the state. Legal provisions are constantly amended providing a buffer for the state to act in ways that are discriminatory and yet enjoy spaces of ‘diplomatic immunity’.

The mistreatment of the most despised has been reinforced by the hurtful stereotypes of dangerousness ascribed to them. The belief that persons of certain communities, labelled Maoists, protestors, terrorists, anti-nationals and the like, are uniformly dangerous is an equally harmful myth. It provides policy makers with a convenient justification to exercise control over persons and communities.

In this context, how does one make sense of it all and would scripture posit a perspective? Issues of stereotyping, attempts to gag by threatening violence and amidst all this quagmire, the provision of sheer Grace may be inferred from the following biblical passage.

The Biblical Passage

NRSV Luke 9:51 When the days drew near for him (Jesus) to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. 52 And he sent messengers ahead of him. On their way they entered a village of the Samaritans to make

1 Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005), p.231.

ready for him; 53 but they did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem. 54 When his disciples James and John saw it, they said, "Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" 55 But he turned and rebuked them. 56 Then they went on to another village.

Confirmed Attitudes and Unconfirmed Circumstances

A plain reading of the passage reveals an inconsiderate view of the Samaritans as being inhospitable. If current understanding of the passage were to be summed up as a newspaper headline, it would read: 'Samaritan Village refuses to accept Jesus'. The ambiguity of the passage is further heightened by the opposing view of the Samaritans' 'hostile' behaviour whereas, elsewhere in the Gospel of Luke, the Samaritans are portrayed in more ambivalent terms. These passages include the celebrated parable of the Compassionate Samaritan and thankfulness of the cleansed Samaritan. (cf., Luke 10:29-37 and 17:11-19). Therefore, there is every room to doubt the current, dominant interpretation which gives credence to the legendary hostility between the Jews and the Samaritans. The social context of hatred and mistrust that has an adverse affect on the opinion of the disciples may be noted. The reinforcing of stigma is like a chronic condition. Even when a challenge has occurred in the past or when the persons appear to no longer possess a particular characteristic, they may continue to be perceived as presenting the possibility of a deeply imbibed 'offensive' behaviour.

Jesus seems to draw attention to the difficulty of this type of attitude in relation to the divergent views of the Samaritan history. There are indications that "when people's desire for structure and predictability is high, they are more likely to engage in stereotyping than when it is low."³ This means that,

2 Other ancient authorities read rebuked them, and said, "You do not know what spirit you are of, 56 for the Son of Man has not come to destroy the lives of human beings but to save them."

3 Diederik A. Stapel et al. 'Coping with Chaos: How Disordered Contexts Promote Stereotyping and Discrimination,' *Science*, 332 (2011), p.251

any hint of disorder or challenge to the set structure (read 'state') or norms (read 'democracy') is overcome by stereotyping ('read 'violence') the erring or divergent entity. State, violence and democracy becomes problematic when seen through prisms such as the Gujarat pogrom, the attacks against Rohingyas in Myanmar, against Assyrian Christians in Iraq, against the Uyghurs in China, against the Basques in Spain, against the Tamils in Sri Lanka, against the Ahwazis in Iran or even the violence against the Baha'is in Samoa! Hatred and mistrust are indeed far-reaching, both in local and international contexts.

Interpretations from the perspective of the Samaritans underscore the complex nature of identity and privilege. The Jewish 'State' had enforced an embargo on the Samaritans, making the region a virtual no-go area. There had been violent clashes aimed at suppressing dissent. Jesus is clearly Jewish. Yet, as a Galilean, the authenticity of Jesus' own Judaism could have been subject to question. It was a region only relatively recently made part of the Jewish state, and at the periphery of Jewish religious life, centred on the temple in Jerusalem. Galilee had also been the base for certain anti-Roman dissident groups. In some circles, Jesus might also be considered a religious outsider. Therefore, the incident reflects the inequalities embedded in both religious authority and social location.

Unravelling Ambiguities

If the reading of this particular text can bring prejudice into the text by suggesting that Jesus enables verbal expression for the disciples' already well-formed prejudice against the Samaritans, the text may render a wholly different picture of Jesus' intention. v.53 is full of ambiguity. The interpretation of this verse would ultimately decide the perspective of the passage. v.53 reads thus: "but **they** did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem." There is a cause-and-effect mode embedded in the text. The cause of the supposed rejection is explained in v53b: "because his face was set toward Jerusalem!"

The verses, presumably, bring forth two possibilities:

1. That the Samaritan village rejects Jesus precisely because of its positive defiance of Jesus' supposed

preference for Jerusalem as opposed to Gerizim as the place of worship.

2. That the rejection was a contrived possibility engineered by the disciples, giving credence to their already set notions of what the Samaritans would do. This doubt is feasible as the pronoun **'they'** in the original language is ambiguous and may also refer to the messengers mentioned in v52. Moreover, the stronger word 'reject' not used at all.

In the light of this possibility, vv52-53 may be paraphrased thus:

52 And Jesus sent messengers ahead of him. On their way they entered a village of the Samaritans to make ready for him; 53 but the messengers did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem.

This possibility of locating the pronoun in referring to the messengers rather than the Samaritans brings forth the suggestion that the messengers did not receive Jesus pointedly because it was purely an unnecessary exercise as Jesus planned to go to Jerusalem rather than stay, as v51 and v53 make abundantly and repeatedly clear. These interpretations alone are filled with possibilities for application, but the narrative raises the possibility of an additional complexity that does not detract from the Samaritans' agency, but makes the story even more applicable. The Samaritans seem to exhibit critical hospitality, where openness is not considered a weakness or taken for granted. But hospitality is still extended, furthering the bounds of grace amidst hostility. There is, hence, a twist in the story. At the same time, however much the story might well reflect that hierarchy, it also illustrates how oppressed persons and communities can use whatever means they have to resist and sometimes provide an outright response and thereby may possibly overcome those who oppress them. There is to be seen here a sense of protest, a hallmark of democracy that calls into question strongly held beliefs about the way things are or should be. Thus, the story can be interpreted as vindicating the Samaritans' agency, as Paulo Freire might put it, their ability to act purposely and reflectively

and, doing so in the world, have a hand in 'shaping that world'.⁴ Here is a reflection of a true Democratic spirit that shapes and transforms.

The reaction of the disciples is an all too familiar echo of the dominant, overarching state, increasingly common in the present century, ready to smother dissent by Blitzkrieg, the display of firepower of 'shock and awe'. The raining of white phosphorous bombs on Palestinian homes is a graphic picture that few can forget: *Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?"* Destructive fire from heaven, indeed!

Jesus' reaction is both sharp and harsh. His body language of 'turning and rebuking' suggest strong intent and deep anger. It is a rebuke, a rebuke which is used in the gospels to silence demonic powers. It is valuable to fall back upon the other ancient authorities that fully encapsulate Jesus' reply: "*You do not know what spirit you are of, for the Son of Man has not come to destroy the lives of human beings but to save them.*" Truly, everyone is welcome to life and love by the significant act of acceptance of opinion, the signs of the new order being ushered in by Jesus.

The cross puts everything in perspective and distinguishes what is life affirming from what is not. What is to be taken and what needs to be left out. It talks about a particular servant who brings forth justice, who brings forth peace. Jesus introduces his disciples and us to the topsy-turvy world of God...Where all our hierarchical relationships are questioned. Jesus gives an alternative place where God is encountered. And in the most profound reference, he is described as *the Lamb, slain since the foundation of the world.* (Rev 13:8) It is as if the Son of God has always been the sufferer, always the victim, as if sorrow and loss and death and sacrifice have always been God, as if in the very depths of creation, God offered Godself to be the world's victim.

May our perception of Christ and our reading of scripture continue to unlock God's worlds of possibilities and change, righting the wrongs and extending critical hospitality whilst continuing to douse consuming fires.



4 Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Myra Bergman Ramos (trans.) (New York: Continuum Ltd, 1970), p. 126.

NCCI NEWS

WCC LETTER TO G 20



07 November 2022

H.E. Joko Widodo

President, Republic of Indonesia and Chair, Group of Twenty (G20)

Chair Widodo and G20 leaders:

Your Excellencies:

The call for a New International Financial and Economic Architecture or NIFEA is a collaborative ecumenical effort that brings together the World Council of Churches, the World Communion of Reformed Churches, the Lutheran World Federation, the World Methodist Council and the Council for World Mission and represents more than half a billion Christians across the world.

For churches, the fullness of life and all that contributes to it are essential to our faith and practice. Through the NIFEA process, we seek an economic system that looks after the well-being of all and particularly the most vulnerable, while bringing us back within planetary boundaries, protecting the diversity of life, and safeguarding the future of coming generations. Our faith perspectives and valuing of justice and peace demand that the poor and the dispossessed lie at the centre of our economic thinking and that our economic systems also work to serve their needs.

At our meeting in Bali between the 11th and 13th of October 2022, we discerned three interrelated and interconnected crises affecting humanity.

We are on the brink of a major social crisis. Rising inequalities in terms of economic disparity linked with racial, ethnic, religious, gender and other social disparities threaten to reach a breaking point. Signs of this are already being seen worldwide, whether it

is racial tensions in the USA and Europe or religious conflict in the South Asian region.

We are amid a climate catastrophe, demanding urgent, deep-seated and concerted transformations in all sectors, including a timely shift out of fossil fuels towards affordable and renewable energy sources in ways that are respectful of Indigenous Peoples' rights. While we previously thought we had a decade to mitigate climate change, we now know that we have even less time to stay below the relatively safe limit of 1.5 °C of warming. Climbing temperatures coupled with rising sea levels and the loss of biodiversity are having devastating impacts including on agriculture that feeds our communities. This is a matter of justice, as climate change affects the destitute, women, and Indigenous Peoples the most, though they contribute least to it.

At the same time and undergirding both the social and climate crisis is a burgeoning debt and broader economic crisis. Amid tighter financial conditions due to the ballooning of government spending during the COVID-19 pandemic, more than half of low-income countries are currently at high risk of – if not already in – debt distress (World Bank 2022). For many of them, debt servicing – estimated at USD 43 billion in 2022 – is equivalent to half of combined food import bills and public health spending. From higher prices of basic needs to cutbacks in social support, it is always the “least among us” who shoulder the most pain of austerity.

In addition, today we are faced with an alarming food crisis, made worse by the Russian invasion of Ukraine, adding to a set of weather-related disasters. Drought and floods joined by rising international prices of food mean increasing malnutrition and starvation. In just the last two years, the number of severely food insecure people doubled from 135 million to 276 million even as the ten richest billionaires increased their wealth from USD 700 billion to USD 1.3 trillion (WFP 2022 and Oxfam 2022). A global financial market that feeds on and encourages speculation and volatile capital flows first into and now out of developing countries has further aggravated it.

Built on the legacies of colonialism and slavery, the prevailing economic system has profited from the exploitation of people and the planet. The model of growth that it is based on is harmful

and unsustainable. While we focus today on the immediate shortages of food, fuel and shelter, in the long run this planet and its people cannot maintain this present system of production and consumption. We need an economic system that is equitable, respects planetary boundaries, involves the participation of all and nourishes the health and resiliency of our communities and ecosystems.

If we are to “recover together” and “recover stronger” from these intertwined crises as a global community, we believe that the G20 Leaders at their Summit meeting in Bali, Indonesia on the 15th and 16th of November 2022 ought to pursue the following measures:

- Adopt new economic and wellbeing indicators that deliver better outcomes for people and the planet and place them at the centre of policymaking. The goal should be ensuring wellbeing for all within planetary boundaries rather than growing gross domestic product or GDP particularly in already high-income countries.
- Stronger rules to curb financial speculation on food, energy and other vital commodities. Financial commodity markets must be regulated to prevent disruptions which make for volatile commodity prices that do not reflect costs of production.
- Adequate social protection for the socio-economically vulnerable (including children, the aged and those unable to work) and support to small farmers. Ensuring healthcare provision, increasing access to education for all girls and women, and expanding support to struggling families and small farmers practicing natural land regeneration and agro-ecology are critical for protecting livelihoods and helping farmers cope with rising fuel prices and fertiliser shortages.
- An end to subsidies to giant agri-businesses and the fossil fuel industry coupled with fast-tracked and tripled investments in sustainable, community-based agricultural and renewable energy systems. In the face of climate change, the main challenge is to produce enough nutritious and affordable food while reviving biodiversity and substantially cutting greenhouse gas emissions. This entails both a redirection and a radical mobilisation of resources towards alternative food and energy models.

- Cancellation of unsustainable debts and a moratorium on debt payments for low and middle-income countries in debt distress while their debts are being renegotiated. To prevent nations and communities from falling deeper into economic crisis and to avert future debt crises, new mechanisms such as the issuance of SDRs, debt-for-climate swaps, as well as debt restructuring models that bring all creditors to the table must be developed and implemented.
- A stronger global effort of cooperation to realise systems of just taxation to raise resources to fund social protection systems and the public investments needed to address the climate emergency. We reiterate the calls of the ecumenical Zacchaeus Tax campaign for: wealth taxes, measures to stop tax evasion by multinational corporations and the rich, creation of an intergovernmental United Nations (UN) tax body and a UN tax convention, progressive carbon and other pollution taxes, financial transaction taxes, capital gains taxes as well as windfall taxes on oil, gas, food, pharma and other corporations that are reaping excessive gains from the current crises. These proposals developed and supported by policy research and civil society organisations offer real, effective and practical solutions to the financing gap.

We are all interdependent in God's whole creation. Therefore, together we are called to immediate actions to transform unsustainable and deadly systems towards an economy of life for the benefit of planet earth and all humankind.

Sincerely,

Prof Rev Dr Ioan Sauca
Acting General Secretary
World Council of Churches

Rev Philip Vinod Peacock
Collegial General Secretariat
World Communion of Reformed Churches

Rev Anne Burghardt
General Secretary
Lutheran World

Bishop Ivan M. Abrahams
General Secretary
Federation World Methodist Council

Rev Dr Jooseop Keum
General Secretary
Council for World Mission

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 A/C NAME: NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES REVIEW
 A/C NUMBER: 496991073

ISSN 0975 - 1882

RNP/NPCity/237/2018-2020

Under No. 72101/99 Registered with the Registrar of Newspapers for India

Price: ₹ 23/-

Date of posting 20th of every month

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