

THE LAST

XV

REFLECTIONS ON THE
CONCEPT OF THE 'RELIGIOUS
UTOPIA' IN THE PRIVATE
SCHOOLS TRADITION IN SRI
LANKA

RASIKA ABEYSINGHE

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Dedication

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.” Mt 5.9

For all those who have strived to keep the peace and continue to do so in difficult situations

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Preface

The present intention was given impetus by two main happenings during this year. The first was when a presentation was made, at the International Conference for Religious Tolerance and Harmony seminar conducted by the Buddhist and Pali University, where the topic was 'A Religious Ethic for a Secular World'. A question was raised at the end of the presentation whether a religious control of the world would be better than a secular one which was the argument of the paper. This dilemma led to the possible intervention of religions to collaborate in diversity in building a constitution based on religiosity. The second was a discussion had with a few school administrators, in which the issue of religiosity in schools was highlighted and challenges it posed for the 'establishment'. This eventually led to the earmarking of sixteen schools out of a probable sixteen thousand in the country which display characteristics favourable to multi religiosity and in turn offer a different view of the religious life in schools.

There must be a very few topics in the world where a non fiction author may explain to the reader that he or she does not possess a qualification to express what is about to be expressed, but rather that the knowledge

input in the essay has grown out of experience! I will be risking with the same apologetic, as the question of who to write on such a topic as this has been a constant query. And considering that the experience which is talked here is also not a lengthy one it is hoped that many others would join the task of research and writing with regard to the private school tradition in Sri Lanka. And it is hoped that this book with its many faults will fall into a manuscript on which more historical, analytic and purposeful work will be attempted. It maybe appropriate, to mention that the use of external literature in this work which is almost zero and hence the entire work projects more in the line of a reflection paper. Two main constraints for this is given below. The use of primary literature with regard to the private schools in Sri Lanka have not been utilized, since in research such would be more bias and the concept under question can receive unprecedented assistance. However the dearth of secondary material about the private school tradition does make the research more cumbersome. In simple not many outsiders to the private school tradition have attempted to do research on same which if it has been done would be the most vital body of literature or thought needed for an essay such as this.

This book aims at a systematic breakdown of the components dealing with religion, harmony, interaction, a special type of schooling and its future with regard to that interaction. There maybe several hundreds of more noteworthy books on religion hence a few salient features only will be discussed, but the concept of a 'religious utopia' will be discussed as forming the crux of the reflection. Then a historical understanding of private schooling in England mainly, and then in Sri Lanka will be presented and a retracing of this tradition through the history of Sri Lankan education will follow. This will also be a slightly less but anyway documented area but the carving of the concept of a 'religious utopia' within the tradition which will be attempted is to be novel. The final reflection will focus on the celebration and challenges of the same religious utopia within the tradition with experience of the author as actor and observer then with discussions done with persons associated with the enterprise as well as with some literature available such as the Christian Teachers Conference (data) held nearly 60 years to this year. Some excerpts of same appear in the appendices.

Thanks are due to Mrs Noor Zaheer a colossus in writing and whom I had the good pleasure of meeting at the above seminar on Religious Tolerance and Harmony,

who most graciously read the script. Sincere thanks are due to Mrs D Thuseetharan, Principal of Chundikuli Girl's High School who went through the script from a school's perspective, to Mr Udara Hemachandra parishioner at St Mark's Katukelle and history Masters who read and assisted with the historical perspective of the project and to Mrs Silvia Rupasinghe who commented on the work from a general education point of view utilizing all her ninety four years of experience! Thanks are also due to Rev Rajiv Palihawadana, Bro Jurinez Shadrach, Mrs. Chrisanthi Abeygoonewardena, Mr Aruna, Mrs Malintha and Mrs Christina Abeysinghe who went through the first draft and suggested amendments and to many who have taken their time to discuss on the topic of the book and for their many perspectives. To my family who always are by my side and to the Theological College of Lanka for their encouragement. To Mr Saliya Gamage and Creative printers for another great publishing work and for the many who assisted in the financing of the project. For many other friends and in whole to the Supreme reality permeating religiousness and humanness in making order out of chaos.

Rasika Abeysinghe
Christmas 2015

CHAPTER 1

RELIGION AND RELIGIOUS UTOPIA

What is a Religion?

In the modern world over four thousand religions are practiced. Some of these are well known and some others not so well known. Some religions fall strictly into categories and some could be beyond classification. As common characteristics of religions we see a genesis¹, a founder or founders or teachers, a doctrinal system, an ethical system, symbols, festivals, scriptures and new movements. Most times in religious definitions we use the word belief in an attempt to carve out the 'being' of a religious ideology and the followers it might encompass as adherents. The word belief also introduces us to a very important aspect of religion that being the hope of something beyond our imagination.

It is necessary to mention that humanity in its quite long existence had to grapple with many phenomena. For starters they had to understand the basic concept of food

¹ A beginning or initial movement of a religion as opposed to a systematized framework of faith has been a hotly debated topic in sociology of religion, which distinction needs to be cast away in caution for the topic at hand as we might fall into debating spirituality versus religiosity.

and clothing. The earliest humans would be quite startled to see what would have become of these primal phenomena in the modern world. One of the reasons for the development of these phenomena would be that humans could have been able to understand what would become of them when improved. For an example a house built by using basic materials would have seen and felt to be better than a cave or a tree top. 'Seeing is believing' stands to be very much true when we try to understand phenomena of this nature.

A second type of phenomena which happened in human history would be those of which a tangible element cannot be traced; but merely concepts would remain, for an example the idea of democracy or the idea of education. On one hand this phenomena has quite a lot in common with the former. The latter also depend heavily on the idea of testing and experimenting where humans were able to dwell upon the best possible choice suitable for them. To illustrate further, the development or the improvement in governance would have been a struggle through millennia settling on varied models, present even still in the world we live. The possible distinction between these two phenomenon types is that while in the former a single individual may itself be able to speculate what is the improvement or the development needed, in

the latter this may depend more on a community² or a following. Let us illustrate this further by using the example of a modern day trend, 'fashion'. For fashion, to explore new avenues it only requires for a creative individual to look at the existing system in a different way. But if we were to think of 'occupation³' as belonging to the second category as mentioned above the need for any progress to be made on such will depend on a more unified effort. Yet the practice of occupation or fashion depends on the limitation of the human mind alone. The exploring into new avenues or the closure of previous avenues depend solely on the individual or with the communal aspect.

The difference of religion when we understand as another phenomenon in human history has a very different aura to it than the two types of phenomena mentioned above. For in religion not all what we practice, participate and prospect are in accordance to what one or a community may agree but rather on some

² The idea of a 'social mind' was cultured by the philosopher Hegel as an attempt to describe the gregarious nature of humanity in an interplay with basic living

³ The development of 'occupation' as it stands today reflects how humanity has moved it to a categorization which if it were to be repealed would have to be none other but another long history of additions and subtractions to its values

aspect which is felt through belief or a faith. Religions tend always therefore to talk of matters which are in connection with an 'other worldly being' and therefore it becomes challenging to the human complexion and the understanding given and proposed in the above two phenomenon models. Religious truth is not understood by looking at oneself, neither is it understood by looking at others or the world ⁴ but it is an amalgamated attempt with these two and another reality which is not experienced directly. Sometimes theological jargon may hinder the very basic understanding of religion and hence to put it even more simply religions induce an attachment based either on the consequences of what may come before life on earth or after life on earth or on a living in this world which is also governed by a hope or an understanding which will be permeating from a source which is untouched by the human mind in whole.

From this point we also learn another important aspect of religions. Religions need to be focused on both aspects of life; the here and now and there and after. If any religion does not address these two aspects it cannot be a movement streaming from a religious truth but a mere

⁴ St Thomas Aquinas the great theologian proposes the understanding of religion and a supreme being based on the natural world but this alone does not suffice for the present task

human construct. Before we end this brief introduction it is also necessary to explain that whatever religious truth was planted in human history the modern practice of same can be varying and sometimes it could even be surprising. The factor which promotes this sort of variance is the religious culture. As any phenomenon in human history, the religious phenomenon also happens ultimately to human beings who in turn adopt and adapt such truth and makes it their own. To elaborate on this further there is always a societal element in religious practice. A Christian in Iraq and in America and in Thailand may have varied approaches to their faith. Society has a remarkable ability of transforming any phenomenon whether it be social, ethical, legal or even religious into the scheme of things within the community. Therefore when speaking of religions we need to bear in mind three important features. The first is that religions have their being in something which is beyond human imagination. Secondly religions while being historic truth are also residual truth⁵ and the communities which carried the flame did so inculcating into it a specific culture. And thirdly religions are double

⁵ A presence into which religious truth can become incubated but with the transmission over time and space, mixed with human weakness to comprehend the fullness of a superior concept, faces a redaction process in which 'truth' becomes multi faceted.

faceted in which not only theological and philosophical perspectives are laid out but an effective living system is also promoted within same.

Theories & History

The history of religion is a very complex and in some aspects a very shadowy one. Some cynical explanations root the beginning of religions into a way of alleviating fear, or a methodology where a priest class sought its income, or it was made to construct divisions at the outset between communities or simply to grow fear and to oust wrongdoing. The modern day student will be much perplexed at what religion has become today. The variance it may show forth from the purist seed planted in the early communities and what the early adherents believed to be the truth is sometimes quite perplexing. Yet again the same religious student may also ponder upon the social history of religions⁶ which indeed were monumental in the fact, that these truths were carried in time and space across boundaries with gratitude due to the same societies who tolerated the religions to

⁶ The social history of religions here is understood as how the society behaved under the influence of a religion and how they acted as a seed bed as set apart from how the religion or its teaching survived within a time period

landscape human history. The same student may also be further perplexed at the quality of religious attachment that maybe present in the world where it could be wielded as a conquering weapon and at another time becoming a panacea. In a time the world thirsts for a religiosity which is not religious and which rebels in the ideology of disowning religious truth, in the hope that humanity has ‘passed’ the era of reconciling historical phenomena, the wandering mind does indeed speculate whether religion will hold against such bombardment.

It will be important to discuss three theoretical frameworks which are among many that theorize the springing up of religions. In the first instance ‘Social Constructionism’ is a theory which elaborates that religions came into being as the namesake mentioned to order society. It provided a way of systematizing the affairs of human life; and the goals or source of religion become not so important. If we are to give a few examples the Old Testamental Judaism and the early Hindu Brahmanism will stand as witness to ordering of the society. The next theory is very much based on the sphere which we were mentioning as what was called the unimaginable or beyond reason and mind. The theory

bears the name of ‘Phenomenology of Spirit’⁷ where it is understood that the Spirit with its many understandings in religions has worked through human history and has planted truth in varied contexts. Islam and Sikhism are two faiths in which this aspect can be found imprinted deeply into the respective frameworks of existence. The working of the Spirit in allowing the human to view the ultimate from varied perspectives becomes the basic aim of this theory. And thirdly ‘Psychological Functionalism’ explains that religions took ground because of the need of humans or the vacuum at humans necessary have towards fulfillment or the wholeness of life. Christianity and Buddhism even at contrast for many other categories fall most adequately as complementary into this definition. Even in modern times the thirst even for non religious goals is also seen as an off shoot of this kind of thinking where some element needs to gap this longing humans have.

To look at the religious phenomenon spanning across space and time and summarizing the salient features will not be an easy task. One could dwell upon voluminous issues of ancient literature to understand the key

⁷ A book bears the same name by Hegel which discusses how the spirit’s final embodiment can be found in Christianity and in the Aryan race which eventually led to the world wars

characteristics of same but maybe the history of religion is not to be understood as a vital aspect of our study. Yet it is pertinent to present a snapshot of religions. It is widely understood that the primitive human had a basic understanding of religion. Their religion was primarily pantheistic⁸ being able to identify the Spirit in almost any natural entity. The ancient most systematic religion could either lie in the ancient Egyptian or Vedic Brahmanism streams. This was closely followed by ancient Judaism and subsequently the Greek and Roman religions took form. More towards the oriental Zoroastrianism, Jainism and Buddhism owed their beginnings to Zoroaster, Mahavira and Gautama. Also closely following more behind than forward were the Chinese folk religions which also have a following of nearly half a billion at present the Confucianism, Taoism and Shintoism philosophies. Islam took its beginning after the second half of the first millennium⁹ and almost till the present times the major religions continued while only dividing amongst themselves either on theological

⁸ A philosophy which allows the devotee to find the revelation of a supreme deity in any object eg sky, rain, mountain, animals, trees, earthquakes, thunder

⁹ With the first millennium Christianity was brought forth and is one of the best examples of new movements and diverse schools with at least three schisms (the modern excepted) and thousands of theological holds

or ethical grounds. There have been new religions in the form of Sikhism and Bahaisam, and more newer variations of Shinshūkyō, Cao Đai, Raëlism, Unitarian Universalism, Noahidism, Scientology, Eckankar and the many other reform movements of established religions. All these religious movements have their being in some form of divine revelation and are the profession of millions of adherents. To this pantheon of faiths we also need to add the indigenous and African religions which may also vary from tribe and locality. While any sufficient overview cannot be given in the space of a few lines some general characteristics on the history of religion can be outlined.

When some sort of movement in the religious sphere took place there was always an advocating community which held at least on principle that this indeed was the path ordained by a higher reality and this should be held dear for posterity. Secondly and which could be a controversial Statement that any religion at its genesis was indeed a fundamentalist movement and there was no metaphor of climbing the same hill¹⁰ or the integration of

¹⁰ A modern expression of pluralism as opposed to inclusivism and exclusivism where people climbing the exact mountain recognizes each other the more they are near to the top, the top being the peak of spiritual maturity

different waters into the same sea. And thirdly each religion over time and even to this day carries with the two ends of faith adherence which either assigns a practice of a cult inculcating texts of terror¹¹ and promotes an exclusivism or either enables a deeper sense of being which leads to think of the ‘otherness’ of the other in terms of religious sentiments and allows for the most vital aspect of dialogue.

Modern Challenges

When the office of the ‘Charlie Hebdo’ satirical French magazine was stormed and twelve of the cartoonists who have been depicting the most heinous of aspects as the Islamists would put it were murdered, the first cry that was heard was that self radicalized extremists had once again taken the bloody path as ordained by the radical wings of their faith¹². It is not an unfamiliar cry in today’s modern world, when this extremity can be found in either the controversial remarks of the Indian Bharathiya Janatha Party member of parliament Sakshi Maharaj’s comments insisting that Hindu women should

¹¹ Expressions in holy scriptures which are used to promote self elevation and the destruction of the other

¹² Continued counter attacks were carried out in the same country in November 2015 with graver consequences.

have more children in order to preserve their faith or in the blooming of the right winged Buddhist groups in Sri Lanka who make it their primal objective to conjure up controversies which divide the social sphere or the toying of the western powers in the affairs of the world based on an archaic Christian understanding which promotes a superiority complex. Religions have come to a point in history where extremism, is viewed as part and parcel of the faith it encapsulates and in some cases, the most successful way of holding onto one's interpretation in a world which is called to eradicate any form of spiritual thinking. In the religious atmosphere, whether it be from an ultra evangelical community in South Korea or whether it is in the ancestral or animistic religions in Sudan or even in the sophisticated first world Europe, is prone on the idea of fundamentalism as something that needs to be nurtured in the hope of survival and the tensions between such groups will escalate beyond mere arguments. And the same phenomena, will affect the struggle of the moderate or traditional faith adherent who may sit on the fence of uneasiness with tendency to, either fall into one of the two extremes in following faith. With these introductory remarks let us embark on this journey of finding an ethic that enables toleration in both these spheres.

The greatest enemy for spiritual faiths is none other but the secularizing world; it makes its presence felt slowly but surely eradicating all marks that attract humans into 'believing'. For a simple example Christians make it the first point at least in theory, to pray when afflicted by illness. As we know many 'illnesses' that have devastated humanity over the years have now all being conquered, by the rise in medical science. Research undertaken in non-conquered illnesses are reaping harvests in leaps and bounds, which makes us realize that what is impossible¹³ now will be possible as time progresses and this is a spiral which brings a realistic fact into the table of consideration. This will of course drastically change the need to rely on any other unseen power, but on the visible power that is in charge of making or breaking life. For another example in Buddhism we see 'suffering' as constituting a major part in its subsequent philosophy and the escape from suffering as the key goal in achieving a perpetual peace. When the world develops at such a rapid pace, the world itself has become its own saviour in the fact that suffering is alleviated through development. The ideology of 'non attachment' is blown away when it is

¹³ This ethical dilemma also embodies the use of stem cell research, cloning, assisted dying, contraception, hormonal therapies as natural deviants etc.

with attachment that this consequence is established. And this phenomenon is tantamount to the immigration¹⁴ of people from developing nations, to developed nations or through the bloody conflicts that are revolutionized in order to eradicate suffering in nations where the present order spells chaos. If the world can lead one from suffering to freedom the eightfold path becomes obsolete as exactly opposite tenets also yield the same freedom. To explain this, arms dealing is not a 'right livelihood' but its benefits can be on par with an accepted 'right livelihood', if the world around endorses equal benefits from having whichever livelihood. Therefore it is not only the concept of 'God' that is being jeopardized by the secularizing world, but rather the holistic aspect of 'hope'. According to well bred secularists 'hope' is to be found here and now and much of what religions speak of before and after death becomes more and more inadequate. The scientific utopia¹⁵ would of course be the bright side of this whole aspect, but the phenomenon

¹⁴ The influx of refugees from Syria has been accepted by many Christian countries with grave battles fought over immigration policies rooting its cause in ethical rather than on religious or social spheres

¹⁵ At this starting point a utopia is defined as a geographic boundary more mythical than real, where each aspect of life becomes ordered and no shortcoming is possible. It is a moment which allows the perfect life for all.

of religion will not find space in same. Since this secular world directs the thoughts and aspiration of humanity to non religious sources, the extremism that needs to counter it is also of equal magnitude. In such light at least in theory fundamentalism only proposes a departure, from the orthodox faith seeking and alternates to a more acceptable yet risky mode. If secularism is the deterrent per se, for religions, such will be a blanket cover for all acceptable religions and for this, the sociological interpretation that 'nothing unites more than the common foe' will stand as true ideologically as well as practically. It may also be possible to complement religions as companions in this battle and which must in fact be tolerated because all share a common objective in the backdrop of a common dark cloud. Returning to the same point from a different angle, we may even State that religions should not only collaborate to survive against a somewhat imperious looking opponent in secularism, but religions should also treat each other as partners in the process of enrichment of each other's faith. A major shift which has taken place in many plural communities is the faith/religious dialogue, which has promised an ethic of cooperation and a learning together experience which has also become a factor of reconciliation. Such moves have also met tremendous opposition from the more extremist groups within

religions and this toleration we will turn to in the next section.

As earlier hinted religious faiths have always had something to say in the time of distress and this is also an accusation that has been thrown in its path, as religions promise an unearthly hope for earthly problems. However as we become modern day by day, religions look to be cast away as something historical and to the die-hard adherents such dilemma, has made them take a more drastic stance in their omission of secular ethics¹⁶ as well as ‘other’ religious ethics. And more often than not this hardened stance bears repercussions in violent ways. For a few examples the struggle of Pakistan a conservative Islamic country, with the Taliban uprising or the dragging of political stances in India by the Shiv Sena or the RSS¹⁷ towards a rightist Hindu wing, indicate to us that stressing on extremes is not a new innovation at all. It was probably in the day and age of the emperor Constantine in early century’s

¹⁶ It may allow a labourious effort to compare and contrast ethics between the secular world and religions however this has been most inconspicuously and lazily progressed into the modern interpretations used when teaching religious ethics

¹⁷ Shiv Sena and Rashtriya Sevaka Samyak have had wide influence on the policy making of the right winged Bharathiya Janata Party and have in recent times provided ammunition for legislation for extremist religious values

Europe that Christianity was heralded as the official religion and any that professed anything beyond was branded as heretical signifying official fundamentalism. While this phenomenon is not new, the complications it brings into an already tensed religious atmosphere can be catastrophic. Some moderate viewed religious may find themselves trapped, either dragged into an extremism or as was mentioned at the outset a neo- traditionalism which tries to elevate one's uniqueness through holding fast to a religious faith without being open to other truths. In such contexts the mere ostracizing of tensions within, can be detrimental to one's own affiliation, while ostracizing tensions outside may single one out, of the collaborative enterprise. But turning to the uprising in the intrafaith sphere which is popularly called as 'fundamentalism' we once again philosophize whether this matter can be resolved in the same manner as we could, when we were talking of faiths. Even though we are not talking of different faiths, but deviations of the same faith dialogue can indeed resolve these tensions through the path of listening to each other. In the modern scenario such attempt is almost unheard¹⁸ of, but the

¹⁸ The argument usually follows from the fact that while interpretations could differ remarkably the practice of life will be restrained into moderate lines as common sense, yet we experience sporadic variations of this expectation

main body of faith adherents looks on these specific groups as not belonging to the original teaching which can also be justified in some aspects, but yet the reason for their departure is also rooted in the same tradition. While this disowning of extremists, from main line religions has had an adverse effect on them and this hard experience does not seem to deter them from engaging in their self proclaimed missions either. Therefore while we seem to know the reasons for the dissension we are still in search of a remedy. A control over such enterprises, as been virtually harmful to society, has also failed upto a greater extent. For this we may even present the case of Christian extremism in Sri Lanka where such control has at sometimes, spurred on remarkable insidious responses from relative parties and the same may be said of the Kashmiri or Boko Haram separatists or the Irish Republican army. Therefore it is doubtful whether control of these erupting mechanisms is the answer, if at all eradication maybe the most goal oriented objective, but which will probably lie in the wrong on religious, ethical and social grounds. Whilst these remedies seem to be in the hands of personnel beyond the religion, staying true to the topic at hand we need to first of all realize that intrafaith conflict is a reality and secondly it

is a measure of what can be called as experiential negativity¹⁹. And thirdly the religion itself, possesses the capacity at least first hand to dialogue with the groups proposing deviation and build the bridge of moderateness. In the next section of this reflection we are going to turn to the aspect of how the social aspect can be instrumental in directing religion towards a positively empowering path.

A Christian and People of Other Faiths

These six words when taken as a topic can be divided into three main sections. The first one is the imperious notion of ‘Christians’. The second is the acceptance of the existence of other faiths. And thirdly and probably most importantly the necessity to think of these two groups with the conjunction ‘and’ signifying a bridge.

When the first ‘Christians’ landed in the ‘darkened’ regions of the world carrying the light or what they believed to be the light they found the existence of other faiths as not only an abhorrence but rather more of a

¹⁹ A term used here to denote that one’s experience with an element can be pleasant as well as non pleasant. And from this may stem two basic realities. On the one hand when met with a negative response the projection of cordiality declines but which could have had different consequences at different times.

barrier. Coming from a ‘one religion’ context the easy way out for them, which even today Christians use when confronted with many ideals is that they chose to take the road which puts them in the least trouble. Having one thing on the mind is always easier than having two or more things on a mind and sometimes it can be quite confusing. From the infamous Thomas Babington McCauley²⁰ who had an issue with the scope of oriental literature to each and every Christian who portrays the humble Jesus as the all conquering Christ as king this mentality of superiority is a natural inborn phenomenon. It may also be for other faith adherents as well, but with a history of imperial rule over heathen lands Christians may be more vulnerable to be driven off their feet with this more safer way. In theological education this same dilemma has been wrestled out with regard to many curriculums here in this country as well as elsewhere. The more perspectives²¹ a student needs to learn becomes more challenging, than been drained in a single perspective. For those who brought the light of Christianity the mere being of other faiths became an

²⁰ The most famous Statement worth mentioning would be ‘that all the literature in the east will fit to one row in a western library’

²¹ Stated with reference to the education at the Theological College of Lanka where students are expected to be rooted in a wider aspect rather than the Bible to grasp the operation of God in context

intolerable aspect. Yet for us this can never be true. We are living the pluralistic dream. How easy it would have been for the architects of any Theological College in Asia to streamline a narrow perspective on the idea of faith? Yet they were with the sign of the times and endorsed fully not only the aspect of ecumenism but also wider ecumenism.

Secondly in this topic we affirm that other faiths are also faiths. It never could be boredom to repeat and reaffirm the comments made earlier. The history of religion is in fact a very complicated story with many theories. Faiths have grown out of a residual 'truth', which have sprung up from time to time in human history, which have faced redaction and has undergone an adoption and adaptation by humanity who came into contact with these phenomena. The student of religion will be much perplexed that much of what is practiced as religion today, has variations from the 'purist' seed that was planted by the founders of same and the early adherents, who believed that this indeed was the path that had eluded many for centuries and which must be held dear for posterity. As mentioned earlier the social context contains the capacity and the inborn potentiality of transforming any innovation may it be social, political, legal, ethical or even religious.

Also as mentioned elsewhere as common factors of great religions we see a grand history, a founder or founders or great teachers, doctrines, cultures, ethics and new developments and movements. It is in fact very difficult for a sensible rationality to State that this and this, in this religion is faulty and therefore it is difficult to accept these as true faiths. It is even more difficult for criticism to be leveled without actually studying other faiths even on the outside. In this light there is nothing called a simple Christian faith²². A simple faith is derived by actually denouncing a host of other facts. To say I agree with only one aspect in faith adherence means a person says no to many other aspects and at the same time refuses to confirm the affirmation of another. It is not enough for Christians to downplay the existence of faiths by challenging the fact their faith have a sure way of liberation and the faith assured in their faith is certain by pulling out a verse from one book or the other from the Bible. This is so because each religion is unique and according to context and style of faith affirmation two faiths cannot really be compared. The only possible

²² Such will have to be arrived at claiming a monopoly of the Spirit , which Jesus says in the Gospel according to John cannot be the monopoly of anyone and it has the capacity of disseminating truth in anyway which pleases

calamity that this insistence of special revelation²³ brings would be that other faith adherents may also propose texts made into terror interpreted to disown any other truth. This is in fact the same phenomena which threatens inter religious harmony which will be discussed later.

And finally there needs to be some connection point between what was discussed above. In technical terms we discuss exclusivity as a more invisible bridge, an inclusivity as a more traffic controlled bridge and pluralism as a more free for all bridge. There have been several arguments that it is the Christians who have always taken the lead in inter faith or religious dialogue. Criticism has been leveled that the other faithful have not been able to match upto the intensity of working together. In some way this stands to be true. But one may argue that even things which eventually led to the need for inter faith relations such as a fundamental ethic was developed by the Christians and we refer to the Constantine mentality which was evolved over time and became a factor for imperialism, slavery and neo colonialism. The fear that the Christians let loose, at the outset would have once again become key in the

²³ That God made Godself present in humankind through Jesus alone and knowledge of God is made possible through Jesus alone

reservedness shown by many faiths in working with them. Anyhow for this progressiveness the Christians should be thanked. They must be held in honour of bringing out the study of comparative religions and philosophy²⁴. This goes on to show the delayed recognition of other religious truth which seems to have seeped in gradually maybe as a sign of the times or a component in a scheme of survival or simply as the way to go to bond all in peace.

²⁴ To improve on this further the irony of the entire scenario of religions and the western world is at times most astonishing, (to use a word not commonly used in published material). The western interpretations of the oriental faiths have seen a process of total destruction to alienation to attraction to embracement and finally to an embodiment. The number of westerners leaving their original faith and turning into all other faiths and varied Indian spiritualities has been turning on its head the Church numbers, rather than the mere secularization process. It goes on to show that religion while it harnesses a complete system of liberation always leaves room for some incompleteness of the same which another faith may have something more to say upon the matter. With travel firstly and secondly with the translation of other religious texts and thirdly with the interaction of people of other faiths and finally with the mere disgust thrown at the official faith regulators the Church, the western world developed the study of comparative religion and philosophy. It is even more amazing to find out that Asia where probably all the major faiths were born into and were living religions had no intention of proceeding with such a task and thus became another aspect that the western world introduced.

The grave dangers that lay in pulling one verse from religious scripture and owning a salvation too unique for one religion has been discussed above. The danger talked about is two fold. It allows any to propose same and be adamant to the end even unto extremism which destroys and kills life which cannot be the teaching of or the interpretation of a religion. Secondly the dialogue loses its centre, and by this we mean that there never can be a common platform arrived at by people who argue in this manner. However the devil's (or the opposer's) advocate is to be played below as we wish to dismantle one verse from the religious scripture in the hope to show the interpretations that can be derived from it. It does not include other factors as context, original language, intention of the speaker, socio understanding of the day etc which all determine the words imprinted and passed on over time used to imply on something which today we use to preach and teach our own whims and fancies²⁵.

²⁵ The task of Homiletics or the Use of the Word of God is a subject in the course for prospective ministers and leaders in the Church and has become controversial that it always ends with conflict and philosophical debates which is rooted in the same understandings of faith proclamation. The interpretation of the Word of God has been taken to task even to the ends of commercialism, building hatred against the established order, sensationalism, disproving of intellectualism as tantamount to uncleanness and in most cases the pure literal method to trump any other manner of Grace.

Biblically

We will be slowly dismantling the 21st verse from the 17th chapter from the gospel according to St John. In a wider ecumenical perspective what does this verse have to say? Does it propose a theme which gathers under the umbrella of God all faiths and the unity which needs to be present for such collaboration (Jn 14.22)? Or does this simply refer to the salvation of those who know Jesus as the Christ and calls that all may become of one mind that evil even if prevailing in other faiths should be destroyed (Jn 14.20)? To once again avoid conflict with applying a religious text to another religious audience it maybe more appropriate to understand this verse in the context of the Uniqueness of Christianity (Jn 4.21). It was probably Jesus' prayer that his followers maybe rooted in the essence of his teaching which was love (Jn 14.6). For the purpose of this reflection the only unique contribution Christians will bring into a multi faith context will be there calling to compromise (Jn 2.4, 4.23, 5.17, 6.27, 7.8, 7.33, 8.7). Compromise is presented here as an offshoot of love the greatest teaching in Christianity. It is undoubted that Jesus had many queries with regard to the oneness of his disciples even before

However many and all overlook the literary instructions of Jesus to the rich young man with regard to wealth!

this particular time (Jn 8.34, 12.7, 12.24, 12.37, 12.48, 14.15,15.6). It is also true that the disciples also affirmed variations of the Jewish faith and were tempted by secular matters which barred a ‘oneness’, and ‘Greatness’ was another issue which rocked the disciple’ world to which Jesus hurriedly provided answers by giving the example of a child, washing their feet, explaining that lifting to greatness lies with God alone etc (Jn.8.47, 9.39, 13.4, 21.17,22). There can be no doubt that Jesus’ teaching was jeopardized even while he was with them and having dissension while he was not physically present will be a reality. In a modern cliché Jesus presents a ‘training of trainers’ outlook to his followers. They are in fact to be the prolegomena of the leading of people who are to make oneness a reality (Jn14.15, 15.26, 16.33, 20.19). Therefore in context of the posh Greek philosophy²⁶ Jesus presents the ultimate communion of how he is one with the Father and His ever present prayer that those who know him may also be one and there may not be any barriers between them. For all those who knew him to be one, they should be in the mind of Jesus or at least aware of what Jesus wants us to be. Jesus says ‘Peace I leave with you; my peace I

²⁶ A characteristic of the Gospel of John where the writer uses more philosophical constructs downsizing absolute logic to reach listeners rather than practicality

give to you' and again 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you' And what Jesus wants us to be is in fact peacemakers who may not be divided by barriers, compromising and even suffering to keep the peace and unselfishly giving to make possible an other worldly reality be present in this world. (Jn 1.10, 3.7, 4.27, 6.3, 8.15, 10.11, 12.27, 14.17, 15.18).

*Religious Utopia*²⁷

We live in a day and age where religious truth faces a disowning process promoted by secularization. All great religious traditions face this same phenomena and each responds or is virtually cautious of this dilemma. On one hand there is a growing concern for religion not to be diluted with the affairs of the world and hence we see a rigid traditionalism which arise. And secondly we see the growth of religious factions who want to fight this secularization tooth and nail in the frantic hope for a survival of their faith. Both these elements affect intra faith and inter faith relations adversely. Very specially the latter has destructive ethos which allows them to be sole saviours of their convictions and hence preserve it against all negative factors. In this day and age the

²⁷ A concept where religious truths prevail as the source , content and administration of the utopian entity

disowning of religious truth is made more viable and all faiths will eventually come to that situation in which either they dilute their consciousness or they hold onto it by other means namely with an extremist view. When we name ourselves Christians it is very important to realize that the name tag carries for us a far greater responsibility in faith adherence than it will be for any other faithful. It has always been our idea and upto some extent, even the idea of other faithful that being Christian is a higher faith platform. The culture and attitude that accompanied Christianity in the past centuries especially in Sri Lanka has greatly assisted in this task. Are we able to understand the same voice of Jesus who in St John's gospel explains the work of the Spirit²⁸ and to listen so that much truth is disseminated as long as we are receptive? It is proposed and it is wished to be reiterated in the fact that progressiveness in Christian thinking should be highlighted. This does not necessarily mean the quoting of other scripture from the Sunday morning pulpit. It is the transformation that needs to take place in the hearts and minds of clergy and laity that we are now

²⁸ As opposed to the monopolizing of the Spirit which we see in radical Christianity as well as in other faiths since the concept of Spirit and Creator besides the concept of mediator is present in all great religious traditions and how well the religious comprehend the Spirit determines their openness to recognize the work of the Spirit elsewhere

able to look at scripture, history and modernity with a broader scope. We are able to look at real life situations especially in the religious and social spheres with a horizon which is wide enough to accept all perspectives which promote the kingdom of God notion. Whether this be in theological education or Sunday school education or even in the studying of the Bible will we be able to inculcate the spirit of accommodation. It is true to the core that pastors face the dilemma of the theological scholarship contrasting with the needs of the pastoral Church. And it is now time to look upon these two as sides of a coin not emphasizing the value of one over the other but a presence that will enable cordiality to all people. And here again we feel the tension of newer Churches who may in the process of blooming may unwelcome the need for such a radical transformation or a dilution in their mind. For this there seems to be no set answer and it will depend on each context²⁹. The idea of a God who loves each and every person and a God who judges on each and every person's accountability is vital for our onward journey. As was mentioned elsewhere we are not transforming our theological thinking to accommodate other religious truth. We are transforming

²⁹ In context since moderateness seem to be crushed towards the more rural areas where evangelism is becoming more industrious

our thinking in the hope that we need to learn more and history and religion become pivotal in this regard.

We have often come across the word utopia in social thought where sociologists, novelists and philosophers attempt to place a mythical place where every aspect of human life is done in perfection. ‘The Republic’ by Plato was probably the first well known attempt of this kind. Almost in all attempts to re create a Utopia³⁰ wealth, governance, opportunities and equalities are thought of and religion is chased out of the scene. There are some utopias like monastic or Christian ones like the Abbey of Telema and Geneva by John Calvin that proposes a utopia based on one theological perspective in one religion. In some ways it is like the Garden of Eden but it is God who is left out. It would be the easiest task for a utopia to be built on a secular foundation as once again there is no need for the understanding of many aspects of faith. For many multi religious countries for an example India the constitution itself is secular since if governance is carried based on one religion inequality will be the result. But in Sri Lanka and many Muslim countries this is not the case. In some situations people may fear that the rule based on religions will be futile and not

³⁰ The rise of utopic thinking has been established as the outcome of the climax of the search for the good life.

progressive but orthodox. In secular constitutions religions also become just one social concern and a societal control will be imposed on religions. Sri Lanka is sixth on the scale behind Bangladesh, Niger, Somalia, Romania, Indonesia with a 99% percent stating according to a survey³¹ done in which people feel that religion and any religion for that matter is very important to them. In such regard the second proposal is to foster the concept of a religious utopia. Even the simple naming of religions as Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam rather than other faiths enable an awareness of the subject. The first point with regard to this, that needs to be elaborated is the concept of awareness. Awareness when we talk about interfaith and intrafaith conflict is primarily rooted in the understanding of the phenomenon of religion. While religion may have several hundred definitions each definition is concentrated on basically two factors; one being the relationship with a hope beyond our imagination but within our grasp and a relationship with the world beyond our grasp and within our imagination. Therefore any religious phenomenon which does not deal wholly in living in the now and here cannot be a religious phenomenon. Therefore the awareness that each religious tradition does in fact bear

³¹ (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Importance_of_religion_by_country)

an ethic of 'being' is the foundational aspect of our proposed elucidation. Closely following this foundational block, would be its variations that the same awareness should be extended towards even the intrafaith branches. In the modern Sri Lankan syllabuses, especially in Civic education this vital aspect has been enumerated satisfactorily to prevent further disasters³² which may have come into effect if not for the knowledge of other cultures. Education is of course the principal feature that needs to be utilized to overcome a bias society. And its target group should not only be the generation that can be educated on benches, but the generation that is in charge of the affairs of the world. This does not however mean that through awareness building alone in education that this toleration can be brought about. As Martin Luther King dreamt of that glorious day of ethnicities living together will religion come hand to hand in action to promote togetherness and rather not a divide? For them who totally dismiss religion because of its dividing ethics can such a utopia be ever imagined? Has humanity lost the lessons taught by religions which have so far in time brought

³² (... Sri Lanka) The virtual segregation and brainwashing for homogenous education proposed without the knowledge of cultures is becoming more and more clear and the outcome could have been even more violent if not for a common sense to prevail within the holds of a country

communities together? That is exactly why religions need to be held dear for posterity because religious truth becomes much more valuable than human made truth. And a scientific utopia may never hold all the answers while a religious one may go that extra mile.

Approaches revised

It is important to discuss the matter of building bridges in the wider context of an ecumenical Church. It is also going to be on one hand very difficult to propose something because once again we need to listen to many perspectives and on one hand it is going to be a blessing because we are going to have all aspects of our religiosity imbedded in our response. We need to focus on the practical element of actually living together or coexisting. In some instances we meet people who having lived together with people of varied faiths³³, who easily grasp the interfaith relation. In more instances we find people who have not been exposed to this rainbow characteristic and moreover fail to understand even the intrafaith differences and tensions that might be present.

³³ The main culprits of tensions within societies are always to found in localities in which the awareness of the other is not experienced, such can also be seen in the support of policies in elections and parties as well in the socio politio dimensions in the two thirds world

However as we detailed above the society itself can be its motivator for this purpose. Society in and through religions could be able to assist in this task of bringing the living experience to the forefront. One of the most recent examples would be the Jewish, Arab and Christian dialogue that takes place in the war stricken areas of Israel. At least in part the participants would leave the dialogue transformed than they would have entered it³⁴.

It is also to be collaborative in social action with a religious backing which, is to tackle secularization of which much was said earlier ,which as this reflection was developed became the sole delinquent for interfaith and intrafaith conflict. One global concern in which religions have collaboratively voiced up is eco-justice and such measures would be essential in carving a suitable religious ethic in a secular world. Highlighting more on intrafaith social action, would create the possibility of a united stance irrespective of divergent views and it would be a strong foundation to go for interfaith social action.

³⁴ There is in psychological terms a process in which an individual learns from prejudice and discrimination through the making of new schemas or mental formations in the brain. In practical terms it is basically the task of accommodating more information through experiences.

It is necessary that continual reflection is done so that proactive attention will be made before a crisis is given birth to and a societal check will enable that religions are active in the form that was mentioned earlier of giving hope and instructions for living. However, the inevitable trap here would be that secular control of religion will probably make religions be ruled by secular forces which in turn will be a ‘back to square one’ with regard to secularism. And many of the secular countries in the world would erroneously be actionizing such an idea. Therefore it needs to be collaborative in the fact that religious truth maybe more beneficial than a secular rule, however rationalism should pervade in any case to maintain a harmonious ‘being’. If we are to be full gospel Christians it is to be rooted in all aspects of the Christian life, deeply rooted like a tree ready to branch out to learn more³⁵.

³⁵ The example is given of a tree which is rooted firmly and then it is able to branch out or spread with total confidence. The primary goal of religious education would be to make sure a person becomes familiar with the full truth within one’s religion. This makes it possible for a person to look at one’s faith as well as another critically because of the equipping process one has passed onto. In this sphere it is difficult for radicalized individuals to be rooted firmly in the faith as it takes an initiative to grasp the base in a very short term with more emotions of anger, hatred, despair ruling one’s affirmation. This also results in the disparities of faith proclamation different denominations within religions make.

And there as by an automatic process we dawn on the concept of a religious utopia. It is not one based on a sole rule neither is it one based on collaborative rule. The rule becomes more obsolete as there is almost no upperhand had by one philosophy. Maybe perfect competition will be how an economist would put it, but this concept reaches far beyond than mutual recognition and existence. It is the ability to be inclusive to the pluralism of the other. It may be possible to identify a strong player in the scene as we will see in the next chapter yet the strength of same does lie in the very misty area between leading with consensus and consensus to lead. Utopian thinkers have been unable in so far as much to come up with this particular scenario since owing to the disturbance one may feel with regard to the clash of ideologies in control. For an example there are no perfectly utopic countries in the world, religion –wise where even minorities may have the same capacity to determine the course of affairs. As mentioned above this leads into a secular trap of control which may ultimately be the monopoly of the majority religion.

Yet the concept under discussion goes beyond the problematic area of ideology clashes and depends more on not the content of each ideology but the shape of the ideology. The critic may point out that once again the

religious clash is obvious since even with converted minds to pluralism the final say on whatever matter cannot be ratified with an overarching consensus since the content of religions lead unto diverse paths. But the world order has seen the best of such vivid display of cohabiting in the histories of humankind. And there we relate the third type of phenomenon which occurred in human history, as was mentioned at the beginning of the chapter. The spiritual sphere of collaboration is also in line to be justified by a higher rationality and the humanistic utopia becomes the limit of the human mind. While the debater may not stop at an unscientific fact such as this, this phenomenon will be present in the focus of the discussion in the next chapter and the reader is encouraged to bear the practice in theory of what has been discussed in the latter part of this passage.

CHAPTER 2

THE PRIVATE SCHOOL TRADITION AND RELIGIOUS UTOPIA

Introduction

Within the Sri Lankan secondary school network we find four different strands³⁶ of School systems in operation namely the Government schools, Semi Government schools, Private Schools and International Schools. In form as in ideology these four strands represent at least in part four remnants of educational ideologies that have been adopted and settled upon in this country. Although this light reflection is to be made centered mainly on the third of the above it may be pertinent to cast some light on ‘them that are to be left out for ease of time and space’.

The eager student of education may be introduced into the philosophy of what is called ‘affirmative action’ a line of thinking in accordance with ‘positive discrimination’ where the crux of education lies not in

³⁶ The classification of schools is most unfortunate to specify, has been affected by a paucity of identification with the confusion over Church run schools, blanketed government held schools, mix ups between international and private schools

‘what’ is to be imparted or in the ‘how’ it is to be imparted but rather on to ‘who’ it is imparted. For this reflection it is with this framework we accord the Governmental schools which together with impressions leading from the spirit of free education, nationalism, equality, political loyalty and bridging the inability of scores who have been left to self proclaim as the lesser fortunate. It is no surprise that for countries in which the need for such education is proportionally high it has to be dispensed by an institution that encompasses and has a ‘hold’ on a large number of enterprises that assists with the task and is inevitably the State.

The second sphere we would wish to lead onto is the philosophical dimension of ‘natural justice’ where we coin such words such as idealism, social work and justice, ecclesiastical hold, work of the Spirit and the withdrawal symptoms of a secular goal. It is not on the mere basis that most schools belonging to our second category are in fact partly governed by the Church³⁷ that we insist such connotations but rather because that these schools insist to a greater deal on identifying with an unshakeable stance on the ‘what’ to educate rather than

³⁷ The norms of the catechetical activities of the early Church are well documented and this particular mission point will be discussed later as we dwell about the European school development

on the ‘who’ and the ‘how’. And in this case putting on the hat of non partiality we admit that the Church’s inborn teaching of being the vehicle of natural justice has been in accordance contextually.

The last and the least (but with a jovial spirit!) we turn to a concept of Progressive education³⁸ and to which we gap the concepts of thinking about thinking, student friendliness, teleology of success, education as an industry and midwifery of the authority. It may be safe to State that this present philosophy under the mastermind of the American John Dewey achieved the nexus in world education that we see even today and its impression is to be on the ‘how’ of education with a slight angular transition from the other two aspects discussed earlier. It may not be wise to accuse the inventors of the athletic shoe of steroid abuse eventhough it has magnified the sense of competitiveness in athletics giving bloom to performance enhancement! Therefore a system in fact cannot be used to charge suppositions that have accompanied same and we would do likewise.

³⁸ A concept readily accepted by the educational fraternity as resultant from the sputnik revolution between the US and the USSR

We now are at a point to analyze and use the remaining just as much Gideon would have felt when he asked guidance to select the group that were to take the city, and group by group disappeared and now we set sight on the Private school tradition in its present form blanketing not only the Christian faith but also the rest. The same student of education venturing into the beginnings of this tradition are confronted with the blunt reality that the architects behind this brainchild needed to make a class of people who exacted themselves to carry forward their work and full stop. From the dining use of forks and spoons to the ‘higher thinking’ of the upper northern hemisphere the British in general wanted individuals who thought, behaved, felt and worked as the people of whom gratitude would be given in the case that they were elevated in those times.

The private school tradition thereby brought another aspect bypassing the ‘whom’, ‘how’ and ‘what’ instilling the ‘why’³⁹ into the ideology of educational thinkers who according to the protestant tradition in Sri Lanka cared

³⁹ This assumption even though here displayed directly is but a product of possible decades of reflection on colonial Europe’s history, modern Sri Lankan sociology and a clash of psychologies when attempting to restore a culture. The curious mind is advised to look into the area of ‘comparative education’ found in education courses for the complete workings of this conclusion.

very less about it for quite some time and need rather than pity shriveled the bones as Ezekiel witnessed to make their mark felt on the educational scenery at that time. Without prejudice let us take time to ponder on the transformation of the educational atmosphere, where from the times of might, to times of slightly blight dawned and the need for the British men and women declined in the same manner spiritual worship declined in the Old Testamental exilic times when Israelites had to forgo the Solomonic temple.

Now begins the time of settling 'ins' and settling 'tos' the time of debate and divisions where neither the need nor the will in broad terms was conquered by the subsequent successors of the country. Lot needed a look behind to make sure of what followed and we join him as we see a glimmer of elitism that was apparent in British times now becoming an obscurity which provided space and meaning for being and existence. Dictating of the terms of 'being' which has been in the sole grasp of the State after the farewell of the British has to be inculturated with a society that emulated the British not only in terms of endearing manner but also of social, political and occupational will. This leads us to reflect on

the interest groups of a private school⁴⁰ we find in the twenty first century much as Saint Paul would have pondered when he had to settle matters in the Corinthian Church where the enhanced opponents of the Gospel were confusion with priorities!

Yet we are to be mesmerized at the rate, the Church schools in this regard, we account for the ones to be counted from fifteen able fingers Trinity, Hillwood, Mowbray, St Thomas and branches, Ladies, Bishops, Carey, Methodist, Wesley, St John's, Chundikuli and Jaffna/Uduvil Colleges have stood the test of the times and are ever present as challenging edifices thanking for a rich heritage of individuals who were willing to stay strong as the winds blew around. We may be confident that only time will tell, as the disciples who travelled on the boat that met the stormy seas eased by power, whether the same tranquility would prevail after the ruffles of global and local jolting. Yet we thank the founders of these institutions⁴¹ who were led by their

⁴⁰ If we were to conclude that this list is possibly quite lengthy, we would not be erring and the niche carved by these institutions are pivotal in grouping these parties into ecclesiastical, State, commercial, traditional, welfare oriented and status oriented .

⁴¹ The detailed works of the historical dimension of these institutions can be found in many of the archival resources facilitated by them separately.

conscience to begin the work that we see in radiance today ever remembering that the mission belongs to the utmost and the highest and we become mere instruments on whom the responsibilities are thrust with no tenderness as the Law book became thrust at Josiah who cried at the immediate counter measures that he had to take yet were hidden by a façade that dictated terms according to the empirical knowledge but which had to be substituted by a waiting upon as Isaiah asserts on ways that are not our ways and on thoughts that are not our thoughts⁴².

History

The word ‘private’ would naturally mean owned separately by someone other than the someone who would naturally own things! And in our contexts the someone who naturally has a say in matters of ownership is the State. When we look at the history of education in the early times there was never a mass education, it was always a private affair. In some cases education was a personal experience through nature or through a mode. In the orient the student looked upon the teacher as someone who disseminated knowledge in a customized

⁴² Isaiah 55

way according to his or her own needs. Then there is also the factor that till the last hundred years or so an education was not a luxury everyone had access to. In the Platonic times the education was a goal oriented activity reserved for a specific class of people. It might be possible to see this trend even in Europe to Asia where a secondary education was not an everyday possibility for the masses.

Since education was used as a tool to distinguish classes between people it is possible to say that for those who 'afforded' it the entire affair was a private one. It may be difficult to blanket this idea upon the whole history of humankind but it can be safely concluded that when looking at the ancient civilizations from Egyptian to Greco – Roman to Indian to Chinese, while schools of students were gathered to give education it was a private affair. It is in Islam that we find the earliest strains of the idea of schools as we come to know today. It was much earlier than the European understanding which came to light in 1179 in England that free education became a binding task of each Church. We then draw on the principle of universal education where education, at least a secondary education was to be the privilege of the total population. And we may be surprised to know that the school system in education as we know of it today is

only a few centuries old. Obligatory school education was made first in Norway and Denmark and then it spread to the other European countries. In this struggle Rousseau's⁴³ emancipation of children and the concept of universal education in the thought of John Amos Comenius became remarkable points of entry.

The main point that needs to be discussed is that it was the push of the renaissance and the industrial revolution that brought forth the concept of new knowledge and creativity and subsequently to the need to harness these⁴⁴. The tools for this was to be given to anybody and it is only in the past century that we see the idea of a school system and education for all regardless of any barrier that comes to be enshrined in the United Nations declaration of human rights. Yet even after framing so, secondary education still may elude millions and the education given to many may not be beneficial or sufficient to many more millions. However for our discussion we need to understand that as was mentioned in the introductory verses the State becomes crucial in

⁴³ His novel "Emile" was revolutionary in understanding the freedom children needed for expression

⁴⁴ The initiatives of sixteenth century Europe can be looked at as the main disparity between the first world and the two thirds world and the nexus between the development through advanced processes in the first world

the concept of education for all. This is a worldwide phenomena and not just to colonized countries but even within the heavyweights of the world a private education and private schools remain within the grasp of the elite.

Understanding the genesis of the Private school tradition in Europe will inevitably guide us into understanding the context that we need to wrestle with in the next few paragraphs.

In the high middle ages the first universities had taken form in Europe and the Christian touch was experienced from parish education to basic tutored education to tertiary education which was more or less in the liberal arts and in the Latin language which was also of a Christian nature. It is believed that the first private schools also came into being during these times and while these schools were religious in nature the primary aim remained the education of a clergy person⁴⁵. While the oldest school in the world is attributed to Kings School Canterbury to 597 AD which was a cathedral school it can be safely said that Private schools came

⁴⁵ It is with the lenses of historicity that we look at the earliest description of the 'school'. The western concept of same in the ages under discussion aimed at either the Church future or the State future and even the military future for which these 'schools' in the language we speak existed.

into being as a fact in the 14th and 15th centuries leading to the age of the renaissance.

It is to be understood that till the renaissance the only religion professed by the European world was indeed the Roman Catholicism. And therefore even private schools which may have later come into being identified by varied denominations are in fact all belonging to the Roman Catholic part in Christianity. And Roman Catholicism also has a colourful more or less approach to education as the monasteries were used as the centres of culture preservation during the dark ages in a time where civilization itself was being jeopardized. The culture of monastic education continues even today as many religious orders they themselves have their own affiliated schools which in fact is ordered to serve mainly the causes of the denomination.

Anyhow the main aspect that we need to follow in this history is that there were two trends that contributed to the concept of schools leading to the renaissance and one was that of the Roman Catholic⁴⁶ influence shorn forth

⁴⁶ A government assisted school in the Sri Lankan term is given to nearly fifty schools a majority of these run by the Roman Catholic Church and the 'why' of their affiliation being monetarily well off goes to the heart of their spirituality of the State-Church welfare

by the establishment of monasteries and cathedral schools which were originally used for training of prospective priests and more generally to conserve the ‘quality’ of religious faith when it was at a point of decline.

The second reason is that schools were brought into the fray as institutions which allowed for a cause of justice in which students who were not able to receive the basics could also be directed in this stream. As time rolled on these trends produced schools which are in the form we find them today. The governmental regulation was able to streamline broad guidelines in which to umbrella⁴⁷ these schools. As we visit the situation in Sri Lanka and the takeover of schools, was in fact a repetition of the happenings in Europe and mainly in England as the schools had to be either grouped as State or independent as this was necessary for the administration. For our present purpose let us look at a few salient features of the

model and their philosophy of linkage. Another aspect could be that while Protestantism was in bloom they played second fiddle and with the development of the State relationship the influence augmented.

⁴⁷ The menace of the private enterprise is almost a myth held dear by the more State conservative thinkers in which socialist ideals need to be imprinted as rift is proposed always with the ability given to the wealthy to maintain measures in life including education

independent schools in England and on their counterparts.

The education landscape in England although probably one of the most comprehensive in the modern times was not, what it was idolized to be. The struggle between the Church and the State was one of the most important matters that need to be considered. It can be said that the Church when in power did not allow the State to develop its own educational setting. The primary purpose for this is that the Church wielded the monopoly of the education which to be fair was only part religious in nature and most importantly served its end⁴⁸. Either the schools which were in operation were Christian in nature that the Church directly influenced affairs or a Board which was elected and most possibly, for well off schools this was practiced. We will come to see how this mentality also influenced the school system in the colonized developing nations as well.

⁴⁸ In terms of secular and sacred education at this time there was no trace of the former. The educators themselves had pledged allegiance to the Church and the Church commanded the content of knowledge imparted; so we find the travesties of Galileo, Copernicus and company whose new teaching was not favoured and the Church needed on high posts who have been formed by them and hence their teaching

And secondly the gap between the well off and workers which had been an issue we looked into earlier played its due part in the formation of the school setup and the education framework. The struggle for the ‘ragged’ students to obtain an education was one which would stand as taller as any other struggle we would exercise in the next many years even in the poorest countries. Here we need to identify the notion of a Board school. When the elementary education act was introduced in 1880 the majority of the students had to be allowed to be educated in Board schools which were either elitist, charitable or Church led in nature. The school Boards had the option of ordering their admission criteria to disallow poorer students as Board control remained firmly in the hands of the selected administrators. In 1891 the State started providing funds for poorer families which was actually an outcome of the problem we discussed earlier⁴⁹. With this measure the State had more of a say in educational matters and education span was lifted from 10 to 11 to 12 to 13 to 15 progressively in which the deaf and the dumb children were also accommodated.

⁴⁹ Hence we see the dilemma of modern education systems almost everywhere, wherein it is mostly a struggle between a set standard which is powerful working under the hypothesis of equality against a swim upcurrent which also proposes a justice however it is not aligning with the set standard; we see the ultimate dichotomy of Christian living with the two worlds.

In 1902 another trend which pervaded education in England was that all schools were taken under an umbrella with State funding through taxation. Here we also need to understand its relatives in a country like Sri Lanka. Taxation was used to fund schools and schools which were religious in nature or elitist in nature still maintained that culture. National schools in Sri Lanka could be equated to the Central schools in England which were clustered to provide education for the underprivileged.

Through these developments we come to a most important time in education in England in 1944 where a tripartite system was introduced where the school tier was organized as grammar schools, secondary modern and secondary technical and transition could be made based on merit. Grammar schools being at the top were pathways provided more like its equivalent the scholarship examination in Sri Lanka where students could obtain a better education regardless of the income of the family. The main condemnation of this system was also this; as education till this time was an affair of the rich and the privileged and this made the situation more acute where this thinking was concerned. However surviving all these changing scenes of life the independent school which was later called public school

which made use of the term to allow that still anyone could be admitted remained and was nourished through the fees levied on students⁵⁰. These schools had a set up which we would undoubtedly be seen in its remnants here with tradition and a unique culture, emphasis on a spiritual education and a holistic development⁵¹. Not quite contrary to this the State school functioned but it was governed though a more wide set up and the main causes for this system remain as to the question of who is the State going to support. The keen reader maybe referred to a whole host of other literature that depicts the full entirety of the making of the British system of secondary education. On one hand this historical map may be quite secondary when we start to discuss the current education trends in our country yet on the other hand when we are carving the remnants of a tradition the ‘original’ private school needs to be kept in mind.

⁵⁰ The first signs of the breakaway was in fact a taxing made on the possibly better off population to assist the less fortunate, however the fee factor became more a privileged factor on inequalities

⁵¹ Quite apart from the inevitable breakaway and the religious hold on the institutions the Board schools had more leeway to devise the formation for which they had much favour

Sri Lankan History of Education

The beginning of education is almost always related to the time when writing is introduced to that society. If that be the case Sri Lanka has a history of nearly 2300 years when Sanskrit was brought in the time of kings as a result of Buddhism being introduced to the land. As mentioned in the earlier essay historical education at the first instance is always a private affair. Education in Sri Lanka revolved mainly in the education of monks and then to the affluent of the kingly families. The establishment of universities and great learning places does not make this situation any lighter than what we experienced in Europe⁵². The education of a noble youth revolved around mainly expertizing in warfare and the more laborious task of religion and culture were left to the monks and their education system of *pirivenas* to which we will allude as a forerunner in the Buddhist aura in governmental schools. We will look into the time of the arrival of the missionaries as so often we turn our attention to when discussing other matters as well such as law, administration etc.

⁵² Quite elaborate readings are placed in the country's history with Maha vihara and Abhayagiri vihara residences of monks numbering over five to ten thousands in collaboration for the preservation of religious scripture and manner.

The Portuguese to whom Roman Catholicism is attributed and in our introduction we referred to as the 'what' of education was primarily a task of the need for education. As a proselytization ministry in heathen lands the depositing of the Christian manner was thought to be essential in the task of propagation. To this end to convert the masses, mission schools were built, however this mentality was clouded by an even more pressing matter that was with the Portuguese and this was the idea of commerce and it always took an upper hand. It is widely believed that education from the Churches itself became schools and no schools as we find today were founded in these times.

When the Dutch⁵³ invasion came to Sri Lanka they were more inclined to get the people of then Ceylon to work for them but still this was through religion and did not necessarily put the finger on education. The result of these two colonizing powers was that they faced two battlefronts one with the internal opposition of the Kandyan kingdom and opposition from each succeeding

⁵³ The Dutch life could be equated to the terror that we talked about in inter religious dialogue as this Protestantism brought with it much one sided theological reasoning which left indelible marks on Sri Lankan history

member for financial gains in commerce. When the mind was set on these the education was itself not a major aspect on the agenda. This dual tension ceased with the arrival of the British who were able to project more on education as we shall see as they gained much peace of mind.

If a researcher was to search for the first school that was set up in Sri Lanka he or she will find that this great privilege goes to Richmond College in Galle set up by the Wesleyan Methodist missionaries in 1814 which is also the time period they arrived in Sri Lanka. Now it is time to descend upon to the layer of activity that this reflection is very much depended upon. The arrival of the British in 1798 signified firstly within the European imperialism race that this was indeed a superpower and with the most important aspect of the fall of the Kandyan kingdom more space was present for them to undertake their strategic plan. It is no secret that they were first mostly uninformed of any other mission in the island than commercial purposes and they made this possible through plantations and transport and law. While this path trod by the predecessors was worthwhile a still higher road presented to them with the comfort of

knowing that they have defeated the opponents both internal and external⁵⁴.

This dawning of the idea of using education to serve their end was probably the brightest star as a strategy when we look at foreign administrations on colonized lands. It was first to develop their own local leadership steeped into their mentality that would take forward the empire. And secondly it was a free mandate for even the Roman Catholics and Protestants alike as they viewed religion as a key factor in a land which they believed was totally dominated by a mindset developed through religion. Then one by one this application of education to serve goals took place throughout the country.

When we look at the first ten schools to be instituted⁵⁵ in Sri Lanka, seven of these were founded by the Wesleyan Methodist missionaries and this within a period of ten years since arrival; which during this particular time

⁵⁴ The Spanish invasion of the Americas, the French invasion of the Africas and Asia and the English invasion of the Asian territories spell different stories yet the colonizing effect always takes on the role exchange from domination to collaboration as time takes its toll and the British were specifically tuned to understand this mechanism and owe their success to same

⁵⁵ It is here we spend a Sabbath moment to understand the enthusiasm and the zeal the founder men and women embodied within themselves who for most part had just the theoretical framework

would have been a very significant achievement owing to the fact that now the term school is much different from what we were using earlier in this essay. The resourcing and the will would have been a significant key in the attempt to build a school per year. The American Ceylon mission also has two schools within the said period of 1816 and 1824. The geography of the schools is of lesser importance then than it is to us now. From the south to the north to the central hills this expansion became very much as if a spirit was working within the ranks. The first Anglican missionary school is widely reputed as the Sri Jayawardenapura Maha Vidyalaya in Kotte 1822 and thereafter St John's College Jaffna in 1823 which is now a semi government school. As was mentioned earlier the freedom of denominational reign was permitted by the British and the first Roman Catholic schools started appearing in the 1850's firstly with St Patrick's College in Jaffna which is once again a semi government school in modern times.

Two important developments led Sri Lanka in the terms of school education leading to the 20th century. The first was the operation of the theosophical society which endeared to make students receive an English education with Buddhist values, which we see emerging once again, and during a time in which religion was slowly

fading away⁵⁶. This sign of inculcating Buddhism as a valuable resource will also be used to understand the mentality of the British and therefore the mentality of the British system in giving ear to the religions of all. The first of these schools began with Ananda college followed by Dharmaraja College in 1886 and 1887 respectively. This mind set which was allowed to remain without dilution to this day but dilution in the other forms took place, which we will look at further on.

The second most important development is called the Colebrooke commission which sought once again to standardize education in Sri Lanka much like the reforms of the Butler act⁵⁷. While the schools continued to flourish, the schools still remained as private schools. The funding given by varied denominations including Buddhism does not amount to the schools to be labeled as State schools. This development which has its counterpart once again in England became possible with

⁵⁶ The counter culture proposed once again by foreigners would result in a heated argument table more than once as we see the power of the set, challenged by the same people who seem to have been challenged by a different ethic

⁵⁷ Mentioned above as the ordering in the British system (Tripartite) of education, the same was attempted by the Colebrooke commission which for most part had a positive view of the segregation but eventually as it turns out the process left minors and majors

the Kannangara reforms in 1936 which brought the concept of free education. One of the main determinants for this would have been the elitism that was projected through the schools made possible both by the Christian and Buddhist schools. The second would definitely be the fairness of education that needs to be given to all. And thirdly the loosening of the imperial grip would also have contributed to this move. The salient features of the C W W Kannangara reforms are worthwhile mentioning here. The key most feature of the entire system was to bring a sense of equality to children all over the island. The only way this could be accomplished was to finance education to all through the government. In another sense education was never made free but the investment for this was made possible through the government. However the brain child of the scheme was the institutionalizing of the Maha Vidyalaya the actual physical locations which targeted students as clusters. With the wave of nationalism now brewing in the air the education in national languages took place and English at least in theory lost the language of the affluent⁵⁸. Aligned to this was the religious education of the child's parents as opposed to the system that was in place in

⁵⁸ This among many were the actual elevations the private schools reserved to which they would owe a great deal to in the later years of that century.

many of the schools started by the British that a possible conversion could be available.

Did this hamper the situation of Private schools in Sri Lanka more than the school take over in the 1960's which we will discuss in a moment? For the keen historical eye this moment would have been more detrimental to the position of education in Sri Lanka with regard to private schooling. If this could have been foreseen maybe the British administration would themselves have taken similar steps to minimize the cost of the movements or it could be envisaged that they were ready for a handover of power.

This handover eventually took form in 1948 and by this time the nationalistic movement looked a giant whale about to swallow any that remained in its path. And needless to say the imperial education system was one of the main targets. However the takeover was not merely a take over it was a talk and take over or rather an 'ask over'. The option was handed over to the Christian Church for them to govern the schools under their purview. In fact we need to re term the 'take over' into 'ask over' since the violence that the former proposes was not an urgency of the time. And the reactions were

mixed⁵⁹; on the one hand it looked a reasonable action to take, with absolutely no resources to manage hundreds of schools and on the other hand the reasoning and measures taken by the Bishop Lakdasa who verily supported this scheme in the hope of ‘assumed magnanimity’ remain to be controversial. However the story of the remnants is an untold story of will and courage. In the old Testamental times there is an account when a conqueror removed all the Israelites from the land leaving the most poor and the helpless⁶⁰. In this account we are pressing here at the story is made vice versa and the to be remnants have left a print which is indeed most effective even into modern times and this we will try to understand further in the next section.

Modernity

The history of education cannot be further away from the history of that country or context. To recap the Sri

⁵⁹ While we do present these criticisms for the purpose of the reflection each and every other deliberation is also respected and accepted. The Church –the State- the Askover- Withdrawal of the British- Nationalism saga remains the still unmet task of the able historian.

⁶⁰ The Biblical story of the Persian King Cyrus leads us to ponder a moment; an individual or a force made other, can be made an instrument regardless of the virtues or vices within to bring emotion, nostalgia and hope to a people who are lost

Lankan version, education is as perennial as the introduction of letters however education remained more of the natural arts and the practical elements and was most exclusively used for the affluent. The gathering of Gurukul as found in the Indian context a master with disciples was commonplace in Sri Lanka whether it be warrior education or the priestly education. The education of monks was almost an exact similar copy of the monastic version found in the middle ages in Europe. The age of the conquerors made possible the use of education as a more progressive tool. At first it was mainly used as proselytization and further on it was a tool to mould the future leadership. The lessons taught by the European educators was more or less heavily embossed in the national leadership and being encouraged by the signs of independence and self sufficiency the local leadership also embarked on the educational reforms. The most striking would be the free education plan which made Ceylon move further into the modernized world in terms of equality, opportunity and process.

Since independence the death rattle sounded to hundreds of Church run schools in Sri Lanka which were removed

from the affluent list⁶¹. While the history of schools would not be touched the modern culture that was insisted in these schools became a telling factor on the landscape in the schools network. The insistence of language, history and religion became sources of inculcation that led in the nationalistic spirit. In the same way the administration at the colonial period lent assistance to its brain child, the same was repeated when the non private schools took shape. It is important to place on record that no private schools came into existence after the independence movement and no private school was taken over to the State sector also during this time.

⁶²Private schools which bore initially the names of international schools became a fad owing to the need for

⁶¹ This maybe one place where bias may set in as we need to decide whether the swim upstream led the remnants to be taken off the affluent list. It is quite obvious that the schools which were asked over would have lost the affluence even though the schools retained a history and a name to go with it. The question still beckons that did the ask over of schools play a partisan role in elevating the elite still making a demarcation between the State run and the private schools which would inevitably be the downside of the nationalistic movement

⁶² The demarcation between the international schools and the private schools has reached a point in which only history per se leads the field and the uniqueness of the education provided seem to move with finance thereby making a hard impression on

the education of foreign students, which had to be in Sri Lanka due to diplomatic purposes, and this still in modern times was almost impossible to label as a neo movement of international schools as private schools, since owing to the image it brought along as providing an elite education mainly with English as the medium of instruction and the more broad aspect of curricula that was offered. The same phenomena that the government disavowed, that being the English medium resurfaced with the country moving more in the line of the modern world and need for the same original British lady or gentleman was quenched by the stream of international education. The second factor that probably influenced the international schools and their take on education was the need of the commercial (business) community which proposed that the future was not for the academically gifted alone yet an all round personality with not only knowledge but the knowhow of the world and affairs and a personality that makes the winning charge.

To resume our discussion on the private schools and where we ended after the 'ask over' of schools we can only imagine the elitism that came out of oppression as well. Since this marks for the remnants as well the clout

susceptible parents who find it more and more difficult to ride the wave of monetary viability over a historical virtuosity

they claimed to have when a total ceasing of relationships between the centre and the schools would be taken out. In such light to remain as they were the moral support would have been provided by the Church if we are to look for one resource. Yet also we need to look at the pantheon of past students who may have ended up in prestigious positions in the State⁶³ and others who may have been able to provide this impetus. Why did we end up with as few as this and why did we end up with exactly these few?

These maybe some of the many questions, that may lurk in the minds of the individuals who reflect on this history in modern times. The fact that these schools have been accepted into the bracket of being established itself goes a long way in understanding the impact these schools have within the society. The establishment of international schools which are also sometimes mistaken as private schools due to the matter of ownership has been the most important aspect in modern school

⁶³ It may be pertinent to mention that private tradition past pupils in State service could have been more influential in the matter as they being part of the regime itself would have had more of a say on the unfolding events

education in Sri Lanka⁶⁴. The public school network some 10000 strong at the last census have had mixed reception within the education framework in Sri Lanka. On one hand the most city based schools and which also are prestigious for the sake of the name have seen great struggle in admission and competition for teachers as well as for students. While the provincial and rural school, have been found out to be lacking the same attention as received by the elite schools in the country. The job market when we think of the same elite past students been present in authoritative positions the intake is always based on the same elite and this whether be private or governmental schools has been a factor worth pondering upon. The drive for educational excellence has also to be reiterated. From the scholarship examination to the Advanced level examination the promise of the good life concept propels students to be devoid of any other character building formation offered in schools and cram under for academic excellence. It is evident that the inequality and society as regards the status and revenue when concerning occupations as

⁶⁴ Another key variant between the schools leave alone the religious sphere will be that international schools actually tally as business ventures and are in taxable mode

opposed to European countries has been influencing this mania⁶⁵.

It is also challenging to see that the modern commercial enterprises insisting on something more than academic knowledge which has become also a point worth considering apart from the academic expertise alone which eventually leads for prestige in the modern world. The need to give a holistic education has also made great revisions to the methodologies of school curriculum; where marks are awarded for activities which are not solely based on paper writing. And in fact these exercises, tests the finer skills a person may possess. Revolutionary India has seen a movement where marks also are allotted for activities other than studies even at the school level and if this be harnessed it can be a significant achievement in all round education. The importance of natural intelligence (a concept made famous by Howard Gardener where intelligence also makes presence in athletics, dance, relationships, architecture, speaking, music etc) has also enabled many paths to be in process which allow students for

⁶⁵ The impression of status and class management has become of so vital importance that the academic surge will not be quenched in the near future and this leads for an assurance in the private tradition as well

vocational as well as skill development in many areas most prominent amongst them the IT/HR sectors. The role of the teacher and teacher education has also become a pivotal change in the landscape in methodology. The teacher has been called to be in a midwifery position facilitating education to the utmost. Here the stress has been upon the widely discussed student centered approach, value inculturation and socialization in which the teacher carries the student not on a uniform formation but a customized one.

The management of schools apart from Boards has also taken a more revolutionary turn with school based management where interest groups are called to develop and monitor policy for the betterment of the school. This section although with many other points to add will not be complete without the mention of religious education⁶⁶ in schools as this reflection is mainly on those lines. The quelling of the nationalistic movement subsiding with regard to extreme ethnic polarization has also ended for most parts the religious aura which surrounded education. The freedom given to all students to follow

⁶⁶ The introduction of history, religion and language studies were thought of as paramount in the post independent era to open minds of students in that context. The paradigm shift now makes these subjects almost obsolete when education focuses on the global arena

their religion has been also with universal rights. However when we look at schools in Sri Lanka, the mixed schools pertaining to religiosity, which are few in number may adhere even with slight reluctance to this offer yet the majority of schools still are of a homogenous nature and this sameness breeds much expected partisan mentalities as we will look at in the next chapter.

The problems that surround the secondary education in Sri Lanka are numerous and varied⁶⁷ however as we are embarking on a particular aspect of education we will not ponder too much on the other factors which influence the topic at hand. But the reader is called to bear in mind that in life no strain lies alone but all are interconnected but for the sake of focusing we will now proceed into the important aspect of religiosity⁶⁸ in the secondary school network and the concept of a religious utopia.

⁶⁷ The budgetary subsidies, political transfers, gap of the rural and urban schools, closing and integrating schools, gender discrimination in teaching, cutting across all around education, tuition harbouring, retention of teachers in difficult areas, political promotions, promoting politicization, unwillingness to introduce courses, commercializing, compromising on quality, overtaxing of parents in finance, safety factors, addictions, technocratic influences are some of the many reasons

⁶⁸ Religiosity is often looked at as the religiousness of an entity, how much in tune the entity is with the concept of religion and for

Religious Utopia

For this discussion we need to single out the sixteen members which were mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. At the turn of this decade there were 10390 schools combining State, private, semi government and international schools in Sri Lanka. There was a move a few years ago to amalgamate nearly 1500 State schools to provide a better centralized education; the results of the motive are not clearly obtainable.

The mushrooming of international schools will provide for the shortfall of the number given above therefore we are left with nearly 10000 schools in Sri Lanka. Out of these schools we are singling out sixteen schools which are going to be the focal point of our discussion from henceforth. Five main areas of consideration are worth mentioning to identify a school positive in the ‘concept of a religious utopia’.

The first is that upto a greater deal all religious traditions must be present in a school therefore many State schools in which a total/high majority of Buddhists, Hindus and

this matter it is never a solo interpretation but the total concept or the idea of religion

Muslims alone are present cannot be taken under this umbrella

The second will be that all religious traditions must be given an equal portion of acceptance adding to the first, the religious right is universal yet in schools where students are not catered to study their own religion may not fall into this category and hence -like State schools and semi governmental schools will all be phased out in this regard

The third element is that the authority in control cannot be favouring a particular tradition for an example Museaus college is a private school but the trust Board which runs clearly States that the administration of the enterprise be based on a religious bias⁶⁹.

Fourthly the consideration that the schools' outer most philosophy should be religious in regard and hence the international schools which still permit the study of religion will be phased out in this.

⁶⁹ We would be tempted to analyze the ideal of a one religion utopia as well since for most part in history, nations have strived forward in same. It could be the primal theme of a comparative study.

And finally there needs to be an ethic that runs from the top most management to the grass root level who should be able to fathom that this institution is indeed 'open' for religious pluralism.

Retracing the history of religious education in all schools will actually be a more tedious as well as a very confusing matter at the least⁷⁰. Therefore we are going to encounter the strict British administered schools system which made the religious education, that of protestant Christianity leaving behind even Roman Catholicism crucial. On the other hand we come to see the tide turning and churning against the status quo when the schools were taken over, it may not have been forced upon but owing to the majoritarian numbers existing as Sinhala Buddhists and Thamil Hindus and Muslims, schools got into the habit we still find them in as they catered to religious education for the majority. When the remnants of the private school tradition had a hard time with dealing with their freedom from the colonial stronghold the idea of developing the utopic religiosity, was in fact a natural response. Such is being said due to the following reasons.

⁷⁰ The most convincing short fall will be that literature a school produced is always bias and in most cases emotional. And depending on the view point a religious trace may never be found.

The first would be the fact of survival. While the umbilical cords of strength have been removed it would have been felt that the Church itself has lost much of the influence and the 'going at it alone' would not be a healthy practice and the need to gather other faiths as well would have been a natural response. This would also emphasize of the quality of the students who were being schooled in these schools. For an instance the Kandyan Schools had always emphasized on the need to develop schooling for a wider community but their focusing on the sons and daughters of Kandyan chieftains would have been an inevitable choice since they felt that they had the best chance of emulating them (the British) after their Christian formation. Then as students from all religious backgrounds also entered schooling, at that time from possibly well to do backgrounds, since now schooling was fee levied it was inevitable that the schools had to accommodate them in the religious sphere as well⁷¹.

⁷¹ Such would have been the dilemma as felt in the reflections given at the end of the 'Christian Teachers Conference in 1955' which was torn between maintenance and main-tasking

Secondly we might talk of the fact that there was a certain flexibility created in Protestantism⁷² that allowed to understand that being Christian is not merely an end in itself but it was a calling and in this regard it was for unity. More than any other faith in modern schooling in Sri Lanka the protestant schools had the capacity because of their ability to think of unity as an inevitable outcome of the teaching of love. And the inclination maybe to throw other religious out and develop a same 'State minded' school would not have been on the cards. Thirdly it is necessary to understand that while the secular power was lost to the private schools it was necessary the goodwill of the schools remained intact and the number of entrances to the school was from all religious backgrounds still owing to the financial factor. Therefore it was necessary to cater not to Christian elitism but rather to the general elitism and thus sprung the opportunities we see for even the other religious to hold post and achieve similarly well in many areas of school life.

⁷² The discussion of the theological stances of Protestantism will be a most exhaustive task, the main keepers of the Protestant 'mind' in Sri Lanka will be the National Christian Council and other similar ecumenical bodies. Reference to their vision, objective, beliefs and practices will enable the inquisitive mind a minor relief

The outcome of this proposed Religious Utopia is the fulfillment of the above Stated criteria. On the first level the school itself promotes a pluralist society, it is not done due to the lack of students who can be brought into to fill a homogenous pattern but the admission is done not solely on religion. And in the next sphere we see that policy due to administration is done by an authority also not based on a single religion basis but rather on election and the voice of the minority is well transmitted due to the same respect the system envisages⁷³.

We might safely State that after studying the concept of religious utopia and owing to the prevalence of the same characteristics in the said schools, we have carved out what we have been expecting. On the one hand it is a great achievement that these schools have been able to maintain this uniqueness which we will discuss later. On the other hand we question as to the issues which prevent other schools from exercising the same flexibility.

⁷³ The administration fulfils a greater deal in the idea of a religious utopia, while it is not necessary to be multi religious, it is expected to be more compromising and for this reason it is expected to receive more ear from all quarters

However having carved out that these schools cater to the religious utopia concept⁷⁴ does not simply mean that the end has been achieved. We will be turning into the pros and cons of the system and very importantly the practical ground situation that lies in this network of schools. Also we will look into the varied challenges the system brings up and how religions affect this concept.

⁷⁴ The philosopher is losing more ground in modern times with the question always thrown at such dismissing theory with the actual practice. However whatever concept that we have 'carved out' is in real terms to be scientifically valid as well. As to how this will be done is through the factual data available in these schools with regard to admissions, composition, promotions, achievements, advisors etc. Secondly it is scientific in the sense of opinion as inmates if they could be called can be quizzed using any research methodology on whether their school has recognized a pluralistic approach and even though here we find ourselves with no investigative data such risk is maintained throughout this reflection and such assurance is given. Thirdly and most importantly the constitutional papers which govern the Church on these schools and the subsequent papers include at least in part the theory of what we have been discussing. Devoid of linguistic and logical arguments these papers enshrine the same philosophical ideal which we have been discussing. While being a human behavioral science the outcome of such a research done will be in line with what has been proposed, eventhough in the strict sense a religion and utopic sociology are not qualified to be tested under science.

CHAPTER 3
IN THEORY AND PRACTICE – CHALLENGES
DEFINED

The Past and the Present

Having drafted a slightly vague outline of a religious utopia in the first chapter and then carving out a rather suspicious looking religious utopia which seem to be present in the private schools in Sri Lanka it is now time to further discuss the validity of the hypothesis of a conjunction between these two concepts.

We were able to see that the concept of actually utopianizing religions was in one way thrust towards the school in the fact that schools had lost for most part their earlier clout. However we might even say that the actual Christian faith which needed to be professed finally took root. It was then that the Christians looked at their presence from the point of the powerless⁷⁵. Leaving as to the ‘how’ the situation came to be it is necessary now to

⁷⁵ “Preferential option for the poor” has been a theological standpoint some Christian thinkers have dwelled upon especially when looking at oppressed contexts in Americas, Africa and Asia. It observes that God has a special favour for those who are ‘poor’ in any aspect. The counter blessings in the beatitudes in Mathew 5 signify that fullness does not leave much room for Gods favour.

look at the outcome itself. In the second chapter we listed some of the criteria we assigned to liberate the specific schools into a certain group. It may be important to State even more specifically exactly as to why we believe that there exists a very special sort of religious atmosphere within these schools. Maybe the onlooker may feel that whilst a majoritarian Buddhist, Hindu or Muslim school may not favour a religious utopia on grounds of homogeneity, the Christian schools are bound to work with religions because of their theological middlepath which is also not valid for Roman Catholic schools, where it is felt that these schools lack the flexibility the above said schools may have. But the most surprising fact is that most of these schools selected are a minority in the Christian population itself, thereby even with control the insistence of a utopic atmosphere is very much a factor worth pondering upon. In this section we are going to see some of the precedents which would have led to the utopic understanding which is talked about.

In the first place we were able to see that whilst these specific schools had uniqueness within them they were

still fee levying schools⁷⁶ and to remain as they were the schools had to have a certain power within them. Therefore regardless of religion the population drawn in, were of a caliber that had for most parts, their needs met and the future was in a way sure. As it is with all matters in life there is very little room for conflict in populations which are equipped with everything needed for life. Or in other words when the standard of life increases there is very little room for conflict. The availability of opportunities and equality makes this possible. To explain this further if we were to take countries in which the standard of living is very high such as Scandinavian countries, western European countries etc the minds of people are more focused on living rather than on conflicts which are less prevalent. This is in fact a psychological element with regard to development. The same notion where we sometimes debate as the first world and the developing world is for most parts very much valid. It could be well to say that when a meeting of groups who are well off economically and socially the divide in this instance religion becomes not so much a divide at all. The culture of the British was held in esteem in religion and there were times when all

⁷⁶ We see the repeat of history as we identified the same strain after a shake up, the international schools' hold in modern times based on the monetary principle.

religious had to be part of that religiosity in these schools⁷⁷. However, even if religions divided, the culture and motive linked the groups who gathered in these schools. Therefore it may be appropriate to State that the management of these schools had an easier run when managing their schools. We may see the history -student grappling with the ‘class struggle in pre and post independent politics’ which is probably an outcome of this phenomena.

Secondly we might be failing in our duties if we do not mention the theological stance of the Christian tradition which also enables the unity we are aiming to describe. For nearly millennia and half the Christianity that was professed in the world was Roman Catholicism. In some early paragraphs we mentioned how the Church and the State became inseparable as time went by and when we talk of a one religion State it is inevitable that the theological culture that gets imbedded also allows lesser room for any other interpretation. However when we hop back into the 16th century and the religious transformation that took place within Europe we see that

⁷⁷ Some more aspects can be received from the Christian teachers conference in 1955, where the editor talks of the ordinance preventing mass assemblies, classroom advise and counsel, preventing the administrators’ religion and direct conversion.

the main underlying force for such was the ‘new thinking’⁷⁸. The protestant Church which emerged from the Renaissance bore several characteristics. On one side it proposed extremism beyond the earlier accepted religious boundaries. When we look at the modern protestant movements the inability to accept the wideness of religious truth which at most times become an impediment in unity can be observed. And on the next we see that it proposes a break from the original hierarchy where the doctrine that people were influenced with and was monopolized, was cast away.

And most exceptionally in this regard there was much freedom from either an extremism or a set hierarchy. For an example the National Christian Council⁷⁹ Churches in Sri Lanka today profess a wide variety of theological interpretations going beyond the Catholic system. For

⁷⁸ When dealing with this new thinking in religions it was primarily the development of the art in scriptural study. Leaving alone the ritualistic Biblical value aspects of religion, protestant thinkers began a search based on scripture alone ‘sola scriptura’. However as regard the culture of Protestantism developed it sought a more freer existence devoid of ecclesiastical rule, critical outlook on commerce and science, spirituality of furthering beyond set standards and the inclusive view point development.

⁷⁹ The role of the National Christian Council has been highlighted below as providing the faith affirmation of the main line Churches but in its nature of Protestant theology the same multiplies into diverse interpretations

this same reason the more independent Churches pronounce judgment upon the main line Churches as been too liberal. On this pretext there have been several accusations thrown at the independent Churches highlighting a 'Jesus only' spirituality and this had been used as an instrument of the modern Churches for inculcating a sense of malice towards the same Churches they were once part of. This topic maybe sensitive and more irrelevant to be discussed at length here but by singling out these schools and then when revisiting these schools makes us aware of the religious utopia which prevail within these schools. For examples any teacher or student regardless of faith adherence maybe elevated and celebrated and recognized which most unfortunately may never be the reality in a State school. Festivals of any religion maybe observed with due participation of the management⁸⁰. Will it be baseless then to propose that the main line Churches in Sri Lanka had that one more thing to offer when thinking of faith? It would be a matter of celebration that such utopia is enabled and acted out in a context.

⁸⁰ The cultural landscape within these schools include much more than this example and it spreads from observances, attire, symbols, assembly, religious associations, activities, outreach work etc

And thirdly we would like to discuss whether this was a model that was in the conceptual framework of progressive Sri Lankans. As we crossed into the 21st century and with the new educational reforms presenting an out of the box approach to multiculturalism it remains to be wondered whether the religious utopia became a significant point of departure from the homogeneity of education. In modern times there is a heavy surge of parents who insist on getting admission to international schools which probably cost the highest among the four types of schools we have been discussing about. Yet their aim seems to be; an English education with a multicultural approach which in the aftermath of war has become more of the option that needs to be taken as foundation to working in the country. It is also the imperative of the business world leaders to attract much of the qualities that we talked on earlier namely a conversing and thinking with English and the ability to understand the pluralistic nature of life. This resonates in fact what the same British administration required and what we still seem on offer as the ‘higher thinking’ in the first world developed countries. This may indeed be neo globalization⁸¹ upto some extent yet we also understand

⁸¹ In this instance we in the two thirds world actually learn to further our reasoning based on the western interpretation. To dwell upon more the southern hemisphere which was most

that if multiculturalism is an approach of developing a person to be open minded with the ability to inculcate and work with the 'other' it does not necessarily seem as such a negative concept. However if we are to suggest that this type of education was 'on the cards' in Sri Lankan education we might have to deal with at least two other factors. The first is the inevitable shift in paradigms that has indeed made the philosophy in education more western.

With the onset of the free economy and the modernization trends coupled with globalization many countries gave way to the neo colonization trend which gave into adapting many western concepts in education. Today in Sri Lankan universities, if we are to seek any local innovation it might be indeed a needle in a haystack since the educational philosophy itself has become very western⁸². The second point worth pondering upon is that whether multiculturalism in this case with religions is indeed a path that we in plural

probably have been against the LGBT movement are faced with the dilemma of inculcating the spirit of accepting people who could be different from nature. This in another light can be seen as western imposition of their doctrine.

⁸² Such is said not of content but of processes where based on ranks the vulnerability to look upon other benchmarks become more reasonable.

societies have missed over time. When we in Asia blessed with a multitude of religions and we with a living experience of same have been unable to accommodate it in our education for centuries. The first strains of multi religious studies or comparative studies are once again western concepts made real by Christians who would have opposed same but whose hearts and minds have been opened to see the richness in other religions.

There could be several and many other reasons⁸³ for the concept of a religious utopia in the private school tradition in Sri Lanka. There of course could be more reasons for this phenomenon to take place based on interpretation of history, education and sociological factors which were present in modern history but we would wind up our deliberations on the matter and invite the keener reader to dwell and bring up even more possibilities.

⁸³ It must be our earnest appeal for more research to be done in this line and if attempted such to be made available since the dearth of such knowledge diminishes the great richness built upon, and the origination point in England could be one place where such deliberations would have been attempted over time.

Celebration

How are we to understand this phenomenon; which was not much highlighted in modern history yet with the genesis of the neo private school tradition, through the blooming of the international schools this has been given more impetus. However the point of celebration in this regard is very much different to the one we will encounter in the latter scenario than the former. We will now turn to discuss as to the ‘why’ we need to celebrate the original religious utopia. For this purpose we draw upon four important who, how, what and when factors.

Firstly the whole exercise of how religions came to work side by side was regulated by a religious philosophy and in this case the protestant moderate philosophy. The new concept of religious well being⁸⁴ and harmony are made upon mere ethical regulations that sometimes are viewed as been more industrialized and finance oriented. Such is not said in an irresponsible manner but with the understanding that we need to reach each other’s ‘otherness’ and the incorporation of each religious

⁸⁴ The new understanding of religious wellbeing merely pinpoint to the adaptation of what is ‘good’ and can be found even without the religious interpretations in syllabuses as general ethics and with a move to embed that in place of a preferred spirituality

faction becomes not the prerogative of the religious world but of an ethical or secular directive. And when we talk of a secular or an ethical directive we need to bear in mind also that these two branches may view finance, industry, success and collaboration quite differently than it would have been viewed in Mt 6.33 when its expression that ‘seek the Kingdom of God and other things will be added ...’. And when we think that former Christian managements regulated the presence of religions in such light the latter ‘utopic’ entities has secularism taking over their bargaining table. Therefore the ‘who’ that was instrumental in bringing this phenomenon should be credited. This approach was in many ways against what was commonplace.

The second point of consideration for celebration is based upon the fact that how this utopia came into being. From our discussion above we gather that rather than being a planned concept the present nature of religious interpretation was something that was evolved into. We might be theologically able to relate that this was something that was destined as a further witness to a more religiously torn society⁸⁵. But as going on with a

⁸⁵ The development in syllabuses was already mentioned, the collaborative visits and exchanges are another aspect of this exercise but apart from this the radicalization could take place from

superficial glance we can assign that culture and in this case the culture of plurality made good grounds into converting some aspect that would have in other circumstances, been transformed into a fundamental ethic. We need to grapple with two contributory factors when we discuss the ‘how’ of religiosity. In the first instance there is the possibility that when private schools made a leeway in allowing for other religions to make a presence, there itself and hence the genesis of a utopia was given birth. Secondly if the religious factor was per se off the table then also it would have been possible for a utopia of some sorts due to other considerations discussed elsewhere. This may remain to be more of a concealed truth rather than an open one in private school history.

The ‘what’ of the private school tradition with its transformation will be dealt in our next section. But it maybe important to mention the main reason for all the harping when it comes to the private school tradition. To sum it all up the private school tradition eradicated the

anywhere from school to home. The greatest witness will be the testimonies of students who actually spend time knowing another yet this is a limited formation.

discrimination principle⁸⁶. Each religious student came to have the same opportunity of entrance, promotion and part taking of the good will of the rich tradition the school possessed. The work of the Church and the work of the school Boards will need to be commended for this task as well. And it is here that the theological stand point needs to be appreciated since, that was really the driving force within these schools when several ground shaking changes were taking place internally as well as externally affecting the school's tapestry. Whilst the Boards of each school ensured that such was so, we will be able to see its reality in the succeeding section. However we still need to muse at the fact that what gave rise to in these institutions. Some would dismiss the claim of a religious utopia based on the fact that any school would be equipped in the same manner if the percentages were as in private schools. Some may dismiss the claim that the present reality is but a forced one and has happened because of weakness in numbers of the strength of protestant Christian students. Yet what is established cannot be denied and what has evolved has

⁸⁶ We will need to critically look back at whether, while the English and the subsequent generations were able to deal with acceptance, the modern schools to whichever branch they might belong has been able to fulfill its part.

surpassed what newer schools attempt to establish with their multi cultural approach.

And when did this all come into being? It is probably one of the most difficult queries that need to be answered. One may even specify that such being the attitude of tolerance projected by the private schools that a religious utopia would have been present from the outset of school beginning. However for the keener student of a religious utopia in the schools they would possibly trace same to the beginning of these schools; where the British sought qualities in prospective students which were not on the lines of religiosity⁸⁷. For an example the Kandyan private schools have in their records of history that the students drawn for their schools were either the local elite or the affluent of the day and age. And most primarily the initial attendees would have been non Christians and maybe even non Ceylonese. One fact that we had not discussed upto this point is the proselytization process that these schools invariably carried out. Even though the finger was rigidly pointed out at the Roman Catholic schools for their education which was seeped in the agenda of evangelization the protestant schools did also follow

⁸⁷ But on the lines of adaptability which they found to be more religion based but in reality culture preceded the faith.

suit⁸⁸. And there are always accusations that conversion was necessary for higher postings or promotions. The school network itself would have been influential in this process. It was a common feature of routines in schools that all students had to attend Christian devotions and this might have been seen with modern lenses as a forceful act in creating would-be followers of the rulers even in religion and not only in culture. While this would have been forceful pre independence time it wavered and became more of a culture under attack during the post independence period. Are we then to take into consideration another aspect of the religious utopia namely that it is a failed experiment of the foreign rulers which was to succeed in total proselytization⁸⁹ but as the winds changed they had to settle on a peculiar looking ordeal that make insists on equality of religions and freedom of expression. If we were to graph the lines of foreign insistence on religion, evangelization and conversion and the same counterparts of the local

⁸⁸ The same process was found even in State oriented occupations for which much accusation is still directed by non Christians but was in general an automatic strategy that was needed to strengthen their work base.

⁸⁹ In some regards the failure of colonization does lead to the failure of its industries as well from their side. However their initiative for this innovation from the side of the progressive countrymen/women was indeed a success.

leadership in these schools the graphs would look totally apart. The first of the reason for this will be that the clout in earlier times was with the foreigners and much of what they desired became reality as they themselves were in charge of administrative matters. The local leadership had more of a survival battle with their already lost dominance and with only a rich heritage to support them. The second aspect was also a sudden realization of their own culture and maybe what the British accomplished for their own end was in fact a situation which was manipulated and slowly the richness of an Asian culture was to be adored. And a third point will actually be the coming together of cultures which made it possible for a deadlock to be implanted in schools and prevented from a rightist proselytization. Still we have not answered our initial query and this may remain as one for future historians and school educationists and it may profit us more for the discussion of the present and the future of private schools rather than dwelling upon a mystery with several historical variants.

In Practice

Our discussion for this purpose will revolve strictly around our selected sphere of schools namely Ladies,

Bishop's, Trinity, Carey, Wesley, the four St. Thomas schools, Chundikuli, St John's, Methodist, Mowbray, Hillwood, Jaffna and Uduvil Colleges. And we are limiting not to discuss the salient point of any particular school with regard to history or modernity but rather the initially carved out concept of a religious utopia. The composition in schools is worthwhile mentioning and will eventually assist us in forming the concept of religions co existing. While a few schools may boast a Christian majority the other schools could either be in moderate terms in number and in most the founding faith population is a minority. This may also be so because of each geographical area as well as the potentiality of the payment capacity of the Christian population⁹⁰. In almost all schools the other faiths of Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam exists however it may not be the case once again in geographical terms where for an example, Buddhist faith adherents may not be present towards schools in the northern part of the island. In composition thus stands the situation and it is reinforced by the fact that

⁹⁰ Countless times this issue has cropped up at Church gatherings and is indeed a problem past, present and future. The inability of the Church to provide schooling for all Christian students even those without payment capacities is primarily because the schools and hence the Church always finds their potentiality for this in the tension between two worlds; the missionary and the establishment.

enrolments are done in an inclusive manner as well. While all these schools may have a preferential order of admitting students there is no hindrance at least in theory which discriminates against the enrollment of the 'other'. This is once again a safeguard that these schools may have with thanks to the theological view point they nurture. While the admission procedure for students remain at this inclusive level it is also the case for staff at other levels⁹¹. The admission of staff from different religious backgrounds or rather the inability to do so may lead onto a serious human rights infringement but it must be realized that in this country if there is no population to be catered to by a certain religious group the admission of any other personnel has been restricted in schools as well as in any other forms of service. This was characterized by the proportional entry of ethnicities and religiosities into governmental services which is still the norm and the percentages may change based on the geography alone. While this convenience has been promoted on varied streams the private school tradition at least has been able to withstand this temptation and work at a more open minded recruitment criteria. For this same reason the private school staff is also very much diversified and for that matter just as the students

⁹¹ The State schools follow a very strict adherence to this founded on the principle that the prevailing culture dictates recruitment

may find themselves at a minority and the staff for an example the teachers may also find themselves at a minority and this is not so only in a few exceptional cases⁹². We have of course to deal with the fact that Christianity is a minority religion in the land and any selection of students or staff can be of the same effect. Yet the specialty of these schools will remain that it has not been swept with having safeguards of staff recruitment neither have they put into practice a discrimination rule on same. In practice the diversity environment made possible by the staff or teachers make it even more possible for a student diversity to take place and this is what succeeds for the international schools at present and which hinders same for governmental schools in history.

Now we need to analyze the internal culture of a private school having a brief view of the admission and recruitment patterns present. The education of ethnicities, religions and cultures have been mostly absent in school curriculums. The first signs of inculcation of these factors were seen present in Civic

⁹² In Pakistan for an example this same dilemma is experienced by the Church who run schools with upto 90% other religious in staff as well as students but with key administration posts given to the Christians which in turn makes taxing on both groups at the same time

education syllabus revisions mainly after the end of the armed conflict just a few years ago. And school going students who have studied any such subject previously would not have studied in depth the diversity of Sri Lanka leave alone maybe in the most primary years. Yet the systematic study of the abovementioned factors became a reality only after the realization that conflict and the one we had in our country was a direct result of the non compliance in diversity education⁹³. And such has been enumerated most vividly from grade six onwards which allows students especially from homogenous backgrounds to learn about the ‘other’. Now did the private school tradition allow for any such consideration? In terms of theoretical education it must be said that it was not realized. But in terms of practical education of cultures in action, festivals, remembrances instituted in schools this education was imparted. It is no secret that Christian students are opportune to witness Pirith chanting, Sarasvathi pooja and Eid al –Fitr observances within their setting. And all these students who belong to different faith adherences have the chance of going through a Christian service. When we think of term beginning and end services, valedictory services,

⁹³ The factors of armament should not be the task of this reflection but to specify that the acceptance of the ‘other’ inevitably solves half the conflict.

college day services etc all take the form of Christian perspectives the education it gives to others as witness is note worthy. When we talk of internal culture it also embodies the relationship a school may have within the vicinity of religious culture in their own geographical area. For an example if a school promotes a multi religious atmosphere it must also be recognized either positively or negatively by the local religious places which will eventually mean that the College harnesses a healthy relationship with them⁹⁴.

Another aspect worth mentioning will be leadership within a school and how well a religious utopia allows for same. When we look at homogenous ventures the leadership offered to a different faith adherent may be even looked upon as a frightening thought. The leadership within students in private schools for an example the head boy or girl being offered to a non Christian is always heard of and while other religious may conclude the matter at basing awards on achievements the ultimate victory of the private schools tradition is that it does not hinder the path of

⁹⁴ Largely to mind any such occurrence of a disturbance by local religious groups with private schools, is absent at least in recent years and at least are not publicly condemned. However this could be also for other schools as well.

achievement. And subsequently in the history of these schools the achievement lists spell out a remarkable diversity.

We will deal with the negative aspects of the present system in the challenges which will be discussed with regard to the religious concept in these schools next. But we need here to discuss the reception of this evolved situation in the eyes of firstly the Church and secondly the society at large⁹⁵. This is due since we are to encounter a certain tension within the schools that will eventually threaten the being of these schools. Such tension cannot be described as a direct response to the religious utopia but it can be a most crucial factor within the problem at hand.

The Church was a partner in the genesis of these schools and the Church continues to be a foremost player in the future of these schools. From the olden times the Church and the State itself were inseparable more or less like in medieval Europe there was a time in Sri Lankan history where the Church was in fact almost as powerful as any

⁹⁵ Hence we approach the two worlds missionary and establishment in their realistic State. It may be inappropriate to assign the leadership in a school as a third party and so we align same with the Church.

institution within the nation and it was the time where the foreign rulers engaged in their domination in local matters. How different a Board meeting would have been during those times with much a different agenda on the table! The allowing of the religious utopia in social terms would have been more of a loss to the Church hold and this is signified with compromising the Church would have had to do in terms of private schools⁹⁶. While at the same times the theological stand point of the protestant Church revolved on collaboration the administrative stand point had to be liberated and here we dawn upon a key concept of the religious utopia in discussion. Utopias are always governed⁹⁷ a pluralistic utopia is also always governed and here the most moderate view point of the Church has transformed into a leadership role thereby the Boards of these schools always represent the concerns of the Church through a majority of Church appointments and a say in admissions.

⁹⁶ Thus we are also called to see the opposite of the story as well; the non local leadership in administrative power who at that time was full with the evangelical spirit for most of the times had a fine balancing act as well with the rise of local agitation against the 'Christianly' run school environment.

⁹⁷ We would have failed by keeping this matter to the end; the governing of any utopia is vital. It is very hard to imagine the multi religious utopia governance. It either could be perfect absolute democracy or the 'democracy minded' governance with more or less bias which will be confronted anyway

The society's point can be an exact opposite of the above. Institutions of prestige as it were a century back and out of the control of the society either with regard to participation or administration; this control was achieved through the mechanisms we discussed above. Firstly the admission based on social status at the outset secondly the majoritarian effect which made it possible for a random sample to be biased to some religions and thirdly it is possible that all religious have accepted the inclusive approach of the private schools and upto a high degree they believed in its cause. We find in many cases of the neo conversions of non Christians taking place where they don't actually turn from their original religion but they become transformed into understanding the values of other religions. In stark contrast we encounter Baptisms made to 'enroll' Christianly and finally the student at the tension between nature and nurture! In Sri Lankan school history this single honour of being able to mould students in a multi religious setting must go to the private schools in the first instance before international schools and school curriculums were developed. In fact we could even say that those who received a pluralistic education in the foreign and the post foreign phases were highly favoured in terms of their openness and were elevated to higher positions and this same cream was instrumental in bringing the force necessary in the time

of the school takeover because of the certain clout they had . The tension between the interest of the Church and the society has become quite visible in modern times. The Church may look at their schools with a perspective which could be different to that of the society and may require the private schools to adhere to its more mission oriented goals. The society who also include Christians⁹⁸ may also have diverse interests and they seek a more realistic approach with achievements and success embedded. However this maybe the topic of another reflection.

Challenges

In the first chapter attention was cast on the aspect of intra faith conflict and we are going to analyze this concept as a great barrier towards the private school utopia, first. Private schools have many interest groups. We may even say that private schools have more interest groups than any other type of school. Most times the managements of these schools find themselves trapped with the burden of too many requirements put forth

⁹⁸ We also need to take into fact the Christians whose interests have not been invested in these schools for some reasons and for a tiny faction of Christians who may have vowed to keep away from either vesting interest through admission, governance etc or voicing upto concerns.

towards them and in the religious sphere this is the case also.

The moderate Christian population in schools have been able to accommodate this religious utopia as it is probably the most acceptable line of theological thinking within the main line Churches in Sri Lanka. However this finely stretched cord can have stress impacts from either side of the religions, Christians as well as the other. The more progressive of the Christian wing of faith adherence will probably dismiss the claim of a religious utopia as a mere abomination. While the next most progressive wing may understand it as an assault on their purist faith⁹⁹. These agitations may surface in a hundred ways, on the one hand these groups may resolve to verbal antagonization which may result in the gathering of more like minded people to detest the current activities of the school. They may be pained to understand that whatever small grasp the Christian population have had, is been deteriorated by the positive relationships had by the management of these schools with the non Christians. There probably would have been

⁹⁹ And the next most will infuse the subject of fear, condemnation and betrayal into inter religious relations. It has to be understood and differentiation done on the level of each faith adherent's comprehension of the faith vs liberation ethic

a time where what the Church performed through these schools was highly appreciated by the Christian community. And this is said on the time basis going back to the early part of the last century where “Christianity” was a force not on survival lines but vibrant and each denomination had its own hold. In the modern times the ecumenism itself finds expression in a very sparse manner. In fact ecumenism within the Church has become a near impossible matter with Churches becoming more independent and theologically specific.¹⁰⁰

Anyway the crux of the matter leads us to understand the agitations of Christians to get involved in cultural symbolism or in other religious accompaniment as in either two ways. Firstly as deterrent of the hold a Christian school should have and secondly a die hard notion springing from the persecution mentalities of the New Testament books which may call for a standing up for what is ‘just and true’. We do not have a final say on these matters except that this is a real situation that come up in the life of private schools.

¹⁰⁰ Such mention was done in an earlier paragraph as well. It may well be the topic of another research to understand how denominations understand their schools as well as their counterparts. And whether there is a certain flood gate that is being piled upon by a specific theological community.

The second challenge for a religious utopia comes from the other religious, sometimes the most majoritarian of the groups who may look at these schools as remnants of foreign power and which must be brought under local governance. It is no wonder that the Government schools in this country boasts of the most qualified and trained of the teachers. But we miss the point that there were times in which being a private school teacher was looked up into as a higher status. The current drama of the governmental ordering of private schools is but one strain of what is discussed above.¹⁰¹ And the same came to be experienced in the sphere of religious affirmation. It is most unfortunate that sometimes the majority is always accused of trying to gobble the lesser parties. However when it comes to the debacle of the private schools we can safely relieve this idea by assigning that might was in fact right as we found out when the foreign rulers were in power eventhough they were a minority they wielded more power. And it is possibly the case in Sri Lanka now as students, teachers and staff of the majority find themselves being the actual majority and to

¹⁰¹ The strength a school display will inevitably be the determination point of whether the government is looked as some force to lean upon. It must a comprehensive push on part of the private schools to remain in a 'position of power' as to mitigate even forces within the schools who jeopardize existence.

be safely said who encompass the more talent, goodwill, finance, results etc are called to look upon the tiny administrations as ones that should change. There of course maybe elements that are similar to that of the Christians which are more bent on towards a fundamental stand point who may actually put into discriminatory practice the prejudice they may harness.

However this majoritarian effect of intimidation is one which may not be solely assigned to each party but the minorities may feel the effect upto a greater degree. And in subsequent years there has been a talk of rufflings within the private school tradition on matters such as admissions, special treatments, administrative vacancies, order of schools maneuvering¹⁰² etc in favour of Christians and Christian philosophy. One aspect that we have been silent on and for good reason is also that different faiths may also have within their spectrum a path that need to be trod in education and objectives to be achieved. This is probably the most conflict oriented zone in private schools when talking of the tensions between religious traditions. The underlying cause for this will be on how each religion terms their existence,

¹⁰² Being said of the philosophies adopted with regard to education and standards as well as emphasizing on more external matters

wellbeing, goals and motives for life upon the earth¹⁰³. And how do religions view religious living and coexistence as part of their being? This is the most interesting question to be answered as this leads to how a philosophy of life and education is to be imparted or practiced. And inevitably each religion may answer that question based on different guidelines and hence what comes out in practice can be different. We need to leave this debate at least here for the moment and turn our attention to another challenge schools face with regard to a religious utopia but this may in the minds of many be the ultimate destructive force with regard to the concept under discussion.

Something needs to be said of our culprit as found in the first paragraphs of this book. The secularization of the world was found to be responsible for both intra faith and inter faith harmony. And this same phenomenon is experienced in a totally different context which is the private school tradition in Sri Lanka but with the same players. How can a bystander expect to see the harmony of a school built on religious collaboration in the wake of

¹⁰³ This question becomes arguably the best reason for the breaking of a religious utopia as we deal here with several philosophies and if these can be contradictory will others be silent when one may lead emphasizing that all voices are actually heard?

a world becoming more secular? The answer to this question lies not on what happens but to whom it happens to. In simple a religious utopia to be exactly what it claims to be needs to be understood and adapted by people who are like minded.

When in the olden days a private school sought a leader it was inevitable that a non religious or an atheist may not be selected simply because there was a conflict of interest¹⁰⁴. A most famous story yet not proven fully comes from a private school in which an old boy who was probably in the top brass, who became the deputy of the school and was in no doubt the one to succeed the reins of leadership. However as the story goes forth this individual was a non religious person who was a Christian by birth and who had already become disinterested in the religious world. And this in turn made him forgo or rather leave the olive branch that would have been his most rightfully. This incident gives us the past but it does not present the future very clearly. The world looks to be in turmoil when dealing with secularization. It has presented a non escapable

¹⁰⁴ There are several instances disregarding this fact as well. As there have been the tendency of schools to produce non Christians into leadership in these schools based primarily that they have made the transformation necessary to uphold the virtues and values that make the school.

temptation in which everything is gobbled up. It does not leave room even for the one who deliberates! We see this phenomenon taking its course in all the other streams of schools we have been referring to¹⁰⁵.

The governmental schools may have been the easiest of the group of schools that were tentacled by the secularization process since it provided a more suitable atmosphere and the mono religious aura of these schools believed in their religious philosophy that it was right. The international schools have become what we would probably call the final end game in this process. They are able to join the secularization process as overcoming shortcomings of stress on hard religious upbringing. And most schools adopt a near western approach to education where secular forces regulate religion. The semi governmental schools being a mixture of all the aspects of the abovementioned will also face this problem however the management and the governance maybe experiencing a similar dilemma the private schools face.

¹⁰⁵ The terms of secular would mean apart from religious but the secularization process is one that makes this leap from one end to the other. Most times secular is used to denote a fairness to all since it is not dominated by a religious philosophy and this distinction should be maintained

The Future

What holds in the future for the religious utopia in these schools? There is much to speculate and much to reflect upon but ultimately it will be the commitment of the people who will be in charge of making decisions and who will manage these schools to be true. First and foremost the traditions within the school which enabled such a utopia to come into place must be held for posterity¹⁰⁶. No whims and fancies of people in charge should pervade these matters. It is imperative that what has gone before and what was held to be good and unique need to be kept intact. These maybe called traditions in the private schools and traditions make these schools stand unique amongst many others. Time can have quite an adverse effect when it does come to ‘keeping things as in the olden days’ as for an instance a secularization within the school society can bring arguments that traditions can be deemed obsolete. And not only in a religious utopia as in other matters

¹⁰⁶ Although not necessarily the place and time to mention the inability of Private schools if at all present, to produce men and women hemmed in the culture of plurality or the selection of such from a potential pool will inevitably lead to a crisis point in the maintaining of such presence. In brief multiculturalism should not be on the list of items that can be called a variable vulnerable for change based on schools needs.

traditions should be upheld and the ever continuing school communities should be trained to make sure that they feel it is their responsibility to do so.

The second most important aspect in preservation will of course have to be the training of the first line of servicemen/women who interact with the students as well as with the society. For this category we need to include the teaching staff and most importantly the top management. Even in modern times we see instances where the past students express displeasure at the tutorial staffs for their inability to conserve the values the schools had nurtured and amongst these values even if not expressed in the present remain the values of religious co existence¹⁰⁷. Therefore the respective Boards who themselves are to be in check with the value of religious coexistence should be extremely mindful in the decision making role they play in appointing and managing leaders. It is also imperative that individuals learned in this form of utopian living are encouraged,

¹⁰⁷ We need to face the dark truth, which the Christian teachers conference who gathered sixty years ago faced with regard to Christian teachers, the dearth of same is a spiritual problem and it has got more chronic by the time period and we need to run the race with those who are flung into the school system not in the same customized manner in which the perfect teachers ought to be formed.

empowered and enabled to take up post within these schools. The great tradition of past students themselves becoming staff and thereupon leaders were in fact very much present and it continues to be so at a diminished level with the secularizing world to be blamed.

Thirdly it is important that this phenomenon is recognized by the wider society. And in this case the wider society could either mean those away geographically or those who are away demographically. What is meant by the geographically distant crowd are those interest groups who can be called to mention the goodwill of the schools based on their multi religiosity and with whom effective relationships have been had regularly. The demographic audience is none other than the parents who invest in the school¹⁰⁸. In this case the school needs to practice its greatest caution with regard to the crux of this reflection as these specific stake holders are going to be equipped with the opportunities of breaking or making the pluralistic dream. This may

¹⁰⁸ The parents who learn from children maybe a handful but it is undoubted that while this generation who are slowly becoming open minded can in turn influence them that wield power in the world now. What greater celebration of Jesus' example of saying that 'you become like this child in your midst' so that you may learn about the Kingdom of God!

appear true sadly to the Christian as well as the non Christian seeker. The followers of Jesus should be reconcilers and peace makers as was the task he performed in his earthy life¹⁰⁹. If there are to be followers who may disrupt this peace in the Christian sense then it maybe a more negative picture that we as a community reflect upon the outside world. However this is to be said of the counterparts most who may have been past students at these schools themselves. The debacle of whether past students confuse a religious utopian upbringing will be in the view of this essay humbled to accept that cases do differ. And for most parts the dissensions are in the minds and in the speeches but rarely in action. With this lowly accommodation it may be appropriate to wind up this section and possibly bring to a summary the salient points in the discussion.

Social institutions contribute to life. It is by which the society at large realizes that they are monuments that bring forth the set values in life. Schools are not exempt from this challenge in anyway. Schools as institutions contributing to life have withstood the changing scenes

¹⁰⁹ There has been several practical observations in modern faith adherence with 'full of faith' spirituality as against 'faithful' spirituality. The first has been seen as the limitation of oneself to be led or to learn more from the Spirit and the second implies a more committed attempt to walk with the Lord even in suffering.

of life, culture and country for centuries and they bring within the schools not only educational institutes propound for them in terms of syllabus, teaching and management methods but rather a distinct presence with which each student who passes by for so many years gets nourished with. If in Sri Lanka, we were to assume that only some schools possess within them a unique presence in which to enrich students the premise itself is faulty beyond logic. Yet if we are to argue that the private school tradition has become and has sought to deliver on a most unique aspect then we must be permitted to make our case. And if that case also goes beyond the periphery of being 'good' but proposes a higher moral ground on which higher ethics have been developed that must be developed and that needs to be cherished and analyzed with intent. The religiousness in students in Sri Lanka is without doubt, since our affiliations with religiosity are been proven again and again¹¹⁰, Sometimes even if with support or with opposition to a book such as this, this sense of affiliation becomes more and more crystal. The most beautiful part of this most 'beautiful phenomena' is

¹¹⁰ Are we able to harness this in a manner worthy of a civilized generation or are we to use it to see the destructive scenes seeing throughout history? While this simple selection still may allude many right winged citizens we remain in hope that God, Father Son and Holy Spirit who has revealed in history will lead the hearts and minds of any and many into the paradise of God' kingdom.

that it does not become any one's monopoly. It needs to be a team effort and it needs to be attempted with the same effort by all groups within it. And so we sometimes meet non Christians who may be more adept to understand the length and breadth of this phenomena more than Christians who have been unable to be pray as Jabez to 'widen our horizons'.. Whilst more words do only so much good this reflection needs to come to an end. It is hoped that the many communities who follow and the many who are called to carry forward the torch will assess and propose the limitations and the shortcomings of this work. And hence the religious utopia will proceed to evolve and play a meaningful part in the lives of those who are nurtured by it.

Appendix 1

Select Biblical and Historical Utopias

B1) The Garden of Eden – (Gen 1-3) – The epic setting of the fall in Christian faith depicting a resourceful abundance

B2) Noah's Ark – (Gen 6.9-22) – Attempt of modern survival, eugenics and diversity depicting a protective atmosphere

B3) The Tower of Babel – (Gen 11)- The drama of intellectualism over the sacred depicting a knowledge utopia

B4) The Sabbatical Year and the Year of the Jubilee – (Lev 25) – The extraordinary call to remember the existential nature of humanity with ground breaking compromises depicting the utopia of freedom

B5) The promised land – (Num 24) – A boundaried and resourceful place depicting God's favour

B6) The Law-bound community – (Ezra) – The existence of the Law re emerging as the sole constitution on which legislation is attempted, very much the same traces found in Christian societies formed in monasticism, medieval kingdoms and as special mention John Calvin's Geneva.

B7) The Peaceful kingdom – (Isaiah 11) – The dialectical account of the overturning of the ‘new world order’

B8) Religious Kingdom – (Micah 4) – The nearest Old Testamental account of varied religious joined in worship

B9) The Kingdom of God – (Gospels) – Many perspectives exist but generally where God is ruler and the presence of freedom from any bondage

B10) St Paul in Athens- (Acts 17) – An inclusivist approach to a multi cultural setting

B11) Gifts and the one Body – (1 Cor 12,13,14) – A humanistic approach to Utopia with the presence of inequality

B12) The new heaven and new earth – (Revelation 21) – The regeneration and the reformation of the chaotic order into strains of God’s kingdom

H1) Aristophanes, The Women’s Republic (392BC)

H2) Plato, The Republic (372BC)

H3) Iambulus, Islands of the Sun (165)

H4) St Augustine, City of God (410)

H5) Tao Yuanming, The Peach Blossom Spring (421)

H6) Al-Farabi, The Virtuous City (874)

H7) Thomas More, Utopia (1516)

H8) Johann Valentin Andreae, Christianopolis (1619)

- H9) Tommaso Campanella, *The City of the Sun* (1623)
- H10) Francis Bacon, *New Atlantis* (1627)
- H11) François Rabelais, *Gargantua and Pantagruel* (1653)
- H12) James Harrington, *The Commonwealth of Oceana* (1656)
- H13) François Fenelon *The Adventures of Telemachus* (1699)
- H14) Louis-Sébastien Mercier, *Memoirs of the Year Two Thousand Five Hundred* (1771)
- H15) Samuel Butler, *Erewhon* (1872)
- H16) Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward* (1888)
- H17) Theodor Hertzka, *Freeland* (1890)
- H18) William Morris, *News from Nowhere* (1892)
- H19) H. G. Wells, *A Modern Utopia* (1905)
- H20) Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Herland* (1915)
- H21) B. F. Skinner, *Walden Two* (1948)
- H22) Aldous Huxley, *Island* (1962)
- H23) Poul Anderson, *Eutopia* (1967)
- H24) Lin Yutang *Looking Beyond* (1980)
- For a complete list and descriptions of same please refer (<http://www.utopianfiction.com/late20th.html>)

Appendix 2

Listed below are the sixteen schools mentioned for the reflection in the book with very brief institutional information

1. Bishop's College Colombo

After an initial attempt by the then Bishop of Colombo the Rt Rev James Chapman and his wife Frances in 1857 the College dates its second phase to 1875 under the name Bishopsgate school.

2. Carey College Colombo

The school was founded in 1914 by the Baptist Missionary Society of England as part of celebrations of a centenary of missionary work in Ceylon. In 1925 it was renamed Carey Baptist College in honour of the English educator and missionary William Carey.

3. Chundikuli Girl's High School Jaffna

Founded in 1896 by Mary Carter of the Church Missionary Society the school became a grant-in-aid school in 1900 but remains as part of the Church Missionary Society Board.

4. Hillood College Kandy

When a ship that set off from London on 17th October, 1888, sailed to Colombo harbour in January, 1889, it brought to our country two young ladies, Miss Elizabeth Bellerby and Miss Ethel Jones who responded to an appeal made to the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society (CEZMS) to send two missionaries to open a school for Kandyan girls.

5. Jaffna College and Uduvil Girl's College Jaffna

In 1823 the Batticaloa Seminary was established in Vaddukoddai whose alumni and other local Christians led a campaign to re-open the seminary and in 1871 Jaffna College was opened on the former seminary site.

Harriet Winslow (1796–1823), a missionary, turned the Uduvil Seminary into an all-girls Boarding school in 1824. Both these schools are run by the American Ceylon Mission.

6. Ladies' College Colombo

The School was founded by Lilian Nixon in 1900 who had a great belief in the importance of education for women and became a grant in aid school in 1914 but was later transformed into a private school.

7. Methodist College Colombo

Miss Catherine Scott started the ‘Kollupitiya Girl’s English School’ in 1866 and in 1883 was registered as a grant in aid English school and its name was changed to Methodist College in 1915.

8. Mowbray College Kandy

The founding of Mowbray College is attributed to Miss. Earp and Miss. Denyer, two ladies from the Church Missionary Society in South Africa and was founded on the 17th of May 1922.

9. St John’s College Jaffna

A clergyman Joseph Night initiated the process for the school in 1823 which was renamed on 1891 as St John’s College and in 1951 the school joined the free education system but chose to remain as a private and non-fee levying school.

10. St Thomas College Bandarawela

Due to the war (WWII) in the South and East the Navy occupied the St. Thomas’ Preparatory School Kollupitiya and this paved way for this school to be moved to Bandarawela in 1942 and was inaugurated initially as St. Thomas’ Preparatory School, Bandarawela.

11. St Thomas College Guruthalawa

St. Thomas' College at Guruthalawa was started by Dr. R.L. Hayman as a branch of the S. Thomas' College, Mount Lavinia in 1942

12. St Thomas Preparatory School

The school was founded in 1938 by William Thomas Keble. The school was the first preparatory school to be established in Sri Lanka based on the English primary School model.

13. St Thomas College Mount Lavinia

First begun as the College of St .Thomas the Apostle in 1851 in Mutwal was moved later to Mount Lavinia in 1918.

14. Trinity College Kandy

Owing to a request from the local Anglican community the Kandy Collegiate School was started in 1857 by Rev Ireland Jones and was re opened as Trinity College in 1872.

15. Wesley College Colombo

Rev Joseph Rippon in 1874 with the intention of establishing a unique educational institution for the Wesleyan Methodist Mission founded this school.

Appendix 3

Quotable Quotes from the Christian Teachers Conference in 1955, its editor Rev Basil Jackson, the page numbers appear in brackets (Ecumenical Centre for Study and Dialogue, Colombo 05).

a) What is a Christian School?

“Two conditions are necessary for a school to be regarded as an effective agency of the Church’s life. It must be under Christian direction: that is to say those responsible for its policy, admissions and staffing must have a clear and definable aim of using the school for the extension of the Kingdom of God in that area. Without that direction from above the school cannot fulfill any distinctively Christian role. In the second place the staff must be in sympathy with that purpose and prepared to be used for its furtherance.” (6)

b) The School’s Pastoral responsibility for its Christian scholars

“(b) The appointment of resident chaplains or others with special qualifications for pastoral work (men or women as the case may be) is greatly to be desired. Such persons would not take upon themselves the full responsibility of the hostel, which would be too big a

task in a large school, but would be in a position to help others in their pastoral responsibility.

(c) Opportunities for training Hostel Masters and Mistresses in pastoral care should be provided.” (11)

c) School and Church

“The need for the closest cooperation between the life of the school and the life of the congregation to which it is attached is widely recognized, but such cooperation has its dangers. For the pupil there is always the danger of associating Church attendance with school life, to be discarded in the holidays, and after leaving school. For the local Church there is, on the other hand, the danger of becoming dependent upon the personnel of the school for the maintenance of its Sunday school, youth work and lay leadership.” (14)

d) Religious activities in school

“The ordinance makes it impossible to have the whole school assembled at the beginning of the day for an act of worship. The Christian school must not, however, deprive its Christian children of this privilege, even though it involves dividing the school into religious groups at the beginning of the day. Great care should be exercised in the conduct of this worship and the associations which gather round it in the child’s mind. It

is the one permanent, repeated, corporate of school life and as such will remain as a dominant memory and influence in the lives of those who share in it.” (16)

e) Responsibility for the welfare of Christian children

“It is not only in admission but also in assisting them when leaving that the Christian school must look to the welfare of its Christian children, though in this matter the assistance it is able to render will be available to its Christian and non – Christian children alike. Assisting its leaving pupils to find employment cannot perhaps be undertaken on any large scale, but the matter of vocational guidance is one of great importance, and merits much more serious attention than it has received. A careers master or mistress, with adequate qualifications in psychology as well as a sufficient knowledge of the local conditions of employment could render valuable service to leaving pupils and their parents.”(21)

f) The dilemma of the Christian school

“We are required to render to caesar the obedience which caesar legitimately demands from us; we have also a responsibility to render to God a higher obedience. We are called to bear witness in word as well as in deed, and our obedience to God therefore requires us to engage in

every form of indirect evangelism which the letter of the law permits. The Christian is never absolved from seeking ways to commend his/her saviour to others, and no human law can release him/her from that perpetual obligation.” (23)

g) Character training without religion

“Apart from the religious issue altogether, the necessity for any school to include moral instruction – in whatever form- is fundamental, and the Church should, in the name of sound education, resist most strenuously every attempt by the Government to exclude this subject from the time table.” (27)

h) The religion of the non Christian scholar

“When we come to the question of the religious life and the training of the non-Christian scholar in the Christian school, we reach the very crux of the dilemma, and the point at which the deepest feeling is aroused. It is agreed that it is a bad thing for a child to grow up without religious training, and such a child is ill equipped to meet the pagan secularism which is so dominant in the modern intellectual world. On the other hand the Church cannot teach that which it does not believe to be true, nor can it permit teaching in its school which would suggest by

implication that other religions are of equal validity with its own faith.” (28)

i) The witness of the Christian love

“The Christian life is marked by love, as described by Paul in the thirteenth chapter of first Corinthians, or as we see it in Him who came and lived among us as a servant. It is achieved through the miracle of the Grace of God slowly transforming and re creating the spirit which finds its nurture in constantly waiting upon Him. Of the value of that kind of witness there never can be any doubt.” (32)

j) The Church’s responsibility

“The faithful witness of the Christian teacher in the non Christian school is the Church’s most valuable asset in the context of Ceylon today. The shortage of Christian teachers in his/her own schools must not be used as an occasion for discouraging men and women from service in this pioneer missionary work which is of the essence of the Church’s evangelistic outreach. That there is a grave shortage of Christian teachers is well known, and is a hindrance to the work of Christian schools.” (35)

Rasika Abeysinghe's book 'Ecclesiastes, Ecclesia and Existentialism: Some Permutations on the Essence of Being' was shortlisted for the Frank Collins award in Theological Research. This book combines the fusion between Religiosity, wellbeing and the concept of a 'Religious Utopia' applied to a special stream of school education present elsewhere but also with a rich heritage, and presence in Sri Lanka. You are invited to journey through religion, education and what both of these mean in the life of the private school's tradition in Sri Lanka. The book as much as possible aims to present as many dimensions of the intention as possible and invites the reader also to be a collaborator in the process of reflection. The title has been fitly adapted to resonate with a popular sporting phrase among the schools mentioned but even more to signify the concept of a team, that is bound by a special link and which faces similar oppositions on the field as they engage in moving forward day after day towards the goal line. Uniqueness of this team lies not only in what they 'are', but as it rightly should be with, what they 'do'. We wish our readership a challenging but nevertheless a pleasant journey!

