

ECCLESIASTES, ECCLESIA AND EXISTENTIALISM

SOME EXPERIENTIAL PERMUTATIONS
ON THE ESSENCE OF BEING

RASIKA ABEYSINGHE

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DEDICATION

To the life and ministry of countless number of past congregations and ministers who made the 'Being' of St Mark's Church, Katukelle possible

CONTENTS

Foreword

Preface

1. Introduction -A Methodology 1

2. Chasing after Wind 12

3. You are Petros and on this Petra I will build 34

4. Existence precedes Essence 58

5. Conclusion 80

6. Educational Considerations - Case Studies 1 & 2 87

7. Ethical Considerations - Case Studies 3 & 4 114

8. Theological Considerations - Case Studies 5 & 6 138

9. Missiological Considerations - Case Studies 7 & 8 163

10. Historical Considerations - Case Studies 9 & 10 189

11. Biblical Considerations - Case Studies 11 & 12 225

Appendix 249

Afterword 251

Bibliography 267

FOREWORD

Life is lived between ‘being’ and ‘becoming’.

In between humans ask - What? Why? How?

What is the meaning of life? Why is there suffering? Why does one flourish and not the other? What is the very point of existence? How can I be...? On the other hand, humans simply have to face life, reality and find daily bread.

In the present book Fr. Rasika Abeysinghe has engaged in a philosophical-theological reflection utilizing three major sources in dialectical interaction – Ecclesiastes, Ecclesia, Existentialism. Here the wisdom of the Judaeo-Christian scriptures, the Christian community or the body of Christ, and contemporary philosophy are synchronically dramatized.

Later in the work Fr. Abeysinghe’s analysis of several ‘considerations’ which involve Paulo Frère, Mohandas Gandhi, Buddhism, Lynn De Silva, Church History & Mission and Biblical Hermeneutics is a courageous point of praxical departure for the thesis, in which the author invites the reader to face life in reality and the reality of life.

In our modern-capitalist 21st century with human flourishing on the one hand and enormous human suffering on the other Fr.

Abeyasinghe invites us to take a pause - *a Sabbath moment* - and to reflect and then move on in life.

Let's join the wise person, the church person and the philosopher in our common sojourn between '*being and becoming*'.

Rev. Dr. Jerome Sahabandhu

Advent , 2015

PREFACE

The Ecclesiastes writer after a hard day at the office is firm on that ‘The sayings of the wise are like goads, and like nails firmly fixed are the collected sayings that are given by one shepherd. Of anything beyond these my child, beware. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh.’ (12.11,12)

The Church Father Saint Irenaeus, the Bishop of Lyon expressed that ‘God’s glory is the living man’ and the one that, that does not flow with the river but the one who embodies the passion to swim upstream (and that also in a seemingly unpredictable world intentionally made to question reality of ‘swimming’!) this, must not only be the means but also the end. The ‘alleged’ Existentialist Albert Camus in his narrative the *Plague* introduces a priest Paneloux who exclaims at the sight of death ‘ No, we should go forward, groping our way through the darkness, stumbling perhaps at whiles, and try to do what good lay in our power.’

A good read must be a grill of juicy mysteries, passionate tell tales, scintillating drama overdone with senseless exaggeration which usually keeps the reader glued on as she or he finds it more and more difficult to take one’s eyes off the unfolding panorama of an outer worldly insistence on a this worldly topic! In that regard the following non – user friendly marathon of a

philosophical and archival fact sheet coated with extraordinary brilliances of logic would probably go down as a cyclist would put it, an ‘excruciating and tedious drag’! Yet it is with a sense of respect for the diehard natural phenomenon of ‘thinking the unthinkable’, to which the following pages may bear witness, with the most probable pre- reading conclusion already arrived at, that this may have only achieved at presenting a nightmare of possibilities which may spin dangerously out of control if much thought was on offer. Such is the crux of the matter at hand, Ontology by name and the never ending saga of ‘to write or not to write’ becomes itself a dilemma worth pondering upon. Yet here we regard the voice of the Ecclesiastes writer to the extent that we do not wish to weary the flesh of too much study about what we are unable to know, only to the extent which will suffice to reaffirm this notion! The Bishop of Lyons paints a more sturdy picture of the need to proceed as there is still much to be learned and the great writer, who made Descartes turn on his head through ‘I rebel therefore; I exist’ pushes us to do whatever we can to find meaning in existence. Here itself we buy into three very different approaches to ‘Being’ and this journey will hopefully do justice to a few more of such considerations.

Rasika Abeysinghe

Feast of St Mark, 2015

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The realization of a book in physical form as opposed to, in a network of ideas in the mind is no simple task and for this maiden work such has been felt in an over abundance. When this network of mind boggling ideas lay calmly as a set of neatly tied up papers it is to God the Wisdom, Love and Change that such accomplishment maybe attributed to in entirety. The completion of a work does not primarily depend on ability to press fast on a key board (but it does help up to a great deal!) but rather with quite a lot of the mindset that allows motivation to the whole exercise. And especially this project, has many who should be on the list who provided this essential factor and many who assisted with the physical outcome of the motivation. Therefore it is with deep sincerity I thank the following for their inspiration, guidance, patience and support.

To the late Rev Dr Jose Lana, for initiating the passion for philosophical research and his exceptional doctoral thesis on 'Humanistic Utopia and the Biblical Eschaton', which motivated same and for his exemplary attitude of passion towards questioning and study.

To the Rev Dr Jerome Sahadandu for his extreme confidence in capability sometime which may even surpass my own

estimation of it, and for his continuance guidance for yield in theological endeavours.

To all the faculty of the TCL for motivation and guidance and for always having trust in what can be achieved.

To my loving family and for all their support and assistance in the completion of this work.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION – A METHODOLOGY

One does indeed fear entering into a gloomy passage in the middle of the night with but only a light of some sort, aware that dangers and surprises alike may be in store and in particular of the former sort which makes one re- think of the intention of why one had to engage in such a task in the first place! Yet as the saying goes the journey is to be more cherished than the pot of gold (if at all to be discovered!) at the end of the journey. It is with such an attitude that this work is undertaken, laborious and uninteresting as it may sound for a first time hearer.

The basic philosophical question that has always been at the debating table is the question of existence. Traditionally this has been named in philosophical study as Ontology a branch under the major study area of Metaphysics which investigates into the nature of reality. In the same way in philosophical terms the way of knowing is called Epistemology. In more simple terms we always question as to who are we? Why are we here? What is our work? And how do we know any of the above? Over centuries of dwelling on these questions, have left us with volumes and libraries of literature, which most probably

are the least read among any type of academic area in the present times!

Yet we do philosophize without actually using the terms of the scholars and we do contend on theories and theoretical data quite unknowingly. It is most probable that this is so, as philosophy and its questions lie with the basic concept of thinking and it is one aspect we engage in on a daily basis. In such light, even though this study is immersed in technicality it is hoped to be practical and in line with our experiences each day.

However this study is not going to be a revisiting of any kind of already accumulated philosophical data and theories. Neither is it a handbook on practical use of theoretical data or a comparative work on the thinkers. This intention is to, in fact bring out into the light the general and specifics of three sources that present sturdy pictures of the same investigative topic that being the concept of 'Being'. Next a cross analysis of these three sources will be done in order to bring out salient features that are concrete and essential in the study of existence. And finally we analyze a few practical lessons from history and from modern times in an attempt to test the derived rationales. After this very brief introduction and the glimpse of the intention we would now pursue into recognizing our sources for

this study contrasting yet complimentary it will seem. Then we would reflect on the general principles of the methodology to be used for this purpose followed by the considerations of examples as well as some implications which we might contend on this mission.

Ecclesiastes, Ecclesia and Existentialism

The New Revised Standard Study Bible introduces the book of Ecclesiastes as ‘deep and dark’ and as we comment upon it in the next chapter we are sure to recognize some of these mystical depths and brilliances of the author. It is a book in the Old Testament sandwiched between two poetical books and at most not referred to in daily lectionaries or for Sunday readings probably owing to the fact that its message cannot be gauged by reading a certain part of it but rather it is to be understood as an admonition of an experienced sojourner as a whole to a comparatively amateur audience. The book of Ecclesiastes spells ‘Being’ and it is not a hard choice to decide on when trying to unscramble the meaning of existence and when we are left with the choice of selecting a theological text to present some argument in this regard.

The word Ecclesia has many meanings and a simple search for it on the net would prove this cause. However the simple

concept that we need to net for this purpose is the meaning it provides for in Greek and that would be translated as an assembly or gathering. Probably most Christians are familiar with the term of Ecclesia as referring to the Church and we would indeed use the same impression during this study but it is also to be remembered that when we do take apart the 'Being' of Ecclesia it will be focused actually on the objective of the term tearing apart the structure, hierarchy, building, tradition and indeed the Church per se. Here we need to wrestle with the concept of 'Being' of the Church and we need to have an eye open for history as well as modernity to come to a conclusion on which, it is felt will never be achieved in so many years to come yet we do proceed with the task of assigning a value to Ecclesia as a changeable that can be measured and evaluated.

And finally we are to draw ourselves into the splendor of the philosophical revolution that rocked several areas of life very specially in the times after the Second World War. There are once again many foundational sources that boast the birth of Existentialism and a strong argument puts it definitely into the Scandinavian regions and its philosophers. However as we may dwell on the historicity of it we may reflect more on the lines of an unsaid philosophy only recovered in European countries (probably France in the author's conviction). Once again the need is to be more subject oriented and to discern the hard facts that await us on this journey from the Existentialist side and the

naturally understood namesake of this philosophical branch also swirls around the most basic of ontological assumptions that of 'Being'. Since we are now introduced to the sources let us be introduced to the methods of inquiry to be used in this study.

Methods of Inquiry

Under this heading we are to refer to the tools of investigation and in almost any research such specification does entertain a certain degree of the gravity of the work and based on the methodology the outcome of the project may even be deemed useless! Therefore to rid ourselves of a pretence of such calamity we would state the instruments of the search.

The first and inevitably the key locus of a philosophical work is the use of language. Language has much glamorous description such as vehicle of culture, royalty of civilization, the reason of intellect so on and so forth however the description of language is always limited when we are trying to describe things for which we are unable to come up with suitable vocabulary and it becomes a scan not a diagnose. For an instance when we describe abstracts such as 'heaven' we need to realize that what we are attempting to do is beyond our grasp as the supporting pillars for the purpose always tend to not, be human

constructions therefore the ability to imagine something beyond our imagination and describe it in terms of human construction is most of the time an illusion. The realists of philosophy would no doubt agree with this statement but there remains the want to express for human interpretation thereby it is understood that what the human intellect constructs will be intelligible for another human if communicated with symbolism of a wider horizon. Therefore the use of language and the play of words do indeed in one way limit the scope of understanding yet expands the scope of presentation!

The theological inquiry in this case the deductive sense will be employed for the use on the commentary Ecclesiastes and the attempt would not be bound by mere quotational use but also by the use of explained theologies. The historic- missiological approach is due for the study of the Church and for this purpose we will also use general logical tools as we are to be left with massive amounts of historical fact that need to be transformed into philosophically networked data. Existentialism will have to be enquired on a primarily literary basis with some far reaching analysis which will also be used in the other interpretations to follow and the cross comparatives of the essence gotten from the main sources.

The pragmatic approach after the analysis will once again be a social inquiry with reference to modernity and the times gone

by. Also the concept of case study will appear subsequently in these chapters signifying a more selected sense of data that needs to be analyzed in accordance with set theory which will in fact be another comparative study. With these general remarks let us turn to the experiences we may disclose in correlation to the study.

Real Experiences

The entire purpose of any inquiry and especially, when considering literal works, is to bring into light the salient points of the inquiry, and present to the readership for their own assessment and input. However when we consider philosophical works the research does lead onto results that are more difficult to grasp as we are continuing to talk in abstract without much support from any physical real evidence. This has been one of the main accusations against philosophical research as the individuals who would rather end the work by reading are only the handful that are able to follow the philosophical framework expounded in the earlier chapters and this makes it extremely cumbersome especially if the literature keeps rolling on and on!

Therefore in this study an effort will be made to explain the authenticity of the construed concepts through a series of real

life situations which spread across time and geography. However it is advisable once again to bear in mind that interpretation on philosophy is as broad as a person's mental faculty can permit and in such context we are talking about an extremely high ceiling. Six experiential sets of case studies are to be used in evidencing the three main sources and such will be from Educational, Ethical, Theological, , Missiological, Historical and Biblical dimensions but however the grouping does not impose rigidity, to stay true to the intention of stimulating a wider mind mapping on the 'Being' of these subjects.

The two examples under Educational case studies will be on 'Dialogue as a Method of Learning' which will be followed by the 'Gandhian Morality in Conflict Transformation'.

The case studies under Ethical considerations will focus on 'Study on the Ethics of Buddhism and Christianity with regard to Abortion' which will be followed by 'Perspectives on Womanhood in Buddhism'.

In the Theological arena the considerations will be 'Insights of Lynn De Silva to Theological landscaping' and 'The Ideologies of the Sixteenth Century Reformers.'

The case studies as regards the Missiological aspect will be 'D T Niles on Ecumenical Evangelism' and 'Evangelism in a Secular and Atheistic context'.

The Historical considerations will encompass 'Prophetic

interpretation on the Law’ and the ‘Study of the Conquest of Biblical Canaan and its implications today.’

And finally from a Biblical view point we see a study on “Psalter Terminology with Special Reference to the term ‘Selah’ ” which will be followed by the ‘Transcendence of False Teachers in the Johannine letters’.

After having stated these experiential situations, let us contend with one more actuality in the introduction which is the significance of philosophical study and action in mission.

Study and Praxis

The infant does indeed learn the routines of his/her caregivers with study whether it is of a careful or carefree nature. The liberation theorists of the Latin Americas never hoped for a study branch to be ordered into university syllabuses over the fact that actual liberation was awaiting millions of the downtrodden. The first world would not have undertaken on theorizing the ‘higher thinking’ on aspects related to life quite apart from religious hold if not the same people can claim in entirety that they now posses valuable lessons in life which have made them change their attitude. Thus up to a greater deal education does in fact change behaviour as many of the students of education would have learnt about it from respective institutes of education.

If we do imply that with a sternest sense that lessons in the study of existence and 'Being' have taught us ways on improving our life and continuity of life it must seem as the more correct settlement rather than we separate the entity of philosophical study as belonging to an archaic generation and what we have progressed so far in life is not due to it but to an innate charisma that leads us on to achieving a full humanity. Sometimes we are torn at the heart when even for theological inquiry in modern times we have had to contend with the varied accusations which are thrown in its way as being sentenced as an entertainment activity of people who belong to a likeminded setup rather than a purposeful activity initiated by God who Godself requests praxis in faith that makes issues more clearer than they seem to be.

On a final note as this study is more on the terms of what we called Ontology or what is 'Being' and not much will be mentioned as to how we know, which also has been a debating topic for many centuries. At least in this study we may spare the reader of epistemological exercise and leave it open for how we know about what we know. This exercise can be done with a purely literal understanding or with a theological view or even with a scientific view for that matter. For those who may tend to read such matters with caution and with a more direct approach the epistemological inquiry would probably hold

more direct answers. While for those who may read with a more than open mind all avenues maybe open which in this case may leave many unanswered questions. A more moderate view therefore would promote a more user friendly source!

Therefore as we come to the conclude of the prelude we brace for a journey collaborating three spheres of existence and the many juggles that may lie ahead hopefully of a comprehensible nature and which may not leave us marooned on an island of chaos!

CHAPTER 2

CHASING AFTER WIND

The book of Ecclesiastes appears in the Biblical canon among the wisdom and poetical books. It consists of twelve chapters and prominently features poetical verses such as 1.1-11, 15, 2.13-14, 3.1-8, 4.4-6, 7.1-13, 8.1, 9.17-18, 10.1-4/8-20, 11.2-4. It presents as mentioned elsewhere an admonition as from an individual who has matured beyond his/her age or has inclined more onto hold issues in life which are more delicate but have a rather deep rooted aura. Unlike the two books of Proverbs and the Song of Solomon this book does not begin with a preamble dedicating the work to Solomon and in this study even though authorship analysis may prove not to be helpful it may be more appropriate to allocate this writing to even someone of a more higher wisdom than that of Solomon which may become a fallacy when seeing that it was a gift which escalated in him more than anybody else in those times. However we are open into believing that God' s wisdom is freely given to anybody who waits upon it and in this case any secretary of the day who may be entitled to be called as a 'Royal Philosopher' could have been endowed with the gift of the Spirit to envision these secrets for posterity.

The first chapter begins as a summary of what is to follow

throughout and highlights the fact that whatever may flow from now onwards is actually a reflection of the person to whom the reality of life has had a powerful effect. In this chapter the basic consideration is the futility in seeking wisdom. If at all this is attributed to Solomonic legacy this sounds either as a tearing of oneself from all potential or an attainment of a climax where an enlightened state has been achieved, both which after having a glance at Solomon's life becomes very much possible.

The second chapter stretches the futility of the search in self indulgences. And the next section introduces the first impression of a divine will that has to be adhered into so that the illusion of life can be transformed. The third chapter begins with the immortal poem of assigning time for every happening in life and ends with the task assigned for each person allowing judgment to take place if this is not the case. The fourth chapter continues this theme and ends with accompaniment in life so that a communal spirit brings this goal ever so close.

The fifth chapter instructs in the virtues of reverence, humility and contentment which in turn also promises peace of mind. The sixth chapter becomes again a see saw scenario as the frustrations of life can be viewed when desires are chased rather than the virtues above. A disillusioned view of life has been warned in the seventh chapter and is thus in concomitant relationship with the problems that are viewed as a generality in

life.

The eighth chapter is devoted to the acceptance of authority in whichever way it transpires and the final vestment of Godly authority. The ninth chapter explains the key in taking hold of disaster in life and interpolates the need to depend on wisdom rather than on a practice built of and on human courage.

The tenth chapter solves another few riddles in life especially anger, sloth, curse and dissension whilst the eleventh and twelfth chapter praise the need of diligence and brings the admonition to a close using the two ends of life of infancy and eventide.

As we are to select a few salient themes in this great literary work it may be pertinent to note that the term Quoheloth appears in several quotations which is in fact the Hebrew name for this certain book. The book itself has come under severe criticism for varied issues most prominent is that it does not codify a systematic thought and rather the author or authors deal with things according to whims and fancies and makes all of it sound more serious than it appears. There is praise for the book as we may see from some of the commentators and some have described it as the most extraordinary book in the Bible. Therefore it is a fine line we are about to tread upon and in such it is best that we hold onto creativity that gives rise over a

perennial view that seem to neglect the brilliance of this particular work.

‘Being’ is Essential

In Nihilism we come across an extreme view of philosophical subjugation that life itself is worthless and meaningless. There is no objectivity in life and therefore the established rules of life developed over centuries are worthless and still meaningless. If we ever were to wonder why motor accidents happen perhaps on the roadside or elsewhere we would be more prejudicial in our judgment if we come to the conclusion that it was due to the development of vehicles beyond the simple walking (which also can make quite a mess at certain times), rather than offer a more industrially pietistic argument that the result is to make aware the terrifying situations that may come about with development. However the latter theory also suggests another issue which we may not be wearily ready to take upon and that is the possibility that while development was indeed allowed in the thinking of God perhaps even the atrocities are allowed in the mind of God, in a more subtle way there is room for all and any actions that may occur due to a certain development. For this let us look on the matter of Kingship in Israel history when the cry was heard God obliged and it brought with it tremendous suffering, destruction and darkness due to human

rule which would also have been allowed in destiny and in theological terms in the mind of God.

“If one believes in God at all, the implications deserve to be followed right through. Quoheleth expects us to do this, and not to imagine that we can take liberties with our Maker or manipulate Him in our interests. We are confronted with God at God’s most formidable: as one who is not impressed by our chatter or by our ritual gifts and airy promises. The opening paragraphs of chapter five derive home these points with vigour; ‘God is in heaven you upon earth; therefore let your words be few.... God has no pleasure in fools.’ God meets us in this book in three main aspects: as Creator, as Sovereign, and as Unsearchable Wisdom.”¹

If we are to consider that God also in God’s self composes the finality and destiny of all life then we should surely accept as God given the entirety of life, as it happens as Job was quite willing to explain to his wife in the second chapter of that book which bears his name. The problem of ‘Being’ is quite simple as the writer of Ecclesiastes explains in ‘All things are wearisome; more than one can express; the eye is not satisfied with seeing, or the ear filled with hearing. What has been is

¹ Derek Kidner: *A Time to Mourn, and a Time to Dance*; Leicester ,Inter varsity Press, 1976,15

what will be, and what has been done is what will be done; there is nothing new under the sun' (1.8,9). In these words at least for the present study a wholesome summary is set out. Life does not allow humans to get ahead of itself. Let us, even considering the most modern discoveries as stem cell research or nano technology from the point of this summary is something that was on the cards, it was the probable outcome for treating incurable diseases or for the void in robotics. The scientists who found that out should not boast of it but realize it was a development that was expected and which will be eventually found out. It is the basic difficulty of accepting things which are beyond our understanding. There is no wisdom that claims the 'knowing', however people may construe for themselves books on knowing about 'knowing'. For the writer this wisdom in which he/she boasts of '.. my mind has had great experience of wisdom and knowledge, and I applied my mind to know wisdom and to know madness and folly. I perceived that also is but a chasing after wind' (.1.16b,17).

“Across the centuries the Quoheloth speaks to our world with a directness and relevance that is, at first sight, quite startling. We hear notes that we have heard in our day under the term ‘the acids of modernity’. In the post war world we have encountered nihilism and the atheistic existentialism and the inherent quest

for values is the same. This search for abiding certainty and meaning is the search of Everyman in every generation..... Today as in his day, there is need of some bridge concepts between two worlds, one dead and the other still struggling to be born!”²

To add to this the two worlds also represent the two points of a never ending cycle of births that becomes and has ‘Being’ yet identifies with the world of knowledge made by those who preceded them and leaves nothing for the world that will succeed them as they never can become immortal in the aspect of knowledge. When a person who finally leaves the non satisfaction in finding this wisdom beyond us he or she settles on trying to understand the things which he or she may try to unravel and this is explained in chapter two in Ecclesiastes ‘Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had spent in doing it, and again, all was vanity and a chasing after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun’ (2.11). We may try to decode this restlessness and the peacelessness of mind as the fall from grace in the beginning of Genesis where the loss of God’s image also lost for us the mind of God which we are unable to grasp as in Isaiah 55.8, ‘.... my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways...’ and the peace

² Edgar Jones: *Proverbs and Ecclesiastes*; London, SCM Press Ltd., 1961,275

of God escapes humanity.

The writer presents varied other reasons in accordance with his or her theology most specifically in chapters six and seven. In modern times we think of education as being in knowledge, skill and attitudes. For this writer knowledge was a disaster and skill was a disaster as mentioned above and in these two chapters we see the breakdown of attitudes as well ‘For what advantage have the wise over fools? And what do the poor have who know how to conduct themselves before the living?’ (6.8) and also in ‘... there are righteous people who perish in their righteousness, and there are wicked people who prolong their life in their evil-doing.(7.15) and even in a superficial glance we see this list of futilities at no close end. Then we need to question ourselves on the importance of ‘Being’ whether it is at all related to God’s plan, and will a God as we believe in Christian ideology who embodies love in totality assign an unsure path of living for all humanity throughout all eternity. This of course is a constant question we come across when we talk of evil in the world. However in this case all is evil, in that human assumptions are false therefore life on such premises are due to fall by the wayside and life becomes a cruel reality. However, it is the only path ordained by God for all God’s creatures as it is the only symbolic system which keeps human beings as human beings with an ever attempting jump to reach

God but with a terrible fall that results from it and crushes ego.

“In constantly fresh turns of thought he made his sallies against the claim of wisdom to supremacy, in order to destroy its false prestige, and to confront it with the fact that a One higher than the wise had appointed bounds that it was not to pass. For wisdom too bears marks of all earthly things. In itself it possess no absolute value, nor can it mediate such; when measured by the highest goal, it is vain. Knowledge of this fact, however, grows from being plunged in the creative power of God, whose absolute freedom works itself out in a predestination which is opaque to man (6.10, 9.1), but is nevertheless not an impersonal fate, but a personally determined action which has revealed itself to men as such”.³

Hence the ‘Being’ of humanity is the work of God through which humanity understands that it is the work of God. Simple as it seems it also bridges a deeper truth that predestination is also an option with which humanity operates and we are now thrown into a more Calvinistic thought stream which may once again permeate the disability of a creative thought but as we follow in the next two considerations the essential factor of ‘Being’ is also accompanied with varied other factors which

³ Walter Eichrodt: *Theology of the Old Testament Volume VII*; London, SCM Press Ltd., 1967, 494

may lessen our emphasis on a nihilistic predestination.

‘Being’ Bears No Promise

If the first part of this chapter sounded more like the penning of an Erasmus modelling humanist the next would be more of a lover of Oriental philosophy! But when we are confronted with such a theme as we shall prove from relevant literature we are to allow the capacity of varied meanings from the same piece of work. What we groped for in the first consideration was that ‘Being’ even though painful and meaningless to some extent it is undeniably necessary. It is not merely we come to this conclude owing that we have no power over it but on the contrary, the only true wisdom we receive is that life itself is the medium through which we are to wonder our existence and being in existence is essential for our awareness.

“The presence of inequities and the permanent sealing of injustice at death prompts Quohelth to despise life. Yet because he cannot welcome the destruction of personal identity he refuses to carry his argument to its logical conclusion. By contrast, comparable sceptics in Egypt and Mesopotamia openly endorse suicide.... Unlike these authors from other lands Quohelth opts for life. He even recommends the pursuit of pleasure during youth, when one normally has the energy to

enjoy life. Quothaleth acknowledges that some people lack the capacity to discover pleasure in various forms – delicious food, desirable women, expensive clothing and perfume. By disposition and disability, they find it impossible to follow Quothaleth's advice, and life passes by them.”⁴

Suicide whether it be physical, mental or spiritual is not to be philosophized in this regard due to the workings above as we need ‘Being’ more than ‘Being’ needs us. However we are about to start on another aspect of Ecclesiastes where in slight angles we may once again be led to understand the nihilistic features of the book but this attempt is to view such thought in a different light. Just before we enter into that famous poem in chapter three we enter a text where we find the promise of two very important characteristics that will line the following argument which are, understanding and joy. ‘For to the one who pleases God, God gives wisdom and knowledge and joy; but to the sinner he gives the work of gathering and heaping, only to give to one who pleases God.’ (2.26a). The promise of such virtue which for the writer supersede the vanity that he or she explains through this text is short lived as in the next sentence itself this argument is broken down and to complement it there breaks this extraordinary poetical verse flowing with ever present feeling. This at least in the strict

⁴ James Crenshaw: *Ecclesiastes*; London, SCM Press, 1988, 27

literary sense points to the ontological theory the Ecclesiastes writer has been propounding on so far and for us who in the 21st century has many terms to attribute may come up with any such terminology to represent such view whether it be destiny, lessons of life, real existence, changing scenes of life, limited human action, delusion, authenticity of being, phenomena of continuation etc. 'A time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war; and a time for peace.' (3.8) a historical witness to the uncontrollable inanity of the human expression of feat the foolhardiness of triumph!

If life does in fact takes its course no matter what human achievement accomplishes we once again roll into a sense of absurdity where we are helpless in the sight of attaining any grasp of the need of our 'Being' and very specially for the non theistic thinker this dilemma becomes of such mammoth burden that future reflection upon it becomes a waste of time and indeed a chasing after wind. The writer goes onto express in the third chapter the 'Being' as very theistic as possible that God had assigned work for humans even though they might feel no use of it. 'He has made everything suitable for its time; more over he has put a sense of past and future into their minds, yet they cannot find out what God has done from beginning to the end.'(3.11). Is this not the shortcoming of wisdom that we wrestled with in the previous section and which we who stand

fallen in the imperfection of thought are unable to produce any such argument to clear the air of confusion?

“In Ecclesiastes God is not only unknown through to man through revelation; God is unknowable through reason, the only means by which the author believes knowledge is attainable. Such a God is not Yahweh, the covenant God of Israel. God is rather the mysterious, inscrutable Being whose existence must be presupposed as that which determines the life and fate of man, in a world man cannot change, and where all his effort and values are rendered meaningless. Thus in the place of a religion of faith and hope and obedience, this write expresses a mood of disillusionment and proffers a philosophy of resignation.”⁵

Quite contrary to the history of theological thinking and the still ongoing debates of natural and special revelation the Ecclesiastes author brings into the fray probably the darkest secret in revelation studies which has been (mis) construed by scholars to aid them on their journey of reasoning, reason stands unjustified and full of loop holes which brings no effective groundwork to begin or to proceed. (However we who are now equipped with Process Theology may refute the above

⁵ R B Y Scott: *Proverbs and Ecclesiastes*; London Anchor Bible Doubleday, 1965, 191

finality, with the dichotomy between the God YHWH and a mysterious God, we realize that God is indeed One and that Ecclesiastes is not an attempt to find meaning beyond God!). Would it not be fair then to express that ‘Being’ is but a reasonably explicit ideology and it bears no promise and no certainty. The moment we try to find meaning we fall either into the two traps of either finding the mind of God or finding a way through reason where we find through human terms to identify the mind of God which according to our writer both bear marks of unfeasible endeavours.

“Ecclesiastes therefore means that the things which God has appointed for men signify only toil. This is of course not God’s fault, who makes everything aright. But what help is this to man who cannot ‘find out’ the work of God? There is no coincidence between man’s actions and the ‘time’ appointed by God; man always misses the mark. It is a strange discovery! The despair of a wise man at a life which he knows to be completely encompassed by God, but which has nevertheless lost all meaning for him, because God’s activity has sunk down into an unattainable concealment”.⁶

Unattainable concealment then it is through which we conclude

⁶ Gerhard Von Rad: *Old Testament Theology*; Edinburgh, Oliver and Boyd, 1962, 456

this section of study because whenever we question that we know the purpose of an action or the doctrine of causation we bring ourselves into a situation where we may speculate but the speculating platform is in another dimension of thought. This as a matter of fact stands in stark contrast to many teachings of all great religions even that of Christianity and more of Buddhism. Neither the merit or demerit of an action cannot be speculated upon nor can it be expected. It is beyond human imagination and as the quoted author places it the mark will always be missed. Then we embark on the question that if 'Being' is essential for God but for the beings itself it bears no promise then what on earth if at all not in heaven! can it be the mystery of life? This will in fact be dealt at length in the next section but true to our findings even this question has no promise yet we may conclude with a few points of practical sense. The writer brings into light, the concept of judgment which has been almost been aloof in the present discussion and which inevitably will transform our thinking in the next section. 'I said in my heart, God will judge the righteous and the wicked, for he has appointed a time for every matter, and for every work.'(3.17). This is also supported in the ninth chapter of the book where the author explains to his already mesmerized or confused audience that the lack of a promise does not end the lack of the need to survive but rather a requisite to 'chase the wind' for it is through this struggle that humanity achieves a

promise of an enlightenment in 'Being'. 'Again I saw that under the sun the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to the intelligent, nor favour to the skilful; but time and chance happen to them all.'(9.11) Subsequently the heading as put in the New Revised Standard Version for this section of 'take life as it comes' would stand much corrected, then again with a final twist we find in the next section that the humility of that proposition is the real requirement and not the embracing of the doctrine.

'Being' Promotes Virtue

Is then the 'world is all a stage and we are all actors' whose parts bear no meaning and however much the script can be changed the acting naturally follows a course, a course which is also unknown! How terribly inconvenient for us in a time where we require answers, where we believe we need to know quick answers and to decide on that knowledge. Shall we query then if at all whether anything can be known? For the Ecclesiastes writer and in this case for some scholars the writer presents remarkably dissimilar accounts about the metaphysics of life in general. It is due to this same fact that this book remains a haunting reality where we expect to find the unexpected and the non expected all lying as strands of a very vivid tapestry and only God could have woven and that also into minds of individuals who would have been apt in

assimilating such vast programming I into a simple two hundred and twenty two versed poem as we see with reference to the literary master piece as hand.

“In Ecclesiastes, orthodoxy alternates with a melancholy scepticism about the purposelessness of life. The interpretation of the book is complicated by the difference of scholarly opinion whether the orthodoxy and the scepticism come from the same author or indicate a drastic process of editorial revision, If the work is substantially by one author we may perhaps think of him repeating and reflecting on the traditional teaching (e.g 3.17) lamenting the seeming purposelessness of life (e.g 2.11,17) and the dismal prospect of what lies beyond it 3.20.”⁷

However, the key issue that awakens our thought buds is not the number of authors but the culmination of several epistemological peaks. On the one hand if the human’s ‘being’ is essential but without promise the natural question arises of what exactly is possible for the human spirit and the author at one point explains that if you would come to a sphere of such understanding there itself you are promised of having access to some portion of true knowledge.

⁷ G W Anderson: *The History and Religion of Israel*; Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1966, 182

“Quoheleth believed that man’s attempts to order his life by exercising his God given wisdom were frustrated by the limitations which God imposed upon that wisdom: in particular, that he had kept him ignorant of the appropriate times for action. As in the world of nature, where even the birds know the proper time for migration (Jer.8.7), and the crops duly ripen at the proper time for migration (Job 5.26), So it was generally believed, human success depends on knowledge of ‘proper time’. Such knowledge was believed to be, at least to some extent, accessible to man”⁸

Towards the end of the fourth chapter and the entirety of the fifth chapter, the writing is devoted to the elucidation of what we would call moral values friendship, reverence, humbleness and contentment given a prominent stand ‘Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil....’(4.9), ‘Guard your steps when you go into the house of God...’(5.1a), ‘With many dreams come vanities and a multitude of words; but fear God’ (5.7), ‘This is what I have seen to be good : it is fitting to eat and drink and find enjoyment in all the toil with which one toil under the sun the few days of the life God gives us; for this is our lot.’(5.18). Let us take care that we do not promote Hedonism as we might be slightly justified when we see that pleasure that can be dwelt upon if duty bears no

⁸ R N Whybray: *Ecclesiastes; Sheffield*; JSOT Press, 1989, 67

meaning. Then again we see this condition of living well is a simple requisite. If far greater things are beyond our imagination let us re echo the words of the psalms ‘O Lord, my heart is not lifted up, my eyes are not raised too high; I do not occupy myself with things too great and marvelous for me.’(131.1). In a more humorous glimmer, enjoy the time you have, rather than spend it on looking at how you fared, we are called to spend the time we have in achieving a perfection through cultivation of qualities which in the text extend even to the early part of the eighth chapter through to the tenth followed by the eleventh.

Now we have come to two conclusions on what can be known, firstly that we can know only so much and secondly the virtues of building up. In another contrast the Ecclesiastes writer sews a hem which Christians may find the whole point of the inclusion of this book in the Biblical canon and that being the awaiting for the fulfillment and in this case we relate Christological experiences into it. ‘Because sentence against an evil deed is not executed speedily, the human is fully set to do evil. Though sinners do evil a hundred times and prolong their lives, yet I know that it will be well with those who fear God, because they stand in fear before him.’(8.11,12) Do we see slight glimpses of Lutheran crying from the depths and justification of grace though faith in these words? It could very

well be that our ‘Being’ is in expectation for a similar fulfillment even amidst delusion or ‘maya’ of life.

“Its prevailing note is that of disillusionment. The writer has looked at and studies human life from many points of view, and all he finds in the end is ‘vanity’. He knows that men think of God as rewarding goodness and punishing wickedness, yet he does not see that there is any practical difference between them in the end (8.10, 9.1-3). All paths lead to one end – the grave and there men share the same lot, and have no memory of what their life has been. The writer is aware of the doctrine of human immortality, but cannot accept it; there is no proof of it.”⁹

But we with such knowledge of an ‘eschaton’ could see the Christ concept of liberation, however this knowledge becomes an answer if we prolong questions in the same direction. Let us therefore return to it after finding what could be in store for a humanity asked to develop virtue but has no promise after achieving it. Throughout the book the writer refers to ‘an evil under the sun’ in which case this refers to the ill effects of vice in the world. At the moment of rapid change in this world we in 2014 are truly longing for a virtuous society. The utopian thinkers of all ages have understood the need of virtue or the

⁹ W O E Oesterley, Theodore H Robinson: *Hebrew Religion*; London, SPCK, 1937,365

exact opposite for a dystopia. How then are we to understand the virtuous qualities in a salvific drama? The simple answer would be that it is also unfathomable. The liberation of humankind deals with the 'Being' of humanity under various paradigms and the realization of liberation which is also a gift of God as it should be and does not shed much light on the aspect of 'Being' since, as we saw from the beginning 'Being' has no promise and if at all guarantees are given they are also hidden in God's enigmatic self.

"God's gifts, however, strike one here as an act of remoteness rather than of generosity. For in fact what God gives is a perplexing, less satisfying. 'unhappy business' (1.13) . There are gifts for enjoyment (3.12), but they are given along with that are given along with that which is vanity. Even what is given of wealth, possession, and honour (6.2) is in fact a vanity, 'a grievous ill' (6.2). This witness is no atheist, he does not want to deny God or Gods gifts. That much, if taken alone, is unexceptional in Israel's account of Yahweh..... Ecclesiastes , as a witness to negativity, pushes past these convictions, which are no doubt serious and positively intended affirmation, to assert the inscrutability of Yahweh,"¹⁰

¹⁰ Walter Bruggeman: *Theology of the Old Testament*; Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 2005, 395

‘Back to square one’ is a relatively simple way of putting the derivations of this section but this pondering on the concept of ‘Being’ in this book lets us conceptualize an array of wondrous conclusions even while still being on the first square. Therefore the coming back to square one or to the very simple constructions of our imagination is actually not a failure but it is actually what we long for and we should receive it joyfully. Whether this mystery be Psychological, Christological or Teleological (goal oriented) the case holds.

CHAPTER 3

YOU ARE PETROS AND ON THIS PETRA I WILL BUILD

The first mention of the ‘Church’ in the Bible devoid of unusual constructions like that of the Songs of Solomon is the probable Mathew 16.18. There have been tremendous rumblings between Roman Catholic and Protestant theologians on this verse with one group obvious it may be claiming the supremacy of Peter and henceforth the supremacy of a papacy against Jesus’ exaltation of Peter based on his faith proclamation (16.16). Even though textual and historic criticism would do us a great deal in searching out for the exact meaning of what this term means we would not rely on such mechanism for the remainder of this study for reasons mentioned elsewhere but it may be pertinent to mention that the only other place in the Gospels where Church appears is once again in the Gospel according to Mathew in 18.17 ‘if the members refuses to listen to them tell it to the Church’ but in Mathew 18.15 ‘if another member of the church sins against you.....’ has been interpreted in the New Revised Standard Version Bible as referring to the Greek ‘your brother’ hence the church as it appears later in the same verse could most probably mean the brotherhood rather than an ecclesiastical setting or gathering.

Then as we refer to the other occasions on which the term Church refers to in the New Testament we can safely quote twenty instances of unequivocal placing maybe quite to the dismay of neo- theologians who may conclude that this Church was indeed a gathering and no ecclesiastical setting can be found in the New Testament of the Bible. However let us not involve ourselves with the work of New Testament Ecclesiologists or with Scholars but rather collect sufficient facts for a working of 'Being' with reference to Ecclesia.

From the twenty quotations available we have a majority written from the hand of St Paul in which we see varying perspectives of the same, specifically in Acts and other epistles as well such as the Church is spread (Act 9.31, 1 Cor 10.32) it is an organized body (Act 11.22, 1 Cor 12.28, 14.4, 1 Tim 3.5), persecuted as a powerful entity (Act 12.1, 5, 1 Cor 15.9, 1 Thess 1.4), set up as a faith body (Act 16.5, 1 Tim 5.16). However we may also trace some other marks of the Church such as house based (Rom 16.5, Eph 1.22, 3.21, Philem 2), Poor (2 Cor 8.1, Phil 4.15), constituted in a cultic scenario (Rev 2.23, Gal 1.6, Eph 5.24).

These aspects discussed have not been specified based only on the Bible verse itself but on the general impression of the Church as can be gathered from the overall epistle and from the

writer's view point. At any rate we are once again not to be involved in a dynamic study of the early Church but we have in store, some marks of the Ecclesia as we will drag across many centuries into the modern day. We may for our general summation be satisfied that the word ecclesia did bear a significant meaning in early Christianity whether we associate a hierarchy, buildings or a constituted work ethic to it, it becomes an issue worthwhile pondering upon but we see that the New Testament Church was in fact a community with offices and their image as a Church focused on a collective faith adherence. And this was the force with which the early communities unsettled the authorities and the well known persecutions would follow. Now we trace the 'Being' of the Church from such lowly backgrounds we dare say to a force, then to a more moderate yet survival seeking entity in modern times. The only assumption that the reader will be requested to stick by is that Church history spreads through time obviously as well as geographical area and when we mean the 'Being' of the Church at a particular instance , its 'Being' should always be the generality of the institution during that particular time and space.

‘Being’ is Reinforced

The name Constantine comes quite a few centuries after the New Testament Ecclesia has settled in as we observed from the early paragraphs but here we do see the first leap of the Church into a set structure. Some suggest that the Church which was oppressed becoming the oppressor as we see the persecution of Christians taking place throughout history till the Edict of Milan and hence an uncalled U turn in the power factor shifting to the Church in Europe and the rest to be followed would be history!

How did the humble religion that precisely was bent upon the qualities of a hope beyond this world, faith which called for the absurd rather than the normal and love which sought the basics of humility, courage, justice, patience, temperance become the monopoly of an authority which led the masses to identify the lowly Jesus as the supreme Christ symbolic of the might, devoid of all goodness, if we may pronounce so.

“Constantine had chosen Christianity not so much because of the vision of the cross, if indeed he ever saw it, but because the empire needed a religion to hold all it’s people together. Christianity, which had spread so rapidly and grown so powerful, appeared to be the best religion in the world to serve

as a cement for the roman world. What was Constantine's dismay when he found the cement beginning to crack! "¹¹

It was the political will that prevailed over the spiritual from the beginnings of Constantine -Christian history and the power factor took control of the media and medium of faith administration. To begin with at Constantine's age the Church was the fine line between the civilized and the barbarians it was the fine line between the saved and the damned it was the fine line between those who belonged and those who opposed. The testimonies of burning at the stake to excommunications to inquisitions the ordering of this human construction wavered in terms of virtue and mission. The Church was in fact a weapon that was wielded according to the ruling parties in Europe mainly Rome. Whenever heresies arose, which today we may never encourage for such a word to be used, the squashing of same were also done with the due sensitivity of a break of political consensus rather than a theological consensus. However the dark ages and the Eastern invasions and the crusades led the Church to ruin yet the authority of the Church would not leave the power factor let go and then we see the monastic disciplines coming to the rescue of the Church especially in the Middle Ages. Then again we see that

¹¹ Roland Bainton: *The Church of our Fathers*; New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1950, 41

monasticism was not a teaching of Jesus who for whichever thinking has been associated with the Jewish Essenes never insisted on such practice and is in no interpretative framework posited in the Pauline teaching or the rest of the New Testament documents with at least a slight resemblance. We see once again the human will positive or negative it may be, deciding on the 'Being' of the Church. The student interested in these affairs may refer to a host of literature on Church history and regardless of the aspect he or she may read wearing glasses of conjecture the facts of the Ecclesia and the ecclesiastical facts become very much belonging to two separate worlds.

We then come to a very interesting period in the life of the Church, the division or schism and the reformation. The communities of St Paul for most times were divided and it was no new ideology that sparked the first divisions between the faith interpreters, first of the east and the west and secondly between the justification of grace through faith against the works. The cement indeed had broken and during those times it would have been perplexing situations the masses had to get accustomed into.

“The cause of the reformation was not simple and single but was complex and multiple. The reformation was both derivative and determinative in its causation. Many causes had their roots

in the centuries preceding the reformation, when Rome had opposed any internal reform and had ignored the rising tide of external opposition that was to cause her so much trouble”.¹²

The reformation in the sixteenth century sparked theological interests in the first instance but it was later understood to be a multiplex of elements that have been only possible of eroding the faith atmosphere rather than when a more pacifying approach to faith could have been undertaken. If any of these strands of division whether they be denominational, theological or socio political if these were of a quality of dismemberment it is quite possible that these aspects would have disappeared long ago yet each division has remained as an array of colours knitting into diversity in a not so smooth fabric. However our quest bars us from analyzing tensions and the humanistic atmosphere that prevailed from the various events and happenings of Christian History. And we must now proceed to the basis of our selected topic for this section that indeed human action or will driven by consciousness whether spiritual or worldly we may contest in the next chapter, has all been an issue that stands tall when we talk of the Church ‘Being’. There cannot be no watering down of the effect of human action in the story of the Church. The apostles who spread the flame and

¹² Earle E. Caris: *Christianity through the Ages*; New York, Zondervan Publishing House, 1981. 278

almost all who did not see the fire afterwards, were instrumental in the process of proclamation and if at all we are to think that their achievements were staged in the mind of God then we need to re think of the times especially in modern days when the proclamation faces criticism and no result even close to what transpired in early times is possible then are we to assume that such activity is not staged in the mind of God?

Let us return to the Reformation, and as a bystander who would follow the events of partisan Europe at this time are we to conclude that it was merely a play in the mind of God and are we to deny the real struggle and conflict of the reformers and the counter reformers. If we are to follow the lives of the evangelists and the great humanists and the charismatic leaders we need to assign a marker of the Spiritual aid and the work done on part of the person him/herself. The most common argument against this would be that being ‘Spirit led’ would inevitably assist human action yet we are called to be mindful of the free will expounded over the millenniums in Biblical history which indeed called for liberation and then an institution of liberation. If it was not so and sin becomes the monopoly of the evil ‘one’ the entire act of human life becomes a dual between a Zoroastrian type good and bad giving scant recognition for the value of the human spirit which ironically becomes a main teaching of Jesus Christ, the human action is

the change agent and Jesus Christ himself heralded this aspect throughout his life and his salvific sacrifice becomes of no importance if things were planned and if human will played no part in the divine battle above. Therefore following the premise stated earlier this paragraph we once again look at the lives of the saints who through their utmost passion and dedication became symbols of Christian spirituality were for most part men and women who through their will obviously with the grace of God achieved this status. And the same should also go for the sinners who followed a dialectical to the above and ended as the pitiful in life once again through their will and obviously not in the grace of God.

Before we bring a conclusion to this section let us cast our minds on one more illustration.

“Is Episcopacy of divine right? This is a theological issue. Tertullian has asserted that the distinction between presbyters and the bishops was a matter of human arrangement. During Jerome’s lifetime, episcopacy in some form had been long established. It was Jerome’s (c347-420) contention that bishops and presbyters were of equal authority in the beginning of Christ’s religion, that the terms ‘presbyter’ and ‘bishop’ were synonymous expressions in the New testament, and that the placing of the Bishop above the presbyter was an ecclesiastical

arrangement”.¹³

To further our study on the human will in connection to the ‘Being’ of the Church we work out a connection between the human interpretations of the Church its functions and the image it dispelled from times gone by into the modern day. When we think of the Roman wing of the Church as well as the Protestant counterparts and them that maybe called the third reformation of Pentecostalism we are to be concerned at the more conservative extreme of these institutions where human construction of the religion as we will see in other religious traditions as well in the next section was a settlement of will and it became administered as given by God as it is deliberated through the mediation of the Spirit. However the applicability of these functions of the Church should deserve a more critical view as these instruments become the image of the Church and centers of authority. For a simple example, the transformation of the suffering faith symbol in Christianity that of the cross became sign of dread in the crusades, the sign of faith administration of councils and states committed the worst legal atrocities from the Copernican intellectual execution for the helio centric model to the burning of the stake of the counter reformers, the support of monasticism held by thievery the

¹³ Nihal Abyesingha: *History of Christianity*; Colombo, Asian institute of Missiology, 2011,107

lands of the peasantry which gapped the wealth of the Church with the poor they sought to serve.

It is of course worthwhile to remind ourselves of the need to look at criticism of this body as a whole and not to dwell on specifics but in all these in summation the clinging theme is that of a powerful (human) will which decides on the course this way or that. Yet its presence can never be clouded or compromised.

Being is not Regulated

In the beginning 'The earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while the Spirit of God swept over the face of the water' Gen 1.2'

And in the Gospel according to John Jesus says, 'And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither seems him nor knows him' Jn 14.16,17a'

And again in the account, 'When the spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come' Jn 16.13

Also previously 'The Spirit blows wherever it chooses, and you

hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from and where it goes.’ Jn 3.8a

For the Christian theologian, the Church not being of the Spirit becomes anathema and discussion further on it becomes baseless whilst providing background for a heretical teaching. However, the fox who feared the lion at the first glance did not account to much horror when it saw the lion over a period of times! and by the end of this section what we try to expound will not be the literary workmanship that has to be in jeopardy but a more hard sunk *Pneumatology* that needs to be put correct.

For those of who may understand the Trinity as coming into being through, on the mere basis of an apple the above argument may indeed stand corrected but it may also stand corrected to all those who truly believe in the three sayings of Jesus of the Holy Spirit in Christianity and if the mind permits in other religious traditions as well, the Spirit is not a monopoly of anyone or group who seem to come into contact with it. It is rather a free will on its own being in existence beyond human imagination and works in ultra human means of which it can be accessible at sometimes as the truth. But we may also have to unshackle the shambles as to whether the Spirit is truth or is a supreme power or as some may put it as consciousness which

can be brought to understanding. As Pneumatology or the study of the Holy Spirit is a task that may be beyond the scope of this book and we may allow for all three means to take its course through this discussion. What we will not allow, is as was emphasized earlier is for the Church in glorious existence to have the manipulation of the Spirit which it had for centuries on and in some cases and had dealt with history in ways which those who can't understand the Spirit may come to a point of saying 'this cannot be the work of the Spirit'!

“During this period the church spent considerable energy organizing its life and thought, Great church councils were held to resolve some of the most important doctrinal issues; what was the relationship between body and spirit? Was Jesus fully human or truly divine? Who could decide these questions? Gradually the church developed an understanding that orthodoxy could be defined by ecclesiastical representatives gathered to deliberate issues under the guidance of the Holy Spirit”.¹⁴

During which period? we may genuinely inquire and the answer would be throughout all periods that can be called a period in Christian history and thereby in the course of its

¹⁴ Barbara Brown Zikmund: *Discovering the Church*; Philadelphia, The Westminster press, 1983, 57

entire 'Being'. The invocation of the Holy Spirit as we find in modern Christian liturgies today is of no accident but a careful generation of what the Church gathering expected to be and that is a community that undertakes a faith work. Therefore the support of the Spirit was essential and even though we may pronounce the invocation or not, we are called to believe that the Spirit does abide in the gathering and the intention. Therefore the Church who has this special knowledge and stance are in fact Spirit driven. This made for the enormous follies that occurred in the Church from the reformation till the middle of the twentieth century take or give when the Church was made to take another U turn which will be discussed later.

The European enlightenment or the renaissance or simply the afterward industrial revolution makes quite a splash in what we are to study about from now on, which concept itself becomes spotlighted in Europe and from which we may see the decline of the 'Spirit led revolution' to the 'leading of the Spirit revolution'. Earlier when the Church deliberated as above they believed that the Spirit leads them, after the renaissance and maybe even a bit before the Church becomes leading on the pretext that the Holy Spirit is the captain of this ship but the results becomes less and less germane.

The enlightened Europe saw that they were in the light quite

simply and the poor wretched in the darkened regions of the world lay exactly in that and it would be fitting to call this the genesis of imperialism. The revelation of imperialism became visible in many ways from evangelization, colonialization, slavery, divide between the powerless and the powerful, the first and the third world etc. and this became the symbol of hate that many non Christian religious traditions find in the imperialism that came and overtook the calm that was present in non European countries. The religion that lost its spirituality and substituted in its place an order or law which we actually saw with imperial Europe is 'ad fontes' or a going back to the Pharisaic interpretation and the Overruling of that by Jesus through the greater commandment of love was in fact vain.

‘.....for religions are not inner dispositions; they bring salvation. They bring salvation to men, Only if we recognize the particular critical and hermeneutical force and impulse of religion as religion, can religion show a service to the world which is both specifically religious and practically effective in the world in politics as well. In especially religious interpretation –and-criticisms lost sight of, in other words, if religion is made to serve non –religious ends, then either religious means offered as means for non religious ends and in fact religion becomes magic, or religion is merely forced into the role of being a teacher and instructor in morality. In other

words, if religion enters the service of tasks imposed from outside, say by economic social or political needs, it degenerates into magic, or it is undermined and reduced to mere ethics....”¹⁵

The power itself becomes the talking point when we discuss the modern politics of the world. We are aware of the power struggle between the more capitalistic nations of the world bearing the cross of Christ and their actions are at best controversial as it's always the power factors they seek to hold onto in the good or bad they accomplish. It should be borne in mind that such accusations do not carry a vociferous support to the other end which criticizes these right winged parties from more socialistic roots, but rather that their opposition does have an evidenced argument on how the west has participated in the activities in the world trying to hold onto supremacy. If not in this light there can never be a justification for causes like colonialization, downgrading of religions and cultures, the slave trade, manipulation of resources and power structures in the world, inculcation of the fear factor through the race of armament, sanctions in the name of forcing support for ideologies that are generated and propelled in the west etc. If and as we can see the turmoil these actions have caused, in the

¹⁵ Edward Schillebeeckx: *Christian Experience in the Modern World*; New York, Crossroad Press, 1980, 775

past and in the present, can never be held accountable against a just God who in Exodus feels in all senses ‘I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings, and I have come down to rescue them ‘Exo 3.7,8. Throughout the revelation of God in the Bible we see God’s commitment to all humanity understood over time, as God becomes the Sovereign of all. An implying that an extraordinary gift has been bestowed on a chosen few is very much possible as we see throughout the Bible that God gifts individuals and groups specially, however it is impossible to believe that God bestows this same privilege in order that it can be used to oppress the same children of God. Therefore the crux of this argument lies also in relation to the above section where we concluded that being is correlated with action, and human action can indeed be given impetus from evil so that the goodness of the Spirit can be clouded at least in that moment in history. It was this same imperialism that of superiority that caught up with Germany that in the end the Aryan supremacy became a blinding mandate for the overtake of all other European countries and the world wars bear witness to such monstrosities.

‘..... the church of the present must face up to the history of its origins in the matter of church constitution as well. In

order to ensure continuity it must take note of the gulf which separates it from its origins, without fuss but perhaps a little ashamed. In order to ensure its continued existence, it must constantly confront the challenge of its origins, and ask itself, in the light of its early history, and in the light of the better future it hopes for, what aspects of its present constitution are justified and what are not”.¹⁶

Therefore the Church even though claiming special rights to administer the will of the Spirit is liable for failure, in totality or in degree is upto the audience to judge, as it is also a human construction and human weakness as we saw in history shadow their judgment of it. This may also stand for all great religious traditions as human manipulation is visible no end it such enterprises. However it is not a utopian religion less world as the prophet Micah foresaw to which we try to connect religion. If at all we are to conclude this section in such manner many questions will remain and mount and hopefully not all will be answered because this wisdom as we saw in chapter two vanishes before it becomes realistic, and arguing on matters of such magnitude impossible of rationalizing will be a waste of space and time. However the ‘Being’ of the Church is for a special reason and this to what we will turn next.

¹⁶ Hans Kung: *The Church*; Vienna, Image books, 1976,532

‘Being’ is a Prolegomena

The Pentecostal Church was as jubilant for the disciples as any other moment in New Testamental literature. It was a special gift that carried the promise which was to be a continuation in history of human liberation. We may be able to identify strains of the many other religious establishments in the same manner yet its resounding impact resonating through the history of the world for the past two millennia at least is mind boggling. In short there is no other single institution to which so much blame or gain can be attributed to. Has it all a long been the change agent in humanity that suffered at the hands of people who became engrossed in the specifics and rather not the bigger picture?

“The Christian faith transcends all particular times. Yet it always appears within a particular time, and within the coordinates of understanding, custom, laws, and roles of that time and its various human groups. The faith sacralizes none of these incarnations. It enters them, but is not lost in them. We must always distinguish between faith and theology, between the Christian message and it’s social expression.....”¹⁷

The knife in the hand of the monkey is still a knife and it could

¹⁷ Leonardo Boff: *Ecclesiology*; New York, Orbis books, 1986, 84

have had a more devastating end game like a perfectly trimmed salad than a severed neck! In such light are we able to understand the still small voice as Elijah found in 1 Kings 19.11-17 where he waited on great vehicles to bring the Lord to him yet found God in the smallest and the least. Should the Church in its 'Being' have been concentrating on the delights of the Lord than the delights it projected towards God? The Latin American revolution and the birth of anything called liberation theology and the earmarking of the grass root agenda for Church transformation is one but many of such initiatives the Church and its people undertook thereby not only leaving a course to be studied but rather a way of life that should be followed in the 'preferential option for the poor'. The great turnaround of the Vatican II and the attrition of power by the Church requested its re organizing and the need to be relevant and to gain through its spiritual power speaks of same volumes. A world on a hard course making life more and more secularized and individualized has become the main enemy of religion in modern times. And the Church which learns can indeed be the same force it was destined to be. However, it is rather not a question of humility in this regard, but also an issue that needs to be worked at.

“Those who acknowledge the headship of Christ and live by the law of sacrifice are the Church, for the Church is ‘human

society in its normal state' the world, that same society irregular and abnormal. The world is a Church without God, the Church is the world restored to its relation with God; taken back by Him into the state for which He created it.' There is, then no absolute separation between the Church and the world. Both are composed of the same elements." ¹⁸

Yet the world thirsts for spirituality and the human yearns for non-religious spirituality and it does so primarily because it craves for a companionship Spirit and friend to carry them at all times. The only companionship unfortunately is not religion leave alone the Church. This void becomes the most insatiable and humanity in its weakness trusts on all human constructions for buttressing, yet its quenching power is minimal and short lived. If not so it would have been a panacea that would have been the utopian portion out of which the world would have drunk. Technology and modernity seem bent on defeating death that brings immortality which would once again be the reverse of the story of Eden this time however Adam might bar God from the garden but it's not the Edenic place that brings liberation or immortality to humanity but the Spirit which is also of God. And re iterating the immortal words of St Augustine we are indeed restless till we find our rest in God. It

¹⁸ John E. Booty: *The Church in History*; New York, The Seabury press, 1979, 139

could also be for the same reason that spirituality has taken a radical stance and it has also become an extremity that can withstand the enemy and the avenger.

“One of the most significant forces in western Christianity is the growth of religious movements emphasizing the role of the Holy Spirit in the development of the faith: significant chiefly because in their third world form, they offer the prospect of a new adaptation of the western Christian tradition as radical as the transformation from rural to industrial Europe last century”.

19

We now face the dilemma of considering the same Pentecostal Spirit incarnate in the modern world or the general quality of the world that to remain and survive it has to be extreme and radical. The transforming power of the Church is called to question as it addresses the daily issues of the world. Can the Church really be the solution and does the Church comprise the interwoven character led by the Spirit to be a centre of action. Institutions are always more powerful than individuals and the Church, as in history proves this point over and over again. With human decadence the proving ground has moved drastically and in modern time religion has become rather a

¹⁹ Darmaid Macculloch: *Groundwork of Christian History*; Norfolk, Epworth Press, 1987,290

fancy or a burden. It looks more the survival of the most radical. The million ‘dollar’ question still remains as to whether the Church can be proclaimed as a special divine occurrence with which there is hope for a change in the world. The dialectic of Hegelian roots may be seen as we try to resolve this issue as the Church founded in goodness then the anti thesis in becoming a wrecking ball and then the synthesis in a more ragged doll now trying to find ground. Does Church bring into hold a great power because of the Spirit or does it have a hold because it is considerably a large gathering over the world or does it comprise secular energy which can be used for good? Maybe this can be resolved through some practical examples to be studied later on but for the moment we turn to a great theological mind and his famous sacramentology of the Church. As we remain with such thought for this section we press for a more accurate understanding ahead.

‘... the church is the active presence of God’s salvation in the world, in a veiled, but nonetheless perceptible form. It is precisely in this quality that the Church is the sacrament of salvation offered by God to the whole world. In other words, salvation, while is in fact actively present in the whole of mankind, is given, in the church, the completed form in which it appears in the world. What God has already effectively begun to bring about in the whole of mankind is an activity of grace

that is not clearly expressed and recognized as such, is expressed and accomplished more clearly and recognizably as the world of grace in the world in the church, although this expression and accomplishment are to some extent always deprived of their luster of our human failure’²⁰

²⁰ Edward Schillebeeckx: *The Mission of the Church*; London, Sheed and Ward, 1973, 45

CHAPTER 4

EXISTENCE PRECEDES ESSENCE

As the name procures for itself Existentialism is a philosophy that dwells on being in existence. Being in existence is the first reality the human mind perceives and on such foundation the rest of the argument or arguments may follow. At the outset we should remind ourselves that Existentialism is not a body of philosophy that is overly ordered and is systematically defined in every way but rather contrarily it is the negation of the former, which is one of the founding points of its reasoning, and that it declines to fit into any systematized order. Its main consideration apart from the earliest times is mainly found in literal works of novels, poems, drama etc and its big eight have been listed as Soren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche , Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Martin Heidegger, Karl Jaspers, Albert Camus, Gabriel Marce and Jean Paul Satre.

Especially Satre who is said to have used the term specifically gave impetus to the philosophy as we know it today. The term's birth after the world wars would enable us to ascertain a few important factors such as the effect of destruction, need for reconstruction of life, need for preservation of life, need to feel and be aware of the other in the journey of life and the need to combine action with reason to enable the working out of the

necessary good.

However Strains of Existentialism has always been present in philosophical reasoning and the earliest existentialist according to researchers is the Lord Buddha and subsequent existentialist writing has been detected in many other literary works from Socrates to Shakespeare. This connectivity through literature become the most impressive aspect of this philosophy and many named above and others who may call themselves existentialists would not agree on a whole lot of things and a linking would be very difficult. But the fact that strains of similarity becomes visible in literature symbolizes the down to earth human emotional side of the pattern of thinking and thereby themes such as despair, need for hard facts for belief, giving value to life, finding meaning by one self, understanding others as giving meaning to life, limitations on expectation are some of the themes we may come across in such thinking. We may of course not be discussing the salient features of Existentialism or performing a critique on the philosophical reasoning, as we are mainly concerned about what this framework expounds on the concept of 'Being' but we are to consider one aspect that may be bounding on further investigation. There are primarily two kinds of Existentialism, one with a theistic touch and the other primarily atheistic and obviously both paths do not cross so often and the end

conclusions may differ preposterously. However we are unable to analyze two lines of thinking from the same source as the possibility of combining outcomes might be a tedious task with very open ended conclusions. Therefore we receive Existentialism as it is, not from the theistic or atheistic side but from the human side and giving value for the humanistic concrete experience.

Therefore our aim in this study will be to articulate some working conclusions about the philosophy and we bear in mind that what we can articulate in a few hundred lines will never be an exhaustive summary yet it may be more pertinent to hold onto the crux of the matter rather than on the several branches that may stem from it.

Being instils Choice

As the first working principle of 'Being' we would like to introduce a very simple aspect of our rationalizing process and as far as we could be concerned we have used it all along in this writing as well. And that is the freedom of thought and the ability to construct an argument on the understanding of one's self. Even though this seems the most simplest of matters to be taken under deliberation its underneath spreads into a myriad of other possibilities as to how this freedom does present itself. And we would look into this subject in the subsequent lines.

“The refusal to belong to any school of thought, the repudiation of the adequacy of any body of beliefs whatever, and especially of systems, and a marked dissatisfaction with traditional philosophy as superficial, academic , and remote from life- that is the heart of Existentialism. It is a timeless sensibility that can be discerned here and there in the past. But it is only in recent times that it has hardened into a sustained protest and preoccupation”.²¹

In the introduction this aspect of, a ‘prodigality’ in the Existential philosophy was highlighted and we will consider upon it further. For an example we look at the philosophy of aesthetics, we know that beauty is but a trigger in the sense perceptions built in humans and we know even further that this concept is not viewed by all as equal. For us to draw these two considerations we work within a set framework with hypotheses even without our knowledge. We understand that it is totally in our senses where the concept of beauty originates and as a second stance we decide that individuals may differ in the way their senses are arranged and thus gives rise to ‘taste’. But here also unknowingly we let a few loop holes linger without actually considering them. The foremost would be the

²¹ Walter Kaufman: *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre* ; New York, Meridan books, 1956,14

fact that the existence of something called beauty does exist and it can be perceived by our senses. There itself we agree to be bound by the philosophy of rationalism where we reason by logic or by an empiricist view where we test data or by idealism where we wrestle with a higher power dictating the concept of taste or we abide by scepticism that leaves either of these ways and remains as the system sounds unsatisfied or we synthesize with Kant on the two former frameworks. Whichever way, we are abiding under a system that may have several great upholders but also keeps us in the fray for all of the other issues that may transpire and we may be held in a prison that makes the world for us, yet we may become unable to reason beyond same. For an even simpler situation let us talk on the issue of progress let's say in a certain body. We need to bear our interpretation out either on some construction that has been handed over to us or rather on our reflection or on a research we conduct or on an analysis with a historical source or on a consensus agreed by a group who may be allowed to do so or based on a divine condescending. Whatever path we may tread we may end up with one of the solutions or theories to a state of affairs and keep our minds closed on some others.

Therefore, let us as we return to the primary argument we have been sustaining that it is the possibility of being in the shadow of a certain thinking that makes us vulnerable to look away

from the shadow and with Existentialism it sounds the same bell as its emergence after the world wars, people contemplated on the predicament and the roads that led to the predicament and the freedom for pondering differently became the phenomena which we may even be apologetic to the higher thinking of Europe which leads to their rank in the modern world.

It is therefore a relevant mini stepping stone to the conclusion of this section that we realize the 'Being' in the world cannot be necessary covered by one aspect of thinking and here we may relate to the limitedness of the human mind we talked in chapter one but the difference here is that Existentialism understands the concrete only, rather than even insisting on the peripheral scope of the human mind. Therefore this concrete thinking or concrete fact which may also even be associated with the scientific method (but may also not be) is assertive on the fact that life and 'Being' are only what we call it to be or rather what we name it to be or rather what we decide it to be minus any past or future experience. This of course can in one way be an individual declaration we hear each day or it could be an awesome breakthrough in the essence of time and space. While not taking either road we simply continue on existence as we make it to be and 'Being' is not a noun or verb in quintessence or ideal but rather a neo- dimension of living we

keep on making every millisecond. This incident of making the dimensional aspects of living allows a freedom beyond a limited space of thinking.

“It is possible for me not to exist; but if I exist, I can lack having a past. Such is the form which is assumed here by the ‘necessity of my contingency’. But on the other hand, as we have two existential characteristics in particular you qualify ‘the’ for itself,

1. Nothing is in consciousness which is not consciousness of being

2. In my being, My being is in question. This means nothing comes to me which is not chosen”²²

Why does nothing come to me which is not chosen? Simply because I have the freedom of selecting the course of my ‘Being’ , how many of us are conscious of this simple fact and how many feel that we are unable to choose ‘my being’ because it is hindered by another. Because we have the freedom of choice to name ‘our being’ and to be in the world we make, there can never be a dichotomy between, what the present holds and whether we wished for a present, as both are of the same

²² Jean Paul Satre: *‘Being and Nothingness’* in *‘The Search for Being’* edited by Jean T. Wilde and William Kimmel; New York, The Noonday Press, 1962, 259

essence. The biggest question would then be why, can there be anguish or despair or bluntly why is there a world we would not have chosen but then the dichotomy between the individual 'I' and the collective 'We' as both comprise the world, such becomes the turning point. This as was explained earlier is a simple platform that if all are virtuous, the world will be virtuous and that does not depend on a past or a future or a divine action in this regard. The concept of 'not being' is detailed as 'Facticity' in existentialist thought and it brings a very distinctive flavour into the Ontological scenario. But we will talk something about the Christian existentialists and their thinking as well the most famous of them would be Paul Tillich followed by Karl Barth.

“Faith is the highest passion in a man. There are perhaps many generations who do not even reach it, but no one gets further. Whether there be many in our age who do not discover it, I will not decide, I dare only appeal to myself as a witness who makes no secret that the prospects for him are not the best, without for all that wanting to delude himself and to betray the great thing which is faith by reducing it to an insignificance, to an ailment of childhood which one must wish to get over as soon as possible”.²³

²³ Soren Kierkegaard: *Fear and trembling and the sickness unto death*; New York, Doubleday Anchor Books, 1954 ,131

We only try to align the divine element on this occasion of a promise made earlier, but we hold onto the stance given in the heading as well. We also still hold firm to the idea that humans choose and whatever had come before or might come after the chances of humans achieving virtuosity is a century percentage. Does God will this? Absolutely the basic essence of God's creation in humanity had the virtuous state embedded even when it was cut loose and throughout history it was given opportunity to be rebuilt, the promise of a saviour and the comforter are evident of this intention of the divine. Does God want anyone to be unhappy? Does God want a suffering world? It may be very difficult to affirm this considering the immortality and perfection principle that occurs throughout the Bible. But evil, sin and temptation or maybe in the other way around are pretty much part and parcel of life. If the Christian existentialist may wonder on the question of why, maybe a consolation word can be received from 1 Cor 10.12,13 'No testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone. God is faithful, and God will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing God will provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it'.

Whenever testing becomes bestowed on us and if uncommon testing presents at the door let us ponder upon the individual 'I' and the collective 'We', just described above!

Being is Time Bound

Now we come to a more practical aspect of the Existential concept of 'Being'. Almost as radical as the founding of the United Nations after the world wars insisted upon getting the same destructors to be the preservers of non destruction which is in practical life, is the way to go, nobody not powerful can ever be called to preserve themselves which stands even to the most humanitarian of religious leaders!

“Once we strip away from the concept of will the metaphysical speculations and antinomies which historically surrounded it, we are left with the simple experience of spontaneous activity based on a previously formulated project. This experience lends itself readily to sober description. It is maintained that voluntary action is the criterion of meaning behavior, then the ‘meaning’ of this behavior consists only in the choice- in the freedom to behave one way rather than another. This would mean not only that the action is ‘free’ but that the aims of the act are known at the moment of the decision; in short that free choice exists between at least two goals”.²⁴

The freedom of choice has been a frequent notion of our

²⁴ George Walsh and Frederick Lehnert : *The Phenomenology of the Social World*; Vienna, Northwestern University Press, 1967, 66

discussion above but here we encounter the actual why of the scenario presented. We are afraid that here we do need to part with Calvinistic predestination as this presents a very odd situation to contend Existentialism with, as the name sounds the Gideonic trumpet we are left with the most basic of what has not been eliminated and that is the free will. Can the 'Being' of humanity be related to a sense of a script that can never be changed it must be boring to be a philosopher in that world! But it is not only this obviousness that makes free will and rationale realistic but the mere nature of examples we see are also of paramount importance. Even in the finality of consciousness a perpetrator's account of a horrific crime always carries the guilt or a resent coated with ambiguity the awareness that it had a choice attached to it. It's very much present in a very key element in Existentialism called Despair or Angst which in reality that would also explain how it always ends up in drama or literature, but it is exactly because of such end in deviation and which is always present in our mindset that we propose that a choice is always available. Since we are on the topic let us also consider the choices that we make sometimes out of knowledge and sometimes without. Excluding the religious interpretation of the goodness of humanity and the presence of an evil demon lurking in the shadows even if we are to understand that the human mind is not in nature programmed to understand good or evil, this argument falls to the mere

referral of historical knowledge. Humanity learns and learns to develop and the development we see today has been the learning process (still without perfection) of thousands of years. The person who touches the candle flame will not do again if only maybe for an experiment for the earlier proposition! The general inference we get from this idea is if freedom is present and if will follows freedom to the right or to the left then there is no continuation of life without actually doing it or living it. Because we have sensed that nothing is programmed to go ahead. Even the theistic view of such proposition stands very much valid.

“In other words, it is a choice of freedom or necessity, involving the totality of the being: it is the leap of the soul, the leap of faith, a leap not into the dark or despair but a leap into the lap of God. The justification of all faith is just this continual awareness of the presence of God. Faith is an act of will and choice. Knowledge of God is an inward experience. Once it has taken place there can no longer be any problem of whether it is so or not”.²⁵

The touch of God still comes with the actuality of a free will, the salvific value of doing evil and then followed by repentance

²⁵ K. Guru Dutt: *Existentialism and Indian thought*; New York, Philosophical library, 1960, 15

would be another topic for another day. But as we will touch in a few examples later, the anointing of God is an assurance of the preservation of Godliness and the choices of a person's life however informed these maybe, the direction of one's life and actions are the individual's alone. As we try to wrestle with the human condition and the guidance of God in understanding the leading of humanity in the direction it has led through the many centuries, this notion becomes more and more crystallized.

“Thus with the modern period, man – to recapitulate-has entered upon a secular phase of his history. He entered it with exuberance over the prospect of increased power he would have over the world around him. But in this world, in which his dreams of power were often more than fulfilled, he found himself for the first time homeless. Science stripped nature of its human norms and presented man with a universe that was neutral, alien, in its vastness and force, to his human purposes”.²⁶

The human predicament has of course led to a human induced atheism especially from the mid of the twentieth century due to the over emphasizing of the reality of free will and the gap it proposes with the divine and as above sentenced, humanity wishes to be ruled by science, once again a human construction

²⁶ William Barret: *Irrational Man*; New York, Doubleday Anchor Books 1962,35

that can only tell the 'why' but certainly not the 'what'. However as we see the decline of religion as related to the incline of thinking especially under this category it is appropriate for us to return back to our heading and after this expounding of the factor of free will we are at a point, monumental if it could!, be of bringing into light the term of Authenticity and Absurdism once again understood more in the reverse. Life is absurd since we name it, and what we have named and understood in life becomes absurd after many years. For the modern mind we associate such thinking with techno development but in existentialist terms this is a never ending vicious cycle in which humanity gets stuck because of their superior intellect. Life is absurd because it opens the doorway of freedom for people to bring in to being the actual 'Being' and 'Being' becomes new every day every second, if at all it is genuine or authentic . If 'Being' is not authentic then life would be a still in a drama and there can be no more deliberation on it.

The moving ahead insists that humanity does and is forced to make and to move forward. And this can only be done by action. There is no alternative and pupeteering, as we eliminated earlier does not count as an option. Therefore the actions we do or we think we do, or we think are learned to do are actually is our response from the human nature. Action of course maybe counted and analyzed under the many

microscopes yet the importance that underlies these actions is the authenticating of the human mind. We name the world we live in it through discovery .We discover to better ourselves and in the process life goes on. There is never any comment that life flows. The flowing of life is contrary to the work we do to make it flow. We say that change is consistent but once again environmental or human the changes in the world occur as the result of our authenticating. Maybe what we can conclude is that nature can at least in 'Being' be not subject to the existential behaviour. In a way we would agree to it as we do not control it in essence. In another light we can assume that if humanity is interwoven with nature then vice versa the 'Being' is made every single second. The big bang in existentialist thought is the bang we receive every time we ponder on the marvellous creation and the total dystopia that can be achieved if we try hard! The light with which the divine will unveil the condition on the world and reflection 'this is not going right' would most probably be the hardest of the bangs as the will to change is embedded within the human being and he or she learns much greater things through experience. Therefore the scope of action is imperative for 'Being'.

Being is Dependent

“Existentialism as a universal element in all thinking is the attempt of man to describe his existence and it’s conflicts and the origin of these conflicts, and his anticipations of overcoming them. existence is that which stands against essence although it is dependent on essence. Plato uses existentialist terms when he speaks of the transition from existence to essence or from essence to existence, ; when he speaks of the fall of the souls; when he speaks of the seeming but not true character of the world of appearances and opinions or when he speaks of the bondage of the soul in the cave of shadows”.²⁷

The experience of the cave of shadows even if not at an illusion that has been conjured to understand the maya of the world and has a direct bearing on which we are to discuss as the final under existentialist thought. The shadows we see from a light signify a basic factor which for us humans is not in the sphere of religion or physics but in the social ‘Being’. We have heard that the human is a gregarious animal the religious sources and also the earliest accounts of human civilization attempts to define the human as ‘humans’. It is in such psychological

²⁷ Carl Michalson: *Christianity and the Existentialist*; New York, Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1956, 129

understanding that we become what we are. Quite frankly this may sound as something that is accepted but for Existentialism the mind which becomes a crucial factor to understand but not to reason takes a non dominating second place after the experience we receive from the meanings we are given. And the ‘other’ or the collaborator in ‘Being’ is the assistance we receive in our ‘mind’ to understand our mind. For an example a human conceived artificially and nurtured artificially and given birth and cared for without human contact and made to grow up without any human interaction but even with other benefits of learning available with access to these available would still never be able to understand his her ‘Being’ as the chief stimulation has never occurred in that person and his or her being in existentialist terms has not evolved into ‘Being’. The analysts of the mind maybe ever so ready to edify on actually how the social element in human beings also decide on their ability to define the world or rather make the world. However such expertise maybe lacking in this study and even if such was researched the ‘what’ becomes, tantamount for our intention rather than the ‘why’ of the issue. But if one might inquire why human beings in social contact does not solve all problems the following quote may spell the significant *raison d'être* for same.

“The goal of psychoanalysis is to decipher the empirical behaviour patterns of man; that is to bring out in the open the

revelations which each one of them contains and to fix them conceptually. It's point of departure is experience; its pillar to support is the fundamental, pre ontological comprehension which man has of the human person".²⁸

The emergence of the 'other' did have a strong discovery point especially appearing after such mammoth destruction and it was the plain realization that made people realize that their reasoning was not sufficient to understand the 'other' and the conflicts that have erupted were all due to this simple reason. When we think of conflicts whether they be internal, international, based on resources or political gratification or self fulfilment or superiority the same note can be found on every line of music that the influence for this discord had been the influence of the mind of similarity or the craving for the mind of a dissimilar group. If the human were to be alone the only conflict that would arise would be all in the head literally! The mind will seek opponents for bargaining or amputating and one's body might become a target. For example in the French and Russian revolutions Waves of intellectualism was crushed especially in socialist states and in the one's where the proletariat were seeking an amassment of power also for this same reason that reasonableness was never in tune with the

²⁸ Jean Paul Sartre: *Existentialism and Human Emotions*; New York, Philosophical library, 1957,68

needs of the day. An intellectual became a source of divergence contrary to the requirements of the masses. The most important part of experiencing humans is even more than the sense of belonging it is the journey of discovery. This curiosity has been deep rooted in the human mind and if not for discovery at least for the existentialist the world it would have ceased to exist.

“It was this experience of discovery which, perhaps more than anything else, awoke in me the desire for the concrete, the nature of which I strove later to understand. (another aspect of this experience came to me at an early through deciphered music.) Thinking about it now, I find it odd that, for such a long time, the whole of this holiday world remained apart from my philosophic activity, like kind on reservation in which I allowed experience to proliferate without submitting it to control thoughts”.²⁹

Existentialists in fact give minimal importance to reason and as we will see later the human shortcomings in, ‘mind stretching’ is the pivotal element in this declaration. But humans do reason and in this philosophical school it is the meaning we give that assist us in ‘Being’. For this same reason existentialists lay greater stress on the concept of the concrete experiences and

²⁹ Gabriel Marcel: *The Philosophy of Existentialism*; Ontario, Citadel press, 1956,116

once again we see strains of Anxiety and Anguish also mingled with concrete experiences and the freedom to act makes us anxious because we are not in control of all the facts and we would never be. However this does not mean that religion is thrown out of the window for the reason it proposes things which are beyond the threshold of understanding but rather because of the 'God' concept which is permissible for them, then once again they have reason to dump all aspects of life good and bad on a divine source and not give the human fecundity the place it deserves. It cannot also side with science even though it gives concrete experiences but as a human construction it also falls into a similar fallacy.

“Science as science is absolutely incapable of liberating itself from the idea of the world as realized knowledge that we have to find anew. It is a legitimate mode of representation and even one that can be called indispensable. It only becomes vicious when it is erected into a metaphysical construction. Now that is the precise mistake common to optimism and pessimism, for both alike claim to formulate judgments on the consent of the real which is posited as an object of science, that is to say they transpose into metaphysical order the postulate that consists in positing the real as science which is exclusively valid in the

order of science”.³⁰

Social scientists would be able to impart such knowledge as we philosophize here of the intimate need for human relations, from a child to a mother, to families, to cults to international understandings. The world has for the most part have not used this human relations in existentialist terms to thrive rather it has been used to survive. The armament race will suffice as one pinch. The dilemma of conflict always laughs in the face of any attempt we may make, to explain that humanity has always stuck together. We see in the post modern world the breaking of barriers and cultures as a sign of a further evolvment but we need to keep in mind that discovery while leading to ‘Being’ does not always promise alliance of mind. And such could be the experience of humanity which shun from the above conclusion and insists on becoming separate and extreme which has also attracted huge masses and the feeling that, that provides ‘Being’ and that human interface is essential leaves us gasping at the nexus and sea of complexities that come when dealing with humans.

Thus we are to conclude this brief analysis of ‘Being’ as understood by the existential order, we bear in mind that the

³⁰ Gabriel Marcel: *Metaphysical Journal*; Chicago, A gateway Edition, 1952, 97

school itself evolved for decades over various subjects with scholars who for most times never did manage an embrace therefore even is these conclusions although can be figurative they can never be comprehensive. Nonetheless as a system which leaves ample room for freedom and discovery we leave the audience to grapple with finer issues in Existentialism but we would guarantee a visit to these presuppositions in our studies further on.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Having dug our teeth into the seemingly inconspicuous apple of our sources, we now sum up the salient features therein for the task of further investigation. Let us draw up theses in which we may dwell the finer characteristics of the inquiry.

Thesis 1 – From a literary analysis of the Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes we established that ‘Being’ was Essential for life in time and space, it was not a concept or an actuality that the beings may at one time resist and undertake to discontinue at will. Secondly we established that even though ‘Being’ is essential it bears absolutely No Promise and hence the contradiction but the realistic state of affairs. And finally we see that even if there is no promise in ‘Being’ it calls for the enhancement of Virtue and this in turn opens gateways into understanding the intention of ‘Being’.

Thesis 2 – From a socio- historical analysis we saw in the ‘Being’ of the Church that it was Reinforced by human will and it has been the, the survival aspect of the Ecclesia. Secondly we saw that regardless of the will being of divine or human nature the ‘Being’ was not a presence where we may conclude as ‘Being’ of the Spirit and it was Not Regulated by it in totality or in part. If the presence has been diluted and debilitated over

and over many times such finality is believed to be in order. And finally we saw how the Church has become an instrument with or without divine intervention a doorway of change a Prolegomena and this in modern times is how we will continue to think of the Church.

Thesis 3 – From an analysis of philosophy and a logical seeking we proposed that ‘Being’ in itself was not happening in that it would be termed as an existence and it Instils Choice. This we concluded is because it is a means to an end and not the end itself. Then coming into practicality we suggested that ‘Being’ has a distinct way ahead and therefore it was Time Bound human intervention is necessary for this path. And finally this path becomes visible only in the light of the other and therefore being Dependent is also a vital aspect of ‘Being’.

Could we have deliberated on more factors and received even further impressions would be a question in the asking and the answer would be positive yet in philosophical works when we grapple with more threads we may undoubtedly be caught in many knots which may not be ideal for the moment but we present in summary form the nine salient features which are in such own right unique and binding. Being

<u>Ecclesiastes</u>	<u>Ecclesia</u>	<u>Existentialism</u>
Thesis 1	Thesis 2	Thesis 3
Is Essential	Is Reinforced	Instills Choice
Bears No Promise	Is not Regulated	Is Time Bound
Promotes Virtue	Is the Prolegomena	Is Dependent

We leave the singles and the doubles and we combine in the triples for this exercise on permutations. While each hypothesis is different it may carry weight on in a single subject therefore we need to bear this in mind and propose lines that may be adaptable through many disciplines. Therefore, let us cite some examples where we may be able to visualize some selected themes as given above.

To understand this whole exercise let us look into a simple example. Let us try to identify the common factors of sports. For this we are going to select a few sports which may not be related at all such as marathon running, ice hockey and carom. However after we juice out some key factors we will test these against a variety of other sports which may once again be poles apart from the selected sports.

The basic idea behind this method is to find an understanding on something we search for using a foundation that, that we build from some sources where we understand which might

have something in store regarding knowledge on the matter. It is called Cohort studies in research methodology but is mostly used in social sciences or in medicine and the task to which we are attempting to use it becomes a novelty but we add a more ordinary element of common research called cross sectional study to complement this task. This method may surreally be cited as a tasting of a cake on top which has layers and attempting to find the composition of the other parts using the received information.

This is all in all a very basic matter but the complexity of the operation exaggerates with the subject matter which is 'Being'. And 'Being' called at best an abstraction of a philosophical nightmare can have a myriad of founding principles or may not have at all but we propose nine for the initiative.

When we talk of philosophical activity in abstract matter maybe the analyzer can get away with using extraordinary interpretative skills to find the silver lining on a very darkened sky. To cite another example if we take the example of love and the presence of love in the world there can be conclusions made such as 'hidden love' even in the most hardest hearts. Or maybe love to be realized in the worst minds that promote exactly the opposite of hatred. We may show that love exists with an individual who may show it to an activity or maybe an

institution or maybe to a non human contact which makes considerations difficult but all the more it is an outcome of interpretation. What follows in the next twelve examples are not interconnected in any way and have not been written to highlight any such points developed so far in the book. These articles have also been written at different times and have not been written in a similar spirit. Therefore the task of finding the presence of some strains becomes a very challenging and a demanding task. And as mentioned above the brighter mind can also make the rigidity vanish by clouding over by technical terms, philosophical and logical enterprises and making the unattainable and not viable conclusions come to the forefront as if by captivating enchantment. There may also be queries as to whether more than three aspects of 'being' can be found in the writings. This may definitely be the case yet we impress on the most vital which may have a say in the case or example.

However as a final word the experiences in the examples are at best very practical and very realistic thereof the fabrication process is hoped in the most genuine sense to match up to sensible reasoning and intelligible ground work.

1. Educational - Case 1- Dialogue as a Method of Learning

Essential Prolegomena Dependent

Case 2 – Gandhian Morality in Conflict Transformation

No Promise Prolegomena Choice

2. Ethical – Case 3- Study on the Ethics of Buddhism and
Christianity with regard to Abortion

Virtue Not Regulated Time Bound

Case 4- Perspectives on Womanhood in Buddhism

Promise Not Regulated Choice

3. Theological -Case 5- Insights of Lynn De Silva for
Theological landscaping

Essential Prolegomena Choice

Case 6 – The Ideologies of the Sixteenth Century
Reformers

No Promise Reinforced Dependent

4. Missiological – Case 7- Thinking of D T Niles on
Ecumenical Evangelism

Virtue Reinforced Choice

Case 8 - Evangelism in a Secular and Atheistic context

Essential Reinforced Time Bound

5. Historical – Case 9 - Old Testament Prophetic
interpretation of the Law

Virtue Prolegomena Choice

Case 10 – Study of the Conquest of Biblical Canaan and
its implications today

Essential Not regulated Dependent

6. Biblical - Case 11- Psalter Terminology with special
reference to the term ‘Selah’

Virtue Prolegomena Choice

Case 12 – Transcendence of False Teachers in Johannine
Epistles

Virtue Not Regulated Time Bound

CHAPTER 6

EDUCATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Case 1 –Dialogue as a Method of Learning

Commentary

In dialogue we see several strains of the concept of ‘Being’. On the first hand dialogue is Essential in the sense that it is a vital component of communication. Secondly we see that it’s a Prolegomena for change not only in a classroom setting but it has over history enabled an education mode. The kind of dialogic learning we are discussing here has been brought to life in the Latin Americas. In the Latin Americas the use of the dialogical method of teaching incited a revolution against the junta that was in charge of deciding what people thought, it was a beginning of change. And thirdly we see that dialogue is indeed something that is Dependent on the other and it is this task of co learning that enables the discussion to bear fruit.

Dialogue; A method of teaching?

Dialogue is a natural phenomenon. It is natural because humans communicate through same unconsciously, phenomenon because it removes any other option for communication out of

the way (even in the post modern age!). Therefore it does not involve the element of surprise when considering that dialogue has been from antiquity a method on which all human communications have been built upon and in this case extending towards education. This particular element is visible even in the teachings of the great religions and in the teaching methods of religious founders. As examples the dialogues of the prophets in the Bible, the conversations in the Bhagavad Gita between Arjuna and Lord Krishna and discourses of the Lord Buddha to his disciples stand as witness. Dialogue can and indeed will lead conversation almost anywhere, so will be the testimony of two friends or companions. Yet there is the possibility of a ‘constructed dialogue’ that may achieve the intention of both the educator and the learner. For the educator he/she may be able to lead the learner towards knowledge yet not uncovered by the learner while the learner learns something new through the process of being led towards knowledge. The dialogical method therefore is rather a ‘programmed dialogue’. It has a point of entry and wherever it may lead to, it has a final objective. The first instance of such systematic programmed dialogue being used would be the Socratic dialogues. “Several educators regard Socrates as the earliest programmer. Socrates used to guide his followers to gain knowledge by conducting them conversationally along a path from fact to fact from

insight to insight”³¹

This dialogical approach needs a common ground for both the teacher and the learner. The common platform becomes the dialogue itself. There is talk and contribution from each party in the hope that it leads to new knowledge or to the confirming of knowledge already gained.

Unconsciously perhaps at first dialogue does inculcate a sense of request. A request extended to the other party to make a contribution. The result of that request is primarily based on the skill of the person who makes the invitation. The acceptance of the invitation, can also be readily accepted if the context for dialogue is prepared not necessarily physically but in terms of mental consciousness. It is quite obvious especially with regard to the oriental context that a response can be readily received if a question can be posed inviting a response. It is this first and basic aspect of the Dialogical Method that we will turn our attention to;

“As developed by Socrates, this conversation or quiz method, sometimes called the dialectic method has two stages. (1) the ironic or destructive phase in which, by skilful questioning, the pupil is brought from unconsciousness ignorance to conscious

³¹ J.C. Aggarwal: *Principles, Methods and Techniques of Teaching*; New Delhi; Vikas Publishing House, 1996, __

ignorance; (2) the constructive phase in which, by further questioning, the pupil is led from conscious ignorance to clear and rational truth”³²

Therefore here we see the two main parts of what the Socratic Method intended to achieve with educators and learners. However we in modern times with the emphasis on the ‘student centered learning process tend to go beyond this proposition and make dialogue a dual enriching process with both parties invited to make contributions in which the benefit flows to the entire educational setting. Thus in classrooms dialogue has achieved the obvious; it has made a relationship.

“Dialogical relations – The ‘teacher –of- the students’ and the ‘students-of – the –teacher leads to a situation wherein, there is no longer merely the one who teaches, but one is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach. They become jointly responsible for the process in which all grow.”³³

The Dialogical Method into Modern Times

The outcome of The Dialogical Method of teaching has been

³² J.C. Aggarwal: *Theory & Principles of Education; Philosophical and Socio-logical Bases of Education*; New Delhi; Vikas Publishing House, 2007,___

³³, J.C. Aggarwal: *Theory & Principles of Education; Philosophical and Socio-logical Bases of Education*, New Delhi; Vikas Publishing House, 2007,___

interpreted through the years as we shall briefly see, under this heading, for new branches to sprout out. However, the specifications for the method remains the same, founded on the aspects of ‘inviting learning’ and ‘learning together’. The following marks are input here to set a more comprehensive look at the intention suggested by this method.

“Whatever kinds of teaching and learning talk are on offer, and however the interaction is organized, teaching is more likely to be dialogic if it is:

- i. Collective- Participants address learning tasks together.
- ii. Reciprocal -Participants listen to each other, share ideas and consider alternative viewpoints.
- iii. Supportive - Pupils express their ideas freely, without fear of embarrassment over wrong answers, and they help each other to reach common understandings.
- iv. Cumulative - Participants build on answers and other oral contributions and chain them into coherent lines of thinking and understanding.
- v. Purposeful - Classroom talk, though open and dialogic, is also planned and structured with specific

learning goals in view.”³⁴

The above pointers reflect a more wholesome view of the first of the two aspects given at the outset which is the more encouraging perspective in which structured dialogue will take place. The following quotation emphasizes the ‘team work’ aspect in which a journey is undertaken which may result even in the recognition of new ideas.

“The dialogical method can be defined as a heuristical method, produced by at least two speakers, when the communication is assumed explicitly and when the reversibility of the sentences covers a range of relationships with specific terms and effects such as:

- i. Reciprocity between speaker and public, generating verbal action, communication,
- ii. Complementarity between partners (proponent - opponent), with the correlated effect – communication,
- iii. Mutuality between persons (ego - alter), which leads to ideas communion (new) and to communication based upon them”.³⁵

With these founding criteria we shall see how varied

³⁴ R. Alexander: *Towards Dialogic Teaching*; York, Dialogos, 2008, __

³⁵ M. Diaconu: *The Structure of the Dialogical Method and Role of the Teacher*; Cluj-Napoca/Klausenburg, Babeş-Bolyai-University, 2008, 74

interpretations have arisen throughout time which has enriched the idea of teaching with dialogue and discussion. In such regard the following quote is in place to identify the variations that have been built on the dialogical platform with stress on differing end results.

“In recent times, the concept of dialogic learning was linked to contributions from various perspectives and disciplines, such as the theory of dialogic action (Freire, 1970), the dialogic inquiry approach (Wells, 1999), the theory of communicative action (Habermas, 1984), the notion of dialogic imagination (Bahktin, 1981) and the dialogical self (Soler, 2004). In addition, the work of an important range of contemporary authors is based on dialogic conceptions. Among those, it is worth to mention authors like Jack Mezirow (1990, 1991, 2000) and his transformative learning theory; Michael Fielding (2001), who sees students as radical agents of change; Timothy Koschmann (1999), who highlights the potential advantages of adopting dialogicality as the basis of education; and Anne C. Hargrave (2000), who demonstrates that children in dialogic-learning conditions make significantly larger gains in vocabulary, than do children in a less dialogic reading environment.”³⁶

³⁶ *Dialogic Learning*. In Wikipedia. Retrieved July 4, 2012 from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dialogic_learning

With these we now move into the first of these interpretations that of Brazilian educator and critical pedagogist Paulo Freire in which we find the essence of dialogue to which and against the succeeding research will be conducted.

Paulo Freire's pedagogical interpretations on dialogical learning

Dialogue for Paulo Freire, who grew, lived and worked in a post colonial setting with imposed doctrines and oppressive education policies, was not merely an invention to impart knowledge into learners but an answer in which he found a mode of liberation and seeking freedom from bondage which threatened to limit free thinking. So can we find the urges of a critical mind which grew out of experience, which spread most vividly across many of his writings and especially in his work 'The Pedagogy of the Oppressed' which for a book on education received far and wide acclamation and attention across the world.

His first and most crucial point for any sort of collateral or joint learning grew from his hard held criticism against the inability of students to contribute to the education process. He emphasizes that studentship had become an 'empty vessel' which needed 'filling' by an authoritative esteemed teacher

figure who had sole authority of what was taught and supremacy over the subject knowledge. This strain of thinking he connected to the superiority claimed by colonial powers or the ruling elite, in his regard the Spanish and Portuguese invaders and subsequent indigenous dictators, who introduced the ‘telling’ system of education which only needed ‘following’ from the masses. Thus grew, as we shall see below, the popular terminology of the ‘depository’ system of teaching.

“Education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and ‘makes deposits’ which the students patiently receives, memorize, and repeat. This is the ‘banking’ concept of education, in which the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filling, and storing the deposits.”³⁷

Paul Freire’s work has made him an influential individual and thinker in critical pedagogy and much literature and comparative studies have been done on same. For the present purpose let us turn to some of the salient features that can be ascertained from the ‘Dialogical Method of teaching’ in

³⁷ Paulo, Freire: *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*; Middlesex, Sheed and Ward, 1972, __

Freirean thought.

As was mentioned before the context for dialogue in the pedagogical work of Paulo Freire rested heavily on supremacy of colonial versus colonized, of leader versus followed, of master versus slaves, of teacher versus student. In this instance there is no room for a collaborative effort it is only an implied one. Respect, Paulo Freire found was the key in which dialogue becomes reality and an actual factor without hidden agendas.

“In the dialectical unity between teaching and learning, the saying “Whoever knows, teaches the one who doesn’t” takes on a revolutionary meaning. When one who knows understands first that the process by which he learned is social and second, that in teaching something to another he is also learning something that he did not know already, then both are changed”

38

When both parties in the process realize the presence of the other as an acceptable and flexible source of knowledge, inadvertently the respect factor becomes established. Such is also the key for the ‘invitation’ to question, know, express and eventually to learn. Paulo Freire believed that even the

³⁸ Paulo, Freire: *Pedagogy in Process, The Letters to Guinea –Bissau*; New York, The Seabury Press, 1978,____

opportunity given to students to express themselves, was allowing them to take part in the decision making process rather than alienating them.

Another aspect that Paulo Freire brought into the Dialogical Method was a decisive factor which he called ‘conscientization’. Once again we must revisit his times in order to understand this particular view point.

“Dialogically the organization of the people’s consciousness takes place for their liberation. Thus it is an effort at dissolution of the identity of the educator within the mass of educatees. Education must occur spontaneously, in the course of the dialogue between educator and educatee. The role of the educator is not that of an apologetic of the system. His role is to abolish the dichotomy of teaching and learning. We do not know what the educatee should know. If we already know, before engaging in the dialogue with the educatee, then we are already part of the ideology of domination and paternalism”³⁹

Here he sought to develop the consciousness of the people, the mass crowds who were dictated to, to find their place in life. He is famous for the experiments he performed by showing a picture of daily life to the peasants and asking them to ‘name’

³⁹Paulo, Freire: *Education for Liberation*; Bangalore, Ecumenical Christian Centre Publications, 1972,___

the components in the picture⁴⁰. And the results reflected a surprising embedding with what the leadership has taught them to believe such as the worthlessness of the lower classes, the supremacy of the leadership and the slave ethic that controlled wealth and the economy. Therefore the task at hand for him was to shatter this consciousness to remake it in a fashion that elevated people into believing their value and the value they can make to society.

Closely connected to the above attempt by Paulo Freire to make dialogue a consciousness awakening tool was the foundation he based his approach on to; which was the diversity of experiences that was available in a learning environment. Each question raised each opinion shared and each view expressed is one unique to that individual. That uniqueness is symbiosis of a multitude of factors stretching from past experiences, mental capacities, awareness, backgrounds to competency levels, culture, demographics etc. Therefore even to a more uniform classroom in a western country this factor becomes a crucial one to tackle with and sometimes discussion and dialogue becomes not only the ideal method of teaching but sometimes the only approach by which an overall objective could be achieved. Therefore in this method of teaching a significant role

⁴⁰ One example was a picture of an aristocratic youth with a woman in a car and three peasants drunk after work against the backdrop of a factory and a dimly lit light post.

needs to be played by the facilitator with regard not only to what becomes visible to the student community but an intrinsic characteristic which is attitude ; attitude that breaks the 'I' mentality of his/her own approach and realize the 'many' who take part in the education process who are different.

“For an educator with this attitude there are no stupid questions or final answers. Educators who do not castrate the curiosity of their students, who themselves become part of the inner movement of the act of discovery, never show disrespect for any question whatsoever. Because, even when the question may seem to them to be ingenuous or wrongly formulated, it is not always so for the person asking it. In such cases, the role of educators, far from ridiculing the student, is to help the student to rephrase the question so that he or she can thereby learn to ask better questions” ⁴¹

In this regard we see how the educational psychological aspect becomes imperative in the education process. There does not stand any 'irrelevant' contribution even to the point of non response, which Paulo Freire termed as the 'culture of silence' which became the tool of the rulers to keep the masses at bay without thinking for themselves.

⁴¹ Antonio, Faundez, and Paulo, Freire,: *Learning to Question* ; Geneva; World Council of Churches Publications, 1989,___

And finally we come to an essential deviation in the dialogue proposed by Paulo Freire with other educators, which is the action that is given birth to by the preceded dialogical activity. For Paulo Freire dialogue becomes not only an education approach but also a way of living in which the world itself is transformed into the ideal proposed by the word. It must have been a quintessential need that arose for him and his fellow educators in an illiterate country with exploited means of economy and fear intricately woven into everyday life that he proposed action to correct these misdoings.

“Paulo Freire was concerned with praxis - action that is informed (and linked to certain values). Dialogue wasn't just about deepening understanding - but was part of making a difference in the world. Dialogue in itself is a co-operative activity involving respect. The process is important and can be seen as enhancing community and building social capital and to leading us to act in ways that make for justice and human flourishing. Informal and popular educators have had a long-standing orientation to action - so the emphasis on change in the world was welcome. But there was a sting in the tail. Paulo Freire argued for informed action and as such provided a useful

counter-balance to those who want to diminish theory”⁴²

But even when we turn our attention to education in general, maybe in different contexts we see how minimal of what is taught is practiced and put to use. Thus would have given rise to the progressive revision of the subject matter studied even under the Sri Lankan syllabuses in recent times. Furthermore at its perfection stage, dialogue accomplishes not only a talk – work methodology but rather a cyclic process of dialogue-reflection – action- dialogue which keeps on accustoming to the situation at hand and aims to better the educational process.

“As we attempt to analyze dialogue as a human phenomenon, we discover something, which is the essence of dialogue itself; *the word*. But the word is more than just an instrument which makes dialogue possible; accordingly we must seek its constituent elements. Within the word we find two dimensions, reflection and action, in such radical interaction that if one is sacrificed –even in part- the other immediately suffers.”⁴³

⁴² Smith, M. K. (1997, 2002) 'Paulo Freire and informal education', the encyclopedia of informal education. [www.infed.org/thinkers/et-freir.htm. Last update: November 04, 2009]

⁴³ Paulo, Freire: *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*; Middlesex, Sheed and Ward, 1972,___

As we have outlined above action deriving from dialogue, sensitivity to the experiential level of the learners, consciousness with the need to transform its negatives and a humbled approach with respect are key in nature as we study the contribution made to education by Paulo Freire. The Freirean pedagogy even with its opponents continues to be a challenging methodology of teaching.

Case 2 - Gandhian Morality in the Role of Conflict Transformation

Commentary

In this next example we inquire into morality, and it has been dubbed Gandhian because it embraces a nonviolent approach and due to its origin in the figure. We describe the role of morality and power in non violent conflict transformation. In this case we see ‘Being’ in the mode of one holding No Promise of the outcome. Secondly we see that it can be and is reinforced by Will and finally non violence is one of Choice in itself but rather it is what we use as a means to achieve a greater end. This reflection paper was submitted under ‘educational’ considerations due to the fact that even the educational landscape has evolved so much that conflict and transformation has become a key component been taught under our secondary syllabuses in the subject Citizenship Education. The time of morality seeping in slowly with experiences has ended and it is now the time that needs to be put on the study table.

An attempt to define terms

Morality – a personal or social set of standards for good or bad behaviour and character, or the quality of being right, honest or

acceptable

Power – 1. ability to control people and events 2. the amount of political control a person or a group has in a community, society or country

Non violent – when someone avoids fighting and physical force, especially when trying to make political, social, religious change

Political conflict – relating to politics 1. an active disagreement between people with opposing opinions or principles

2. fighting between two or more groups of people or countries

Introduction

“The goal of non violent direct action is to establish a political culture in which conflicts are managed without violence. The recent worldwide proliferation of nonviolence is itself an indication that nonviolence is the human future”⁴⁴.

Non violent action may be divided mainly into two categories. One is the pragmatic aspect where the power of the people is emphasized. And the second is the ideological non violence which is morality centered. However the present study will not

⁴⁴ Walter Wink: *The Powers that be*; New York, Galilee, 1998, 60.

concentrate heavily on these two aspects although it will be mentioned, rather an attempt will be made here to relate the components of power and morality in a political conflict when non violent intervention is made.

Context

We begin our search for the ‘role’ with an analysis of the context we are concerned with, and that is the social and political arena where conflicts more often than not occur frequently. It may be in order to question why this is so? This is so because politics and political thinking is always based on ideologies.

“An ideology begins with the belief that things can be better than they are; it is basically a plan to improve society. Followers of a given ideology argue that if their plan is followed, things will be much better than they are at present. Political ideologies, then, are not calm, rational attempts to understand political systems. They are rather, commitments to change political systems”.⁴⁵

The political stage is always more suitable to be referred to as a

⁴⁵ Michael G Roskin, Robert L Cord, James A Medeiros, Walter S Jones: *Political Science*; New Jersey, Prentice Hall, 1994, 97.

battle field where two or more parties try to impose on others their view points as to how politics could be done. Eventually this tension will lead into conflict. It is accepted that the victory of one party to ‘have its own way’ is by defeating the other. And when we talk about victory and defeat in the political scene, it means the central focus point is going to be power. The party who has overpowered the other will claim the right to ‘have its own way. The political arena becomes a stage where there is a struggle to gain this power.

“We might see power politics as a combination of goals or policies and the power necessary to achieve them. Power, in this view, is a prime ingredient of politics. It would be difficult to imagine a political system without political power.”⁴⁶

Power then is a device which enables one entity to carry out its policies and objectives. On the other hand we may come to the understanding that the main emphasis of politics is the struggle to achieve this power. In this light in political confrontations the role of power remains as a necessity that needs to be fulfilled. It becomes an objective and in this case the main objective over which conflicts are developed.

⁴⁶ Michael G Roskin, Robert L Cord, James A Medeiros, Walter S Jones: *Political Science*; New Jersey, Prentice Hall 1994, 97.

Let us consider the example of the cold war between two superpowers which became a global concern. “Contention, mistrust, and hostility between two emerging superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union, developed quickly and produced an ongoing, global, bipolar power struggle”.⁴⁷

Reasons for conflict and solutions through non violent involvement

When we come to consider the non violent approach to conflict resolution we see several theories that have emerged.

Community relationship theory explains that conflict is the result of polarization. This leads to hostility between different groups. Improving of communication and understanding with the tolerance amidst diversity will address such issues.

The human needs theory assumes that conflict is due to unmet basic human needs. In this case providing of same will transform the conflict nature.

The identity theory explains that when threatened groups/parties tend to get involved in conflict. This should be addressed also by the enhancement of understanding and care.

The intercultural theory formulates the argument that incompatible communication leads parties into confusion and

⁴⁷Wayne C Williams, Harry Piotrowski: *The World Since 1945*; London, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2001, 4.

increasing of knowledge of the 'other' and the weakening of stereotypes will improve relationships.

Given these four perspectives of non violent conflict transformation we see that the solution always stems from understanding, care, improving relationships etc. Therefore we see the emphasis for solving these issues is centralized on things which are not power. Although the power struggles have initiated such conflicts, the halting should not take the same form, rather it should resort to ethical and moral reasoning.

Models of non violent action

In history we see non violent political conflict being settled in several ways. Owing its existence to Marxist ideals one way of settling disputes have being in the suppressing of the legislative power of a government. Strikes, harthal, work to rule, go slow, calling in sick campaigns actually was done in protest to withdraw support from the employers or government. Even here the method of conflict transformation was based on people power or the force of the number of people and their hard lined attitude.

However non violence took an even profound meaning in the eyes of the great Mahatma Gandhi and followed by Martin

Luther King Jr.

“On the morning of 22 November, about one hundred and fifty thousand people assembled at Liberty Square. Opposition leaders and the Civil Disobedience Committee gave a final signal to the government to resign peacefully. It was clear that if the government used force, they would lose moral and legal power. The government refused once again and the leaders of the civic movement then made a direct appeal to the President. “if you do not resign, we will not obey you. We won’t kill you and we will face death if your order is imposed upon the people. You can have our dead bodies, but you will never have our obedience again.”⁴⁸

Graphic language as it seems but it captures the spirit of deep rooted emotion for change. The Gandhian ideology was nevertheless accompanied with certain other qualities which made it a force to reckon with.

“Gandhi believed that the force of the soul focused on, to use the Hindi, satyagraha (truth seeking), and ahimsa (non violence) could accomplish what a resort to arms could not.”⁴⁹

⁴⁸ (Ed)Paul van Tongeren, Malin Brenk, Marte Hellema, Julliette Verhoeven: *People Building Peace II*; London, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2005, 509.

⁴⁹ John T Rourke: *International Politics on the world stage*; USA, The McGraw –Hill Companies, 2003, 398.

His was what is called a Principle Ideological System where it is not used only as a ‘way’ but also as a way of life. The opponent is considered as a partner and not as an opponent. The soul force was to emanate from the following of ahimsa and the path of truth which is a moral spirituality.

“Concepts of moral behavior may stem from religious beliefs, from secular ideologies or philosophies, from standard of equity (what is fair), or from practice of a society.”⁵⁰

As discussed before political struggles are based on power, or rather who should have the power or have the ‘say’ in a matter. In non violent conflict morality itself becomes the power and transformation is the end result.

“I contemplate a mental and therefore, a moral opposition to immoralities. I seek entirely to blunt the edge of the tyrant’s sword, not by putting up against it a sharper –edged weapon, but by disappointing his expectation that I would be offering physical resistance. The resistance of the soul that I would offer instead, would elude him and at least compel recognition from him which recognition would not humiliate him but uplift

⁵⁰ John T Rourke: *International Politics on the world stage*; USA, The McGraw –Hill Companies, 2003, 301.

him”.⁵¹

These words of Mahatma Gandhi offer us a few clues as to how the concept of non violence actually becomes a force⁵². It is spirituality or a practice that will radiate as power when confronting conflicts. Evil must be overcome with good and anger by love and falsehood by truth. The non violent approach simply changes the perception of what people feel as objective of the struggle. It transforms conflict into a solution by transforming the way we think about it.

The Role of Morality and Power

“The law of violence can continue to rule only if it is met by another form of itself-by a counter threat of death or by a surrender to the fear of suffering and death. Nonviolence is neither of these. Non violence is the overcoming of death by a fearless love.”⁵³

Traditionally the focus of conflict is the defeat of the other

⁵¹ M.S Deshpande: *Light of India*, Message of the Mahatma; N/A, N/A, N/A, 160.

⁵² Comprehensive reading under this subject would also have to include the concepts of *satyagraha* as truth force/love force/soul force, *ahimsa* as the summit of bravery, *sadhana* as the perfection of this weapon. However, given the scope of this essay these will not be discussed at great length.

⁵³ James W Douglass: *The Non violent coming of God*; New York, Orbis Books,1999, 23.

party or the win –lose scenario. With non violent mediation the paradigm of our traditional understanding shifts to find a win-win situation. When power is in the centre of conflict, and victory is the only goal to be achieved, parties resort to using unfair and even immoral methods of putting the other down. This may be our human nature⁵⁴, our inability to coexist together. Because naturally in a conflict scenario we unconsciously identify the guidelines of victory as including the defeat of the other party. This becomes so through the factors of greed, non flexibility, pride, inability to move from one's own interpretation etc. But when morality comes to the aid of the parties the guidelines for victory take a different form. Or rather morality based on truth brings out within the conflict a totally neglected side. Therefore parties can then work together to solve it.

The Asian political landscape including Sri Lanka insists that parties need to be at loggerheads, and it is quite clear that it is the traditional system of using power to come /remain/oust/seek (into) power, which is in use. Political rallies, media, press conferences, newspapers all reflect one sided stories with the aim of 'killing' the morale of the other. The results are the never ending conflicts that happen during political propaganda campaigns and election times. Obviously the political parties in

⁵⁴ Walter Wink: *The Powers that be*; New York, Galilee,1998, 47.

Sri Lanka have ideological differences. And morality is never used as an instrument to settle these differences. Thereby this confusion is directly experienced and can be experienced through the decline of morality in the people.

Conclusion

Therefore we may conclude that when non violent intervention is used in political conflict, power on which we all keep hope on is devalued and certain other sign posts come up which have earlier remained 'unseen' due to the blindness caused by the greed for power. Morality may be a relative thing, what is good here may sound not so good in some other place, however when what is accepted to be good is used as a measuring stick eventually (if the parties agree) the central focus shifts to a new dimension. And thereby providing a new platform to settle differences. It is rather the old platform now evolved into something which was 'closed' to perceive earlier. Then the victor will not be the one who is the most powerful in mere power but who is ahead in reasoning moral standards. That is the main role played by morality on power in a political conflict where non violent methods of intervention are used.

CHAPTER 7

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Case 3 – Study on the Ethics of Buddhism and Christianity with regard to Abortion

Commentary

Now we turn to a moral issue in modern times with much debate and that being abortion, we study two ethical systems that may shed some light on the matter. Firstly we see that the issue of ‘Being’ in this matter is essentially a matter in which calls for the development of Virtue. Secondly with the modern debate we will see that for the pro choice movement the ‘Being’ is not at all Not Regulated and finally we see the importance of the Time Bound nature of this issue as it becomes a boiling point which induces human intervention in the matter.

“Do not kill a living being. You should not kill or condone killing by others. Having abandoned the use of violence you should not use force either against the strong or the feeble”(Suttanipata 394)

“Love your neighbour as yourself You shall not murder a child by abortion nor shall you kill a new born.” (The Didache)

Jesus said “You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, ‘You shall not murder’; and whoever murders shall be liable to judgement’. But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgement...” Even anger violates the sixth commandment.

Introduction

Abortion has been quite a talked about controversy in the west and has stealthily seeped into the east as well as an ethical issue. This study however does not concentrate on the actual concept or operation of abortion but it would stick closely to a general understanding of it. The heading itself of this essay contains three key words which are abortion, Buddhism and Christianity. In this essay neither will be researched in depth as to remain true to the actual question which is within the title and that being a comparative study. The core attempt would be to do a comparative study on the ethical foundations of two of the most prominent religions in the world Buddhism and Christianity. It is a plain fact that all the great religions in the world have a system of ethics or an ethical framework springing from the respective doctrines, dogmas, teachings and traditions. Therefore an attempt is made to ‘proportionately run through’ the general understandings of the ethical groundwork in these two religions on the subject of abortion. Even this may

prove a gigantic task as deep analysis and philosophical grounding would be needed for same. However this attempt would try to point out the main tensions and common grounds of where these two ethical frameworks stand.

Abortion the Controversy

The Cambridge dictionary illustrates the term abortion as the ‘intentional ending of a pregnancy, usually by having a medical operation. Abortion in the general sense becomes a controversial point when looking at it from the perspective of ‘taking a life away’. Arguing on these lines abortion may be better decorated with such notions of ‘murder’, ‘killing’, and ‘degrading the integrity of creation’ etc.

In recent years the abortion issue has been framed as “a debate between two sides, usually called the pro – life and pro – choice. The labels themselves are instructive. Whereas one label points our attention towards the fetus, the other emphasize the issue of the rights of the pregnant mother... Pro life supporters emphasizes the issue of the rights of the unborn, while pro choice advocates stress the importance of the rights of the pregnant woman.”⁵⁵ This debate has been centered and woven around the question as to whether the fetus ⁵⁶ is actually

⁵⁵ Lawrence M. Hinman: *Contemporary Moral Issues*; New Jersey, Prentice Hall, 1996, 37.

⁵⁶ A young human being or animal before birth, after the organs have started to develop (Cambridge Dictionary)

a person. If of course the fetus is proven to be a person then abortion would be ethically wrong. On the topic of the ‘personhood’ many facts are presented on both sides but the debate carries on and this article will not deal with this area in depth.

Apart from this the ‘rights’ of the pregnant woman, the ownership to one’s own body and the right of determining for one self have also combined in making way to abortion as a talking point. “Three principle factors have combined to make abortion the serious moral and social problem it is today: (1) abortion is a relatively low risk, pain free operation when performed by skilled medical practitioners⁵⁷, (2) there are impressive reasons prompting women to seek abortions, and (3) abortion involves terminating life of what is (minimally) a potential person endowed with some measure of value”⁵⁸

Several other issues have also been pin pointed in the abortion controversy. On medical grounds if a pregnancy is terminated the mother will experience internal hemorrhaging and may die. On psychiatric level the emotional and psychological well being of the woman may be at stake and she may be suicidal if

⁵⁷ Towards the latter part of the chapter the author does state that it has not always been so and it posed a serious threat to the woman’s life.

⁵⁸ Robert N. Wennberg: *Life in the balance*; Michigan, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990, 20.

she is forced to continue with the pregnancy. On criminal grounds pregnancies from forcible rape or incest pose serious problems to women. And for eugenic⁵⁹ reasons if a pregnancy is permitted to go to term the baby will be physically abnormal or mentally retarded. A choice then arises whether to abort the pregnancy or to give birth to a deformed child. On the socio economic scale financial circumstances make pregnancy considerably burdensome. And when considering mistakes of youth, teens with no emotional stability or maturity to carry out pregnancy may become a heavy burden on the surroundings. And on personal grounds an unwanted pregnancy may ruin chances to realize important life goals and aspirations of a woman.⁶⁰

It is quite evident even from these implications that abortion has become a field of study rather than a particular moral issue. When entering the ethical frameworks of Buddhism and Christianity there may be many insights which may be gathered to support to fight or to completely change the way abortion is looked at. However it is felt that two main questions need to be studied within the ethical frameworks of these two religions. The first of these is whether abortion (directly or indirectly) is included in the ethical frameworks and if included the

⁵⁹ Allowing of chosen human beings to procreate to improve the quality of the human race

⁶⁰ Robert N. Wennberg: *Life in the balance*; Michigan, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990, 23-26.

justification for doing so. The second would be the study of the particular aspect of the fetus according to the religious traditions as the argument has already been developed that if the personhood of the fetus is accepted then abortion would be morally wrong.

The Ethic of Abortion in Buddhism and Christianity

Central to Buddhist teaching" are the Three Refuges⁶¹ and then the observing of the precepts. "In the first instance these number five, but in particular cases and on particular occasions they are extended to eight or even ten. The Five Precepts are stated as follows

- (1) Panatipata veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami (I undertake the precept to abstain from taking of life)
- (2) Adinnadana veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami (I undertake the precept not to take that which is not given)
- (3) Kamesu micchacara veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami (I undertake the precept to abstain from misconduct in sensual actions)
- (4) Musavada veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami (I undertake the precept to abstain from false speech)
- (5) Sura meraya majja pamadatthana veramani sikkhapa-

⁶¹ Buddham saranam gacchami. Dhmmam saranam gacchami. Sangham saranam gacchami.(To the Buddha as a refuge I go; to the Dhamma as a refuge I go; to the Sangha as a refuge I go.)

dam samadiyami (I undertake the precept to abstain from liquor that causes intoxication and indolence)”⁶²

Elaborating the first of these five precepts, the Buddhist undertakes to abstain from destroying, causing to be destroyed, or sanctioning the destruction of a living being. ‘Living being’ implies anything that has life, from insects up to and including man⁶³.

The key notion underlying this precept is the respect for life⁶⁴ and the need to recognize the meaning of another life. The precept does not exclude the tiniest living being as long as it can be assessed to have life. “The extent of moral guilt in killing depends on the physical and mental development of the being that is killed and the circumstances under which the deed is committed.”⁶⁵ There are five conditions which constitutes the immoral act of killing: “(i) the fact and presence of a living being, human or animal, (ii) the knowledge that the being is a liv-

⁶² H. Saddhatissa: *Buddhist Ethics*; London, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1970, 87.

⁶³ H. Saddhatissa: *Buddhist Ethics*; London, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1970, 87.

⁶⁴ And this offence as explained in Buddhism will have adverse effects upon the offender in this life or/and in rebirth. Therefore stems the concept of non violence or the non use of injurious activity and in the same instance gives birth to one of the greatest concepts in Buddhism which is “metta” or loving kindness.

⁶⁵ H. Saddhatissa: *Buddhist Ethics*; London, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1970, 88.

ing being, (iii) the intent or resolution to kill, (iv) the act of killing by appropriate means, (v) the resulting death”⁶⁶

Abortion in the meaning of the word itself is not directly addressed in the Bible. However mercy killing, suicide and mass killing are also not directly dealt but the commandment of ‘thou shalt not kill’ (Exodus 20:13) remains the principle under which all these practices have to be taken under consideration.

Following from this commandment some vegetarians take it as a literal base and comply that God forbade the taking of any life for any cause. But it is argued that Moses who received the law commanded the taking of animal life for sacrifices and food and as the capital punishment in war. Therefore in the Old Testament this particular law meant the deliberate taking away of human life which is not authorized in the Bible.⁶⁷

However it is quite evident in the Christian tradition that abortion is looked upon as a crime “Even though there is no scriptural basis for it⁶⁸, the contemporary Church stand is strongly antiabortion. The typical churchgoer will hear

⁶⁶ H. Saddhatissa: *Buddhist Ethics*; London, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1970, 89.

⁶⁷ Robertson Mcquilkin: *Biblical Ethics*; India, OM Books, 2002, 295,296.

⁶⁸ The author dismisses the claim of abortion as illegal as the ‘Bible does not speak clearly on the matter.’

ministers, priests and bishops denouncing abortion in the strongest terms, claiming all the while to express the ‘Christian view’. It is no wonder, then, that many people will feel that their religious commitment binds to oppose abortion.”⁶⁹

The Personhood of the Fetus

The argument against abortion from the Buddhist view point can be stated as below.

“Premise one : It is wrong to take innocent life

Premise two: from conception onwards the embryo or fetus is innocent, human and alive

Conclusion – it is wrong to take the life of an embryo or fetus

In Buddhism, premise one is supplied by the First Precept, while premise two is supplied from Buddhist teachings on re birth and embryology. The conclusion follows as a matter of formal logic, if the premises are accepted the conclusion must be also”⁷⁰

In Buddhist thought it is evident that ‘life’ is accepted even at the fetus and this is due to the doctrine of rebirth. “Rather when death takes place, when the body dies away, the mental current,

⁶⁹ James Rachels: *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*; New York, McGraw and Hill, 1999, 68.

⁷⁰ Damien Keown: *“Is there a middle way” in “Buddhism and Abortion”*; London, McMillan, 1999, 207.

driven by the thirst for more existence, will spring up again with the support of a new physical body, one which has just come into being through the meeting of sperm and egg. Thus rebirth takes place immediately after death.”⁷¹

In Christian thought the question that needs to be asked is whether that the fetus the unborn life is actually an image of God.

“Most serious discussions of the biblical evidence for or against abortion wrestle with Exodus 21:22-25. When two men fight and the pregnant woman is injured so that the fetus “departs”, punishment is due for any harm that follows. Is the harm to the mother, to the premature infant, or to both ?.... majority of scholarly opinion holds that the mother ‘s injury is in view, but Luther and Calvin in their day and the great Jewish scholars today hold that harm to the fetus also demanded the *lex talionis*, eye –for- an eye punishment in the event of death.”⁷²

In passages like Psalm 139:13-16⁷³, Genesis 4:1⁷⁴, Ps. 51.5⁷⁵ it

⁷¹ K Sri Dhammanada: *What Buddhists Believe*; Taiwan, Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, 1987, 98.

⁷² Robertson McQuilkin: *Biblical Ethics*; India, OM Books, 2002, 36,37.

⁷³ For you created my inmost being; you knit in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. (NIV)

may be accepted as the life in the womb is accepted as a person, therefore it leads us to believe that some biblical passages maintain that the conception as the beginning of a person's life.

Also taking the births of John the Baptist and Jesus Christ an argument has been formed “In Luke I John the Baptist, a fetus of six months, leaps for joy (1.44) at the arrival of his cousin Jesus, in all probability a zygote and certainly no more than an embryo. Elizabeth addresses Mary as the “mother of my Lord” (1:43), not as “the future mother of my potential Lord”. Had Mary sought an abortion as a pregnant, unmarried young woman, what would have been aborted – a potential human being or the eternal Son of God?”⁷⁶

Another heavily cited passage has been from the book of Jeremiah chapter 1 “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you” also pointing to the acceptance of the personhood of life in the fetus.

Evaluation & Conclusion

Religions in a general sense are systems of beliefs that have

⁷⁴ Now the man had relations with his wife and she' conceived and gave birth to Cain

⁷⁵ In sin did my mother conceive me

⁷⁶ Robertson McQuilkin: *Biblical Ethics*; India, OM Books, 2002, 317.

been built on certain founders, experience of followers, scriptures, traditions etc. Therefore it is quite impossible for an acceptable religion to justify ethics which are morally wrong even to reason such as murder, stealing, cheating etc. From the select ideas which have got tabled so far it is quite evident that the Buddhist and Christian faiths agree as much as that of taking away of life as morally wrong. Respect for life and respect towards the nature of life has been highly emphasized. For an example the non violent means of peaceful existence was a primary teaching of the Lord Buddha and the ethical system on which Buddhism was founded on.

“Buddhist discipline is aimed at fostering moral conduct (sila), concentration (samadhi), and wisdom (panna). This is to avoid doing anything harmful whether to oneself or to any other creature. This applies even to the fetus during its period of gestation.”⁷⁷

And comparatively coming to New Testament times Jesus Christ preached the same principle in the form of love which will remain as the key element in Christian ethical thinking.

Having established the notion of ‘taking life away’ as wrong, we could conclude that both these religious traditions do agree on the acceptance of the value of human life. Next the question

⁷⁷ James P. Mcdermott: *Abortion in Pali Canon and Early Buddhist Writings* in “*Buddhism and Abortion*”, Ed Damien Keown ; London, McMillan, 1999, 160.

that needs to be answered is whether the two traditions agree on the ‘state’ of the ‘life’ in question here.

In Buddhist doctrine the fetus or life before ‘seeing the light of the world’ is accepted as a potential person and although even with conflicting perspectives the Christian faith does allocate this same personhood even to the embryo.

In conclusion we may state that the ethical grounding of the Buddhism and Christianity do agree on the two queries set at the beginning. They are how an idea can be worked on abortion out of the existing ethics of these two religions and next the personhood of the embryo which if proven (as confirmed in this study) would prove that abortion is a morally incorrect practice.

Case 4- Perspectives on the Womanhood in Buddhism

Commentary

Feminism and the world are not human constructs but definitely our response to these natural existences certainly are. The ‘Being’ in Buddhism in general bears No promise and the being of womanhood is no exception. However if at all a philosophical or religious discrimination in being cannot be regulated by the Spirit even if this is the case. And as in many such issues the being is not for itself it provides a Choice but rather for a higher purpose and in this case the natural phenomenon of life.

‘When the mind is well concentrated and the wisdom never fails does the fact of being a woman make any difference?’

King Kosala was very disappointed when he heard that his Queen had given birth to a baby girl. He had expected a boy.

To console the sad King, the Buddha said;

‘A female child, O Lord of men, may prove

Even a better offspring than a male.

For she may grow up wise and virtuous,

Her husband’s mother reverencing, true wife ,

The boy she may bear may

do great deeds, And rule great realms,

yes, such a son of noble wife becomes his country's guide,' ⁷⁸

Introduction

These two quotations carry the prospect of interpretation in a number of ways to the inquiring mind. The first may sound like a direct support against equality of women yet the chances of division are already mentioned and it all rests upon the capacity of the audience who does the interpreting. The second is once again a contradiction where the girl child is praised yet towards the end a superior being is venerated. The great religions in the world by which we mean the traditions of Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam and Sikhism have all grown up and developed as response to the teachings brought forth by each of their founders. However as teachings were preserved and passed on, it (the teachings) have not been able to withstand 'going through' the elements of life which prevailed during each period. For an example let us take Prophet Mohammad's teaching which was eventually 'wrapped up' in all elements, influences and traditions which were present in that context. Islam wherever it prevails still bears these marks which it had inherited. Then it is not difficult to realize that 'gender discrimination' was also a key element which was inculcated in all the developed religions. In this

⁷⁸ K. Sri Dhammananda: *What Buddhists Believe*; Malaysia, Buddhist Missionary Society, 1987, 228.

essay Buddhism will be analyzed in order to see the treatment of gender in it. As an article of this nature may not be enough to cover all aspects of religious perspectives and the female sex, two areas will be looked upon which are the concept of womanhood/the female and religious life/ ordination of women.

The Nature of Womanhood

According to Buddhism, it is not justifiable to regard women as inferior. The Buddha Himself was born as a woman on several occasions during His previous births in *Samsara* and even as a woman He developed the noble qualities and wisdom until He gained enlightenment or *Buddhahood*.⁷⁹

The nature of Buddhism itself is more on the lines of a philosophy rather than a 'faith'. It is unique in the sense that a great deal of rationale and logic is used to determine many pillars of the religion. "Buddhism, de-emphasizes everything that might be used to create lasting 'identities', be they male or female, and points towards the impersonal realities of *Dhamma* and *Nibbana*."⁸⁰

⁷⁹ K. Sri Dhammananda: *What Buddhists Believe*; Malaysia, Buddhist Missionary Society, 1987, 229.

⁸⁰ Klaus K. Klostermaier: *A Short Introduction Buddhism*; Oxford, Oneworld Publications, 2006, 56.

It is popular opinion that the Buddha himself never initiated any discrimination against women yet this inferiorization was due to the way interpretations were done by later communities. The cutting off of women's contributions in the early Christian Church may be considered a similar case. This was a deliberative action to make the male sex superior than the female. “..that when things are born female, it is the result of past *karma* (actions in previous existences) which cause them to be reborn in an inferior position. Females are females because they have not advanced as far, spiritually, as males. Being born male is the visible demonstration of one's moral and spiritual superiority.”⁸¹

There is of course the understanding that Buddhism was influenced by Hinduism, another religion where the female is found at a relegated position. The ‘maleness’ of the Buddha and the perfection seen through been male may have had its roots in the prevailing situation in India at that time. However when we do a detail study of the ‘highest bliss’ possible in Buddhism, quite on similar terms to eternal life in Christianity it is difficult to bypass the notion that prevails of the need to be male to achieve the *bodhisattva* stage (enlightenment). “The *Bodhisttva-bhumi* is more definite on this point. It explains that

⁸¹ (Ed) Arvind Sharma: *Women in World Religions*; Sri Satguru Publications, Delhi, 1995, 118.

a bodhisattva may be born as a woman during the first *asankheya* of his career, but not during the second and third *asankheya*. A woman can never be a Buddha. The greatest boon that a woman can crave is speedy rebirth as a man.”⁸²

Yet this is not the case in all forms of Buddhism. The ‘large vehicle’ or *Mahayana* branch holds different opinions towards this. “..that there was a gender issue in some Buddhist circles is made by the widespread (but not universal) conviction that the Buddha could only appear as a male and that a female *bodhisattva* would undergo a change of body before becoming a Buddha. On the other hand, in *Mahayana* Buddhism there is not only acceptance of a number of female *bodhisattvas* as teachers of the true *Dharma*, but the grammatical gender of *Prajna-paramita* (perfection of wisdom) is also taken as an expression of the female nature of the ‘Mother of all Buddhas’ . Several important *Mahayana* texts are ascribed to female *bodhisattvas* and there is recognition of the irrelevance of gender in questions concerning the true *Dharma*.”⁸³

It is very difficult to conclude in a matter such as this where only assumptions may be made on a few texts. The maleness

⁸² Har Dayal: *The Bodhisattva Doctrine in Buddhist and Sankrit Literature*; Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, 1932, 224.

⁸³ Klaus K. Klostermaier: *A Short Introduction Buddhism*; Oxford, Oneworld Publications, 2006, 16.

attributed to God in Christianity is quite complementary to this kind of issue. “The patriarchal Christianity that came to dominate the Christian Church in classical orthodoxy never went so far as to completely deny women’s participation in the image of God. To link woman only with the sin –prone part of the self would have been to deny her any redeemability.”⁸⁴ It is quite obvious that interpretations can mislead and cause oppression for several hundred years till new thinking is injected. However, the rationalistic nature of Buddhism and its foundation, finally has the say on reflection on the sexes. “The *Mahayana sutras* demonstrate dramatically that the man who clings to his maleness is not an enlightened being, and the woman who does not worry about changing her sex is genuinely enlightened. This is the dramatic demonstration of the meaning of emptiness.”⁸⁵

Religious life & Ordination

“Women’s position in Buddhism is unique. The Buddha gave women full freedom to participate in religious life. The Buddha was the first religious teacher who gave this religious freedom to women. Before the Buddha women’s duties had been restricted to the kitchen; women were not even allowed to enter

⁸⁴ Rosemary Radford Ruether: *Sexism and God Talk*; Boston, Beacon Press, 1993, 94

⁸⁵ (Ed) Arvind Sharma: *Women in World Religions*; Delhi, Sri Satguru Publications, 1995, 121.

any temple or to recite any religious scripture.”⁸⁶

Buddha had allowed women to prove themselves and to show that they were also on par regarding capacity just like men to attain the highest position in the religious way of attaining *Arahantahood*. “The Buddha acknowledged, according to the *Vinaya* of the *Theravada* school, that women are quite capable of becoming *arahants*, that is, persons who have attained *nirvana*.”⁸⁷

A very recent comment made by a women’s social activist needs to be stated here “Buddhism seems to have a far greater hold on societal life in general because of the values inculcated by the religion on the women, which in turn is planted with the same emphasis on their children and so on” ⁸⁸. It is quite obvious that women and in a broad sense womanhood has been a consistence loser in the face of many of the great religions in the sense that even after hundreds of years the place for women has not been awarded on equality with men. Yet it is an interesting fact to be analyzed regarding the mission that is present in Buddhism which makes it have a strong influence on

⁸⁶ K. Sri Dhammananda: *What Buddhists Believe*; Malaysia, Buddhist Missionary Society, 1987, 227.

⁸⁷ (Ed) Arvind Sharma: *Women in World Religions*; Delhi, Sri Satguru Publications, 1995, 107.

⁸⁸ Mrs. Nimalka Fernando (W&C) speaker.

where ever it is planted.

Contrary to the *Brahmanism* of his time, the Buddha taught the essential equality of the possibilities of liberation available to all. When asked whether women could reach enlightenment he emphatically affirmed it. The climax of women in religious life is Holy Orders. “The re-emergence of a monastic role for women picks up the theme of women’s liberation, their emergence into greater social prominence. The self ordained monk explicitly and flagrantly defies the established structure of authority”.⁸⁹

Holy Orders or monasticism is first encountered in Buddhism when the Buddha is visited by his aunt and foster mother *Mahapajapati Gotami* who seeks permission from the Buddha to be admitted to renounce everything to which the Buddha gives a negative impression. However on further perseverance by her and *Ananda*, Buddha’s closest associate he eventually admits them but makes them dependent on the *bhikkhus*. “*Mahapajapati* is made a *bhikkhuni* under the condition that she accepts the *attha garu dhamma* (eight heavy rules)

1. “A *bhikshuni* who has been ordained even as long as a hundred years might rise, salute, and venerate every

⁸⁹Richard Gombrich, Gananath Obeyesekere: *Buddhism Transformed*; New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1988, 41,42.

bhikshu even one who had just been ordained that very day.

2. A *bhikshuni* must not reside for the rainy season in a place where there is no *bhikshu*
3. Every half month the *bhikshuni* must ask the *bhikshi sangha* when a monk will be sent to give them exhortation to keep the eight rules and when the *Uposatha* ceremony should be performed.
4. At the end of the rainy season retreat, *bhikshuni* should report any misdeeds committed before both the *bhikshu* and *bhikkshuni sanghas*.
5. A *bkihshuni* who has transgressed an important rule must submit to formal discipline before both the *bhikshu* and *bhikshuni sanghas*.
6. After a female novice has trained for two years, she should seek ordination from both orders.
7. A *bhikshuni* must not abuse or revile a *bhikshu* in any way.
8. A *bhikshu* may admonish a *bhikshuni* , but no *bhikshuni* may admonish a *bhikshu*.”⁹⁰

Later the Buddha also agreed to let the *bhikkhunis* receive the *upasampada*, which is the higher ordination, but they still had to be ordained by *bhikkhus*, not by *bhikkhunis*.

⁹⁰ (Eds) Sallie B. King, Christopher S. Queen: *Engaged Buddhism*; Albany, State University of New York Press, 1996, 261.

“However, by imposing rules on nuns which would place them in a permanently inferior position in all their interactions with monks, the monks reserved for themselves the control and leadership of the entire *samgha*. Undoubtedly such a desire to exercise authority over nuns rather than to accept complete assimilation with them came from traditional ideas about the proper relative positions of men and women prevailing in India at the time.”⁹¹

One of the best supporting evidence for this kind of prejudice may be the establishment of orders for nuns in the Roman Church. Although included in separate monasticism they are quite dependent on the male hierarchy. And although right throughout Christian history women have contributed towards development yet their parts have been omitted. “The dynamics of the repression of women’s leadership and the continuing oppression of enslaved and poor people, especially of women, in the name of Christianity are historically intertwined and have the same roots in the patriarchal structures of dominance and submission.”⁹²

⁹¹ (Ed) Arvind Sharma: *Women in World Religions*; Delhi, Sri Satguru Publications, 1995, 108.

⁹² Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza: *In Memory of Her*; London, SCM Press, 1983, 250.

Evaluation & Conclusion

If a question is asked whether Buddhism is also a religion which suffered at the hands of women discrimination, the answer would be in the affirmative. Not only were the doctrinal bases influenced by it but also the visible aspects of religious life. However if a question is asked about the place for women in Buddhist society in a country such as Sri Lanka, the answer may be quite contrary to the above. Motherhood is looked upon on similar terms as godliness upon earth and womanhood in general is identified as a state of virtue and goodness. It would be wrong to assert that the whole Sri Lankan society is keeping the same kind of attitude towards womanhood but this is expressed based on the common understanding (prevailing among Buddhists in general), experienced by the writer. It is quite relevant to state that Buddhism as a rationalistic philosophy has indeed paved the path for giving women their long due place in society. It follows that when logic is concerned rather than practicalities plus faith traditions gender barriers tend to cease. Women's high percentage in education and work and also leadership and contribution to economy and society has been thoroughly influenced by it. Therefore it is felt that the followers of Buddhism (limiting to Sri Lanka) have been able to differentiate between the rational defence of women equality and religious understanding influenced by history.

CHAPTER 8

THEOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Case 5 - Insights of Lynn De Silva for Theological landscaping

Commentary

In the world and works of Lynn De Silva culminates an aspect both amazing and bold at the same time. It's the ability of intellectual compromise. For him the 'Being' of religions and religious truth is essential and secondly it has to promote change thus it religious truth is a Prolegomena in this matter mainly in understanding. And finally we see once again the issue of debate not being for the mere sake argument and it does instill Choice as any religion student may bear witness and this needs a permeating effect in life.

Introduction

“Theology is a living thing and has to do with our very existence as human beings in a particular situation and therefore, must be related to traditional beliefs, classical expressions of faith and cultural forms. Theology is not an intellectual activity that takes place in the seclusion of a class

room, but a human activity that takes place in a culture; it is not a theoretical science with a fixed structure of thought applicable to all times and all places, but one that is dynamic and mobile and adaptable to the changing circumstances”⁹³

This is the definition of theology given by Rev. Dr. Lynn De Silva who has been a prominent exponent in theologizing in the real Sri Lankan context with relation to the richness of faiths and cultures prevalent within same. In his pilgrimage as a minister, teacher, writer, researcher, truth seeker and scholar of comparative studies he ventured into the then fairly new area of contextualization and experienced the richness and validity of different cultures and faiths. This, he used both as a complimentary element as well as a critique. Single essays may not be sufficient to welcome and evaluate his approach and findings in his theological journey. Same insufficiency would come up if a study was done on his major emphasis, that being the study of comparative Christianity and Buddhism. This study focuses to run on the lines of one of his key approaches that being inculturation⁹⁴ on which he was able to develop concepts in comparative studies. Inculturation, leaving alone the definition given in the footnote may be explained in many a

⁹³ Lynn De Silva: *Emergent Theology in the Context of Buddhism*; Colombo, Ecumenical Institute for Study and Dialogue, 1979, 1.

⁹⁴Concerned with the process of proclaiming and explaining the gospel in a language a particular people understands (de Mesa 1979)

way. However as regards the aims of this essay, our point of view on inculturation, runs on a similar understanding that of 'being in a culture'. It involves the ability to 'be' and 'experience' a given culture. It follows the simple assumption that to 'be' in a culture is to accept up to some level the richness and validity of same. In this essay several instances are highlighted where Lynn De Silva was able to use culture and 'being in a culture' for effective communication and widening of horizons. And on a recommendatory level we shall see the need for the element of inculturation in theological education.

existence as human beings....

"Lynn De Silva was born in Sri Lanka on 16th June 1919. He was educated here and abroad in the United States, England and India. In 1950, he was ordained minister in the Methodist Church and later took over the Anglican Study Centre which later came to be known as the Ecumenical Institute for Study and Dialogue and was the editor of the Centre's journal, *Dialogue*. During the course of his life, De Silva was also a teacher, lecturer, researcher, editor and author of eight books and numerous pamphlets, and co translator of the Bible into Sinhala. His works on *Christianity and Theravada Buddhism*, include *The problem of self in Buddhism and Christianity* which is perhaps his greatest contribution to both Buddhist-

Christian dialogue and to Asian Theology. In addition, he was active in ecumenical ventures as well as in dialogue with other faiths and ideologies. He was a member of the Central Committee of the WCC. He was a visiting lecturer at Selly Oak College, Birmingham, in the year 1970-71. He passed away on 22nd May 1982.”⁹⁵

traditional beliefs, classical expressions of faith and cultural forms.

Lynn De Silva’s initiative to scan the Sri Lankan environment for new expressions of the Christian faith was not born as a theoretical tactic to tackle barriers to evangelism but rather an experience centered need. His broad minded understanding of faith, as response to God, enabled him to venture into the rich diversity of culture that Sri Lanka has inherited.

“He tried to construct a theology within the context of Buddhism in Sri Lanka. He looked for ways to express Christian thought using Buddhist concepts, that is, through sensitive dialogue, to re conceptualize Biblical revelation within the Buddhist context. Such dialogues take place on three interrelated levels: the intellectual, the experimental and the

⁹⁵ Franklin J. Balasunderam: *The Prophetic Voices of Asia (Part II)*; Sri Lanka, Centre for Society and Religion, 1994, 114.

socio political.”⁹⁶

As an ardent Christian theologian he had been firmly fixed on his own faith and through the strength which he derived from it, he was able to broaden his horizons in search of the truth. A classic example of an open minded person, so deeply rooted in one's faith that he was able to embrace the faith of another devoid of suspicion with the sole purpose of enriching what had already been built up in him. He found his most ideal source in Buddhism the major religion in Sri Lanka and which even today is considered quite opposite to Christianity (within certain circles).

“The need for restating Christian Theology in relation to other faiths in Asia has been stressed over and over again. We have an important theology that does not make sense in the context in which we are living in Sri Lanka. There are deep insights in Buddhism that can enrich Christian thinking, but Christians have been afraid of having to do anything with Buddhism”⁹⁷

not an intellectual activity but a human activity...an activity

⁹⁶ (Eds) John c. England, Jose Kuttianimattathil, John Mansford Prior, Lily A. Quintos, David Suh Kwang –sun, Janice Wickeri: *Asian Christian Theologies(Vol I)*; New York, Orbis Books, 2002, 482,483.

⁹⁷ Lynn De Silva: *Emergent Theology in the Context of Buddhism*; Colombo, Ecumenical Institute for Study and Dialogue, 1979, 1.

which takes place in a context

Now we do a brief analysis of some of his major emphases in the field of theological thinking.

1. One major contribution of Lynn De Silva has been to relieve the tension between Buddhism and Christianity in his approach of treating them as complementary elements rather than confusion points. His major tool for the alleviation of this tension was the attempt he made to ground both the religious traditions in a common frame. It was at this juncture where he tried to relate the religious truths in applicable ways, applicable to the common culture. On the subject of what the Christian attitude towards Buddhism should be, Rev. De Silva states that the arrogant and exclusive attitudes to other faiths which still prevail has only served to antagonize them and naturally they come to despise the Christian faith. A change of attitude is therefore essential.⁹⁸

2. Then in the doctrinal sphere his work of comparative study has been immense and he was able to 'complete' or 'add' to any shortfall that may have been present in many doctrinal thinking especially in the two religions in question. However he will always be remembered as a pioneer in the study of the

⁹⁸ Lyn De Silva: *The Buddhist Challenge and the Christian Response in Logos*, Vol 8, No. 2; Colombo, Aquinas University College, 1967, 7.

‘self’ concept in the two religions. “In Asia it was Lynn De Silva who pushed the doctrinal confrontation to its ultimate limit. His investigation into Buddhist theory of reincarnation led him to revise his Protestant views on eschatology. But his most daring achievement was the theological appropriation of the Theravada doctrine of *Anatta* – the non existence of a human or any soul.”⁹⁹

3. Spirituality or the response to one’s faith has always been a conflict point among various religious, but Lynn De Silva was able to articulate a common ground based on the integration of various diverse thinking patterns. “What he believes as a model acceptance is the understanding of holy worldliness¹⁰⁰ consisting of the three dimensions of mutuality, non egoity, and transcendence will perhaps lead us to participation in a common spirituality linking inwardness with action, solitary contemplation with mutuality and transcendence with social involvement community within communities.”¹⁰¹

4. His understanding of ministry was once again reinforced by turning attention to ‘being in a culture’. He has re defined evangelism in the context in which the Church is operational in

⁹⁹ Aloysius Peiris: *Love meets Wisdom*; New York, Orbis Books, 1988, pg 84.

¹⁰⁰ Simultaneous involvement in the world through participation in a reality that takes one beyond this world.

¹⁰¹ Lynn De Silva: *Christian Community within Communities in J.RF Carter Religiousness in Sri Lanka*; Colombo, Marga Institute, 1979, pgs 299,300.

non Christian lands. In that light, he poetically composes the following. “The grain of wheat must fall into native soil; it must die: it must take root in that soil: it must grow and bring forth its own fruit. What we need is not Christianity in Ceylon, but a Ceylonese Christianity. The Gospel must be put in earthen vessels made of the clay in Ceylon.”¹⁰² Through which he highlights the need to be aware and to be immersed in the very life of a society or country.

“The role of the Church in the world is to work for the Kingdom of God which is understood as a community of love, a ‘divine commonwealth’ an open society which can accommodate the riches of all traditions and cultures. The Church will be the nucleus of this community of love and will facilitate all religions to grow and develop those elements within them which promote the growth of the divine commonwealth within their own culture”¹⁰³.

5. Probably the most crucial message that could be learnt from the Rev. De Silva is the dire need to understand, study and give importance to the culture, language and idiom of the other in the other’s own context. “While the idioms of religions are different, they are mutually not exclusive and are often

^{102, 88} Lynn De Silva: *The Buddhist Challenge and Christian Response in Logos*, Vol 8 No.2; Colombo, Aquinas University College, 1967, pg 10

complementary. Thus, for an example, Christianity speaks of liberation through love while Buddhism speaks of liberation through knowledge. However, Christianity does not belittle the role of knowledge for liberation as it considers meditation as a means of purifying and cultivating the mind. And Buddhism has the elements of love as it advocates *metta* (a loving attitude)) and *karuna* (a loving involvement)”¹⁰⁴. Therefore he argues that ‘liberation’ set forth by Christianity and Buddhism are not contradictory, but rather needs to be taken as a whole. In a similar way he illustrates the Buddhist doctrine of *anatta* (no self, no soul) and the Christian denial of self, to unite and proposed a ‘joint’ ideology towards liberation. Based on these premises he worked towards his most groundbreaking study which was about the ‘self’. “The understanding of *anatta* and *pneuma* enables us to see these two concepts not in contrast but in relation –*anatta-pneuma*. Each is enriched and deepened by the other. From the psycho –physical point of view *anatta* means the rejection of an immortal soul within man. This is a corrective to the wrong notion that has invaded popular Christian thinking. However, the *pancakkhanda* analysis seems to reduce man to a *pscho* –somatic organism. But *pneuma* points to a dimension that cannot be exhausted by such an analysis; it signifies that extra dimension of finite life which is

¹⁰⁴ Franklin J. Balasunderam: *The Prophetic Voices of Asia (Part II)* ; Sri Lanka, Centre for Society and Religion, 1994, pg 116.

constitutive of authentic being that makes a man more than a bundle of aggregates or an unusually complex animal.”¹⁰⁵

These points are in no way a composite of the contribution of Lynn De Silva to theological thinking, but rather a few examples where his approach of inculturation has initiated and achieved an openness to ‘think outside the box’.

Let us take another example where culture or rather another’s culture has provided him with a more profound understanding far strengthening inherited knowledge. “The Buddhist parable¹⁰⁶ should serve as a corrective sentimental way in which Christians think about the gospel parable. Forgiveness does not mean that one is absolved of discipline and is instantaneously transformed into a perfect being. It does not mean that we can keep on sinning and obtain free pardon by merely confessing our sins. Forgiveness does not mean that we cease to be sinners. Rather, it means that we are encouraged to be saints. It means that the barriers to a relationship are removed so that through faith one can enter into the path of holiness which is the beginning of a new life the proof of which is seen in “good works”. A relationship of discipline and

¹⁰⁵ Lynn A. De Silva: *The Problem of the Self in Buddhism and Christianity*; Colombo, The Study Centre for Religion and Society, 1975, 15.

¹⁰⁶ Lotus Sutra a Buddhist version of the story of the prodigal son

service.”¹⁰⁷

His comparative study on various aspects of religion can be found especially in the book titled ‘Emergent Theology in the Context of Buddhism’. There he talks of *tilakkhana* (three marks of existence) and the human predicament comparatively with the Biblical understanding of the same subject. Also he investigates the relationship between creator and creature and other aspects such as resurrection, eternal life and social ethics. In all of this we can see the hallmark of Lynn De Silva which is readiness to scan the environment around for better understanding. His choice of Buddhism may have been inspired in some way but the same creativeness may be achieved through any other religion or culture.

not a theoretical science with a fixed structure...but one that is dynamic and mobile

Today in the 21st century it has not been difficult to admit that theology and theologizing should be components that needs to move or rather ‘go with the time’. The perennial thinking has lost much of its flavour and even the Christian circles which were cast out by the heavy weights due to their lack of

¹⁰⁷ L.A De Silva: Why Cant I Save Myself; Colombo, Dialogue Publications, 1966, 38.

flexibility, are opening up to the need to be more broad minded¹⁰⁸. The ‘going with the times’ has been able to relate many an aspect such as history, sociology, anthropology etc. with theologizing. Another probable aspect to list with the above may be culture, as so clearly demonstrated by Lynn De Silva through his inculturation approach. Culture is defined in the Cambridge (2003) dictionary as the way of life, especially the general customs and beliefs of a society. And evidently Asia seems to provide more impetus for study ‘in culture’ due mainly to its diversity. Now it is a common feature in many theological syllabuses that Asian Theology appears as a subject. Asian Theology, with more stress on culture, religion and way of life has been able to open new avenues in theological thinking the world over.

In recent years theological curriculum also includes subjects such as ‘understanding society’ ‘outline of major religious traditions’ and ‘history’. Inclusion of these may inspire keen students to venture beyond popular Christian ministry and to be theologians in their own right contributing on a more grand scale to human spiritual development and conflict transformation. It is in that light that Lynn De Silva’s contribution becomes vital to our own theological reflection. The ‘how’ of the whole concept maybe debatable but certainly

¹⁰⁸ Writer’s point of view in a generality in our context to the prayer of Jab-ez

the concept itself may be injected at least to some theological subjects. When education becomes exclusive the outputs of education become accustomed to thinking in a vacuum with the inability to associate with significant factors outside their comfort zones.

Conclusion

Lynn De Silva's work does not reflect much on the aspect of theological education itself but incidentally through his work we are left with an approach. An approach which makes the Christian faith more native and applicable, more interactive and viable. This has been his signature on theological thinking and it has left behind a dynamic and different way in which to understand and theologize. With this thinking subsequent strains of how Jesus and Paul reacted with their respective surroundings resonate soundly in the ears of the keen pedagogist. And when reflection is done under these circumstances the advantage of stumbling onto new fields and breaking boundaries leading into innovative assessments may be expected.

Case 6 - The Ideologies of the Sixteenth Century Reformers

Commentary

The Reformation has been discussed when we looked into the ‘Being’ of the Church and possibly no other movement is more suitable for us to understand the importance of ‘Being’ than it. We will clearly see that it bore No Promise of blooming but it was Reinforced and the revolution became very much possible because of the Dependent nature on other reformers. Primarily this was the case not because of the number of the theologians or the reformers but by the force that was ignited through places across Europe in a unified sense.

“I see a golden age dawning in the future” ¹⁰⁹

Desiderius Erasmus (c.1469-1536)

Introduction

This essay, based on the given title, need to focus on two main aspects, one would be the main thinkers and actors behind the Christian reformation begun in the 16th century and secondly their interpretation of the Christian Scripture the Holy Bible. It

¹⁰⁹ R. Tudur Jones: *The Great Reformation*; Wales, Bryntirion Press, 1997, 21.

would not be unjust, to give special mention to Erasmus the ‘Father of Humanism’ and his initiative in Biblical scholarship which paved the way and laid a sturdy foundation for the later reformers. The title also implies that, Humanism with an optimistic view of humanity/its ability and the central position of human beings in creation (thus encouraging the study of Humanities), directed the thinking pattern of that time towards the ‘basics’ and the ‘preliminaries’, and had had a hand in the Reformation. This will also be dealt briefly within the limitations of this article. There is no doubt, that even the handling of the Biblical interpretation of one thinker, could be expounded through many voluminous works (as it has been done on various occasions), and the understanding and focus given below is merely a snap shot within this great tradition of ‘interpreting the interpreters’.

*Erasmus & the New Learning*¹¹⁰

“The illegitimate son of a priest, he was constrained, after an illness, to enter a monastery in 1486. But he found the monastic life most uncongenial, and the monks ignorant, petty minded and quite uninterested in the new learning. Later he was

¹¹⁰ In this instance this word is used to the impetus in education made possible by the Renaissance. Humanism would be a specific branch of this movement. Towards the North of the Alps, Humanism dwelt on Christian Scripture and towards the South, more on the Classical works.

allowed to leave his monastery and lead the life of a secular priest and scholar.”¹¹¹

For an individual with a beginning, such as mentioned above, the fame and recognition which embraced him towards the latter part of his life and beyond, signifies a tremendous work ethic and a rich and effective contribution towards religious education on his part as a scholar. He was an individual who prized his relationships; especially the ones with the rich and educated and who, throughout his career had a circle of admirers and friends in high positions¹¹². In an age, where the renaissance and intellectualism brought new light into varied spheres of life, these relationships enabled and empowered the cause of scholarly output by this great individual.

Such being the valuation of Erasmus in his contemporary times, we now concentrate on his work. He provided, a historical picture of Jesus and through which also, a pattern to follow for the common masses the faithful. He was an ardent, yet careful

¹¹¹ M. E Gibbs: *From Jerusalem to New Delhi*; Madras, The Christian Literature Society, 1978, 145.

¹¹² to name a few with whom he had deep acquaintances were the Englishmen Thomas More (1478-1535), John Colet (c.1467-1519), John fisher (1469-1535) and Johannes Huszgen 1482-1531 who was his literary secretary. In France Guillaume Bude (1468-1540), Lefevre d’Etaples (1455-1529) and Cardinal Ximenex in Spain were his was an ardent supporters. It is mentioned that he also enjoyed, support of the highest authorities of the Roman Catholic Church which eventually gave him dispensation from his monastic vows to pursue a secular career.

protester and critic against the ritual nature of the Christian faith, which at that time had overshadowed true pietism and the original teachings of Christ. This made him stress on the simplicity of Christianity, and his effort of ‘reforming’ the Church, was to be arrived at, through education. This was undertaken by Erasmus together with other contributions to Christian learning in this period, when for the first time he printed the New Testament in its original Greek language, earmarking it from the Latin Vulgate for a more discerning audience.

“Erasmus also prepared editions of the works of the early Christian fathers, a labour which made it possible for the scholars to compare the Church as they knew it with the Church as it existed in the first three centuries. He also showed his prowess as a writer for a more extensive public in his *Praise of Folly*, wittily exposing human weakness and vice, while in his *Colloquies* he brilliantly castigated the superstitions of a popular piety. In a more serious vein, he offered a guide to Christian living in his *Enchiridion*.”¹¹³

Many of the great Christian scholars of the New Learning, who were inspired by the Renaissance, faced the conflict and

¹¹³ R. Tudur Jones: *The Great Reformation*; Wales, Bryntirion Press, 1997, 24, 25.

contradiction, between the Church they witnessed at that time from the Church they studied and was revealed in the New Testament. Erasmus echoed the call of Humanism ‘ad fontes’, in his approach to theological studies and this was simply a ‘paradigm shift’ invitation, upon Christians to return to the Bible and understand it in its pure and original meaning.

“There were three elements in Erasmus’s position which the radicals¹¹⁴ could appropriate. The first was the way in which he envisaged the restoration of primitive Christianity. The central point for him was not, as for Luther, doctrine of justification by faith, but the pattern of New Testament behaviour, the exemplification of the Sermon on the Mount, the literal imitation of Christ. The second point was aversion to dogma, whether cold from Rome or hot from Wittenburg. Deeds are more important than creeds, and the amount of belief necessary for salvation cannot exceed the comprehension of the most obtuse. The third principle was inwardness, the spirit against the flesh and the spirit against the letter.”¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ Although it cannot be handled at length, several literature pin point Erasmus (after his death) as the ‘Father of Anabaptism’. Undoubtedly he being a ‘middle man’ would not by any chance have obliged to such a title! Yet this could be due to the fact that the Anabaptists utilized and took to extremes the foundations of Humanism.

¹¹⁵ Roland H, Bainton: *The Reformation of the Sixteenth Century*; London, Hodder and Stoughton Limited, 1953, 69,70.

Erasmism and the Reformers

As we handle this topic, it is also pertinent to note the effect, Erasmus would have had on himself, as the ‘concept of reform’ crept into every sphere of life through the inroads made by the reformers. Whilst Humanism and Erasmus, were able to shed new light on reinterpretation of the Bible, it is felt that neither accompanied the reformed theology to the extent it did in the minds of the main characters of the revolution. Therefore Erasmus was in such a situation, of tension trying to balance the Catholic and reformed thought schools together with the explosion of new thinking, education and rationality.

“Although the Catholics regarded him in the heat of the struggle as the corrupter of the Church, the Protestants as the betrayer of the Gospel, yet his word of moderation and kindness did not pass unheard or unheeded on either side. Eventually neither camp finally rejected Erasmus. Rome did not brand him as an arch heretic, but only warned the faithful to read him with caution. Protestant history has been studious to reckon him as one of the reformers”¹¹⁶.

In general, both Erasmus and the reformers could be

¹¹⁶ Johan Huizinga: *Erasmus and the Age of Reformation* ; New York, Harper Touchbooks , 1957,192.

categorized under the title ‘Humanists’, but one distinction would be, that he (Erasmus) emphasized on the free will of the human being and he stressed that humans need the grace of God towards salvation but they should choose to repent. Such school of thought has been agreed upon as philosophical humanism and it runs for most of the time on Roman Catholic lines.

“Erasmus followed earthly, rather than heavenly light. He cared for the religion of Christ, and he loved scholarship. From some of his expressions one or the other might seem his chief care. But, with him, both belonged to the same quest of rational truth. He followed letters; as a scholar also he studied the Scripture, still seeking to establish the surest record of the Faith.”¹¹⁷

On the other hand other reformers like Luther, Calvin and Zwingli are called theological humanists, and especially for Luther, only God has free will and we are deprived from such liberty and free influence by God or evil.

“Probably the most important split in those early years was that between Luther and Erasmus. Luther made much use of the New Learning of the humanists, and many of them in turn were impressed by his teachings. But after a heated debate between

¹¹⁷ Henry Taylor: *Erasmus and Luther*; New York, Collier Books, 1962, 58.

Luther and Erasmus on the freedom of the will of sinful man, the majority of the humanists decided to remain within the Catholic Church, hoping to cleanse it from inside.”¹¹⁸

The Reformers and the use of Christian Scripture

Erasmus was a friend of Ulrich Zwingli and it is noted that Zwingli preached on Erasmus’s New Testament. There is also sufficient evidence to state that Luther himself used it for his theologizing. Let us now, considering the positive impact made by Erasmus on the reformers, seek as to how they (the reformers) used same for their theological contributions. Due to the limitation of space three primary reformers will be illustrated with a method for which they used the Bible in their theology.

Firstly, it is important to note that the reformers drew inspiration from the Bible; it was to be for them the centre of the Christian faith. They envisioned strength, derived from it which should and would replace, all other mediations that were within the Church framework.

“It is very evident, from surveying the history and the writings of the Reformers, that their strength and success, both as

¹¹⁸ Alan Thompson: *New Movements*; London, SPCK, 1995, 11.

defenders of divine truth and maintainers of God's cause, and also as men engaged, amid many difficulties in the practical business of the Church and the world, and in the administration of important affairs, arose very much from their familiar and intimate acquaintance with the word of God-the whole word of God."¹¹⁹

Secondly, the reformers used the Christian Scriptures, foremost and as it would become for the most sharpest distinction caused by the reformation, which was for the bringing out of a reformed theology. This is a task which keeps getting enriched and developed, even to this day, however as history records, it was the Augustinian Monk Luther who read and re- read the Bible to exposit varied and challenging theological view points.

"In May, 1515, he (Luther) began to lecture on Paul's Epistles to the Romans, and pondered, the verse (I,17) 'The just shall live by his faith.' All at once, so forcibly that he believed it a revelation of the Holy Ghost, the thought dawned upon him that whereas man was impotent to do or be good, God was able freely to make him so. Pure passivity in God's hands, simple abandonment to His will was the only way of salvation; not by

¹¹⁹ William Cunningham: *The Reformers and the Theology of the Reformation*; Pennsylvania, The Banner of Truth Trust, 1967, 606.

works but by faith in the redeemer was man sanctified.”¹²⁰

A third aspect, for which the Bible was used by the reformers, was to correct and bring back to basics, the ethics and traditions which have got interwoven with the Church causing dissatisfaction to the congregations. While at the same time new thinking was extracted through the Bible, it was used as a tool of evaluation and this brought about a sharp contrast between the varied denominations (ritual –wise) as it can be still observed today.

“Zwingli’s preaching in the Minster, magnetic in it’s drawing power and persuasive in its impact on the citizens, was centered in a systematic exposition of the Bible, and was based on the startling proposition later made explicit in *The First Helvetic Confession*: ‘Canonic Scripture, the Word of God, given by the Holy Spirit and set forth to the world by the prophets and Apostles, the most perfect and ancient of philosophies, alone contains perfectly all piety and the whole rule of life’. He attacked abstinence from meat during Lent, pilgrimages to holy Shrines, adoration of relics, masses for the dead, invocation of Mary and the Saints and celibacy of monks and priests.”¹²¹

¹²⁰ Preserved Smith: *The Age of the Reformation*; New York, Henry Holt and Company, 1920, 65.

¹²¹ Harry Emerson Fosdick: *Great Voices of the Reformation*; New York, Modern Library, 1952, 157.

It was mentioned at an earlier point the vastness of this subject, (of reformers and the use of Christian Scripture) and there may very well be many other interpretations that could be derived from history. However, as a final point, another aspect relevant to this topic could be derived from the French Calvin who among other reformers established the procedure of commentary. This in turn would open Biblical scholarship to a wider audience and would endorse the participation of other interested parties. Also it would open avenues for new theological thinking and preaching.

“He has left us an exposition of nearly the whole word of God, and it is not only immeasurably superior to any commentary that preceded it, but it has continued ever since, and continues to this day to be regarded by all competent judges, as a work of the highest value, and as manifesting marvelous perspicacity and soundness of judgement”.

Conclusion

A new age, prophesized by Erasmus did dawn upon Christendom, the ‘goldenness’ of same however will be debated by various constituent members. This new age marked and to this day resounds the object of controversy prevalent at

that time, that being interpretation. However, it is quite obvious that Erasmus played a major part in Biblical scholarship and his interpretation of the Christian faith, mingled with Humanist ideals opened up a river of possibilities, on which equally great thinkers sailed their ships. And down to this modern day we the inheritors of the Christian tradition and faith have enjoyed the labours and initiatives of these individuals. Humanism did cry out for a ‘back to basics’, yet this move was stretched and enlarged in great proportion, serving in bringing a spectrum of views.

CHAPTER 9

MISSIOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Case 7- D T Niles on Ecumenical Evangelism

Commentary

In the outlook of the theologian D. T Niles Ecumenism and Evangelism mix together to develop Virtue and even most notably the need for Reinforcement. For a visionary mission his life and work stand witness to the true need we feel direly even today for a unified image of the Church, a unified mission of the members of the Church and finally like other concepts it was not a an end in itself but a far higher goal that was in the offering. His methodology and missiology instills Choice if the call for mission is unheeded we remain as we are stagnant and with excuse.

Introduction

Daniel Thambirajah Niles, a Sri Lankan, was Asia's special contribution to the Christian world at large. His contributions made radical changes both in the Asian Church as well as the World Council of Churches. His rise to prominence in the ecumenical ministry was described as phenomenal. He was one

of the founding ‘fathers’ of the East Asia Christian Council (later known as Christian Council of Asia CCA). In this organization he served both as the first General Secretary and the President of the Council. He was a prolific writer, pioneer in ecumenism and a great Church leader with a prophetic vision.

“He was born on the 4th of May 1908 in Jaffna in Sri Lanka. His Methodist heritage enabled him to offer the best in Methodism in his ecumenical ministry. He finished his graduate studies at the United Theological College, Bangalore and later obtained a doctorate from the University of London. His emphases are: on ‘experiential religion’¹²² on the centrality of the Bible, and the concern for unity and ecumenism”¹²³.

“He was General Secretary and Chairman of EACC from 1957- 68 and Chairman of the Northern district Jaffna and President of the Methodist Conference of Sri Lanka during 1968 – 70. And one of his greatest honours was to be elected as the member of the presidium of the WCC.”¹²⁴

“He served as Executive secretary for the department of

¹²²Experiential religion was the centrality he gives to the personal dimension of the Christian faith, the need for a personal encounter with Jesus Christ but not to be confused with the individualistic and world renouncing pietism.

¹²³ S Batumalai: *Asian Theology* ; New Delhi, ISPCK, 1991, 219.

¹²⁴ S Batumalai: *Asian Theology* ; New Delhi, ISPCK, 1991, 225.

evangelism in the WCC (1953- 1959). He was Chairman of the World Student Christian Federation from, 1953-60 and Principal of Jaffna College during 1955- 1961.”¹²⁵

His main emphasis lay in the field of evangelism. The vast collection of writings he contributed confirms this claim. Although his central theme was evangelism it was not built in seclusion. He always tried to place it in the real context and amidst numerous factors. It is in this light that he is still regarded as a great visionary.

Evangelism

It is acknowledged that the main impulses for evangelism came from his family heritage, from the evangelical tradition of his Church, and from the SCM, in which he received ecumenical vision and training.

“The search for an answer to the insistent question of ‘how do I commend my Saviour to other?’ led him to undergo theological training in Bangalore Union Theological College. His book ‘The uniqueness of Christ and the presentation of His message’ introduces the motive and reason for evangelism. There he

¹²⁵ S Batumalai: *Asian Theology* ; New Delhi, ISPCK, 1991, 223.

examines four¹²⁶ of the generally offered answers.”¹²⁷

For D.T Niles the Church’s evangelistic task was to be involved with the divine mission, for it is determined and controlled by that mission. It is here that Niles teaches us a very important lesson in that evangelism should be contained in a greater container of mission, and evangelism should be supported by it.

“ based on his understanding of historical and secular nature of the divine redemptive action, the mission of the church is also conceived by Niles in relation to the secular tides of history. Secondly, by interpreting Christian mission in secular terms, Niles attempted to check the pietistic and fundamentalist orientation of the Christian community in Sri Lanka. Thirdly, religions are important aspects of the Asian reality. With the help of dialectical theology, Niles presented a more differentiated conception of the Christian encounter with other religions. There is continuity and discontinuity within the universal salvific activity of God. Niles discerns the distinctiveness of identity and the newness of the Christian community in society as the sign and bearer of God’s

¹²⁶ To make one’s personal religious experience the basis for evangelism, Christ alone can satisfy the spiritual longings of the human heart, the Biblical command Mt. 28:19-20 where evangelism is justified, Christ as the greatest and noblest of the founders of religion.

¹²⁷ S Batumalai: *Asian Theology* ; New Delhi, ISPCK, 1991, 221.

revelation”.¹²⁸

Here he tries to understand evangelism as part of the salvific activity of God. Firstly, he investigates secular movements in history through which the redemptive activity of God may be seen. Then he critiques the secluded Christian community who has become so because of their non participation in the affairs of the society. Next, importantly even for a hard line evangelist he tries to understand the rich religiosity prevailing in the country. He attempts to see where other religions have also contributed to the salvific mission of God. And through that he brings out the distinctive nature of the Christian community and thereby explains the mission and purpose of same.

Response

D.T Niles was among many other things also a very comprehensive thinking. For him evangelism was not a subject to be dealt separately. We see the true genius of the person as he identified certain hindrances to evangelism.

1. One main barrier he mentions is Colonialism. We are all familiar with his evergreen statement that the pot of western influence carrying the plant of Christianity should now be

¹²⁸ S Batumalai: *Asian Theology* ; New Delhi, ISPCK, 1991, 224.

broken and planted on Sri Lankan soil. And the richness of the Sri Lankan soil should nurture Christianity. Even today there remains the question as to whether the Church has been able to free herself from the influences of Western countries and present the faith as universal. Therefore indigenization of Christianity was of utmost importance in his thinking.

2. His next barrier for evangelism was also on one he worked tirelessly to eradicate. This is denominationalization. His commitment towards ecumenism and profound understanding for the unity in Christ led him to work with his contemporaries to work towards a Church Union scheme to bring the Main Line Churches into one entity to bring about the united Church of Sri Lanka.

3. We see him as a prolific writer but there was also his contribution towards worship and hymn writing in general. This was his response towards the barrier of cultural foreignness in our Christian forms of worship. This in his mind also projected the western outlook. Furthermore it made Sri Lankans absorb a holistically foreign image of the Christian faith. His solution for this was to indigenize worship giving prominence to culture. As we know he was also one of the pioneers in initiating the Theological College of Lanka which searches to theologize within the local context amidst the rich diversity of creed, culture and ethnicity.

4. And some of the other factors he emphasized were financial

dependence, also going back to western influence and a lack of indigenous leadership. He was a critic of the Church centered evangelism and structural irrelevance. Because once again this painted a picture of an institution under the control of distant powers and not of the essence of the message the Triune God tries to teach. He emphasizes between the identity of the Christian message and the identity of the Christian Church.

D.T Niles believed that evangelism was useless unless it was made understandable and through which it was to be made meaningful. The following excerpt justifies his claim;

“The Gospel is a mystery even though it is an open mystery. In it we have: Royalty hidden in a stable, Universality hidden in an exclusive race ,True Divinity hidden in a man who experienced every human need and temptation, Voluntary self giving hidden in a murder, Truth hidden in parables , The resurrection hidden by its transcendence over common experience And eternal contemporaneousness hidden by a life lived in the process of time”¹²⁹

In the field of the encounter with religions he strives hard to find common grounds for existence and being. “Niles attempts

¹²⁹ D.T Niles: *That they may have life*; New York, Harper & Brother Publishers, 1951, 88.

to create a common ground for dialogue and cooperation between Christianity and people of other faiths in common social life and social responsibility”¹³⁰.

And evangelism is not to be based on a claim that Christ’s uniqueness surpasses all, rather this ends with confusion. He calls for the paying of respect for the claims of other religious. Downplaying the existence of great religious traditions should never become the launching pad for Christianization.

“Lastly, there are those who, being keenly alive to the question of uniqueness , take their point of departure in comparative religion, and attempt to base evangelism on the uniqueness of Christ as the greatest and noblest among the founders of religions. But this cannot be rationally established as no absolute objective standard exists outside the various religions. Judged by the tenets and standards of other religions, such as Hinduism and Buddhism, Christ is not unique. Such reasoning and method of comparison leads into a blind alley.”¹³¹

Ecumenism

It was during his ecumenical ministry, both in the EACC, WCC

¹³⁰ S Batumalai: *Asian Theology* ; New Delhi, ISPCK, 1991, 222,223.

¹³¹ Christopher L Furtado: *The Contribution of Dr. D.T Niles to the Church universal and Local*; Bangalore, United Theological College, N/A, pg 35.

and the World Methodist Body, that he introduced a new understanding of the Church of Mission. The Church is the outcome as well as the instrument of the redemptive activity of God in human history. It is not only an instrument of the Gospel but part of the Gospel as well.

“Niles uses both Biblical –theological and practical arguments to maintain the centrality of the Church for mission. The Church is a fellowship where people grow into a wholeness. Apart from the criteria of the ‘three self’ movements (as the founding of self supporting, self governing and self propagating), Niles also had a new quest for the identity of the Church. He discerned that the identity of the Church was not found in worship but must be found in relation to the nation, and by the secular involvement of the Christian Community also. The Church according to Niles, is for the nation. The Christians continue to emphasize their denominations. Niles’s vision of the ‘self hood’ of the Church and the ecumenical unity, for which he worked untiringly, did not come into reality and the Churches are divided in the terms of race and ethnic groups and denominations”¹³².

He presents the challenge to work not only the theology of the relationship both with Christian and non Christians, but neighbourliness within the ecumenical body, and within

¹³² S Batumalai: *Asian Theology* ; New Delhi, ISPCK, 1991, 223.

denominationalism in terms of racism. In his writings he describes the Church as a worshipping community, a Church in a place or a group of Christians engaged in secular occupation.

As a worshipping community “... Worship must be Christian – it must be worship of the Triune God; worship must be indigenous – it must be the natural expression in worship of the culture and common life of the group concerned; worship must be Catholic – it must be worship with all the saints and all the company of heaven; worship must be missionary- it must proclaim the Lord’s death until he come.”¹³³

As a Church in a place “..... it should be the part of a Church’s concern that the nation which it is set to serve should live in freedom. The self-hood of a nation is witnessed to by the authenticity of its culture, its sense of self consciousness destiny and the freedom with which it is able to share in the concert of the nations.”¹³⁴

Response

“The Church is one and it is within this oneness that the Churches have their life and being. The missionary movement

¹³³ D.T Niles: *A decisive hour for the Christian Mission*; London, SCM Press, 1960, 74.

¹³⁴ D.T Niles: *A decisive hour for the Christian Mission*; London, SCM Press, 1960, 75

was the result of the conviction that all churches had as their common and primary responsibility the task of taking the Gospel wherever it was not known or believed. To-day we speak about the ecumenical era and by that we mean that the Churches have come to recognize that their oneness is the basis of the whole being. They do not just come together to perform a common task; in their togetherness is the very dynamic for this task.”¹³⁵

Such was the ideal he placed on the ministry of the Church. The comprehensiveness of his thinking mixed with the zeal for evangelism led him to be involved with several movements. Among them were the ecumenical, inter religious relationship, social services (YMCA), National Council of Churches and the political sphere through safeguarding fundamental rights of the Christian Community in SL etc..

“He served as secretary of the National Christian Council of Sri Lanka (1941-45). He did not fail to understand the political and social condition of Sri Lanka in the 1940s. He discerned that the Buddhist resurgence was closely connected to the political and social development of Sri Lanka. He was actively involved in the NCC for he believed this unity was an instrument of the

¹³⁵ D.T Niles: *Upon the earth*; New York, Mcgraw –Hill Book company, 1962, 167.

Church for evangelism and unity”.¹³⁶

In his own ministry, he paved the way for the NCC to move from cooperation to cooperateness, this can be described as the idea for the Church to be a body for expressing unity rather than a body with the idea of building unity. Next he built up the concept of ‘developing corporateness’ where he concentrated on;

1. Organizations such as YMCA, YWCA, SCM & Joint committee on Church Union
2. Worship
3. Youth work to give corporateness as output.

Although the cooperateness of the Churches within a given historical and social situation is a significant factor in the search for a new self understanding, unity alone cannot ultimately determine their self identity. Their relation to the social and cultural environment plays an equally significant, if not greater, role in this search for identity.

“However, this relation to the environment cannot be theoretically pre conceived. Nevertheless two extremes must be avoided. On the one hand there is the danger of introversion, isolation, and irrelevance; on the other hand, there is the possibility that the minority Christian community, faced with

¹³⁶ S Batumalai: *Asian Theology* ; New Delhi, ISPCK, 1991, 221.

an increasingly hostile environment or influenced nationalism and the national renaissance, will be caught in the prevailing mood of accommodation and lose its distinctiveness, and consequently its evangelistic relevance and its critical function”.¹³⁷

Next he developed the concepts of ‘corporate thinking’ and ‘corporate planning’ to further strengthen the task of creating a new self understanding of the Church and thereby for the Church to identify herself on a greater scale with the society.

Evaluation

There are many important aspects in the thought of D.T Niles quite relevant for today. He was an individual who understood unity in the terms of service and development. The Church should be one because its mission has to be one.

“ ... the reality which we see in one another as churches is the reality of God ‘s operation in each, and the reality of each church’s response to that operation. Hence arises the need to understand another as part of one’s understanding of oneself. One of the tasks that the churches were summoned to by the Faith and order conference at Lund was the task of

¹³⁷ Christopher L Furtado: *The Contribution of Dr. D.T Niles to the Church universal and Local*; Bangalore, United Theological College, N/A, 110.

understanding their separate histories as part of one history. To arrive at this understanding conversation is our main instrument. To know ourselves as belonging to and engaged in the same realm of discourse, to speak remembering that when one Church speaks to another it is but entering into a conversation already going on between that other and its Lord, to listen realizing that in listening to another Church is but listening to one's own Lord as He speaks through that Church – that is the relationship of conversation into which we are called.”¹³⁸

It was this united Church that was to transform the society. And its mission is not for a violent evangelization but for an involvement in every sphere of human activity.

“This requires of us, Niles affirms, that we overcome self imposed social isolation as well as an individualistic – pietistic and other worldly approach to life and commit ourselves to find solutions to the concrete problems of the people and the nation. The continuity that exists between other religions and Christianity (without denying the true essential discontinuity) and the fact that the Spirit of God is active in every renaissance of culture, society and religion, give us sufficient grounds to

¹³⁸ D.T Niles: *Upon the earth*: New York, McGraw –Hill Book company, 1962, 150,151.

cooperate with people of other religions in creating a new world.”¹³⁹

For an evangelist he presented the challenge of letting go of the isolation which created seclusion and to move around people. The example it presented was to attract future members to the Church.

It was quite obvious that he believed that before our expression of faith may be achieved we should be objects or models of the faith we try to express. This was to be the new mission of the Church. He was a dedicated ecumenist who always sought to present an ‘oneness’ through the Church. The unity through the Church was to build for a united society and country.

“There too primary forms of belonging that we must notice. There is the form in which churches of the same denomination or confession belong together in one family with a growing family life, and there is the form in which, in the missionary movement, churches belong to one another in a permanent relationship of help sought and help given.”¹⁴⁰

And evangelization being part of it, was built into a complete system where he analyzed every aspect surrounding the people.

¹³⁹ John C England: *Asian Christian Theologies*, Volume I; New York, Orbis Books, 2002, 479.

¹⁴⁰ D.T Niles: *Upon the earth*; New York, Mcgraw –Hill Book company, 1962, 152.

He was a forerunner in the indigenization campaign and stressed heavily on the need to free the Church from Western bondage and present Christ as universal. He insisted that the 'western ness ' of the gospel together with all other aspects it entailed should be cast off and Christianity should be nourished with local resources. For him the need to stress the faith as born in Asia and not an invader was imminent.

And his most enriching contribution was for a new theological mission. An attempt was made to locate the place of the life and mission of the Church in the framework of a theology of history. Unity, religious faith, evangelism, secular involvements, national crises were all included in this framework of history.

Conclusion

D.T Niles would remain truly one of the greats that Sri Lanka has produced in the field of Christianity. He was a visionary who used both aspects of theory (through his numerous publications and philosophical wonderings) and practice (through his involvement in many institutions) to promote unity amongst the churches and provide her with a new theological mission. Even though he tried to contain evangelism among many other factors (that needed to be put right first) it is doubtful whether he was truly appreciative of the rich religious

traditions the country was blessed with as an end to itself or was he a person who ‘talked’ about other religions to promote Christian evangelism? However his work and dedication towards the mission of the Church will continue to give insights for the many generations to come.

Case 8- Evangelism in a Secular/Atheistic Context

Commentary

Evangelism and Atheism have been usually been put on different sides of the coin but in way it is more like a cycle and one cannot be without the other as well. As the world becomes secularized the general concept of atheism finds more and more ground. In this sense the ‘Being’ of Evangelism is Essential in the sense that it leads onto a breaking point whichever way. And both these processes are induced and Reinforced. And finally the most suitable setting for this scenario is that evangelism is relational with time, Time Bound and needs human intervention in the sense that Atheism comes over time and so does the need for evangelism.

Introduction

The Cambridge dictionary (2003) describes Atheism as the ‘understanding a person or a group may have that God or gods do not exist’. However this connotation does give liberty to the reader to have his/her own understanding about the nature of this/these supernatural beings/s in whom this trust exists. For an example does atheism mean the absence of God illustrating that humankind have no creation or liberation in that sense and they

themselves should create it? Or does atheism mean been agnostic, where the so called atheists have turned a blind eye to any theological insight? Or does this description talk about a group of people such as the followers of Buddhism who have a well developed religious philosophy yet they may be unwilling to accompany God talk with it? Therefore it may be quite appropriate not to fall into lengthy debates about the nature of atheism as studies such as this may not permit the space. Hence an atheistic context for the purpose of this project is taken to be person/s who are not religious in anyway and have deemed to have ended their belief in a supernatural Being from a Christian view point. It may also be in order at the outset of this essay to set a clear definition of ‘mission and evangelism’. It becomes necessary due to the accepted theological notion that God has and is already present in whichever context we may use for the purpose of this article. Therefore mission and evangelism are used in this case as a ‘continuation’ that should take place from a Christian view point and not a mere methodology or a handbook of ‘winning souls for Christ’ in pagan lands.

The Secular/Atheistic Context

“Being an atheist is nothing to be apologetic about. On the contrary, it is something to be proud of, standing tall to face the far horizon, for atheism nearly always indicates a healthy

independence of mind and indeed, a healthy mind. There are many people who know, in their heart of hearts, that they are atheists, but dare not admit it to their families or even, in some cases, to themselves.”¹⁴¹

These few lines appear in a famous book named “The God Delusion” by a prominent scientist and atheist Richard Dawkins. He makes an untiring effort through the book to strike almost all acceptable sources for the being of God or gods. In present times when the world has shifted into an age of post modernism, atheism has not been available as an option rather it has become a way of life. In the rush of life and the competition to succeed and be ahead of others the presence of a supernatural being hidden from human eyes has become almost a superstition. Humankind has progressed at a tremendous rate in technology, sciences, education, development and in several other fields thus slowly closing the gates of accepting wisdom from above but rather having the need to be proud of each person’s self determination. Therefore the atheistic context is not necessarily an evil one but where the community has advanced in their thinking thus turning a blind eye on religious truth and revelation. In many countries the only groups that seemed to have a firm grasp of religion are the fundamentalists

¹⁴¹ Richard Dawkins: *The God Delusion*; London, Bantan Press, 2006, pg 3.

who truly believe that it should only be an extreme loyalty that would keep them religious, less they would become too liberal and fall by the wayside.

“His constant abstraction of religion from the way it is practiced is evidence enough that Marx had no objection to religion, but only to its use as a tool of domination, superstition and exploitation. The fact that such negative attributes could be predicated of religious institutions kept him at arms length from them for all his adult life.”¹⁴²

The commentator of these few lines, using Karl Marx as an example, brings us to another important characteristic of atheism. This hatefulness of religion has been inadvertently directed at the non contribution of religion towards humankind. This may be a debatable idea where we may be able to come up with much good, religions had done to particular communities but this statement emphasizes the fact that society would be fair and just if not for religion, society would be a peaceable one if not for religious division. Therefore once again we comment that an atheistic context is one that has lost hope in religion due to various reasons. With these characteristics in mind we now enter on how mission could find meaning in such contexts.

¹⁴² Patrcik Bascio: *Building a Just Society*; New York, Orbis Books, 1981, pg 127.

Mission and evangelism

Apart from the question at hand what exactly is the mission of Christians in any age? It is the dedicated work towards the reign of God. Evangelization is merely an offspring of this far greater task. Therefore even in an atheistic context, where people may despise to hear theologizing, Christians are called to bear witness. Bearing of witness is participating in the life and struggle of that particular community.

“Human aspirations to justice, to freedom, to peace, to brotherhood come together and begin to be realized in many social and religious groups situated outside the church. Christians bear witness to the kingdom by recognizing these signs even outside the church and collaborating with non – Christians in the tasks of justice, peace, development and health.” ¹⁴³

Eventhough this statement is made in the context of other religions, social action is still applicable as a witness bearing tool. Therefore the ‘values of the Gospel’ become something visible and tangible to all around these workers. Their work should remain monumental to the empowerment of God which

¹⁴³ Jean Cosby: *How to Understand the History of Christian Mission*; London, SCM Press, 1966, pg 176.

should be on display to those who do not believe.

Therefore the missionary in an atheistic context is called to bear witness in a similar way Christ bore witness to ignorant masses during his times. Another important feature of mission in these advanced situations should also be education of the missionary. If a person called for mission is unable to comprehend the reasons and the reasons behind the reasons for a particular community to act in such a way he/she would face severe hardships in communicating any message across. For this purpose an ‘on going’ education is also needed for the Christian and the development of a critical and analytical mind which would not be down trodden and emotionally disturbed when he/she cannot get the message across but rather which would help in speaking to people ‘in their own tongue’. This exercise may be labeled as dialogue.

“In spite of the difficulties involved, dialogue is an appropriate form of communicating the Christian gospel to a non –Christian world. It was used by Jesus and Paul in their time, and there is no reason to believe that it cannot be an effective vehicle for the propagation of the gospel today. If the Christian really believes that in the gospel of Christ he/she possess the truth about God, human, sin and salvation, he/she should have no problem with

dialogue.”¹⁴⁴

Therefore this method basically explains the need for the missionary to be aware of what a particular people are thinking. Dialogue should also be accompanied by a sense of inculturation, the term used in this sense is not merely a indigenization but rather a contextualization of the Christian mission and in this case the culture may be one where religious values are unheard of or rather which have dissolved. For an example if in an atheistic context science is worshipped as a substitute, a teaching ministry may arise where the wisdom of God could be expressed in the outcome of scientific development.

“Sharing in the human condition of the people to whom the missionary is sent is a process that never ends. It is a constant exodus from oneself through renunciation, failure and misunderstanding in the fulfillment of his mission as it was for Jesus.”¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁴ J. Herbert Kane: *A Concise History of the Christian Mission*; Michigan, Baker Book House, 1978, pg 177.

¹⁴⁵ (Ed) Sebastian Karotemprel: *Following Christ in Mission*; India, Pauline Publication, 1995,pg 135.

Conclusion

An atheistic context is not necessarily a unique context but it is rather a context in which people put their hope and belief in other phenomenon. This is certainly true of the many western countries where religion has become something that the ‘weak hearted’ are in need of for emotional assurance. Being non religious also implies that the so called atheists put more weight on own self rather than on an invisible super power. Even still, a missionary is not to be discouraged or lose hope but he/she should trust in the spirit of God to teach him/her how to reach out to this special class. It may be important to state here that the missionary may not end up Christianizing the atheists but still would be able to receive their admiration and respect for the guided work done. Bearing witness is one key element in this process, where a Christian may be called to live his/her life according to Gospel values within this context. Next participating in activities around may also help the process of atheists accepting the power through which a missionary may work. Trying to understand the people as well as speaking to them in their own language is also vital for this ministry. However even if these conditions are fulfilled the road ahead may be a rocky one as in an atheistic context the thinking capacity of its inmates could have far developed more than to accommodate any sentimental feeling. And the fact that human wisdom is enhanced by these communities would mean that

faith as an invisible element would have less and less appeal to such an audience. Yet the missionary¹⁴⁶ is called to be strong in the face of these issues and first of all live a life of prayer and guidance seeking and then a life of active participation bearing witness to almighty God who reigns above all modern, past and future tendencies and to Jesus Christ the forerunner of this kingdom and our model.

“The Church is a witnessing fellowship living in the world for the sake of the world. It is not of the world, but it is in the world. Hence it is never the business of the Church to withdraw itself from the world. Rather it is to find it’s mission in the world while refusing to identify itself with anything that is of the world.”¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ The reader is invited to refer to Appendix 1 for further deliberation on the contextual spirit prevailing in Sri Lanka in the past few years with regard to this intention

¹⁴⁷ (Ed) Gerald.H.Anderson: *The Theology of the Christian Mission*; London, McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1961, pg 247.

CHAPTER 9

HISTORICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Case 9- Old Testament Prophetic interpretation of the Law

Commentary

The Law is an important tool in Jewish-Christian understanding and in it we see Virtue that was to be developed. Even in the time of Jesus the Jewish religious sense was law bound. And it is for the purpose that it embodied a Prolegomena that the Law was given in the first place. This was adhered at several historical moments that in the place of God the Israelites found the Law and followed it. But just as Jesus teaches that ‘the Law was given due to hardness of heart’ the real presence of the Law was not a idolizing of a scroll but the prospering of a Godly people. And the being of the Law instilled Choice and it came with an objective.

Introduction

The prophetic literature contained in the Holy Bible is both a wealth of information about different times in Israelite history as well as a documentary of responses by a few brave individuals who in the Spirit dared to face off with far greater

oppositions. To the careful reader the Old Testament may almost fully bear the marks of prophecy. From the entry of Moses even within the Pentateuch and then on to the period of Judges with Deborah and Samuel to the early prophetic guilds we read several accounts of prophecy even before the monarchy. Then with the beginning of the monarchy the main prophetic voices could be experienced. From Nathan this list runs over centuries and over so much change. The ninth century prophets of Ahijah, Elijah, Micaiah and Elisha to the eighth century prophets of Amos, Hosea, Isaiah and Micah to the Seventh century prophets of Jeremiah, Zephaniah, Nahum and Habakkuk the reader may visualize varied situations when the call comes to a normal individual to say mighty things against people and rulers. The prophetic ministry continues to the exilic period with the Deutero Isaiah and Ezekiel into the post exilic situation with the Trito Isaiah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi and beyond. Prophets were not merely soothsayers of fortunetellers as we might identify with today but rather they experienced the need within themselves through the will of God of proclaiming to society and individuals of the will of God. Therefore the prophetic role was not merely protesting against social evils but rather the human beings response towards God. The word 'prophet' in Greek has been rooted to the meaning of 'one who speaks for another' and the prophet's role was to be the mouthpiece of God to proclaim God's will.

At this point it is necessary to introduce the two main components of this study. The first is the 'prophetic interpretation' and the next is 'Law'. Prophetic interpretation could either mean one of two things. One is that it is how the prophet saw something in a particular way after the Spirit of God has encouraged him/her. Or it could mean the way a prophet understood something according to his own capabilities and then forth told it in the Spirit of God. This may not be the platform to distinguish between the two but it may be important to realize that for the 'interpretation' part of the prophet both his own experience and God's vision would have helped. Next the 'Law' could also mean two different things. On the one hand it could be the priestly Law or Torah and on the other hand it could mean the word of the prophet or a system of ethics developed by the prophet. Anyway it could be agreed that the Law meant a code of behaviour that would enable a transformation of oneself and society.

Prophetic interpretation of the Law is an area large enough to write several volumes purely because of the existence of a many number of prophetic contexts, as well as the 'Law' being a main component which the Israelites did not follow and hence the disasters. The amount of prophetic literature which could be interpreted as words regarding law is large in volume. It is still

important to note that prophetic interpretation of the Law may not follow a set pattern even when done in similar contexts. This may be due to many reasons and one prominent reason would be how the prophet understood of what he/she was to proclaim. Therefore during this study we may not reach uniform conclusions and what is concluded may not be applicable to other prophetic literature found elsewhere.

The Law and the laws

It may be necessary to make an inquisitive look at the Law as described in the Old Testament because this may well be one source of inspiration the prophets had to deal with when they were required to speak on behalf of God. Considering the Israelite's strong tie with the Law it may have been possible for many of the prophets to have had some knowledge of same even before their times of witnessing. And for the prophets who were priests this would have been a practice quite well versed.

The Torah the divine Law revealed by God through Moses was reason enough for the interpreters of religion to consider that the Old Testament thought was indeed sharply influenced by it. For nearly two millennia this school of thought was quite prominent that the Torah was the special factor which could be experienced in some form or the other throughout the Old

Testament.

“Even in the early nineteenth century, the prophets were still viewed simply as the preachers of this age old legal code. Their passionate involvement was put down to their readiness for a total obedience to God’s commandments- a readiness which they failed to find among their fellow countrymen. When the New Testament sums up the Old Testament as the ‘law and the prophets’, this seems to be an accurate description of the relationship between the two; with its many voices, comes later, to help interpret the law, which was fundamental in its importance.”¹⁴⁸

King Josiah of Judah for an example was deeply impressed by the Torah, and it undoubtedly would have played a critical role in the interpretation of God’s will by the prophets. A hallmark of the Abrahamic religions as still could be observed today was the strong and deep relationship the community of faith had with their relative scripture. And this was ever so strong as that of the Jewish understanding and even stronger in the Old Testamental period, regardless of whether the society followed it or not. Life as they knew it was drafted on the divine book. And still this was not a thorough worked out and regulated code

¹⁴⁸ Klaus Koch: *The Prophets (Vol 2) The Babylonian and Persian Period* ; London, SCM Press Ltd., 1983, 1& 2.

of laws but more a long list of “do’s” and “don’t’s” explaining how to lead a holy life worthy and pleasing. In some texts the Law is often classed as a sermon inculcating legality.

“To this is added a highly individual, emotional language for which we have no earlier parallel in Hebrew, and which uses impressive, easily remembered phrases, such as ‘love Yahweh your God,’ and many fixed sequences of words, such as ‘commandments, statutes and ordinances.’ It is often imitated from exilic times on, even being introduced into historical works and prophetic writings. Was it this kind of language that made the concept of Law an essential element in Israelite religion? And what is the relationship of this concept to the activity of the critical prophets who preceded it?”¹⁴⁹

As expressed in the above quotation the author feels that what has been reproduced later in writings which appear towards the latter part of the Bible is rather a commentary on the Law or the Torah. There may of course be varied ideas on how the Law could have been used by later Biblical writers, yet this idea when commenting on the prophets seem quite appealing for the very fact that the prophets would have been able to present the idea that defiling of the Law was in fact on par with defiling the

¹⁴⁹ Klaus Koch: *The Prophets (Vol 2) The Babylonian and Persian Period*; London, SCM Press Ltd., 1983, 4.

name of God. When prophecies were proclaimed it was the need for the human to come into the right relationship with God rather than social justice or human rights. Hence what do they have to come back on track to? It would be the Law as carried on through the ages.

Let us now turn to an example in the book of Hosea where in this instance the prophet is expounding on the concept of the covenant. For Hosea the Torah (8.1) becomes a vital part of the covenant. Commentators express that this precept of the Law is very much different from the laws which evolved later and here it focuses on what is clean and unclean according to the divine will, this being the task of a priest.

“But the large number of Yahweh’s divine Torah precepts is greatly exceeded by the number of altars in the country (Hosea 8.11f) ; every priest should have known that. And the priests above all have failed. Unlike Amos, Hosea attacks them as a class more than any other social group in the nation. For Torah feeds the knowledge of God; and for Hosea this is the concept which provides the guide for conduct. Here Hebrew *da’at* is not interpreted as detached, objective investigation, but as an understanding with emotional and sympathetic connotations and practical consequences, which is possible only as a result of

close personal community with what is known.”¹⁵⁰

Hosea uses the knowledge of the Torah to teach about a practical issue that has arisen in the society. He uses precepts encapsulated in the Torah as well as the response that is worthy of the Torah to attack and correct the thinking of that period. Let us turn to another example commented upon as expressed in the book of Haggai chapter 2 dealing with the clean and unclean factors. It is easy realization to feel as to how much weight was carried on the elements of the Torah in Old Testament times and this would inevitably make the prophets use same to speak to the people in error.

“Haggai makes use of a normal procedure of inquiry from the priests, asking for a ruling on a problem of clean and unclean. He asks for a ‘directive’ (RSV to *decide the questions* (v11) conceals that the word used here , Torah, the word used for Law and eventually for the whole Pentateuch, has the technical sense of a ruling given by priests. (Cf. Jer 18.18 and Ezek.7.26 for an indication of the relation between such a directive and the prophetic word and the wise man’s counsel; they are all means by which the divine will is revealed.)¹⁵¹

¹⁵⁰ Klaus Koch: *The Prophets (Vol 1) The Assyrian Period*; London. SCM Press Ltd., 1982, 91.

¹⁵¹ Peter Ackroyd: *Israel under Babylon and Persia* ; Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1970, 215.

In the same way commenting or expository speaking of the Law has been found in other prophetic writings. Given below is a quotation that explains the literal styles that have been used in some prophetic writings to send out an effective message.

“Exposition of the laws may be found especially in the book of Deuteronomy and in the Holiness Code in Lev. 17-26. The poems of the Second Isaiah (Isa. 40-55) often have a strongly rhetorical tone. Were they perhaps delivered by the prophet on occasions when it was appropriate to exhort and warn and encourage? Later still in the book of Malachi we find the question and answer style, very appropriate to teaching and warning.”¹⁵²

In concluding this section to the essay we may say that the Law as in the Torah was used abundantly by the prophets who would have been encouraged to do so because for two reasons. One would be the closeness the Torah had with the Israelite people and secondly God’s revelation could always be interpreted (especially on holiness and moral issues) in terms of the Torah. The law as to be found in the prophetic writings could mean the exposition of the main Law of the Israelites by

¹⁵² Peter Ackroyd: *Israel under Babylon and Persia* ; Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1970, 29.

individuals who were bestowed upon them the call to speak on behalf of God. Now we will turn to the prophets themselves and try to examine their understanding of God, Law and society within their contexts.

Prophetic Consciousness

“The prophets were not mere shadow figures, puppets on the pages of history. They were real persons who were absolutely convinced that they were spokesmen of God, proclaiming not their private views and opinions but the very will and purpose of God. It was a ‘forth telling’ not a ‘fore telling’. It was a proclamation and not a social blue print for a sick society.”¹⁵³

Even yet they were concerned with the real big issues prevalent in their contexts. They did not build sermons on minor faults of the people or mere infringements on the Law. They observed, felt and understood the real diseases plaguing the society. They identified the behaviours which had become common and also which had eaten up the relationship with Yahweh. For an example idolatry was a most prevalent offense among the Israelites and attacks against the idolatrous people are found in many a place. This was so because of the crime being

¹⁵³ Edgar Jones, *Profiles of the Prophets*; Oxford, The Religious Education Press, 1968, 5.

committed of not loving God wholeheartedly and the repeated turning towards idols and diverting affection from God.

Then we are naturally faced with a question; how can the will of God be experienced through these individuals who are quite ordinary characters (with regard to their previous occupations in the socio and religious background)? How can this call be any different from any other call that has been extended to other individuals through the grace of God? Moreover how does the will of God get transmitted through a prophet in verbal or written form? No simple approach therefore can be adequate to cover the prophet's relationship with God, tradition and his/her environment and it may be important to be open to many possibilities that may arise. But for the purpose of this particular essay the phrase 'prophetic consciousness' could be elaborated further.

"The prophetic consciousness of God therefore did not mean either an abandoning of tradition, nor yet simply a wholehearted embracing of it. The prophet himself both drew upon, modified, and added to the religious traditions of Israel, at times affirming it, and at others rejecting it."¹⁵⁴

A rather intimate relationship could create this need to be the

¹⁵⁴ R.E Clements: *Prophecy and Tradition*; Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1975, 41.

voice of God or in a rather contemporary note to help God in God's work. As quoted below the author expresses that the visions, the call and all experiences the prophets would have undergone are part of the consciousness that they would have felt through their own steadfastness in faith.

“The new perspective on prophecy can be conveniently dated to *Die Theologie der Propheten* which Bernard Duhm published in 1875 at the age of twenty eight. The full title of this book is significant: ‘The Theology of the Prophets as Foundation for the Inner Historical Development of Israelite Religion’. The ethical idealism of the prophets represents the essence of true religion stemming from their direct and intensely personal experience of God. The emphasis therefore, is on the prophetic commissioning, the visions and other extraordinary experiences of these chosen intermediaries.”¹⁵⁵

Then if agreeing with this thinking of the prophet's relationship with God producing a higher self consciousness, we are still to find the role of the prophet's own capabilities and his own reasoning in this whole scenario. Because as detailed earlier prophets remained as mortals till the end and were never transformed into beings of a higher order even in their

¹⁵⁵ Joseph Blenkinsopp: *A History of Prophecy in Israel*; London, SPCK, 1984, 28.

strenuous undertakings. If so we have to entertain the idea that the prophets used their own understanding in trying to interpret the voice of God. Yet this leads us into a new problem and that is of the quality of the literature produced by such minds who may not have had the capacity to express in such an expansive manner.

“There is still the unresolved problem involved in passing from the prophetic consciousness to the production of literature, with the clear indications that it conveys of poetic craft, sometimes of a higher order, and the conscious and often sophisticated use of established types of speech. This leads into the theological problem of the prophet’s mediation and interpretation of the common traditions and symbols in the light of an intensely personal experience, and this, in its turn, inevitably raises the issue of conflicting claims to authority in the religious sphere and the different possibilities for a resolution.”¹⁵⁶

This may lead us to a safe conclusion that the prophetic role was a dual task, one propelled by God and activated by the prophet themselves. Then let us now take a few examples of how the prophets reacted to this consciousness.

¹⁵⁶ Joseph Blenkinsopp: *A History of Prophecy in Israel*; London, SPCK, 1984, 35.

Interpreting the interpreters

“Several prophets speak of Israel’s relationship with God in terms of matrimony (Isa. 50.4, Jer. 3, Ezek. 23, Hos. 1-3). God was married to Israel, but the latter had broken her vows. Frequently the unfaithfulness of Israel was portrayed, pointing to the terrible deeds that had destroyed this unique matrimonial bond between Israel and God.”¹⁵⁷

The above finding is one where we see a particular aspect of understanding among the prophets where they refer to the relationship of God and the Israelites in terms quite common in society. Although this terminology was popular among the prophets it is difficult to accept that this concept was derived for the Law as it does not specifically create such an understanding. Therefore this understanding of the prophets could be noted as how they interpreted the events of the day and their call to prophecy in the name of God.

The prophetic consciousness that led to a prophet’s interpretation of the will of God was indeed influenced by each context as well. In the text below we see two separate groups of prophets interpreting the Law in different ways.

¹⁵⁷ Samuel J. Shultz: *The Prophets Speak*; New York, Harper & Row Publishers, 1968, 35.

“The prophets of the Assyrian period never appeal to any commandment as the basis of their arguments in their criticism of the social conditions of their day. They demand faithfulness to the community, or they lament its absence. This faithfulness springs from a (non) anthropology which sees the individual as a part of particular institutions which make life possible. But in the Babylonian and Persian eras, the prophets begin for the first time to concede a special ethical role to divine statutes.”¹⁵⁸

Let us turn to the prophet Ezekiel and his interpretation of God’s nature and Gods purposes. One important factor of his teaching has been considered to be the ‘responsibility’ of each individual. The prophet explains his own calling and thereby makes an invitation for the people to do likewise and here the prophet begins with himself and his own calling, and sees the response which his people ought to make in the same terms. This may be a reflective understanding of the Law where an individual requests the community to follow same as he/she had experienced.

“He does not ask of them anything which he does not know to be asked of himself. That God has laid upon him the obligation

¹⁵⁸ Klaus Koch: *The Prophets (Vol 2) The Babylonian and Persian Period* ; London, SCM Press Ltd. ,1983, 1.

to be watchman corresponds to his recognition, that each man is responsible before God to be obedient to his will. That, will Ezekiel shows to be set out in the laws and traditions of the faith in which the people have been called to live. The possibility of obedience is given in the willingness of God to give life even to a dead community (cha 37) and to give to his people a new heart (36. 22 ff).”¹⁵⁹

It is in order to state a few of the dimensions of social justice of the prophetic thinking as the prophetic movement in common thought is intertwined with justice and righteousness. Here it was rather an observation and a link with the Law that would have made the prophets protest so vociferously against Kings and authorities. As common people in society the prophets would have felt the sting of injustice stemming from the top of the social hierarchy and the encouragement they received through the prophetic consciousness would have pushed them further to be the voice of the voiceless.

“Although Deuteronomy sees possession for participation of the promised land as the pre condition of all blessing , the individual’ s religious status is no longer tied to the possession of land; this means that the soil is now demythologized. From

¹⁵⁹ Peter Ackroyd: *Israel under Babylon and Persia* ; Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1970, 71.

this time on, all are equal before God, not merely fundamentally and in principle, but in actual cultic practice as well. It was probably the passionate intervention above all of Amos and Isaiah, on behalf of people, who had few legal rights, which triggered off this constitution for a future Israel—a constitution in which social distinctions are at least leveled out more than ever before, even if they do not disappear completely.”¹⁶⁰

Conclusion

At the initial stages of this study the interpretation of the ‘prophetic interpretation’ was said to be a task which would not be smooth and easy. After the presentation of the above facts it remains a task still to be taken further on a deeper level. However a few broad principles may be concluded from the facts stated. The first was the integral part the Law played in the ministry of the prophets and their exposition of same in creating the prophetic law. Next the prophetic task was a joint effort through the will of God coupled with the individual consent which collided to make a prophetic consciousness which sets the forth teller in a more specialized position. “Moreover, the canonical prophets must be distinguished in

¹⁶⁰ Klaus Koch: *The Prophets (Vol 1) The Babylonian and Persian Period*; London, SCM Press Ltd., 1983, 9.

principle from the institution of prophecy, a fortiori from other institutions such as the priesthood. Their claim to an authority deriving in a direct way from their experience of God put them aside of acknowledged jurisdictions and introduced an element of deep conflict into the life of the community. The accusation of Jeremiah, directed against those who claimed to be wise of their possession of the Law and who, at the same time, neglected the prophetic word Jer. 8.8 is only one indication of conflict between different claims to authority in the religious sphere.”¹⁶¹

And finally interpretation of the Law by the prophets could be seen in various forms, influenced by context, personal orientation and the needs of a bleeding society. Whichever way we choose to interpret the interpreters, it remains a task of wonder to see how the prophets received their inspiration from the Law.

¹⁶¹ Joseph Blenkinsopp: *A History of Prophecy in Israel*; London, SPCK, 1984, 25 & 26.

Case 9 – Study of the Conquest of Biblical Canaan and its implications today

Commentary

No spotlighted issuer in terms of alliances on the world stage, surround any other matter than that of the Israel-Arab conflict escalating over time. Here we see these marks of ‘Being’ as Essential to history as it has been of perennial existence and without contrary opposition to it the situation dictates much of world relations. It is absolutely impossible to call this feud as willed by God and Regulated by the Spirit as for reasons of process theology mentioned elsewhere. And we see more than ever the being of the conflict or the resolving of the conflict lies more that ever closer on the Dependence on the other.

Prologue

“Two nations, Israeli and Palestinian, have both long existed in the same area. Most of that territory is now controlled by the Israelis; the Palestinians mean to get enough of it to create a Palestinian state. The dispute goes back to Abraham and his sons, Isaac, who founded the Jewish nation, and Ishmael, the symbolic father of all Arabs. Such biblical stories are important because the Jews base their claim to Israel partly on Jehovah’s

promise to Moses to deliver the Hebrews out of Egypt to “a land flowing with milk and honey” (Exodus3.8). The catch is that God directed the Hebrews “unto the place of the Canaanites”- occupied territory. Jewish fortunes changed, though, after a millennium the last vestige of their control in the region was ended by the Romans in A.D 70. During the diaspora that followed, most Jews were scattered throughout the world. The Palestinians have existed in the region for centuries and may date back to the pre- Hebrew tribes in the area. In any case, Palestinian Arabs were the area’s primary inhabitants for many centuries and comprised 90 percent of the population in 1920. Most Palestinians are Muslims, but many are Christians”¹⁶².

Introduction

The Israelites settling in the land of Canaan (Palestine) is usually referred to as the conquest in Biblical terms. The land of Canaan has behind it a historical footing as well as the divine blessing which inevitably makes it known as the Promised Land. Canaan the land itself was comparatively rich in composition and prosperous mainly due to its fertility. However it was not heaven on earth. The ideology of the ‘promise’ itself

¹⁶² John T. Rourke: *International Politics on the World Stage (Ninth Edition)*; Connecticut, The McGraw – Hill Companies, 2003, 152.

gave more weight to the value of the land. And it can be seen throughout the Old Testament the reoccurrence of the presentation on this gift to the Israelites. The meaning behind the land is therefore enlarged. Moses and then Joshua take on the leadership of leading the Israelites into this land. It may be pertinent to mention that the word ‘conquest’ is one among the many words which is used to describe this event. This is largely due to the fact that the Israelite occupation of the ‘promised land’ is subject to many interpretations. And these interpretations are given birth to by the different accounts of the same event described. Canaan and entry into Canaan with its main variations are described in this paper in a lesser degree. The objective of the paper is actually to see in (a) retrospective from the effects experienced today in Palestine (politically) and to (b) draw a critical conclusion on the mode used by the Israelites for settlement. And then to (c) critique same as to whether the Israelites ruined the promise of God through their own free will.

Background to the conquest

Genesis chapter 12 includes the first¹⁶³ account of ‘God’s call’ with regard to Abraham. Abram heeding God’s call sets out from Haran together with his family and possessions. Their first

¹⁶³ The other accounts being Genesis chapter 15 and 17.

stop is at Canaan where God promises to faithful Abram that ‘To your offspring I will give this land’ (Gen 12:7). Throughout the ages which followed this ‘promise’ was cultivated and nourished in the minds of the many generations. During their bondage in Egypt this idea of the ‘promised land’ would have been a subject which was refreshed over and over again as it implied hope of a prosperous future. ‘Thus the Lord gave to all Israel all the land which He swore to give to their fathers; and having taken possession of it they settled there. (Josh 21:43)’. The Israelites who believed that it was God who delivered them from Egypt were sure that this same God ‘brought us into a place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey (Deu 26.9)’. It was evident that the Israelites truly believed that the gift of land and the overcoming of its inhabitants was the work of God. ‘We have heard with our ears O God, our Fathers have told us, what deeds thou didst perform in their days in the days of old; thou with thine own hand didst drive out the nations, but them thou didst plant; thou didst afflict the peoples, but them thou didst set free; for not by their own sword did they win the land, nor did their own arm give them victory; (Ps. 44)’. “When Israel later considered the events of her history, and compared the lowly origin with the greatness of the empires of the world, it was indeed no small claim to make for God that He had thus cared for them.”¹⁶⁴. Therefore this

¹⁶⁴ A.R Ackroyd: *The People of the Old Testament*; Bangalore, The United

concept of the Promised Land was one that became very important to the Israelites and their faith.

Canaan and its people

Ackroyd claims that Canaan had been occupied for centuries before Israel's entry. Jericho was a well to do city thousands of years even before the conquest took place¹⁶⁵. The inhabitants were either Canaanites or Amorites. "The difference between the two peoples is that the Canaanites were the original inhabitants of the land, while the Amorites were those who entered in Biblical times."¹⁶⁶ Great developments of civilization and religion have taken place before the conquest. The two most important were the invention of the alphabet and the development of the Canaanite religion. "The alphabet is sought to have been found in the Canaanite area which was rich in literary activity by 1500 B.C and had developed several systems of writing. The alphabet spread into Greece and then into western lands, it spread also in different forms to be used for the Semitic languages and those of India"¹⁶⁷. The religion was also highly developed and the people worshiped gods and

Theological College, 1986, 32.

¹⁶⁵ A.R Ackroyd: *The People of the Old Testament*; Bangalore, The United Theological College, 1986, 33.

¹⁶⁶ David F. Hinson: *History of Israel*; Delhi, ISPCK, 1990, 65.

¹⁶⁷ A.R Ackroyd: *The People of the Old Testament*; Bangalore, The United Theological College, 1986, 33.

goddesses thinking of them as givers of life and well being, The title of Baal was given to one of the gods who was prominent in Canaanite myth. “The period of conquest was a struggle for religious ideals of Israel and those of Canaan. Canaanite religion, poetry, religious festivals and sacrificial practices were taken over by Israel and transformed”¹⁶⁸. However Canaan was in small city states that were often with war with one another, alliances were also made within them. This would seem true that when we see the first settlement being in the hill country remote from strong Canaanite rule on the plains.

Into the land of promise

We have looked at the promise of Canaan and the land of Canaan and now we venture into the actual occupation of Canaan. Although the movement of Israelites have been stated as ‘occupation’ in this instance many other words have been used to describe same such as invasion, conquest, settlement, immigration etc. Here itself we find the reason as to how ‘models’ have been theorized to explain this entry into Canaan. Three main variants bearing different accounts or non similar information confuse the investigator who tries to unravel what mode of entry the Israelites had taken. Two of them are from

¹⁶⁸ A.R Ackroyd: *The People of the Old Testament*; Bangalore, The United Theological College, 1986, 33.

the Biblical tradition and the other from the historical point of view grounded in archaeology.

1. Biblically it is the accounts from the books of Joshua and Judges which have differing opinions. The book of Joshua claims a sudden and complete invasion by the whole of the Israelites involving bloodshed. While the book of Judges emphasizes a long process of settlement and also only by individual clans. "Stories in Joshua and Judges, which may have originally involved only individual tribes (Judges 1:1-36), describes the settlement in terms of a smashing victory (Josh 1-12). But Judges 1 suggests a different scenario. The nature and growth of the tribal federation that exists in this period are unclear."¹⁶⁹ There is of course a certain thrust towards the Theological understanding of the writers of these books as to why they have presented varying stories. However it does not relieve the confusion and certainly distorts the actual event that has taken place.
2. Archeological evidence has clearly shown a major upheaval engulfed Palestine as the Late Bronze Age ended and many towns which have been claimed as outright takeovers by Israel have already been destroyed. Many

¹⁶⁹ Raymond E. Brown., Joseph A. Fitzmyer., Roland E. Murphy: *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*; Bangalore, Theological Publications in India, 2005, 1224.

scholars (perhaps the majority) have seen in this evidence that the Israelite conquest took place late in the thirteenth century B.C.¹⁷⁰ Archeologically the questions raised have been the dating of the conquest and the next with regard to the cities taken over and the question of whether there were takeovers at all. “if it (archeological evidence) shows that some cities mentioned in the Bible were destroyed, it does not necessarily tell us that the Israelites destroyed them; and it seems to indicate that other cities that according to the Bible were destroyed were not even occupied at this time (Jericho, Ai, Gibeon;)”¹⁷¹

Models of settlement

In the light of the differences that were discussed above ‘models’ have been fashioned on the interpretations offered by scholars. Mainly two types of ‘models’ exist concerning the conquest. On the one hand there are stories dealing with the settlement of isolated tribes, giving an impression of disunity and independence of action (immigration model). On the other hand, there are firm statements of complete and unified

¹⁷⁰ John Bright: *A History of Israel*; London, SCM Press, 1981, 130.

¹⁷¹ Raymond E. Brown., Joseph A. Fitzmyer., Roland E. Murphy: *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*; Bangalore, Theological Publications in India, 2005, 1228.

conquest (conquest model)). ‘So Joshua defeated the whole land..... he left none remaining but utterly destroyed all that breathed.....’ (Joshua 10.40). And a third model has been developed in quite recent years and has taken place alongside the former two which insist a socio- political perspective where revolution involved a transition from oppressed masses into a tribal alliance (revolt model) .

Immigration Model

The opening chapters of Judges points to the incompleteness of the conquest, noting several places which were not taken and the position of some of the tribes as minority groups amid a larger Canaanite population. Thus “Zebulun did not drive out the inhabitants of Kitron ... but the Canaanite dwelt among them, and became subject to forced labour. Asher did not drive out the inhabitants of Acco .. but the Ashrites dwelt among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land: for they did not drive them out.’ (Judges 1:30-32). “Elsewhere in Numbers 14: 39-45 a story is preserved of an attempted conquest of Canaan from the south which failed. This follows the story about the spying of the land in which twelve representatives, one from each tribe, were sent into Canaan. They brought back a report of a rich land, but one difficult to conquer. ‘We came to the land to which you sent us; it flows with milk and honey .. yet the

people who dwell in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large.’ (Num 13.27-28). In Num 21 there is a successful attack on Hormah in the South together with a conquest of the South by Judah and Simeon described in the opening chapters of Judges 1 seem to point to an invasion from that direction, independent of the Joshua traditions, and to some extent overlapping them”.¹⁷² This lack of unity has been understood as leading to the possibility of the conquest been done in several stages in a non systematic way. And if the conquest was done in several stages it leaves room to discern that the land itself was of more importance and not the wiping out of its inhabitants. Also intermarriages and peaceful settlement (Gibeonites) are other reasons which imply that the original population was not wiped out but eventually absorbed into the Israelites.

Conquest model

“The conquest model of the Israelite occupation seems to be the one and only way of understanding Israel’s sudden emergence to Canaan. It shows an invasion of Canaan from Transjordan towards the end of the thirteenth century B.C.”¹⁷³. This

¹⁷² A.R Ackroyd: *The People of the Old Testament*; Bangalore, The United Theological College, 1986, 35,36.

¹⁷³ Norman Gottwald: *The Tribes of Yahweh*; London, Maryknoll and London, 1979, 550-55.

describes the idea that Israel under Moses marching from Kadesh around the areas occupied by Edom and Moab, and defeating the two kings Sihon and Og to the east of Jordan. A few of the Israelite clans settled beyond the Jordan. At the death of Moses, Israel was on the threshold of the promised land (Deut. 34 .1,4). The opening chapter of the book of Joshua describes the invasion and the crossing of Jordan miraculously as well as the falling of Jericho. The reader is made to understand that all these happened by divine power not by human will. The Canaanite religion was a threat to Israel and her faith. Therefore it is mentioned as if no talks would be held with an alien faith. This violent unified conquest is an expression of the conviction that the occupation of the land was not simple storming of the cities but was part of God's promise. Ps 44.2 'not by their own sword did they win the land.. but thy right hand and thy arm....'.

Revolt Model

The underlying assumption to this model is that rebels oppressed from the city states and who were already present in the Canaanite country would have joined forces with Israelites on the threshold of the promise land in rebellion. "The Bible tells us of Israel's entrance into Canaan on the theory that Israel was in fact composed in considerable parts of native Canaanites

who revolted against their overlords and joined forces with nuclear groups of invaders and/or infiltrators from the desert. This is allied to the immigration model in that it does not make a sharp distinction between Canaanite and Israelite”¹⁷⁴. It stresses that the formation of later Israel resulted from the mixture of many diverse groups with their histories and social realities which eventually comprised the final tapestry of the Israelite tradition. This model is thought to solve many issues if it was true. Few of these are the “continuity of the ethnic and linguistic modes from Bronze Age to Iron Age, the command to destroy cities and not villages, survival of a majority of the Canaanite population to the time of Josiah’s reform”¹⁷⁵. Even though this model raises questions as well it provides a ‘socio political’ perspective leading from exploitation to rebellion, one which is possible to have existed in Canaanite country.

Palestine and Israel on the world stage

The world has conflict points all over it. By conflict points it is meant, endless streams of struggles devouring life and time. Leaving behind the two world wars where humanity seemed to have reached an all time low on preserving the value of

¹⁷⁴ Norman Gottwald: *The Tribes of Yahweh*; London, Maryknoll and London, 1979, 555.

¹⁷⁵ J. Alberto Soggin: *An Introduction to the History of Israel and Judah*; London, SCM Press 1993, 161.

creation, a few of these conflict points may be pointed out. Indian and Pakistan border, Independent states in the Soviet Union (Bosnia, Chechnya), African kingdoms (Congo, Somalia), Israel and Palestine, Koreas etc. are few of these conflict points where finding lasting solutions has almost become impossible. Yet none seems to be more controversial religiously and with potential of dividing world powers than the Israel – Palestine conflict¹⁷⁶. A day rarely passes in which news of clashes in the West Bank or Gaza are not reported. Several peace measures had been used but “Alas peace was not at hand. Each step toward peace has been followed by a retreat to hatred and violence. Each side, Israeli and Palestinian, charges the other with bad faith and with fostering conflict.

¹⁷⁶ After the British captured Palestine from Turkey during World War I, they allowed limited Jewish immigration into the area. The trickle became a flood when those fleeing Nazi atrocities swelled the Jewish population in Palestine from 56,000 in 1920 to 650,000 by 1948 (compared to nearly 1 million Arabs). In rapid succession, fighting for control erupted, Britain turned the issue over to the UN, and Arabs leaders rejected a UN plan to partition Palestine into a Jewish state and an Arab state. Israel won the ensuing war in 1948 and acquired some of the areas designated for the Arab state. At least 500,000 Palestinians fled to refugee camps in Egyptian-controlled Gaza and elsewhere; another 400,000 came under the control of Jordan in an area called the West Bank (of the Jordan River). Since then, Israel has fought and won three more wars with its Arab neighbours. In the 1967 war Israel captured considerable territory, including the Sinai Peninsula and Gaza from Egypt, the Golan Heights from Syria, and the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) from Jordan. Victory however did not bring Israel peace or security. The most important reason is the unresolved fate of the West Bank, which is central to the quest of Palestinians for their own autonomous, even independent, homeland.

(John T. Rourke: *International Politics on the World Stage (Ninth Edition)*; Connecticut, The McGraw – Hill Companies, 2003, 152).

These mutual accusations reached a crescendo as violence mounted throughout late 2001 and into 2002, and they were reflected by public opinion on both sides.”¹⁷⁷ It is quite obvious that not much can be done after the ‘horses have fled the stable’. Solutions may seem hard to come by if parties involved believe that injustice is continuously wrought upon them. The Arab world already accused of extremist religiousness may never come into terms with the Zionist (nationalist belief that Jews are a nation that should have an independent homeland) response from the Jewish party. “The clash between Zionists and Palestinians became a conflict fueled by passion, anger and hatred between two nationalist movements insisting on their historic and religious rights to the same land.”¹⁷⁸

Promise or Fallacy: Evaluation

Whatever the model of settlement, it is clear that the final result was that the Israelites were able to overpower the natives in the land of Canaan. And also the result seems to have been inevitable or unstoppable; therefore it is believed even to this day that it was the will of God. However the question needs to

¹⁷⁷ John T. Rourke: *International Politics on the World Stage (Ninth Edition)*; Connecticut, The McGraw – Hill Companies, 2003, 152.

¹⁷⁸ Wayne C. McWilliams., Harry Piotrowski: *The World Since 1945*; London, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2001, 146.

be asked whether God would eradicate a total race and their culture for a piece of land. Talking from the oppressed party in this instance it is clear that the people of Canaan were the people under threat. This form of punishment comes to them even without anyone of them even laying a finger to provoke the Israelites. What kind of justice can be expected for the oppressed in this regard? Sometimes the reader is met with disgust at some of the battle stories that are found in Joshua, where it is simply stated that entire settlements were massacred because they were hard hearted (Josh 11.20). How can we understand this today? If there was a foreign invasion against our country we would unconsciously fight back. However may the foreign powers claim that it was God's will that our land be taken over by them, it is hard to imagine that we would give in as easily as that. Can a third party or a bystander explain this as hard heartedness and more importantly hard heartedness caused by God? It is human nature to make connections with elements of life and it is the same nature that drives humans to protect themselves when threatened to break their connections. Will we act as the Gibeonites as in Joshua 9 who resorted to trickery to make peace with the Israelites. Or will we try to chase them from causing further harm to us. The list of Kings defeated and the cities stripped bare and the races chopped down takes its presence in grand style in the Israelite victory songs but what about the damages done?

In the immigration model we see the promise fulfilled through peaceful co existence. We sometimes might want to support this claim as it involves no blood shedding. Is it not possible that God would have wanted the Israelites to co exist with the inhabitants who had been there earlier. A ‘rainbow’ pluralism may have been God’s intention. It probably would have been the excitement and zeal as well as the rush of blood that encouraged them into slaughter. A feeling of powerfulness would have led them into this maddening quest to invade. On a religious footing this is extremist religious fundamentalism developing even in today’s society. It is felt that Israel even today has no peace because the Promise Land has been torn apart by conflict. It does make sense to believe that God required the Israelites not to meddle with foreign faiths but does it come as a command of violent means? It may be appropriate to end by stating that Israelites failed to take the correct route of settling in the Promised Land and its repercussions are felt even to this day.

Conclusion

Therefore it is our conclusion that what the Israelites did to the Canaanites was of their own free will. And considering the three models it becomes evident that conquest was indeed the

method used by them nearly three millennia ago. Hardly surprisingly the same method seems to be engaged by them even today. The land was promised by God anyway to them. And God delivered them in to it. How they went about the business of settling was their own responsibility. It is felt that conquest nearly 3500 years ago bears its marks still even today with religious disharmony tearing the Promised Land apart. Provided with these realistic facts a 'ruined dream' seems to be the outcome of the conquest by the Israelites and not a 'fulfillment of promise'. The promise of God is never to be questioned but the human nature of comprehending it has dealt the hardest blow on Israelite future.

Epilogue

There are a number of specific, intractable issues to resolve. The two that are the most difficult involve the status of Jerusalem and the fate of the Jewish settlements in Gaza and the West Bank. Both Israelis and Palestinians claim Jerusalem as their capital, and for either side to surrender all or part of its claim will be emotionally, and, therefore politically, wrenching. The matter of the settlements is almost as insoluble. Beyond these two issues, the larger need is almost certainly for two things to occur. One is the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. The other is an end to Palestinian attacks on

Israel. The strife in the region from Gaza to the West Bank is part of the ancient as well as current history of the Middle East. One can but hope that the leaders on both sides will step away from precipice and, instead, look to antiquity to remember the words of the book of Isaiah (52:7) : “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace”.

CHAPTER 11

BIBLICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Case 11- Psalter Terminology with special reference to the term ‘Selah’

Commentary

The psalms are life giving in Christian faith. And the following line of thoughts, bears witness to the ‘Being’ of terminology in the Psalms. As we proceed we shall very concisely see that the psalmist presents these poetical insights to develop Virtue. It is to be used as the Prolegomena from chaos to understanding from monotony to beauty. And once again terminology will pass remain or pass away it is not being in itself a beauty but rather it has a greater role to play and in this instance it is to contribute to the motivational trend that is to be cherished within the Psalms for the deeper insights of God to be penetrated in to the human sphere by instilling Choice.

Introduction

The Psalter is widely regarded to have been composed between the tenth and second centuries before the Common Era. It is a collection of artistic works mainly comprising of hymns and

prayers which grew out of real emotions, feelings and faith responses of the Jewish people in relation with God. The Psalter has had throughout the years contributed greatly to Jewish and Christian worship, meditation, theology and many such areas of faith expression alike. Considering the still vital place the Psalms have in worship even in modern times, it is hardly surprising to believe in the fact that the Psalter was indeed the Hymn book of the Jewish temple. When we think on these lines it is convenient to compare the Psalter with a modern day hymnal in which we find poetry, moving literature, musical settings, instructions for accompaniment, techniques involved in the performance of the music and many such attributes. The task at hand in this essay is to present the various technical annotations that are associated with the Psalms and to bring out as to how they assist the reader for better understanding.

Technical Terms

Technical terms are in fact constructions which relate to knowledge and meaning of some activity, specialized field or area of practicality. The technical terms found are divided into two categories. One is the type that is to be found in the Hebraic text itself in the form of superscriptions and the Selah's found at various points (of which an extended contribution

would follow). The other is the invention of modern scholarship which is used for analytical purposes and better and further comprehension.

Hebraic Technical Terms

Out of the one hundred and fifty psalms nearly five sixths are ornamented with superscriptions. The superscriptions themselves are distinct and in a way create a sense of blurredness with regard to their presence , because in modern scholarship it is believed that they refer to a system of notation which we do not understand and have no means of recovering¹⁷⁹.

“There are certain titles which are obscure in meaning but seem to indicate different categories of Psalms. Those of most frequent occurrence are Psalm (Mizmor), Song (Shir), Prayer (Maschil, Michtam). With the exception of the last it is not possible to find any common characteristic in the Psalms that bear these particular titles, and therefore they can hardly refer to a manner of composition or subject matter. They may refer to the way in which they were sung, or to the occasions when they

¹⁷⁹ Even at the time of the Greek translation they were not understood, for the translators clearly did not know what to make of them.

were used”¹⁸⁰.

However, these may be categorized broadly into three sections as (1) the character of the poem (historical occasion etc.), or (2) matters connected with the musical setting or liturgical use and (3) the author (the collection etc.).

However, not all the words used in these titles could be accepted as technical terms. For an example the superscription in Psalm 34 (NRSV) reads as ‘Of David, when he feigned madness before Abimelech, so that he drove him out and he went away’ and this primarily gives out the setting of the psalm rather than any technical term.

Most of the technical terms¹⁸¹ other than the Selah’s are to be

¹⁸⁰ P Carleton: *How shall I study the Psalm*; Bangalore, Christian Literature Society, 1959, xxii.

¹⁸¹ ‘*Shiggaion*’ occurs in the title of psalm 7, (and the prayer of Habakkuk is said to be set to ‘*Shigionoth*’). The word is derived from which means to wander. Perhaps it means "wild and ecstatic" or denotes a stirring of the emotions.

Musical instruments, ‘*Neginoth*’ rather with music with stringed instruments, ‘*Nehiloth*’ with wind instruments. ‘*Alamoth*’ is found in psalm 46 and it may possibly stand for soprano or high pitched, ‘*Sheminith*’ the eighth denoted that the setting was to be an octave lower. Upon ‘*Gittith*’ in psalm 8 is from some Gittite instrument or the harp brought by David from Gath. ‘*Psalm*’ (*mizmôr*) and ‘*Song*’ (*shîr*) cannot be completely distinguished, but psalm probably implies that it was sung to an instrumental accompaniment. ‘*Maskil*’ (*maskîl*) designates in 13 psalms. The root *śkl*, denotes "insight" or "wisdom," so a maskil might be an "efficacious psalm" or "skillful psalm," but we don't really know the

found in the (2) matters connected with the musical or liturgical use. Some of them refer to the instrument of the accompaniment, some to the manner of singing, and some to the particular tune to be used. The most frequent is 'To the Chief Musician'. This probably means that the particular psalm was to be found in the collection used by the "Director" of music in the Temple.

"Such titles as 'For the Chief Musician' or 'to the Choir master' as it might now be put ; 'with stringed instruments' or 'for the flutes' (Psalm 5) ; 'according to the Gittith' (psalms 8,81,84) , probably referring to the harp ; 'according to Jeduthum' (Psalms (39,62,77), probably referring to a melody called after David's chief musician, all reflect considerations of the time and the music. Some titles refer to special occasions for the use, of the Psalm-92 for Sabbath Day, 38 and 70 for Memorial occasions, 30 for the dedication of the House of God. It is not possible to attain certainty as to the meaning of some titles, for some are late and unreliable. Many of the psalms, however,

meaning. 'Mizmor' - musical accompaniment, 'Shir' - vocal music , 'Mikhtam' - a song of covering or atonement, 'Tepillah' – prayer, 'Tehillah' - song of praise , 'Lam-menasseh' - to the choir leader , 'Mahalat' - song of lament 'Higgaion', found in 9:16 in a note with Selah and in the text of 19:14; and 92:3. It seems to derive from *hāgā*, "meditate, devise, plot." It may mean "meditation, whispering melody." As a musical direction it may perhaps indicate the quieter instruments.

Based on www.xenos.org/classes/psalms/psweek1

have no such directions (musical). There is, however, abundance of evidence for the use of music in Old Testament worship – flutes, trumpets, organs, harps, lutes and cymbals.”¹⁸²

All this information does direct us to understand of a rich tradition of music that was present even in ancient times and more specifically that singing was accompanied by various musical instruments and music itself was a developed art form.

The use of the word Selah

“Scattered throughout the psalms is the word Selah. The most likely view is that this refers to a musical (instrumental) interlude; this has the support of the Greek Septuagint, which always renders it as *diapsalma* ‘musical interlude’. Further support for this view comes from the fact that Selah often comes at the end of a strophe or where there comes a natural division or change of mood in the psalm. (cf. Pss. 44.8; 46.7,11; 89.37)”¹⁸³

The term Selah appears 71 times in 39 psalms and it would belong to the same category as the musical titles because they are devoid of any literal meaning to the message in a psalm. Even after perusing several works and views expressed by

¹⁸² P Carleton: *How shall I study the Psalms*; Bangalore, Christian Literature Society, 1959, xxii.

¹⁸³ J Day: *Psalms*; England, Sheffield Academic Press, 1995, 17.

researchers on the technical terms the meaning of the term is not absolute, but it does for the most part seem to indicate the place where singing was interrupted by a musical interlude.

“It may fairly be inferred from these facts that *Selah* is a technical term of great antiquity, having reference to musical accompaniment. Its precise meaning, however, is quite uncertain. There are two main lines of ancient tradition :

- (a) By LXX always, and by Symmachus and Theodotion generally, it is rendered *diapsalma*, which may denote either louder playing, *forte*; or more probably, an *instrumental interlude*, while the singing ceased. The Syriac (with a few exceptions) gives an abbreviation of the Greek word. The Vulgate omits it entirely.
- (b) The most ancient Jewish traditions interpret the word to mean *for ever*. So the Targum, with some variety of rendering, Aquila, the ‘Fifth’ and ‘Sixth’ Greek versions. Symmachus, Theodotion, and the Syriac occasionally; and Jerome, who renders *semper*. ”¹⁸⁴

Another explanation that has been given is that it was a signal for a change of musical accompaniment, probably from the Hebrew root word *salal*, "to lift up". If this be the case then it would probably call the worshippers to raise their voice up in a

¹⁸⁴ A.F Kirkpatrick: *The Book of Psalms*; Cambridge, University Press, 1957, 178.

unified way thereby increasing the volume (of voices and instruments together) of the musical piece at that particular moment as in a crescendo.

“There is no conclusive answer to the question of the meaning and function of the ominous *Selah* which appears seventy one times in the Psalter, in thirty nine different psalms. We may think with the LXX of an instrumental interlude (an *intermezzo*), or a pause for prayer, or a response. However, the reasons for placing it in the given positions are unknown and unfathomable.”¹⁸⁵

Other explanations have also included it to be an emphatic Amen, where the congregation was to join in on a response quite similar to Christian worship today.

“The word evidently indicates a point where a pause of some kind is to be made in the recitation of the psalm, thus, for instance, where it stands at the end of the separate strophes, as in Psalm 46. In late Jewish and Rabbinic times this was supposed to mean that at such a point the congregation was to join in with some shout of homage, namely ‘for ever’ (*nesah*); that is why most ancient translators render *selah* by (for ever) , and that is what the M.T means by the vowel signs (*qere*) with

¹⁸⁵ Klaus Seybold: *Introducing the Psalm* (Trans. R. Graeme Dunphy); Edinburgh & T Clark Ltd., 1990, 87.

which the consonants have been furnished, but which do not fit in with the form and the tone of the word.”¹⁸⁶

The intention of a Selah, even though it could be debated, was included to break the flow of the psalm. Exactly what happened throughout this break is open for various view points. Either the music increased and lingered for a while or the voices together with the music rose in unison. There is also the possibility that the music halted completely for the human voices to respond or finally there was a moment of silence (a rest) before proceeding with the rest of the hymn.

Invented Technical Terms ¹⁸⁷

The Hebrew Bible is full of poetry, from complete books to books containing long sections of poetical verse. When we consider poetry in our own times, such verse is usually associated with certain forms that enable our better understanding, and knowledge of same is evidently helpful. In this study it is felt that a brief inclusion needs to be done with regard to various forms of patterns that have been developed for

¹⁸⁶ Sigmund Mowinckel: *The Psalms in Israel's Worship* Trans. D.R.A.P Thomas; Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1962, 211.

¹⁸⁷ This subheading has the contribution of discussion of the many of the books mentioned in the bibliography. The NRSV version has been used for the quotations.

analyzing Hebrew poetry and the Psalms.

The word '*stich*' has been used to denote a line or sentence of words and '*strophe*' or '*stanza*' to a set of lines. '*Metre*' and '*rhyme*' are used in hymns to analyze the arrangement of syllables according to the number of beats in a line¹⁸⁸. '*Alliteration*' or repetition has also been used in this regard to put out a meaning more forcefully¹⁸⁹. As in other poetry '*figure of speech*' has been used through '*simile*' and '*metaphor*' to bring to life a concept through the description of some common and natural object or incident¹⁹⁰. '*Assonance*' is the concept of the similarity in sound of the ending words of two verses or lines¹⁹¹. '*Paranomasia*' is the careful selection of words which also make focus the reader into understanding a particular idea¹⁹².

Another technical area that seems to have thrived under certain

¹⁸⁸ '*Accent*' is also used as a supportive element in determining '*metre* and *rhyme*'.

¹⁸⁹ 'O Lord, how long shall the wicked,
How long shall the wicked exult? (Ps. 94.3)

¹⁹⁰ The voice of the Lord flashes forth flames of fire (Ps. 29.7)

¹⁹¹ (e.g Isaiah 53.4 & 5) However this phenomenon has to be undertaken with the Hebrew script where this can be observed. In translations this may not be the case each time.

¹⁹² In Isaiah 5.7b this could be observed where the words 'justice & bloodshed' as well as 'righteousness & cry' correspond with similar words in the Hebrew language. For original text readers this poetical style would have appealed greatly.

scholars has been parallelism. Parallelism has been divided as given below.

(a) Complete Parallelism. Here we have two lines where each significant word in one corresponds to a significant word in the other.

i. The parallelism may be synonymous (the same thought) thus,
The Lord of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our refuge (Psalm 46.7,11).

ii. Or it may be antithetic (a contrast), thus;
They will collapse and fall;
But we shall rise and stand upright (Psalm 20.8)

iii. Or it may be emblematic (a comparison), where the situation in one line is compared to the situation in the adjoining line, thus
As the father pities his children,
So the Lord pities those who fear him (Psalm 103.13)

(b) Incomplete Parallelism ¹⁹³

i. Sometimes one word in a line has no counterpart in the neighbouring line. This is called incomplete parallelism without compensation,

¹⁹³ This is also called 'Progressive Parallelism' where a sentence was broken up into two (Ps. 119.13).

He drew me up from the desolate pit
Out of the miry bog, (Psalm 40.2)

ii. For incomplete parallelism with compensation an example would be,

Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; (Psalm 1.5)

This area of study, that being of the invented technical terms is by no means over and many new developments would take place with modern and future scholarship. But it is never in doubt that these technical terms have played a major role in making the reader (especially the one not conversant with Biblical Hebrew) to understand the psalms more comprehensively.

Conclusion

“We shall understand and enjoy the psalms more if we appreciate the beautiful form that is an intrinsic part of them. Of this beauty there remains for us, unfortunately, practically only the thought – rhyme when we read the psalms in translation”¹⁹⁴.

¹⁹⁴ Pius Drijvers: *The Psalms: Their Structure and Meaning* ; London, Burns and Oates, 1967, 32.

The challenge to the interpreter of the book of Psalms will be to identify the particular form of each psalm in which he/she could find much hidden treasures. As in most times the readers have to be content with translated versions of the Psalms, therefore it is doubtful whether the perfect and round understanding can be received with the lack of knowledge in ancient Hebrew and advanced poetical analysis. The technical terms that were used in the Hebrew text have helped us to realize the presence of music and varied forms of composition. They have also directed the reader to visualize and experience upto some extent the great tradition of Psalms in the ancient times. The technical terms that have come into being through invention continue the task of simplifying and explaining what the Psalmist meant for his/her audience.

Case 12 – Transcendence of False Teachings in the Johannine epistles

Commentary

The following work will firstly concentrate on the Biblical literary element of the Johannine Epistles which will focus on an introduction and ‘false teachings’ as well as how the author addresses these issues. And next this will be contextualized into interpretation and discussion relevant for this day. Teachings are to develop Virtue. How does false teaching develop virtue? Exactly because there should be some opposition to it. However the ‘Being’ of false teachings cannot be Regulated by the Spirit since the Spirit is truth. And this issue is very much Time Bound. The outcome is overlooked by intervention and the fading becomes ominous in time if not the non standard would become the gold standard and the original would be only a matter of historic importance.

Introduction to the Johannine Epistles

Traditionally, five texts in the New Testament are ascribed to the apostle John and which are also called Johannine literature. These texts are the Gospel of John, the three letters of John and the book of Revelation.

“The three letters share some vocabulary and have the same style, so they are closely related to each other.¹ John has more in common with the fourth Gospel than do the other letters and there is general agreement that none of the letters is related to Revelation”¹⁹⁵.

1 John

Like most other letters in the New Testament I John is not begun with a greeting and does not end with a departing good wish. Sometimes because of these reasons it has been treated not as a letter but a sermon or a theological essay. The letter concentrates on two main aspects, one being the attack on the true faith and discernment of same and the emphasis it places on love. The letter is addressed to readers “...as threatened by a heresy the representatives of which neither Jews nor Gentile, but claim to be Christians themselves.”¹⁹⁶ In opposition to this the letter portrays Jesus as the Word of God in human form owing such thought to the beginning of the Gospel by John. Those who distort such truth or the anti Christ are figured by the false teachers who were in that time where the Gnostic movements was present. Next the love and responsibilities of

¹⁹⁵ Edwin D Freed: *The New Testament*; Californian, Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1986, 376.

¹⁹⁶ Wille Marxen: *Introduction to the New Testament*; Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1974, 261.

the Christian community had been deteriorating at that time due to divisions created by a set of Christians claiming to be superior than to others “.... In their pride they thought that the common Christians were sadly inferior.... The elder protested with all his power against such divisive pride. The very nature of Christian life was love.”¹⁹⁷

2 and 3 John

These two letters fit into the normal style of the epistle of the day. Even more the beginning and the end of both letters seem to take a similar pattern. The author of both of these letters seemed to be a person calling himself the ‘elder’ and addressed to the ‘elect lady and her children’ and ‘Gaius’ respectively. Opinions have been raised to imply that the ‘elect lady’ could herself be a Church. ‘Gaius’ seems to be a disciple and a friend of the writer. Love seems to be the main theme in 2 John while “.. it attacks docetism¹⁹⁸ and antinomianism¹⁹⁹”²⁰⁰. The third letter of John is appreciative of the addressee as well as Demetrius but criticizes Diotrephes who challenges the author’s

¹⁹⁷ Floyd V Filson: *Opening the New Testament*; Philadelphia, The Westminster Press, 1952, 209.

¹⁹⁸ The belief that Jesus was never a true man but a spirit who inhabited a human body.

¹⁹⁹ The belief that being in Christ and being free from the law meant they had unlimited freedom to do anything.

²⁰⁰ W. David Stacey: *Groundwork for Biblical Studies*; London, Epworth Press, 1992, 422.

authority. The letter also mentions the responsibility for Christians (travelers/missionaries) who visits them. “.....the Christian Churches are recognizing that they are separate entities in the world, and as such ...this hospitality to other Christians was to become an important sociological factor in the development of the Church”²⁰¹.

False Teachings and how the author addresses these issues

False teachings are regularly brought up in I John. The first mention comes in 2.18 where the term ‘anti Christ’ is being used to denote false teachers at that time. As mentioned above false teachers could have either belonged to the Docetism party or to the Antinomianism party. The author warns throughout the letter (2.26, 3.7, 4.1,3) of the need to be aware of such teachers. False teachers are thus given this name by the author for mainly three areas of interpretations.

1. Christological error²⁰²- where believers were misled that Jesus Christ never came in the flesh and never possessed a human body. This claim was made in the light that matter was evil and thus Christ would be free from immersing in evil when this cover was set up. 1 John

²⁰¹ Norman Perrin: *The New Testament and Introduction*; New York, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Inc., 1974, 249

²⁰² John Stott: *Men with a Message*; London, Evangelical Literature Trust, 1994, pg 81

2.22, 4.3, 2 John 9 are some examples of where this is talked about.

The author fights against this heresy by implying the fact they knew the real Jesus in his human form 1 John 1.1-3. He justifies this claim through words such as ‘Jesus Christ has come in the flesh...’ I John 4.2, 2 John 7. Baptism and the cross²⁰³ are implied by 1 John 5.6 there again signifying the human quality of Jesus Christ. He challenges the community to discern the correct teaching in I John 4.2.

2. Moral self Deception ²⁰⁴ - this was the idea of the physical life having no connection to the faith and whatever happens to the flesh will not interfere with the spiritual life. So a life could be spent devoid of any limits and sins were of little significance and forgiveness meant little. I John 1.6, 2.4, 3.7-9, 3 John 11 are some places where this is being addressed.

The author counterattacks these ideas by emphasizing on responsibility. We can never boast of being sinless 1 John 1.8-10. Knowing the vulnerability of the young

²⁰³ John Stott: *Men with a Message*; London, Evangelical Literature Trust, 1994, pg 82

²⁰⁴ John Stott: *Men with a Message*; London, Evangelical Literature Trust, 1994, pg 82

minds the author's final words are also connected with avoiding sin 1 John 5.21. The author presents the criteria to walk in the path of the righteous 1 John 3.10.

3. Spiritual self exaltation²⁰⁵ - This was an issue created by a few Christians because of their foolish pride they have moved away from their duty of love towards their neighbor and rather looks down upon them. I John 2.19 probably refers to this group who have segregated themselves from the community.

Against this the author stresses the concept of love and shows that if they claim to be special they should be accompanied by their commitment to their neighbours as well 1 John 4.7,9,11,20,21, 2.9-11, 4.8. "... finally by showing love the believer is assured of the authenticity of their Christian faith; by loving others the believer discovers the power of God at work."²⁰⁶ (I John 3.24)

The author specifies that 'living in Christ' or the true meaning of being a Christian can never be an experience, way above the head but "it's indispensable accompaniments are the confession of Jesus as the son of God come in flesh, and a consistent life of holiness

²⁰⁵ John Stott: *Men with a Message*; London, Evangelical Literature Trust, 1994, pg 83

²⁰⁶ Diane Tidball :*John's letters*; London, Evangelical Literature Trust, 2002, 92

and love”²⁰⁷. And these are the three teachings which have been reversed and adapted by the false teachers. In the author’s eyes “ The world with its deceptive attractions, and false teachers with their deceptive doctrines might easily snare God’s children and prevent them from practicing God’s truth, but they are shown how to resist and overcome in belief and behavior”²⁰⁸ John 2.19-21.

False teachings in Church today

The word ‘Church’ in a broad sense may refer to the several thousand denominations which claim to be institutions of Christianity. And it is quite obvious that it is because of the ‘teachings’ itself that the Church has got divided. In that sense we can never arrive at a uniform ‘teaching’, however the general perceptions of the Church at large may be used to answer this issue.

1. The Church as we know can become, due to the false teaching of religious exclusivity, a fundamentalist institution. The inability to widen our horizons to discern the truth of God in other religions has a puzzling effect. Yet the Church projects

²⁰⁷ John R.W Stott: *The Letters of John*; Ipswich, Inter-Varsity Press, 1988, 154

²⁰⁸ David Jackman: *The Message of John’s letters*; Leicester, Inter Varsity Press, 1988, 71.

a showy pietistic attitude without ever sparing a thought for the rich religiosity that cultures may be blest with. This religiosity mentioned here refers to Buddhism, Islam and Hinduism all accompanied with founders, history, scripture, ethics, doctrines etc. just like the Christians have inherited. The Johanne epistles itself, R.S Sugirtharajah describes, have many features of a colonial discourse. Of I John 4.5,

“The epistle exhibits intolerance of this sort of situation and detest any theological contradiction. The author’s hermeneutical device for dealing with theological dissidence is to come up with his own definition Christianity on the basis of his understanding of the person of Christ. The incarnation and the atoning power of the sacrificed Christ become normative and are used as a way of excluding those with divergent views or who hold a different interpretation from this.”²⁰⁹

These are the same texts of terror used by the Church to exclude other faiths. Faiths just like us who have built systems of theologies and philosophies on what is in store after and before life. To the neutral bystander the religious battle field proves a laughing stock where so much is said to undermine the other but where nothing is done to prove what each one profess.

²⁰⁹ Fernando F Segovia, R,S Sugirtharajah: *A Post Colonial Commentary on the New Testament*; New York, T & T Clark, 2007, 414.

It is a common belief that the author of I John is a wounded and fearful man. Wounded because he/she has lost and realized that God the supreme reality is one who likes diversity, and freedom to follow God according to one's wishes should be allowed (it is inevitable). Fearful because he is dejected of losing what he had built up and at not being able to increase his flock that has been blinded to limit their thinking. Very few people in Churches seem to be near the top of the mountain of one's spiritual journey. They see others who are different also arriving at the summit but taking a different path. The majority are at the bottom of the mountain unable to see others and think that they are the only people exploring.

One way of improving the situation is through education and encouragement to expand our capacity to think openly. The Church should become an instrument of unity and harmony. It does not mean losing even an iota of what it is but rather an attempt to understand the other and cooperate to walk with acceptance.

2. The Church it is felt has also got stuck in the mud of the faith vs works debate. The one reason why the 'natural' evangelization does not work in Asian countries is that Christianity has become a personal matter, faith has become a wonderful, emotional feeling up in the clouds where you should not worry even if hell broke loose below. Christians are merely

not living lives worthy of the noble person and work of Christ. And the Church being the ‘educationist’ should accept failure for this attitude of ‘keeping the hands clean’. (This is a critical attack on all religions and not limited to Christianity, however in this specific platform we air assaults on the false teachings of the Church). “For the writer of the epistle, the real and deep meaning of ‘truth’, ‘justice’ and ‘love’ emerges out of the tension in the midst of life, and they are at no stage separated from action²¹⁰”.

The only reasonable way of addressing this would be to actively engage in the life of the society and country. It should become a major concern of the Church to have her voice in all sectors of life. Voicing to the injustice and for the cause of the oppressed was indeed the example of Jesus Christ working towards the reign of God.

3. Another probable false teaching of the Church is that the “Church” itself is given a more prominent role in the life of believers than the ‘Dharma’ or the ‘teaching’ of Christ. This is due to the traditional teaching with emphasis on the priestly class and institution. The need to profess Christ and not Christianity is a major hindrance to the image reflected on the Christian community.

²¹⁰ Fernando F Segovia, R,S Sugirtharajah: *A Post Colonial Commentary on the New Testament*; New York, T & T Clark, 2007, 421.

Probably this can be best addressed by the ‘base ecclesial communities’ method where few members of the Church form groups to study the Bible and actively participate in their own context.

While problems arise with unattended bruises suffering for long times the healing process also takes on an even longer time. But in history we see that many issues that have been put in the wrong have become right through human intervention. We may attribute this to ‘time the great solver’ but it is us/we who act in time. While locks appear keys also are visible it is the role of the Church that brings into understanding these many solutions because it has the greatest of the lessons on how things can be rectified.

AFTERWORD

A long summation does not fit a tired eye especially after a long and arduous trip rattling through philosophical knowledge. Yet the questions that may arise from our queries on the concept of Being leaves yet much facets to be explored and discovered. One of the most startling questions which we may have to answer would be whether 'Being' has other perspectives of attachment to it other than what we discussed. And the simple answer would be that it does and much more sides can be investigated and decided upon. Even in the examples quoted the keen mind may scan and discover strains mentioned here or even newer perspectives. All the more the inability to grasp the concept of 'Being' is actually the most salient feature in the concept and finally knowing that makes us come to 'square one' but with a whole lot of ideas and experiences that we did not have in our hold if we had set out uninformed. It may also be pertinent after travelling back and forth through varied subjects in the quest for meaning in existence, to reflect on 'Being' as a concept that beleaguers wishful constructions for an example the scientist might assign existence as the mode by which living beings are on earth not because of any charge but rather because it is part of evolution, the oriental religions of Buddhism and Hinduism may assign the law of Karma as the causation of existence and the need to decimate the cycle of

transmigration, in Islam , Christianity and Judaism although not following a blanket rule we may allocate a more purposeful reason for existing. For the philosopher existence rolls out a diversity of possibilities such as nature to name one and for specific schools of thought such as for Existentialists it bears no direct intention. For the social view, to which group the majority of the population may unconsciously belong to 'Being' is a matter of duty that has been entrusted and expected but the charge remains pretty much vague. Therefore owing to some of these possibilities we may take for granted a view already accepted and wish no more to add or subtract thereby realizing a vital strand in the issue of the inability to test something beyond our scope.

Yet humanity makes life as it goes on a merry way, the earliest settlements would never have dreamt of the idea of the value of oil or democracy yet through development we have achieved both. We now need to realize the saga of the extinction of oil or the story of two wolves and a lamb deciding on what to eat for dinner! Yet in all, existence rolls on as if by nature (maybe it purely is), as if humanity has nothing to do with it as if cutting open the anatomical fish will reveal nothing of worthwhile information leave alone astronomical swish! The weariness of study the Ecclesiastes scholar talked on is becoming light by the second, as we remain in 'being'.....

Appendix 1

Constitutional guarantees on the freedom of religion with recent discussion on conversion

Introduction

(a) The Sri Lankan Constitution

“The Constitution of Sri Lanka is the supreme law of the country. Sri Lanka has been governed by a number of Constitutions before and after independence. The Constitutions which were in force before independence are the Constitution of 1833, the Manning Constitution of 1920, the Donoughmore Constitution of 1931 and the Soulbury Constitution of 1946.”²¹¹

The first Constitution promulgated by the Sri Lankans was the Constitution of 1972, also referred to as the first Republican Constitution. With that Constitution Sri Lanka broke off entirely the allegiance to Britain and the British government and became a “free, sovereign and independent Republic”. The 1972 Constitution was replaced by the Constitution of 1978, or the second Republican Constitution which declares Sri Lanka, to be a Democratic Socialist Republic. Both the Constitutions of 1972 and 1978 are referred as ‘autochthonous’ or ‘home

²¹¹ Understanding Law: Nawala; Open University of Sri Lanka; 2001,pg 28.

grown’ in that their authority was derived entirely from the people of Sri Lanka freely electing their representatives who drafted the Constitution and not from a British Act of Parliament or from the British crown as before.

The Preamble to the Constitution declares the fundamental premises on which the Constitution is grounded. The principles of freedom, equality, justice, fundamental human rights and the independence of the Judiciary are declared as the intangible heritage of the people, both present and future. Chapter I of the Constitution contains general provisions with regard to the people, the state and sovereignty. Article 3 states that the Sovereignty includes what has been described as the ‘five building blocks’²¹² of the Constitution. They are

(1).The Legislative power to be exercised by the Parliament (2). The Executive power to be exercised by the President (3). The Judicial power of the people to be exercised through courts, tribunals sand other designed institutions (4). Fundamental rights (5). The franchise

A Constitution is also passed by the legislature as other laws but especially with 2/3 majority and a referendum of the general public.

²¹² Understanding Law: Nawala; Open University of Sri Lanka; 2001,pg 28.

The Sri Lankan Constitution reflects upto a degree of separation of powers, it made a radical shift from the traditional model of government which has been straight forward Parliamentary to a system combining both presidential and parliamentary methods of government.

Generally Courts are authorized to declare as invalid any law inconsistent with the constitution, but this is not so in Sri Lanka. There is provision to declare proposed statutes as inconsistent with the Constitution, but once they are passed by the legislature and become law they cannot be challenged and struck down.

Context and Analysis

(b) fundamental rights

“The Constitution of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka of 1978 (chapter III) guarantees to the people certain basic human rights from torture, right of equality, freedom from arbitrary arrest and detention, freedom of speech assembly, association, freedom to form and join a trade union, freedom of movement and of choosing his/her residence within SL,

freedom to follow any occupation, profession or business and the freedom to return to SL”²¹³.

Absolute and unrestricted individual rights do not, and cannot exist and in a modern State. The liberty of the individual to do as he/she pleases must yield to the common good. The Constitution strikes a balance between individual and social control. ²¹⁴

The following are the fundamental rights enshrined in our constitution

“Article 10 – freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right includes the freedom to adopt any religion of one’s choice

Article 11 – freedom from torture and from cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment

Article 12 – the right to equality and non discrimination. The right to equality before the law and equal protection of the law.

²¹³ Understanding Law: Nawala; Open University of Sri Lanka; 2001,pg 30.

²¹⁴ It follows therefore that nobody can be allowed to exercise his/her legal right so as to prejudice the existence of a similar belonging to another individual. It is the duty of the court to harmonize the exercise of competing rights. Protection for these fundamental rights has been provided for by making them entrenched rights which neither parliament or the executive may disregard. The Constitution has in Article 17 read with Article 126 provided a remedy for the enforcement which it has been made a guaranteed right. The Supreme Court is empowered to protect and grant relief and redress in respect of infringement or imminent infringement by executive or administrative action of any fundamental right.

Article 13 – rights relating to the due process of law. Freedom from arbitrary arrest.

Article 14 – freedom of speech and expression including publications, freedom to assemble peacefully, freedom of association, freedom to form and join a trade union, freedom to manifest one’s religion by worship, practice or teaching alone with others, privately or in public, freedom to enjoy and promote one’s culture and to use one’s language, alone or with others, freedom to engage in any lawful occupation or business alone or with others, freedom of movement and to choose one’s residence within the country”²¹⁵.

The exercise and operation of all fundamental rights declared and recognized by Articles 12, 13 (1,2) and 14 shall be subject to such restrictions as may be prescribed by law in the interest of national security, public order and the protection of public health or morality or the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights of a and freedom of others or of meeting the just requirements of the general welfare of a democratic society.

(c) religious and ethnic minorities

²¹⁵ Understanding Law: Nawala; Open University of Sri Lanka; 2001,pg 31.

Minority has been taken to mean “a group numerically inferior to the rest of the population of a state in a non dominant position whose members being nationals of the State possess ethnic, religious, or linguistic characteristics differing from those of the rest of the population and show if only implicitly a sense of solidarity directed towards preserving their cultural traditions, religions and language.”²¹⁶

Education & Culture - The United Nations educational, scientific and cultural organization (UNESCO) have cooperated closely in matters relating to the right to education, including the eradication of illiteracy, the education of youth on Human Rights and fundamental freedoms, and the eradication of discrimination in education.

Other international instruments on education and culture such as Article 26²¹⁷ and Article 27²¹⁸ of the universal declaration of

²¹⁶ Anton Fernando: Constitutional guarantees for minorities are imperative for peace; N/A, N/A, 2004, pg2.

²¹⁷ “Everyone has a right to education. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit”.

“Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations racial or religious groups and shall further the activities for the maintenance of peace”.

Human Rights and Article 15 of the International Covenant on economic, social and cultural rights,

“The right of everyone to take part in cultural life, to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and its applications. To benefit from the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which is the author”²¹⁹.

The declaration of the principles of International cultural co operation also makes claims likewise²²⁰.

“Parents have a prior right to choose the education that shall be given to their children”.

²¹⁸ “Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community and to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits”. “Everyone has the right to protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he/she is the author”.

²¹⁹ Anton Fernando: Constitutional guarantees for minorities are imperative for peace; N/A, N/A, 2004, pg8.

²²⁰ “Article 1 – each culture has a dignity and value, which must be respected and preserved. Each people have the right and duty to develop its culture in their rich variety and diversity.

Article 2- Nations shall endeavour to develop the various branches of culture side by side as far as possible, simultaneously, so as to establish a harmonious balance between technical progress and the intellectual and moral advancement of humankind.

Article 3- International cultural cooperation shall cover all aspects of intellectual and creative activities relating to education, science and culture”.

When considering Constitutions in other countries we come across many Articles which provide for non discrimination of education and culture, the guarantee of freedom for imparting education and preserving cultural rights. The following are some of the examples. Romania, Burma, Russia, Czechoslovakia, Germany, Costa Rica, Pakistan, USA, India, South Africa, Canada. “There is no specific provision in the Sri Lankan Constitution to protect the educational, cultural and linguistic rights of minorities”²²¹.

Next the need to guarantee equality of opportunity to every citizen of the country is vital to ensure national unity. This can be achieved by institutionalizing equal opportunity by anti discriminatory legislation. “The right of equal opportunity in public employment should be made a specific fundamental right in Sri Lanka as in the Indian constitution”²²².

These matters of opportunity are vital for the unity of a country. And the law of the land should provide a safe net towards these issues. A good Constitution²²³ must necessarily protect the

²²¹ Anton Fernando: Constitutional guarantees for minorities are imperative for peace; N/A, N/A, 2004, pg23.

²²² Anton Fernando: Constitutional guarantees for minorities are imperative for peace; N/A, N/A, 2004, pg24.

²²³ The Constitutions failed to incorporate, contd./

right to religious freedom and educational and cultural rights of minorities.

Successive governments failed²²⁴ to respond to the needs of a multi cultural society. The 1972 and 1978 Constitutions were discriminatory of the minorities. The Constitutions did not provide for the protection of educational and cultural rights and gave a foremost place to one religion and supported the majoritarianism.

(d) article on freedom of religion

The right to religious freedom is mentioned in the articles of the Constitution. The expansiveness of this freedom may differ

“1. The right to equality of opportunity in public employment: Article 21 (2) of the U.N declaration states “everyone has the right of equal access to public service in his/her country.

Section 16 of the Indian Constitutions specifically provides for equality of opportunity in matters of public employment. There is no such provision in the SL Constitution.

Article 16 (2) “No citizen shall on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, descent, place of birth, residence or any of them be ineligible for or discriminated against in respect of any office under the state”.

2. The right to own property: Article 17 of the universal of Human Rights proclaims “everyone has the right to own property along as well as in association with others. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his/her property”.

3. The right to legal aid: is imperative in a democratic state. The poor and the under privileged should not feel bitter that access to justice has been denied to them due too lack of financial resources”.

²²⁴ On Constitution making

from state to state. However most Constitutions²²⁵ are secular in nature. Only Maldives has been identified as having a state religion.

A secular state is where the Constitution does not favour any religion. No religion is given a special or foremost place. “In Sri Lanka however preference is given to Buddhism.” Such a Constitution is not secular though the Constitutions states in Article 9 “while assuring to all religions, the rights granted by Articles 10 and 14 (1).” “²²⁶The Constitutions of these countries (footnote 15) conform to the religious freedom and have adopted the United Nations declaration on elimination of all forms of intolerance based on religious belief. “Unfortunately Sri Lanka has failed to comply with international instruments which is also one reason for the ethnic conflict”²²⁷.

1946 constitution was one where religious freedom was guaranteed²²⁸ upto some extent while the constitutions²²⁹ of

²²⁵ The Constitutions in many countries among them USA, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, India are secular.

²²⁶ Anton Fernando: The right to religious freedom and the need for a secular state; N/A, N/A, 2004, pg8.

²²⁷ Anton Fernando: The right to religious freedom and the need for a secular state; N/A, N/A, 2004, pg8.

²²⁸ “1946 Constitution– Article 29 (1) states that parliament shall have power to make laws for the peace, order and good government of the island, provided no law shall

1972 and 1978 hindered same because Article 29(2) of the Constitution which lasted provided relief was and done away with.

The mere provisions in the Constitution guaranteeing religious freedom²³⁰ does not ensure the right to religious freedom in actual practice. Discrimination must be considered.

Challenges

(e) recent discussion on it with special reference to conversion

-
1. Prohibit or restrict the free exercise of any religion ; or
 2. Make persons of any community or religion liable to disabilities restrictions to which persons of other communities or religions are not made liable ; or
 3. Confer on persons of any community or religion any privilege or advantage which is not conferred on persons of other communities or religions ; or provide for a guarantee to all minorities.

The Soulbury Constitution was of a secular nature and did not give a special place to any one religion and Article 29(2) of the Constitution protected the rights of the minorities. Article 29(2) represents the solemn balance of right.”

²²⁹ “1972 Constitution– The first Republican Constitution provided that the Republic of SL shall give the foremost place to Buddhism and accordingly it shall be the duty of the state to protect and foster Buddhism while assuring to all religions the rights secured by Article 14(1).

1978 Constitution– This Constitution repeated the same Article. That is to foster Buddhism and assure rights to all other religions granted by Articles 10 and 14 (1).”

²³⁰ At the same time giving a foremost place to one religion.

“Anti conversion legislation was first mooted by the Jathika Hela Urumaya in what was perceived to be a populist move, which could also arguably gain the JHU seats in parliament. The bill was tabled in parliament in 2004, and was subsequently challenged before the Supreme Court in July of that year by 22 religious and civil society organizations, including the so called mainline churches on the grounds that it was unconstitutional. However the highest court in the land held it to be valid, with the exception of two clauses. An attempt to reach a compromise of sorts was made thereafter when, over a period of two years or so three lawyers representing the Church and the JHU respectively met three times in discussion before parliamentary select committee with various drafts of the bill. The two parties were unable to reach a consensus, however, and each wrote independently informing parliament of their respective inability to do so.

The amended draft was placed before parliament for its third reading and vote in January 2009 and has since been referred to a parliamentary consultative committee on religious affairs to decide on a definition of the word ‘religion’ as the term is not defined in the bill And there the matter lies dormant, for the

momentbut many are of the view that the situation could change easily”²³¹.

It must be admitted that these actions were brought upon the Christian community by several segments who have used material benefits to converts. However with this kind of legitimate rule common religious freedom and conversion²³² to a religion according to conviction is curtailed. Furthermore this can be used to abuse religious sects on the pretext that some harmful activity was done. This could erode harmonious dwelling among communities.

In January 2009, the heads of the mainline churches in Sri Lanka – RC, Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, Christian Reformed, Anglican , Church of South India as well as the Salvation Army collectively wrote an appeal to the members of

²³¹ “Articles of faith: When push comes to shove” in The Ceylon Churchmen: Apr-Jun 2009,pg 1.

²³² Section 2 of the Bill identifies the three criteria under which conversion is prohibited : by

‘1. allurement – being the offer of any temptation for the purpose of conversion, whether in cash, kind or other material benefit including employment or promotions.’

‘2. force – as being the use of threat of personal harm or injury as well as the threat of religious disgrace as a means of converting a person’.

‘3.fraudulent means- as being any means willful misinterpretation or any other fraudulent contrivance used to convert a person from one religion to another’.

The penalty for anybody found guilty of converting or attempting to convert is heavy.

parliament urging them to stop and reconsider the bill's adoption as law.

In the section comprising the 'background' to the letter it was argued that all religions practiced in SL have their origins outside SL. Christians have also grown to become an intrinsic and integral part of our country. The service done by Christians in nation building cannot be declined. As Sri Lankans serving in various and diverse fields they have made their contributions felt (Judiciary, Private Sector, Foreign Affairs, Media etc.) through such engagements as well as in humanitarian causes. It is accepted that Christians have made a significant contribution to the cultural, ethical and moral values of our society.

The main concerns²³³ on the bill were highlighted and an Inter religious council²³⁴ was proposed as an alternative to mediate in

²³³ "1.that it will erode the democratic right of religious freedom.... namely the right to choose a religion according to one's conscience."

2. "It will prevent Christians and indeed adherents of all religions in spite of their innocence to stand affected and save one another for fear of legal consequences in spite of their innocence"

3. "The interpretation and implementation of certain provisions of the bill are likely to provoke more inter religious suspicion, tensions and conflict than will resolve them"

²³⁴ "Whist admitting to insensitive and even thoughtless methods of Christian behavior on the part of some Christian and other groups that have upset our Buddhist and Hindu brothers and sisters in particular, and recognize the need to learn new lessons of respectful co existence with adherents of all faiths.... We instead wish to propose a representative Inter

matters of religious dispute. The closing to the letter captures the gist of the argument of the Church leaders. “While we may have made some errors in the past, we believe Jesus Christ is leading us on a journey from privilege to responsible servanthood. In the recent past we have strived to transform into a more open, understanding and inclusive Church rooted in and appreciative of our ancient heritage and culture.”²³⁵

Conclusion

It is pertinent to mention some part of this catastrophe was indeed one that ‘we brought upon ourselves’, owing to the thoughtless actions of some Christian sects. Peaceful coexistence should be high on the agendas of the Church in Asia as it has to be mindful of the rich religiosity that Sri Lanka is blessed with, as well as the freedom for each person to think for him/herself without force in choosing a religion. Also we should be mindful of the suppression the colonial powers brought upon Buddhism and relate that to their offensive when they have the upper hand. However the need to press for a

religious council with statutory powers to mediate when tensions occur including when allegations of force are made in conversion”.

²³⁵ “Sri Lankan Church leaders speak out ...” in Occasional Newsletter: Theological College of Lanka, Pilimathalawa, Ascension day 2009 issue, pg 16..

secular Constitution or adopting of provisions²³⁶ to safeguard such rights is also a pressing matter as nationalism as wipeout agendas may have dire consequences.

²³⁶ Adopt similar provisions like in the proposed Constitution of Myanmar where not only Buddhism but Hinduism, Christianity, Islam and the Animism are also recognized. In the Constitution of Ireland too there is a similar provision recognizing other religious groups.

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A Brief History of St Mark's Church Katukelle, Kandy

In the year 1835 Revd William Oakely took over the missionary work in the Kandyan regions. He joined an already active Gospel mission in and around Katukelle. While the propagation activities were under way in the year 1835 a small chapel was built just near the Kandy –Kadugannawa road and was used for worship. In the historical Chronicles of the Diocese of Colombo, it is mentioned that the Church at Katukelle was built between 1835-1867 and the consecration took place on 14th August 1880.

(Trans. from the (Kurunegala Diokeesiye Wansha Kathawa) Kurunegala Diocese Chronicles by I M D B Illangasinghe, 1990, 108-109)

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