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About the cover painting...



“Togetherness”

by Ajiyan George | Acrylic on Canvas | 40x60 | 2010 |

“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” - John 8:12

We human beings are self-centered and self-driven. All our efforts are over shadowed by the natural darkness of our hearts. No one has “a pure heart” and we all fall short in many ways. Jesus came into this world so that we could experience the goodness in our heart. God lovingly embraced each one of us through the wisdom of His Word. He shed light into the darkness of our lives uniting us through all our differences, giving us a sense of belonging and encouraging us to love one another. Hence, let all of us be torchbearers of this light of life that God Almighty has showered upon us.

Editorial

Togetherness was a hallmark of the early church. The spiritual dimension of togetherness and fellowship is fundamental to the character of a true church. The early followers of Christ were together in every spiritual sense because they were all ‘in Christ’. This is the great reality of our common Christian faith – our relationship with one another is derived from our personal relationship to Jesus Christ.

If our fellowship has any other basis it is spurious – even if that basis is a common ethnic culture, a common Christian upbringing, a common adherence to a certain branch of theology, or a common preference for a given mode of worship. It’s Jesus who binds all of us together and God. It is a true blessing and at the same time, a responsibility of the Church.

In this regard, the current issue of Hekamtho tries to elaborate few dimensions of the social responsibility of the Church to establish the togetherness in Christ in the recent times.

The first article, ‘The Internet and Alternative Media as Christian Communication’ by Jerry Kurian explains the need and essence of alternative media and journalism especially in the effort towards bringing about an alternative, religious or Christian view point which supports the views and needs of ordinary people.

Jenosh Johnson G, in his article ‘Affirming Belongingness to the Refugees: The Quest for an Ideal Christian Response in the Context of Syrian Refugees’, explains the role and necessity of the Church to engage in a direct involvement with the uprooted people that churches can help and lay the foundations for a new international order for uprooted people, which is very much the need of the hour and a prime responsibility of the Church and all of us.

‘In Recognition of the Christian Contribution to the Arab Civilization’ by Adibeh Abdo-Attia provides a personal reflection on the presence of Christianity in the pre-Islamic Arabian peninsula and shed light on few forgotten feminist Christian poets who made significant contributions to the Arabian civilization.

The fourth article, ‘The Narrative Critical Approach on the Temptation of Jesus (Mt 4: 1-11)’ by Anish K. Joy is an exegetical study of three temptations that strikes at the heart of religiosity and worldly conceptions of power and reminds us of how close that danger can come to believers. From one perspective, the first temptation is to use divine power to satisfy physical appetite; the second is to subject the promises of God to the test of spectacular demonstration, and the third is to accept the Devil’s definition of authority and its way of achieving it.

Jaisal Kauma Issac, in his article ‘Water as Divine Gift for Holistic Wellbeing: Perspectives from Orthodox Earth Ethics in the Context of Commodification of Water Bodies’ tries to explore the struggle of water for its existence which is not only a struggle for personal interest but as a struggle for the existence of the whole Creation. The existence of water as a life-giving resource with all the dignity and pride can only decide the existence of the humanity too.

Hope this issue of Hekamtho benefits you to understand few of the concepts of togetherness in Christian witness!

- Fr. Dr. Ajiyan George
Editor

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The Internet and Alternative Media as Christian Communication

Jerry Kurian¹

Introduction

Communication is what we cannot live without. One cannot but communicate. Every sound and non-sound, every silence and gesture is communication and communicates something. It is a basic need of every human being. But just as food, clothing and shelter and basic needs like water have been commodified, communication has also been commodified. It is similar to keeping God in a box. Boxed and commodified communication challenges the very core of human existence. God's creation of human beings and every living being associated with it has been in a deep crux of freedom, albeit with responsibility. When this is taken away, God's very creation is questioned. Communication

¹Rev. Fr. Jerry Kurian is a well-known scholar in the field of media and communication. He teaches at several theological colleges across India as a guest faculty. His research interests include the internet, social networks, protest movements, women in the church, theatre and new forms of education and alternative journalism. He is also the Vicar of St. George Simhasana Church, Thiruvalla.

mediates our reality² but wrongful mediation could lead to drastic consequences.

Christian communication is communication which makes use of Christian concepts for communication. It is different from secular, profit seeking communication in that the concepts are associated with God. As in theology, Christian communication becomes a deep involvement of God, human beings and all of creation. It is not just for baptized Christians, but for anyone interested in and associated with the very concepts of Christianity and Christian witness. In this sense Christian communication cannot be limited to just churches and theological colleges/seminaries but goes much beyond that. Communication in theological education also thus holds its very own and can bring out such points as human relationships, dialogue and interaction which is supposed to bring people together.³

Such Christian religious communication is the need of the hour in India. We are faced with the challenges of a commercial, corporate, business and profit oriented media in which paid news instead of news is being sold to the people. The very concept of news as being truthful and unbiased is being challenged. "The mass media are not mere carriers of messages. They also confer power, they legitimate systems, and they provide ways of looking at the world. They supply the context in which information is learned, attitudes are formed, and decisions are made. Christians living in our culture find themselves at odds with the assumptions and values within it."⁴

In such a context, what is left for the people to do? They can either come together and form independent media houses or

²Quentin J. Schultze and Robert Lerbert Woods Jr., eds, *Understanding Evangelical Media: The Changing Face of Christian Communication*, (Madison: Inter Varsity Press, 2008), 19.

³<http://jerryachensworld.blogspot.in/2012/06/communication-in-theological-education.html>, < May 20, 2013>.

⁴William Fore, *A Theology of Communication*, <http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=268> < May 16, 2013>.

become part of a network of citizen bloggers, journalists and media. Such efforts can now be sped up with technology and platforms like the internet. The very nature of the internet makes such a network possible and can be seen as a people friendly revolution which leads to a cleansing of the media. Christian communicators have such a responsibility wherein they become part of and support a network of independent journalists and bloggers. “Christian Communicators need serious theological reflection on their work and mission, particularly on the challenges posed by the new Information and Communication Technologies.”⁵

Communication

Communication is what brings people together, builds relationships and communities and strives at peace building instead of violence. Communicators are peace makers. They ignore gossip and pseudo sources and try to say the truth. Communicators identify and fight violence of all forms. This includes war, gender violence, caste and class violence and all forms of violence which silence and annihilate the subjugated and have nots. Communication changes (is dynamic) with changing needs, challenges, environments and technologies. So communication is seeking and being in dialogue whereby the other is seen as the same as us and each step is seen as a step towards understanding and doing away with misunderstanding that already exists and is bound to come up. Communication is also about equal access and the right to information. Francis Plude reminds us that the right to information is a fundamental human right in the United Nations charter.⁶ The right to Communication can be thus interpreted. Everyone has the right to information and communication in his/her own land. But when

⁵Ineke De Fiejter, *The Art of Dialogue, Religion, Communication and Global Media Culture* (Amsterdam: Deutsche Nationalbibliothek, 2006), 185.

⁶Francis Ford Plude, *Communications Technologies and the Ethics of Access*, (<http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=96>) <May 17, 2013>.

this right is hijacked, the people have the right to get it back. Christian communication can help in such a task.

WACC Christian principles of Communication and Communication for all

The Christian principles of Communication formulated by WACC⁷ in the 1980's and the present WACC principles are also a framework for communication. The Christian principles of communication include "communication from a Christian perspective, communication creates community, communication is participatory, communication liberates, communication supports and develops culture, and communication is prophetic".⁸ The revised version of this termed as Communication for all outlines "communication as a spiritual exercise, communication builds and shapes community, communication enhances participation, communication promotes freedom and demands accountability, communication celebrates cultural diversity, communication builds connectedness, and communication affirms justice and challenges injustice".⁹

The framework in all urgency and sincerity suggests that communication should lead to equal rights, equal opportunities, freedom and justice to all. But is such a framework workable given that the forms of communication available through various media are skewed in a direction that the winner is decided even before the competition starts? This can be corrected by changing the traditional means of communication in the organized media such as print and broadcast media. The framework that they follow and the owners and advertisers that they cater to many a time than not prevent them from following the principles of communication, which have to be adhered to, for the benefit of the common person.

⁷World Association for Christian Communication.

⁸(<http://www.waccasia.org/index.php?module=htmlpages&func=display&pid=2>) < May 17, 2013>.

⁹(<http://waccglobal.org/en/about-wacc/principles.html>) < May 17, 2013>.

Religious/Christian communication

Christopher Arthur tries to grapple with the term religious communication and argues that it is indeed something we need.¹⁰ We did see the principles of communication. Such principles are necessary for society to have a basis with which to work. It also leads to a religious framework of communication which is necessary in a society like ours. Religious communication for Arthur is about telling the truth, providing a space for people to express themselves, being empathetic and listening to the real stories of people and bringing about transformation.¹¹ Certain values have been lost in translation with time as far as the media is concerned. But this was not so earlier. The mainline press also came about with the emergence of popular and objective journalism by reporting reality in a non-partisan manner.¹² This however changed with time.

Herman and Chomsky developed the five filters through which news has to go through to be published in the main line media today. They are- commercial basis of dominant news organizations, advertisers have a big say in what to publish, over reliance on government and corporate experts, producers of flak and threats (credibility of sources is challenged by a big corporate public relations exercise) and ideology of anti-communism (also the producing of an enemy who is then done away with).¹³ Passing through these five filters¹⁴ is not easy for an ordinary person. This has brought about a vacuum which can be filled with religious/Christian communication.

¹⁰Chris Arthur, A Rationale for Religious Communication, Paper given at Working Consultation organised by University of Edinburgh Media and Theological Education Research Project (Edinburgh: Centre for Theology and Public Issues, 1988).

¹¹Ibid., 8,9.

¹²Stuart Allan, *News Culture* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1999), 12.

¹³(<http://www.chomsky.info/onchomsky/2002----.html>) < May 22, 2013>.

¹⁴Alison Edgley, *The Social and Political Thought of Noam Chomsky* (London: Routledge, 2000), 150.

Traditional and alternative journalism

Traditional journalism entails the investigation and writing of stories to suit the wants and economic ends of mainline print and audio-visual media. Such journalism has to compromise on how news is covered and produced and follows the traditional pattern of the inverted pyramid. The inverted pyramid has the most important details about the news in the first paragraph and include the who, what, when, why, where along with the how¹⁵. The other details follow in the subsequent paragraphs. This tradition of the inverted pyramid which is used especially in print journalism is still popular. But this inhibits the journalist from producing more interesting writing styles and also makes the story very predictable¹⁶. Regular readers of the text won't get a comprehensive view of events but rather receive information in a limited form. Warren G. Bovee quotes Lippmann to say that we usually have what is called public opinion¹⁷. This public opinion is created by learning facts about the world we live in. This in large part is created by the media we consume. Traditional journalism also follows a model of news worthiness. Eight factors that determine the newsworthiness of a news story is impact, timeliness, prominence, proximity, the bizarre, conflict, currency, and human interest¹⁸. One can see then that following this cannot ensure the principles of communication in a news story because it will not fulfill most of the factors for newsworthiness. Print media and news broadcasters will not see any newsworthiness in news which is oriented towards people friendly principles. Zelizer and Allan put this into perspective by saying

¹⁵<http://www.poynter.org/how-tos/newsgathering-storytelling/chip-on-your-shoulder/12754/writing-from-the-top-down-pros-and-cons-of-the-inverted-pyramid/>, < May 26, 2013> and W. Richard Whitaker, Janet E. Ramsey and Ronald D. Smith, *Media Writing: Print, Broadcast, and Public Relations* (Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2004), 153.

¹⁶Fred Fedler, et al., *Reporting for the Media* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 201.

¹⁷Warren G. Bovee, *Discovering Journalism* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1999), 4.

¹⁸<http://www.communication.utah.edu/classes/sp02/news.html> <May27,2013>

“Universal concepts of religious, ideological, or traditional values should be used to bridge the existing cultural communication gap. The common aspects of life that unite rather than divide could be emphasized. However, these suggestions have gone largely unheeded.”¹⁹

Alternative journalism on the other hand need not limit itself to the inverted pyramid model of writing stories. Traditional journalism does not limit itself just to the inverted pyramid but also to certain traditional ways of thinking. Alternative journalism goes against this rigid structure of reporting and seeks to experiment keeping the good of the ordinary people in mind. Alternative journalism takes place within the mainline media and in completely alternative forms of media. Whenever it happens in the mainline media, one may suspect that a certain catering to the needs of the advertisers will have to take place. In the case of alternative journalists who work with alternative forms of media this pressure may not be there. Rajeev Srinivasan says that “In India, there is an obvious industrialist-politician-journalist axis. They ‘manufacture consent’. But they were caught red-handed, Watergate-style, in the Radia tapes incident. Thereupon, the entire media closed ranks, and buried the story, hoping it would go away: this tactic has always worked in the past. Unfortunately for them, this time it didn’t work, because Internet readers, especially Twitterati (those using the Twitter social network), kept the issue alive”.²⁰ Daasu Krishnamoorthy says that

“The alternative media concept originally arose from mainstream media’s blackout of alternative opinion. It means more things than anti-establishment or underground press. Government leverage with information is minimal today compared to the control corporate mainstream media (MM)

¹⁹Barbie Zelizer and Stuart Allan, *Journalism after September 11* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 113.

²⁰Rajeev Srinivasan, *India is Finally Seeing the Birth of Alternative journalism* (http://www.dnaindia.com/analysis/column_india-is-finally-seeing-the-birth-of-alternative-journalism_1493314) < May 23, 2013 >.

have over mass communication. It is the private sector that owns almost all information and broadcasting channels today. The network of private networks dwarfs the state information and broadcasting network in India. It is now acknowledged all over the world that the Indian media are the freest. Yet it is the free media that stifle alternative voices.”²¹

One then understands the need and essence of alternative media and journalism especially in the effort towards bringing about an alternative, religious or Christian view point which supports the views and needs of ordinary people.

Traditional journalism and inbuilt safe guards

Safeguards within traditional media and journalism include journalists as being those who imbibe a never ending search for truth, those who meet the needs of the changing times and perform services for human kind²². They also include ethical norms in journalism or norms of journalistic conduct²³, newspaper editors’ code of ethics²⁴, press council code on communal writings²⁵ and News Broadcasters Association code of ethics and broadcasting standards²⁶. One can see the presence of enough safeguards for the media in its various forms.

Jesus as an alternative to the traditional

Jesus can be seen as an alternative to the traditional society he was in. His call to eternal life and what needs to be done to inherit

²¹Daasu Krishnamoorthy, *Defining Alternative Media in the Indian Context* (<http://www.thehoot.org/web/home/story.php?storyid=879&pg=1&mod=1§ionId=34>) < May 23, 2013>.

²²Y.K. D’Souza, *Handbook of Journalism and Mass Communication* (Delhi: Indian Publishers, 1997), 2.

²³<http://presscouncil.nic.in/norms.htm>, < May 23, 2013>.

²⁴<http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CI/4.%20India%20AIN%20code%20of%20ethics.pdf>, < November 3, 2012>.

²⁵Y.K. D’Souza, *Handbook of Journalism and Mass Communication* (Delhi: Indian Publishers, 1997), 15.

²⁶http://www.nbanewdelhi.com/pdf/final/NBA_code-of-ethics_english.pdf, <May 24, 2013>.

it suggests an alternative world to the one we know and live in.²⁷ This alternative is a departure from the narrow, hierarchical spirituality. Such an alternative becomes a framework for an alternative.

The internet as an alternative

The internet was in effect invented in 1969 as an experiment called ARPANET (Advanced Research Projects Agency Network) which was a defence experiment in the USA. This was then commercialized. India offered internet access to its citizens by 1995. “Internet penetration in India is now at 137,000,000 internet users for June, 2012 at 11.4% penetration of the population and 56,698,300 Facebook subscribers for September 30, 2012 at 4.7% penetration of the population.”²⁸ Even though at the moment internet usage in India is not at par with other countries there will be substantial change in these statistics from a year to year basis from now on and the difference between the haves and have nots will decrease.

Internet as virtual and spiritual space

The church gets tied up in its own rubrics when it comes to handling technology like the internet. It can avoid two things. One is over-hasty enthusiasm and the other is undifferentiated rejection.²⁹ Both are not good paths to take. Felix Wilfred is of the opinion that

New technology has given rise to “the emergence of the computer-mediated religion, known as ‘cyber-religion’ or virtual religion. This has made it possible because, communication technologies have led to a blurring of the real and the imaginary, to adopt a classical adage for today, ‘the imaginary is real’. Traditionally, religions have abounded in symbols and these have

²⁷Christopher Bryan, *Render to Caesar: Jesus, the Early Church and the Roman Superpower* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 83.

²⁸(<http://www.internetworldstats.com/asia.htm>), < May 29, 2013>.

²⁹Jean- Nicolas Bazin and Jerome Cottin, *Virtual Christianity. Potential and Challenge for Churches* (Geneva: WCC, 2004), 44.

been amply made use of in religious communication; however one knew when one was in the symbolic realm, as in the case of rituals, and when out of it. With the progressive elimination of the distinction between the real and the imaginary, people today inhabit and interact with the virtual world created by the various forms of computer-mediated communication, and for many, this imaginary world has become the real one.”³⁰

The internet is also spiritual in its own way and therefore it can be a sacred space for the divine and religions can be at home on the web.³¹

Internet as transcendental space

You “will be able to immerse yourself in simulated environments instead of just looking at them through a small rectangular window...you become an inhabitant, a participant, not merely a spectator. Increasingly we are told, ‘cyberspace places will present themselves in increasingly multisensory and engaging ways...we will not just look at them, we will feel present in them.”³² This makes a big difference in bringing about a different way of bringing out true people stories which lead to more democratic ways of living instead of corporate stories that encourage conflict.

Internet as dialogic space

The internet offers a space for dialogue which otherwise may not be available easily in the world we live in. Lack of a space for dialogue leads to more misunderstanding among communities. Jolyon Mitchell writes of the images on the internet which

³⁰Felix Wilfred, “Religion and Theology in the Information Society” in *Digital Culture Unplugged. Probing the native Cyborg’s multiple locations*, edited by Nalini Rajan (New Delhi: Routledge, 2007), 30.

³¹Jude Botelho, “Church and the Internet” in *Communication as Mission*, edited by L. Stanislaus and Jose Joseph (Delhi: Ishvani Kendra/ISPCK, 2007), 225.

³²Kevin Robins and Frank Webster, *Times of the Technoculture. From the information society to the virtual life* (London: Routledge, 2001), 241.

promotes itself as a resistance against terrorism.³³ Such images to promote good values bring a positive reaction from different communities and diffuse tensions. Such expressions come out because there is a space to express them.

Internet as anti-authoritative space

Kevin Robins and Frank Webster quote Pierre Levy's thoughts on the internet. Levy is of the opinion that "This new space- it is the space of the World Wide Web- is distinguished by its open, fluid and dynamic qualities; it is a space of creative profusion and disorder. The key metaphor is that of an 'information deluge', creating an 'ocean of information', a 'global information of fluctuating signs'. The old- and, it is said, now superseded- space was one in which vested interests sought, and could achieve, control over the ordered totality of knowledge."³⁴ He further says that "In the new condition of disorder, or 'knowledge-flux', there can no longer be any such totalising perspective or centralised mastery over the global domain of knowledge- it is in this respect that the relation to knowledge is necessarily and inevitably transformed."³⁵ Lawrence Liang brings out a very interesting argument and tries to trace the truth of whether books also went through a period of not being authoritative. His point is therefore that the internet will also transform at a later time into a place where information in it will be accepted as authoritative.³⁶

Internet as network and relationship space

Earlier information would be from dictionaries and books which were not interactive. This was web 1.0. Now sites like

³³Jolyon Mitchell, "Posting Images on the web: The Creative viewer and non-violent resistance against terrorism", *Material Religion* (volume 2, issue 2, 2006), 162.

³⁴Kevin Robins and Frank Webster, *Times of the Technoculture. From the information society to the virtual life* (London: Routledge, 2001), 222.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Lawrence Liang, "A Brief History of the Internet from the 15th to the 18th Century", *The Digitized Imagination. Encounters with the Virtual World*, edited by Nalini Rajan (New Delhi: Routledge, 2009), 15-35.

Wikipedia are called web 2.0 because they are more interactive.³⁷ The networks suggested for the internet are different from the usual networks known to us. Yuk Hui points to the rhizome which is “an open and decentralized structure reducible neither to the one nor the multiple...it also gives the internet the capacity of connectivity and inclusiveness.”³⁸

Internet as multiple identity space

“While cyber space provides access to great sources of authoritative information, it is also a virtual dumping ground full of misinformation, hoaxes, scams, counterfeit websites, and opinions that are portrayed as facts.”³⁹ But this should not be seen as a disadvantage. There are several people who are discriminated against and hounded in the world that we live in. For them the prospect of multiple identities offers new possibilities of discovering and expressing themselves. Campbell says

“The internet highlights the idea of the multiplicity of the self. There is no limit to the number or kind of newsgroups one can subscribe to, chat groups participated in or sites visited. At the same time there is nothing requiring the user to present a united self. How a person chooses to be known can vary from one site to another.”⁴⁰

The internet also offers people the chance to bring out their own identity and flourish in a group.⁴¹

³⁷Virginia Scott, *How Google Changed the World* (Bangalore: Jaico,2010), 94.

³⁸Yuk Hui, “The New Politics of the New Media”, *The Digitized Imagination. Encounters with the Virtual World*, edited by Nalini Rajan (New Delhi: Routledge, 2009), 94,95.

³⁹Daniel J. Lohrmann, *Virtual Integrity* (Hyderabad: Authentic, 2010), 48.

⁴⁰Heather Campbell, “Cultural Implications of the Internet and Postmodernity”, *Interactions. Theology Meets Film, TV and the Internet*, edited by Heidi Campbell and Jolyon Mitchell (Edinburgh: Centre for Theology and Public Issues and The Media and Theology Project, 1999), 43.

⁴¹Daniel Miller and Don Slater, *The Internet: An Ethnographic Approach* (Oxford: Berg, 2000), 174.

Internet as vulnerable space

The reality of the internet is not only in the fact that it is an alternative and even real space for people but that the realness of the internet is reflected in the vulnerability of the space in the internet. This means that various discriminations, conflict, and violence will be acted out in the internet just as we see in the world we live in. This makes the internet real and not just any other space.

“The conventional wisdom accurately maintains that the Internet serves as an important forum for expression in large part because of the unprecedented ease of entry into this forum for expression. Yet such expression is ultimately controlled by—and may be facilitated or frustrated by—a small handful of powerful conduits, that is, the broadband providers, Internet backbone providers, email providers, and search engines that make it all happen.”⁴²

It is not only different sorts of regulation and laws but also ghetto-ization on the basis of gender, class, race and caste (in the Indian context) to name a few. “The analysis of Internet users indicates disparity in levels of educational attainment and income, inequality in gendered and minority participation and access, and disproportionate opportunities for periphery and core firms.”⁴³

Alternative forms of media and journalism

When one looks at the dissemination of news and sees how conflict is distributed through the mainline media, it is time to look at other alternative means of news writing and dissemination. This does not mean the end of traditional media but could be a new era of a new means of technology and reporting which could help the traditional media and radicalise

⁴²Dawn C. Nunziato, *Virtual Freedom: Net Neutrality and Free Speech in the Internet Age* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 1.

⁴³Alecia Wolf, “Exposing the Great Equalizer: Demythologizing Internet Equity”, in *Cyberghetto or Cybertopia?: Race, Class, and Gender on the Internet*, edited by Bosah Ebo (Westport: Praeger, 1998), 30.

reporting. Even the mainline traditional media was at its inception seen as radical and new and as a threat to the established media of the time. Journalism was not even seen as a complete profession⁴⁴.

Blogs have become an alternative voice in society with many blogs and bloggers all over the world and in India. The possibility of putting a differing voice on the public sphere with very little expense is attractive to many. The proliferation of technology has also helped in this process. A blog is a personal diary, daily pulpit, a collaborative space, a political hotbed, a breaking-news outlet and a collection of links. This makes it a place where we can write and publish, give opinions, network and change the course of a news story by reporting the truth on it, reporting it differently and reporting it before anyone else does.

Bloggers are independent publishers, and the best bloggers are successful and effective because they do what the best old media publishers do- consistently provide quality content that is interesting and useful to their readers and by passing along scoops from other media sources⁴⁵.

Blogs are also called one form of new media which is simple to operate, accessible to those with an internet connection and so not complicated as a website to run and update. The framework of the blog also makes it imperative to network with other bloggers and thus become part of a strong voice on the public sphere in the internet. Subash Rai says that the internet has opened up a very important space for progressive and democratic communication. Therefore blogs, discussion forums and other forms of community building tools online could be deployed effectively to

⁴⁴Stuart Allan, *News Culture* (Buckingham: Open University Press), 1999, 21.

⁴⁵Frederich Noronha, "Caught in the Net" in *21st Century Journalism in India*, edited by Nalini Rajan (New Delhi: Sage, 2007), 286.

further the democratic dialogue⁴⁶. But blogs also offer a much more serious contribution.

“Blogs can be of value in the dissemination and discussion of current political events relating to peace and war, affording the means for individuals to provide terse but forceful commentary and reflection. The importance of promoting inclusive approaches toward weblog development is underscored by their growing role in the construction of collective memory. Memories of peace and war are critical to how people respond to changing political conditions. However, the construction of collective memory has seldom been inclusive, since those in power are largely in control of information sources and archives as well as physical artifacts. With the manipulation of collective memory come new opportunities for those in power to activate wartime sentiments and engage in dis-information campaigns. The distributed nature of the internet could mitigate these considerable threats, although electronic traces in themselves may ultimately be more at risk for censorship and distortion than ones conveyed in more permanent media such as books and newspapers.”⁴⁷

Citizen journalism is a direct result of the visibility of such new technological developments. The term became famous after the Asian Tsunami in December, 2004. Citizen journalism works on two levels. One is the level of the public sharing information from the ground with big media houses. Two is the level of the public using their own blogs and networking sites to share this information with the outside world. “Technology has helped citizen journalists or the person on the street, or at the scene of the tragedy, to be an eyewitness to breaking news and at the same

⁴⁶Subash Rai, “Blogging- A new paradigm in Journalism” in *21st Century Journalism in India*, edited by Nalini Rajan (New Delhi: Sage, 2007), 293.

⁴⁷Jo Ann, “Conversations in the Blogosphere in Inclusive Pedagogy of Peace and War”, (Transformations, Volume X, Issue 2, Fall 2004), 79.

time share it with others as the event unfolds”⁴⁸. Mobile and internet technology have resulted in the ordinary public reporting from the scene and this has resulted in the truth being reported in many cases and scenes and information which would otherwise be hidden, not only coming out but coming out very quickly indeed. Citizen journalism thus is “individuals playing an active role in the process of collecting, reporting, analyzing and disseminating news and information. The intent of this participation is to provide independent, reliable, accurate, wide ranging and relevant information that a democracy needs.”⁴⁹ Such alternative media and journalism fights against government propaganda⁵⁰ and thereby makes an effort to turn conflict into peace. As mentioned earlier, the new media offer new possibilities. They are free of cost, easy to learn and use, can be done by rookies (non-professionals), users can work at their pace and they can use multiple platforms like blogs, Facebook, twitter and YouTube to name a few⁵¹.

We cannot look at the world anymore in the traditional way. The inverted pyramid and stories which fulfil only newsworthiness can only be news which are sensational and have violence and conflict as an important ingredient. Furthermore a market driven economy will not in all probability be able to hear the voices of those who matter, the poorest of the poor.

⁴⁸Ethiraj Anbarasan, “Citizen Journalism and the New Media” in *21st Century Journalism in India*, edited by Nalini Rajan (New Delhi: Sage, 2007), 266.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Any set of opinions or beliefs advanced, directly or indirectly, for the purpose of persuading others to accept certain views. See Y.K. D’Souza, *Handbook of Journalism and Mass Communication* (Delhi: Indian Publishers, 1997), 37-40. Such propaganda is dangerous because it tries to convince the people that what is being done is the truth when in reality this may not be the case. A somewhat recent case is the propaganda unleashed by the Sri Lankan government during the internal war against the Sri Lankan Tamils. The propaganda was of the Tamils being terrorists and anti-national. This was only true with regard to the LTTE. The government is now facing international pressure for alleged war crimes that are now coming out.

⁵¹Jerry Kurian, “Media Ethics, the main line media and new (social) media: A case for alternative people’s journalism”, paper presented for UTC alumni meeting, October, 2011.

Chris Atton says that “alternative media may be considered as offering radical, anti-capitalist relations of production often coupled to projects of ideological disturbance and rupture”⁵². He further makes it clearer by saying, “alternative press responds to the mainline media by their own construction of news based on alternative values and frameworks of news gathering and access. This proceeds from a wish to present other interpretations of stories and to present stories not normally considered news”⁵³. The alternative advocacy media adopt a different approach and have very different news values from the mass media. They introduce alternative social actors (such as) the poor, the oppressed and the marginalized as the main subjects of the news and features⁵⁴.

Conclusion

Christian communication should express itself more in the present world. As a religion, Christianity has the framework of scripture, tradition and living as a framework to offer. In the haste to make everything secular, the good which exists in religion is being ignored. This has also led to a very secular, business like communication in society. This needs to change if the world with all its people and creation has to survive. Exclusive profit based and skewed communication will not keep the interests of the ordinary and the poor in mind. This will lead to severe conflict and problems in society.

Christian communication should be a mix of the old and the new. This includes what we can bring out from the ministry of Jesus, the life of the early church, the traditions followed by our ancestors, the articulations of theologians and church workers and the lessons and aspirations new technology provides to us. Technology is an intrinsic part of religion. This paper has sought to bring out the internet and alternative media as the new face of

⁵²Chris Atton, *Alternative Media* (New Delhi: Sage, 2002) 7.

⁵³Ibid, p. 10.

⁵⁴Ibid, p. 16.

Christian communication. This seeks to bring people together. They will bring the real stories to light and this gathering will not just transcend denominational boundaries but will also be a loose formation which allows anyone adhering to the principles of Christian communication to join in.

Affirming Belongingness to the Refugees

The Quest for an Ideal Christian response in the context of Syrian Refugees: From Hostility to Hospitality

Jenosh Johnson G¹

Introduction

Refugees are perhaps, the most talked about group in recent times. People are being uprooted from their homes and face hardships as they are forced to lead miserable lives fearing for the life and liberty of themselves and their loved ones. The refugee issue with its sheer numbers and intensity merits serious concern and the attention of the international community. It is inextricably intertwined with Human Rights violations which cause the painful plight of refugees in the form of exodus from their usual habitats, often under grueling conditions while exposing them to perils, both natural and man-made along the way.²

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²T.V. Thomas and Elias Medeiros, "Toward Strategic Directions for Diaspora Missions: An Introduction," in *Scattered and Gathered: A Global compendium of*

1. Definition of the term “Refugee”

Refugees have been defined in different ways at different points in human history. According to the Cambridge English Dictionary, the word ‘refugee’ means - “a person who has escaped from their own country for political, religious or economic reasons or because of a war.”³ According to Peter Vimalasekaran, refugees are those people, who are looking for a place where they can find refuge, protection, and provision.⁴ The most commonly employed definition of a refugee is in Article 1 Paragraph 2 of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees which reads as follows:

“As a result of events occurring before 1 January 1951 and owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is living outside the country of his nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his formal habitual residence as a result of such events is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.”⁵

2. A snapshot of the Refugee Crisis

Refugees are not only displaced from their countries of origin or residence, but also fear to attempt a return. They may be uprooted because of systematic genocidal campaigns, religious or political persecutions, denial of fundamental civil rights, and so on. The forces that drive more and more people from their

Diaspora Missiology, edited by Sadiri Joy Tira and Testunao Yamamori (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2016), 207.

³<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/refugee> accessed on 10/09/2016.

⁴Peter Vimalasekaran, “Strategies for reaching refugees,” in *Scattered and Gathered: A Global compendium of Diaspora Missiology*, edited by Sadiri Joy Tira and Testunao Yamamori (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2016), 208, 210.

⁵Subramanya, “International provisions for refugees,” in *Refugees and their right to communicate: South Asian perspectives*, edited by Joshva Raja (London: World Association for Christian Communication, 2003), 88-89.

homes are - weak states, big tumults within the Islamic world, a divided international system. None of these things are likely to abate soon.⁶

UNHCR reports data on refugees, asylum-seekers, internally displaced people (IDPs), and stateless people, collecting and collating figures from its own registration database (proGres), national governments, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).⁷

As per its latest Review Report for 2017, the trends for refugee crisis are:

- 68.5 million forcibly displaced worldwide as a result of persecution, conflict, or generalized violence
- 25.4 million refugees, 40.0 million internally displaced people and 3.1 million asylum-seekers
- An estimated 16.2 million people were newly displaced in 2017
- The number of new displacements was equivalent to an average of 44,400 people being forced to flee their homes every day in 2017
- Altogether, more than two-thirds (68 per cent) of all refugees worldwide came from just five countries:

| | |
|----------------------|-------------|
| Syrian Arab Republic | 6.3 million |
| Afghanistan | 2.6 million |
| South Sudan | 2.4 million |
| Myanmar | 1.2 million |
| Somalia | 986,400 |

3. Millions of Syrians displaced

The Syrian refugee crisis has become one of the biggest humanitarian crises with one in eight Syrians having fled across the border. An estimated 11 million Syrians have fled from their

⁶Dorothy Kweyu and Simeon Havyarimana, *Refugees' right to communicate: A call for Action* (Nairobi: World Association for Christian Communication, 2003), 19

⁷<https://www.unhcr.org/globaltrends2017> accessed on 01/02/2019.

homes since the outbreak of the civil war in March 2011. Now, in the eighth year of war, 13.5 million are in need of humanitarian assistance within the country. Among those escaping the conflict, the majority have sought refuge in neighboring countries or within Syria itself. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 4.8 million people have fled to Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt and Iraq, and 6.6 million are internally displaced within Syria.⁸

There have been more than 1 million refugees who arrived in Europe through Greece after fleeing the civil war in Syria over the past years. Of the 150,000 asylum-seekers who have arrived in 2016 alone, 38 percent have been children, according to U.N. refugee agency data.⁹ In some places, like Italy, mandatory detention facilities have been set up, according to Reuters.¹⁰ International Rescue Committee President, David Miliband, said the Syrian refugee crisis represents three million indictments of government brutality, opposition violence and international failure. This appalling milestone needs to generate action as well as anger, calling for more aid to Syria's overburdened neighbors and for civilians still in the country.¹¹

4. The prominent issues faced by the Refugees

4.1. Identity Issue

The attitude of most of the host countries towards refugees is that they consider them as mere guests. As such, they enjoy few or no rights. Once their entry visa expires, they become unauthorised migrants and find themselves fated to exploitation and destitution, or they must leave and they often lack the most

⁸<https://syrianrefugees.eu/> accessed on 25/09/2016.

⁹<https://www.ibtimes.com/european-refugee-crisis-child-detention-worrying-un-human-rights-chief-says-2381496> accessed on 25/09/2016.

¹⁰Dorothy Kweyu and Simeon Havyarimana, *Refugees' right to communicate: A call for Action...*, 19.

¹¹<https://www.middleeaststar.com/index.php/sid/225225113> accessed on 25/09/2016.

basic necessities of food, water, and shelter.¹² Typically defenseless, they are at the mercy of those in power over the territory, in which they seek refuge. They often fear revealing what they have experienced because of repercussions from those in power. Refugees had recent pasts filled with trauma and characterized by upheaval, terror, hardship, fear, torture, imprisonment, and a fight for survival.¹³ Today, refugees are often people not only without home, but like the Palestinians, they may also be without a country for decades. In emotional and physical shock at having to leave their homes, refugees often have nothing more than the clothing they wear. Even mission agencies working among them may be unable to publicize the stories since they depend on permission from governments to continue their work.¹⁴

4.2. Human Trafficking

Like all refugees, women and children are the real victims who face numerous problems as a result of their displacement. They face physical dangers in flight from their community, stress in adapting to a new cultural environment, questions about their identities, and guilt and worry about those left behind. They also face particular problems of rape and abuse, from those from whom they are fleeing, but also sometimes from those from whom they seek protection. At borders, they are more vulnerable to sexual abuse and intimidation. Once they arrive in camps, they face the possibility of violence from camp officials and in certain cases, when they cannot obtain sufficient food for their families, they may turn to prostitution. Children arriving to Europe and seeking asylum status have frequently been subjected to detention in prison cells. Zeid Ra-ad Al Hussein,

¹²Dhyanchand Carr, "Towards a proper Christian response to the problems faced by refugees and migrant workers," in *Uprooted people in Asia*, edited by Henriette Hutabarat (Hong Kong: CCA, 1995), 82.

¹³Jeanne Burger, "Lost in America: Mission opportunities among refugees...", 74.

¹⁴A. Scott Moreau, "Refugee mission work", in *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, edited by A. Scott Moreau ed.al (Michigan: Baker Books, 2000), 816.

the human rights chief, said during a speech to the U.N. Human Rights Council in Geneva: “Even unaccompanied children are frequently placed in prison cells or centers ringed with barbed wire and that the rise of such practices is ‘worrying’.”¹⁵ In the case of children, they face the issue of their identity, education and nutrition.¹⁶ About 30% of the refugees who flee Syria, settle in refugee camps, at least temporarily. Others mostly become urban refugees, usually living in cramped facilities and sometimes in squalor. The camp has become so large, and its resources are so minimal, that most of the refugees do not live within walking distance of schools or medical facilities.¹⁷

4.3.3 Spiritual and Personality Issues

Five significant themes emerged as personality and spiritual issues: (1) Shame and guilt, (2) grief, (3) conflicting Christian images, (4) holding on to beliefs and (5) longing for freedom. Shame was often related to things that had happened in the homeland. An American missionary who had been working among refugees explains that many refugees live with heavy burden of guilt that their actions had caused severe consequences and repercussions for their families left behind, which they have never anticipated when they took the difficult decision to flee for better. One refugee wrote in his autobiography, “Because of my activities, my father was arrested and all my brothers were forced to work as slave labor. Refugees had many losses to grieve-family left behind, loss of an arm or an eye, loss of a child’s chance to grow up in his or her own culture, loss of future dreams - but they were hesitant to express the grief.”¹⁸ Paul Jeffery observes the religious sentiment that the image of Christianity was favorable among refugees

¹⁵<https://www.ibtimes.com/european-refugee-crisis-child-detention-worrying-un-human-rights-chief-says-2381496> accessed on 25/09/2016.

¹⁶Elizabeth G. Ferris, *Beyond Borders: Refugees, Migrants and Human Rights in the Post-Cold War Era* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1993), 108-113.

¹⁷A. Richard Kauffman, “Syrian Refugee crisis hits are neighboring countries,” in *The Christianity Century* 130/8 (April, 2013): 18.

¹⁸Jeanne Burger, “Lost in America: Mission opportunities among refugees...”, 77.

who, associated Christians with the benevolent help they had received when leaving their country or upon arriving in Europe. A few even reported having converted to Christianity in the refugee camps. But for others, Christianity brought about ambivalent or negative reactions because of things that had happened to them in the name of Christianity.¹⁹ For most refugees, their religion was synonymous with who they were; therefore, they expressed strong desires to hold on to their religious beliefs. Phrases like, “To be Bosnian is to be Muslim,” or “To be Burmese is to be Buddhist,” were common. Some described the mosques in their homeland in great detail, others kept Buddhist shrines in their apartments, and many expressed fear that Christianity would try to change their religion. The longing for freedom that was frequently mentioned was more than just a political theme. It appeared to be at the very core of the refugees’ spirits. Freedom was associated with many things, especially to having peace and security.²⁰

4.4. The Issue of Human Rights violation

Refugees are people who are denied of national protection and forced to live in a foreign country and are amongst the most vulnerable groups in human society. They are targets of human right abuses in their countries of origin and do not often get much of a hospitable treatment in their countries of their asylum.²¹ They are often considered as unwanted aliens with the potential of posing grave danger to the socio-economic and political fabric of the country of asylum. With this attitude of the asylum countries on the rise, refugees are often victims of human rights abuses in the country of asylum also. This is the result of a lack of their rights to operate and also due to the bias

¹⁹Paul Jeffrey, “Room at the Inn?: Refugees hope for hospitality,” in *The Christian Century* 132/25 (December 2015): 12.

²⁰Paul Jeffrey, “Room at the Inn?: Refugees hope for hospitality,” in *The Christian Century*..., 13.

²¹Elizabeth G. Ferris, “Introduction,” in *Beyond Borders: Refugees, Migrants and Human Rights in the Post-Cold War Era* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1993), xii.

which operates in the media about them in the asylum country. Therefore their right to speech and expression are denied in all strata of the society.²² Richard Carver and Guglielmo Verdirame, writing for the Article 19, *Global Campaign for free expression*, identify the following specific needs for the refugees: access to information about their rights as refugees; the right to express themselves on political issues both in their country of origin and in their country of asylum; their right to express grievances related to their situation; their right to preserve the cultural and artistic traditions of their homeland; and their right of access to comprehensive and accurate information about conditions in their country of origin, especially prior to voluntary repatriation.²³

5. The Church's and State's response towards the Refugee Crisis

The image of Alan Kurdi, a three-year-old Syrian refugee, lying face down on a Turkish beach in early September, 2015 is what woke the west to the urgency of the Syrian refugee crisis. His Holiness Ignatius Aphrem II, the Patriarch of the Syrian Orthodox Church commented, "Our thoughts go out to his family and to the families of all victims. I would like to say that like Alan, as horrible as his story is, there are thousands of people like him (who got drowned) and there are thousands of kids like him, but their stories were not told. What has happened in the last few years, specifically in Syria and also in Iraq, has put our faith to the test and put our existence at stake."²⁴ These horrific images seem to have galvanized public opinion in favor of a shift to protection rather than deterrence or in other words a shift from hostility to hospitality. But, some leaders still seem

²²Mark Galli, "A Church welcome for the tired, the poor: How the refugee crisis makes for a beautiful gospel witness," in *Christianity Today* 59/9 (November, 2015): 33.

²³N. Subramanya, *Refugees: Right to freedom of expression and communication- A legal handbook* (London & Delhi: WACC/ISPCK, 2004), 8-12.

²⁴<https://www.pravmir.com/syriac-orthodox-church-patriarch-pleads-for-peace-during-laval-visit> accessed on 25/09/2016.

to be committed to harsh action – Hungarian Prime Minister Orbán’s comment that the arrival of refugees threatened “Europe’s Christian roots” and Donald Trump, the US President, had called for all Muslims to be barred from entering the country.²⁵

Church leaders across Europe were also scrambling to find housing, food and other basic necessities to accommodate a growing influx of refugees escaping conflict and repression. The flurry of charity came after Pope Francis urged Roman Catholic communities to follow the Vatican’s lead and take in refugee families.²⁶ As Europe grapples with its worst refugee crisis in decades, the Roman Catholic Church has the potential to become a key player in helping resettle the continent’s growing number of displaced Syrians, Africans and other refugees. The Pope’s request for volunteers is not unprecedented in the Catholic Church. Mary Gautier²⁷ highlighted how Churches around the world, including in the U.S. and Australia, took in refugees from Poland during the country’s solidarity movement in the 1980s, when workers used civil resistance methods to challenge the Communist regime. She opines that the Pope’s current call is a practical response to a crisis that has left European leaders scrambling to find a solution.²⁸

Some church leaders, however, noted that they might be limited by an individual country’s policies. A representative of the Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales noted that Prime Minister David Cameron’s call to take in 20,000 Syrian refugees from camps is complicated by the fact that the U.K. is not part of the EU’s scheme zone for free travel. That

²⁵Tom Heneghan, “Churches vary in response to refugees,” in *The Christian Century* 132/21 (October, 2015): 16.

²⁶Tom Heneghan, “Churches vary in response to refugees,” in *The Christian Century* 132/21..., 16.

²⁷A senior research associate at the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown University in Washington.

²⁸Tom Heneghan, “Churches vary in response to refugees,” in *The Christian Century* 132/21 (October, 2015): 16.

means church leaders expect that they will have to work with government officials to ensure refugees can enter the country legally.²⁹

6. WCC Statement on Refugee Crisis

The WCC/UN high level conference on the refugee crisis in Europe, which took place at the Ecumenical Centre Geneva on 18-19 January, 2016, issued a statement entitled “Europe’s Response to the Refugee Crisis, From Origin to Transit, Reception and Refuge, A Call for Shared Responsibility and Coordinated Action”, reads as follows: The conference aimed to promote principled, human rights-based and coordinated responses to refugees and migrants in Europe and to the root causes of their displacement. The conference provided an opportunity for participating faith-based organizations to apply faith principles (especially the belief that every human being is created in the image and likeness of God) in putting at the centre of the responses, the human dignity and rights of all those affected, no matter where they are or where they come from, whether they are refugees or migrants, are entitled to care and protection of their dignity, rights and well-being.³⁰

The conference participants called for stronger collective engagement by the international community in seeking political solutions to conflict, violence, inequality and exclusion that are the root causes of the current unprecedented global crisis of forced displacement. In particular, we appeal to all those with capacity to help stop the fighting and to alleviate the intolerable suffering in Syria to put aside their political differences and to join in common action for peace now. The conference participants concur that alleviating the suffering of people affected by displacement is a shared responsibility, not only in Europe but

²⁹http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/corunum/documents/rc_pc_corunum_doc_25061992_refugees_en.html accessed on 05/10/2016.

³⁰http://www.ceceurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/A-Call-to-Shared-Responsibility-and-Coordinated-Action-20-January-2016-10am.FINAL_.pdf accessed on 01/01/2019.

also elsewhere. It is vital that governments, civil society, international agencies and others work together in a consistent and coordinated manner to provide a safe and humane environment for refugees and migrants, and to meet the immediate needs of people escaping war, generalized violence and oppression - and over the longer term to facilitate social inclusion and integration. It is of urgent importance that safe and legal passage for refugees coming to Europe be expanded and facilitated. Closing national borders to refugees is not a solution because it only shifts the responsibility to the next country.³¹

7. Church: A Community of Hospitality

If the Church is going to follow the footsteps of Jesus Christ, its mission has to focus on the people who are still marginalized. Gustavo Gutierrez once preached at a Vatican gathering challenging the Church to become a Samaritan Church. "The neighbor is not the person that we find on our way, but that person that we approach to the extent we leave our own way, managing to approach others. A Samaritan church is an open church, a church attentive to human needs. We don't need a church of the pure. We need a church of the compassionate."³² Therefore, doing mission in the context of the margins is to take into consideration the epistemologies of people, listen to the cries of the vulnerable and to respond to the visible oppressive sign by discerning the context.³³ The need of the hour is for the Church to take bold actions, lead by examples and work towards empowering refugees by mainly working in the below aspects:-

³¹Gerhard Hoffmann, "Solidarity with strangers as part of the mission of the Church," ..., 55-61.

³²George Zachariah, "Church: An Inclusive community of Hospitality, fellowship and solidarity," in *Borders and Margins: Re-visioning Ministry and Mission*, edited by Dexter S. Maben (Thiruvalla & Bangalore: CSS & UTC, 2015), 461.

³³Gerhard Hoffmann, "Solidarity with strangers as part of the mission of the Church," in *International Review of Mission* 78/309 (January, 1989): 53.

7.1. Mobilization of Refugee Workers

Mobilizing and motivating Christians to get involved in refugee ministry, is essential in reaching out to refugees. Generally, there is a negative understanding of refugees and why they leave their homes. We need people with good heart of God to care and love those in need. To achieve this, we need to mobilize people in local churches and provide the right information regarding the plight of refugees.³⁴

7.2. Refugee education

Most refugees are young people. In abandoning their countries, their homes, families and friends, they also loose most important opportunity towards full human development education. Time and again, in the developed world, they could provide learning opportunities for refugees resettled there. In addition, they could be of service to the large numbers of displaced people in poor countries by offering the following opportunities.³⁵ Firstly, the distance learning colleges and universities could offer courses through learning packets containing printed and audio materials which could be studied independently, or under the guidance of qualified refugees or volunteers of charitable organizations. Secondly, on-site teaching colleges and universities could release faculty members who would provide on-site teaching in specified areas identified as needed by the uprooted population. Thirdly, refugees who have shown dedication to their fellow displaced persons and who seem to have the capacity for higher education can be offered scholarships to come and study at a college or university on the understanding that they will return and use their newly

³⁴Peter Vimalasekaran, "Strategies for reaching refugees," in *Scattered and Gathered: A Global compendium of Diaspora Missiology*, edited by Sadiri Joy Tira and Testunao Yamamori (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2016), 212.

³⁵Gerhard Hoffmann, "Solidarity with strangers as part of the mission of the Church,"..., 53.

acquired knowledge and skills to help the uprooted population of which they are members.³⁶

7.3. Converting Refugees to Workers

In anticipation of future needs, creative policies should be designed to turn the burden of refugees into an asset. There are signs that massive flows of refugees have already produced a net benefit for European economies. The European Economic Forecast of Autumn 2015 indicates that additional public expenditures have generated a 0.2% increase in GDP. In the medium-term, a greater positive impact on growth is to be expected from the increase in labor supply. The condition is that appropriate policies are put in place to facilitate the refugees' access to the labor market.³⁷ The first step towards converting them into skillful workers is by enabling refugees to become language-proficient, to get their educational and professional credentials recognized and to complement their skills with additional training is critical for their successful integration and, hence, in allowing for the positive economic impact of refugee flows in destination countries. Gender specific measures should be undertaken to help the women also to be financially independent.³⁸

8. Evaluation and Conclusion

In this century, Christianity is challenged by the rapid change of global shifts; traditional missiology has been challenged, there has been emerging agendas in missiological circles and also the issues that refugees face are complex. The contemporary missiological circles seek to articulate some solutions for the issues and they put forward towards the Church and the community as whole that the welcome given to a guest

³⁶Mark Raper, *Accompanying the Refugees* (Bangalore: JRS South Asia, 1999), 37-38.

³⁷Philippe Fargues, "2015: The year we mistook refugees for invaders," [https:// www. Migration policy centre. eu/](https://www.Migrationpolicycentre.eu/) accessed on 25/09/2016

³⁸http://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/43505/Study_fromRefugeesToWorkers_2016_Vol_2.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y accessed on 25/09/2016.

is the model for “our encounters with refugees”.³⁹ It is important to identify practical ways in which mission can be expression of people’s experience of liberation. Rather, we should translate our words into action, and for the voices and views of refugees to be heard and taken into account to the maximum extent possible. This will entail defining roles and responsibilities, sharing information and knowledge, resources and activities, building on each other’s comparative strengths and advantages, and holding each other to account. It will require concrete mechanisms for strategic planning, implementation and accountability, and a plan of action to set specific, measurable, achievable and time-bound goals.⁴⁰

An action plan for the churches could be developed through consultation between Church partners from all regions to plan a co-ordinated advocacy effort. Such a consultation could agree on priorities for action, and develop a plan by which Church groups in different regions or countries could develop policy positions and advocate their adoption in different forums because there are many areas where the churches could play a positive rather than a reactive role in shaping a new international system for the uprooted people. The international system emphasizes that it is the responsibility of the international community to protect and assist those forced to flee their countries through no fault of their own. Moreover, it includes shared responsibility in preventing the violence that uproots people and that sees uprooted people in terms of the search for peace and justice. Thus, it is by engaging direct involvement with the uprooted people that churches can help and lay the foundations for a new international order for uprooted people, which is very much the need of the hour and a prime responsibility of the Church and all of us - Christians who claim to represent and follow Jesus Christ, the Messiah.

³⁹Jeanne Burger, “Lost in America: Mission opportunities among refugees: A Missiological research study,” in *Missio Apostolica* 12/2 (02/11/2004): 72.

⁴⁰Gerhard Hoffmann, “Solidarity with strangers as part of the mission of the Church,” ..., 55.

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In Recognition of the Christian Contribution to the Arab Civilisation

A personal reflection by Adibeh Abdo-Attia¹

It is always a great pleasure to write about the Christian presence and its contribution to the Arab civilization. The conditions our people lived in after the revolutions of the Arab Spring raised the issue of citizenship and identity. The chain reaction to this revolution is that one ideology has obliterated people's ethnicity, nationality and culture. This issue is still prevalent, as we are now witnessing the omission of Christian heritage and culture from schools curricula in the Arab region. This culture that dates thousands of years has in fact enriched the Arab civilization in all fields. And any attempts to marginalize it to the point of denial and rejection through the publication of

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books, magazines and other media in the last century, should not be tolerated. And if we examine carefully the works and testimonies of myriad western and oriental historians and writers all agreed on the influence of the Christians civilization on the Arab cultures. That was established through the finding of manuscripts and engravings centuries ago, adding to it the Syriac books that they found in the Ark of the Kaaba, all of which confirm this edifice of a diverse cultural heritage as a rainbow of life and building of civilization with love and peace. The fundamental goal is to create a bridge- to acknowledge the truths of the past in order to move forward together as one. To create a multicultural society filled with acceptance and peace instead of promoting division.

One of the reasons why Christians in the Middle East are persecuted openly or by concealment, is the historical fallacies and the lack of recognition of what their Christian brethren achieve before and after the rise of Islam. And this misleading notion gives justification to radicalize Muslims to oppress minorities that they call them parasites living from their good and dignity of their existence! The truth in history has to be told and acknowledged the countless works, including “The transfer of Greek medicine from Syria to the Arabs” - by Michael Dulles, and translated into Arabic by Dr. Admir Kouriey, and here some excerpts:

“The knowledge of the Syriac language as a historical background is a fundamental factor in the study of Aristotelian philosophy among the Arabs.”

“General consensus that Haneen bin Isaac was very proficient in the creation of new technical vocabulary suitable for medicine in Arabic; at the same time the introduction of Syriac words into the Arabic language in large numbers.”

What prompted me now, is to write and discuss the Christian legacy and the contribution of Christian poets. I will explore the feminist poets and excerpts of their works not to cause division

and poke the oppressors, but rather to achieve unity and peaceful co-existence:

1- Multiculturalism should be the lighthouse that will guide us all to accept others and live in peace and harmony.

2. As a Syriac community from a diverse background, mostly Middle Eastern and Indian, our goals are:

a. To promote our community and define it by our civilization and our contributions from before the birth of Christ until now, and with all aspects of life whether it was through literature, science and others.

b. To encourage our members to learn from our ancestors, and build bridges with the rest of the society for the benefit of humanity and peace and love; and be an example of civilization as it was called: the mother of all civilizations.

I would like to stress that these oppressors of Arab and Muslim writers and historians, have denied the pioneering role and sacrifices by the Syriac fathers and academics, in philosophy and scientific fields of medicine, astronomy and others. It is one of the most important reasons for Christian's suffering. They are not treated as equal citizens with equal rights. They have been accused for being agents of the Western "Christians".

The reason I chose poetry is its role in society, where the poet is not limited to rhymed words, but to eloquently and skillfully choose words in glorifying the noble and the great, and criticizing the oppressors, as well as sharing the joys and sorrows of people.

My introduction of Christian poets in the Arabian Peninsula before Islam is not to divide or incite matters, but to be a lighthouse that guides us, and an emphasis on cultural and religious pluralism and its fundamental role of progress in civilization, and peaceful coexistence among peoples according to their affiliations and spectrums. In response to some who boast of knowledge and falsely historical facts by what is appropriate for them and reject what does not serve their ideas and agendas. Their

purpose is to establish a culture of hatred and exclusion. My colleagues and I, and many of the generations that preceded us were the victim of injustice and concealment of the truth. However, we learned that the best of Arab writers were Pagan before Islam! In particular “Mu’allaqat” the unique poetry and pendants that were written with gold water and hung on the wall of the Kaaba in what they called the “pre-Islamic era” and their arguments not to recognize this elite poets as Christians and not as pagan, flimsy indicating only the intransigence, religious intolerance and non-acceptance of others who are in fact the original owner of the land.

In confirmation of the Christian presence in the Arabian Peninsula and the Levant is what Ibn Qutayba al-Dinawari said: “Christianity was in the region of Robayaa and Ghassan.” We also read in Ya’qubi and his assertion of many tribes who converted to Christianity such as: Taha, Mhajj, Sarih, Tanuk, Kindah, Ghassan and Lakhmid, Imru’ al-Qais bin Hujr al-Kindi and specifically mentioned Nofal bin Asad of the tribe. And the tribe of Bahraa and Iyad were amongst the Arab tribes who converted to Christianity before the rise of Islam.

How did Christianity enter the Arabian Peninsula?

1. Preaching: Apostle Bartholomew and other apostles and missionaries and monks went there to live away from the pleasures of the world.
2. Through trade.
3. Through professions, especially in medicine.
4. Finally, the escape of Christians from the persecution of the Romans or due to the theological differences of Christianity, where many of them were persecuted.

It is said that Christianity entered the land of the Arabs from the west of the peninsula from the Levant², and Al-Maqrizi states in his book “Plans and Antiquities” (Math 2: 483): “When he

²Levant is an approximate historical geographical term referring to a large area in the Eastern Mediterranean, primarily in Western Asia.

went to Palestine, Tire, and Sidon, Bartholomew was sent to the land of Arabs and Hijaz.”

And Dr. Shawqi Daif agrees in his book “The history of Arab literature in the pre-Islamic era”, in which he mainly based his writings on references of Dr. Jawad Ali’s book “Al-mofassal” and on the writings of Father Louis Sheikho’s book “Etiquette of Christianity in the Arabian Peninsula” in which he states that the spread of “Christianity” in Yemen began since the fourth century AD.

Also in the region of Yathrib, Hassan ibn Thabit states in the book “Kitab Al-Hayawan by Al-jahiz” that: the “Christian presence before the death of the Prophet at the age of 60 years.” There was also an affirmation of the presence of Christians and Jews in the Arabian Peninsula.

We can say that the spread of Christianity in that region was the result of the unison of the Syriac language, the language spoken in the centuries BC and to the end of the seventeenth century AD. And the influence of Syriac language on Islam is acknowledged by the testimonies of Said al-Andalusi as he states: “This region was unison, ruled by one king, and spoke one tongue i.e. Syriac, the old tongue.”

Therefore, it is our responsibility to tell the truth, and correct all those who have committed themselves to falsify the facts, the history and the marginalization of the Christian poets before and after the emergence of Islam in the Arabian Peninsula. We should acknowledge their origins and the treasures of poetry and literature that they have left to us such as the Pendants “Mu’allaqat” and other poems, and to promote and preserve their culture and civilization for generation to come.

Those who invoke their rejection and sometimes doubt the elite Christians poets before Islam by saying that there are ideas and spirit of Christianity found in the poetry of Zuhayr ibn Abi Sulma and others, but we cannot say that they were Christians. And those who try to obscure the Christian poets such as Hanzala

Altai and Ṭarafah ibn al-Bakri al-Wa'ili and others, are the radicals and they are numerous especially from the beginning of the last two decades. And now as the religion is going in political transitions, sectarian conflicts and fierce battles to reject secularism, and the imposition of a populist religious community that does not accept the partnership living, particularly the exclusion of the Christian component such as:

Hatim al-Tai is one of the poets who accepted Christianity, and was known for his generosity, and become an icon and example of generosity till our day³. Also Hanzala Altai, the Christian poet in the Arabian Peninsula, and his story with Al-Nu'man, king of Hira who asked him:

- How come you came here while you escaped death?
- And Hanzala said: Loyalty
- Al-Nu'man asked him: Who called you to this Loyalty?
- Hanzalah said: My religion
- Al-Nu'man said: What's your religion?
- Hanzalah said: Christianity

In addition to the difficulties faced by male poets, it is well documented that feminists' literature was further constrained by the women's backwardness imposed by Islamic "conquests" in general, as well as by the constraints imposed on them by Christian and social traditions in ancient times.

With all these restrictions, the Syriac women of the Arabian Peninsula managed to shake off the dust of backwardness and rise again as the Renaissance of phoenix to delve into the field of literature and others. Unfortunately, many researchers and historians have provided a lot of literary, intellectual and political research for men, but they ignored the role of Syriac women in all aspects of life.

Therefore, I decided to shed a little light on the role played by the Syriac woman in the field of literature in the Arabian

³ Cfr. The History of Yaqoubi, 254-257.

peninsula, insofar as much as I have documented evidence that this step may be the corner stone in the Syriac feminist literature, and a starting point for those interested and willing to acknowledge this literature and its importance in building our ancient society.

I'd like to bring your attention to the women who had literary effects at certain stages of the Christian presence in the region, including: Laila Al-Afifah, Jalila Bint Morra Al-Shaibani and Al-Khirniq bint Badr Al-Adnanieh, sister of Tarafa Ibn al'Abd.

1. Laila Al-Afifah (+ 483)

One of the most famous feminists' poetry in the ancient Arabic is the poetry of Laila al-Afifah, a christian and the youngest child of Lokais ibn Morra bin Nizar. She was the most popular poet and her literature was known from the Arabia till the end of Yemen. She refused to marry since she was in love with her cousin the poet Al-Burraq, and she owes his religion where he learned to recite the gospel since his youth. The son of one of the kings of Yemen, Amro ibn al-Sahban, asked to marry her and she did not disobey her father's command. During that time, Ibn of Kosra, King of Ajam (Persia) heard of her and of her beauty and wanted her for himself, he kidnapped her, and to move her to Persia. She remained there captive, and refused to marry him until Al-Burraq came to her rescue and married her. He died in 479 AD and Laila died four years later in 483 AD.

The significance of her story is that given all her sufferings, she remained a strong, empowered and self-confident. She kept fighting for her freedom and liberation in both a physical and mental capacity. Through this notion, she was fighting for all women.

2. Jalila Bint Mourra ben Wael, a poet from the tribe of Bani-Adnan (+538 AD)

Historians have agreed that the first who wrote Arabic poetry is Jalila Bint Mourra, the most beautiful women of Bakr. It is

worth mentioning that Jalila was the first female to write a feminist poetry, and her poetry was about making peace between her own family & her late beloved husband. Her brother killed her husband in one of the abhorrent battle between two families of the same tribe. The Basus war was a conflict for 40 years between two cousin tribes in Arabia of late antiquity which started by the killing a camel under the protection of a woman named Al-Basus. Jassas and Jallileh's aunt, considered this as great insult to her honour which started a chain of events that lead to the war. The Taghlib and Bakr tribes fought for roughly forty years, locked in a perpetual cycle of vengeance. In parts of the Arab world today, the Basus war has been incorporated into an aphorism warning people against vendettas.

In the history before Islam Jalila's poetry was about mourning her beloved husband, encouraging peace within the family and her message was enough killing and enough bringing the shame to their tribe.

3. Al-Khirniq bint Badr Al-Adnanieh (+574 AD)

She was a poet who had a Diwan - is a book of poetry and was married to Beshr of Sid Bani Asad, who killed Kulayb Wâ'il Ibn Rabî'a. Most of her poetry was in his lamentation and the lament of those killed with him from her folks.⁴

Lastly, in the context of today's society - the stories of the feminist poets I have discussed are relevant now more than ever. We cannot continue fostering and endorsing a society filled with hate and mistrust.

The young generations need to be aware of our history so that they can feel a sense of pride over the ways our forefathers overcame suffering. Through this, our community can be empowered to be able to respect people of all cultures and it will especially, help to mend our relations to the Aspra community.

⁴ Her Diwan of poetry can be downloaded at: <https://www.aldiwan.net/cat-poet-khernq-Bnt-bdr>. The Diwan was reviewed by Abu Amr ibn al-Ala and edited by "Yusri Abdul Ghani Abdullah" (1990) Beirut.

It is time that we acknowledge the truths of the past in order to build a bridge for the future of our people. For without this, we will never be united and strengthened by acceptance, which is the underlying aspect to live harmoniously.

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The Narrative Critical Approach on the Temptation of Jesus (Mt 4: 1-11)

Anish K. Joy¹

1. Introduction

Temptations are the very fabric of our human and Christian existence. The priest and the monk, the layman and the religious, the young and the old, all have to face temptations constantly and we are tempted to gratify the lusts and desires of the world and of the flesh. In Matthew 4:1-11 we will find that the subject matter is temptation. Well, there are number of temptations - everyone is tempted to sin, almost daily, if not hourly. But, there is something

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different going on here. Here Jesus, at the outset of His ministry, is confronted by the Devil with all his power, and He does not sin. The temptation of Christ in Christianity, refers to the temptation of Jesus by the Devil as detailed in each of the Synoptic Gospels, at Matthew 4:1-11, Mark 1:12-13, and Luke 4:1-13. The basic text used for this paper is the Gospel according to Matthew from N R S V. The analysis is done by taking each Temptation at a time. The temptation episode was God's way of showing that Jesus was the perfect man, that He could resist sin, that he could defeat devil. The main focus of the study will, of course, be on each of the three temptations, to determine what the temptation actually was and how Jesus dealt with it.

2. Structure:

The structure of this narrative is relatively easy to trace: there is an introductory section providing some details vv 1 & 2 then three temptations with three answers vv 3-10, and then an aftermath on v 11. The temptation verses from 3-10 are narrated as a series of confrontations between the Devil and Jesus and is narrated in a common pattern: a) the setting b) the words of the Devil and c) the response of Jesus.

3. Context:

The Temptation narrative cannot be considered as a single isolated unit. This pericope comes in between the baptism of Jesus and His public Ministry. It is directly related to the preceding narrative concerning the baptism of Jesus in which Jesus is attested with the title Son of God through the voice from heaven (Matt. 3:17). The usage of τότε which means 'then' at the beginning of the sentence links the temptation incident with the preceding event baptism. This connection can also be found from the key term "Son of God"² and this identity is confirmed by Jesus' victory over devil. This temptation is also closely related to his Crucifixion at the end. The parallel "If you are the Son of

²*Word Biblical Commentary*, Vol. 33a, 1993, 61

God, come down from the cross” (27:40) and “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down...” (4:6) which are more than simply grammar points out the link between the Temptation and His Crucifixion.

4. Point of View:

The point that comes to us from the temptation narration is the proof that he is the real Son of God. Even though His divine Sonship is unquestionable this temptation narrative reaffirms that he is “Son of God” and His commitment to the will of His Father³. The conflict between Jesus and the Jewish leaders is a surface dimension of the underlying discord between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Devil is seen in this temptation and is highlighted throughout the Gospel⁴.

5. Characters:

Jesus and Devil are the main characters in this narration. Spirit, that comes at the beginning and Angels that comes at the middle and at the end of the narration are the other two characters in this temptation narrative. The Spirit and the Devil are presented as manifestations of two supreme supernatural authorities which have some kind of power over Jesus⁵. The Bible actually says διάβολος (*diabolos*) for *devil* in the Gospel of Matthew. In the NT literature the *diabolos* figure is head of the dominion of evil, bent on destroying man by tempting him⁶.

6. Text Analysis:

πειράζω: The act of testing or trying (Deuteronomy 4:34; Tobit 2:12; Luke 22:28; etc.); enticement to evil (Matthew 26:41; 1 Corinthians 10:13; etc.); the state of being tempted (Matthew 6:13; Luke 4:13; etc.); that which tempts or entices to evil (James 1:12; 2 Peter 2:9; etc.); the name of a place (Exodus 17:7;

³ibid., 62

⁴*The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary*, Vol. 8, 1995, 162

⁵Daniel Patte, *The Gospel According to Mathew*, 1987, 52

⁶The Anchor Bible Commentary, Vol. 26, 1971, 34

Deuteronomy 6:16; etc.)⁷. *Temptation* or *to tempt*, in the scriptures of God, is called to try, to prove, or to assault the valour, the power, the will, the pleasure, or the wisdom, whether it be of God, or of creatures. There are three testing stories in Matthew which bear comparison with 4:1-11. In 16:1, 19:3 and 22:34-35, Jewish leaders ‘test’ Jesus by asking him questions. A form of *πειράζω* is used in each instance. And in each case Jesus answers by alluding to or quoting Scripture. The scribes and Pharisees tempted Christ by diverse means, questions, and subtleties. And of this matter, says St. James, "God tempts no one" (Jam. 1:13): that is, by temptation proceeding immediately from him, he intends no man's destruction. The infinitive *πειρασθῆναι* expresses the purpose in the sentence that the Spirit is prior to the Devil. Matthew expresses so strongly that the Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness in order that he might be tested by the Devil. In Matthew 4:1 the verb clearly has both meaning. God, through the Spirit intends to test Jesus; Devil, God's indirect agent, seeks to tempt the Messiah designate⁸. A temptation is the attempt to change a person's will from good to bad, and thus it aims at causing the person to want to do something wrong. The designation of the Devil as the tempter shows, therefore, that this confrontation with Jesus is a battle of wills, and since Jesus is victorious, the temptation shows what characterizes Jesus' will and upon what it is based.

νηστεύσας ἡμέρας τεσσεράκοντα καὶ νύκτας τεσσεράκοντα, ‘*having fasted forty days and forty nights*’: The terms ‘*fasting*’ and ‘*forty days and forty nights*’ are two important ideas that have a deep meaning in this temptation narrative and is considered as a basic setting of the first temptation. Fasting traditionally presaged a great spiritual struggle. Fasting is a great weapon against

⁷Frederick William Danker, *A Greek –English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 3rd ed., 2000, 792-793.

⁸Douglas R. A. Hare, *Interpretation*, 1993, 23

Temptation in Old Testament it was used as a penitential act⁹. Moses fasts 40 days (Deut. 9:9, 18) and also Elijah (1Kings 19:8). The cultic term fasting – νηστεύω is used to bring a connection between the Christian practice of fasting (6:16-18; 9:14-15) and the model of Jesus (4:1)¹⁰. Matthew’s aorist participle νηστεύσας puts the testing explicitly after forty days and forty nights. ‘*Forty days and forty nights*’ tell us that Jesus had been fasting for forty days and forty nights, and was hungry. There is no reason to doubt that it was forty days and forty nights as the text says; but “forty” is a round number in the Bible for a period of difficulty, hardship, or suffering. Moses fasted forty days and forty nights when he was in the mountain with YHWH (Exodus 34:28) and Israelites’ wandering for forty years in the wilderness. In 2:13-15 Jesus is presented as new Israel and here more specifically as faithful Israel in contrast with the Israel who failed to remain faithful.

7. First Temptation (4:3-4):

In the first temptation Jesus is challenged to produce bread to satisfy his own hunger. This temptation must be understood against the back ground of the messianic expectation of the people. Εἰ which means ‘if’ in the starting of the Devil’s words does not mean that the Devil is doubted the power of Jesus rather the Devil is making an argument on a fact assumed to be true¹¹. There was a Jewish expectation that Messiah would reproduce the miracle of ‘manna’ and that there would be a lavish supply of food in the messianic time¹². The temptation is to make Jesus to act at the Devil’s behest¹³. The Devil seeks to control Jesus through obedience (4:3-4). If Jesus supplies his own bread at the Devil’s command, he acts for his own benefits as the elite do. He

⁹Warren Carter, *Matthew and the Margins*, 2007, 108

¹⁰David and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*. 1988, 356

¹¹R. V. G Tasker, *Matthew*, 1961, 52

¹²*The New Interpreter’s Bible Commentary*, Vol. 8, 1995, 162

¹³Warren Carter, *Matthew and the Margins*, 2007, 108

ceases to trust and obey God, contrary to his own subsequent teaching (6:25-35).

7.1. Setting of First Temptation:

Each temptation takes place in a different setting. The temptation of making bread out of stones occurs in the desert.

7.2. Text analysis:

ἵνα οἱ λίθοι οὗτοι ἄρτοι γένωνται- *‘that these stones to become bread’*: This first temptation picks up immediately on the fact that Jesus was hungry, that he had not eaten for forty days and forty nights. Devil used that physical aspect of hunger and said you are the “Son of God.” He knew who this was, and built his temptation on it. He was saying, Why should you be hungry? Just change some stones to bread. Should he presume on the power, which by fair inference the commission of God had given him, to satisfy his own craving and to defeat the barrenness of the desert?

“One does not live the mouth of God”- In response Jesus quoted from the Book of Deuteronomy 8:3b: “Man does not live on bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of Lord.” If you go back and read Deuteronomy 8 you will see that the topic there is about the Israelites hungering in the wilderness for forty years. God tested them in the wilderness so that they would learn that they must obey what comes from the mouth of God. He gave them Manna; but to acquire it and enjoy it required that they follow God’s instructions carefully. The main point was that if they obeyed the Lord He would provide their food. And so it was more important to obey God than to have all the food they could eat¹⁴.

7.3. Comments:

By changing stones into bread according to Devil’s perspective would demonstrate that Jesus is indeed the Son of

¹⁴Recall that Adam and Eve chose to eat rather than obey God’s word.

God. But Jesus' response shows what is wrong in Devil's suggestion, namely a wrong interpretation of Jesus' situation of need. The tempter Devil had perceived his physical need, hunger, he had not recognized another kind of need; in order to live, human beings need 'every word that comes from the mouth of God', as well as the bread (4:4). The tempter has perceived the hunger but not the cause of it, Jesus' fasting (4:2), which in this context appears to mean "nourishing oneself with God's word". Jesus cites the verse 4:4 to express his trust in, dependence on, and obedience to God. On the other side the Jesus' divine power cannot be questioned because in the following chapter we can find that Jesus use his miraculous power to curse the fig tree that cannot provide him food when he is hungry (21:18-22) and he twice accomplishes a feeding miracle for the hungry multitudes (14:15-21; 15:32-38).

8. Second Temptation (4:5-7):

If the first test was in the realm of the physical, the second is a test of the spiritual. In fact, the test strikes at the heart of the previous victory. Jesus had escaped that temptation by showing that He was not just physical but spiritual, that He could accept the hunger and the weakness if it meant obeying God. And so Satan wants Him to do something spectacular to demonstrate that He is spiritually perfect. Devil was saying to Jesus, "Very well, you have shown your trust in God in response to my first appeal; so now show your trust in God by flinging yourself from the pinnacle of the temple." This second one is the most subtle and dangerous to one who was spiritually sensitive¹⁵.

8.1. Settings:

After the first temptation is rejected, the devil takes Jesus to a new location, to a high *pinnacle* in what Matthew terms *the holy city*.

¹⁵*The Interpreters Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, 1939, 272

8.2. Text Analysis:

Holy City and the pinnacle of the temple: Most Christians consider that *holy city* refers unquestionably to Jerusalem¹⁶ and the *temple* to which the *pinnacle* belongs is thus identified as the Temple in Jerusalem, although the text is quite ambiguous in this matter since Matthew could easily name the location.

If you throw yourself down: Here the Satan himself quotes Scripture in making the appeal. He quotes from a psalm that says that God will give the angels charge over him so that he will not dash his foot against a stone (Ps. 91:11a, 12). The Devil omits v. 11b, ‘to guard you in all ways’ because Jesus must be unguarded if he is to comply with all your ways. The psalm is a psalm of trust, telling how God protects his people. It was never intended to be claimed apart from practical wisdom. God promises to protect His people; but He has also given them common sense.

You shall not put the LORD your God to the test: This comes from Deuteronomy, 6:16. This is the chapter in the Law that is foundational to Israel’s faith. It had the creedal statement in it, “Hear O Israel, Yahweh is our God, Yahweh alone.” The chapter then exhorts the people to obey His commands, and to do what is good and right before Him--but warns them not to test God. The context of Deuteronomy 6:16 refers to Massah and Meribah in the wilderness where the people murmured against God and tested Him--because they did not believe He could or would give them water (“Massah” is one name; it is derived from the verb in Hebrew *nasa*, “to test”; the other name is “Meribah”; it is from the verb *rib*, “to strive”). A trust that is weak or wavering seeks a sign or a dramatic intervention to make it steady.

¹⁶cf. Isa. 52:1; Neh. 11.1, 18; Dan. 3:28 and also used in Matt. 27:53.

8.3. Comments:

Actually the Devil's use of Scripture involves a misunderstanding of the promises of Scripture. Rather than conceiving the Scripture as promise, the Devil conceives of it as a means of testing faithfulness, a mean of testing God's faithfulness but also a means of testing Jesus' faithfulness. This opposing does not deny that one can trust the promises of Ps. 91:11a, 12 and of Scripture in general. There is a significant difference between a promise and a testing. A promise is a gracious gift of God and testing is an instrument of judgement¹⁷. This second temptation would be a temptation to trade upon the Messiah's relationship with God, to achieve a reputation as a wonder-worker and so succeed in securing the attention of the people. The Son, however trusts the Father's will and provision, though that trust may invoke the risk of life¹⁸. Πάλιν γέγραπται, 'again it is written' in v 7 stresses the importance of scripture.

9. Third Temptation (4:8-10):

The last temptation is amazing in its boldness. Jesus is tempted to political power and authority. This kind of temptation seems to have been the one Jesus had to face most frequently. It is almost as if the devil realized he was not winning, and so with nothing to lose calls for Jesus to worship him. Its purpose was to prevent the work of the king, the work for which He had come into the world. This temptation has some differences from the two preceding ones. The Devil does not refer to Jesus as Son of God, yet the temptation presupposes that Jesus should have a view of himself as someone worthy of authority. This involves two narrative oppositions: on the one hand, the confrontation of Jesus as the devil; on the other hand, paying homage and thus allegiance to God or to the Devil. So this temptation has concern with idolatry (Deut. 6:13-14)

¹⁷Daniel Patte, *The Gospel According to Mathew*, 1987, 54

¹⁸cf. 26:53-54; 27:40.

9.1. Settings:

For the final temptation, the devil takes Jesus to a *high place*, which Matthew explicitly names a mountain, where *all the kingdoms of the world* can be seen.

9.2. Text Analysis:

“*a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour*”: This verse seems to suggest something mystical, something supernatural. There is no mountain in Israel high enough to see much of anything¹⁹. Nothing in Scripture suggests that the Devil has a power to alter this situation. So probably some kind of visionary experience is in view here.

καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ, Ταῦτά σοι πάντα δώσω, ἐὰν πεσὼν προσκυνήσῃς μοι, ‘*and he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me."*’: The aorist εἶπεν, ‘*he said*’ is used after two historical present tenses in the preceding verse. The main clause in this third testing by the Devil contains not an imperative as in the preceding two verses 3 and 6, but a promise: ταῦτά σοι πάντα δώσω – ‘*I will give you all these things*’ the conditional clause that follows involves an actual condition to be met unlike the previous two conditional clauses. The Devil’s offer of all the kingdoms of the world is a parody in that God has already promised the messianic king, the Son of God, “Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your procession”²⁰ (Ps 2:8).

Ὑπαγε, Σατανᾶ· γέγραπται γάρ, Κύριον τὸν θεόν σου προσκυνήσεις καὶ αὐτῷ μόνῳ λατρεύσεις, “*Away with you, Satan! for it is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.'* ”: two slight changes have been made for this quotation from the Deut. 6:13. The usage of προσκυνήσεις, ‘*you shall worship*’ instead of φοβηθήσῃ, ‘*you shall fear*’ and the

¹⁹The American Commentary, Vol. 22, 1992, 85

²⁰cf. Ps 72:8; Rev 11:15

insertion of μόνω, ‘only’ before λατρεύσεις, ‘you shall serve’. The former may be chosen to echo the words of devil in v 9, ‘if you worship me’. The μόνω simply underlines what is evident in the following verse of Deuteronomy 6:14.

9.3. Comments:

The pattern of the third Temptation is same to that of the preceding two other than one reason. Here the Devil does not refer Jesus as Son of God. But presupposes a view that Jesus himself is worthy of an authority. This view is expressed by John in 3:11-12 but was somewhat tempered by John’s debate with Jesus (3:13-15). Here Jesus is tempted to political power and authority. This kind of temptation seems to have been the one Jesus had to face most frequently. This temptation assures us of Jesus’ undivided loyalty. He will not ride two horses. He will worship and serve God only. All three temptations reach their culmination in the third temptation in which Jesus faces the temptation of power that is the temptation to enter into a power game in order to achieve his goal. “Away with you, Satan” points to more than a verbal link with 16:21-23. In both places Jesus is choosing the path of duty: the end ordained by the Father is to be achieved by the manner ordained by the Father, namely, the cross. And any opposition to this is satanic. To reject the way of the cross is to be on the side of the devil.²¹ At the conclusion of the story, on another mountain, Jesus announces that he has received all authority on earth, but it is from God-and after the cross (28:18).

10. Arrival of the angels:

Τότε ἀφίησιν αὐτὸν ὁ διάβολος, καὶ ἰδοὺ ἄγγελοι προσήλθον καὶ διηκόνουν αὐτῷ, ‘Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him’: Beginning of the sentence again with τότε, ‘then’ as in 4:1 which shows the close relation of this sentence with the preceding third temptation. The

²¹David and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*. 1988, 372

appearance of the present tense ἀφίησιν followed by an aorist and an imperfect shows that Matthew indeed knows of the reappearance of the tempter²². καὶ ἰδοὺ ἄγγελοι προσῆλθον καὶ διηκόνουν αὐτῷ , ‘ and suddenly angels came and waited on him’ – here rather than meeting his physical needs (hunger) angels came here to give special attention to the victory of the obedient Son²³. This also shows our God’s faithfulness to the obedient. Finally we can infer that God brings triumph to all those who remain faithful in His testing.

11. Reflection:

We have here a great drama between Satan and Christ. It ends with Christ’s victory over the tempter because of His knowledge and use of the word of God. The attack of Satan was made against every vulnerable point--hunger, trust, and responsibility--and when these were held firmly, there was no other area the devil could attack. He struck at the material or physical need of food, but he found one who knew the spiritual was more important than the physical; he struck at the spirit’s confidence in God, but found one whose trust in the Father did not need testing; and he struck at the carrying out of the divine commission, but found one who was determined to carry out that plan in a divine way. Thus was Satan defeated. ?

Was there anything wrong with making something to eat? He had the power to do it. He multiplied food later for people who were hungry. So why was this temptation? I think, is that Jesus had come out into the wilderness to fast for forty days. That was a spiritual exercise that had a very important place in His life at the moment. But the devil wanted to ruin the mission of Jesus, and so if he could convince Jesus on this seemingly trivial thing to abandon a spiritual work, then he would have had him. The temptation was to turn His spiritual nature into a means of

²²cf. 16:23 and 27:40, both in relation to “Son of God”

²³cf. Matt. 26:53; Heb 1:6

satisfying His material need without reference to finding the will of God. In fact, he would be doing the will of the devil. The devil simply chose a little thing for the test; but it would have destroyed the work of Christ.

The second temptation has a personal and a social impact. As personal, if Jesus cast himself headlong in utter risk he could prove both his own trust and God's power. As social, he might startle a shallow generation out of its indifference into sudden belief. By refusing to jump, Jesus chooses the path of continuing danger and hardship. The response to this temptation is a little more involved. At the outset one should consider the source: if the devil, or, more obviously for us, someone who has no inclination to obey Scripture, if such a person prompts you to do something that it looks like the Bible says you can do, you would be wise to think it through very carefully. A lot of Scripture is quoted out of context, or partially, and needs to be investigated. Matthew is not merely reporting a once upon a time encounter between Jesus and Devil, but is illustrating that even the well-intentioned theologies and interpretations of Scripture in his own community can become the vehicle of demonic alternative to the path of obedient suffering that Jesus has chosen as the path of messiahship.

Here Jesus defeated the tempter who tried to ruin His mission. It was a foretaste of the victory at the cross. But here Christ demonstrated that He would not be deterred from His mission. It was a very significant spiritual victory over the devil. And it would have given Jesus a tremendous boost (if we can say that reverently); He would know that the anointing of the Spirit gave Him the power to resist the evil one and to fulfil His mission.

Jesus defeated the temptation by appealing to a clear principle of Scripture. But He was not just quoting a favourite verse; He was drawing in the whole context of the passage to show that if God puts you in a place of deprivation for some spiritual purpose

you do not try to change it solely for the purpose of satisfying your physical needs. The first thing that the person must do is try to discover what God is doing through the deprivation, what spiritual growth is desired and how it should be achieved. This would show that one does not live by bread alone, but by everything that God says and does.

12. Application:

God does try or test us, the same Greek word can be used to describe a person being tempted to sin. Satan wanted to tempt Christ to sin. However, Christ had no sin nature. Since sin is passed down from father to children (Romans 5) and Christ had no human biological father (Matthew 1) Christ did not have a sin nature for the devil to exploit. As James 1:13-14 reads "13 Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. 14 But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed." This does not diminish the victory that Christ had over the devil. We simply need to remember that our sinful temptations are different from the temptation that Christ faced in the wilderness. However, we have victory over sin through His precious blood and His Holy Spirit will conform to His image. Therefore, while we will not have total victory over sin in this life, we can become more like Christ and have greater victory over sin. We also, through the same power that was available to Jesus, can stand firm and demonstrate the genuineness of our faith in our trials just as our Lord did in His trial.

All the temptations we face can be summarised in the three Jesus confronted and overcame: to put our earthly before our spiritual needs; to misinterpret Scripture for personal purposes; and to compromise scriptural truth for an apparent gain.

a) The first had to do with knowing what is most important in life--obeying the word of God--and not living only to satisfy the flesh, or making a living, or using spiritual resources just to meet

physical needs. Living by obedience to God has fallen on hard times today when so many are only interested in security of life through investments and entitlements, or indulging themselves in the good things of life. Seeking the good life can truly crowd out the spiritual things.

b) The second temptation had to do with trusting God. Those who truly know God and experience the reality of their faith daily do not need to find something spectacular to convince themselves and others. Today there is a growing pre-occupation with miraculous signs. Now God will do miraculous things--when He chooses to do them. But if people seek the spectacular in order to believe, or to convince themselves of the faith, it betrays a weak faith.

c) The third temptation had to do with fulfilling the commission or plan of God with a shortcut, not doing God's way. This is the common temptation to avoid the means to get to the ends, or as is said, the end justifies the means. But with God there is a way to accomplish His plan for your life, and it calls for absolute devotion and obedience to Him. But Satan always offers shortcuts that if looked at carefully, will ruin your life.

13. Conclusion:

The essential content of the three temptations may be variously understood. From one perspective, the first temptation is to use divine power to satisfy physical appetite; the second is to subject the promises of God to the test of spectacular demonstration, and the third is to accept the Devil's definition of authority and its way of achieving it. Also one can see from the three approaches of Devil one basic temptation: to fulfil the mission to which God has called him by means which God has not appointed²⁴. The temptation narrative strikes at the heart of human religion and worldly conceptions of power and reminds us of how close that danger can come to believers. Our mission is

²⁴F. W. Beare, *The Earliest Records of Jesus*, 1962, 43

the obedience to our Father's will, both in our destiny and in the details. God's vindication does not always come in this life, but in the end he always delivers his own.

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Water as Divine Gift for Holistic Wellbeing: Perspectives from Orthodox Earth Ethics in the Context of Commodification of Water Bodies

Jaisal Kauma Issac¹

Introduction

Life is a mystery which humanity is still struggling to explore. According to the Christian belief, life is the precious gift of God in this world. Life has a widerange of complex diversities in its existence in this world. In Kerala we are facing the real after effects of natural calamities like floods, landslides, sun strokes and rise in temperature which makes life a bit difficult in the recent years in the so called God's own country when compared to the age of our forefathers and foremothers. It is high time to

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search on the root causes of those drastic changes which make our life difficult in this planet. According to scientific explanations the life was created from the water. The biblical account of creation mentions about the life-giving spirit which was hovering over the waters.² So both science and faith affirm the ever continuing relationship of life with water. A life without the existence of water can never be imagined in this earth. Biblical accounts also describe the eternal life-giving streams of water. Since water is a life-giving entity in the created world, this paper tries to explore the struggle of water for its existence which is not only a struggle for personal interest but as a struggle for the existence of the whole Creation. The existence of water as a life-giving resource with all the dignity and pride can only decide the existence of the humanity too.

1. Water in the World

According to the USGS³ water Science School, 71% of the surface of the earth is covered with water resources, where 96.5% is located in Oceans in the earth.⁴ As per the evaluation of National Geographic Society, the fresh water content of this earth is limited to 0.3% of the whole water present in this world. Among this 3%, about 2% is frozen in the form of ice and snow in poles and glaciers. 0.5-0.75% of the fresh water is reserved as groundwater in the core of the earth. Finally, less than 1% of fresh water is available on the surface of the earth in the form of rivers, streams, and lakes.⁵ WWAP⁶ informs that about 2 million tonnes of human waste are disposed on water resources around the world in a single day.⁷ In the ancient period water was the real

²Genesis 1:2(NRSV)

³United States Geological Survey.

⁴“How much water is there is on, in and above the Earth?” *The USGS Water Science School*, <https://water.usgs.gov/edu/earthhowmuch.html> <5 July 2018>.

⁵“Earth’s Fresh Water,” *National Geographic Society* (7 Feb 2018), <https://www.nationalgeographic.org/media/earths-fresh-water/> <5 July 2018>.

⁶World Water Assessment Program

⁷“Statistics on Water Pollution,” *Help Save Nature*, <https://helpsavenature.com/water-pollution-statistics> (7 July 2018).

source of life and existence. Major primitive civilizations were always attached to freshwater sources on this earth.⁸ Human greed transformed the pure source of life to a life-threatening entity by anthropocentric action. Presently water is transformed as a source of lethal diseases due to its polluted nature.

2. Water as a Victim of Human Greed: Stories of Victimized Water

The term victimization itself has a deep meaning in the historical setting of Christian tradition. The meaning can be explored as ‘the action of singling someone or something out for cruel or unjust treatment.’⁹ The history of victimization of water is not a new idea to the humanity. It can be traced throughout the human history. This has been always legitimized in terms of attempts to human development. Hence this active victimization is always hidden in the history of survival of the creation. Since humanity has failed to realize the water’s voice of pain and pathos, the call is thus to listen to some narrations of the victimized life of water in the created world as a subaltern entity. Water as a resource for the existence of creation, it has the privilege to exist with dignity and pride. The body of water is filled with wastes like plastics, toxic chemicals, atomic residues, industrial wastes, electronic wastes along with biowastes.

2.1. Letter From the Ocean

Letter from the ocean narrates a story about life, liveliness, kindness, greed, and apathy. Ocean explains that according to science and myths, the creation has been generated from its shores and its depths. And in the present scenario, it’s the humanity that ruins the life of the ocean and its creations. It is time for humanity to look towards the reality of its throwaway plastics culture. Plastic is a design disaster which never biodegrades. So when human throw it away- there is no “away”

⁸“Statistics on Water Pollution,” *Help Save Nature*, <https://helpsavenature.com/water-pollution-statistics> (7 July 2018).

⁹*Oxford advanced Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 1738.

because the material lasts for eternity. It is everywhere, from the air to breathe, water to drink and to the clothes that you wear. Through the letter, the ocean is begging to humanity to be the part of the solution. It further cries out that, there is no single culprit and everyone is part of this victimizing ideology. In every second of the day, over 20,000 single-use plastics bottles are sold all over the world. That may add up to a million every single minute and a staggering 480 billion each year. The fish and the sea organisms die from getting stuck in nets to eating plastics that they think is food. The children of the ocean are struggling due to this human-made disaster.¹⁰

Ocean narrates, “The rate humanity is currently going, by 2050, there will be more plastics in the ocean than fish. By that time you can at least realize the importance of caring the creation or to select to live a life in the garbage. You made plastics. You depend on it. Now we are all drowning in it. When will all of this biodegrade? Ocean accounts for 90% of habitable space on the earth. It not only absorbs almost 50% of the carbon humanity emit but produce nearly 50% of earth’s oxygen. And humanity is expressing its gratitude for all these contributions in its life by irretrievably turning the ocean into a thin soup of plastics. Soliciting to the humanity’s actions, Ocean concludes, “If we die, you die...”¹¹

2.2. The Response of a River Through an Adivasi Women

Geetha Vazachal is one of the Adivasi Leader in the primitive Kadar Tribal Settlement¹² in the Vazachal Forest division in

¹⁰ You made the plastic, Now we are all Drowning in it: Ocean’s appeal to humanity in this Open Letter,” *The Theological Indian* (25 June 2018), <https://theologicalindian.com/awareness/ocean/plastic/> <6 July 2018>.

¹¹ “You made the plastic, Now we are all Drowning in it..., <https://theologicalindian.com/awareness/ocean/plastic/> <6 July 2018>.

¹²Kadar tribal community is considered to be the most primitive of the south Indian forest tribal settlements in Western Ghats. They mainly depend on hunting, fishing and food gathering in the Chalakudy river basin whose population is estimated to be less than 1500. Kadar tribal communities were forced to shift their whole community settlement in the name of dam projects in Chalakudy river. Kadar has a history of

Thrissur District of Kerala State. In her own words as a person who is living in the forest and so close to the Chalakudy River, she is able to hear the groaning of the River. The Kadar tribal community considers River Chalakudy as their mother who feeds them, according to their needs. As in the name of development the River is already packed with five dams and the sixth is on its way. A 145 km river, is struggling hard to flow because of the large human constructions, like Dam projects. Geetha further explains the vanishing forest life which is highly intertwined with the life of the river. She as an uneducated, undeveloped in the eyes of dominant sects of the society explains that we cannot exist without this river, even our fellow creations cannot exist without this river. The Chalakudy River is facing a situation similar to the judgment of life imprisonment due to human greed. She says that if we listen to the cry of the river, we can hear the weeping of a mother who is begging to the humanity to free her, for the survival of her children.¹³

3. Methodology

The methodology employed is Orthodox Earth Ethics¹⁴ which in essence is a cosmotheandric vision and expression of an

resettlements for the Parambikulam and Vazachal Dam constructions. Kadar community does not have a life beyond this forest and river. The present settlement is 400 meters within the proposed AHP area. The traditional headman of the community is named as 'Ooru Moopan' who controls the functioning of the Kadar community; see in Government of India, The Ministry of Environment and Forests, *Report of the Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel* (Gadgil Report), 2011.

¹³Interview with Geetha Vazachal, Oorumoopathi, Kadar Community, 1 June 2018.

¹⁴According to Orthodox Earth ethics Creation is the matrix through which the creator is revealed. Jaroslaw Buciora argues, "God, in essence, is a mystery and the mysterious God reveals itself in creation, nature becomes the mystery of God's revelation;" see in Geevarghese Coorilose Nalunnakkal, *The Joy of the Gospel of Life: Contextual Reflections on Mission and Evangelism* (New Delhi: ISPCK, 2016), 138. This perspective can give a substantial impetus for our understanding towards ecology and the ethical praxis that humanity needs to engage in. It challenges the anthropocentric rudiments of Christianity which reduces earth as a storehouse of greed and consumerism. Orthodox Earth ethics extrapolates Trinitarian *perichoresis* to the cosmos exemplifying the panentheistic dimension of the Cosmic Presence. Outlining the social and ecological implications of Holy Trinity Geevarghese Osthathios

Orthodox ecological and missiological hermeneutics. Cosmology, theology, and anthropology are intrinsically intertwined in Orthodox Earth ethics. In Orthodox ethics, ‘Creation’ is given preference over against ‘Nature’ to eliminate the dichotomy between human beings and nature and not to attribute transcendental value exclusively to human beings.

4. Listening to the Exploitation Narrations

The discussed stories of exploitation provide the light to envision the atrocities faced by the water resources in the midst of development. The primary narration of the letter from the ocean is a clear picture of realities faced by major water resources throughout the world. This letter can be accepted as a clarion call to re-look the human anthropocentrism in the hidden ideology of development through destruction.

The second narration deals with the after-effects of dam construction on the natural environment. According to the dominant ideologies, dams are one among the basic requirements for the development of a nation. But in the eyes of the

remarks, “As God is social, cosmic and kenotic in the Triune existence and in the Incarnation, humanity must be social, cosmic and kenotic;” see in Geevarghese Osthathios, “Restoring Harmony in Creation through a Trinitarian Sharing Life-Style” in K.M. George ed., *Towards a New Humanity* (New Delhi: ISPCCK, 1992), 90-91. Earth in Orthodox earth ethics is not a passive object of salvation but to the contrary, it participates subjectively along with humans in the salvific plan of God; see in Geevarghese Coorilose Nalunnakkal, *The Joy of the Gospel of Life...*, 140. Theologians like Metropolitan Gennadios, Elizabeth Theokritoff and many more consider the Orthodox liturgy and sacraments to reveal the sanctifying and redemptive powers bequeathed to elements in creation. Bread, water, wine, and tree are some of the sacramental elements in the Orthodox liturgy that initiate an ontological metamorphosis which leads to a spiritual discovery where humanity becomes once again an earthling, a sanctified matter; see in Geevarghese Coorilose Nalunnakkal, *The Joy of the Gospel of Life...*, 141. It is in sacraments where creator and created realm reconciles. In Orthodox Earth Ethics the role given to humans in corroboration with earth is also pivotal. The Orthodox theological anthropology perceives human as “Priests of Creation;” see in Ernst M. Conradie, ed., *Creation and Salvation*, vol. 2 (Berlin: LIT, 2012), 48. This concept of Priests of Creation was propounded by John Zizioulas. This clearly has eco-theological implications with an ecclesiological framework.

indigenous communities, erasing of natural forest lands for plantations and dam projects had reduced the water contributing sheds for the Chalakudy River.¹⁵ Even the Madhav Gadgil Report denies the sanction of the project by predicting the death of the river and dependant vegetation.¹⁶

As Maulana Wahiduddin Khani opines any acts which prohibit the natural flow of water is a threat to the life of the river. River chalakudy is already died partially by cutting down its downstream flow by about 28 km. About 65 km of the river which is nearly half the length is partially restricted to flow freely. This has resulted in the life of dependent vegetation and animals in the Vazachal forest division.¹⁷ Maulana further suggests, the life of a river is similar to that of a Human life. A river is a unique phenomenon of nature. In the river fresh water is being added to the existing water at every moment. This everyday phenomenon is responsible for the freshness of the river water. In the absence of this continuous flow of newly added water, the river will lose its freshness: it will not be able to maintain its health-giving, even life-giving, properties.¹⁸

5. Commodification of Water

Globalization and the newly designed developmental strategies have resulted in identifying water as a valuable commodity for economic interest. Privatization of natural resources which nourishes life is a serious crime and unforgivable sin in the cosmotheandric lenses of orthodoxy. Privatization of the natural resources is one of the root causes for the shift in viewing water as an economic commodity rather than a life-

¹⁵A. Latha and S. Unnikrishnan, *RBO Driven Campaign to Preserve Downstream Ecological Flows of a Western Ghats River* (Chalakudy: River Protection Forum, 2010).

¹⁶Government of India, The Ministry of Environment and Forests, *Report of the Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel* (Gadgil Report), 2011.

¹⁷A. Latha, "Intha Adavil Dam Venda," *Mathrubhumi* (March, 2017): 27.

¹⁸Maulana Wahiduddin Khani, "The Journey of Life: A Flowing River," *The Times of India* (15 December 2010): 10.

giving resource. Koffie Annan says, “Lack of access to water for meeting basic needs such as health, hygiene and food security undermines development and inflicts enormous hardship on more than a billion members of the human family.”¹⁹ The attitude towards the water as an economic entity has led the private sector to cash in on the need for safe drinking water. Privatization is actually the result of the community, which has the economic potential, who makes use of this privilege and the low-income category which is left to the mercy of the governments. Governments which are ranked as the custodians of the state’s resources entrust the private companies for raising funds for the so-called developmental projects.²⁰ Hence the privatization always benefits the dominant profit-making companies. It simply looks water as a commodity, water as an economic good, and water as a commercial product which is exactly against the Orthodox understanding of mutual benefiting within the society. J. Hart opines that when water is privatized, its sacramental role is nullified as the access is curtailed for the commons. It is no more a sign of the living Spirit.²¹ Through the last decades, the water has been transferred as the most profitable product in the society. Knowingly or unknowingly the global MNC’s are targeting the developing nation’s water market and its resources for profit making. As Mark L. Allman rightly points out, ‘when water is made to be an expensive commodity by the colonizers, it no longer functions as a symbol of God’s freely given redemptive grace; instead it symbolizes oppression and the commodification of grace.’²²

¹⁹Kofi Anan, “Forward,” *Water for people: Water for life* (New York: UNESCO & Berghahn Books, 2003): 11.

²⁰Anderson H.M. Jeremiah, “Privatization of Water- A Theological Critique and Emerging Challenges for the Church,” *Reformed world 57/1* (March 2007): 4.

²¹cited in Mark. J. Allman, “Water as Sacrament Global water crisis and sacramental stewardship” in *Concilium* (May 2012): 52.

²²Allman, “Water as Sacrament Global water...”, 53.

6. Privatization of Water in Earth towards Water in Plastic: Threat to life

The letter from the ocean wakes up humanity in revealing the hidden atrocities done to the creation. Bottled water has become a part of human pride among the developing social premises. Globalization and development had contributed to the new habit of bottled and aerated water as a commodity for sale in the midst of society. Orthodox understandings are rooted in the notion that clean drinking water, like air, is a God-given blessing that should not be packed and sold. In fact, the bottled water takes water resources away from the poor. According to studies by Orb Media, the bottled water has a market of about 150 billion dollars per year in the world economic market. The studies clearly narrate that about 90% of these plastics packed water is contaminated by microplastics, posing potential harm to the health of humans directly and towards the rest of the creation indirectly. Microparticles like polypropylene, nylon, and polyethylene terephthalate are included in this celebrated fresh water. The findings suggest that a person who drinks a liter of bottled water a day might be consuming tens of thousands of microplastic each year.²³ As a response to this study, a clarification was given by the PEPSICO, which justifies itself by stating, “The science of microplastics and microfibers is in its infancy. Microplastic particles are found across our environment, including soil, air and water.” The self justifications by MNC, itself states the situation of polluted water all around the world which is completely the result of human activities. The slogans used by the corporate’s have to market their bottled water expose their insensitivity to the struggles of the parched generations. Nestle Pure Life Mineral Water exhorts us; “Good to Remember: Don't wait to be thirsty; regular drinking prevents dehydration.”

²³“90% bottled water contaminated globally possess potential harm to humans”, *The Economic Times* (16 March 2018), <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/miscellaneous/90-bottled-water-brands-contaminated-globally/articleshow/63316844.cms> (18 July 2018).

Such slogans absolve the sins of the corporates who exploit the resources of the commons and rebuke the victims for choosing to stay dehydrated.²⁴ The creation is at risk in consuming the products of greed and destructive development in this world.

7. Water and Right to Life

As Humanity listens to the groaning of the Ocean and Chalakudy River as examples of the victim's voice, it clearly states that "If We Die, You will also die."²⁵ There is no existence for any creations without the presence of water. Fresh water occupies a special place within Environmentalism and it is high time for the issue of access to fresh water to top the list of global right to life advocacy efforts.²⁶ According to Christiana Z. Peppard, water is intrinsically linked to the fundamental human rights such as the right to life, to food and to health.²⁷ The issue of the water crisis is dealt with as a passive issue which will not affect the normal life in recent times. But the facts and surveys alarm humanity to seriously look into the upcoming crisis. According to the reports by Down to Earth Magazine, about 600 million people face high to extreme water crisis: worse 70% of available water is contaminated. And by 2020 Delhi, Bangalore, Chennai, and Hyderabad will run out of ground water and by 2030, as much as 40% of India will have no drinking water.²⁸ Still, these frightening statistics are not been listened to by the humanity who enjoys privileges. If the situation is going to be a reality it will affect the whole creation and the after-effects will be mightier than that of nuclear emissions. Recent Cape Town Episodes are revealing the threats of water scarcity and sufferings

²⁴George Zachariah, "Water Justice: A Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace: Theological Musings," 3.

²⁵"You made the plastic, Now we are all Drowning in it: Ocean's appeal to humanity in this Open Letter," *The Theological Indian* (25 June 2018), <https://theologicalindian.com/awareness/ocean/plastic/> <6 July 2018>.

²⁶Christiana Z. Peppard, *Just Water* (Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 2016), 53.

²⁷Peppard, *Just Water*, 60.

²⁸"Every Drop Matters," *Down To Earth* (15 July 2018): 2.

of the existing creation. Everyone is running behind that allotted ration of water to maintain life.²⁹ The crisis is not even far ahead to Indian cities as human greed is on the path to Cape Town. The rivers, oceans, streams, water bodies all are polluted as a part of human greed and development where there is no value for life and existence of the creation. The worst part is that the victims of these acts are the common creation who tries to conserve everything for the future. The cities are extending its dark straws to the resources of the villages and forest to satisfy its own needs. So water can be recognized as the most sensitive upcoming right to life issue in the present and future world.

8. Water and Life in Orthodox Understanding of Earth Ethics

Polluting water resources are simply termed as polluting Life in the Earth. The patristic and liturgical traditions in Orthodoxy affirm water as the source of life. St. Cyril of Jerusalem affirms the importance of water as a life-enriching resource by saying,

“water is a wonderful thing and the most beautiful of the four sensible elements of the creation, the sky is the dwelling of angels but the skies are made of water; earth is the home of human and creations, but the earth has come out of the waters; and before the creation of the visible things in six days, the spirit of God hovered over the waters. The water is the principle of the cosmos and the Jordan of the gospel.”³⁰

Water is one of the essential elements in the sacramental liturgy of Orthodox churches. Even the baptismal liturgy affirms the hovering of the Holy Spirit in the fresh water used in the sacrament of baptism. It further speaks about the life in the water by announcing that water itself submits towards the heavenly

²⁹“Cities Need Wisdom for Water,” *Down To Earth* (31 March 2018), 2.

³⁰cited in Salim Thanka Kumar, *Eco-theological Significance of water* (New Delhi: Christian World Imprints, 2015), 59.

action of God in the sacrament of baptism.³¹ Even after completing the sacrament the priest informs the parents that the water where the holy oil is mixed must be poured into a flowing stream of water. That act itself affirms the acceptance of life and sanctity in the flowing natural water. The church does not permit to pour the remnants of the blessed water which is considered to be filled with the Holy Spirit into stagnant water bodies but strictly to pour into flowing water which has a life.

In the sacrament of Eucharist, there is a practice of mixing equal amount of fresh water with grape wine so that it symbolizes the inseparable unity of divinity and humanity of Jesus Christ which later transforms to the blood of Christ. It resembles the power of fresh water to be transformed into the life-giving blood of the savior Jesus in the Eucharistic liturgical tradition in Orthodox Church.³² There are several other instances like midnight prayer sessions, where flowing river or streams are used as metaphors to the lives of martyrs and saints in liturgical prayer sessions. God's grace and mercy are also compared to a flowing/stream in daily liturgical sessions of Orthodox worship.

Thus Orthodoxy insists on the life-giving value of the water resources. It denounces all the practices of keeping water in bondage or being polluted. On considering the Eucharistic prayers it can be concluded that polluting water bodies and creation is similar to that of polluting the life-giving body and blood of Christ.

9. Implications for the Christian Communities to be in solidarity with the Life-giving Water

Orthodox Earth ethics, which prefers to use 'creation' over 'nature' gathers the whole visible and invisible creation as the sharing of the energy of God. Orthodox earth ethics shatters all

³¹ *Kudhasa Kramangalum Anidhayum* (Liturgical text of sacraments in Syrian Orthodox Church) (Mulanthuruthy: Seminary Publications, 2012), 20-35.

³² *Service Book of Holy Eucharist* (Mulanthuruthy: Seminary Publications, 2017), 12-16.

the attempts towards the attitude of ownership and custodianship of the created world. It only allows humans to enjoy the freedom of being one among the creatures who are called to serve the creation. Mark J. Allman opines, the politically sided privatized liturgies are social sins because they do not challenge the economic and political status quo, which renders a billion thirsty and kills 3.5 million annually. Through this, they augment our Saviour's thirst on the cross.³³ Hence the Christian communities must witness the world by deconstructing the politically biased mindsets and should frame their convictions on an attitude of solidarity with the life giving resources of the commons. Christians should endeavour towards water justice reprimanding all manifestations of imperial conquest in our times which commodify water.

9.1. Deconstructing Anthropocentrism

The concept of a human above nature or as owners of nature is the basic reason for this much exploitation on the resources. Orthodox earth ethics deconstructs the idea of dominion and replace the term nature by using 'creation' so that even humanity is counted as one among the creation. The concepts of human as the priest of creation,³⁴ stewards of creation,³⁵ Human as a

³³ Mark. J. Allman, "Water as Sacrament Global water crisis and sacramental stewardship" in *Concilium* 2012/5, 55.

³⁴ The idea of human as priest of creation proposed by John Zizioulas has clear orthodox eco-theological implications. The concept is extracted from the ecclesiological framework of the orthodox Christian churches. Zizioulas explains with the conviction that humans constitute the ecclesial community which offers the gifts of creation towards the creator. The communion is celebrated among the created and the creator through the Eucharistic anaphora. As per orthodoxy, every believer as a member of this body is called to act like Christ as a priest of creation in the ecclesial network; see in Michael Prokurat, "Orthodox Perspectives On Creation," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 33/4 (1989): 335.

³⁵ The concept of steward is entrusted in the orthodox priesthood; a priest in orthodoxy can be understood as the office of kenotic serving leader who follows the path of Christ and disciples. i.e., he or she is anointed with a command to lose his/or her own life for the protection of the community. Hence the concept of stewards of creation also can be understood as a duty entrusted by the creator to serve and protect the creation. Ignoring this commitment and responsibility is a serious sin in the orthodox

Microcosm in creation,³⁶ and the concepts of Theosis³⁷ helps a lot in restructuring the relationship between Creator and creation.

9.2. Greed as Sin

In the present world, humanity is in the contest for accumulating power, pride and wealth in the society. The everlasting Greed is another root cause for the exploitation of resources. Orthodoxy has a traditional history of sharing the resources for the whole community in its early phase. The resources are created for the abundance of life on this planet; but it is being looted by humanity as a result of greed. Christian value of love and justice to the other is being shadowed by this unhealthy behavior of Greed. The looting of the resource of the other is viewed as the greatest among the sins in the ecological understanding of Orthodox ethics. Water is always a common resource for the whole creation, which has the strength to create, sustain and nourish life in abundance. Persecuting this life-giving creation is an act of transgression towards the will of God to a flourishing life.

thought. Orthodox faith affirms the concept of serve and preserve. Stewardship is also a call to denounce the greed's and desires of self interest. The vocation is to serve the needs of fellow creations; see in John Weaver, *Earthshaping Earthkeeping* (London: LYNX, 1999), 127.

³⁶ The new oxford Dictionary explains the term Microcosm as a community, place or situation regarded as encapsulating in miniature the characteristic qualities or features of something much larger, i.e., humankind regarded as epitome of the universe. As per the orthodox creation narratives it is evident that God has created the universe out of the Trinitarian freewill. After finishing and recognizing the goodness of the creation God utilized the elements of created world to create human beings. So the human body can be understood as a space where the characteristics of the wider world are encapsulated. The physical elements which formulate the human body are no differentiated from those which constitute the physical world. Orthodoxy affirms the integrity of creation by explaining human as a microcosm, i.e. polluting or corrupting the creation is same as that of polluting the existence of humanity itself; see in Michael Prokurat, "Orthodox Perspectives On Creation...", 335.

³⁷The concept of Theosis is a core content of eastern orthodox spirituality so that it shows a path to the divinization of human beings as the vision of God. According to Paulose Gregorious, Theosis or Divinisation is the sharing in the life and consequently remaining in the glory of God; see in Paulose Gregorious, *A Human God* (Kottayam: MGF, 1992), 27-38.

9.3. Preaching and Practicing Ethics of Sufficiency

An Ethics of sufficiency is an idea which promotes the usage of resources to the limit that what is an actual need. It is an enactment of the gospel, social norms and individual morality. The controlled use of resources can be easily accomplished through the practices of ethics of sufficiency. It is the need of the hour which ensures the created resources for future generations of the existing creations.³⁸ In the case of our water resources which are already installed with huge number of Dams, Ethics of sufficiency initiates to utilize the existing systems and it neglects any more chance to risk the existing eco-diversity. The churches have the role to inform its followers to follow the idea of ethics of sufficiency so that they can preserve their co-creation.

9.4. Strengthening Inter-religious and Ecumenical cooperation

A collective effort is the need of the hour to redeem the water from the clutches of oppressors and regain its value as a common resource for the whole creation. The orthodox understanding of creation over the terminology of nature can create a platform for interreligious and ecumenical discussions which can be fruitful in creating an awareness among the human community. There is no difference in the usage of water based on religion, caste, creed, color, economic status etc. It is always the same in its essence for every creation, the same water for same daily needs. This can be the guiding principle or motivation behind the collective effort. The call of the WCC assembly in Busan for the seven-year pilgrimage of justice and peace also offers links to the topic area of the integrity of creation in the ecumenical gatherings.³⁹

9.5. Creating Learning places for Change

One of the resistance towards the destruction projects can be achieved through the creating learning spaces for change. For

³⁸Ji-Sun Kim, ed., *Making Peace with the Earth* (Geneva, WCC Publications, 2016), 125.

³⁹Kim, ed., *Making Peace with the Earth...*, 125.

example, in case of Chalakudy River, the indigenous people in assistance with the CPSS movement conducted several seminars and practical river knowing sessions on the banks of the victimized river which equipped the local people to stand against the dam construction projects. Even these short learning spaces were able to resist the state government agenda of implementing the power project.⁴⁰ The church itself can transform to be the learning spaces for eco-friendly discussions. In Orthodox understanding, the church is a space of hope for the past, present and future generations, where it has the role to educate both spiritually and socially about the pilgrimage for justice and love in the creations common life.

9.6. Involving Young People

Young people should be engaged to commit themselves to the integrity of creation or their existing commitment should be strengthened.⁴¹ The youth movements and student movements can be the right spaces where the church can create an ecological commitment for the future generations. Projects like Riverwalk⁴², Kids for River⁴³ conducted by CPSS⁴⁴ can ensure the practical participation of the younger generations in water conservation forums.

⁴⁰Interview with Geetha Vazachal, Oorumoopathi, Kadar Community, 1 June 2018.

⁴¹Kim, ed., *Making Peace with the Earth...*, 125.

⁴²A protest program called 'River Walk' observed on 2005 November by farmers, political organizations, kids and young women and men aroused a mass interest on protection of Chalakudy River. The movement was counted as a success due to the participation of people of local and other communities.⁴² The program was conducted as a march from the river mouth to the dam site followed by a water rights convention in the banks of Chalakudy River; see in A.Latha and S. Unnikrishnan, *RBO Driven Campaign to Preserve Downstream Ecological Flows of a Western Ghats River* (Chalakudy: River Protection Forum, 2010), 15.

⁴³CPSS movements which has a vision for the future has organized 'Kids for Rivers' groups in both upstream and downstream parts of the Chalakudy River in sensitizing the younger generations towards river protection and restoration; see in Latha and S. Unnikrishnan, *RBO Driven Campaign to Preserve...*, 14.

⁴⁴Chalakudy Puzha Samraksana Samiti (Chalakudy River protection Forum).

9.7. Forming Civil Society Alliances

Churches are always a part of the civil society. Churches can join their hands in alliance with civil society movements like CPSS, River Protection Forums in conserving creation. As a collective effort, those combined movements can be a powerful resisting presence in the society against the dominant MNC's alliances with the state in looting the resources. It strengthens and enriches the concern for creation towards large lenses where the voice of the voiceless becomes meaningful. Also, this process must critique itself that whether it transforms to be a body which rejects the voices of indigenous communities and the marginalized sections.

9.8. Revisiting the Ascetic/ Monastic Model

Ascetic and Monastic models in the tradition of orthodoxy have a very important role in its development. In this model Renunciation is the key. As explored in the paper human greed is identified as one of the basic problems for the exploitation of water resources and creation in this world. It is a way of adopting a simple life style to overcome the clutches of greed. Living in harmony with nature and keeping their needs to a minimum, monastic communities proclaim the message that the earth is Lord's and that it should not be used indiscriminately to satisfy human greed. This can be identified as a powerful protest against a wasteful lifestyle devoid of any sense of responsibility to the world of nature.⁴⁵ Regaining the dynamics of this model to the present society a life in the community, sharing and commitment to the fellow creation can inspire a clarion call for practical action.

9.9. Re-visioning the idea of Fasting

Fasting is a traditional act of renunciation of dairy and meat product along with spiritual exercises for purifying body and soul

⁴⁵K.C. Abraham, "A theological Response to the ecological crisis," in David G. Hallman, ed., *Ecotheology* (Geneva, WCC Publications, 1994), 71.

within the Orthodox Church families as a part of the spiritual exercise. The days can be even counted up to half of the year in the Orthodox liturgical calendar.⁴⁶ According to Bartholomew 1, fasting is not to deny the world, but to affirm the world, and the body, and material creation. It is an act to remember the hunger of others along with the hunger of creation itself for restoration.⁴⁷ Orthodoxy has a tradition of collective community fasting than individual fasting which is derived from the idea of fasting with entire creation for its restoration. He further says, “Fasting is to move away from what I want to what the world needs.”⁴⁸ Thus the discipline of fasting can be revisited as a concept which is necessary corrective for our culture of wasting. Even the church can add some ethical elements like limiting the use of electricity, fossil fuels, and natural resources to this model of fasting so that these practices can contribute towards the restoration of the world.

Conclusion

The water of life is primarily meant to say that water gives life, that is for drinking, the intake by all creations.⁴⁹ Through this paper an attempt was made to re-vision the life-giving values of water, to redeem water from bondage for the sustenance of life in this created world. As per Orthodox theorizing, it is the duty of the humanity to practice the life, as affirming the fellow creations especially Water for the existence and survival of the world. As Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew 1 opines, “How we treat the earth and all of the creation defines the relationship that each of us has with God.”⁵⁰ He further suggests that the crisis the world is facing is not primarily ecological, instead, it is concerned with the

⁴⁶John Chryssavgis, ed., *Cosmic Grace Humble prayer, the ecological vision of the green patriarch Bartholomew 1* (Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 31-33.

⁴⁷Chryssavgis, *Cosmic Grace Humble prayer...*, 31-33.

⁴⁸Chryssavgis, *Cosmic Grace Humble prayer...*, 31-33.

⁴⁹Salim Thanka Kumar, *Eco-Theological Significance of Water* (New Delhi, Christian World Imprints, 2015), 11.

⁵⁰Chryssavgis, *Cosmic Grace Humble prayer...*, 221.

way human envisage or imagine the world. In short water crisis is not a natural calamity; it is the consequence of the systemic evils which legitimize the greed of the corporate's at the expense of the life of the commons. As Orthodox earth ethics portrays, the first change must be initiated in the human minds that water is a gift of God.⁵¹ The duty is to deal with the causes not the symptoms anymore.⁵² On this light, water crisis, pollution, commoditization and its privatization must be addressed in its root causes which can be the human greed. The implications can create a new committed generation which considers water as one of the sources of human existence. The real change is needed in the human attitude and mindset. As the water bodies groan for its existence, humanity must be informed of the fact that there is no existence of life without this life-giving resource.

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⁵¹Philip V. Peacock, "Waters of life and Water of Struggle," in V.J John ed., *Water Struggle* (New Delhi: ISPCK, 2007), 23.

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