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HEKAMTHO

SYRIAN ORTHODOX THEOLOGICAL JOURNAL

‘Creative Destruction’



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About the cover painting...



||Creative Destruction||

by Ajiyan George | Acrylic on Canvas | 40x60 | 2007 |

***“But the Lord has told me to say to you, ‘This is what the Lord says:
I will overthrow what I have built and uproot what I have planted,
throughout the earth.’” - Jeremiah 45:4***

By birth, we are the co-creators, but in reality we are also the co-destroyers. Our attitudes and actions have immense influence on the surrounding world, and vice versa. Some of them are creative and some of them are destructive and counterproductive.

Creative destruction is a process through which something new brings about the demise of whatever existed before it. We create our life as well as the lives of others, and at the same time it results in the destruction of something less privileged in our life. While considering the Greater Goodness our actions are just instrumental. Though, many of the events in the recent times have also proven that our greed and pride are also directing our creative nature to make way for creative destruction. The destructive nature of human beings is increasingly affecting the balance and peaceful existence. In either way, we are mere instruments in the hands of God for shaping humanity.

Editorial

Being a Christian is not just about following rules and regulations, performing rituals, or even regularly attending church. It's about a fellowship and a deep friendship with Christ. Jesus taught us that knowing him is the doorway to a special relationship with God. He defined the relationship in terms of revival of mind, body and soul.

As a community of believers each Church has the duty to undergo constant revival in its nature to abide in Christ. All the malicious practices that are the residuals of year old traditions need to be rectified in order to experience the true fellowship with Christ. This can be only achieved by constant renewal in Christ for which the concept of 'creative destruction' is a necessity.

In this regard, the current issue of Hekamtho tries to elaborate few dimensions of creative destruction occurring within the Church for continuing fellowship with Christ.

In the first article, "A Contextual Reading of Patristic Theology", Mor Antheemos Matthews Metropolitan directs us to go back to the roots of the Patristic period along with the Scripture to get feasible solutions for grave theological challenges, for the theology of the early Patristic period and that of today. He urges us to make a paradigm shift from ego-centeredness to Theo-centeredness. The Church should also uphold the values of Kingdom of God, because Ecclesia, the called-out community, is called out to labour for the Kingdom of God and its justice values.

Thomas Abraham, in his article 'HIV and Aids: The Causes and Effects', explains the social, economic and cultural aspects of HIV

and AIDS. It reminds the role of the Church to engage in a direct involvement with the uprooted people, which is very much the need of the hour and is the responsibility of both the Church and its members.

The third article, 'Religion in the Market Place: The Changing Environment of Women in the Church' by Jerry Kurian illustrates upon the various forms of denials faced by women within the Church. For this purpose he placed traditional religion and media next to each other and tried to identify the characteristics of the mainline media. The article also describes how religion is treating and exploiting women and put forth appropriate alternatives to their present predicaments.

The fourth article, 'A Tree and Its Fruit (An exegetical Study of Luke 6: 43-45)' by Anish K. Joy provides an exegetical insight to the verse 'For each tree is known by its own fruit'. It underlines that fact that effective compliance can come only from a heart that has been converted and has proclaimed the ministry of Jesus.

'Building Self Esteem among Women: Mission of the Church' by Jiji Johnson elaborates the actual mission of the church as inclusive, liberative and transformative. It points out that in present times the Church has failed in its true mission. The article examines the reason why the mission fails and what do women need to do for their liberation.

Lincoln G. Kadoopparayil, in his article 'Communitarian Paradigm of the Universal Church' proposes a new paradigm - communitarian paradigm - for Christian social communication all over the world.

Hope this issue of Hekamtho benefits you to understand few of the concepts of 'constructive destruction' for the well-being and fellowship with God!

- Fr. Dr. Ajiyan George
Editor

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A contextual Reading of Patristic Theology

Mor Anthimos Matthews¹

Introduction

Struggles are part of Christian life and partaking in those struggles, I believe, is a divine call. Hence, the theological convictions of mine always direct me to *go back to the roots of the Patristic period* along with the Scripture to get *feasible solutions* for grave theological challenges, for the theology of the early Patristic period is so rich and distinctive. The theology which they discussed is not a theology which *promotes intellectual exercise and academic interests, but which has strong roots in day to day life of the faithful*. ‘Patristic Theologies’ are developed within the faith traditions as well as in the living contexts. Therefore, this short presentation intends to focus on the Patristic period in order to ponder over the early Christian

¹ H.E. Dr. Mor Anthemos Matthews is a professor in the department of Theology and Patristic Studies at MSOTS. He is also the Auxiliary Bishop of the Muvattupuzha Region and the Patriarchal Vicar of UK & Ireland dioceses.

understanding of the Gospel in order to positively encounter those forces which are trying to destabilize the *Faith, Christian ethics* and sanctity of *Christian Doctrines*.

God the Creator (Honourable Provider)

In the beginning God created the creation,
the **fountainhead of delights**;
the house which He constructed
provisions those who live in therein,
for upon His gift
innumerable created beings depend;
from a single table
does He provide
every day for each creature
all things in due measure.
Grant that we may acknowledge
Your grace, O Good One.²

God designates creation as *the fountain head of delights* and creation was entrusted to live in harmony. For that, God has constructed the house (Natural World) for the created beings which provides everything for their sustenance. Therefore, by bringing the concept *from a single table*, Ephrem (*The Orient*)³ says that, God is such an *honourable Provider*, provides *everything for each creature*, that too in equal measure. Therefore, God's creations are intended to live in mutual dependence with each other. This shows the harmonious living of the whole creation which is God's intention.

The **keys of doctrine**
which **unlock all of Scripture's books**,
have opened up before my eyes
the book of creation,

² Hymns on Paradise 13:2. (emphasis mine)

³ Christendom consists of three major cultures – The Latin West, The Greek East and The Orient.

the treasure of Ark,
 the crown of Law.
 This is the book [Genesis] which, above its companions,
 has in its narrative
 made the Creator perceptible
 and transmitted His actions;
**it has envisioned all His craftsmanship,
 made manifest His works of art.**⁴

For him, creation is the marvellous representation of the invisible Creator.⁵ In the beginning, God brought everything into existence in purity, beauty and goodness.⁶ Ephrem explicitly reveals that the *keys of doctrine* unlocked and revealed before him the *Book of Creation* (Genesis) which *envisioned all His craftsmanship and made manifest His works of art*. He further says that creation is a demonstration of *His rich wisdom* and these freely created works were given to Adam (humanity).⁷ Syriac Christianity views *Creation*, *Revelation* and *Incarnation* as ingredients of one divine process which inclined to the *Scripture and Faith*. Hence, the creation cannot be de-linked from God's self-revelation. Therefore, for Ephrem, hidden God is manifested in the creation and the creation in turn is filled with pointers to God who is far away.⁸

“In the beginning [God] created heaven and earth”,⁹ “brought forth vegetation through the agency of earth and water”,¹⁰ “animal world came into being as a result of the combining of earth and water”¹¹ and finally “fashioned dust from

⁴ Hymns on Paradise 6:1. (emphasis mine)

⁵ According to Ephrem, angels are also part of the creation. However, in this presentation this aspect is excluded. For Ephrem's views about angels, see BOTHA, *Fire Mingled with Spirit*, 95-104.

⁶ Cf. Hymns on Faith 35:7 (Gen. 1:31). Hymns against Heresies 20:1 (Gen 1:31).

⁷ Hymns against Heresies 28:8.

⁸ Hymns on Church 48:10. Hymns on Faith 44:7. Sermons on Faith II: 709-714

⁹ Commentary on Genesis I:1.

¹⁰ Commentary on Genesis II:3.

¹¹ Commentary on Genesis II:9.

the earth into Adam [humanity]”.¹² And for Ephrem, one can perceive marvellous representation of the (invisible) Creator in the (visible) creation. He clarifies further, God is engraved in the natural world,¹³ and therefore, in the created world (Eden and natural world) one finds symbols and types of the Creator. Ephrem advocates that the Father fashioned creation through the Son.¹⁴ By this, he also affirms that creation unfolds Christ (Lord of Symbols)¹⁵ and Christ’s symbols too are visible in creation which carries Christ’s divinity and humanity,¹⁶ because “in His [Christ] womb dwells all creation”.¹⁷ Hence, he concludes that Christ dwells in the wombs of all creation¹⁸ and “He was entirely in the depths and entirely in the heights; He was entirely in all and entirely in each one”,¹⁹ i.e. “... the heavens and all the creation were filled by Him”.²⁰ Therefore, “Everything in the heavens and earth are Creator’s witnesses. They proclaim His grace”.²¹

According to Ephrem, in the Scripture and natural world God traced His properties²² and the process of God’s self-revelation is through *types and symbols* (His properties) and their main purpose is to link the creation with the divine world and salvation history. What is revealed through types and symbols is hidden power and one can perceive this truth by an eye of faith.²³ Hence, for him, the (invisible) Creator which is hidden as well as

¹² Commentary on Genesis II:4.

¹³ Cf. Hymns on Virginity 8:3.

¹⁴ Cf. Commentary on Diatessaron 19:17.

¹⁵ Cf. Hymns on Faith 9:11.

¹⁶ Cf. Paschal Hymns (Unleavened Bread) 4:24.

¹⁷ Hymns on Nativity 4:154.

¹⁸ Cf. Hymns on Nativity 21:7.

¹⁹ Hymns on Nativity 4:159.

²⁰ Hymns on Nativity 21:6.

²¹ Hymns on Church 48:10.

²² Cf. Hymns on Virginity 20:12.

²³ Cf. Hymns on Church 24:3; 38:2.

revealed in the (visible) creation²⁴ and the creation in turn is filled with pointers to the Creator.²⁵

For him, Fire and Spirit can be found in the Bread and Wine (Holy Eucharist) that consume,²⁶ the womb that which bore him (Mary),²⁷ in the river he was baptized (water of Jordan).²⁸ And he also identifies Jordan as womb of the water which conceived Christ in purity,²⁹ waters of Jordan too gave birth to Christ without intercourse.³⁰ He also equates wheat, olive and grapes with Bread, Wine and Oil, the (three) Medicine(s) of Life,³¹ by which Christ heals humanity. He also identifies Christ as the Bread which issues from the blessed Wheat sheaf³² and Grape of mercy.³³ The olive tree gives beautiful symbols of Christ³⁴ and serves Christ (olive leaves depict symbol of crucifixion, resurrection and victory).³⁵ It is a symbol of God³⁶ and in likeness of Christ, the First-born from the dead³⁷ and thus symbolizes the mystery of Christ.³⁸ He portrays oil as a symbol of Christ,³⁹ the dear friend of Holy Spirit⁴⁰ and wipes out sin,⁴¹ as a forebear of Jesus.⁴² Therefore, types and symbols contain the real presence of that which they symbolize and at the same time *connect the whole creation*. So, says Sebastian Brock,

²⁴ Cf. Hymns on Faith 44:7.

²⁵ Cf. Hymns on Virginité 29:9.

²⁶ Cf. Hymns on Faith 10:17.

²⁷ Cf. Hymns on Faith 10:17.

²⁸ Cf. Hymns on Faith 10:17.

²⁹ Cf. Hymns on Church 36:3.

³⁰ Cf. Hymns on Church 36:4.

³¹ Cf. Hymns on Virginité 37:3.

³² Cf. Hymns on Virginité 31:14.

³³ Cf. Hymns on Virginité 31:13.

³⁴ Cf. Hymns on Virginité 5:16.

³⁵ Cf. Hymns on Virginité 7:13.

³⁶ Cf. Hymns on Virginité 6:11.

³⁷ Cf. Hymns on Virginité 6:3.

³⁸ Cf. Commentary on Diatessaron 21:11.

³⁹ Cf. Hymns on Faith 82:10.

⁴⁰ Cf. Hymns on Virginité 7:6.

⁴¹ Cf. Hymns on Virginité 7:9.

⁴² Cf. Hymns on Virginité 7:12.

Types and symbols, then, are the means by which the interconnectedness of everything can be seen, the means by which meaning can be found infused in everything. It is a dynamic and exciting way of looking at the world – and one that is profoundly ecological.⁴³

The *hidden Creator* is manifested in the creation and therefore creation cannot be spaced out from God's self-revelation. Ephrem's theology portrays that visible realities (creation) have been with invisible meanings (of hidden Creator). According to him, the eye of faith sees *Bread* from the *Wheat* as *Body of Christ* and the *Wine* from the *Grape* as *Blood of Christ*. He is of the view that the power in the *Eucharistic Bread and Wine* and in the anointing *Oil* is inwardly, because it is a divine mystery, even though outwardly they are products of wheat, grape and olive. Therefore, when we examine the *manifest things* (Bread/wheat and Wine/grape), they become hidden things (Christ's body and blood).

The Creator has engraved His hidden power in innumerable creations of the natural world. The three terms employed by Ephrem, namely *hidden things*, *manifest things* and *symbols* act as variables (hidden things as mysteries of God; manifest things as creation; symbols as types and symbols of God) in this context, bring the very concept of *Panentheism*. Thus, Ephrem highlights the concept of sacramental character of the natural world and thereby the model of *Panentheism*, i.e. *the Creator is sacramentally embodied in the creation* (God in creation and creation in God). God is hidden in His revelation whether *far away or near* and God cannot be far away, when creation depends on Him. Therefore, creation expresses the mysterious nature of God's revelation to human beings. Hence, everything in creation is a symbol of the Creator and "... in it (creation) and through it (creation) the Invisible is seen, the Unknowable known, and the Omnipresent and Eternal experienced within the limits of space

⁴³ Brock, *The Luminous Eye*, 56.

and time”.⁴⁴ To be precise, according to Ephrem, creation is *symbolic-full*, because the *visible realities* of the creation not only signify, but also contain the *invisible realities*.

For Gregory of Nyssa (*The Greek East*),⁴⁵ creation is the projection of the Will, Wisdom and Power of God. Creation comes to be from *non-being* (ex nihilo) is maintained in *being*, only by the *Will of the Creator*. The basis of existence of the creation is *His Energy*, *His Will*, and *His Power*. Moreover, nothing in creation can exist without engaging in God’s energies. The Creator’s *ousia* does share its *energeia* with creation and it is from this *energeia* that the creation has the basis of its existence and its possibility of sharing in the good. The *ousia* of God is *fullness of being* and *infinity of goodness*. So, by sharing in the *energeia* of that *ousia*, creation is enabled to participate in both being and goodness. The creation abides in the *being of God* and creation does not have any existence without abiding with the *being of God*. However, God’s immanence in the creation is not by the *ousia*, but by *energeia*. Therefore, creation is not outside of God, the Creator.

God’s virtues are mighty acts – raised Christ from the dead, released the Israelite captives from Egypt etc. So, the humanity should also practice virtues which are mighty and for others to benefit. Therefore, for him, *Image of God* means the participation in the very characteristics of God, to be the perfection of all good. Hence, without moral good, there is no *Image of God*. For him, humanity as Co-worker with the Creator is its essential *nature of being*. By free choice, the humanity is capable to determine its

⁴⁴ den BIESEN, Simple and Bold, 22.

⁴⁵ Gregory of Nyssa (C.E. 335/340-394), bishop of Nyssa (C.E. 372), had emerged as an influential *Ecclesiastical Politician*, prominent *Theologian* on the dogmatic issues, *Exegete* and *Orator*. His philosophy was shaped by *middle Platonism* and early *Neoplatonism*, on the other hand his theology is based on the Alexandrian tradition of Philo and Origen. The *Second Council of Nicea* referred to him as *named by everyone as the Father of Fathers*. Maximus, the Confessor (580-662) praised him as the *Ecumenical Teacher* and Cardinal Danielou, who did a western study of Gregory called him first *the Greatest Mystic among the Greeks*.

essential *nature of being*. He regards this capability of humanity as a vital characteristic of *humanity's being in the Image of God*.⁴⁶ (*This theology of Gregory which is highly anthropo-centric, invites criticism for its glorified position of humanity above the created limit.*)

Nature/(Natural World) and Scripture: Twin Sources of Revelation

Ephrem combines the *Nature*⁴⁷ and *The Scripture* as two witnesses that reveal God and these *two witnesses reach everywhere and can be found at every time*. Moreover, he views that the Creator is engraved in both the Scripture and nature.

In his book Moses
described the creation of the natural world,
so that both **Nature** and **Scripture**
might bear witness to the Creator:
Nature, through humanity's use of it,
Scripture, through his reading of it.
These are the witnesses
which reach everywhere,
they are to be found at all times,
present at every hour,
confuting the unbeliever
who defames the Creator.⁴⁸

Moreover, he views that the Creator is engraved in both the Scripture and nature.

In Scripture, He [God] is **written**;
in nature He is **engraved**.⁴⁹

According to Ephrem, the two harps which proclaim the Creator – *Scripture by words* and *Nature by deeds*.

⁴⁶ Cf. Gregorios, *Cosmic Man*, 197.

⁴⁷ In the writings of Syriac Fathers, the term *nature* denotes either *creation as a whole* or *human nature*. Cf. BROCK, *Humanity*, 149.

⁴⁸ Hymns on Paradise 5:2. (*emphasis mine*)

⁴⁹ Hymns on Virginity 8:3. (*emphasis mine*)

Who has ever seen **two harps**, [former is nature and latter Scripture]
 one silent and one endowed with speech?
 But the silence of that one, its preaching,
 was not heard by rational [creatures].
 For the silent one persuaded by deed,
 but the one endowed with speech [persuaded by sound].
By words and deeds both,
they proclaimed the Lord of all.⁵⁰

Elsewhere, he brings three harps, the Old Testament, New Testament and nature. The two harps (Old Testament and New Testament) are with Christ's right and left hands respectively. According to him, Christ placed the third harp (nature) before Himself as a witness to the other two harps and it is harmonious and completes the other two.

The Word of the Most High came down and put on
 a weak body with hands,
 and He took **two harps** [**Old Testament and New Testament**]
 in His right and left hands.
 The **third** [**nature**] He set up before Himself
 to be a witness to the [other] two,
 for the middle harp taught that their Lord is playing them.⁵¹
 He [Christ] played, and that **third harp**
 Was harmonious and completed the [other] two.⁵²

He also equates these three harps with the three names in which the faithful are baptized (the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit) and he concludes that "... You [faithful] were not to be baptized in one name nor to play on one harp".⁵³ So, both the harps – the Scripture and nature are important like the Holy Trinity in baptism.

⁵⁰ Hymns on Virginité 29:9.

⁵¹ Hymns on Virginité 29:1.

⁵² Hymns on Virginité 29:2.

⁵³ Hymns on Virginité 27:4.

Blessed are you, O church, whose congregation
sings with **three glorious harps**.

Your finger plucks the harp of Moses [Old Testament]
**and [harp] of our Saviour [New Testament] and [harp]
of nature.**

Your faith plays the three [harps],
for three names baptized you.

You were not able to be baptized in one name
nor to play on one harp.⁵⁴

Therefore, the image of the Creator is hidden in these three
harps and from these three harps, appears Christ.⁵⁵ He says that,
“He [Christ] blends their counterpoint lest their hearers be
alienated: signs, symbols and prototypes, so that nature and
Scripture may convince”.⁵⁶ So, for Ephrem, he was baptized in
three names and bestowed with three harps and the three harps
witness and reveal the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
because the three harps (Old Testament, New Testament and
nature) are from the Holy Trinity.

*I [Ephrem], who have believed that they are as one
and also from One by means of One,
I have honoured Moses, I have worshipped the Son
and I have professed that nature is pure.
You have baptized me in the faithful names,
and You have handed me the glorious harps.*⁵⁷

He was handed over three glorious harps – the Old
Testament, the New Testament and nature. So, to use only one
harp or to use the three harps separately is against the Divine
Will. In *Hymns on Faith*, therefore, Ephrem reproves that

⁵⁴ Hymns on Virginity 27:4. (emphasis mine)

⁵⁵ Cf. Hymns on Virginity 28:1.

⁵⁶ Hymns on Virginity 30:1.

⁵⁷ Hymns on Virginity 27:5.

investigators are foolish and sick and they are not capable of understanding the harmony of nature and the Scripture.⁵⁸

The Creator has been revealed by Scripture and nature in two levels. Firstly, it reveals the incarnate Christ and thereby His Father to *eyes of faith* and secondly, indicates the *life of the Church* and its *Liturgy* and thereby reveals ultimate fulfilment of all creation in the economy of salvation. To be precise, for Ephrem, the Scripture and nature provide basic pointers to understand the faith and thereby the divine economy and salvation. Therefore, God indeed revealed in nature too and one must look into both Scripture and nature in order to see God's presence for the sake of humanity's partial understanding and revelation in its full sense, the incarnation.

Ephrem's literature expresses the divine character of the natural world and the potential of every creation in the created world to act as a witness to the Creator. So, according to Ephrem, the natural world is a locus of God's self revealing. Consequently, Scripture and natural world function as twin sources of revelation. Therefore, Ephrem urges humanity "... to understand Scripture and Nature correctly, for these give evidence about God's existence and Majesty".⁵⁹

Praxis Concerns

Creation is a community of beings interconnected with each other and with the Creator. In the God-given Eden Garden, there was true integrity of creation, which includes justice, peace and koinonia. The whole creation is precious in the eye of God, therefore to harm the same is to heap contempt upon God. Therefore, God's ownership urges us to consider not only social justice (just relations between human beings), but also ecological justice (just relations between humanity and other creations). So, we have reached at a juncture where an acknowledgement of the value of creation and inclusion of the natural world as an aspect

⁵⁸ Cf. Hymns on Faith 35:10.

⁵⁹ Shemunkasho, Healing, 331.

of the common good rather than mere object of exploitation, should be realized without any deficiency.

Humanity is created in the image of God, as the combination of corporeal and spiritual worlds. For Mor Gregorios Poulos,⁶⁰ Jesus Christ is the best example of the *true human presence on earth* and in Jesus Christ the purpose of God to manifest Himself through humanity is fulfilled.⁶¹ Therefore, Jesus Christ, the new man is the true *image/eikon* of God. So, it is from Christ alone that

...humanity as a whole receives the grace and power to become assimilated to the Image of God, for He [Christ] alone is the true Image of God.⁶²

However, today humanity dislikes the presence of God, overthrew God and created an own world and started exploiting the whole creation for own vested interests. Gregorios says so confidently,

Man [sic] who exercises lordship over creation without reference to his communion with God and to his contingent existence dependent upon God as Creator, is distorted man, Gregory would say.⁶³

Therefore, *the distorted human lordship over creation* is disfiguring the whole creation and also dehumanizing the humanity. Therefore, says Gregorios,

If all human activities and abilities, including the development of science and technology, were subordinated to and integrated with the quest for justice, freedom, peace,

⁶⁰ Mor Gregorios Paulos is one among the very few distinguished modern philosophers in India and one of the theologians who made his way to bring up a theology for the natural world, and thereby a sustainable eco-system. The source of his inspiration is the Cappadocia Church which flourished in West Asia in the fourth century AD and the spiritual fathers of the Cappadocian Church, Basil the great, Gregory of Nazianzen and Gregory of Nyssa.

⁶¹ Cf. Gregorios, *A Human God*, 49.

⁶² Gregorios, *Cosmic Man*, 231.

⁶³ Gregorios, *Cosmic Man*, 225.

and creative goodness the human rule over the creation could mean a blessing for the whole universe.⁶⁴

In the ongoing scenario, the Church as well the whole society has to be re-structured. Our *baptismal grace* should result in a new economics, new politics and new social education, advises Gregorios. He proposes three ways to bring back *Humanity as Divine Presence in Creation*,⁶⁵ (a) the transformation of persons by separation from evil and cleaving to the good, (b) the transformation of society itself in such a way that the social reality of humanity reflects the *pleroma* of human adherence to the good and (c) the transfiguration that goes on through the work of the Spirit in Person, Society and *pleroma*, (the whole of humanity) the outcome of which will manifest itself only on That Day.

He sums up, “we have to create a new pattern of civilization wherein humanity can grow towards the fullness of its God-given vocation”.⁶⁶ This *new human presence* encounters “... exploitation and injustice in society, fearlessly exposing evil and conscientizing and politicizing people to fight against such evils and to restructure a more just and humane society”.⁶⁷ Albeit human beings are given mastery over creation, creation is also a mystery. So, he advocates for a *reverent-receptive method* from the side of the humanity in order to see the creation as a whole with reverence. This change of attitude needs eyesight and such eyesight should be spiritual in nature. Therefore, for him, “spiritual eyesight can be restored only with the return of moral health, and clearing the fog requires spiritual penetration”.⁶⁸ (Gregorios’ whole idea is built on humanity and its moral responsibility, highly anthropo-centric, however still needs contemporary attention.)

⁶⁴ Gregorios, *The Human Presence*, 71.

⁶⁵ Gregorios, *Cosmic Man*, 233.

⁶⁶ Gregorios, *The Human Presence*, 99.

⁶⁷ Gregorios, *The Human Presence*, 102.

⁶⁸ Gregorios, *The Human Presence*, 7.

Conclusion

One of the primary concerns of theology is to theologize on living conditions and its socially moulded reflections provide life-transforming concepts whereby the humanity could make a paradigm shift from their ego-centeredness to Theo-centeredness and this is a *theological re-cycling*. In this context, theology transforms to *Theology is what theology does*.⁶⁹ All forms of life are integral part of creation, a Theo-centric Theo-ecology. If anthropogenic agencies and their false values are destroying this integrity and thereby peaceful co-existence, then we should curtail its spirit before spreading its venom everywhere.

The Church has a very prominent role to play in today's context, because the Church "... is a community renewed by and in Christ, and is destined to become the ferment of, and instrument for, the renewal of the whole of humanity and creation"⁷⁰, "... not only the source of mysteries, but is a sacrament of the union of Christ with his people"⁷¹ and moreover, according to Origen, "the Cosmos of the Cosmos".⁷² The Church should also uphold the values of Kingdom of God, because *Ecclesia*, the called-out community, is called out to labour for the *Kingdom of God* and its justice values.

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⁶⁹ I have moulded this definition from a famous definition of money which says, *Money is what money does*.

⁷⁰ Aram, Unity and Mission, 62.

⁷¹ Beggiani, Early Syriac Theology, 81.

⁷² Quotation taken from: Aram, For a Church, 89.

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HIV and AIDS: The Causes and Effects

Thomas Abraham¹

Introduction

HIV /AIDS was identified during the early 1980s and it spread the world very quickly and alarmingly. Its impact covers all dimensions of human life: physical, social, cultural, political and economic. This has become a grave public health problem and a threat to sustainable development all over the world. The pandemic was first identified among a group of homosexuals in the United States of America and later, similar cases were also identified among sex workers in other countries. At the beginning it was considered a gay-men disease, but later on discovered to be a deadly disease which has caused an estimated 36 million deaths worldwide, according to a 2017 survey. HIV is a kind of virus infection which gradually attacks the human immune system and makes the person more susceptible to common infections like TB

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as well as other opportunistic infections. It occurs mostly among the productive age between 20 and 45 years and affects the growth and development of human communities. The origin and development of HIV is still a debatable issue and different studies have been conducted in this regard. The social, economic and cultural aspects of HIV and AIDS make the infected more vulnerable today.

HIV and AIDS

Nowadays diseases produced by bacteria and other viruses are mostly treatable and preventable. So far human beings have been able to develop vaccines and effective medicines to control and prevent such epidemics. There is no stigma or discrimination associated with many of those infectious diseases. But as far as HIV and AIDS is concerned, it is totally different from other diseases which human beings face today. The cause and the mode of transmission of HIV is the main reason for stigmatization and discrimination of People Live with HIV and AIDS (PLWHA).

HIV is a peculiar type of retrovirus which attacks the immune system of the human body and makes the body more prone to other infections, leading to AIDS. HIV and AIDS are two separate, although linked, conditions. A person infected with HIV can live a long and active life with proper counselling, adequate nutrition, practicing a healthy life style, following certain precautions, and by taking ARV drugs. A person who has reached the stage of AIDS may have multiple diseases and has a limited time span to live. Thus, we need to discuss HIV infection as a viral infection and AIDS as a situation.

1. HIV-1 and HIV-2

HIV is a retrovirus which attacks the immune system of the body and which causes a number of diseases. “The word virus is derived from the Latin word *virus* meaning ‘poison’ and also ‘slimy material’. In medical circles the word ‘virus’ often overlaps with the word ‘germ’ in a vague and diffuse way to

connote some infectious organisms.”² There are two types of HIV, HIV-1 and HIV-2, and are members of the lentivirus³ family of retroviruses. Both HIV-1 and HIV-2 differ in geographical distribution, biological and molecular characteristics and extent of transmissibility, though both produce AIDS. HIV-1 and HIV-2 are treated with the same medications and can be detected with the same antibody blood test for CD4 monitoring. These viruses store their genetic information as ribonucleic acid (RNA) unlike most viruses. RNA must be converted to deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) by a special enzyme reverse transcriptase.⁴ This is done in the body cells. The AIDS is caused by HIV type 1, an association that was not discovered until 1983-1984.⁵

HIV-1 and HIV-2 are distinguished by genetic and evolutionary differences; they also possess different virologic and epidemiologic characteristics. HIV-1 is comprised of different groups and these groups were identified in different places.

HIV-1 is not just one virus, but comprises four distinct lineages, termed groups M, N, O and P, each of which resulted from an independent cross-species transmission event. Group M was the first to be discovered and represents the pandemic form of HIV-1; it has infected millions of people worldwide and has been found in virtually every country on the globe. Group O was discovered in 1990 and is much less prevalent than group

² Thenpillil, *Socio-Cultural Dimensions of the HIV/AIDS Affected*, 36.

³ *Lentivirus* (*lente-*, Latin for ‘slow’) is a genus of retroviruses that cause chronic and deadly diseases characterized by long incubation periods, in the human and other mammalian species. The best known lentivirus is the HIV, which causes AIDS. Lentiviruses are also hosted in apes, cows, goats, horses, cats, and sheep. Recently, lentiviruses have been found in monkeys, lemurs, Malayan flying lemur (neither a true lemur nor a primate), rabbits, and ferrets. Lentiviruses can deliver a significant amount of viral RNA into the DNA of the host cell and have the unique ability among retroviruses of being able to infect non-dividing cells, so they are one of the most efficient methods of a gene delivery vector. HIV, SIV, FIV, EIAV, and Visna are all examples of lentiviruses.

⁴ Baveja, “The Human Immunodeficiency Virus,” 18.

⁵ Henny, “The Virus, Its Epidemiology, and the Natural History of Infection,” 3.

M. It represents less than 1% of global HIV-1 infections, and is largely restricted to Cameroon, Gabon and neighbouring countries. Group N was identified in 1998 and is even less prevalent than group O; so far, only 13 cases of group N infection have been documented, all in individuals from Cameroon. Finally group P was discovered in 2009 in a Cameroonian woman living in France. Despite extensive screening, group P has thus far only been identified in one other person, also from Cameroon. Although members of all of these groups are capable of causing CD4⁺ T – cell depletion and AIDS, they obviously differ vastly in their distribution within the human population.⁶

“HIV-1 is a highly variable virus which mutates very readily. So there are many different strains of HIV-1. These strains can be classified to two groups, group M and group O. Within group M there are currently known to be at least ten genetically distinct subtypes of HIV-1. These are subtypes A to J. In addition, group O contains another distinct group of very heterogeneous viruses.”⁷

Ever since HIV-1 was first discovered, the reasons for its sudden emergence, epidemic spread, and unique pathogenicity have been a subject of intense study. A first clue came in 1986 when a morphologically similar but antigenically distinct virus was found to cause AIDS in patients in Western Africa. Curiously, this new virus, termed human immunodeficiency virus type-2 (HIV-2), was only distantly related to HIV- 1, but was closely related to a simian virus that caused immunodeficiency in captive macaques. Soon thereafter, additional viruses, collectively termed Simian Immunodeficiency Viruses (SIVs) with a suffix to denote their species of origin, were found in various different

⁶ Sharp and Hahn, “Origins of AIDS and the AIDS Pandemic,” 9-10.

⁷ Mehta and Sodhi, *Understanding AIDS: Myths, Efforts and Achievements*, 15.

primates from sub-Saharan Africa, including African green monkeys, sooty mangabeys, mandrills, chimpanzees, and others.⁸

It was identified that HIV-2 is more difficult to transmit and is slower acting and less virulent than HIV-1. Initially HIV-2 was found in Western Africa with the greatest number of infections outside this area in Angola, Mozambique, France and Portugal.⁹ According to Weeks and Alcamo,

People infected with HIV-2 are subject to the same opportunistic infections as those infected with HIV-1, and although they progress to AIDS more slowly, people infected with HIV-2 do get AIDS. Furthermore, HIV-1 and HIV-2 are treated with the same medications and can be detected with the same antibody blood test for CD4 monitoring; however, the efficacy of the medications against HIV-2 is less than that for HIV-1, and some HIV-2 infections do not show cross-reactivity with the HIV-1 anti-CD4 antibody. A specific antibody test for HIV-2 has been developed. The differences between HIV -1 and HIV-2 are as noted before; HIV-2 weakens the immune system more slowly than HIV-1. When compared with HIV-1 infected individuals, patients with HIV-2 are less infectious early in the course of the disease, yet more infectious later in the course of disease. These differences are likely due to the entry of HIV-2 into the human population through a different and less common route, thus its discovery in human blood after HIV-1.¹⁰

Viral loads tend to be lower in HIV-2 than HIV-1 infected individuals, which may explain the lower transmission rates of HIV-2 and the near complete absence of mother-to-infant transmissions. In fact, most individuals infected with HIV-2 do not progress to AIDS, although those who do show clinical

⁸ Sharp and Hahn, "Origins of AIDS and the AIDS Pandemic," 2.

⁹ Barnett and Whiteside, *AIDS in the Twenty-First Century: Disease and Globalisation*, 28.

¹⁰ Weeks and Alcamo, *AIDS: The Biological Basis*, 12-13.

symptoms indistinguishable from HIV-1. Thus, it is clear that the natural history of HIV-2 infection differs considerably from that of HIV-1, which is not surprising given that HIV-2 is derived from a very different primate lentivirus.¹¹

2. AIDS

The Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report produced by the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta, USA, on 5 June 1981, first publicly reported about AIDS. It was stated that doctors had recorded unexpected clusters of previously extremely rare diseases such as *Pneumocystis carinii*, a type of pneumonia, and Kaposi's sarcoma, a normally slow-growing tumour which had manifested in exceptionally serious forms in a narrowly defined risk group – young homosexual men. Within a year cases were being seen among the partners and the infants of those infected.¹² In July 1982, CDC produced a working definition for AIDS based on clinical signs. According to them, "AIDS describes the disease accurately: people acquire the condition; it results in a deficiency within the immune system; and it is a syndrome not a single disease."¹³ AIDS is the final stage of HIV infection and is characterised by a life threatening disease. The first AIDS cases were reported among homosexual men. As a result in the beginning the disease was called Gay-Related Immune Deficiency Syndrome (GRID). Subsequently similar cases were reported among other groups, such as recipients of blood transfusions, among IDUs and infants born to mothers who are infected. It was clear that this was not a 'gay disease' rather it was an 'AIDS'.¹⁴ To understand this more we need to explore into the medical explanation for the word AIDS,

The 'A' stands for Acquired. This means that the virus is not spread through casual or inadvertent contact like flu or

¹¹ Sharp and Hahn, *Origins of AIDS and the AIDS Pandemic*, 11.

¹² Whiteside, *HIV/AIDS A Very Short Introduction*, 1.

¹³ Whiteside, *HIV/AIDS A Very Short Introduction*, 2.

¹⁴ Barnett and Whiteside, *AIDS in the Twenty-First Century: Disease and Globalisation*, 28.

chickenpox. In order to be infected, a person has to do something (or have something done to him/her) which exposes him/her to the virus.

I' and 'D' stand for Immunodeficiency. The virus attacks a person's immune system and makes it less capable of fighting infections. Thus, the immune system becomes deficient.

'S' is for syndrome. AIDS is not one disease but rather presents itself as a number of diseases that come about as the immune system fails. Hence, it is regarded as a syndrome.¹⁵

When a person reaches the stage of AIDS, his/her immune system gets collapsed and faces many life-threatening diseases. In this situation the patient usually suffer from herpes, TB and Pneumonia. A type of cancer affecting the skin called Kaposi's Sarcoma is also common in many patients and they also become thin and grossly fatigued. When it comes to the terminal stage, the patient does not respond to the ART and have more serious infection.¹⁶ This is a fatal stage and the patient has limited time span to live. The lifespan of the patient varies from place to place and person to person. It fully depends on the healthy life atmosphere of the patient because regular medication, exercise, and care can extend life for the patient. In India it is reported that most patients diagnosed with full-blown AIDS die within less than six months of the diagnosis. In exceptional cases, some have survived for one to two years.¹⁷ The average time that passes from HIV infection until AIDS has been a subject of controversy for many years. Earlier, the incubation period for AIDS was believed to be about 7 years. But recent studies have proved that it could average approximately 10 years, with some even living for 12 years without developing symptoms. Sometimes AIDS can

¹⁵ Barnett and Whiteside, *AIDS in the Twenty-First Century: Disease and Globalisation*, 28.

¹⁶ Singh et al., *HIV/AIDS: Issues and Strategies*, 16-17.

¹⁷ Singh et al., *HIV/AIDS: Issues and Strategies*, 17.

develop in as little as six months too. This would depend largely on the lifestyle of the individual.¹⁸

2.1 Origin and Development

The sudden emergence of AIDS in early 1980s forced researchers to trace the origin of this newly discovered deadly human disease. In due course there were many findings and theories developed by medical science. In 1988 Sabatier had given three explanations from different studies about the origin of the HIV virus. The first explanation is that it may originate from an old human disease unknown to science for a long time. The second assumption is that it has originated from species other than human beings like apes, monkeys. The third explanation is that it may have accidentally originated in laboratories while conducting experiments.¹⁹ The first theory says that the virus was evident in a small and isolated group, which had acquired immunity to it, so it had hardly caused death. When it spread outside this community, and reached people who had no such immunity, it became a deadly disease. There were a few isolated ethnic communities left in the world, among them was the one found in central Africa. Since, in the beginning AIDS cases were also reported in Central Africa, much assumption was focused on the possibility of the spread of the virus from the isolated community.²⁰

Since the virus was first detected among a group of homosexuals, it was initially called gay-related immunodeficiency. But later it was discovered to be an infectious agent which transmits through contaminated body fluids. Though there are many theories about the origin and development of HIV the most popular among them was the cross species theory. This theory tries to establish that the virus already existed in animals and then transmitted to human beings through different means. There are other examples of diseases crossing over from animal to

¹⁸ Weeks and Alcamo, *AIDS: The Biological Basis*, 101-102.

¹⁹ Sabatier, *Blaming Others: Prejudice, Race and Worldwide AIDS*, cited in Sakthi, *Plight of HIV Infected Women: Plan of Action for Prevention and Control*, 5.

²⁰ Singh, et al., *HIV/AIDS: Issues and Strategies*, 7.

human being, and since a rather similar virus to HIV has been found in species of monkey, this possibility has received considerable attention.²¹ Medical science mostly upholds this position and opines that,

More than thirty different nonhuman primates are natural hosts to Simian Immunodeficiency Virus (SIV). SIV co-evolved with these species and appears not to cause immunodeficiency or AIDS. Strains of SIV identified in the Pan Troglodytes subspecies of chimpanzees (SIVcpzPtt) and sooty mangabey (SIVsm) are the progenitors of HIV-1 and HIV-2, respectively. In parts of Africa, chimpanzees are hunted and butchered for food, and sooty mangabeys are eaten or kept as pets. Exposure to infected primate blood is the proposed original route of transmission of HIV to humans. SIV strains have been identified in gorilla populations (SIVgor) and are closely related to HIV-1 group O. Gorillas live in more remote areas and historically have less contact with humans. SIVgor is a descendant of SIVcpz, but it is unclear how SIVgor and HIV-1 group O relate – whether the virus was transmitted from chimpanzees to gorilla and then subsequently to humans, or from chimpanzees to humans and gorillas at approximately the same time.²²

Though most of the scientists accept the cross species theory, the time and correct ways of transmission is still uncertain.

Scientists now generally agree that a strain of SIV made the crossing from chimpanzees to humans and later evolved to the current strains of HIV. Exactly when the crossing occurred is uncertain, but an estimate appears to be provided by analysis of the HIV obtained from the oldest

²¹ Singh, et al., *HIV/AIDS: Issues and Strategies*, 7.

²² Santiago et al., *Simian Immunodeficiency Virus Infection in Free-ranging Sooty Mangabeys from the Tai-Forest*, cited in Willig et al., “Human Immunodeficiency Virus,” 34.

documented case of infection. The analysis shows that the passage to humans probably occurred during the late 1940s or early 1950s.²³

There was an idea that since HIV was considered as a STDs, the original transmission from monkey to human occurred through sexual relationship. Though this idea was propagated by some western publications, medical researchers objected to this argument. Many Africans have found this suggestion insulting, and have reacted strongly against the whole simian origins theory. But today most of the researchers accept that the transmission occurred while hunting the animals. In this scenario, SIVcpz was transferred to humans as a result of chimps being killed and eaten, or their blood getting into cuts or wounds on the hunter. Generally human body tried to resist SIV, but in certain times it adapted itself within its new human host and became HIV-1.²⁴

In February 1999 it was announced that a group of researchers from the University of Alabama had studied frozen tissue from a chimpanzee and found that the simian virus it carried SIVcpz was almost identical to HIV-1. The chimpanzee came from a sub-group of chimpanzees known as Pan Troglodytes Troglodytes, which were once common in West-Central Africa. However, it is not necessarily clear that these chimpanzees are the original reservoir for HIV-1 because chimpanzees are only rarely infected with SIVcpz. It is therefore possible that both chimpanzees and humans have been infected from a third, as yet unidentified, primate species.²⁵

Some other slightly different and controversial theories have emerged in the beginning of 1990s that, HIV was transferred through medical intervention. This theory articulates that HIV was originated in the laboratories where polio vaccine were made

²³ Weeks and Alcamo, *AIDS: The Biological Basis*, 17.

²⁴ Singh et al., *HIV/AIDS: Issues and Strategies*, 8-9.

²⁵ Gao et al., "Origin of HIV-1 in the Chimpanzee Pan Troglodytes Troglodytes Nature," cited in Mehta and Sodhi, *Understanding AIDS: Myths, Efforts And Achievements*, 7.

and tested. The facts of this theory were published in 1992 by 'Rolling Stone' magazine that Hilary Koprovski's oral polio vaccine was a possible source of HIV infection. It said,

In the late 1950s, several groups of researchers were developing vaccines against polio, which at the time was still epidemic worldwide. One of these vaccines, developed by Hilary Koprowski, MD (1916-2013), was used in trials in Africa, after first being tested in the United States. The vaccine virus was grown in tissue cultures taken from macaque monkeys before being administered to about a million people in Burundi, Rwanda, and what is now the Democratic Republic of Congo.²⁶

Hilary was trying to develop polio virus in the kidney cells of African green monkeys. Towards the end of the investigation and testing, AIDS virus was developed without the notice of the scientists. The report in the 'Rolling stone' becomes more convincing after the discovery that African green monkeys are carriers of AIDS virus.²⁷ But the magazine issued a clarification statement in December 1993 that,

The editors of *Rolling Stone* wish to clarify that they never intended to suggest in the article that there is any scientific proof, nor do they know of any scientific proof, that Dr. Koprowski, an illustrious scientist, was in fact responsible for introducing AIDS to the human population or that he is the father of AIDS... Dr. Koprowski's pioneering work in developing polio vaccines has helped spare suffering and death to hundreds of thousands of potential victims of paralytic poliomyelitis and is perhaps one of his greatest contributions in a lifetime of high and widely recognized achievements.²⁸

²⁶ "Debunked: The Polio Vaccine and HIV Link," <http://www.historyofvaccines.org/content/articles/debunked-polio-vaccine-and-hiv-link>.

²⁷ Thenpillil, *Socio-Cultural Dimensions of the HIV/AIDS Affected*, 43.

²⁸ "Debunked: The Polio Vaccine and HIV Link."

This clarification was not satisfactory for many researchers and a few of them took it up for further investigation. Journalist Edward Hooper wrote a book called *The River: A Journey to the Source of HIV and AIDS* in 1999. In this Hooper argued that the animal cells used to culture the vaccine virus were kidney cells from chimpanzees local to where the vaccine was used, and that those chimpanzees had been infected with Simian Immunodeficiency Virus.²⁹ He continues that, “a vaccine made in such a cell culture would lead to human infection with HIV.”³⁰ Here a simple question being raised is, if AIDS virus originated in the 1950s why did it not spread immediately after its origin? Many scientists have objected Hooper’s theory and argued that local chimps were not infected with a strain of SIVcmz that is closely linked to HIV. In February 2000 the Wistar Institute of Philadelphia, one of the original manufactures of oral polio vaccine, announced that,

It had discovered in its stores a phial of polio vaccine that had been used as part of the programme. The vaccine was subsequently analysed, and in April 2001 it was announced that no trace had been found of either HIV or chimpanzee SIV. A second analysis confirmed that only macaque monkey kidney cells, which cannot be infected with SIV or HIV, were used to make polio vaccine.³¹

Many other studies have been done to argue against Hooper’s findings. In Luc Montagnier’s book, *Virus*, he states: “the origin of the epidemic remains a mystery, and the virus seems older than the epidemic” and “it is important to distinguish between the origins of the virus and that of the (AIDS) epidemic.”³²

²⁹ “Debunked: The Polio Vaccine and HIV Link.”

³⁰ “Debunked: The Polio Vaccine and HIV Link.”

³¹ Singh et al., *HIV/AIDS: Issues and Strategies*, 10.

³² Cantwell, “Debunking the out of Africa Origin of HIV and AIDS: The Greatest Conspiracy Story Ever Told,” <http://www.rense.com/general61/outof.htm>.

The colonialism or Heart of Darkness theory is another theory proposed by Jim Moore, an American specialist in primate behaviour, in 2000. He published his findings in the journal “AIDS Research and Human Retroviruses.” According to this theory,

During the late 19th and early 20th century, much of Africa, including French Equatorial Africa and the Belgian Congo, were ruled by colonial forces. The labour camps were overcrowded, sanitation was poor, and the physical demands on the inmates were extreme, all of which would have weakened the immune system of the camp inmates, paving the way for SIV to become HIV. Practices such as the use of unsterile needles to inoculate labourers against diseases such as smallpox and employing prostitutes to keep the workers happy, would have created numerous opportunities for transmission.³³

In order to confirm his theory Moore argues that the labour camps were set around the time that HIV was first believed to have passed into humans, that is, the early part of the 20th century.

Some others say that HIV is conspiracy theory. A good number of African Americans believe that HIV was created as part of a biological warfare programme in order to wipe out large numbers of black and homosexual people from the world. Some people believe that the virus was spread through the smallpox vaccination programme or, alternatively, to gay men through hepatitis B vaccine trials.³⁴ The debate about the origin and development of HIV continues even now. However, in March 2007 at the 14th conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections in Los Angeles, a group of International scientists presented data based on complex genetic analysis of 122 early samples of HIV-1, group M, subtype B, showing that the strain

³³ Harindra, *HIV: Past, Present and Future*, <http://medind.nic.in/ibo/t08/i1/ibot08i1p1.pdf>.

³⁴ Singh et al., *HIV/AIDS: Issues and Strategies*, 11.

had probably been brought to Haiti from Africa by a single person in around 1966. Genetic analysis showed that the virus had spread slowly from person to person on the island before being transported to the U.S., probably by a single individual, at some point between 1969 and 1972. From this point on, the epidemic grew rapidly, with transmission occurring within and between the U.S. and Haiti and also internationally.³⁵ This was not a new discovery; rather, the epidemic in Haiti was first reported in the early 1980's and believed that it was responsible for the AIDS epidemic in the U.S. This claim, without any solid evidence, fuelled pre-existing racism in the U.S. and many Haitian's lost their jobs and some were evicted from their homes at that time. The emotionally-charged culture of blame and prejudice that surrounded HIV and AIDS in the early years meant that it soon became politically difficult to present epidemiological findings in a neutral and objective way. Thus for many years the link between Haiti and the origin of the epidemic was set aside and again it came to the public during 2007.³⁶

The debate about the origin of HIV has not been helpful for the real solution of the problem; rather, it creates diverted attention from the task of prevention. Kenneth Kaunda, the former President of Zambia, comments that, "it is not important to know where it came from, but rather where it is going."³⁷

2.2 Modes of HIV Transmission

HIV may be found in the cells, bodily fluids and secretions of infected persons and the presence and the transmission risk of the virus in the body parts vary from person to person. HIV enters the body through open cuts or sores in the skin, through mucous membranes or through direct injection. The main means of transmitting HIV is through sexual contact with the HIV infected person. The other ways are: transfusion of infected blood and

³⁵ Harindra, *HIV: Past, Present and Future*.

³⁶ Singh et al., *HIV/AIDS: Issues and Strategies*, 6.

³⁷ Thenpillil, *Socio-Cultural Dimensions of the HIV/AIDS Affected*, 45.

blood products, sharing of infected needles and syringes, and from infected mother to child. The transmission routes are mostly associated with individual behaviour. AIDS is a threat to every sexually active person who has not been in a mutually monogamous partnership. All over the world HIV infection spreads mainly through sexual contact.³⁸ Lalthanmawia further discusses the risk of HIV being transmitted through several sexual acts.

Untreated STDs increases the risk of acquisition and transmission of HIV by 7-10 folds. Any ulcer, injury or damage to the skin of the penis or mucous lining of the vagina and cervix increases the risk of getting HIV infection. Anal sex has a higher risk of transmitting HIV infection as compared to vaginal sex. Moreover, oral sex can transmit HIV infection if there is contact with genital fluids and blood through cuts or wounds in the mouth, bleeding gums, etc.³⁹

HIV is carried in semen, vaginal fluids, cervical secretions as well as in blood. Any kind of exchange of these fluids can result in transmission of the virus. Thus, any unprotected sex with an infected partner can place a person at risk of infection.

HIV is also transmitted through contaminated blood and blood products. This mainly occurs through the sharing of contaminated needles and syringes; for example, when same needle is used for skin piercing, such as piercing ears and nose, tattooing, circumcision, etc., for a large number of people in a short time. Infected blood transfusion and contaminated donated organs are also reasons for HIV infection. Another possible way of HIV infection is from mother to child through pregnancy and birth. This is known as peri-natal transmission. The chances are higher during childbirth, though it may also happen during

³⁸ Lalthanmawia, "HIV and AIDS: A Medical Problem," 3-4.

³⁹ Lalthanmawia, "HIV and AIDS: A Medical Problem," 5.

pregnancy or breastfeeding.⁴⁰ Peri-natal transmission is very common all over the world and the number is increasing day by day. This is the major cause for infection among infants. Lalthanmawia states, “the HIV infected mother can pass the virus to her baby in the womb itself or during pregnancy, labour, delivery or after birth through breastfeeding. The risk of transmission from mother to child is around 15-30% if the mother does not breast feed the child. But it can rise as high as 30-45% with prolonged breast feeding.”⁴¹ The infected mother may perhaps completely avoid breastfeeding so that the MTCT of HIV can be prevented.

Since the principal route of transmission of HIV is sexual, the epidemic spreads classically in three waves.

In the first wave, HIV infection is seen amongst sex workers or IDU which are also called as ‘core transmitters or core groups’. In its second wave, HIV infection reaches the clients of sex workers or partners of IDU. When evidences suggest affection of spouses and children of the clients of the sex workers, the HIV epidemic is understood to have reached its third wave.⁴²

Here the infection is transmitted from the core groups to the low risk population i.e., the children and the spouses, through the bridge population (clients of sex workers, STD patients, partners of drug users).⁴³ Bridge population can be defined as those men and women who have sex with both high risk and low risk partners. Bridging risk behaviour involves transmission of HIV across the sub-populations having different risk behaviours. Studies have suggested that men having sex with both commercial and non-commercial sex partners play a significant

⁴⁰ Lalthanmawia, “HIV and AIDS: A Medical Problem,” 6.

⁴¹ Khurana, *The Awesome Challenge of AIDS*, cited in Sakthi, *Plight of HIV Infected Women: Plan of Action for Prevention and Control*, 9-10.

⁴² Joshi, “Global and National Overview of HIV/AIDS Epidemic,” 65.

⁴³ Joshi, “Global and National Overview of HIV/AIDS Epidemic,” 64-65.

role in transmission of HIV.⁴⁴ This bridge population transmits the virus from the HRG to the low risk group. Thus, the low risk population like children and housewives are most vulnerable to HIV and AIDS. NACO analysis shows that,

Sex work continues to act as the most important source of HIV infection in India due to the large size of clients who get infected from sex workers. These men, then, transmit the infection to their wives affecting several low risk women in the society. Long-distance Truckers and Single Male Migrants constitute a significant proportion of clients of sex workers.⁴⁵

In India studies show that HIV transmission is mainly through heterosexual relationships. According to NACO analysis, “while heterosexual mode of HIV transmission accounts for 88.2% of HIV positive cases detected, MTCT accounts for 5.0%, Infected Syringe and Needle 1.7%, Homosexual 1.5% and contaminated blood and blood products account for 1.0% of HIV infections detected during 2011-12.”⁴⁶ In India it is very clear that HIV infection is mostly driven by groups with high risk behaviours. Commercial sex trade is thriving in India and their number in Mumbai exceeds more than one lakh. Extra and premarital sexual relationships are more common among men than women in India because of the power and freedom enjoyed by men in a patriarchal society.⁴⁷ As a result, “more than 75% of HIV infections in our country are caused by multi-partner heterosexual behaviour.”⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Joshi, “Global and National Overview of HIV/AIDS Epidemic,” 69.

⁴⁵ “Annual Report of the Department of AIDS Control: Ministry of Health and Family Welfare” http://www.aidsdatahub.org/sites/default/files/documents/NACO_Annual_Report_2011_12.pdf.

⁴⁶ “Annual Report of the Department of AIDS Control: Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.”

⁴⁷ Thenpillil, *Socio-Cultural Dimensions of the HIV/AIDS Affected*, 60.

⁴⁸ Tripathy, “HIV/AIDS Epidemic in India,” cited in Thenpillil, *Socio-Cultural Dimensions of the HIV/AIDS Affected*, 60.

Transmission of HIV among homosexuals is also a notable factor. Homosexuals are a high risk group in HIV infection because of their high risk sexual behaviours like anal and oral sex. “Anal sex involves highest risk because the infected semen can be deposited in the anus and rectum of the recipient partner. Both the partners are at risk but the receptive partner is probably at greater risk of contracting the virus because of the high frequency of the trauma to the mucosal lining of the rectum during rectal intercourse.”⁴⁹

Thus, the transmission of HIV is controllable and easily preventable through individual behaviour. Moreover the awareness about the chances of transmission will really help the healthcare workers and the immediate family members of the infected one to protect themselves as well as provide adequate care and support to those who are infected.

2.3 Prevention and Treatment

HIV can be silent and dormant for many years and starts to reveal its nature very slowly. In most of the cases when the person is diagnosed with HIV infection he/she may have reached the stage of AIDS. The period of HIV infection to sickness is, on an average, about eight to ten years. This can be achieved and even extended with basic lifestyle changes; a person who eats nutritious food regularly, avoids smoking and consumption of drugs and alcohol, and does regular exercise, will live a longer and healthier life. Immune system boosters can help a person to avoid possible infections and prolong life. So far medical science has not yet been able to develop a medicine to cure HIV infection. But the ART can be used to boost immunity against the opportunistic infections and to prolong life.

Intensive research about possible treatment could help developed countries reduce the mortality rate of PLWHA. But no antiviral drugs are currently available which can permanently cure

⁴⁹ Thenpillil, *Socio-Cultural Dimensions of the HIV/AIDS Affected*, 73.

a person with HIV infection. This is mainly because of two reasons.

The first is that HIV hides in the body cells it infects. To kill it, a drug will also probably kill these cells, damaging the patient's immune system even more. The second is that the virus can infect the brain cells, where most antiviral drugs cannot follow because they are filtered out by the blood brain barrier. It is extremely difficult to design a drug that will enter the brain and kill the HIV without damaging the brain itself.⁵⁰

So far there is no medicine available for the complete cure of HIV infection. Thus treatment to PLWHA can be focused mainly on providing care, support and medical assistance for the treatment and prevention of the opportunistic infections. This can be provided in three ways.

The first is when they are infected, but CD4 cell counts are high. At this point, the emphasis is on 'positive living' - staying healthy, eating the correct food and so on. The second stage is when the CD4 cell count begins to drop. At this stage, prophylactic treatment to prevent TB and other common infections commences. The third stage is the use of anti-retroviral drugs to fight HIV directly.⁵¹

These different levels of treatment of HIV infection can be classified as supportive, preventive and therapeutic. Supportive measures include change in lifestyle, taking nutritious and balanced diet, balancing exercise and rest, managing stress and prevention of repeated HIV and other infections. Mental support is very important for improving the overall quality of life of an infected person. Preventive measures include taking medicines to prevent bacterial, fungal, viral or parasitic infections. Opportunistic infections occur repeatedly and therefore adequate

⁵⁰ Thenpillil, *Socio-Cultural Dimensions of the HIV/AIDS Affected*, 51.

⁵¹ Barnett and Whiteside, *AIDS in the Twenty-First Century: Disease and Globalisation*, 42.

preventive medical support needs to be provided. Therapeutic measures include treatment of specific opportunistic infections and treatment of HIV infection.⁵²

A World Health Organisation (WHO)-led consultation in Durban in 2005 confirmed that HIV-infected people have greater calorific needs than those uninfected. While asymptomatic HIV-infected adults and children require 10% more energy from their diet, symptomatic adults need at least 20 to 30% more energy and children require 50 to 100% more.⁵³ Here the complicating factor is that the infected person often has loss of appetite, inability to eat due to infections of the mouth and throat, and failure to properly digest food. In addition to this, the loss of work and income that results due to the sickness may lead to the unavailability of the food to the household.⁵⁴

ART drugs reduce viral activity, allow the immune system to recover, and prolong and improve quality of life. As an illustration of their effectiveness, in the USA by 1991, HIV was the leading cause of death among adults aged 25 to 44, and rates reached close to 40 deaths per 1,00,000 by 1995. The introduction of ART in 1996 meant mortality plummeted, so that by 2000, it had fallen to about 10 per 1,00,000. Patients who had resigned themselves to death, cashed in life insurance policies, and given up employment found themselves granted a new lease of life - so dramatic it became known as the 'Lazarus syndrome.'⁵⁵ The goals of treating HIV with anti-retroviral medicines are to (a) reduce HIV related illness and prolong life, (b) improve the quality of life, (c) restore as much as possible, and then maintain the body's immunity, and (d) suppress the HIV level as much as possible.⁵⁶

On June 27th, 2014 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention organised the 20th annual observance of National HIV

⁵² Lalthanmawia, "HIV and AIDS: A Medical Problem," 13.

⁵³ Whiteside, *HIV/AIDS: A Very Short Introduction*, 31

⁵⁴ Whiteside, *HIV/AIDS: A Very Short Introduction*, 31

⁵⁵ Whiteside, *HIV/AIDS: A Very Short Introduction*, 31

⁵⁶ Lalthanmawia, "HIV and AIDS: A Medical Problem," 13.

Testing Day and recommended testing as a primary step to detect, treat and prevent HIV infection. According to them, “HIV testing is entering a new era in the United States because of Food and Drug Administration approval of 1) combination tests that detect both HIV antigen and antibody, and 2) tests that accurately differentiate HIV-1 from HIV-2 antibodies.”⁵⁷ This test would help to detect acute HIV infections that would be missed by antibody tests alone and can accelerate entry of patients into care because of reduced turnaround time for test results. They succeeded in this mission in an urban health centre in New York and an emergency department in New Orleans where many patients were screened for HIV and identified with previously undiagnosed HIV infections.⁵⁸

Though HIV is an incurable virus, a person infected with HIV can live a long and active life with proper counselling, adequate nutrition, practicing a healthy life style, following certain precautions, and by taking ARV drugs. Early detection can help the patients follow the above treatment method to lead a long and healthy life. More than 20 approved ARV drugs are available now. The ART is a combination of three or more ARV potent drugs, which is being given to the persons with advanced stages of AIDS. Other suboptimal courses of therapy are known as monotherapy or dual therapy.⁵⁹ Although these drugs do not cure HIV infection, they suppress the multiplication of the virus and reduce the number of opportunistic infections, thereby improving the quality of life and prolonging life span. Apart from providing free treatment, the ART centres also provide counselling to the infected persons. Treatment, care and support can help people adhere to treatment and address any problems they may have with their treatment routine.

⁵⁷ “National HIV Testing Day and New Testing Recommendations,” 537.

⁵⁸ “National HIV Testing Day and New Testing Recommendations,” 537.

⁵⁹ “UNAIDS Terminology Guideline,” http://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media_asset/JC2118_terminology-guidelines_en_0.pdf.

It is estimated that a majority of HIV transmission occurred through risky sexual behaviour. Thus, education focused at adopting safer sexual behaviour is very much needed now. According to Cimperman, “HIV/AIDS education for prevention continues to be an almost universal high priority, and the area of sex and sexuality is a critical component of such programs.”⁶⁰

Behavioural change is the most important and fundamental aspect to control the transmission of HIV. The Church and society must give emphasis on practicing abstinence before marriage and fidelity within marriage. In addition developing a value based sex education would also help to reduce the spread of this pandemic. The Commission for Health of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of India, held in 2005, suggested that “the ideal preventive measure with regard to sexual transmission of HIV is education in the values of life, love and sexuality. A proper appreciation of these values will enable men and women to attain full personal fulfillment through effective maturity and proper use of sexuality; and married couples will remain faithful to each other.”⁶¹

Conclusion

HIV and AIDS has gone beyond the medical dimension and has become a complex phenomenon all over the world. Within a short period of time HIV and AIDS has become a dangerous disease affecting millions of men, women and children around the globe. AIDS is caused when a peculiar type of HIV badly affects the immune system of the human body and makes the body more prone to multiple infections. Though the situation of AIDS was earlier thought to occur because of a single virus called HIV, now it is being proved that there are two kinds of HIV and, among them, many subtypes too. The varied nature of AIDS and the impact it has on the human immune system, reveals the complexity of implementing a prevention and treatment method.

⁶⁰ Cimperman, *When God’s People Have HIV/AIDS: An Approach to Ethics*, 9.

⁶¹ *Commitment to Compassion and Care: HIV/AIDS Policy of the Catholic Church in India*, 16.

So far medically there is no complete cure for the diseases but there are ART and other socially supportive measures for prolonging the life of the patient. Developed countries have succeeded in their mission to control and prevent the disease and also to help infected people lead healthy and dignified lives. More than the medical side of the diseases the human approach to HIV and AIDS is the most crucial issue to address. Most developing countries are unable to handle the situation and, as a result, their number of infected cases has increased uncontrollably.

Though there are many theories about the origin and development of HIV, none of them have helped to provide a solution to the real problem; rather, it makes the situation more contentious. Here, the question of origin and development of the virus is not important; rather, the transmission and prevention of the virus is important. Mostly HIV and AIDS is a result of human behaviour and it destroys human rights and dignity. It affects people from all walks of life. Earlier, it was believed that only a few categories of people like high risk groups would get this infection. Now it has been proved that everyone is under the threat of HIV and AIDS and behavioural change is the possible way to prevent the transmission of HIV.

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Religion in the Market Place: The Changing Environment of Women in the Church

Jerry Kurian¹

*To go to places people avoid
To understand the struggles faced
To mitigate the sufferings traced
To ensure justice with proper haste²*

The church is a body of women and men symbolizing the sacred body of Christ in the world. This is an equal body which reflects the equal body of Christ which is broken for all. In Christ there is no Jew or Greek, man or woman. But this was not anti-woman as is perceived now. The early church had both women and men evangelists, deacons and deaconesses and presbyters and presbyteress. What this means is that the early church was not an anti-women space but rather a space which had lots to offer for women.

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²<http://jerryachensworld.blogspot.in/2008/09/lord-in-your-mercyhear-our-prayers.html>

What does it mean to be spiritual over and against being religious? Religiousness is association with a religion as institution whereas spirituality is the feeling of being in relationship with God. One need not be associated with religion to be spiritual. Spirituality because of this need not depend and thereby feed on religion as an institution or church. Spirituality can pick up from various spheres and religion becomes one of those spheres. "Spirituality refers to an outlook on life and personal relationship with God, whereas religion refers to church doctrines."³

In today's world one other sphere of importance is the media simply because of its size, power and reach. It has an impact on the lives of people in myriads of ways and this cannot be ignored. But for this we need to look at various forms of the media. Print media, audio visual media and internet based media are three forms we can give our attention to.

A religious place with a religious leader has only two or three hours to talk to and interact with people who come to the place. On the other hand, the media has almost all the remaining time to interact and influence people. The framework of an individual and his/her thought process will also determine the spiritual life of a person. So we are lead into questioning ourselves as to whether we are indeed moulding the lives of our church members. This being the case one cannot argue that the church has nothing to do with politics, society and the media. The media becomes an important element in meaning making in the lives of people. Meaning making⁴ leads to spiritual growth and the media is taking the lead in influencing the lives of people and running a huge educational enterprise whereas the church (or any

³ Nancy Boyd-Franklin and Tonya Walker Lockwood, *Spirituality and Religion, Implications for Psychotherapy with African American Families in Spiritual Resources in Family Therapy*, Froma Walsh (ed), New York: Guilford Press, 2009, 141.

⁴ Encoding and decoding as brought out by Stuart Hall. He talked about the dominant reading, negotiated reading and oppositional reading.

religious institution) is running a tutorial institution with time bound coaching classes!

Our views and thoughts are based on what we see and hear in the media. Religion in the official sense then becomes a small part of the lives of people. We can prove this hypothesis by looking at how less influence the church has on its people during elections and in other important stands the church has to take.

So spirituality is definitely influenced by the media. Religious media and a Christian presence in the media is not evangelization of the media but to say that without being a part of the media we are not fulfilling our religious call to reach out to the people both inside and outside the church. The earlier notion that we have to keep ourselves far away from the media should change into engaging with the media and going further and being a part of the media. Any other model would not be effective in the present scheme of things.

Women in the church are in an out of the church at the same time. They make up more than half the church attendance and yet don't have much say in decision making or administration in the church and everything comes second. The world outside the church in the form of the market place or free media is a different world. It is a world which offers much more opportunity to women to express themselves and be who they want to be. Isn't this what spirituality is supposed to be?

Conflict becomes a part of our lives and this conflict is driven by mainline religion and mainline media. Conflict has to be a part of the issue because otherwise we won't be accepted as 'men' and 'women' defined and exhibited in religion and the media. Conflict is one of the primary driving factors and this conflict becomes a part of our spirituality. But conflict is not necessarily part of the spirituality of our scripture. It is true that communities highlighted in the scripture have had their own episodes with violence and conflict but this was not initiated by God. While trying to let women get their share of space in the

church we have to understand that there needs to be change in thinking and expression in the church. For this purpose I am placing traditional religion and media next to each other and trying to identify the characteristics of the mainline media to understand how religion is also similar to this and what then is the alternative to this.

Certain characteristics of the main line media are

1. They are owned by big corporations, business houses, and rich families.
2. They complement the businesses of the owning entity and make sure that they further the same interests.
3. They make use of advertisements to earn revenue and also to instil a culture of buying among the consumers so that the benefit does not only reach the media house but also benefits the business of the owners and of the people they network with.
4. News stories are not based on an ethical code but on the interests of the owner/s and advertisers and acquaintances.
5. Articles and news are based on the sensationalism quotient of index and not on the 'just (ice)' quotient of index.
6. Success of the mass medium is measured in terms of the circulation achieved and not on the basis of change brought to society.
7. People at the fringe are brought into the focus of the camera and celebrated like a carnival. (Peepli live)⁵

Religion and Media is an important topic for exploration because both are the sphere of influence of people. Secularism is the new religion which is a result of the church backing off from the sphere occupied by the media and limiting itself to the confines of the church. But this secularism is now showing signs of nationalist fundamentalism and majoritarianism. This means that the church which has backed off from engaging secular

⁵ <http://www.peeplilivethefilm.com/<01-6-2015>>

spaces should regain its momentum and engage with these spaces to prevent the coloring of these spaces in line with communal colors.

Paid stories and coverage in India

In India the print media is being accused of publishing what is called paid stories, where the paper is paid by political parties and corporate leaders to run certain stories. These stories are similar to paid advertisements, the difference being that the people are not aware of which is which. Paid news has emerged as an organized and properly structured industry in India. P. Sainath says that “the individual journalist has no importance in this industry because what is published as news has not been independently gathered and reported by reporters and journalists but written and published as per the wishes of the political party or the candidate who has paid money to the concerned publisher or media organisation.”⁶

He goes on to say

‘The ‘coverage packages’ offered to the candidates were different for the 2009 Lok Sabha elections. Some media were offering low-end “coverage packages” for Rs.15 lakh to Rs.20 lakh. “High-end” coverage would cost a lot more. A candidate could pay different rates for ‘profiles,’ interviews, a list of ‘achievements,’ or even a belittling of his rival in some cases. The dawn-to-dusk coverage included following the candidate for a day/days through his/her campaign trail. Ashok Chavan had spent a mere ₹. 5,379 on advertisements in print media but he managed to feature on 156 pages of prominent local and national dailies’.⁷

News reporting in such a context becomes a farce and the media which is also supposed to be a last resort (fourth estate) for

⁶ <http://foreignpolicyblogs.com/2011/04/15/p-sainath-on-paid-news-in-india><01-3-2015>

⁷ Ibid.

the people turns into the same oppressor that the people have to deal with.

Why is the church scared of the media or why doesn't the church want to use technology? The 60's, 70's and 80's were largely a period where the media were seen as the extension of the devil and his army. This opinion has now changed but the opinion that the media is secular and therefore non-religious is now existent. This means that even today watching a movie, screening of a documentary or any other similar exercise is kept out of the confines of the church and are seen as non-spiritual exercises.

But non-engagement again leads to dis-engagement from the congregation because they are culturally being trained by the movies they see and internalize. Movie or film watching as a religious experience has been explored by John Lyden in his book *Film as Religion: Myths, Morals and Rituals*. The experience of movie watching and the actual movie as a cultural and religious experience is indeed worth exploring. Travelling deep into one's own character and experiencing satisfaction through film watching is not available in a religious space defined by certain rules.

Religion and spirituality in the media (market) place

Spirituality as mentioned before is not confined to the realms of the church or a religious institution. Where else is it then available? It is available in the media or market place or space. This is a space which is outside the walls of official religion and yet is so overbearing on people. It is a space which is frequented by the public often and which is a part of the daily narrative of people. Stewart M. Hoover in his write up on *Media and Religion*⁸ says "The media increasingly operate like a marketplace, and as there is more and more demand for religion and spirituality, media supply has increased. Among other things,

⁸ Stuart M. Hoover, *Media and Religion*, The Centre for Media, Religion and Culture, University of Colorado, 2008, <http://cmrc.colorado.edu/cmrc/images/stories/Center/Publications/whitepaperfinalversion.pdf> <01-3-2015>

this increased supply of mediated religion means that religion and spirituality are increasingly available outside the boundaries of the formal “religions,” a situation that has world-changing implications for those institutions.” Maybe it is because the media is one step ahead of the church or the church has chosen to step back from the world of the media and has given up the space it is supposed to occupy! Hoover further says “The term “spirituality” is prominent in these trends. People are increasingly uncomfortable identifying with “religion,” which they define as a package combining institutional and clerical authority, and more at home with “spirituality,” which for them represents pure meaning and practice undiluted by its association with received and determinative ideas and histories.”

There is mistrust perhaps between religion and the media. There is mistrust between church leaders and journalists. There is a gap between what the media thinks about religion and in turn what religion thinks of the media. There is a gulf between women and men. Hoover suggests that “There are, then, three dimensions to the challenge for media professionals as they look at the world of religion. First, there is increasing need for sophisticated understandings and interpretations of what religions are on their own terms...Second, there is a need to understand and interpret the ways that religion interacts with other dimensions of social, political, and cultural life. Religion is neither irrelevant to these things nor entirely explained by them. Finally, a broader understanding is needed of how religion and media influence each other today. We cannot fully understand religion without understanding media, nor can we fully understand media without understanding religion.”

Real life to reel life

In *Film as Religion: Myths, Morals and Rituals*, John C. Lyden encourages us to take films seriously. He says “Popular films perform a religious function in our culture. Like more formal religious institutions, films can provide us with ways to

view the world and values to confront it. Approaches which interpret films only ideologically or theologically miss the mark in understanding their appeal to viewers. There should be an alternative method which shows how films can be understood as representing a "religious" worldview in their own right."⁹ Lyden tries to remove the demarcation between film and religion and religion and culture. He is of the opinion that we have separated it into perhaps the sacred and the profane, where one is acceptable and the other not. He makes the very important observation and says

"It is my contention that there is no absolute distinction between religion and other aspects of culture, and that we have a tendency to label certain sorts of activities as "religious" chiefly because they fall into the patterns that we recognize from religions with which we are familiar. As a result, we have a tendency to limit what we view as religion to that which is recognized as such by us in our own culture. The result is that we can find ourselves shortsighted when we encounter a diverse form of religion—as, for example, the European colonists who came to America did. For a long time, they refused to even grant the name "religion" to the activities in Native American culture that paralleled those undertaken by Europeans under that name. In time, they came to see that the "otherness" of American beliefs did not disqualify them from performing the same functions for Native Americans that Christianity did for most Europeans, and therefore these beliefs might be considered equally "religious." Perhaps they feared to give such practices the label of "religion" because doing so might require an acknowledgement that these practices are as valid or true as their own. In fact, it merely required them to acknowledge that they exist."

Lyden quotes Conrad Ostwalt and says that film is religion, complete with a sacred space and rituals. Richard Niebuhr and his

⁹ John C. Lyden, *Film as Religion: Myths, Morals, and Rituals*, New York: New York University Press, 2003.

fivefold typology of ways in which Christians can choose to engage the larger culture are perhaps beneficial while looking at religion and films. The five types Christ rejecting Culture, the Christ of Culture, Christ above Culture, Christ and Culture in Paradox, and Christ Transforming Culture. In one way this gives us the option of donning Christ's mantle outside of religion and critiquing religion. Clifford Geertz's definition of religion and that we should describe religion rather than explaining it gives more space to the reel life.

Women in the church are being exposed to a sacred space outside the church. They are grabbing it with both hands and there is nothing wrong with this. But why are churches denying them the sacred space of the church and the right to worship in it? Whenever this happens women won't become non-religious but will look for spaces outside official religion which offer them the experience of religion and more importantly spirituality.

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 nothings. 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 thereby each step is seen as a step towards understanding and doing away with misunderstanding that already exists and is bound to come up. Robert M. Krauss and Ezequiel Morsella identify the dialogic paradigm as the best to resolve conflict instead of the encoding-decoding paradigm, the intentionalist paradigm and the

perspective taking paradigm¹⁰. James Carey calls our attention to the ritual model of communication instead of the transmission model of communication. In this, communication becomes an act where we become part of an exercise of relating with each other and learning from one another. It is people centric and looks at how we can engage with each other in real life.

Traditional and alternative media

Traditional media strives towards the investigation and writing of stories to suit the wants and economic ends of mainline print and audio-visual media. Such media 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 how¹¹. The other details follow in the subsequent paragraphs. This tradition of the inverted pyramid which is used especially in print media is still popular. But this inhibits the media from producing more interesting writing styles and also makes the story very predictable¹². 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 opinion¹³. 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 media 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 interest¹⁴. One can see then that following this cannot ensure true communication in a news or media story because true

¹⁰ <http://www.columbia.edu/~rmk7/PDF/Confl.pdf><01-3-2015>

¹¹ <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/>

¹² Fred Fedler, John R. Bender, Lucinda Davenport and Michael W. Drager, New York: Oxford University Press, 2005, 201.

¹³ Warren G. Bovee, *Discovering Journalism*, Westport: Greenwood Press, 1999, 4.

¹⁴ <http://www.communication.utah.edu/classes/sp02/news.html><01-3-2015>

communication will not fulfill any of the factors for newsworthiness. Print media and news broadcasters will not see any newsworthiness in news which is community and people oriented.

Alternative media on the other hand need not limit itself to the inverted pyramid model of producing stories. Traditional media does not limit itself to the inverted pyramid but also to certain traditional ways of thinking. Alternative media goes against this rigid structure of reporting and seeks to experiment keeping the good of the ordinary people in mind. Alternative media 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’ (Noam Chomsky). 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”.¹⁵

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) 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

¹⁵Rajeev 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<01-3-2015>

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. Let us first define what mainstream media (MM) are. Those groups that monopolize the means to produce and circulate agenda-setting information and dominate the media scene can aptly be described as MM. These groups have economic clout that helps them to own mass media as a means to further improve their economic base¹⁶.

One then understands the need and essence of alternative media in a quest for spirituality. We have seen some instances of the mainline media and new media being made use of. They suggest the need for a new approach to media and journalism. This is a people's journalism or barefoot journalism as some would call it. The grounding of such an alternative is based on

1. From non-actors to actors- The direction being taken by the mainline media means that ordinary people have very little roles to play in it. A few letters to the editor will not satisfy the craving of people to be part of the story telling process. The new media offers a chance for this and people's journalism can offer a great opportunity for this need to be fulfilled.

2. The recreation and regaining of lost identities- The new media offers the possibility of reclaiming and recreating the identity of human beings. When society moves towards being closed and authoritarian, the scope and space for expressing one's identity is lost. The new media offers with all its limitations the possibility of identity expression. Stuart Hall says

In essence, the argument is that the old identities which stabilized the social world for so long are in decline giving rise to new identities... This so called crisis of identity is seen as part of a wider process of change which is dislocating the central structures and processes of modern societies and undermining the

¹⁶Daasu Krishnamoorthy, Defining Alternative Media in the Indian Context, <http://www.thehoot.org/web/home/story.php?storyid=879&pg=1&mod=1§ionId=>
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frameworks which gave individuals stable anchorage in the social world¹⁷.

3. Forming communities- The opportunity to form communities in the virtual world will be a result of disappearing communities in the real world. For David Bell this is so because

“The disintegration of traditional societies can revive computer mediated communication (CMC) to rebuild lost communities in cyber space. Virtual communities grow organically to fill the space by the demise of traditional communities”.¹⁸

4. Differing voices- A market driven economy will not in all probability be able to hear the voices of those who matter, the poorest of the poor. In this context it is essential to have an alternative. This alternative can only come out of a strong alternative media foundation. Chris Atton sees the alternative in Marxian terms,

The classic Marxist analysis of the media contains within it the seeds of such a space, in that alternative media may be considered as offering radical, anti-capitalist relations of production often coupled to projects of ideological disturbance and rupture¹⁹. 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 news²⁰.

5. The ethics of media coverage- An alternative to the mainline media would seek to formulate a framework on media coverage and this could come from a strong ethical way of looking at news reporting and truth telling. This foundation could

¹⁷ David Bell, *An Introduction to Cyber cultures*, London: Routledge, 2001, 101.

¹⁸ David Bell, *An Introduction to Cybercultures*, London: Routledge, 2001, 98.

¹⁹ Chris Atton, *Alternative Media*, New Delhi: Sage, 2002, 7.

²⁰ Chris Atton, *Alternative Media*, New Delhi: Sage, 2002, 10.

be from a collection of scriptures and writings which offer hope to those who are at the margins. Michael Traber categorically puts forth his stand point by saying,

The alternative advocacy media adopt very different news values from the mass media, introducing alternative social actors (such as) the poor, the oppressed and the marginalized as the main subjects of the news and features²¹.

The alternative media make use of certain fundamental and core beliefs to identify and showcase those who are usually not covered by the mainline media. Alternative spirituality also makes use of such core beliefs of including oppressed groups like women into the realm of spirituality. This is primarily because mainline religions and churches have stepped back from their responsibility to cater to women and other marginalized groups.

Alternative forms of media

When one looks at the dissemination of news and sees how lies instead of truth are distributed through the mainline media, it is time to look at other alternative means. 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 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 profession²².

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 soapbox, a breaking-news outlet and a collection of links. This makes it a

²¹ Chris Atton, *Alternative Media*, New Delhi: Sage, 2002, 16.

²² Stuart Allan, *News Culture*, Buckingham: Open University Press, 1999, 21.

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 sources²³.

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 further the democratic dialogue²⁴.

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 time share it with others as the event unfolds"²⁵. Mobile and internet technology have resulted in the ordinary public reporting

²³ Frederich Noronha, *Caught in the Net in 21st Century Journalism in India*, Nalini Rajan (ed), New Delhi: Sage, 2007, 286.

²⁴ Subash Rai, *Blogging- A new paradigm in Journalism in 21st Century Journalism in India*, Nalini Rajan (ed), New Delhi: Sage, 2007, 293.

²⁵ Ethiraj Anbarasan, *Citizen Journalism and the New Media in 21st Century Journalism in India*, Nalini Rajan (ed), New Delhi: Sage, 2007, 266.

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.”²⁶ Such alternative media and journalism fights against government propaganda²⁷ and thereby makes an effort to tell the truth. 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 few²⁸.

Women are using alternative media to voice their thoughts and make meaning out of their lives. This does not mean that they have an equal and just space online but that they have some kind of space in which they can try and be themselves.

Peculiarities of the cyber age

1. People express their relationships online- the culture of likes has taken over the expression of friendship and love in the cyber world. People say hi and that we are thinking about you by liking what you have posted. The aspiration to get as many likes

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Any 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, pp. 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.

²⁸ Jerry 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.

is to make one feel that we have many friends. This also reflects in the number of friends we have on face book even though many in the list may actually not be our friends. Even though this suggests that friends in the cyber space are also different from friends in real life, they are friends never the less. Relationships are even made online with couples meeting and professing love online. This then gets extended into the physical world at a much later stage. The initial feeling of love, expression of love and courting all happen in the cyber world.

Can't we then say that the cyber world actually leads to the making of relationships and this forms the foundation of relationships rather than vice versa? Another thing that is happening is that families are more and more feeling comfortable to interact in the cyber world. How can we judge those who want to express themselves in the cyber world? "An extraordinary number of people spend an extraordinary amount of time online connecting with other people. They reveal their deepest darkest secrets to folks who may be strangers and they often find these relationships so compelling they seem more emotionally real and alive than the marriages they are actually in. Indeed, online relationships can be unusually seductive. They are readily accessible, they move very quickly, and under the cloak of anonymity, they make it easy for people to reveal a great deal about themselves."²⁹ In *Love Online: Emotions on the Internet*, Aaron Ben-Zeev says "cyberspace is a kind of 'mentally nude commune,' where people often strip off their masks. What nudity leaves undone, imagination finishes? Imagination, which paints cyberspace in more intense and seductive colours, also helps people satisfy some of their most profound desires. It frees people from the limits imposed by their bodies and their surroundings."³⁰

2. The expression of truth becomes clearer rather than vague- there is an allegation that truth is not fully expressed

²⁹Hara Estroff Marano, *Cyberspace: Love Online*, <http://www.psychologytoday.com/articles/200412/cyberspace-love-online<01-3-2015>>

³⁰ Ibid.

online in the cyber world and that people hide who they actually are. On the other hand one can say that truth is lived out because people act out and live out their true fantasies. They become through whatever identity, who they actually want to be. This is not just some flimsy expression but some deep down expression of the being-ness of an individual.

In an article in 2000, journalist Mary Flanagan stated that: "Technology allows us an alternate space within which we can invent unique methods of telling stories, forming identities, and remembering."³¹ Further "Perhaps the most famous advocate of this was Oscar Wilde when he wrote: "Man is least himself when he talks in his own person. Give him a mask, and he will tell you the truth."³²

3. Knowledge is back with the people- knowledge has always been the bastion of the rich and powerful classes including the church. Knowledge therefore is never free and is always commodified. The cyber world has brought about a change in this. Wikipedia has been criticized for being naïve, simple and even misleading. But who gets to decide this? What is good about cyber space is that knowledge has been decentralised and even detached from the academia and so called scholarship. This has brought back knowledge to the people. Information and knowledge has to be free and freely shared as well. The cyber space has led to this and the people who are likely to share freely are also everyday ordinary people but people with experiences nevertheless. Copy right has been converted to copy left and the concept of free sharing through creative commons. "Theology now is all access, immediate, interactive."³³

4. Fellowship is broken down to becoming mundane and simple- it is one thing that relationships are being fostered on the

³¹ <http://www.ukessays.com/essays/media/cyberspace.php><01-3-2015>

³² Ibid.

³³ <http://www.relevantmagazine.com/god/god-our-generation/cyber-theology><01-3-2015>

internet and fellowship between people is something which is happening as well. But the other important thing is that the official way of interaction and dealing with people is coming to an end. People are finding it simpler to interact in the cyber world because this comes at one's own terms. Pastors are finding that their congregation would rather like to interact with them online and even have an online cyber confession instead of a one to one straight interaction. The option of hiding behind the pulpit is also coming to an end as people can read/listen and then question and contribute to the sermon of the pastor online.

The Catholic church understands this and in church language expresses this as "According to the Church, the internet and other forms of communication find their starting point in the communion of love among the divine Persons and their communication with us, and in the realization that Trinitarian communication reaches out to humankind: The Son is the Word, eternally 'spoken' by the Father; and in and through Jesus Christ, Son and Word made flesh, God communicates himself and his salvation to women and men... Moreover, the Church herself is a *communio*, a communion of persons and Eucharistic communities arising from and mirroring the communion of the Trinity; communication therefore is of the essence of the Church."³⁴

5. Disembeddedness and the need for intimacy and belonging- Elaine Graham and Anna Rowlands talk about this in their book "Pathways to the Public Square: Practical Theology in an Age of Pluralism" They say that the church should familiarise itself with the needs of cyberpunks and understand the needs of the people in church.

6. The global village and transformation of space into cyber space- Harvey Cox in the Secular City mentions this transformation. The coming together of people all over the world has been made possible by the cyber space. This can be negatively construed as a conspiracy of the West or can be

³⁴ <http://joshysj.blogspot.in/p/theology-of-cyberspace.html><01-3-2015>

positively construed as a space for the people of the world to come together.

“Barry Wellman has argued that digital media support “personal communities”, surrounding every individual with their own unique network of friends and contacts and conversations. You don’t need to belong to the same community as your family or your neighbours any more. If you have a phone – particularly a smartphone – you can always be in touch with your personal list of people to talk to. So what happens when Christians start turning to “personal churches”? Is this what we’re seeing in social media right now? I think so. There are many different types of “online community” and “online church”, but the “personal church” is one of them.”³⁵

There has to be a concerted effort to understand reality as it is. In India there are serious issues of the digital divide, surveillance by government agencies, draconian anti-internet laws, pornography, cyber bullying, cyber stalking, internet addiction, child abuse, cyber salvation and the like. But on the other hand these very issues are a part of the society as we have known it. This means that these issues have not cropped up with the cyber age. At the same time we can’t belittle or ignore any of the above mentioned issues. This remaining and with the commitment to relate with all issues as they are, we should also be able to look forward and give suggestions for the churches in India about this pertinent topic.

Antonio Spadaro, a Catholic priest writes “The Internet has become part of everyday life for many people, and for this reason it increasingly contributes to the construction of a religious identity of the people of our time, affecting their ability to understand reality, and therefore also to understand faith and their way of living it. The Net and the culture of cyberspace pose new

³⁵ Tim Hutchings, *Cyberchurch Theology, Part Two: The Problem with Community*, <http://bigbible.org.uk/2011/09/cyberchurch-theology-part-two-the-problem-with-community> <01/07/2015>

challenges to our ability to formulate and listen to a symbolic language that speaks of possibility and of signs of transcendence in our lives. Perhaps the time has arrived to consider the possibility of a cyber-theology also understood as the intelligence of faith in the era of the Net. It would be the fruit of faith that releases from itself a cognitive boost at a time in which the logic of the Net influences the way we think, learn, communicate and live.”³⁶ The mandate for the church is clear. Unless the church takes the cyber space seriously, it won’t be ministering to a significant number of people in India and the world and this includes juveniles who are a very important category.

Cessation of manufactured culture and alternative news writing as reflection of culture

Truth cannot occur without dealing with all kinds of experiences in society. Such experiences include gender, caste, racial, national, international and ecological problems to name a few. For this it is important that we have different frameworks and lenses to look at the overcoming of manufactured news. It will be beneficial if we try reporting based on such parameters which seek to bring out the stories and perspectives of those who are often not reported. This will overturn the usual newsworthiness stories and try to bring out the truth using the angle and perspectives of those at the margins.

Cai Yiping writes of such a framework of analysis, “In contrast to War Journalism, which is journalism about conflict that has a value bias towards violence and violent groups that usually leads audiences to overestimate violent responses to conflict by ignoring non-violent alternatives, real journalism, by identifying and avoiding these reporting conventions, aims to correct this bias”³⁷. This helps in bringing about a non-violent

³⁶ <http://www.cyberteologia.it/2012/10/cybertheology/<01-3-2015>>

³⁷ Cai Yiping, Revisiting peace journalism with a gender lens, http://www.waccglobal.org/images/stories/media_development/2011-2/cai.pdf <01-3-2012>

response to conflict and this is possible only if we look at the stories from the point of view of the marginalized.

The cessation of manufactured news will not then be possible with the traditional way of looking at stories. 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.

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”³⁸. 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”³⁹. 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 features⁴⁰. This is also what is offered in the market place as alternative spirituality. Women need to be spiritual like any other. Being spiritual is the fundamental right of any human being. When this right is violated by religion, women move on to other meaningful spaces.

St. Martha as an example of alternative spirituality

Martha perhaps is a silent character in the New Testament, silenced by mainline and traditional religion and the church. But Martha is not what we have heard her like. Schussler Fiorenza believes that the Mary-Martha narrative reflects the debate over

³⁸ Chris Atton, *Alternative Media*, New Delhi: Sage, 2002, 7.

³⁹ Ibid, 10.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 16.

leadership roles for women in the early house churches. The ‘good portion’ chosen by Mary is the listening to but not the diakonia--the preaching of the word. “Luke 10:38-42 pits the apostolic women of the Jesus movement against each other and appeals to a revelatory word of the resurrected Lord in order to restrict women’s ministry and silence women leaders of house churches, who like Martha might have protested, and at the same time to extol the silent and subordinate behavior of Mary”⁴¹ (Schussler Fiorenza 1986:31-32).” Martha seems to be the head of the house and thereby the head of the domicile or domestic or house church.

The church has not seen this side of the story because this is a story of the market place and yet a wonderful, believable story. It gives us the essence to believe that violence is not an inherent part of Christian spirituality and only if we accept the role of women will we be able to understand this. There is a very interesting take on the legend of St. Martha and drawing of parallels with her and St. George, the dragon slayer.

Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel has suggested some of the possible origins of the connections between the dragon motif and the Martha legends: influences from Egypt, from the Cathars, from the female deities of the ancient Mediterranean, from the Celtic mother goddesses. She also provides a feminist interpretation of the Martha–dragon motif when she compares the story with the legend of St. George. The new element in the Martha legend is that it is not a man here who is armored, armed, a hero, a soldier, who conquers the dragon: it is a woman. Another new element is that the victory is friendly, without violence. Martha conquers the dragon by spiritual means, without weapons, without armor, and in bare feet, and binds the dragon with her girdle, the sign of purity in a patriarchy and the symbol of eros and power in a matriarchy; In the matriarchal

⁴¹ Allie M. Ernst, *Martha From the Margins, The Authority of Martha in Early Christian Tradition*, Brill, 2009, 207.

consciousness, the dragon is a source of power which is in bondage; it represents elements that are unconscious, driving and impassioned—all of which are positive and are to be integrated into human existence; To make it understandable for us personally, and to put it in modern terms, the dragon is what we fear and therefore hate and normally try to suppress. The other, non-violent way to get along with our fear is to integrate it, to accept it as part of our personality.⁴²

What the church could consider

What a wonderful scenario it would be if both women and men were part and parcel of the church and would contribute to the church equally in their own ways.

1. The church has to leave the safe environs of its own four walls and venture out into the real lives of people.

2. Truth cannot be compressed and manipulated. Truth exists in various forms and in various places. Identifying this becomes a challenge but also a mission.

3. Religiousness and spirituality goes beyond small considerations and it exists in a multi-racial, multi religious, multi-cultural and multi gender environment. The church has to try and become this as well and understand that the church consists of both women and men and not just any one with the other as a decoration.

4. Media is turning out to be a religion in itself. The church does not have to emulate the media. But the church can be itself and claim spaces occupied by the traditional media and make them available for women, which is part of the church's mandate. There need not be any misunderstanding of the media but an

⁴² Diane E. Peters, *The Iconography of St. Martha: Some Considerations in Vox Benedictina: A Journal of Translations from Monastic Sources* 9/1 (1992): 39-65.

effort to understand the media and in turn make the media understand the church.

5. Spirituality exists everywhere and no place is anathema to the church.

6. The church can consider looking at the numerous options of the new media and be present in the new media and use the new media to reach out to people and use the space of the new media to speak the truth and ensure the gospel of truth. Women can be engaged with and brought into the main stream.

7. It will help to look at traditions like that of St. Martha and realise and affirm an alternative spirituality in the church. This is bound to help the church become non-violent, accepting, sensitive and caring.

A Tree and Its Fruit

(An exegetical Study of Luke 6: 43-45)

Anish K. Joy¹

Introduction

Theology seeks not merely to understand the faith, but to make it operative. Theological reflection is one of the important ministries in the church in India today. Theological reflection can take place at various levels. Sometimes relevant and creative insights are the fruits of experience and call for dialogue. At other times deep and systematic study of sources and contemporary movements are called for. To cater to these two sorts of situations, a deep systematic and scientific study of the Scripture is necessary.

In this paper I am trying to analyze Luke 6: 43-45. I am trying to bring out the theological intention of the above mentioned passage. Exegetical method is used to study the text.

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1. Text: Luke 6: 43-45²

43. Οὐ γάρ ἐστιν δένδρον καλὸν ποιοῦν καρπὸν σαπρὸν, οὐδὲ πάλιν δένδρον σαπρὸν ποιοῦν καρπὸν καλόν

44. Ἕκαστον γὰρ δένδρον ἐκ τοῦ ἰδίου καρποῦ γινώσκεται· οὐ γὰρ ἐξ ἀκαθῶν συλλέγουσιν σῦκα οὐδὲ ἐκ βάτου σταφυλὴν τρυγῶσιν

45. ὁ ἀγαθὸς ἄνθρωπος ἐκ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ θησαυροῦ τῆς καρδίας προφέρει τὸ ἀγαθόν, καὶ ὁ πονηρὸς ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ προφέρει τὸ πονηρόν· ἐκ γὰρ περισσεύματος καρδίας λαλεῖ τὸ στόμα αὐτοῦ

1.1 Literal Translation

43. For there is no good tree produces rotten fruit; nor, on the other hand a rotten tree produces good fruit.

44. For each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thorns, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush

45. The good human out of the good treasure of the heart produces good, and the evil out of the evil (treasure of the heart) produces evil; for out of abundance of heart his mouth speaks.

1.1.1 Text variants

There is only one text variant for this text which is in verse 6: 43 Οὐ γάρ ἐστιν ... Codex D and some other versions omit the γάρ, in which the connection with the preceding is not observed. Some of the editions of the Greek New Testament and translations paragraph the text differently. When ‘Westcott and Hort’ (1881) and ‘Merk’ (1984¹⁰) considered this text without paragraphing ‘Textus Receptus’ (Oxford, 1889), ‘Apostoliki Diakonia’ (i.e., B. Antoniadis’ edition of the New Testament, 1988), ‘Nestle-Aland²⁷’ (1993), ‘Revised English Bible’ (1989), ‘New Revised Standard Version’ (1990) paragraphed the text.

2. Delimitation

This comes under the main pericope 6:17-49 which is the sermon on the plain in which we can find a number of sub-units. The tree and its fruits is one among the sub-unit which comes in between “Judging

² UBS⁴

others” (6:37-42) and “The Two Foundations” (6:46-49). This sub-unit is also considered as a fourth figure³ in 6:17-49. Also UBS⁴, N A and NRSV has already considered this as a sub-unit in the Bible. In short we can say that ‘A Tree and its Fruit’ can be considered as a small sub-unit inside the major pericope.

3. Synoptic Comparisons

There is no parallel text in Mark. So the comparison can be done only with Matthew.

Matthew 7:16-20 & 12:34-35	Luke 6:43-45
<p>¹⁵ Προσέχετε ἀπὸ τῶν ψευδοπροφητῶν, οἵτινες ἔρχονται πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἐν ἐνδύμασιν προβάτων, ἔσωθεν δέ εἰσιν λύκοι ἄρπαγες</p> <p>¹⁶ ἀπὸ τῶν καρπῶν αὐτῶν ἐπιγνώσεσθε αὐτούς· μή τι συλλέγουσιν ἀπὸ ἀκανθῶν σταφυλὰς ἢ ἀπὸ <u>τριβόλων</u> σῦκα</p> <p>¹⁷ οὕτως πᾶν δένδρον ἀγαθὸν καρποὺς καλοὺς ποιεῖ, τὸ δὲ σαπρὸν δένδρον καρποὺς ποινηροὺς ποιεῖ</p>	<p>⁴³ Οὐ γὰρ ἐστὶν δένδρον καλὸν ποιοῦν καρπὸν σαπρὸν, οὐδὲ πάλιν δένδρον σαπρὸν ποιοῦν καρπὸν καλόν</p> <p>⁴⁴ ἕκαστον γὰρ δένδρον ἐκ τοῦ ἰδίου καρποῦ γινώσκεται· οὐ γὰρ ἐξ ἀκανθῶν συλλέγουσιν σῦκα οὐδὲ ἐκ <u>βάτου</u> σταφυλὴν τρυγῶσιν</p> <p>⁴⁵ ὁ ἀγαθὸς ἄνθρωπος ἐκ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ θησαυροῦ τῆς καρδίας προφέρει τὸ ἀγαθόν, καὶ ὁ ποινηρὸς ἐκ τοῦ ποινηροῦ προφέρει τὸ ποινηρόν· ἐκ γὰρ περισσεύματος καρδίας λαλεῖ τὸ στόμα αὐτοῦ</p>

³ Blind leader, the disciple not above the master, the parable of Mote and the Beam are the first three figures.

<p>¹⁸ οὐ δύναται δένδρον ἀγαθὸν καρποὺς ποιηροὺς ποιεῖν οὐδὲ δένδρον σαπρὸν καρποὺς καλοὺς ποιεῖν</p> <p>¹⁹ πᾶν δένδρον μὴ ποιοῦν καρπὸν καλὸν ἐκκόπτεται καὶ εἰς πῦρ βάλλεται</p> <p>²⁰ ἄρα γε ἀπὸ τῶν καρπῶν αὐτῶν ἐπιγνώσεσθε αὐτούς</p> <p>³⁴ γεννήματα ἐχιδνῶν, πῶς δύνασθε ἀγαθὰ λαλεῖν πονηροὶ ὄντες ἐκ γὰρ τοῦ περισσεύματος τῆς καρδίας τὸ στόμα λαλεῖ</p> <p>³⁵ ὁ ἀγαθὸς ἄνθρωπος ἐκ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ θησαυροῦ ἐκβάλλει ἀγαθά, καὶ ὁ πονηρὸς ἄνθρωπος ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ θησαυροῦ ἐκβάλλει πονηρά</p>	
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The verses written in bold are the similar verses in both Matthew and Luke. So we could say that there should be a common source material for both Matthew and Luke which is considered as a Q. When compared we can see that in Matthew there are eight verses and in Luke there are only three verses which deal with the same idea. This could say that either Matthew has expanded the idea or Luke has shortened. But our basic assumption is that the shorter text is more close to the original⁴. One another small difference that can be noted is that the use of τριβόλος ‘thistle’ in Matthew and βάτος ‘bramble bush’ in Luke. But this makes no much difference for me in the idea

⁴ John Nolland has commented in his W B C that Lukan form has better claim to be original, 308

even though there is another interpretation⁵ for the above. Also there is a reversal of usage ‘grapes from thorns and figs from brambles’ in Matthew.

4. Literary Genre and Sitz im Leben

This verse begins the fourth section of Jesus’ sermon on the plain. The verses 39 -49 are considered as parabolic pieces which underscore the various ways and the importance of following Jesus’ teaching about love of enemies and nonjudgmental generosity. This parable piece itself can be considered as a figure of speech -simile⁶ or metaphor⁷. Luke has given specific meaning to this traditional parable by his context of calling disciples and would-be disciples to join “the poor of God” by sharing their possessions, even with enemies. The context here stresses the need for the disciples to rid themselves of the speck in their own eyes before they can live lives of outward goodness⁸. Luke does not relate the parable to the problem of false prophets, instead he speaks to the truth that what is required of a disciple is not cosmetic alteration, even removing a log from one’s eye, but a genuine goodness of heart⁹.

5. Structure

A Οὐ γάρ ἐστιν δένδρον καλὸν ποιοῦν καρπὸν σαπρὸν, οὐδὲ
πάλιν δένδρον σαπρὸν ποιοῦν καρπὸν καλόν

B ἕκαστον γὰρ δένδρον ἐκ τοῦ ἰδίου καρποῦ γινώσκεται

C οὐ γὰρ ἐξ ἀκανθῶν συλλέγουσιν σῦκα οὐδὲ ἐκ βάλτου σταφυλὴν
τρυγῶσιν

⁵ William Kirk Hobart in “*The Medical Language of St Luke*” says that bramble being so well known to physicians, it is possible that St Luke translated by ba,toj the Syriac word used by our Lord, which Matthew translated by tribo,loj, 78.

⁶ Rev. Raymond F Stoll in “*The Gospel According to St Luke – A Study of the 3rd Gospel with a translation and commentary*” says that the figure of speech mentioned here is a simile, 118.

⁷ Joel B Green in “*N I C N T – The Gospel of Luke*” compares fruit metaphorically with human conduct, 279.

⁸ Howard Marshall in “*The Gospel of Luke – A Commentary on the Greek Text*”, 271.

⁹ Leander E Keck in “*The New Interpreters Bible*” Vol. 1X, 151.

(A + B + C) = ὁ ἀγαθὸς ἄνθρωπος ἐκ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ θησαυροῦ τῆς καρδίας προφέρει τὸ ἀγαθόν, καὶ ὁ πονηρὸς ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ προφέρει τὸ πονηρόν·

(A+B+C)'= ἐκ γὰρ περισσεύματος καρδίας λαλεῖ τὸ στόμα αὐτοῦ

A = a statement (parable)

B = a principle (which underlines the statement A)

C = a self-evident fact (a contemporary proverb)

A+B+C = a sentence of application

(A+B+C)' = a general principle

6. Exegetical Issues

What is good tree and rotten tree?

Is there any difference between fruit tree and other trees?

Importance of bear fruit

Importance of 'Figs from thorns and grapes from bramble bush' usage

Use of Βατος instead of τριβολος

Importance of heart

Use of καλός - ἀγαθός

What makes a heart "good" is not stated

7. Analysis of Greek text

The analysis is done for only some significant words which help us to under the text more easily. This will be done under two sections Greek grammar and Greek words.

7.1 Greek Grammar

This section analyzes some important Greek grammatical usages like γάρ, ἐκ and some phrases;

7.1.1 γάρ and ἐκ

The word γάρ – *for*, which is a 'conjunction subordinate' is used four times in this text. First time (v 43) it is used to express a continuation and not explanation. Second time (v 44a) is used to introduce a principle which underlines the statement of v 43. Third time (v 44b) is

used to introduce a self-evident fact which supports the above principle in v 44a. Fourth time (v 45b) introduces a statement of general principle.

The word ἐκ – *out, out of, from within*, a preposition genitive is used six times in this text. ἐκ + genitive is Greek usage too. ἐκ when used with vowel is written as ἐξ.

7.1.2 ἐκ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ and ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ

This is considered as an elliptical phrase in which ‘treasure of the heart’ which is used along with ἐκ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ has to be added along with ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ also.

7.2 Greek words

Difference between καλός - ἀγαθός, συλλέγουσιν - τρυγῶσιν, understanding of ἀγαθοῦ θησαυροῦ and some words like γινώσκεται, καρδίας, προφέρει has to be dealt in detail.

7.2.1 καλός - ἀγαθός and συλλέγουσιν - τρυγῶσιν

καλὸν – *beautiful*, adjective nominative neuter singular from καλός is generally used for things. ἀγαθός – *good*, adjective nominative masculine singular from ἀγαθός is used for human beings.

συλλέγουσιν – *to collect, gather* – verb indicative present active 3rd person plural from συλλέγω – is used as an impersonal / unfriendly or in very general way. τρυγῶσιν – *to gather in, harvest* – verb indicative present active 3rd person plural from τρυγάω – is a more specific term. It is used especially to gather ripe fruit/grapes and is used only three times in N T other two are used in Revelation 14:18, 19¹⁰ which is also used in relation with grapes.

¹⁰ Revelation 14:18-19^{NAS} And another angel, the one who has power over fire, came out from the altar; and he called with a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, "Put in your sharp sickle, and gather the clusters from the vine of the earth, because her grapes are ripe." ¹⁹ And the angel swung his sickle to the earth, and gathered *the clusters from* the vine of the earth, and threw them into the great wine press of the wrath of God.

7.2.2 ἀγαθοῦ θησαυρου

Θησαυρου has two meaning – place where something is kept: *storehouse*, that which is kept: *treasure* – noun genitive masculine singular from θησαυρός. The apt meaning can be understood only if we consider ἀγαθοῦ along with θησαυρου. ἀγαθοῦ - adjective genitive masculine singular from ἀγαθός denotes the quality of that which is kept and not of the place where it is kept. So we can say that the second meaning, treasure is more preferable.

7.2.3 γινώσκεται, καρδίας and προφέρει

γινώσκεται – *to come to know, learn, know, realize* is a verb indicative present passive 3rd person singular from γινώσκω. This term is used in present tense in order to express a general truth.

καρδίας – *heart*, noun genitive feminine singular from καρδία. Heart is a Semitic usage. In Semitic anatomy heart symbolized the active intellect rather than, as to us, the seat of feeling and emotion¹¹. τῆς καρδίας ‘of his heart’ has locative meaning.

προφέρει – *to bring forth, produces* - verb indicative present active 3rd person singular from προφέρω is used in literal sense.

8. Explanations of vv 43 - 45

Here good tree and rotten tree are two parabolic phrases that are used to denote good human and evil human. The illustrations used in vv 43 -44 express a law of physical nature; and they are easily understood as figures of moral contact¹². Fruit as a figure for deeds, good or bad, is used in O T – Hos. 10: 13¹³; Isa. 3: 10¹⁴, Jer. 17: 10¹⁵. In considering this parable we must remember that not everything contained in the type (the image used to illustrate) is applicable to the antitype (the

¹¹ George Arthur Buttrick, Ed. “*The Interpreter’s Bible*”, Vol. 8, 126.

¹² Joseph A Fitzmyer in “*A B C*”, 643.

¹³ You have plowed wickedness, you have reaped injustice, and you have eaten the fruit of lies. Because you have trusted in your way, in your numerous warrior,

¹⁴ Say to the righteous that it will go well with them, for they will eat the fruit of their actions.

¹⁵ “I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give to each man according to his ways, According to the results of his deeds”.

truth illustrated). That which is true of a tree in the natural order cannot be applied to human and to the moral order without restriction. Even though there are trees which do not bear fruit, fruit trees are considered here to emphasize the quality and character.

In nature there is no exception to the rule that good trees bring forth good fruit and evil trees bring forth evil fruit. If the tree is good, sound and healthy, its fruit is good; if the tree be evil, unhealthy, the fruit will not be good. Generally speaking, we find the same rule verified in human; his conduct is good or evil, according as his dispositions and character are good or evil. The possibility of a change is not excluded, nor is it contemplated here. Neither it is said that a good human cannot do some evil and vice versa. The rule is general and is not consider exceptional works and acts.

“Figs from thorns and grapes from bramble bush” is a Semitic-Greco Roman usage which was used so common in their life situation. Figs refer to an edible and valued kind of fruit. More or less a literal rendering is often possible. Thorns indicate the name of any kind of thorny wild growth, shrub or tree with no fruits, or inedible fruits. Since wine is known by most people grapes are used here and bramble bush is a synonym of thorns, symbol of unfruitfulness.

What makes a heart ‘good’ or how can we attain a good heart is not mentioned in this particular sub-unit but if we read this sub-unit along with the major pericope we can arrive an answer for that question. If we read Luke 3: 7-9 – repent and bear fruit, Love for enemies – 6:27-36, non-judgment – 6:37-42 and two judgment – 6:46-49 we can arrive at a conclusion that if we hear and act upon the teaching of Jesus then we will have a good heart.

9. Relations with Sirach

This imagery of bearing fruit is seen in Sirach 27: 6¹⁶. This is one among the three images that illustrate the manner in which speech demonstrates the discipline of one’s mind which is derived from ordinary farm life in ancient Palestine. This third comparison rests on

¹⁶ The fruit discloses the cultivation of a tree: so the expression of a thought discloses the cultivation of a man’s mind.

the assumption that a well-tended vine or fruit tree will produce appropriate fruit, but this principle does not always apply.

10. Theological Reflections

Through 43 and 44 verse the author tells about the human character and points Jesus Christ's character through 45th verse. What makes the heart good is 'standing in the position of divine son-ship inaugurated by Jesus¹⁷, or obeying the word of Jesus¹⁸. Jesus through his birth, life, teaching, crucifixion and resurrection showed and explained the meaning of good heart. Jesus' location of goodness in love of enemy and nonjudgment is a call to a true inner goodness of the heart, of which one's concrete acts of goodness will be the natural fruit. Jesus thus cuts through the hypocrisy, shallowness, and self-deceit of every paraded goodness of externality. Also Jesus is speaking about the moral actions and the character that produces the good person. Therefore Discipleship requires not just good rather it requires integrity and a purity of heart such as one sees in Jesus himself. John Nolland's words can be coated here – "whether one likes it or not, what one produces is finally a product of what one is"¹⁹.

11. Applications

A bad tree produces hate and judgment of others where as a good tree produces a love even of enemies and a non-condemning attitude. To bring good treasure out of the heart, therefore means to bring that kind of helpful thought and counsel which a man can give only when he can cleanse his own mind from its spots of ignorance and error.

I am concluding this paper with Fitzmyer's words – If you want to correct others you must first demonstrate your own goodness by good deeds. If there are good and evil people in a group we will be attracted more towards the good human and that good human can show the real path to reach God. He/she can show others what God has taught him/her in their life. However worst the situation; if we could squeeze out at least a small drop of goodness from that, then we will be a successful person in Life.

¹⁷ W. Gutbrod, TDNT IV, 1062.

¹⁸ Luke 6:46, "And why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord', and do not do what I say?"

¹⁹ John Nolland in "W B C – Luke 1-9:20 (35A)", 309.

Conclusion

Effective compliance with the teaching in 6: 20-38 can come only from a heart that has been converted to the gracious God proclaimed in Jesus' kingdom ministry. I am concluding my paper with a statement that – No one is capable to teach or to correct others, unless they are good and kind in heart.

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Building Self Esteem among Women: Mission of the Church

Jiji Johnson

Introduction

We believe that church is the body of Christ and so it demands equal and responsible participation of men and women in all its areas. To perform these duty church members irrespective of their gender should pool in their resources. Jesus Christ visualise the Kingdom of God which has no inequality. The status of women granted by God is ignored and the one which is granted to them by the male members of the family and society is ensured, thus leading to subordination. The solution is promotion of justice and awareness of rights of women. They must also initiate and sustain, in all creativity and good sense, the promotion of the involvement of women in all facets of societal life, especially in decision making and leadership levels. But, due to age old inferior feeling in every culture, the fulfilment of empowerment not succeeds. Actually the mission of the church in

its nature is liberative and brings transformation. That is what Jesus showed in His public ministry. Through the experience we know that church failed in its true mission. In this paper I would like examine the reason why the mission fails and what do women needed for their liberation.

Early Church experience

Soon after the execution and resurrection of Jesus, the community were gathered and prayed in one heart and soul. We can see the active role of women in various biblical references (Phil: 4:2-3, Acts 16:13-15, 1Cor:16:19, Rom. 16:12). Early church celebrated Lord's Supper and preached good news in the 'house churches'. The Eucharist at His period was celebrated by the whole church. The bread and wine for the sacrifice were brought by the people. The house churches by its virtue of its location, provided equal opportunities for women because traditionally the house was considered women's sphere and women were not excluded from activities in it. They were actively participating in it.¹

After the declaration of Edict of Milan in 313 by Constantine, Christianity became official religion and the church became Imperial patronage. The worship places built by the Empire and the imperial treasury were open for that. Then worship is shifted from the houses to public worship places. Then the sitting arrangements in the church and vestments of bishops and priests made just like royal court. With the public recognition of the Church in the fourth century all bishops found themselves enjoying this status of senior imperial officials. They wore the dress of the Roman upper classes, made obligatory for imperial officials². Gradually strict hierarchy developed within the worshiping community. And the women were moved to the lowest level. The church and surroundings considered being holy and house and its environment became unholy. Whatever changes

¹ Fiorenza, Elizabeth, In memory of her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins, 1988, 176.

² Wybrew, Hugh, The Orthodox Liturgy, St. Vladimir Seminary Press, 1990, 32.

that Jesus tried to introduce among his disciples were ignored. If we are serious about women empowerment, the building of self-esteem among women should become an important mission of the church.

Self-esteem and mental Health

Self-esteem, self-worth and self-concept are similar term describe aspects of self-evaluation. Social scientists usually define the self as the combination of one's physical appearance, memories and sensory images.³ H. Norman Wright presents the basis for a healthy self- image as containing the need to belong, the need to feel worthy and need to feel competent. First is we all need to know and feel that we are wanted, accepted, cared for and enjoyed for who we are. Second is we feel worthy when we know we are counted, and are valued by others and by God. God declares us to be of value and each individual is divine. We are the creative expression of loving God. Third, we need to know that we can do something, give something, contribute and make a difference. All these needs are fulfilled in the way that Jesus dealt with women in the New Testament.⁴

Latest studies show that through enhancing the positive emotions mental health can be regained. Positive psychology is the scientific study of what makes life most worth living. Martin Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi define positive psychology as "the scientific study of positive human functioning and flourishing on multiple levels that include the biological, personal, relational, institutional, cultural, and global dimensions of life."⁵ George E. Vaillant considers positive emotions include love, hope, joy, forgiveness, compassion, trust, gratitude and awe which lead to spirituality. Or spirituality is all

³ Quoted by (Gecas 1982) Retrieved from rsc.byu.edu<01.07.2016>

⁴ Wright, H. Norman. : Questions women asking private; CA: Regal books Ventura, 1993. <http://bible.org/article/how-Jesus-ministered-to-women><01.07.2016>

⁵Seligman, Martin, Csikszentmihalyi, Positive Psychology, *American Psychologist*, Jan 2000, Vol. 55, No.1, 5-14

about positive emotions⁶. So the enhancement of positive emotions and spirituality will certainly improve the mental health. To provide abundant life, Jesus enhanced the positive emotions to the women who he ministered. In contrast in the church ministry we are experiencing a kind of suppression and avoidance or segregations separation.

How Jesus ministered to women

Both in his teaching and his activities, Jesus reached out to women as persons who were equally worthy as men in his saving activity. Through His non-judgmental attitude and unconditional positive love, Jesus enhanced women's self-esteem and helps them to break their barriers which were oppressing them. In His ministry he helped them to change, to stretch, to grow, to have hope, positive energy and faith in themselves. Low self-esteem produces feelings of hopelessness and despondency, which sap the energy and faith needed to strive and achieve, thus producing more failure.

All through the healing ministry of Jesus, women like, bend woman, bleeding woman, Mary Magdalene, Samaritan woman were healed from their distorted physical, mental, religious, social racial, problems and allowed them to grow fully. This we can see very much clearly through the intervention of Jesus with Samaritan woman (Jn. 4: 3-42). It was not geographically necessary for Jesus to go through Samaria, and Jewish travellers normally travelled around Samaria. But he chose the odd way. There he met the Samaritan woman came for water at odd time. Women normally go to fetch water in the mornings and evenings, but this woman goes at noon, perhaps because she doesn't want to face other women. She keeps a distance from others, not wanting to expose herself and her relationship to the prying eyes and sharp remarks of neighbours. Many commentators have jumped to the conclusion that she was an

⁶ Vaillant, George. E., *Positive Emotions, Spirituality & Practice of Psychiatry: Mental Health, Spirituality, Mind*, 2008, Vol. 6(1).

immoral woman who had been divorced five times (O'Day, 384).⁷ According to Jewish Law women cannot divorce their husbands. There are two possible reasons why this woman has had five husbands.

One possibility is that she was unable to have children (the biblical language is "she was barren" cf. Gen. 11:30). In a culture that placed supreme importance on having children, especially sons, barrenness was solid ground for divorce (cf. Deut. 24:1). So it is possible that the men had married her, then found out that she couldn't have children so divorced her to marry more fertile women.

She could also be trapped by the Levirate marriage law. Her five husbands could have been brothers for whom she was supposed to produce an heir (Matt. 22:24-28). Either the family ran out of sons or the next son could have refused to marry her. That she was living with a man now who was not her husband, may be a care taker. Jesus intervenes in her life by asking for water, as if to fulfil his human, physical, bodily need- thirst.

Jesus then did something that was a cultural taboo; he spoke to a woman in public; and not just a woman, but a Samaritan woman. She was twice an outcast in Jewish thought. Jesus asked her for a drink of water. She was understandably shocked: a Jewish man was speaking to her, a Samaritan woman? He also should not have wanted to share a vessel with her for drinking water since it would be considered unclean. She was right to be confused. The woman is surprised that Jesus would ask her for water. She recognizes the boundaries between them of race, caste, culture, religion and of gender. Jesus told her if she had known that she is a gift of God and had known the identity of the one who talked her, then she would have asked him water and He would have giving living water. Jesus may be the first man who gave positive stroke to her. Jesus' words led her to self-awareness that she is a gift of God. And she is valuable. Then she got the

⁷ Attabery, Shawana R. B., The Samaritan Women, *The Voice*, March 25, 201, www.crivoice.org<01.07.2016>

courage to clarify doubts about so many things like their tradition, worshiping place, mode of worship, messiah etc. It was in front of this woman Jesus first revealed himself as the messiah whom both groups have long expected. Having identified Jesus this woman became the first evangelist. The woman who first appears in the Bible preferring to be isolated from the society gained courage through the encounter with Jesus and went back to the town to proclaim her experience to her community and became part of the main stream. People listened her words and believed. She led them to Jesus Christ. Thus she became a catalyst for the transformation of the community. This is an incident which shows that, through the encounter with Jesus her self-esteem enhanced, regained her mental health, repaired her relationship with people, and she became dependable leader who could even transformed her community.

Jesus always went out of his way to confront those who had reached the limit of human endurance. The woman with the issue of bleeding-making her social outcast for twelve years (Mt. 9:20-22, Mk. 5:25-34, Lk. 8:43-48) and the woman whose back was bent for eighteen years (Lk. 13:10-17) were both desperate woman. Jesus singled out them, because he knew that women were important as human beings demanding dignity and respect.

We also see Jesus appreciation of women's spiritual capabilities. Mary Magdalene, who was first to receive news of His resurrection, was given the honoured position of witnessing it to his disciples (John 20:1-18). Wilkins states, "the crucifixion and Resurrection accounts tell us a decisive number of things about God's purposes for women in the life and ministry of Jesus. Women were validated as worthy of the most privileged service in the community of faith, bearing witness to the reality of the risen Lord Jesus."⁸

While there were conflicting attitudes about the education of women among the rabbis, there was no confusion with Jesus. Three times in the Scripture, we see that 'Mary' sister of Lazarus

⁸ Wilkins, How Jesus Ministered to Women, <https://bible.org/01.07.2016>

seated at His feet and listen to the Lord's word (Lk. 10:38-42, Jn. 11:2, Jn. 12:3). Jesus valued her as a good student and her physical posture reflects her qualities- humble, reverent, and teachable - all the qualities of a good disciple. Jesus desires that all believers think, grow, learn and He is an equal opportunity teacher to both men and women.

Through the encounters we see that to all women regardless of their past mistake, hurt, pain and failures Jesus wants to fill them with his love because women are people intrinsically whom he values. Every woman is created in His image and He offers them greatest ministry ever; cleansing, forgiveness, hope, meaning, significance and life of power and purpose.

Mission of the church

The church is a community of people who commit themselves to live in communion with God and with each other according to the message of the Gospel as exemplified by Jesus Christ during the earthly life. Especially the 'Nazareth Manifesto' explains the purpose of His ministry as "the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of the sight to the blind to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour" (Lk. 4:18,19). So the church is called upon to commit herself to practices and promotes such a liberative message where the identity and freedom of all people ensured. Gifts, abilities and visions are unmerited gifts of God to individuals according to God's will and purpose, and not on the basis of their sex or merit. The task of building a more humane world is unquestionably the task of every human being; both male and female love, freedom, dignity and justice are the qualities of a community that God created. Anyone can strive to sustain and share such gifts for the common good. As structures are created to promote community, men and women need to participate in them together, to plan and promote programmes that witness Gospel values.

But still the conservative attitude toward the social life of women and statement like ‘they are essentially for child-bearing and for cooking’ and commented like ‘women have essential nature appropriately belong to home’⁹ and also literal interpretations of St. Paul like Christ’s head of Church and man is woman’s head¹⁰ and also the concept regarding priesthood, ‘if the Holy Eucharist were conducted by a woman there would be no resemblance between Christ and His minister and it would be thus difficult to see the image of Christ in the minister as Christ was a man.’¹¹ Such type of commends and attitudes fails the true mission of the Church. Whenever there is a failure or deviation from the mission of the church, it needs to be corrected. Only the attitude of Jesus helps bring forth the true mission. The mission is vast. What should the practical measures we need take?

Building Self-Esteem

Women are especially vulnerable to feeling, inadequate and depending on the approval of others for their sense of self-worth. And they are not aware undermining themselves and erode their self-esteem. It can only come from inside, from inner acceptance and approval. Many women cannot self-nurture because they have been brought up to think they should be givers and not takers. Society teaches women that giving is good and that taking is selfish. Since birth women have been surrounded by people evaluating them and pronouncing judgments about every aspect of their beings and their performances. Low self-esteem produces feelings of hopelessness and despondency. To develop an accurate self-appraisal, good motivators are essential. They are both internal and external. Experience the energy generated when each person respect and encourage the self. That is why Jesus

⁹Chrysostomos, Archimandrite, Women in Orthodox Church; Orthodox info.com/general/women.aspx<01.07.2016>

¹⁰Nicolaidis, Angelo, The Role of Women in the Eastern Orthodox Church; aegt.com.au/.../007/395539/ AEJT_4.12<01.07.2016>

¹¹ Hillman, Carolyn : Recovery of your Self-Esteem; Simon & Schuster, New York, P24

said, 'love your neighbour as yourself...' (Mt. 22:39, Mk. 12:31, Lk. 10:27). In order to become self-valuing successful people they need *compassion* for their feelings, *acceptance* for their individuality, *respect* for their worth, *encouragement* to strive, loving *support* and physical and emotional *stroking*. These nurturing acts and attitudes are growth conditions under which people flourish¹². These attitudes are external motivators which help the individual to grow fully or attain abundant life.

Compassion is sorrow for the suffering or troubles of another, accompanied by an urge to help. Compassion and acceptance go hand in hand. Accepting oneself means recognising and genuinely appreciating your positive attributes and also seeing the fault and understanding that they are the part of human conditions as well as individuals' experiences. Respect is important which gives a lift, promotes feelings of competence and help to harness inner strength. We all need encouragement and support to stretch beyond where we are now, to lead for goals and believe that we can attain them. Stroking is verbal or nonverbal communications which help as to experiences or feel warm, happy, worthy and confident. Everybody can raise their self-esteem and move toward attaining their goals by learning to nurture them. Accepting the self, having compassion for the inner pain and regarding the person of innate worth produce high self-esteem. Encouragement and support help to persist in the face of obstacles and inner or outer hindrances. Stroking, both physical and emotional - enhance the person to feel worthy, capable, appealing and lovable. This is what Jesus did in His healing ministry especially to the women. Because they are over burden and bonded by the religious rule and social culture. In each case like healing of bent women in the synagogue, conversation with Samaritan women, regarding the sinner women in Lucan narrative, woman caught by adultery in John's Gospel etc... Jesus approached them with compassion, accept them as women,

¹² Ralte, Lalrinawmi, Women Reshaping Theology, UTC, Bangalore & ISPCK, Delhi, 1998.

respect their individuality, given encouragement and support. Through the positive strokes, encouraging words, healing touch, forgiveness and unconditional positive love enhanced women and accompanied Jesus even at the foot of the cross. All these attitudes which Jesus has shown to women in His ministry should be taken seriously in the ministry of the church also.

Conclusion

This paper aims at how the abundant life possible for women in the church life. Through centuries of alienation, patriarchal domination, social suppression and cultural condition women have low self-esteem. If the church wants its mission to be truly liberative, transforming and successful, there should be urgent measures to build up self-esteem among its women members.

*God, enlighten our memories to avoid errors from the past,
Enliven our consciences to do what is right in the present,
Shape our character to guide our conduct in the future.*

Communitarian Paradigm of the Universal Church

Lincoln George Kadoopparayil¹

The paradigm serves as a model or pattern in a research. The communitarian paradigm originates from the teachings of the Catholic Church regarding communication. It demonstrates a sharper focus and clarity in the Pastoral Instruction *Communio et Progressio*² which is the direct outcome of the Second Vatican Council proposals. The basic outlook of this paradigm is that Christian media by its very nature are communitarian.

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² *Communio et progressio* is a pastoral instruction of the Roman Catholic Church, issued by the Pontifical Council for Social Communications on 23 May 1971. It was prepared in accordance with the Second Vatican Council's 1963 decree *Inter Mirifica*. The new pastoral instruction outlined the relations with public media that Church authorities were henceforth to adopt: recognition of the freedom of information and free choice of information, the legitimate independence of the activity of journalists and media institutions, and the need to educate members of the Church in the discriminating use of media.

Accordingly, every communication should lead to communion, and consequently build communities. This paradigm hence invites all Christian communicators to view and practice communication from a communitarian frame.

Paradigm: An Introduction

A paradigm is a model, a system or a framework to think from within. *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines it as “a pattern or model, an exemplar”. A paradigm influences the way knowledge is studied and interpreted. It is the choice of a particular paradigm that sets the definite intent, motivation and expectations for a given research. Without primarily establishing a paradigm, there is no basis for subsequent choices regarding methodology, literature or research design (Mackenzie and Knipe 2006). Paradigms are also defined as the fundamental models or frames of reference used to organize observations and reasoning. Hence the selection of a paradigm for any research is very important.

Thomas Kuhn, an eminent figure in the field of philosophy of science, gave a paradigm its contemporary meaning when he adopted the word to refer to the set of practices that defines a scientific discipline at any particular period of time. In his book, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*,³ he argued that scientific research and thought are defined by paradigms, or conceptual world-views, that consist of formal theories, classic experiments, and trusted methods. Scientists typically accept a prevailing paradigm and try to experiment within its scope (www.britannica.com; accessed on 11-11-2010). Thus in Thomas Kuhn’s definition, we find an additional component of paradigm: how an experiment is to be conducted, and what equipment is available to conduct the experiment (Kuhn 1996).

³ The Structure of Scientific Revolutions (1962), by Thomas Kuhn, is an analysis of the history of science. Its publication was a landmark event in the sociology of scientific knowledge, which popularized the terms paradigm and paradigm shift.

This Communitarian Paradigm of the Church i.e., the outlook proposed by the Pastoral Instruction *Communio et Progressio* which directs that communication should be qualified in such a way to bring about communion and unity in the society. In fact, *Communio et Progressio* denotes a paradigm shift on the part of the Church in its approach to communication. It was the first time that the Church specifically expressed its view of communication as communion. Until the publication of *Communio et Progressio*, the Church was holding on to an institutional view of media. Srampickal and Joseph (2003a) writes:

In the early days of mass media, the official Church had a negative attitude to media, considering them bad and as vehicles of sin. Hence the Church was keen to control and censor media. This changed gradually. Passing through a stage of parallel competing, and then a stage of learning from media, today the Church is more intent at collaborating with the mass media (p. 19).

In fact, during the early period, explicit permission from the Bishops was needed to print any matter especially books and pamphlets (Srampickal and Joseph 2003a). The paradigm shift from institutionalism and control to communitarianism is more than evident now.

2. Communitarian Paradigm of Church

Although the teachings of *Communio et Progressio* demonstrated a clear paradigm shift regarding Church communications, we could say that the communitarian outlook of the Church regarding communication had already begun with *Gaudium et Spes*. As Eilers (2006) remarks, *Gaudium et Spes* underlines the role of the modern media in society. GS presents the role of modern media as: “contributing to the spread of knowledge and the speedy distribution, far and wide, of habits, of thought and of feeling, setting-off chain reactions in their wake...” (GS 1965:6). *Gaudium et Spes* further says, “open up the riches of different cultures to each and every individual, with

the result that a more universal form of culture gradually takes shape, and through it the unity of mankind be fostered and expressed in the measure that the particular characteristics of each culture are preserved” (GS:54). Hence, in numbers 6 and 54 of *Gaudium et Spes* we can already find the Church’s orientation for communication as the communion of peoples and the unity of mankind.

Even if the communitarian outlook began with *Gaudium et Spes* and continued through *Inter Mirifica*, it reached its zenith with the publication of *Communio et Progressio*. It is a definite pastoral instruction published in 1971, for the application of the decree of the Second Vatican Council on the means of social communication. It is regarded as one of the most positive Church documents on social communication. CP is also considered as the *magna carta* of Christian communication (Eilers 1996). From this document emerges a communitarian paradigm, the communitarian face of the Catholic Church and the Catholic media.

The first part of this pastoral instruction clearly delineates the communitarian aspect of communication. The introduction says, “...the unity and advancement of men living in society are the chief aims of social communication and of all the means it uses. These means include press, cinema, radio and television” (CP 1971:1). Thus the very first number of the document highlights the communitarian aspect - unity and advancement of men living in society are the main aims of every communication. It underlines that communication should lead to communion i.e., unity among human beings. All the means of communication including press, cinema, radio and television should aim at the unity of humanity. This is the basic outlook of CP. CP continues,

“This Instruction, it is hoped, will be well received by all those who are professionally involved in the field of communications and, indeed, by all who, from good will, seek the progress of mankind. So, as a result of exchanges of

views and cooperation with such men, the vast potential that lies in the means of social communication will be made good and this for the advancement of all” (CP 1971:5).

CP does not speak about the advancement of Catholics only, but it speaks of the advancement of all. Similarly CP hopes that this instruction will be well received by all who are professionally involved in the field of communication. Surely all media managed by the Catholic Church should put into practice the instruction given by CP. The ultimate goal of all media is the benefit of all people. CP speaks about the effects of modern media in society.

The channels of social communication, even though they are addressed to individuals, reach and affect the whole of society. They inform a vast public about what goes on in the world and about contemporary attitudes. They do it swiftly. That is why they are indispensable to the smooth functioning of modern society, with its complex and ever changing needs, and the continual and often close consultations all this involve (CP:6).

Therefore, channels of social communication should address all the members of society, and not merely Catholics. CP continues the same theme, “these technical advances have high purpose of bringing men into closer contact with one another” (CP:6). This affirms the aim of Catholic media namely, uniting human beings, avoiding everything that may cause disunity and divisions among them.

According to CP, social communications are to strive to multiply contacts within society and to deepen social consciousness. The resultant outcome is that individuals be bound more closely united to their fellow beings and play their part in the unfolding of history, led by the hand of God. In section 8, CP not only states the aim of communication but also points to an ultimate model for communication.

“In Christian faith, the unity and brotherhood of man are the chief aims of all communication and these find their source

and model in the central mystery of the eternal communion between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who live a single divine life” (CP:8).

Every form of communication should lead to the unity and brotherhood of man. This is the fundamental point regarding communitarian paradigm. As shown in No.8, unity and brotherhood are the main aims of communication. CP suggests the Trinitarian unity as the model for communication. In the Trinity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are united and they form a community. The Christian communication should lead to such a communion and unity in the world. All communication processes should ultimately lead men and women to the Trinitarian model of communion. This exactly is the communitarian paradigm on which this research is based; looking at communication as a means of communion and unity and how all media should be targeting this aim.

Again CP No 12 speaks of unity and highlights Christ as the perfect communicator. “Christ communicated to us his life-giving Spirit, who brings all men together in unity” (CP:12). It continues to say in No 13, “And this, in turn, inclines them to justice and peace, to good will and active charity, to mutual help, to love and, in the end, to communion” (CP:13). The emphasis is that the aim of communication is communion, just as Christ, the perfect communicator lived and died to bring all men together in unity. In the vision of the Church, therefore, all media and particularly Christian media are vouched to fulfill this task – that of unifying the human family. *Deepika* being a Catholic medium should aim for nothing less than this.

How to evaluate a medium? CP has clear views regarding this as well. “The total output of media in any given area should be judged by the contribution it makes to the common good. Its news, culture and entertainment should meet the growing needs of society” (CP:16). This is very pertinent for any medium that functions in multi-religious contexts. Here also CP highlights the

outcome of communication as unity. While speaking about the duties of communicators, CP underlines their role, “Communicators have therefore a most important part to play in forming public opinion” (CP:27).

With regard to the effectiveness of media CP teaches that, every communication must comply with certain essential requirements, these being sincerity, honesty and truthfulness. Good intentions and a clear conscience alone do not thereby make a communication sound and reliable. A communication must state the truth. It must accurately reflect the situation with all its implications. The moral worth and validity of a communication does not lie in its theme or intellectual content alone. The manner of presentation, whether in writing, speaking or treatment and even the audience for which it is designed must be taken into account (CP:17).

Another significant instruction of CP is that media should address all members of the society. “The media are there for the good of everyone and to serve everyone” (CP:84). “Media should be able to participate in a worldwide exchange of brotherhood and cooperation” (CP:19). CP also conceives media as an instrument of progress (CP:21). All these highlight the nature of communication as a communion building process. Media which are the means of communication, therefore, should have the same purpose.

3. The Relevance of Communitarian Paradigm in our Time

Since Indian society is highly sensitive on the grounds of religion, politics and ideologies, the communitarian paradigm is relevant for Indian Christian media. Hindus, Christians and Muslims form the major religious communities of the state, although a small population of Jains, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jews and some others are also present. According to the Census 2001, Hindus constitute 56.20 percent, Muslims 24.7 percent and Christians 19 percent of the total population of the state, which has a total population of 3,18,41,374 persons (Prakash 2004).

Christians comprise of both Catholics and non-Catholics. Regarding political affiliation, Kerala follows a two front system (Roy and Wallace 2007) i.e., the Indian National Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF) and the Communist party-led Left Democratic Front (LDF).

In this context the communitarian paradigm of communication is more than relevant as it upholds the unity building role of communications. The society which is divided on the basis of religion and politics offers the media the chance and the opportunity to function as an instrument of unity and peace proposed by CP.

The communitarian aspect of communication is upheld for all parts of the world. However, it is all the more important for those working in multi-religious contexts to have a communication strategy for building up communion. This angle of approach could lead communicators to a better vision of communication as universal in appeal and goal - people of all categories brought together in unity and harmony.

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