

Voices



FROM THE THIRD WORLD

Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians

A NEW WORLD AND OUR THEOLOGIES

Asociacion Ecumenica de
Teologos del Tercer Mundo

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AND OUR THEOLOGIES**

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Editorial

The sixth General Assembly of the EATWOT was held at Johannesburg, South Africa, from July 24 - 27, 2006. The message from the assembly, a summary report and other related papers are published in this volume. We regret we do not have the papers presented at the meeting ready for publication.

An assembly of the EATWOT is an occasion for its members to reflect on their own contextual realities and to envision their theological task. The EATWOT is unique in that its members are committed to theologising from the perspective of the poor and marginalised of this world. Integral to this task is an analysis of the social realities, especially the mechanism of oppression, be it cultural and religious. The statement from this assembly has a marked difference in emphasis and content from the previous statements. The analysis of world realities does not come to us with ideological rigour and confidence as of earlier times. This is understandable. For the realities that we face today are complex. The earlier framework is in need of revision or reformulation. Particularly, the ubiquitous globalisation and religious pluralism have broken many barriers and we are challenged to renegotiate our boundaries. However, our commitment to the marginal remains unchanged, but the contextual realities are not the same. While poverty is the lot of millions in Africa and Asia, they are now exposed to HIV/AIDS and ecological disasters like sea-rising and Tsunami. New issues call for new analysis to understand them and new strategies to overcome them.

In one of the earlier assemblies of the EATWOT we were reminded by Asians that the poor of this world are also

religious. This correlation between poverty and religiosity has assumed new questions to spirituality. When religious truths are turned into ideological weapons, mobilising the poor against an imaginary enemy in those who differ from their faith, spirituality is distorted. The 'other' is the enemy. This spirituality thrives in exclusion. How do we recover the Biblical emphasis on God in the other, the alien, the poor and the widow?

If you look at the documents for critical analysis of our ground realities you will be disappointed. But the strength of it is in its attempt to revisioning a new world. Following the lead given by World Social Forum, there is a marked shift from critical analysis to search for alternatives. Its slogan 'another world is possible' marks this change.

The essential feature of this new world is interconnectedness. That can be described as the new spirituality – not only the connectedness between humans, but between humans and nature. The whole creation is a web of interconnected relationships, the glorious expression of Trinity. To this mutually caring and responsible form of life, we commit ourselves.

Women's caucus in the EATWOT continues to be strong and articulate. The women's communique is a clear indication to it. Patriarchy is the most heinous structural impediment for achieving gender justice.

Finally, the document raises matters relating to the organisational life of the EATWOT. The international gatherings are not only financially unviable but also not the best way to achieve the goal. Some serious thinking has to take place about the *modus operandi* of the EATWOT. True to its ideology, can the emphasis be placed on strengthening the local, and making use of other avenues than international travel and meeting for better communication and sharing on an international level?

Our best wishes and prayers go with the new officers and executives of the EATWOT.

K. C. Abraham

A NEW WORLD AND OUR THEOLOGIES

Part I

**The Sixth General Assembly of the EATWOT
Johannesburg, The Republic of South Africa,
July 24-27, 2006**

*Report by EATWOT'S President, 2001-2006.
Diego Irarrazaval.
VI General Assembly, July 24-27, 2006.*

May I thank each and all members -in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and minorities in the USA- for ways in which we join hearts and minds in a passion for Life, and for allowing me to be part of what all of us do: a renewal of christian theology focused on liberation, a new humanity, and compassion within God's creation. A special word of gratitude to my friends in the executive committee.

May I share with you tasks and concerns as president of Eatwot (2001-6). I have been challenged by the purpose of our association: "doing theology from the vantage point of the poor seeking liberation, integrity of creation, gender co-responsibility, racial and ethnic equality, and interfaith dialogue for promotion of full humanity" (Eatwot's Constitutions and Bylaws, article II). May I also underline new possibilities (particularly our connections with grass roots movements

and World Forums) and also urgent signs pointing towards a reshaped organization.

1. General focus

In today's world, and in our Christian communities, a major shift has been taking place. Many of our questions now deal with signs of the times and with God's revelation in all human journeys. Theology again focuses on humanity and creation (and not only on intrachristian themes). We walk with the Spirit of Christ, as communities that believe in a new earth and heaven. Due to dialogue with non western cultures and religions, our Christian faith becomes deeper and is less attached to absolutes that exclude others. Many Christians become engaged with different faiths, wisdoms, networks leading to another world. Since our IV General Assembly (in the Philippines) and our V Assembly (in Ecuador) we have been concerned not only on injustice worldwide but mostly on global alternatives.

Plural understandings of Christ and the Spirit are cornerstones of our engagement towards a new humanity and creation. It is not a simple strategy so as to get along with people who have other convictions. Rather, to contemplate and interact with people who are different flows from Christian wisdom and leads to mutual growth. In this pilgrimage we participate as church communities with unconditional faith in the Lord. Jesuschrist is the prophet of love, that draws all peoples of the earth towards freedom. These Christian inquiries into the Presence of God have a social and cultural dynamism due to several networks that include the World Forum on Theology and Liberation.

Eatwot is part of the organization of the World Forum on Theology and Liberation., The first WFTL took place in Porto Alegre, Brazil, January 21-25 of 2005 (previous to the World Social Forum). During the WFTL, about 30 Eatwot members met reviewing our regional activities, and being self critical about our association. There are new geopolitical situations; peoples of the world and the poor are our epistemological starting ground. On January 16-19 of 2007 the second

WFTL will be held in Nairobi, Kenya, previous to the World Social Forum. I am convinced that new theological thrusts in the South (and also some within the North) are growing due to persons and groups that interact in global networks that socially and culturally struggle and dream on "another world" (as is the motto of the WSF); in similar ways we contribute to "another spirituality and theology" that excludes no one, and to "other images of God".

2. Internal reorganization

Eatwot begun in Dar-es-Salaam in 1976. So its 30 th anniversary is celebrated in the African context. May we rekindle our hopes and give new directions to this Ecumenical Association. Its regional activities (in Africa, Asia, Latin America, US minorities) and its two intercontinental committees (theological and women's committees) have been carried out on a voluntary basis, with great generosity by many (whose names it would be lengthy to mention now).

Theologians belonging to Eatwot are committed to many personal, professional, and church tasks; they are overworked, communications are difficult, and good wishes remain unfulfilled (for example: more regional activities and communications, having data of all publications by Eatwot members); much work is in a few hands, and everyone is too busy with family, with social justice, with church and professional concerns. Moreover, during the last ten years funding partners have reduced donations; have not seen us as a priority; and have not been given adequate and immediate reports.

For the last five years (2001-6) Eatwot had planned activities that required about a million dollars of donations. A very small part of that was received. Our intercontinental association requires coming together and making long distance journeys; but for travel there is hardly any donation. Many activities have taken place due to resources from institutions where we work, and mainly due to long hours of voluntary work by leadership in each region, by the executive committee, and in a special way by the executive secretary and treasurer, Ramathate

Dolamo. We lack personnel to handle secretarial and financial aspects. All of this may be handled only if Eatwot gets organized in new ways. Minor changes will not be adequate; there is a need for widespread changes in organization and more persons doing the necessary networking.

May I underline key changes. Eatwot needs to have at least two persons for each major responsibility. In this sense, in March and May of 2006 the membership received a proposal of constitutional amendment. Article IV, number 11: the General Assembly elects two persons as international leadership (president, vicepresident, executive secretary, treasurer, chairpersons of women's commission and of theological commission) and as regional coordinators. One is called first president, first vice president, etc., the other is called second president, second vicepresident, etc. The "first" person has full leadership responsibilities and is invited to intercontinental meetings and other tasks, and the "second" carries out tasks only when the "first" person is unable to do so.

There is a need for basic criteria for any role in leadership: active membership in Eatwot, experience in team work and leadership, verbal and/or written commitment to carry out responsibility and to resign if that is not the case, and material and human resources so as to have an efficient leadership.

Moreover, experience shows that donations are few and they go to local projects (that may be placed together with intercontinental meetings). So regional assemblies and executive committee activities could be reshaped accordingly.

3. Intercontinental and regional plans

Most activities have depended on e mail communication, and on many personal and group networking. I have assisted and been almost on weekly (and at times daily) communication with regional coordinators, the vicepresident, the executive secretary and treasurer. Moreover there have been general plans.

The Executive Committee (President, VicePresident, Executive Secretary, Regional Coordinators) has met in Quito (October 1-2, 2001), in Bossey (June 10-14, 2002), in Maryknoll (July 26-28, 2004), in Johannesburg (July 22-23, 2006). The second and third meetings were held together with workshops, the one in 2002 on hope and inter-faith praxis, its theological meaning and its practical implications, and the one of 2004 on Christian-Muslim dialogue. Inputs for the first meeting were published in our Journal *Voices*, and inputs on the second workshop have yet to be published. All that networking has been planned and carried out by the three of us (Ramathate, Meehyun, myself).

Concerning regional activities, and intercontinental commissions, the chairpersons are giving detailed reports. So here only basic data is presented (and I again thank the regions for allowing me to promote their activities and be present and give inputs in some of them). I have also assisted and fostered the project of writing *Eatwot's History* and the establishment of a Web Page (organized by Meehyun).

In Asia, regional (Rohan Silva) and national coordinators met in Hong Kong, March 3-5, 2003, sharing what is being done in each chapter within Asia and drawing a five year plan with the motto: Beyond Globalization, inter-faith praxis in Asia. Later, in Shri Lanka there was a regional meeting, ATC VI, March 26-31, 2006, with the theme: emerging face of the Asian Church through Inter-faith Dialogue. A workshop also took place in Pakistan. Moreover, due to KC Abraham and other generous contributors, *Eatwot's Journal* is published out of Bangalore, India. The Asia Women's Commission held a workshop in Garut, Indonesia, April 17-22, 2005, on: a feminist theology of hope through interfaith dialogue from a holistic perspective".

In Africa, networking was begun by Arnold Temple (who did not continue as regional coordinator) and continued by Ramathate and Philomena, who organized the regional consultation and women's commission meeting in Ghana, March 3-5, 2005, on: towards a theology of hope from a holistic perspective through interfaith dialogue. The paperes are being published in *Voices*.

In Latin America, regional coordinator (Tania Mara Sampaio) and other Eatwot members participated and/or led several activities: three volumes on theology and religious pluralism (edited by Luiza Tomita, Jose Maria Vigil, Marcelo Barros), workshop on Indigenous Theologies (in Paraguay, may 2002), workshop on Afro-latinamerican and caribbean theologies (in Sao Paulo, october 20-25, 2003), and women's commission workshop (in Matanzas, Cuba, july 31 to august 2, 2005). Moreover the region hosted the WFTL in Porto Alegre, Brasil, where meetings were held by regional representatives (january 2005).

US minorities had numerous contacts among themselves (while participating in activities organized by other institutions, like AAR) and led by Jung Ha Kim also held regional workshops in New York (september 17-19, 2004) and Chicago (september 29, october 1, 2005), and their papers are also being published in Eatwot's Journal Voices.

Concerning the two special commissions, Philomena Mwaura has been active as chairperson of Women's Commission; a lack of funds made it impossible to hold an intercontinental workshop, that may only take place now in Johannesburg, july 2006. The Theological Commission has functioned in a regional way (specially in Latin America with its dynamic team of Luiza Tomita, Jose Maria Vigil, Marcelo Barros), but not in an intercontinental way since Yang En has not been in conditions to lead it.

Since the General Assembly in Quito there has been interest in research and writing about the History of Eatwot. MP Joseph (of India) has begun this project, with assistance of J. Cone in Union Theological Seminary (where the archives are kept) and of myself. On another part, the Eatwot chapter in Hong Kong, assisted by Meehyun Chung, has begun Eatwot's Web Page.

In a few words: much has been accomplished due to the work of many; but if we look at mainline theological productions, our input is quite marginal and known by few.

4. Financial resources

Throughout these 5 years Eatwot (mainly the President and at times the Vice President) has continued and nurtured new contacts, visited personally, and mostly had e mail and postal communications with many funding partners. From Europe: ADVENIAT in Germany, BILANCE in The Netherlands, BREAD FOR ALL in Switzerland, BREAD FOR THE WORLD in Germany, BROEDERLIJK DELEN in Belgium, CAFOD in England, CCFD in France, CHRISTIAN AID in England, Church of NORWAY, CIDSE in Belgium, CMC and CORDAID in The Netherlands, CWM in England, DKA in Austria, EMW in Germany (from whom we received many donations), ENTRAIDE ET FRATERNITE in Belgium, FASTENOPFER in Switzerland, GLOBAL MINISTRIES in Netherlands, ICCO and IMMO in The Netherlands, INSTITUTE OF MISSIOLOGY in Germany, MDO in Holland, MISEREOR in Germany, MISSIO in Aachen Germany, MISSIO in Munchen Germany, MISSION 21 in Switzerland, NOVIB and OIKOS and NZR in The Netherlands, NMZ in Germany, SVENSKA KYRKAN (Church of Sweden), WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES. In North America we have had contacts with AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES, ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE in Canada (that has also been one of our main funding partners), FAITHFUL COMPANIONS OF JESUS in Canada, GLOBAL MINISTRIES in the USA, MARYKNOLL in the USA, OBLATES in Canada, PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CANADA, PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, USA, RONCALLI FOUNDATION in Canada, UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA. In Asia with the ASIAN CHRISTIAN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTE in Hong Kong.

Visits have been made to several funding partners (the President went to Canada in 2002 and to some funding partners in Europe during 2004 and 2005; these visits were not payed with Eatwot funds since I was traveling in those areas for other purposes). Visits were made by the Vicepresident to several partners in Europe (also not on Eatwot money since she had other reasons to travel). Moreover, a trip was

made to seek funds in Europe, on October of 2003 by Sergio Torres, former general secretary of Eatwot, and by Silvia Regina of Latin Americas women's commission (and half of Silvia's expenses were paid by Eatwot, since the other half was paid by another organization which she and Torres represented).

As everyone is aware, donations from ecumenical funding partners have diminished during the last 10 years. On 2001 several partners indicated to Mary John Mananzan that it was better to draw a general plan and budget. I did that, after the General Assembly in Quito (2001), with the assistance of Ramathate Dolamo, and we sent such a general proposal to most of our funding partners. Few responded positively and gave us general donations (in a special way: EMW of Hamburg, and Development et Paix from Montreal), and some responded helping us with special projects: Missio Munchen (for Asia regional workshop), Fastenopfer (for women's commission in Latin America), EMW for several of our projects, AMA, Brot fuer Alle (for publications).

Concerning Bank Accounts, in 2002 we had three accounts. The checking account # 10769577 in New York, with 78 thousand dollars; a time deposit Nassau account # 37016675, that gave Eatwot limited interests, so on March 14, 2004, US \$ 61,550.91 were transferred to our checking account; and a non US Investment Fund # 400509 of 89 thousand dollars. The Bank in New York told us, in May of 2005, that "due to the tragedy of 9/11 and the Patriot Act we have no choice but to close your non for profit accounts" and to stop taking care of Eatwot's money. That made waste a lot of time in debates and consultations. Finally, on April of 2006 the amount of 152 thousand dollars of such non investment fund was placed in our checking account 10769577 (and these funds are being used in the VI General Assembly).

Everyone who prepares and manages the above mentioned intercontinental and regional activities is most aware that our funds are diminishing, that few new donations are arriving, and that Eatwot has to continue with its own resources and plans at the local level for

which some donations may be obtained. So as to carry out intercontinental activities that demand many resources, it is better to link them up with local and regional activities that may receive donations asked for and managed by each chapter or region of Eatwot.

May I finish with a heartfelt and hopefilled faith

For some persons phrases such as "another world is possible", "ways of doing theology from the standpoint of non western cultures and religions", and "relationships with God and neighbour, in a new earth and heaven", may seem to be wishful thinking. I feel that such utopian phrases become true through concrete proposals (even though utopia is never under human control). When there is a passion for Life, it is possible to have meaningful theologies. May we address concrete potentials, that set the course for a hopeful theological discourse among the "little ones" of the earth. Perhaps there are few resources and few participants, but shared small passions have no boundaries.

ACTIVITIES REPORT OF THE VICE-PRESIDENT OF EATWOT, 2001-2006

Submitted by Meehyun Chung, June 20, 2006

My main tasks as Vice-President have been:

1. to clearly communicate with, and support the activities of, the President and General Secretary;
 2. to consult with both the Theological and Women's Commissions;
 3. to liaise with the regional co-ordinators;
 4. to create and update the website www.eatwot.org;
 5. to liaise with our funding partners and, in particular, to raise financial support for the Women's Pre Assembly and General Assembly of 2006.
1. During April and July of 2002 I visited several funding partners in the Netherlands and Switzerland. These included NOVIB and CORDAID in The Hague, OIKOS, IIMO, and MDO in Utrecht, ICCO

in AD Zeist, Bread-For-All in Bern, Fasten Opfer in Lucerne, and the WCC in Geneva. The responses were generally negative, as the funding partners themselves had financial difficulties.

2. I organized, with the President and General Secretary, a workshop focused on Inter-religious Dialogue held in Bossey, Switzerland during June 2002. Many funding partners (and potential funding partners), as well as experts within the field were invited from throughout Europe.
3. I was invited to attend the Asian National Co-ordinator's Meeting in March 2003, held in Hong Kong. While there, and with the agreement of each of the National Co-ordinators, I began to prepare for the publication of a book on contemporary Asian feminist theology, written by female contributors currently active within Asia. Of course my priority was to invite EATWOT female member. But it didn't work out well. With the permission of President Diego Irarrazaval, I invited certain contributors who were not EATWOT members. The greatest challenge during this project was the on-going communication with the contributors from Hongkong, Thailand, Indonesia, Korea, India, Japan as neither regular nor electronic mail proved ideal. Although there were many difficulties finding a publisher, the book, published in **Indian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (ISPCK)** India, will be launched in July 2006.
4. After the Asian National Co-ordinator's Meeting in March, 2003, in Hong Kong, I was able to create our website with the help of Asian Human Rights Commission (<http://www.ahrchk.net>). However, it is important that we make the required investment to improve the site, both as to its ease of use and its content. For example, if we could upload and download more quickly, then all of the articles printed in our journal 'Voices' could also be available on-line. I think it is important that we use modern technology to carry the hope and ideas of EATWOT throughout the world.

5. I had hoped, especially given my new job at mission 21, to play an effective role in connecting European funding partners with (so-called) third world women, and have written many emails and letters seeking support for a variety of projects. However, this proved unsuccessful. One difficulty I identified is that the funding partners require more detail than is usually included within our reporting format. This aspect of our operations needs to be improved.
6. From September 2003 to December 2003 I taught Asian Feminist Theology at the Vancouver School of Theology in Canada, fulfilling an invitation accepted in July 2001, prior to being chosen as Vice President. I used the opportunity to introduce many materials and activities related to EATWOT into my lectures, especially in regard to the activities of Asian women.
7. The Executive Committee of EATWOT had requested that M. P. Joseph undertake the writing of a history of our association. I suggested to him that he apply for the Burke Library Scholars in Residence Program at the Union Theological Seminary. I am happy to have supported that successful application with a letter of recommendation.
He reports that the history project is progressing very slowly. He has finished reading the archives kept in Union Theological Seminary in New York but, unfortunately, could not dedicate himself to the project during the last four months. He expects to resume the work soon and, if possible, to conduct interviews during the General Assembly.
8. I have tried very hard to maintain contact with Yang-En Cheng, who is in charge of the Theological Commission. Due to personally difficult circumstances in his seminary, he was unable to continue his work for EATWOT. Unfortunately, due to the lack of timely information forthcoming from him, I was unable to report about the Theological Commission to our funding partner, Bread-For-All.

9. I participated in the meeting of the Pacific, Asian and North American Asian Women in Theology and Ministry (PANAAWTM) in March, 2004 in San Francisco, and the Christian World Mission (CWM) Asian meeting in May 2004 in Malaysia. At both meetings I presented information about EATWOT.
10. I visited the General Offices of the United Church of Canada (UCC) and the Presbyterian Church of Canada (PCC) on June 16, 2004, in Toronto, and reported on EATWOT's current situation to Chris Ferguson, Bern Jagunos, Ron Wallace and Ian Morrison.
11. I participated in the Executive Committee Meeting of Maryknoll Missionaries in New York, July, 2004. We discussed inter-religious issues and planned our General Assembly. I also used the occasion to visit the EATWOT archives at Union Theological Seminary.
12. In June, 2005, I participated in the Inter-religious Conference in Geneva, Switzerland hosted by the World Council of Churches (WCC). Following the conference I invited President Diego to mission 21 to further our relations there, particularly on the issues of peace through religion.
13. In November, 2005, I visited Evangelisches Missionswerk (EMW) in Hamburg, Germany, to meet with Dr. Sabine Plonz. After receiving so many rejections to our proposal, it was wonderful and encouraging news to hear that they will support our General Assembly.
14. I advised on the Women's Commission Workshops, even though the communication was not ideal. These included:
The African Women's Commission Workshop, March 3-5, 2005, in Accra, Ghana, with the theme: Towards a Theology of Hope, an Holistic Perspective through Interfaith Dialogue; the Asian Women Commission Workshop, April 17-22, 2005 in Garut, Indonesia, with the theme: Feminist Theology of Hope through Interfaith Dialogue from a Holistic Perspective; the Latin American

Women's Commission, July 31 – August 2, 2005, in Matanzas, Cuba, with the theme: Inter-religious Dialogue from the Perspective of Feminist Theologies.

15. I had intensive discussion about the purpose and activities of EATWOT with the appropriate persons of Fasten Opfer and Bread-For-All in Switzerland. However, the results were not positive, not only due to our lack of detailed reports, but also in relation to the quantity and quality of our theological production.
16. I have arranged 2005 a link between our Journal 'Voices' and 'Zeitschrift für Mission' of German Association of missiology and mission 21. Certain of our articles may be selected for translation, and then published in German. This will further disseminate our theological efforts.
17. Despite consistent effort and much correspondence through 2005 and the first half of 2006, I have been unable to find support for EATWOT among the Churches of the Scandinavian countries (Sweden, Norway, Finland).
18. Since November, 2005, we (the President, Vice-President and General Secretary) have been actively preparing for our Women's Preassembly and General Assembly. The greatest difficulty has been maintaining active communication with those in charge: the Regional Co-ordinators, the Theological Commissioner, and the Women's Commissioner. Only by June, 2006, had I gradually received communications from most of them.
 - ❖ I want to thank the President, the General Secretary, the members and executive of EATWOT for their friendship, support and encouragement during my tenure. The experiences I have had have been many, varied, and valuable. Learning more about our association and the problems it faces has broadened my perspective, and helped me within my own work.
 - ❖ It was a great pleasure getting to know both the President and the General Secretary through our shared efforts. I am, I admit,

very thankful that President Diego has remained healthy and active throughout this period, so that I never needed to assume his responsibilities.

- ❖ I appreciate your prayers and best wishes as I continue my mission in various parts of the world.
- ❖ Respectfully,
- ❖ Meehyun Chung.
- ❖ Vice President of Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT)
- ❖ www.eatwot.org
- ❖ June 20th, 2006, Basel, Switzerland

SIXTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE ECUMENICAL ASSOCIATION OF THIRD WORLD THEOLOGIAN (EATWOT)

*(Johannesburg, Republic of South Africa
July 24-27, 2006)*

Karl Gaspar

SUMMARY RECORD OF ACTIVITIES DURING THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JULY 24

All the expected participants arrived in the morning of this day. From 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., the participants went on an exposure trip seeing the different sections and meeting a few residents in the Soweto township, viewing the exhibits at the Hector Pieterse museum and that of the Mandela family (both in Soweto), having lunch at the shebeen, seeing parts of Johannesburg and visiting the Origins Centre Museum. After supper was the Opening Worship conducted by the US Minorities delegation, the Welcome Address of Ramathate Dolamo (EATWOT's Secretary-Treasurer who serves as host of this conference) and the Keynote Speech of Mohau Pheko who connected EATWOT's conference theme with that of the World Social Forum.

JULY 25

The devotions to start the day was prepared by the African delegation. Desmond Lesejane of South Africa led a Bible Study after the devotions. Announcements were then made by R. Dolamo related to technical matters related to the conference. After a short break, the formal sessions began with Emmanuel Martey as moderator. First, he called on Diego Irarrazaval, EATWOT's President, to give his report. A copy of this report – A New World and our Theologies – was distributed. The report of the Vice-President, Meehyun Chung, followed after which R. Dolamo also presented his report as Secretary-Treasurer. After these three reports, questions were entertained.

After the coffee break, the Regional Coordinators read excerpts from the written reports which were distributed; they included Rohan Silva (Asia), R. Dolamo (Africa), Tania Mara Vieira Sampaio (Latin America, but the oral report was done by Luiza Tomita) and Andrea Smith (US Minorities).

The two Commissions also gave their reports: that of the Theological Commission (the document was prepared by Yang-en Cheng but read by R. Silva) and that of the Women's Commission (presented by Philomena Mwaura). An Open Forum followed the presentations.

The afternoon's session began with a round table discussion on the theme – Another Possible World and Theology. The panelists for this session included: Linda Thomas, Marcelo Barros, E. Martey and Shirley Lal Wijesinghe. The objective of this session was to look into how the World Social Forum influenced the deliberations of the World Forum on Theology of Liberation and how this has impacted EATWOT.

The next session was the round table of the Women's Conference with the following delegates as panelists: Ada Maria (US Minorities), Lilith Usog (Asia), T. Sampaio (Latin America), T. Okure (Africa) and P. Mwaura (EATWOT's Women's Commission Coordinator). They

presented the communiqué – A New World and a New Theology: Women-Centered Theological Contributions - which the women drafted together at the end of their two-day assembly prior to the General Assembly.

After supper, the different regions had their separate meetings in order to deal with the following agenda: 1) to prepare and finalize the Regional Report they were to present on July 26, 2) to nominate names required for the elections to the different posts of EATWOT, 3) to choose a representative to the Drafting Committee tasked with drafting the final document and 4) to discuss financial issues affecting EATWOT's activities at the international and regional levels.

JULY 26

The day began with the devotions prepared by the Asian delegation followed by the Bible Study led by D. Lesejane. Asia was assigned the facilitation of the day and this task was undertaken by Archie Ligo. The round table discussions for the day involved the sharing about human and theological issues in each Region.

First was Africa and E. Martey, Sophie Chirongoma, Zechariah Samita, Protos Kendirius and T. Okure constituted the panel. There was an open forum after their presentation.

This was followed by Asia and those in the panel were: Nunuk Murniati, S. L. Wijesinghe, Rosario Battung and R. Silva. Again, there was an open forum after the panel presentation. Before breaking off for lunch, D. Irarrazaval announced the names of those nominated for the different EATWOT posts.

After lunch, it was the turn of US Minorities (Peoples) and the panel was composed of Ada Ma. Isasi-Diaz, Rosetta Ross, A. Smith and Randall Bailey. An open forum followed. Latin America followed and the round table discussion panelists included Sonia Querino Santos, Maricel Mene Lopez, Ernestina Lopez Bac and Jose Ma. Vigil. An open forum again followed.

After supper, there was a last round table discussion which was that of the Indigenous Theologies and the panel was composed of R. Battung, Z. Samita, E. L. Bac and Karl Gaspar. The delegates were asked to respond to the question: As an EATWOT theologian, how have you “integrated” Indigenous theologies in your praxis and theological reflection? After the sharing, K. Gaspar summarized the points raised by those who spoke.

This roundtable discussion was followed by a plenary meeting on EATWOT finances. A financial report was submitted by R. Dolamo and each copy was given to the delegates. There were some questions raised on the report and these were answered by R. Dolamo. The EMW representative, Sabine Plonz, gave her feedback on the financial report. Regarding the need to raise more funds for EATWOT, a number of suggestions were proposed: earn more from the Journal (*VOICES*) by marketing this to libraries, collect membership fees and transfer existing funds to a bank account that earns interest. There was a consensus that a percentage of those collected at the national level should be sent to the head office of EATWOT to be used by the overall organization. The amount of the membership fees and the percentage to be sent to the head office will be decided on by the national groups. There was also an agreement that when the delegates come to attend a General Assembly, that each delegate pay a registration fee.

JULY 27

The Latin American delegation took charge of the devotions as first activity of the last day. The ritual site was outside the meeting hall as the delegates encircled a tree; this was a ritual to honor the ancestors and linking them with humankind's first ancestors from Africa.

When the plenary assembly was convened, D. Irarrazaval proposed a revised schedule for the day which was approved by the assembly. He then facilitated the session to discuss EATWOT's main focus (or themes and dimensions) for the next five years. A number of suggestions came up.

In an effort to reach a consensus, it was agreed that a small group (one from each Region: P. Gundani, M. Lopez, R. Ross and K. Gaspar) would come together to come up with a formulation that is inclusive enough to bring in the major points raised. They proposed the main focus – NEW THEOLOGIES FOR AN ALTERNATIVE WORLD – and the dimensions (themes): 1) Globality (Interconnectedness) and Globalization, 2) Social Justice and Reconciliation, 3) Experiences of Everyday Life, 4) Inter-faith Praxis and 5) Identities: Cultural, Gender, Racial, Ethnic and Sexual 5) Hermeneutics. These were accepted by the Assembly.

After the coffee break, the assembly reconvened to discuss the proposed draft of the Final Message of the Assembly prepared by the Drafting Committee composed of A. Ligo, L. Tomita, R. Bailey and P. Gundani. The statement summarized what happened during the Assembly and offered suggestions for EATWOT's action and program development.

Following the discussion on the Final Message was the session to deal with a proposed constitutional amendment. This involved the problem when a vacancy arises in any of the offices. A proposal came up, was discussed and agreed upon, namely: When a major emergency or vacancy arises, the Executive Committee should proceed to solve those difficulties.

Before breaking for lunch, the delegates voted for those nominated to the different posts of EATWOT.

The following were elected:

President	Rohan Silva (Asia)
Vice-President	Emmanuel Martey (Africa)
Secretary-Treasurer	Luiza Tomita (Latin America)
Regional Coordinators	Nunuk Murniati (Asia)
	Ramathate Dolamo (Africa)
	Maricel Mena Lopez (Latin America)
	Andrea Smith (US Peoples)

Women Commission	Lilith Usog (Asia)
	Beatrice Ngeh (Africa)
	Sonia Querino Santos (Latin America)
Theological Commission	Anthoniraj Thumma (Asia)
	Philomena Mwaura (Africa)
	Jose Ma. Vigil (Latin America)

(The US Peoples Women and Theological Commission members will be chosen by the US Peoples members later).

After the elections, the new President gave a short speech.

In the afternoon, there was a final plenary session to deal with other items including 1) EATWOT to organize the World Forum on Theology and Liberation in 2008, 2) the UTS archives which are in Columbia University, 3) the organization's webpage, 4) publications and 5) the history project. The body decided that the World Forum item be further discussed by the ExCom in January. As to the archives, the suggestions included: leaving them with Columbia in NY but to find funds to duplicate the archives so that we have them in the Third World, have a CD of the archives and that materials from 2001 to the present be sent to the archives (with the ExCom finding a way that this be done). As to the webpage, the ExCom will take care of this need.

Regarding publications, there is need to review *VOICES*. The Committee doing publications with members from each Region be strengthened. These will be taken up the ExCom. As to membership of EATWOT, it is not clear as to who accept members: the regions or the ExCom. The suggestion presented was that once a membership is approved at the country level, then the name is sent immediately to the ExCom; thus the day that one is accepted as part of a national group automatically becomes a member of the intercontinental group. This, however, is just to expedite the process of approving members without the need for an amendment of the Constitution. This suggestion was approved.

As to the writing of EATWOT's history, there was a motion to involve one representative from each Region to review the draft of the *historical writing*. This was approved.

The second draft of the Final Statement was taken up, discussed and, eventually, approved. This session was followed by a meeting of the outgoing and incoming ExComs had their meetings along with the Regional Coordinators.

The Conference ended with a Closing Worship prepared by the US Peoples and a *Braai* (Barbecue) as celebration for the success of the conference.

ASOCIACION ECUMENICA DE TEOLOGOS/ AS DEL TERCER MUNDO

*Sexta Asamblea General
Sud Africa, Johannesburgo, 24-7 de julio, 2006.*

MENSAJE FINAL

“Otro mundo es posible: He aquí que yo creo cielos nuevos y tierra nueva (Isaías 65:17)”. Ésto hemos conversado cuarenta y dos personas delegadas de Africa, Asia, América Latina, Estados Unidos, *pertenecientes a la ASETT (en inglés: EATWOT)*. Primero hemos peregrinado a Soweto, un barrio histórico en el caminar revolucionario de Africa del Sur; aquí hemos visitado un asentamiento humano, y los museos de la familia Mandela, de Hector Petersen, y de la Universidad de Witwatersrand. De este modo ingresamos en un país asolado por la maldad, pero que luego ha renacido, y constatamos que la fe, la esperanza y el amor son posibles y sostenibles.

Las preocupaciones del Foro Social Mundial (FSM) han estado presente durante la asamblea de ASETT. La srta. Mohau Pheko

(integrante del Consejo Sud Africano del FSM) ha hecho la ponencia inaugural. Los estudios bíblicos han estado a cargo del pastor Desmond Lesejane (de los Servicios Ecuménicos para una Transformación Socio-económica). Cada día ha comenzado con oraciones presididas por personas delegadas de las cuatro regiones que conforman nuestra Asociación Ecuménica.

El Comité Ejecutivo, las Comisiones, y las Regiones, han presentado sus informes del quinquenio (2001-2006). A continuación hubo mesas redondas sobre el FSM de Porto Alegre y sobre la Conferencia de Mujeres Teólogas de ASETT/EATWOT (en los días previos a la Asamblea General). En los debates han aflorado varias cuestiones: la existencia de fuertes movimientos sociales y de pueblos, que buscan transformar el mundo, la necesidad de encontrar nuevas expresiones y metodologías teológicas adecuadas a los cambios contemporáneos, los desafíos de la globalización y también de la complicidad de las iglesias con la opresión, síndrome de adicción al colonialismo y al neo-colonialismo y a resabios de la esclavitud, el constante impacto del patriarcado en los procesos teológicos, y la conjugación de lo patriarcal con lo racial, etnocéntrico, sexista, clasista, el militarismo y el sistema de castas. Ante estas grandes cuestiones, ASETT/EATWOT siente el desafío de evaluar si las hemos encarado y si como organización hemos fallado o evitado encararlas.

Los informes de las labores llevadas a cabo por las regiones de ASETT/EATWOT ha permitido examinar varios temas y algunas controversias. Nuestra Asamblea General ha debatido lenguajes sobre Dios, la relación entre Evangelio y cultura, la perspectiva de género que incluye géneros y sexualidades, el dialogo entre comunidades de fe y entre religiones, la pluralidad religiosa, la autoridad del texto bíblico, la espiritualidad personal, expresiones religiosas por parte de pueblos indígenas que interactúan con el cristianismo, diversas orientaciones sexuales, y las relaciones mutuas entre varios modos de hacer teología de liberación. Además hubo sesiones especiales sobre espiritualidad y teología autóctona, y sobre la viabilidad financiera de ASETT/EATWOT.

Gracias a estas deliberaciones, hemos acordado las siguientes acciones y programas a desarrollar en los años venideros:

1. Participar en las teologías de género, y la innovación metodológica que ello significa; ello confronta privilegios patriarcales, e implica reconstruir las ideologías de género.
2. Examinar la autoridad del texto bíblico en la labor teológica, y también las otras fuentes orales y escritas que forman parte de los nuevos trabajos teológicos.
3. Reafirmar métodos praxiológicos que encaran las tensiones entre la acción concreta y las fórmulas y construcciones teológicas.
4. Continuar colaborando con grupos humanos que se expresan en términos de género, raza, etnia, sexo, identidad; a fin de aprender mutuamente y de continuar forjando viables comunidades de liberación.
5. Desarrollar mayor dialogo e interacción entre quienes formamos parte de ASETT/EATWOT, y con personas de otros grupos de fe y religión, que no aspiran a la hegemonía y que optan por la humanización de quienes dialogan entre sí.

La Asamblea General asumió para el quinquenio 2006-2011 la temática de “Nuevas teologías para un mundo alternativo”, que conlleva los aspectos siguientes:

1. interconectividad y globalización,
2. justicia social y reconciliación,
3. la experiencia cotidiana,
4. la praxis inter-fe,
5. identidades en términos de cultura, género, raza, etnia, sexualidad,
6. hermenéuticas.

Finalmente ha sido elegido el nuevo Comité Ejecutivo de ASETT/EATWOT presidido por Rohan Silva (de Sri Lanka) como presidente, Emmanuel Martey (de Ghana) como vicepresidente, y Luiza Tomita (de Brazil) como secretaria ejecutiva y tesorera.

A Dios sea la Gloria.

FINAL MESSAGE OF THE SIXTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF ECUMENICAL ASSOCIATION OF THIRD WORLD THEOLOGIANS

Johannesburg, RSA 24-27 July 2006

We the members of EATWOT, forty-two in number from Africa, Asia, Latin America and the US, met under the theme, “Another World is Possible: ‘Behold I create new heavens and a new earth’ (Isa 65:17).” We began with a pilgrimage to Soweto, one of the sites of revolutionary struggles in South Africa, visiting among other places an informal settlement, the Hector Petersen Museum, and the Mandela Family Museum. We also visited the Origin Centre of the University of Witwatersrand, in Johannesburg. These places immersed us in a country which was ravaged by evil and reborn, showing us that belief, faith, hope and love is possible and sustainable.

Woven through the conference was a variety of inputs from the World Social Forum (WSF), beginning with the keynote address by M^s. Mohau Pheko, a South African Council Member of WSF. Bible

study on the theme was conducted by Rev. Desmond Lesejane of the Ecumenical Services for Social and Economic Transformation. Each day began with devotions respectively led by members of the four regions.

After Five Year Reports: 2001-2006 from the Executive Committee, Commissions and Regions, round table discussions were held on the WSF in Porto Alegre and on the Women’s pre-Assembly meeting. Key issues which emerged from these discussions were the existence of powerful numbers of people and social movements, committed to constructive change in the world, the need for new theological formulations and methods for living into the changes taking place in the world, the challenges of globalization and Christian Church complicities with these forces of domination, dependency-syndromes of colonialism and neo-colonialism and residues of enslavement, the continued control of patriarchy upon our processes of theologizing and the intersectionality of patriarchy with racism, ethnocentrism, sexism, classism, militarism and the caste system. The challenge to EATWOT is to explore how we have been faithful in addressing these and also how as an organization we have been deficient *and* resistant in addressing them.

The Assembly also received reports from the regions on their work which led to the surfacing of the following issues and areas of tension and attention. The Assembly grappled with issues regarding the nature of God, gospel and culture, gender inclusive of all genders and sexualities, interfaith/inter-religious dialogues, religious pluralism, authority of the biblical text, personal spirituality, the autonomy of indigenous religious expressions and their intersections with Christianity, diversity of sexual orientations, and the relationships of various forms of liberation theologies with each other.

Two special sessions, one devoted to Indigenous Theologies and spiritualities and another to financial viability of EATWOT were added to the agenda.

As a result of these deliberations we hold forth the following covenant for future EATWOT action and program development:

1. Development of and engagement with gender theologies and new methods for such theologizing which challenge patriarchal privileges and require the reconstruction of ideologies of all genders;
2. Exploration of the authority of the biblical text in our theological endeavors along with naming additional oral and written sources to be engaged and explored in the formation of these new theological endeavors;
3. Reaffirmation of praxiological methods which constructively engage the tensions between action on the ground and theological formulations and constructions;
4. Affirmation of our commitment as theologians to working with gender, racial, ethnic, indigenous, and sexual groups in mutuality, learning from each other to enhance the building of viable liberatory communities.
5. Developing dialogical styles and approaches to interaction with each other and with members of other religious groups which are non-hegemonic and which affirm the humanity and worthiness of all parties in the dialogue.

The Assembly adopted the theme, “New Theologies for an Alternative World” for the next five years, 2006-2011. The focus areas to be explored under the theme are,

1. Interconnectedness and Globalization
2. Social Justice and Reconciliation
3. Experiences of Everyday Life
4. Interfaith praxis
5. Identities: Cultural, gender, racial, ethnic, and sexual
6. Hermeneutics

It also elected Rohan Silva, President, Emmanuel Martey, Vice-President, and Luiza Tomita, Executive Secretary/Treasurer.

To GOD Be The GLORY!

COMUNICADO MUNDO NUEVO Y TEOLOGIA NUEVA: APORTES TEOLÓGICOS CENTRADOS EN LA MUJER

En Johannesburgo, Sud Africa, del 22 al 23 de julio del 2006, ha sido celebrada la conferencia de mujeres de ASETT (Asociación Ecuménica de teólogas/os del Tercer Mundo, cuya sigla en inglés es EATWOT). Treinta teólogas de Asia, Africa, América Latina, y de minorías de Estados Unidos de América, nos hemos reunido en torno al tema “Mundo nuevo y teología nueva: aportes teológicos centrados en la mujer”.

Primero ha habido informes de la coordinadora internacional de la Comisión de Mujeres de ASETT/EATWOT y de las coordinadoras de cada región. Los informes regionales presentados en la plenaria suscitaron temáticas que han sido examinadas en grupos pequeños.

Una primera temática han sido los puntos en común y las diferencias en los modos de hacer teología.

Las mujeres siguen siendo discriminadas en la religión y en la sociedad. Esto conlleva el tráfico de mujeres y niñas/os en Africa y Asia, que a menudo son víctimas de VIH/SIDA. En los Estados Unidos de América, el VIH/SIDA ha sido contraído por muchas mujeres latinas y afro-americanas. También la mujer en Asia y la latina en Estados Unidos sufre la injusticia por ser trabajadora migrante.

En las diversas regiones del mundo, las mujeres hacen esfuerzos para participar en el dialogo entre personas con diferentes formas de fe. En Asia y Africa existe un constante dialogo entre el Cristianismo y el Islam, el Budismo, el Hinduismo, y las religiones originarias e indígenas.

Las mujeres teólogas también compartimos el compromiso de reflexionar desde la experiencia de asociaciones de base. Esto a veces es difícil en Sud Africa, porque académicos de raza blanca han usado al pueblo para sus intereses profesionales.

Debido al enfoque desde las agrupaciones de base, los aportes teológicos centrados en la mujer suelen no ser bien recibidos por el mundo académico. Vale decir, la teología centrada en la mujer es a menudo marginada. En Asia y Africa existen obstáculos para desarrollar, publicar, y tener acceso a elaboraciones teológicas centradas en la mujer. En América Latina, Africa, y Estados Unidos, el término feminista no siempre es aceptado.

La segunda temática ha sido la de valores y modos de entender nuestra visión de una teología nueva y un mundo nuevo. Tomando en cuenta el conflicto entre capitalismo y socialismo, estamos de acuerdo que la vida es el valor principal y más precioso. Cuidamos el tejido de la vida. En este tejido, la vida humana es una trama preciosa. Nos parece que un mundo nuevo exige una red de seguridad social que ofrezca lo esencial de la vida para toda persona. Además del bienestar material la gente tiene que aportar a la construcción del bien común, o mejor dicho, a un mundo nuevo. Por eso promovemos el desarrollo de

todas las capacidades humanas, el respeto a las personas y al medio ambiente, y la promoción de la reciprocidad.

Nuestro encuentro ha comenzado con una homilía. Ella ha subrayado el valor de respetar la labor humana de carácter comunitario: “durae” (en lenguaje de Korea). Éste valor consiste en la interconexión entre Dios y la humanidad y la naturaleza, que genera obras armoniosas y que permite disfrutar los frutos de nuestra labor. A continuación, la conferencia inicial ha desarrollado la temática africana de “botho”, que significa humanidad, ser plenamente humano. Ello es manifestado en la comunidad y la hospitalidad, sin dejar de lado las acciones de la persona apreciándose a sí misma.

Luego (en la primera mesa redonda) se ha conversado sobre el modo que la mujer hace teología perseverantemente inmersa en las luchas de los pueblos por su liberación. Intentamos llevar a cabo una nueva teología cuyas fuentes son las creencias del pueblo. Hacemos teología desde la particularidad de ser mujer, “otra”, “marginal”, “afuerina”. Esto es asumido como una energía hacia una realidad alternativa. Hacemos presente las importantes perspectivas de género, de corporeidad, de sexualidad, de lo cotidiano. También incluimos la interacción entre las reivindicaciones humanas y las creencias y ritos de los pueblos.

Nos parece que la Biblia continua siendo un recurso primordial al hacer teología. Sin embargo, constatamos orígenes, contenidos e interpretaciones de carácter patriarcal. Como mujeres vemos en la Biblia un libro de liberación que contiene la Buena Nueva, y lo leemos con una actitud crítica. Nos apropiamos del imaginario bíblico de “un cielo nuevo y una tierra nueva” (Isaías 65:17), y a la vez reclamamos “otro mundo posible” y una teología nueva.

A continuación (en una segunda mesa redonda) hemos conversado sobre la función de la cultura en la creación de un mundo nuevo y una teología nueva. La cultura conlleva aprehender formas de pensamiento y de comportamiento. Ella interpreta la sociedad; lo cual incluye el

comportamiento religioso, político, económico. Las vivencias culturales de la mujer también contiene el género, la raza, la etnicidad, y lo económico y lo profesional.

La globalización afecta las culturas del mundo. Al encarar la globalización, una perspectiva centrada en la mujer esta bien atenta a las relaciones de poder. Además, es una perspectiva que recalca los valores del Evangelio, y todo esfuerzo colaborativo y responsable a favor del pueblo. También se presta atención a las diferencias, y es favorecida la justicia y la compasión. La perspectiva de la mujer lleva a cabo un análisis crítico, promueve relaciones justas, y asume riesgos debido a su incansable esperanza.

Nos parece que cada cultura tiene que estar abiertas a las vivencias interreligiosas, y encontrar a Dios a través de todas las manifestaciones de fe. Las culturas deberían propiciar la participación de la mujer en los ámbitos públicos, y en particular en todo lo que le afecta a ella. Las liberaciones de carácter personal dinamizan las comunidades, y de este modo es generado un mundo nuevo.

Gracias a la sabiduría y teología de pueblos originarios, nuestra postura hacia la vida es holística y centrada en la comunidad. De ellos aprendemos que la existencia humana esta enraizada en la divinidad y que Dios participa en la condición humana. La presencia de Dios cruza la existencia humana.

Nos comprometemos a favor de una teología nueva, al servicio de un mundo nuevo. Pedimos a ASETT/EATWOT que destine sus recursos teológicos y también recursos materiales para llevar a cabo este programa de acción que creemos conducirá a la liberación/plenitud de vida para toda persona.

A NEW WORLD AND A NEW THEOLOGY: WOMEN-CENTERED THEOLOGICAL CONTRIBUTIONS: A COMMUNIQUE

At the EATWOT Women's Conference in Johannesburg, South Africa, celebrated on July 22-23, 2006, 30 women from Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the USA Minorities came together around the theme "A New World and A New Theology: Women-Centered Theological Contributions."

The conference started with reports from the International Coordinator of the Women's Commission and from the Women's Regional Coordinators. Two questions emerged from the regional reports that were discussed by small groups. The first group examined similarities and differences in our process of doing theology and found the following common themes:

- Women continue to experience discrimination in religious and social life. In Africa and Asia this results in the trafficking of women and children who often become victims to HIV/AIDS.

- In the USA HIV/AIDS infections are high among Latinas and African American women.
- In Asia and among Latinas in the USA injustices suffered by migrant workers continue.
- Across the regions, women are attempting to engage in interfaith dialogue. In Asia and Africa there is an ongoing dialogue between Christianity and Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, and indigenous religions.
- An important similarity is our commitment to reflect on the experience of the grassroots. In South Africa this is sometimes difficult because white university professors “used” the people to further their professions.
- Because of the grassroots focus, women-centered theologies encounter difficulty in being accepted by the academy. In other words, women-centered theologies are often marginalized. In Asia and Africa there is particular difficulty in developing, publishing, and accessing women-centered theological literature.
- In Latin America, Africa, and the USA the label feminist is not always welcome.

The second question had to do with the values and understandings that our vision of a new theology and a new world must include. Learning from the conflict between capitalism and socialism, we concluded that the central and most precious value is life. We must care for the threads that connect all life. Human life is one of the most precious of those threads. A new world demands a social security net that provides the essentials for life for all – not only material well-being, but also opportunities for people’s contributions to construct the common good, that is, a new world. Specifically, we need to encourage development of all human abilities, respect for persons and nature, and to promote reciprocity.

The theme of our conference was developed in the opening sermon, a presentation by an invited speaker, and two panels with presenters

from the four EATWOT regions. The opening sermon introduced the value of respect for communal human work – *durae* in Korean. This value is based on the interconnectedness among God, humans and nature, produces harmonious works, and gives us the ability to enjoy the fruits of our labor. The guest speaker developed the African theme of *botho*, which means humanness evidenced in community and hospitality, without denying acts of self love.

The first panel dealt with women’s perseverance to do theology as an integral part of our peoples’ struggle for liberation. We seek to do a new theology that has as its source peoples’ beliefs. We do theology from our particularity as women – “the other,” “the marginal,” “the outsider.” We assume this positionality as an impetus toward an alternative reality. We bring into the process the important categories of gender, of body, of sexuality, and of *lo cotidiano* – Spanish for the everyday. We also include the interaction of activism with peoples’ religious beliefs and practices.

We acknowledge that the Bible remains an important resource for doing theology. Yet we are aware of its patriarchal origins, teachings, and interpretation. As women we read it with critical eyes as a book of liberation containing the Good News. We reclaim the biblical imagery of “a new heaven and a new earth” (Isaiah 65:17) as we claim another world and a new theology.

The second panel dealt with the role of culture in creating a new world and a new theology. We understand culture as learned patterns of accepted thought and behavior. Culture is defined as social interpretations, which include religious, political, and economic behaviors. Gender, race, ethnicity, economic status, and professions are all elements of women’s cultural experiences. Globalization has become an element of cultures around the world. Women-centered responses to globalization need to be aware of power relations, and they should feature gospel values and people-oriented, practical, accountable, collaborative efforts. They must attend to differences,

calling for justice and compassion. They should be grounded on critical analysis, promote right relationships, and be willing to take risks without ever ceasing to hope. All cultures must be open to interreligious experiences, finding God in all expressions of faith. Cultures must promote women's participation in the public sphere – particularly in what affects their own lives. As personal liberations help mobilize communities, a new world will be achieved.

From indigenous peoples' understandings and theologies we draw a wholistic and community-centered approach to life. We learn how human life is entrenched in the divine and how God participates in human nature – how God's ongoing life constantly intersects human life.

We commit ourselves to work toward the development of a new theology in the service of a new world. We ask EATWOT to commit its theological and monetary resources to carry out this action plan which we believe will result in liberation/fullness of life for all.

Part II

RELIGION FOR ANOTHER POSSIBLE WORLD

Tissa Balasuriya

Abstract

Figures derived from statistics show that large numbers of inhabitants of Europe have migrated all over the world in the past. Nowadays they still dominate economic and technological developments causing injustice in many countries mainly outside Europe. As a result the economic system of the world is fundamentally unjust. Moreover the technological development supports the dominating powers at the cost of the poor and the oppressed. In the meantime a religious awakening is taking place. Unfortunately this religious renaissance tends to promote violence in many parts of the world. Therefore another religion is needed for another possible world. The second part of the article delineates the outlines of that other religion, which the main world religions seek for mutual contact and disclose the dangerous relationship between religion and power in many areas hoping to attain real conversion: choosing for the humanist core each world religion possesses.

In this reflection every word is important. We would have to take into account the significance of each word.

1. The present World

First of all what is the present world we are in and what do we mean by another possible world? Is it a world that is desirable in itself, is it feasible or not, such as a utopia would be? Secondly is it a feasible world towards which human groups could strive towards in a given period of time? Third is it the world that is likely to be if the present processes of development and relationships of people are continued in the next 25 years, half century, or during the 21st century? And finally what is likely to be the change if some of the more active agents of transformation both for good and for bad evolve without much interaction with forward looking human groups?

There are also the imponderables such as the advancement of sciences and technology and the impact of deadly diseases like AIDS, both of which can radically transform human relationships in the world even in the next 25 years.

In the present world there is a great imbalance in the division of resources among peoples beginning with the land and capital, and in the resources of technological advancement and scientific education. From this perspective we could refer to the likely changes that will take place in the distribution of population in the world in the coming 25 and 50 years and even the whole century, according to present possibilities of population projection. The population changes are challenges to world justice.

1.1 Population: Some Data on Growth, Movements and Prospects

Most of Europe was sparsely populated in 1820, inhabitants living mainly in the villages. By 1900 European population became more than double. European migrants went to the Americas, Australasia, Southern Africa and Siberia. The population of these areas increased from 5.7 million to over 200 million between 1810 and 1910.

Between 1810 and 1840 only 1.5 million left Europe mainly to the USA. Between 1841 and 1886 the figure leapt to 8.15 millions, and between 1880 and 1910 to 25 millions. 'Between 1800 and 1930 the White proportion of the world's population expanded from 22 to 35%'.¹ See, for example the following figures:

European Population Growth 1800-1910 (excluding Russia)²

1800	123 million
1810	140 million
1830	156 million
1840	170 million
1850	170 million
1860	194 million
1870	210 million
1880	225 million
1890	244 million
1900	267 million
1910	294 million

Migration data:

Percentage of population increase that has permanently emigrated (see: a)

Period	Europe	Asia (see b)	Africa	Latin America (see b)
1851-1880	11,7	0,4	0,01	0,3
1881-1910	19,5	0,3	0,04	0,9
1911-1940	14,4	0,1	0,03	1,8
1940-1960	2,7 (see c)	0,1	0,01	1,0
1960-1970	5,2	0,2	0,10	1,9
1970-1980	4,0	0,5	0,30	2,5

- a. Numbers are calculated from data on gross immigration in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States (US)
- b. The periods from 1950 to 1960 pertain to emigration only to the United States.

c. Emigration only to the United States.³

Overseas Migration from Europe between 1846 and 1924

Great Britain and Ireland	18,030,000
Norway	804,000
Sweden	1,145,000
Denmark	349,000
Netherlands	207,000
Germany	4,533,000
Belgium	172,000
Switzerland	307,000
France	497,000
Spain	4,314,000
Portugal	1,633,000
Finland	342,000
Russia	8,000,000
Austria/Hungary	4,878,000
Italy	9,474,000

55 million people migrated from Europe between 1846 and 1924. In this period Chinese, Indians and Japanese also moved, much less and often as laborers.⁴

Between 1960 and 2000 there have been very substantial changes in the world population distribution. The population projections are in millions.⁵

Year	1960	2000
Developed Market Economies	633	857
Eastern Europe and USSR	313	429
Developing Countries	1367	3558
China and Asian Planned Economies	704	1400
World Total	3019	6251

These projections which have been more or less realized indicate that out of an increase of world population by 3,232 million, the developing world has to provide for about 2,930 million, whereas the developed countries have to provide for 224 million and the Eastern European block including Siberia for 116 million. This is the biggest gap in the world structure.

World population prospects in millions

	World	Asia	Europe	N. America	L. America	Aus/NZ
2000	6057	3672	727	314	519	23
2050	9322	5428	603	437	805	31
The change from 2000 to 2050 is:						
	+3265	+1756	-124	+123	+306	+8
Total world population in millions:						
			2000	2050		
World			6 091.3	9 366.7		
More Developed			1 171.4	1 151.7		
Less Developed			4 515.7	8 204.9		

The world system of land distribution has consolidated more or less as in 1945 after five centuries of the colonial expansion and the end of World War II. Thus countries such as China and India have limited land despite a very high population in relation to land.

Without a just and peaceful remedy for this imbalance there will not be a guarantee of life and security for the billions who are poor, nor will the rich countries be able to prevent an overflow of population from the South to their under-cultivated areas. Capitalistic globalization not only does not provide solutions for this problem, it makes the situation worse by the policies of structural adjustment and the World Trade Organization (WTO). Neither is the United Nations Organization (UNO),

as it is presently conceived and structured, capable of finding meaningful solutions for this imbalance.

It would be good for present peoples of European origin to reflect on how they were able to migrate in the 19th century when their population was increasing, and they had problems like the Irish potato famine.

Having gone to those lands, marginalizing or even exterminating the previous indigenous inhabitants, now they are sealing off these lands and their own lands in Europe to the rest of humanity, except mainly when it benefits them. What is the ethical justification for this? How does international law regard this situation? How would international law, in so far as it exists, have to be reformed in terms of a global ethic that is rational and humane, not to say civilized?

The situation is more intriguing and challenging when we reflect that most of the peoples of European origin are considered to be of Christian civilization and peoples of the poor countries who cannot now move to the free land spaces of the world are of other religions. The issue becomes more complex when thought of in the background of the Islamic/Christian conflicts of the late middle Ages, and early modern period and the so called clash of civilization today.

1.2. Foundational Injustice of the World System

This imbalance of population to land is in a sense the foundational injustice of the whole world system today, coming down from the colonial period. It was consolidated after World War II with the setting up of the UNO and the Security Council basically to preserve this distribution as what is considered the just world order. Its preservation is thought of as the maintenance of peace and law in the world. This may be called global apartheid and is one of the biggest structural evils that continue from generation to generation. A reflection on it would give some of its characteristics:

- a. it is a result of violence, consolidated by the victors in terms of territorial frontiers and carried on from generation to generation. It is based on 'might is right';
- b. it is racist of an extreme form, leads to the fear of the disadvantaged races by the possessors of land and hence to defensive militarism;
- c. it is the most basic form of inequality and deprivation from which others such as of incomes, wealth and resources flow;
- d. it deprives people in need of the opportunities of work, food and livelihood;
- e. it causes economic depression by decreasing production of food;
- f. it leads to waste of resources by neglect, by non cultivation, and perhaps over fertilization;
- g. it is maintained by unjust immigration laws, leads to illegal immigration and conflicts; it is a basic cause of social conflicts in the countries, and contributes to the expenditure on arms;
- h. it helps increase land, water and air pollution; it is against the principle of 'the free market' and of liberal values that would exalt freedom of movement. It is the result of western land grab of the past 500 years; it makes people insensitive to the needs of others and to the evils of the past; it is a centennial form of injustice for which no adequate solution is in sight, for it influences the mind sets of the dominant;
- i. it goes against the core values of the religions which advocate the whole earth to be available to all humankind and teaches sharing to be a principal virtue;
- j. it is a basic problem for the liberation of the elite, challenging them to respond to the advantages that are from birth.

This problem is neglected by most economists, political scientists, politicians, planners, international lawyers and theologians. It is not generally studied by universities and international foundations. It is not within the scope of the religions either, especially Christianity. Since the demographic data indicate a worsening situation in the course of

the 20th century it is a challenge for the youth of today to participate in making the world more just by bringing about changes in mindsets as well as global structure of the world system. Most solutions presently discussed for development, justice and peace are piecemeal and reformist, keeping the foundational system intact. It may be called the original sin of the modern world.

1.3. Some Current Global Trends

Another type of development would be in the way in which the world economy will proceed in the coming decades. The present *world economy* is motivated by the desire to maximize private profit. It leads to the accumulation of capital by the already wealthy. If the concentration of capital and the control of production and distribution by the international corporations and the world's wealthy takes place then there will be a continuing growth in the overall production with an increase in the gap between the rich and the poor within nations and among the peoples of the world. Much would depend on whether the desire for a simplicity of life style, and the present efforts towards a more just world economy would be successful and the extent to which other forms of production and exchange would control the present trends of large scale globalization.

A third area would be in the field of *power politics*. Would the present tendency towards the domination of the world by a uni-polar authority with its allies continue? The big transnational corporations dominate the economy and even influence the political life of countries. Money is the goal, and power depends on finance. Would the economy be brought under a more democratic and egalitarian distribution of power in the world? In this connection the control over oil which is a major means of production and communication would be very significant and the present thrust of the United States and United Kingdom moving militarily and politically to control the oil resources of the Middle East even from the areas such as Eastern Europe or Central Asia would be immensely significant for the power balance in

the world in different aspects such as the economy and the impact on the environment.

In this relationship the *development of technology* concerning *military power* would also be very significant. Will military power be capable of being exercised by long range controlled missiles operating from the air or would nuclear power be developed by several other countries and be a great treat to world peace, or else would an agency like the United Nations Organization be able to regulate peace and war and the use of such sophisticated military technology in the hands particularly of the financially powerful and land and resource rich nations.

On the other hand would humanity be able to develop means of impact over the *military and political powers* by the development of an alternative basis of power and human relationships such as through the acceptance of ethical codes of behavior among nations and the development of the potential of non violence, networked among the more peace and justice loving peoples of the world?

Within nations and among the nations how would the *social relationship* be organized? Would there be a greater tendency towards justice and equality and acceptance of the democratic processes for *problem resolving among them*, or would the present imbalances continue and increase such as in gender relations, in class distinctions, caste discrimination. In the relationship of the working class with the rest of society, how important would be the strength of the working peoples who have to contribute their manual and physical resources to the productive process or would there be a tendency for the decrease of the power of the working class due to an increase in the use of machinery and the mechanization of much of the production processes? In reaction to this would there be a transfer from the society in which personal human skills such as manual workers or small scale enterprises would be replaced by large scale enterprises and technologies capable of being directed by computers and indirect planning and supervision

from a distance? This can be connected also to the transfer of employment from the countries where the payment for labour is high to countries in which the labour is cheap. This can be the result of a transfer of the platforms of production from a country such as Germany to Vietnam or a breaking up of the sections of a production process and assembling the product in another country. This is also related to *outsourcing* as when it takes place in accounting, transferred from New York to Bangalore so that work continues throughout the day and benefits from cheaper labour. The type of changes are comparable to what took place in Europe in the industrial revolution when the system of production was changed by what is called the development of the assembly line in motorcar production. Part of the process included making the working class capable of buying motor cars and thus increasing productivity and standard of way of living of the peoples.

With these types of changes enormous transformations seem possible such as if India and China were transformed by entering the global productive process along with the multinationals and the use of computers and cell phones. In the next 25 years enormous change in the relations among peoples could take place without necessarily being in the line of justice, but benefiting the rich and marginalizing the poor. In this connection we may also reflect on what is called the feminisation of labour alongside the development of technology which does not require physical power as of males. What could be the impact on the gender relationships and of the rich and poor nations as may take place in the textile industry with the growth of free trade zones in poorer countries for the utilization of cheap female labour.

Another type of issue is what would happen to the *family* in the process of the changing is world. The demographic data show tendencies such as the decrease in the number of children almost everywhere in the world.

Culture: what is likely to be the impact of the vast expansion of mass media and their control by a few multinational agencies based

on finance and the transmission of a dominant culture. There is a commercialisation of moral issues such as health care, education, social relations and even the treatment of the environment. This can be seen particularly in the emphasis on violence and sexuality that may be productive of a great deal of harm while also having its potentialities for human liberation. This would be another important area of the transformation of the world in the coming decades due to the entry of television into most homes.

Another trend that may be observed is the *revival of cultures and religions* among the peoples leading to a certain amount of backlash of ethno-cultural considerations. The migration of peoples is leading to a grater cultural contact than before and to some extent a conflict of cultures. There is a fear in a majority group that a minority is taking its place or diluting its culture. This can take place also at the level of the races. So we can find in the last 25 years the class conflict that was very significant in the 1960s and 1970s in terms of a clash between capitalist and socialist ideologies and powers, is been reduced and replaced by a mono capitalist power dominance. There is a tendency for the racist ethnicism of religious divisions among peoples to be emphasized at present; this is manifesting itself in terms of different *fundamentalisms* that are now even speaking of a clash of civilizations and a conflict of democracy against terrorism. How these would develop in the coming decades could be of great importance along side scientific technological and economic changes.

Another area of great importance for the future is the impact of modern development on the *environment* and on *ecological factors*. During the last century and particularly in the second half of last century there had been an increasing pollution of the seas, the land and the air and a great deal of an exhaustion of the un-renewable resources of the earth. Corresponding to this there is the impact of the warming of the earth and the rising of the water level and even the fear of a water shortage leading to the submergence of some of the low line areas as

in Bangladesh and the thawing of the ice on the Polar Regions. These environmental and ecological changes are connected also with the social organization particularly of the capitalist mode of production and life that lead to the exhaustion of resources such as oil and even the extinction of species, the reduction of the fish in the world, the poisoning of the agricultural land so that even the food eaten is harmful for animals and humans.

Efforts at solving these issues have been brought to the fore globally and in the United Nations conferences and in the Kyoto protocol on the safeguarding of nature. But here too, some of the powerful nations like the US who are the main polluters of the world do not come to an agreement. The entire civilization built on the use of oil, including the private motorcar, is related to the environmental crisis that is affecting the coming generation and particularly the poor peoples in our nations.

Another significant area of change is *concerning the religions themselves* and the process of *secularization* going on in the world. One line of change has been the de-religionisation taking place, first in the West in relation to many no longer participating in the Christian religious services and also not even in appurtenance to a church. We can speak of different phases of this process such as de-religionisation, de-Christianization, de-clericalisation and also the deconstruction of the belief systems, including issues of morality. There is a great reduction in the numbers of the clergy particularly in the West, they are ageing so that it is becoming clear that in the future Western Christianity will mainly be a lay organization.

One could also see a de-religionisation process in some of the other religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism. The numbers of Hindus and Buddhists who participate in religious ceremonies are decreasing and the Buddhists also find that the number of the monks is decreasing and their average age increasing. This is partly due to the process of secularization that is taking place throughout the world.

On the other hand, there is a process of *revival of the traditional religions* in the countries that have become independent of colonial rulers with emphasis on their own identity and dignity and the claims for a redressing of imbalance that may have been brought about by the colonial powers in the treatment of the religions. There is a special phenomenon namely the growth of consciousness of Islam as a religion that is worldwide with its own doctrines and codes of morality and a sense of affirming themselves as a world religion, spread through all the continents of the earth. The increasing wealth of the Islamic peoples, especially due to the income of the oil resources allows them to use much more money for the spread of Islam than in previous periods and hence the growth and establishment of mosques in many parts of the world. This goes side by side with the *migration of peoples* from the southern countries and the Middle East to the more developed countries which are majority Christian and where the churches are falling into disuse. Islamic mosques have been set up and there are places of worship and gathering for their followers. Buddhism as a religion is also missionary in another way of spreading their message of human fulfillment through meditation. This is also a religious influence that is spreading in many parts of the world.

The phenomenon of *religion* is also noteworthy in so far it has *survived* several decades of opposition and suppression under communist regimes in the Soviet Union, China, and North Korea and to some extent Cuba. But after the fall of communism in the Soviet Union and the opening of China to the rest of the world and a greater acceptance of Christianity in Cuba, the religions are beginning to come back to the surface in these countries and become motivating forces for people's lives, having learned much of the experience of suppression and persecution.

As mentioned earlier the religions are experiencing another trend of a backlash of conservative tendencies affirming their different identities and expressing themselves often in the ethno nationalistic

sense. Then the religions become sources of division among peoples, especially when they are important even for the setting up of new nations such as Pakistan and Bangladesh.

2. Some Characteristics of a possible/ Desirable World Order

First, all human beings have freedom and dignity irrespective of gender, sex, race, creed, caste, mental capacity. It follows that every human being or community is responsible to ensure that one's actions do not impair/undermine/damage the integrity of any other human being or community.

Second, every human being is entitled to the satisfaction of one's basic needs which include food, housing, health services, income/work/employment/education/leisure.

Third, communities have the right to develop their own identities, provided they do so with proper regard for the dignity and integrity of other individuals and communities.

Fourth, the environment in all its forms, diversity and interdependence, has its own being which must be protected and respected by humanity. The environment which sustains human life is to be held in trust by each generation for its successors. Intergenerational justice and obligations concerning resources that are not renewable, preservation of biodiversity and climate of the earth are to be ensured.

Fifth, people without land have the right to land without people. Migration rights should be given and recognized.

Sixth, the continuing effects of injustice must be investigated, redressed, remedied and compensated for wherever possible. The global distribution of land must be reviewed periodically to allocate land in a planned and feasible manner, according to human needs, given the changes in population and in technology. The concept of mono-ethnic nation-states inside fixed boundaries is a principal root of our present problems.

Seventh, the global structures which produce inequalities and inequity must be investigated and reconstructed to promote human life and dignity. It follows that the concept and claims of national sovereignty must be subject to the right of all human beings to a life of freedom and dignity.

Eighth, all power, even of global authorities, must be exercised in a way that is accountable to those affected by it and therefore power be no more remote from people affected by its exercise than is absolutely necessary – the principle of subsidiarity.

The values expressed in some of these issues are also the core values of the faiths and cultures of the peoples of the world and in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948.

Property is a Trust

The basic needs of all must be met before the luxuries of some. To each according to need and from each according to ability.

Global Governance

There is need of a global law-making authority and a global executive with effective power to ensure and enforce justice.

There is need of a global judiciary, international tribunals concerning major events of the past which have contemporary and future impact, e.g. land ownership in the world, reform of UNO and UN agencies such as the Security Council to be more democratic, accountable and effective. The International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank (WB) and WTO need to be placed under a democratic authority and accountable to a world democratic body. For there is a need of global planning in a globalised situation.

Arms production and sales must be controlled for the common good of humanity.

Global Economy

The present globalization of the economy is based on the hegemony of capital in a exclusive, racist and even genocidal way. It contradicts

the fundamental basic rights expressed above. Therefore those globalised structures should be changed, and strategies central to a global ethic which should include making transnational corporations subject to the control of elected bodies responsible to those affected by the corporations, activities. Technology needs to be developed to benefit humanity, and not for the profit of capital. Technology transfer should be made easier. Those nations, communities and corporations which process advanced technology which could benefit other human communities and individuals have a duty to share their knowledge, claiming only a modest fee for their own work in developing the technology, e.g. for meeting the tragedy of HIV/AIDS.

3. Religion

In this section we shall discuss some of the constituent elements or ingredients of religions and how they can contribute to the development of another world, while they have often been allies of the powers that built up the contemporary world. In religions we can distinguish several *ingredients or constituent elements*:

- a. *Primordial intuition* concerning human life and its destiny. Religions claim to give an explanation for the origins of life and what happens after this life. They indicate a path that would lead to happiness and fulfilment in this life and give a meaning to human relationships. We may say that the primary vision of religions is valuable and attractive and that is why they have had millennial influence over peoples and communities. Religions also claim to have some link with the transcendent divine, sometimes also considered as immanent in all human beings and in the universe.
- b. At the origin of religions there is a *founder and or seers* that are reputedly holy and wise persons who expounded the primal vision and the path of fulfilment, liberation and salvation *eventually interpreted as* in and through the religion. The founders of the religions are persons who often had a primordial spiritual experience. It is a key insight into what human nature is, what are

liberating and fulfilling human relationships in society, and how human beings can relate meaningfully and caringly to nature. Such an approach is generally fostered by meditation and union with the divine or on the transcendent values in life.

- c. The religions have *sacred writings*, coming down from the foundation and traditions that give the teachings both as doctrines concerning life before birth and after death, as well as codes of moral conduct for this life.
- d. Relating to each religion there is generally a *community of believers* formed in relation to the prevailing and social relations and interests of its members. Often the interests of the dominant sections of the community tend to interpret the text and doctrines of a religion, to certain extent even diluting the primordial intuition and even introducing discriminatory doctrines and practices.
- e. Religions have methods of *worship and rituals* for celebration of the festivities of a religion. Here too there is a combination of the basic liberative messages with external manifestations of community and celebrations that may be expressed in a particular culture and may also reinforce the social difference within the religions.
- f. The religions also tend to be organized as *an institution* with the membership of its believers and a power structure with an authority that claims to interpret its message and leads its members to their goal of fulfilment here on earth and thereafter. Generally such a religious authority has tended to be hierarchical and patriarchal. None of the world religions has given an important place to women either in the evolution and teaching of the doctrines or in the government of the institutions and the leadership in the worship.
- g. Some of the religions claim to have a *meta-natural means of salvation*.

That is that they teach/claim a relationship to a divine source through which salvation takes place due to divine grace or favour. Some other religions such as Buddhism would insist that liberation is due to a personal effort and enlightenment that result from meditation and a life of self restraint and loving kindness.

Thus in the religions there are some elements which are enabling and *liberating* while there are others that are *oppressive* and *enslaving* of their own rank and file members, and of other religions. *No religion is totally pure or totally impure*. Human beings will not accept a religion for long if it does not have good inspirations. Like every human effort every religion also needs appreciation of its good and correction of its evil aspects. Hence it is necessary to discern in each religion its positive and negative elements. The history of each religion has instances of such abuses even over a long period of time. Religious reformers have emerged at different times to purify the religions of such accretions.

Negative aspects of religion work against the positive values of human fulfilment and liberation such as justice, equality, freedom and loving kindness. These negative aspects can contribute towards the oppression of the poor and the weak by legitimizing the position of the dominant oppressors. It would be necessary to study how in the different religions the basic liberating aspects can get interpreted and articulated so as to legitimize the powers of the dominant group or community. Thus the concept of *karma* and rebirth deeply rooted in the Indian religious consciousness can favour a social order of caste discrimination. It may also be possible to argue that the liberating impact of the Exodus on the Jewish people could also be linked to their claim of the lands of Canaan as if given to them by God. Religions connected to this Biblical history such as Christianity and Islam have also a position of considering themselves being liberated by a divine power from oppression and suffering, but they may at later stages become also intolerant of other, as the history of Christianity shows.

With reference to our reflection on the contemporary world it may be asked how far have the different religions been involved in the setting up of this world structure and the relationships of peoples, and secondly how far these changes themselves impact on religion. Thirdly, if we have to move towards another possible world, how can a religion or the religions contribute to such a desirable goal or reduce the undesirable elements in an evolving future world.

The *path of liberation* can be expressed in terms of core values that the religions propose as good and desirable. Though these values are expressed in the language and idiom of different cultures they have a similarity in content when thought of in relation to practical life in given situations. A possible way of trying to identify the core values of the world religions can be found in *the five main precepts of the Buddha*. Each of them teaches giving up of a basic evil and promotes goodness in an important sphere of life and action. The five precepts can be expressed briefly in relation to modern times.

The *first* precept is *respect for all life*, non-violence, and the cultivation of compassion. It teaches the ability to remove suffering and transform it by protecting and promoting lives of people, animals, plants and minerals. It is against killing and hence the production of armaments. It includes also the care for nature that nurtures human life.

The *Second* precept is *generosity, loving kindness* at a personal level and in structures of society. It is the intention and capacity to bring joy and happiness to another person or living being and to communities. The practice of loving kindness requires that we see the situations of exploitation, social injustice and oppression. It is against the stealing of what belongs to others. Individuals and groups are invited to share their time, energy and resources with those in need to make one another happy and have the basic essentials for living. This precept motivates us to resist injustice and prevent others from profiting from human suffering or the suffering of other species on earth. This

promotes the giving of one's time and resources for others, especially for those suffering and in need.

The *third* precept teaches *sexual responsibility* to protect and promote the safety and integrity of individuals, couples, families and society. Sexual relations are to be based on love and a long-term commitment. The welfare of children is also to be safeguarded and children preserved from sexual abuse. Children should not be made to suffer due to sexual misconduct. Sexual relations with love and long term commitment can heal persons, families and society. Such a behaviour promotes the capacity to bring joy and happiness and transforms pain and suffering. It is good for all and brings about understanding, stability and peace in society on the basis of equality in dignity and rights of persons.

The *fourth* precept is *respect for truth*. It promotes *deep listening* and loving speech. Negatively this precept is against the speaking of untruth and the promotion of suffering and conflict by lies. Positively it encourages speech that is truthful, and brings joy and happiness to others and relieves others of their suffering. This requires mindfulness in speech, the effort at understanding others and helping resolve conflicts by reconciliation. The truth has to be found by each one without assuming that it has already been discovered and is possessed exclusively by someone. Encouraging the truth is very important in relation to the mass media which have a vast influence nowadays due to rapid and widespread global communications.

The *fifth* precept promotes *the healthy diet* for body and mind and discourages intoxicating drinks and excess in food and drink. It promotes mindfulness and consciousness that leads to good thoughts and good actions, unlike liquors and drugs that reduce mindfulness and lead to waste, anger, and violence. Hence the importance of cultivating good health, both physical and mental for oneself, one's family and for society, including the global society.⁶

The practice of the five precepts is helped by *meditation*, the growth in awareness or mindfulness. Their practice is interconnected.

Practicing one of them helps the following of the others. On the contrary going against any one of them leads to the violation of others example, violence, greed, selfishness, untruth, and lack of self-control. The basic vision of the Buddha is that existence involves suffering or *dukkha*. The cause of *dukkha* is *tanha* or attachment to things which are illusory. The path to liberation from *dukkha* is detachment from *tanha* or undue attachments.

The path to liberation is the following of the eightfold path of right thought and right action. In this, humans have to rely on their own enlightenment which is realized by meditation and mindfulness.

4. Another Way of Being Religious/Religion is Possible

There are certain aspects of religions, concerning which their togetherness or *agreement may not be possible*.

- a. Religions may not agree with reference to what they teach about *the origins of human life on earth*, or about *what happens to humans after death* (in so far as there is an after life). These are issues concerning which each religion has a teaching and position. But humans cannot have apodictic evidence about them as no one comes back after death to inform others of the situation thereafter. These are part of the still unexplored mystery of life. There may be evidence that contests certain positions held by some religions: e.g. whether all humans are from one pair of first parents. Or some past views may now be no longer held, such as the existence of a limbo, formerly held by some Christians.
- b. Religions may not agree with reference to the interpretations of *the nature and functions of the divine* –the ultimate transcendent reality. There may be doctrines, called dogmas in Christianity, for which certitude is claimed on the basis of a divine revelation received or made, by founders, seers, or leaders. Thus there may be no agreement, or understanding of the Christian teaching that God is a Trinity with different functions for the three divine persons.

Even attribution of *philosophical* concepts such as that of ‘person’ or ‘substance’ to the divine may be limited to a certain language and cultural framework.

- c. There may also, be no agreement concerning the *stories, myths, symbols*, stereotypes, prejudices that one religious group proposes or entertains about itself or others. These are the cause of much of the lack of understanding among the members of different religions. The cultures of the communities often carry these differences from generation to generation. The ethno-religious fundamentalisms maybe engendered by such stories taken as truths and justifying privileges of particular religions or ethno-cultural communities. These may need clarification for good inter-religious relations. The cultural filters often condition the understanding of terms used by the different religions in different cultural environment.
- d. An exclusivity claimed by a religion concerning its *interpretation of life, the paths to salvation* and special privileged position in relation to the Divine is also a source of division and mutual incompatibility of religions. There should be no competition among religions concerning the salvation of persons, especially after life.
- e. There would be difference concerning the *institutional* arrangements within religions, the structures for their management, the patterns of authority, the legal systems for administration of the communities.
- f. The forms of *worship, the rituals* of a religion depend very much on their languages, cultures and art forms and would not necessarily be understood by other religions.

These difference can be also occasions for the members of religions in dialogue to seek to understand their different languages, systems of logic, metaphors, presuppositions and assumptions used in expressing their beliefs. The religions have to be recognized as communities that

emerge from a distinct cultural milieu and have advantages and limitations due to such a context. This is true not only among religions but also within each religion from different cultural contexts. Thus the variations in the interpretation of Christianity in the Roman and Greek traditions, and of Buddhism in Sri Lanka and Japan. The differences of religions can be a challenge to the openness of participants in an inter-religious dialogue. They can help also to develop the humility of such partners on dialogue. Since the discussions are about the ultimate mystery of human life and the Transcendent such divergence must be expected, critically evaluated and duly respected. Criteria would have to be evolved as to what is essential for genuine human relationships among religions. Here our perception is that the acceptable core values held by all of them regarding the human common good may be a valuable criterion.

For 'another religion' to be possible we must know what religion has been: *what the essential identity of a religion* is, and what it should not be in the future. We have to be conscious of the merits and limits of our religions, and try to live their basic message while correcting their wrongs. Can we maintain the identity of our religions in what is good in them and find a way of cooperating in the common good of all? There are positive approaches which though interpreted differently by the religions may have a similarity and could be helpful in inter-religious understanding:

1. We can appreciate the *commonality of teachings* and practices that advocate the avoidance of evils that harm persons and communities. Thus all world religions disapprove of evil forces such as greed, untruth, lust and lack of temperance in food and drink, hatred, violence and the destruction of life and nature. Unfortunately none of the world religions still condemns and corrects adequately the discrimination against women especially within the religions themselves. None of them sees women as equal in the mediation of the transcendent/divine.

2. On the other hand they *encourage the positive values of love*, sharing, truth, justice, respect for life and the dignity of all persons and communities. These may be understood as loving service, *karuna metta*, universal love, a core value, proposed by all religions. This is expressed in the statement 'do unto other as you would like others to do unto you', the golden rule common to all religions.

While the particular presuppositions and some conclusions of religions and claims of revelation may tend to divide the followers of the religions, the *core message of the religions* concerning human life and fulfilment can help bring peoples together in mutual understanding and respect and in common action for the good of all.

This can be a better deeper and most *lasting basis for interreligious understanding and cooperation* at all levels, including global social justice and human liberation. Such a dialogue can also help disengage the core message of Jesus from its encrustation in a particular cultural interpretation of revelation or even theological school. The faith in and the discipleship of Jesus can then be seen in clearer perspective. It can be harmonized with the core message of the other world religions – if these too can be understood in their essence beyond their particular religio-cultural and ethno-nationalistic expressions.

It would be significant to refer to the core values of the different religions as we can see much similarity among them, and each one as if it were confirming the other. Since the core values refer to human behaviour in real life situations they can be verified as to whether they lead to personal happiness, joy, peace and to similar development in communities. Therefore the core values must be capable of being verified in real life, unlike the dogmatic teachings of religions concerning life before birth or after death.

We give below a *summary* of the values of the four world religions. The core teachings of the four main religions in South East Asia are similar in their emphasis on care and concern for the other. Thus:

- ◆ Hinduism: Do naught unto others which would cause you pain if done to you.
- ◆ Buddhism: Do not hurt others in ways that you would yourself find hurtful.
- ◆ Christianity: Do unto others as you would like them to do unto you.
- ◆ Islam: be kind to all living beings so that God may be kind to you.

The religions teach a *moral code* that includes: *Truth, justice, freedom, equality, non-violence and respect for life.*

The moral dimension of Hindu *dharma* is embodied in *eight yamas* (restraints) and *eight niyamas* (observances): the *yamas* are non-violence; not stealing; disciplining desire; abjuring lust and greed; curbing arrogance and anger; not lying; avoiding injustice; shunning wrong doing and evil company. The *niyamas* are, be pure in mind, body and speech; love humankind (*karuna maitriya*); seek contentment; cultivate devotion; develop forbearance; give charitably; study the scriptures; perform penance and sacrifice.

Buddhism is opposed to *tanha, labha, moha, dosa*, against selfishness, deceit, immorality, theft, violence, as do the other religions.

All four religions teach similar norms for righteous living and finding meaning in life, which include the respect for all humanity. A person genuinely faithful to one's religion would respect other religions and be a loving and lovable human person. Religions advocate the care of nature and simplicity of life.

4.2. Need of the religions

The persons and communities of the modern world also generally need the religions for resolving many of the issues faced globally. This is partly due to the inner message of the religions, and also because the religions still have a widespread influence on peoples' lives and on countries. Thus Islam and Christianity are the religions of well over

half of humanity. Furthermore the religions are the largest and oldest peoples' movements in the modern world. They have an influence on persons and powers, unparalleled by any other mass agencies. They have networks of communication that make them a most influential mass medium even with, or because of, the modern communications revolution. If the religions concern themselves with the human common good their liturgies, and other gatherings could be a very great influence on the communities. While regretting the past conflicts due to religions we must recognize and have recourse to their immense possibilities for good in the present and future. The relationship of the religions should be built on open dialogue with genuine respect for each other, without any hidden agenda and with preparedness to work together for the good of all humanity.

The great spiritual and even political leaders of the 20th century were persons who were influenced by the religions and appealed to the spirit and core values of the religions. Thus Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, and Nelson Mandela. They were prepared to suffer for a cause and forgive their opponents who oppressed them.

4.3. Another Relationship of Religions is Possible

Leaving behind the sad history of inter-religious animosities of the past, it would be possible to forge another relationship among persons of different religions, among the religious institutions and among the religions as whole bodies or movements.

1. For this each religion must return to an emphasis on an effort to *live its primary intuitions*, core values, and basic teachings. This would require an internal reform, self-purification and renewal within each religion. For this, within each religion its core values would be a criterion for its self-correction. For instance, any teaching or practice going against the primary and unique commandment of Jesus to love God and neighbour would not be admissible as Christian. Likewise for the other religions in terms

of their core teachings. Externally a criterion common to all religions would be the common core values and considerations of the common good of humanity, if such an agreement is possible. It would also require a soft-peddling, or acknowledging the relativity, of the philosophical and cultural expressions that often make for difference in interpretations of the core values, even to the extent of leading to misunderstandings, antagonisms and conflict. It would generate more reflective persons both young and old.

2. Religions *cooperating for the common human good* could evolve studies, reflection, mediation, empowerment and participation in common action that would be building togetherness in thought and action.
3. The religions can together be linked in *networks* among themselves and with other agencies for realizing the core values of the religions and the common good of humanity. This would require an understanding of the events, issues, trends, values and needs of persons, of a community and of the larger world to which they belong.
4. In the modern world of *global-inter-relatedness*, the religions can come together to uphold the common cause of humanity with agreed moral guidelines against the trends towards inequality, injustice and conflict and violation of human rights.
5. The religions, (through religious leaders, as believers, and as institutions) together can participate in *building a new international order of justice to all*, overcoming the evils of greed, untruth, violence, hatred exploitation of peoples and destruction of nature.
6. These would not be without suffering for those who stand courageously for truth and justice in the presently unequal and divided world. This would imply a great responsibility for the *leaderships* of the religions to actively participate in this common human endeavour.

7. *Asia* can be a significant learning ground in the search for this approach to religion, due to the history of past tolerance, the lessons of past and present conflicts and the evolution of contemporary thinking and practice among the religions and our rather peaceful co-existence in many Asian countries.

All these would be perhaps best expressed as the pursuit of a *spirituality* that is more truly human and divine; this would be the finest in the religions without their deficiencies. Modern persons respond better to the spiritual inspirations even without the externals of the religions. This may be one of the messages of contemporary secularization prevalent in many developed countries. Religion deals with the mystery of life and of ultimate meaning in life. Each one can be open to mystery, no one has a monopoly of it, as the mystery is infinite. *Mystical intuitions* of the transcendent mystery are not open to rational definition and debate or perhaps even comparison, as these would deal with intensely personal experiences with an element of the incommunicable in them. The *dialogue of religions* hence would not be a mere dialogue of concepts, but of life in humility and respect for the other, not merely of specialists but also of ordinary persons and of cultures.

Our further searches in inter-religious dialogue could have a more positive agenda also concerning the cooperation among religions. Relating thus, they would not be competitive for expansion at the expense of others. There would be no social conflicts among the religions. Religions would be a healing influence among social and ethnic groups. All these would be a way in which religions could be related to each other in as different ways – in this sense another way of being religious is possible. While maintaining the identities of our religions we must go to the basic core message of each of them and relate to issues of love, truth justice and equality in the actual circumstances of our lives.

The bells of the temple and the church are different, they may ring at different times, calling their faithful to different services, led by different priests. But the tune, the music are the same, the liberating song of the Divine, reminding us of the eternal truth, all of us are the children of God. The need of the hour is a shift from religion to spirituality. Religion divides, spirituality unites, *Spirituality* is the outbreak of truth, the sunrise of justice. (This) could pave the way to a state of spiritual solidarity. It could provide the key to open our respective prison doors. But it is up to us to walk out and forge a new spiritual solidarity that would impact and transform our society and set the agenda for a brave, new world.⁷

4.4 Some Basic Considerations for a Pluralistic Theology of Revelations

A relevant issue in this connection is the interpretation of the claims of divine revelation, especially by the three monotheistic religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Historically Christianity has had three paradigms or models for salvation:

- a. an exclusivist paradigm according to which only Christianity is salvific,
- b. an inclusivist paradigm: persons from other religions can be saved through Christ and the church, as anonymous Christians,
- c. a pluralist paradigm: salvation is open to all, through other religions – according to good life.

We offer some basic reflections on these positions

The divine is unfathomable by humans. No one has a control over knowledge concerning God and the impact of divine action.

The claims of revelation or divine communications are always externally expressed analogically, metaphorically and in a given social cultural context.

The power elites in any community tend to interpret such claims of revelation in a manner favourable to them e.g. male domination.

The historically given interpretations of revelation by Christian churches have generally led to the view of the exclusion of the vast majority of humanity from divine grace and eternal salvation.

They have had a bad impact on power holders in the church. Their interpretations have led to long term arrogance and intolerance by powerful Christian churches and to consequent conflicts. They have been invoked to legitimize the Inquisition, colonial invasions and centennial colonization.

The exclusive and inclusive Christian theologies claim God to be on their side, to the disadvantage of other revelations.

Both the inclusivist and exclusivist interpretations imply the necessity of the church as a mediator for salvation.

Their Christology generally interpreted salvation as by Jesus a God/man paying a price to an angry God the Father. This would seem to be contrary to the central theme that God is love, and that love of neighbour and of God is the criterion of salvation attributed to Jesus in the gospels. The exclusivist and even inclusivist theories are a distortion of the core message of Jesus, and an impediment to a correct understanding of discipleship of Jesus.

The clash of the implicit inner revelation to individuals and communities with the explicit exclusivist and inclusivist theologies or revelation call for their revision.

Only a pluralist understanding of revelations can be acceptable to humanity in a world in which the majority of humans are not Christians. The claims of exclusive or inclusive revelations are no longer supported even by the world's rulers of different peoples. They cannot be the basis of global inter-religious dialogue.

The de-christianisation of the Western peoples and the growth of secularism throughout the world no longer tolerate the worldviews and hypotheses on which the earlier dominant Christian theologies of revelation were based.

Due to the exclusivist interpretations of revelation that prevailed in the church up till modern times, the Christian establishment was often incapable or slow to appreciate historical movements such as the development of science, democracy, feminism. Still less would it appreciate the other religions or even non-Western cultures

Given these considerations the Christian churches must investigate as to how and why they were wrong for several centuries on such foundational issues as the human condition, the mission of the churches, the nature of the divine and the ultimate destiny of humans.

In a one world situation of rapid global communications a claim of an exclusive rigid revelation is no longer tenable or capable of helping build a peaceful and sustainable world order.

5. How Do We Move?

In the search for religion for another possible world we can approach the issue either theoretically and/or practically. Theoretically the approach would be to work as scholars and make a synthesis of the different teachings with their similarities and differences and work out a sort of global theology or ways in which religions can work together for another world. While this has its values and merits a more realistic approach would seem to be to start from where we are to where we can go and what steps we have to take towards the feasible objective in the current world situation of the religions.

It is first necessary to see the reality of the world religions as it is today, appreciating their good points and seeing that there are also wide differences among the religions. Further historically we can recognise that religions have also been one of the main sources of conflict and wars within countries and even at a wider international level. This phenomenon of religious conflict has been related to alliances of religions with particular communities and nationalities and also the close links that religions have had with the state power. The differences of religions have had relations to economic factors, political power

and institutions, and cultural forms of expression which have an impact on doctrines and world views. All these often make it difficult for religions to work together.

In this search we can begin trying to bring about *inter-religious understanding and action* at different levels such as the local, national, regional and global. This can be done within each religion or in an inter-religious approach. In a practical approach we can begin with a particular issue at the level of a locality. In that, a beginning could be to see what are the problems that the people face in that situation and what the attitude of the different religions is. We can then try to understand the causes of the suffering or divisions and seek practical remedies for them, both as immediate palliatives and as basic remedies. In this we can see what is the role the given religions can play concerning these issues. Thereafter there can be action together for resolving the issues such as an ethnic conflict or grave divergences in the social standing of groups.

The first stage in this process is to develop *inter-religious discussion of issues, or dialogue*. In initiating such a process, the persons involved from the different religions have to try to overcome any prejudices and stereotypes that may be part of the heritage of the religious communities. They should have a desire to deal with the given issue and have some understanding and agreement on the general goals to be realised and the type of means to be undertaken. Thus in situations of conflict the religions can be helpful if they work for peace with justice to all as the goal, and non-violence and democratic approaches are the means.

The conditions for inter-religious dialogue are similar to conditions in other situations of dialogue where there are deep differences and conflicts. The religions can bring in a specific dimension of meditation in common which can be a means also of deep listening, maybe in silence, and developing openness to each other and trust. Such dialogue has to be among equals, undertaken in humility and

honesty with acceptance of the other as the other, without seeking to convert the other to one's point of view, especially to one's doctrinal assumptions. An approach of being self-critical and mutually critical in the search for truth and peace with justice can be helpful for coming towards a better understanding of reality and among the religions themselves.

In the Process of actual search for a *religion in another possible world* it may be more *practical to think first of a better world* that could be worked towards in the given circumstances, choosing feasible targets and manageable strategies. This can of course be in the background of an ideal possible world or what may be sometimes called utopia. In undertaking such *feasible action* the group would have to think of the possible allies in the process and the obstacles. If we think of the global level we can think of such issues as the reform of the UNO, the Security Council and its membership and decision making process as likely objectives on which the world religions may agree and then seek methods by which the religions together can influence global thinking and the process of the reform of the UNO. In other words, the religions would do well to begin with the type of issues that are practical and would be understood by the rest of society at different levels. We could say the world sets the agenda for inter-religious dialogue and action. In taking up such issues they can try to formulate positive agreements. In this methodology what has been learned in the processes of conflict resolution can be valuable in the inter-religious dialogue itself, e.g. 'Getting to yes'.

More specifically in inter-religious dialogue it would be helpful to *relativise or de-emphasize the doctrinal differences* of religions and reflect together on the moral issues, the core values and possible common action in a practical situation.

In this connection it will be important to try to *overcome the exclusivist tendencies* of the different *fundamentalisms* that affect the religions. Fundamentalisms often stress some aspects of the

teachings of a religion to the exclusion of other religions. But an emphasis on the core values that stress respect for one another and the common human good can help groups to get beyond the divisions of fundamentalisms. In this process the religious groups can think of establishing communal and institutional dimensions for resolving the given issue or in general building a better world. Thus in a locality an *inter-religious council* representing all the partners in the dialogue and with capability of extending to different localities and even networking nationally can be helpful for resolving issues such as an inter-religious conflict. In these there could be an appeal to the high ethical standards of all religions while agreeing to respect the different doctrinal positions of each religion and maintaining its own cultural identity and differences in ways of worship and ritual.

The religions together can be a very valuable and effective means of bringing about a change in the consciousness of individuals and groups concerning what is just and right in a given situation.. They can help in promoting cultures of peace and understanding that make for personal fulfilment and social harmony. The understanding of these values and processes can be communicated through the means of education available to each religion and this may influence also the education in the schools as well as the education through the religious prayer sessions, meditations and festivities. The religions can have a very great impact on influencing the younger generation who are often the bearers of new visions and initiators of new orientations.

An inter-religious group in a *given place or region* can also influence other agencies such as the cultural media, the governments and political parties and even business. Therefore the inter-religious group could develop the personal and collective responsibility of defending the human rights of particularly the marginalized and the oppressed groups, as well as create a consciousness of the duties of all concerned groups. In this process they can help develop new partnerships among the religions in building the desired relationships and institutions to solve human problem such as social injustice.

Coming together in trying to resolve such issues inspired by the core values of the religions and of humanism would be in a sense the *real conversion that the religions should seek* instead of a mission of converting persons to membership of one's own religion.

It would be important to recognise that the *linkage of religions with state power* has been one of the major occasions or reasons for inter-religious conflict. Hence it should be good if inter-religious dialogue would think of ways by which there could be a separation of religions from state power and state control. This would help the religions themselves to return to their deeper values that bring understanding and peace with justice rather than competition and conflict. The history of Indo Pakistan relations in the last 50-60 years can indicate to us how religions linked to state power can be a source of long term conflict and even of wars.

A feasible and necessary issue in the present circumstances would be the need for *religions to come together* to care for nature and check the *ecological devastation* based on the present widespread consumerist lifestyle and the economic exploitation of the natural resources of the earth. On these issues there is now awareness at the global level and even on the level of children who learn at school the need for care for the earth. The religions in diverse places and at different levels of organisation can teach and bring about practices for fairness to humans and nature both at present and intergenerationally in the perspective of the future. Through the process of meditation and social dialogue they can think of methods and alliances for saving the environment and realising justice in this field. At the global level the religions could bring influence to bear on the governments of the world to implement the UN proposals for an Earth Charter as decided in the Kyoto protocol regarding the environment and ecology.

All these approaches of inter-religious dialogue working towards the realisation of the ethical values would be in a certain sense *promoting a spirituality* that goes beyond particular religiosities and

mere rationalising. They can point towards an approach of listening to the spirit and evoking the spirit acknowledged by all religions for the practical common good.

Notes

1. *Times History of the World Atlas*, New York: Harper Collins, 1999, 209
2. *Times History of the World Atlas*, 208
3. The World Bank, 1984, 69 ref. 18
4. *Times History of the World Atlas*, 209, 225, 245
5. United Nations, *Global Outlook*, 2000, 227
6. Thich Nhat Hanh, *for a Future to be Possible*, Berkeley: Parallax Press 1993, 1-83.
7. Swami Agnivesh in Foreword to Albert Nambiaparambil, *Pilgrims on the Seashore of Endless Worlds*, Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2002, iii

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FOR THE FORMATION OF A PEOPLE'S LIFE-PEACE COMMUNITY IN NORTHEAST ASIA

A Statement from the 2005 International Conference on Peace for Life in Northeast Asia

“God blesses those who work for peace, for they will be called the children of God.” (Matthew. 5:9)

“In that day the wolf and the lamb will live together; the leopard and the goat will be at peace. Calves and yearlings will be safe among lions, and a little child will lead them all.” (Isaiah 11:6)

The Korean Christian Faculty Fellowship (KCFF), standing within the historical tradition of the Donghak Movement and the resolute struggle against the powers of Japanese colonialism, has carried the spirit of resistance and solidarity by joining the *minjung* movement that took place during the period of industrialization in the Republic of Korea (ROK) during the late 20th century. The KCFF has also been a strong force of resistance against the totalitarian anti-communist military dictators, struggling with the Korean people to attain democracy and working toward the peaceful reunification of Korea.

The members of the KCFF have supported the proclamation of the Year of Jubilee on the basis of the principles of popular participation, peace, national autonomy, national collaboration, and humanitarianism set forth in the 1988 Korean Church Statement on Peace and Reunification. We have endeavored to lay the foundation for peace on the Korean peninsula and open the path to national unification by engaging in various movements to establish peace and attain national unification. We believe that democracy and reunification are inseparable, and we also affirm that there cannot be a lasting peace in Northeast Asia without the reunification of the Korean peninsula and the Korean people.

It is within this historical tradition and praxis that participants from China, Germany, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Norway, Russia, South Africa, the Philippines, Taiwan, and the United States gathered at the St. Lazarus Village in Uiwang City, Gyonggido, Korea from 15 to 19 May, 2005 to hold an “International Conference on Peace for Life in Northeast Asia” to discuss ways by which we could establish peace for life in Northeast Asia.

It is within this context that the 2005 International Conference on Peace for Life in Northeast Asia convened. As the participants exchanged stories of the suffering people and their struggles in solidarity with the oppressed and victimized, and as they delved into the theological, political, social, and ethical issues surrounding our region, we discovered ever more clearly that we are engaged in a struggle of those promoting life and peace on the one hand, and against those proliferating death and violence on the other. The three days spent together in common worship, and the sharing of stories, ideas and visions of hope have produced within us a renewed commitment to solidarity and action for building a peace for life in Northeast Asia. As part of our continued commitment to each other in solidarity and for the purpose of promoting common action, the participants of the 2005 International Conference on Peace for Life in Northeast Asia commend the following to the Christian brothers and sisters of the

world, as well as all movements of peace and life and all good willed persons who wish to join in our journey of peace for life.

1. We believe that peace is an integral element of life. Peace is the fulness of life enjoyed within the framework of proper relationships. The Bible teaches that peace is a fruit of justice. Justice implies the establishment of a proper relationship between God and humankind, between humankind and nature, and among members of humankind. Therefore, there can be no peace without justice, and there can be no life without peace. We believe that God desires all of creation to enjoy a communal and mutually enriching life, and that God wishes to see all life forming a network. We seek to be participants in this work of God.

We are presently faced with a reality where peace is threatened and violence is prevalent among people and nations. The violence being enacted today is systematic and has extended to include numerous places in the world. The people of Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine, and the Korean peninsula are being oppressed by the powers of the Empire and are being victimized.

In a world where violence is jeopardizing the communal relationship of the people, we confess that we have been weak and negligent, succumbing to the present situation of violence rather than effectively struggling against it. As we humbly acknowledge our shortcomings we recommit ourselves to respond to the call of God to build up a household of peace.

2. The global situation today is one in which the people find themselves increasingly victimized by the imperial acts of aggression instigated by the United States in its pursuit of the so-called "War on Terror." The world today is faced with a situation in which the value of peace is continuously diminishing and the discourse on the permanence and inevitability of war that attempts to justify the doctrine of pre-emption has superseded previous conceptions of the relation between peace and war. In the name of maintaining global dominance, the peace and security of the people and all living creatures of the world is put into jeopardy.

2.1 Along with the imperial acts of violence that threaten the security of the people the increasing influences of economic globalization endangers the right of people to live peacefully in the land that has been given to humankind as a gift and in which the people have a right to inhabit. Land is not a commodity to be purchased, exploited, nor is it merely a form of territory for militant defense or aggressive occupation. The integration of the Empire's quest for militant and economic predominance is heightened as war is utilized as a means of protecting the gains of market made possible by the acceleration of economic globalization. This integration of military and economic aggression by the Empire threatens the peace and security of the people by degrading our ecology and endangering our cultures.

2.2 As the Empire seeks to aggressively broaden its influence in the world the peoples of Asia, and indeed all around the world, become the victims of more sophisticated forms of violence and are denied their basic rights as human beings to live in peace. The people of the Philippines find their land overtaken by the forces of the Empire as a second front to the so called War on Terror. Japan, a state that already has a history of abusing its power and influence as imperial overlords in Asia increasingly show signs of yearning for the "years of glory" as a subordinate regional power of the Empire. Northeast Asia is a potential point where three countries who collectively possess the tendency to become imperial powers converge. The competition of China, Japan, and the U.S. for supremacy in this region is particularly disturbing to those who have struggled tirelessly to promote and sustain a peace for life in Northeast Asia.

3. At present, the Korean peninsula is faced with a situation that may turn to a crisis at any moment. The six-party talks aimed at diffusing the antagonistic relationship between The DPR Korea, or North Korea and the United States are on hold. There are continued reports in the world media that the DPRK is preparing to test a nuclear device, and there are voices in the United States that argue for a pre-emptive strike against the DPRK. We are deeply disturbed by the fact that the

recent statements made by the United States toward the DPRK seem to deny its present right to exist. The present state of insecurity reflects the global situation of the acts of aggression enacted by the Empire of the United States

3.1 Within the present critical context of the Korean peninsula we firmly believe that it is imperative that United States end its antagonistic policy toward the DPRK and work to create a peaceful relationship between the two countries at the earliest date possible by the Two-Party – Talk(or bilateral talks). The United States must guarantee the security of the DPRK and positively state that it recognizes the DPRK's right to engage with other countries as a sovereign state and a legitimate member of the world community. We believe that the DPRK and the United States should normalize relations and journey together on the path to peace and prosperity.

3.2 We are deeply concerned of the notions of preemptive strike advanced by the United States. Any preemptive strike by the United States against the DPRK will result in a war engulfing all of Northeast Asia which would bring about the total destruction of the Korean people. We oppose the very notion of a preemptive strike by the United States against any state. We stand against any second Korean War being waged on the Korean peninsula and vow to work together with all Koreans and in solidarity with the citizens of the world to engage in an aggressive anti-war peace campaign. It is in this respect that we call upon the Korean administration and the National Assembly to implement measures that will return war-times operational control of its military forces (war time powers) to Korea.

3.3 We elucidate the principle that all nuclear weapons in the world should be comprehensively regulated, dismantled, and destroyed. The United States, Russia, China, U.K., France, India, Pakistan, and Israel must all permanently destroy their nuclear arsenal as demanded by the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Japan must abandon any nuclear capability that would allow it to produce nuclear weapons. We believe that it is only after the total and comprehensive dismantling

and complete destruction of all nuclear weapons is realized that the vision to secure a nuclear free peace for all people can become a reality. For this reason we oppose the development of the so-called new tactical and strategic nuclear weapons by the United States. The development of a so-called new generation of nuclear weapons is not only in direct violation of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty but is a direct threat to the peace and security of all peoples of the world.

3.4 The designation of the DPRK as “Outposts of Tyranny” by the United States, which has declared the advancement of “freedom” as its ultimate goal, is, along with the statement made in 2002 by George W. Bush which named the DPRK as “an Axis of Evil,” a direct denial of the DPRK's right as a state to exist. We are deeply disturbed by the recent National Policy Review of the United States which explicitly lists the DPRK as a potential site for a nuclear strike. The fierce and intense response that such statements have elicited from the DPRK reflects the degree to which the people feel threatened as they oppose the super-power United States. We believe that both the United States and DPRK should desist from levelling accusations at each other and implement steps toward mutual recognition of the other. We oppose any act of aggression planned by the United States to destabilize a sovereign state and affect a “regime change” and or “regime transformation” in pursuit of its own narrow national interests.

3.5 We believe that DPRK and the ROK should move forward together on a path of peaceful co-existence, peaceful exchange, and peaceful reunification in line with the principle of national autonomy as expressed in the 1972 July 4 Joint Communiqué, the 1991 South-North Basic Agreement, and the 2000 South-North Summit Joint Declaration.

4. We express deep concern that there are many prominent issues today that threaten security and peace in Northeast Asia. Levels of tension and discord are increasing between the three key countries of the region, Korea, China, and Japan surrounding the issues of history and land.

4.1 We deplore the fact that the history of colonial exploitation and rule conducted by the Japanese in this region has not been sufficiently redressed. We are deeply distressed that the rash behaviors of the Japanese prevent Korea, China, and Japan from furthering a mutually beneficial friendly relationship oriented toward the future. Japan continues to distort historical facts, remains adamantly defiant about refusing to humbly reconsider its criminal activities, and has failed to compensate the victims of its crimes. We wish to make clear that Japan has in no way, shape or form sought to be apologized to or compensated with reparation the thousands of Korean people who suffered injustice under the brutal hands of Japanese imperialism.

4.2 The recent escalation of issues relating to land that occurred as a result of Japan's assertion of possession regarding Dokdo Island and the Spratly Islands in the South China Sea have become a seed for conflict. We oppose any involvement by the United States in this region, either military or political, and we oppose the possibility of any strengthening of the reactionary group still admiring the glory of the Japanese Imperial past and any increase in military expenditure by Japan.

4.3 We call upon Japan to participate in constructively dealing with its issues of the historical past, to implement specific, realistic and meaningful measures to apologize and compensate for its past misdeeds, and to refrain from instigating any future action which may jeopardize peace in Northeast Asia. Only then will the people of Northeast Asia be able to forgive and reconcile one another, thereby working together to build peace.

5. We highly regard the efforts of the South Korean government to strengthen its role as the catalyst and or balancer for peace in Northeast Asia and support its endeavors to contribute to peace and prosperity in Northeast Asia through economic cooperation and cultural exchange within Northeast Asia and between Europe and Asia.

5.1 The peaceful exchange and cooperation of the DPRK and ROK, especially those economic cooperative programs, such as the

Gaeseong Industrial Park, are positive starting points. The national cooperation of the two Koreas is not only beneficial to the Koreans, but is also a starting point for bringing peace and prosperity to Northeast Asia and the Eurasian region. Therefore, we encourage the people of these regions to fully and actively support these national cooperation efforts.

6. While we recognize the importance of the state's efforts to seek cooperative measures in maintaining security and establishing a peaceful order we firmly advocate and support the formation of a peace community that can secure the peace and security of the people at both the local and global levels by their participation and leadership.

6.1 Toward this end we support the formation of civil peace forces within and among the countries in Northeast Asia, and we affirm that we will work together with them to establish a Northeast Asia peace community.

6.2 We recommend that the WCC, AACC, CCA, CLAI, as well as other ecumenical organizations should take as a high priority the issue of global insecurity and violence resulting from the current world military order dominated by the global Empire and the peace for all living beings on earth.

6.3 In order for us to carry the spirit of the 2005 International Conference on Peace for Life in Northeast Asia forward we recommend that the KCFF in cooperation and solidarity with other peace building organizations work toward a People's Peace Forum to be organized at the local, national, and international levels for the purpose of engaging in periodic and regular activities for the purpose of building peace for life.

IS SOMHLOLO'S DREAM A SCANDAL FOR SWAZI HEGEMONY? THE CHRISTIAN CLAUSE DEBATE REEXAMINED IN THE CONTEXT OF PROSPECTS FOR RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATION

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Abstract

Evangelical scholars and some Zionist sentiments have declared Swaziland a Christian country. The ideological foundation of this ambitious call is King Somhlolo's dream on the coming of the white missionaries and settlers to Swaziland. This paper argues that the King's dream need not be subjected to a particular, monolithic interpretation. A literal interpretation of the dream has the potential of landing Swaziland into a religiously polarized scenario. This paper gives pointers to two alternative readings of the dream, while arguing that the dominant or popular interpretation seems unhelpful in the creation of community in the kingdom of Swaziland. The two alternative readings, on the other hand, should be encouraged and recognized for the sake of preserving Swazi hegemony in the context

of diversity and difference. The recently settled debate on the Christian clause in the new constitution indicated how religion can so easily polarize a nation to the extent of creating tensions between the Christian clergy and the head of State. As the game of reading the dream proceeds, the Christian Church should not lose its calling by yielding to unhelpful right-wing intercourse with the state.

Introduction

The most over-used jargon to describe the religious scene in Swaziland is that Swaziland is a Christian country (Nyawo 1994; Mzizi 1998; Vilakati 1998). The popularization of this notion is based a questionable reading of Swazi history, which suggests that Christianity came to Swaziland first through royal revelation, and then royal invitation (Mastebula 1987; 41-43, Kasenene 1993: 43-48). This interpretation of a complex set of events has been appropriately called Somhloloism (Gamedze 1990:48) because it is linked to a revelation, or dream, that appeared to King Somhlolo in the latter part of the 1830s.

In this essay I shall argue that Somhlolo's dream was a rich metaphor, rather than a cut-and-dried historical reality pointing to a divine sanction and diction that only Christianity was good for the Swazis. Therefore, as a metaphor, Somhlolo's dream can be used as a vehicle for building a more inclusive society, tolerant of diversity and accommodative of difference. The reverse is not true, if the dream is taken as historical *panacea* for the religious shape and consciousness of the Swazi which is the thinking advanced by Nyawo and Gamedze. Nyawo (1994:28) stated emphatically:

Although Swaziland respects the freedom of conscience, she does not for one moment wish to vacillate on the theistic foundation upon which the nation was founded some 150 years ago. History has taught us that different and opposing religions, offered at the same time, to the same people, become divisive elements in society.

Swaziland does not want to engage herself in bloody religious wars. This is not scepticism, but it is simply affirmation of the basic philosophy of the nation.

Between May 2003, when the draft constitution was released for public debate at the sanction of the king, to July 2005 Swaziland has been engaged in an uncoordinated public debate on the question of a “Christian clause” in the draft constitution. This debate follows one which was held at the University of Swaziland under the auspices of the Religious Knowledge panel on a multi-faith curriculum for Swaziland schools. The debate on a multi-faith curriculum was inspired by curricular developments that were going on in neighboring South Africa in the pre and post-1994 era when South Africa was coming to terms with the reality of creating a new and open society that is tolerant and accommodative of difference. Both debates have revealed a strong tenacity by evangelical and Zionist Christians to adhere to a literal interpretation of the dream of King Somhlolo.

The literal interpretation, as shall be indicated below, has led some Christian leaders to reject the teaching of other faiths to school children in Swaziland, and to express an implicit desire (through a “loud silence” on the matter) to ban other religions from operating in Swaziland. The attempt to have the Swazi constitution enshrine Christianity as official religion was the ultimate effort by the enthusiastic fundamentalist interpreters of Somhlolo’s dream to create an exclusive society receiving spiritual dictates only from the Christian religion. The negative consequences of this move, such as social and inter-religious conflict, seem to be deliberately overlooked by its proponents.

The incumbent Swazi monarch, while believing in the dream of his forefather, has had a mind shift about how it should be interpreted, as is explained below. Instead of seeing it as a simplistic constitutional declaration that Swaziland should be a Christian country, he suggests that the implications of the exclusive society it may create be examined in the light of the basic teachings of the Christian faith.

The strategy of extolling Christianity above other religions was also followed in Zambia in recent years. When Frederick Chiluba assumed power after defeating Kenneth Kaunda at the polls, he engaged in the necessary path of constitutional reform. One of the proposals was a clause declaring Zambia a Christian nation. Although meeting with substantial opposition from within the Christian community itself, the clause was included in the Zambian constitution. Chiluba and his deputy declared that they were “born again” Christians, hence their strong support for the clause. The main advocate at present for the retention of the clause in Zambia is the ousted deputy President, Nevers Mumba, who had formed a political party to contest the next election. Mumba, like Chiluba and others who support this position, are Pentecostal Christians who believe that having such a clause would translate into better morals for the Zambian nation as a whole.

A similar scenario occurred in Zimbabwe, where Pentecostal Christians pushed relentlessly for a clause in their constitution that would declare Zimbabwe a Christian country. This effort has not been successful, since the draft constitution of 2000, in which such a clause had been enshrined, was rejected by the Zimbabwean electorate. In both Zambia and Zimbabwe the major opponents of such a clause are Christians from the mainline and historical churches. Their central argument is that Christianity does not need any constitutional protection to thrive.

I propose in this essay that Somhlolo’s dream should be looked at as a metaphor, rather than as an angelic dictation from some celestial power affording mortals no choice to think or to contextualize the dream in the realities of their social location and existence. In order to explain the richness of this metaphor, I shall indicate three readings of the dream which I have referred to elsewhere (Mzizi 2003: 12-18) as (i) *popular*; (ii) *secular*; and (iii) *religious*. Briefly stated, the *popular* reading of the dream is the one that is promoted mainly by evangelical theologians like Nyawo and Gamedze, including some Zionist Christians

who, however, make no attempt to conceptualise the dream theologically. Its reading of the historical narration and interpretation of the dream is decidedly literalistic and dogmatic. When Gamedze first advocated Somhloism in the 1980s and developed it after the collapse of the Eastern bloc and the Cold War, there was no clue that Somhloism would become a problem, as it did in 2003-2005 during the discussions of the Christian clause in the new Swazi constitution. What clearly transpired during the course of that debate was that the kind of Somhloism advanced by Nyawo and Gamedze had the potential of creating a closed and exclusive Christian society, perhaps with proclivities to dangerous radicalism, which could result in social disharmony and gross religious intolerance.

The *secular* reading of the dream, which is explained in more detail below, draws a lot from the historical context and times of King Somhlolo. The point is that the King would not have dreamt in a historical vacuum, hence the early interpretations of the dream should have known exactly what the dream meant in the context of the times.

Finally, the *religious* reading of the dream is what Paul F. Knitter (1998:23f) calls “an effort on the part of religious persons to be big-hearted, generous and to share with others what was given to them.” This reading is mainly evident in the pronouncement of members of the Baha’i community in Swaziland. The reasons for this community’s religious reading of the king’s dream are sometimes unfortunately enmeshed in the events of the 1840s which bear some significance in the Baha’i faith’s revelation history in so far as the ministry of the Bab was concerned. But we need not be detained by the Baha’i’s position here. It is the essence of their interpretation that is significant for the purposes of this discussion.

Conceptual framework

The argument that this essay advances is that as a result of Somhlolo’s dream the Christian religion has enjoyed a love-hate relationship with the Swazi state. There is no evidence in Swazi political

history suggesting that the Swazi state has had a political agenda to control the church. But that does not mean that political authority has always been pleased with the church. There have been clashes from time to time (cf. Matsebula 1987 :39ff; Kasenene 1987: 65ff; 1993:45-48; Mzizi 1995:273-283). What is remarkable, however, is that the church in Swaziland had over the years sought to legitimate its message by claiming a divine connection between the advent of Christianity and traditional authority. This is what Vilakati (1998:63) calls “royalist opportunism, i.e.. the act of wanting to endear oneself to the monarchy in order to be awarded with high political positions by the king.”

For some reason the church leaders believe that by parading this relationship all *bona fide* Swazi citizens, including royalty itself, would choose to be Christians. In other words, the church is involved in an ideological game of playing the political trump card to garner religious support. This is the essence of Somhloism. Taken to its logical conclusion, Somhloism suggests a marriage of convenience between church and state, in which the Swazi church hopes for a permanent religious monopoly within the Swazi state, with the state standing to benefit through assured blessings of all its activities and counting upon the support of the church at all times.

The Swazi state has over the years practised a tolerant attitude toward other religions:

It is possible, therefore, that the royal family understood Somhlolo’s vision in broader and more tolerant terms. And this is Kasenene’s methodology in his phenomenological analysis of religion in Swaziland. A kind of tolerance of other religions and of other brands of Christianity can be found only in the institution of kingship, much to the disappointment of other competing and more pietistic Christian formations (Mzizi 1998:52).

Christian diversity and religious pluralism, therefore, are definitive terms of state policy. Unfortunately the popular reading of the dream leads to the dishonest denial of religions, pluralism in particular. This is

the kind of tension Swaziland experienced as the debates on the Christian clause in the 2004 Constitution Bill progressed. Perhaps what the church in Swaziland wants to achieve by promoting Somhloloism and enshrining Christianity as the official religion is a Swazi cultural Christianity that would claim a large following and appeal on cultural impulses, but with hardly any traceable prophetic features, as is expected of the church as the body of Christ. The dangers such a scenario poses for Christian ministry need not be over-emphasised. The Christian tradition is replete with examples of tensions, ambiguities and contestations for power when a marriage between church and state is sought.

Somhlolo's dream, therefore, has been used to bolster a powerful religiocultural ideology in Swazi Christian history. This paper takes the position that Somhloloism, as an ideology, is the expression of a marriage of convenience between church and state in Swaziland. This ideology, emanating from ahistorical foundations and operating through a highly selective reading of the dream of King Somhlolo, has resulted in the popular view that Swaziland is a Christian country – a political assertion with far-reaching consequences. Somhloloism makes definite assumptions about church-state relations in Swaziland, and ends up in turn complicating those relations.

The Dream Revisited

King Somhlolo's dream has been celebrated in song and tale so many times in different contexts that there is no "objective" narration of what the King's dream was. This is perhaps not uncommon with any narration and eventual interpretation of a mystical experience. A mystical experience gets translated and retranslated into words and symbols that are easier for its interpreters to understand or more conducive to their social and political interests.

There is general consensus, however, about the following: In a dream, King Somhlolo saw white-skinned people carrying two objects: a scroll (*umculu*) and a round object (indilinga). The white-skinned

people had long hair hanging down their heads, resembling cattle tassels. The king was instructed in the dream to advise the Swazi people to do three things. First the white-skinned people were not to be hurt in anyway. Secondly, the scroll was to be accepted. Lastly, the round object was to be rejected. On the surface these instructions appear simple and straightforward. The king then summoned his advisers and narrated the dream to them. The various accounts of the dream point out first and foremost that the dream had come to the king from divine origins. In the Swazi context, it was the national ancestors who had spoken to the king. This, in and of itself, legitimated the dream.

It is significant to note that the following questions were *not* asked: (i) Did the king just have a normal dream like any old person, or did he really have a vision, some form of mystical experience? (ii) Was there another similar experience in Swazi royal history which could have easily rendered the king's dream acceptable? Other curious issues relating to the content of the dream have not been questioned: (iii) Why was it forbidden to hurt the white people? (iv) What were the reasons for rejecting the coin, but accepting the scroll? Since it is impossible to reach back to the original narration of and responses to the dream, no definitive answers can be given to these questions. This has resulted in various interpretations being given to the dream, thus complicating church-state relations in Swaziland and heightening the tensions surrounding whom to admit into – or eject from – public religious space in Swaziland.

The popular reading of the Dream

The popular interpretation is common mainly among the evangelicals affiliated to the Swaziland Conference of Churches and the Zionists affiliated to the League of African Churches. Some leading theologians in Evangelical circles have over the years emphasised the importance of this dream. Within the Swaziland Conference of Churches there has emerged a strong cultural- evangelical wing championed by powerful leaders under the banner *The Somhlolo Festival of Praise*.

The original group of leaders started this festival during the commemoration of 150 years of Christianity in Swaziland in 1994. However, the story did not end there. Since 1994 there have been systematic attempts by the leaders of the Festival to get the celebrations included in the national calendar. The Somhlolo Festival of Praise normally climaxes on July 22, a public holiday in honour of King Sobhuza II's birthday. Sobhuza II occupies an important place in the modern history of Swaziland in that he was not only the longest ruling monarch to date, but was also influential in shaping the political and cultural philosophy on which post-independent Swaziland was founded. The Zionist Christians of Swaziland regard him as their "High Priest" because of the role he played in unifying them during the colonial days.

The Somhlolo Festival of Praise group is more concerned about the fact that Sobhuza II used the Bible when he took the oath of office as King on September 6, 1968. To them this was an indication that the national ethos and philosophy of the country should be founded on the Christian Bible. The Somhlolo Festival of Praise group has come up with a religio-cultural justification of the celebration. They explain the reason for the annual celebration as follows in the programme for the main service:

The Lord God Jehovah, Creator of Heaven and Earth, had mercy on Swaziland when He visited our founding King Somhlolo in a dream. In this dream God gave the Nation a mandate "to choose the Umculu, the Word of God, the Holy Bible, and "eat it" and if the Nation would do so the Nation would Live. The Word of God is Jesus, the Light of the World, the Messiah, Wisdom and Life. In Leviticus the Children of Israel were called to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacle for 8 days, the last of which is the day to give thanks and celebrate the Torah (Word of God) on the 22nd day of the 7th month each year. By God's divine mercy the Government of Swaziland has set aside a National Holiday on the 22nd July annually to honour King Sobhuza II, who declared that Swaziland

would follow the Word of God, the Umculu when he took oath as Head of State. He lifted high and presented the Holy Bible to the Nation because it contained the mysteries of how to follow in the footsteps of Jesus.

This Somhlolo Festival of Praise on the 22nd day of the 7th month is a Biblical Feast or Festival to give thanks to God in obedience to His Word in Philippians 4:6-7 "in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving present your requests to God, and the peace of God which passes all understanding will guard your *hearts* and minds through Christ Jesus". The Mini-Festivals throughout the country give us the opportunity (1) to remember God's mercy in visiting this Nation and (2) to give thanks that "the Light has come and the glory of the Lord has risen upon us. "Isaiah 60:1. What is this light? It is the revelation of Jesus, the son of God in the Holy Bible, who is the Light, the way to the Father and the Truth which bears liberty, healing, wisdom and eternal life. The National Events at Lobamba give opportunity to Praise God for His goodness and mercy through the Song and Music Festival; to Thank God for His love and faithfulness through the Sunday Thanksgiving Service and to Pray for the Prophetic Destiny of this "small one that will become a mighty strong nation, in His time". Isaiah 60:22; at the International Prayer Breakfast and the National Prayer Service. (Cited from the Somhlolo Festival of Praise programme of February 22nd July, 2005).

Rev. Dr. A.B. Gamedze, a royalist and leading proponent of Somhloloism, believes that Swaziland was given the Bible by God for the purpose of building upon it its socio-economic and political philosophy. Gamedze (1990:29) has written: "Christ revealed Himself to King Somhlolo in a vision. In that vision, Christ commanded that, for survival in this world of endless turmoil, the Kingdom of Swaziland should build its socio-economic and political philosophy upon the Bible... In that divine initiative, Christ, as Head of the Church, by addressing an earthly Head of State ... he was ... confirming the fundamental truth that unity in diversity of functions between Church and state is ordained of God."

Gamedze understands Somhloloism to have been functional basically at four levels, namely, (i) teaching the Swazi the content of the Bible; (ii) teaching the Swazi literacy skills; (iii) building Primary, Secondary and High schools, as well as Bible Colleges and other tertiary institutions, e.g. the Nazarene Nursing College, Teacher Training and Vocational institutions; (iv) embarking on community development and social welfare projects, e.g. fighting poverty, disease and caring for the physically challenged. The purpose of missionary enterprise in Swaziland was realised when Swazis became “co-workers and co-partners of development and progress. It is a stage where Missionaries do not do things for the Swazis anymore, but work with the Swazis for the glory of God, honour of the King and development of the Swazi nation” (1990:31). According to Gamedze (:31), “applied Somhloloism” means that:

... the State realised the good work done by Missionaries and, in response, started to assist and to co-operate with the Church for the general development of Swaziland. That was the beginning of Government Aided Schools, Government Aided Hospitals and Clinics. There is even a closer cooperation today between Church and State in such projects as fresh water supply for the rural communities, promotion of commercial handicrafts for the rural mothers, Co-operative Societies and Literacy Centres.

Rev. Nicholas Nyawo (1994) supported Gamedze. Arguing for a Bible-centred Religious Knowledge curriculum, Nyawo asserted that Swaziland’s educational philosophy should be built on the Bible: “The centre and the circumference of the Bible is Christ. Swaziland’s formal education, therefore, should be oriented to the Bible and should be Christ-centred. The inclusion of the Bible in curriculum from primary school to University is non-negotiable and non-debatable. This is the life and blood of the nation” (Nyawo 1994:27). According to Nyawo, Somhloloism is about how God instructed King Somhlolo to make the Bible the foundation of Swaziland’s socio-economic and political philosophy.

As argued above, the views articulated by Nyawo and Gamedze are representative of the popular reading of the dream. They are expressed with such evangelical passion that one tries in vain to sway the issue. Very little is said about the round object, which Gamedze summarily dismisses as socialist materialism, which led to the rise of communism, the Cold War and the rejection of the biblical God. The collapse of the Eastern bloc, according to Gamedze, represented the triumph of Somhloloism. Furthermore, the two scholars do not even begin to address the concerns raised by Vilakati (1998:63-65) on the essence of religious hegemony and Christian diversity, or the morality side of the coin if it could be successfully argued that Swaziland is a Christian country.

To conclude, four features characterise the popular reading of Somhlolo’s dream: (a) The scroll that the king saw was the Bible; (b) The Bible should provide the guiding principles for the Swazi worldview; (c) Swaziland is a Christian country; (d) No other religion should be allowed any space in Swaziland.

A Secular or Historical reading of the Dream

The predominant view of this reading is that Somhlolo’s dream can best be understood in the context of its times. For this reason, one can safely call it a historical reading with no religious assumptions: As a great nation builder, King Somhlolo carefully crafted a strategy that he sold to his advisors, for the purpose of avoiding a possible bloodbath should the Swazis resist the encroachment of white people.

The backdrop against which Somhlolo’s vision should be understood was the December 16, 1838 Zulu massacre at Encome (Blood River). Julian Kunnie (1994) describes that massacre as a catastrophic event for the whole people of Southern Africa. It was a key event in a war over the control of African land, with the Afrikaner settler colonialists hell-bent to lord it over African ancestral lands. The settlers interpreted their victory as divine intervention, hence the Voortrekker Monument

that was later erected to symbolise the day when the Afrikaner God gave Southern Africa to the whites.

A secular reading of Somhlolo's dream holds that the king did not see a vision after all. He had heard about the military prowess and political intentions of the whites from others (Matsebula 1987:25f; Mzizi 1995:272ff; 2001:137). Some Portuguese people had settled in neighboring Mozambique, and the story of the defeat of the Zulus at Encome had spread far and wide. Part of King Somhlolo's military strategy was never to do battle with a powerful enemy. That is why the king elected to establish cordial relations with the Zulus during the *Mfecane* wars. King Somhlolo's strategy, therefore, was that whites should be unconditionally welcomed in Swaziland. Resisting them could prove perilous to the nation. Welcoming them would ensure security on two fronts: First, their military power could be harnessed to protect the Swazis against invaders who may want to overturn the Swazi nation; secondly, their presence could preserve Swazi kingship, as the whites protect and teach his young successor their secrets (Matsebula 1987:39).

I have argued elsewhere (Mzizi 2000:916f) that Christianity entered Swaziland in the heyday of the consolidation of the Swazi state by King Mswati II, Somhlolo's son. As mentioned above, King Somhlolo was an astute strategist-statesman. He was a generous and benevolent ruler who sought to accommodate foreign elements in a diplomatic fashion (Kuper 1978; Booth 1983; Matsebula 1987). In this interpretation, the round object in the dream stood for the white man's bullet. The rejection of the bullet meant not only that the blood of the white settlers should not be spilled, but also that Swazis should live in harmony with them, hence ensuring the survival of the nation. In a wider sense the king was warning the nation to avoid war and always pursue peaceful co-existence with other people, especially foreigners. The scroll in this case represented the white man's knowledge – scientific and technological – which the Swazis should adapt and

integrate for the sake of survival and prosperity. Briefly, then, the secular reading of the dream takes into account the existential political realities that King Somhlolo had to contend with in the late 1830s. The immediate objectives of the dream were survival and preservation of Swazi Kingship. The long-term effects would be an integrated Swazi society, accommodative of differences and constantly adapting to new situations and challenges. Both the immediate and long-term objectives were difficult to achieve. Despite the enthusiasm of King Mswati II to invite white missionaries into the country, the encounter was short-lived. It was only a generation later that the proliferation of white missionaries and land exploiters were allowed.

A religious Reading of the dream: toward an integrative approach

A religious reading of the dream is a conscious attempt to read the dream in terms that transcend both the parochialism of the popular reading and the elitism of the secular-historical reading. This reading suggests that King Somhlolo stood in time and space to announce that a new age had become manifest, an age of the unity of religions and of humankind. As a herald for peace, Somhlolo was not alone, for as Ben Dlamini (in Mzizi 2001:11) explains:

Christ confirmed the time and described the manner of his return; he said he would have a new name; and that the name would be Baha'u'llah, the glory of the Father. The place of his return was Iran, although he would end up in Akka, Israel. He said he would return in 1844. The Bab, the forerunner of Baha'u'llah, declared his mission on the 23rd of May 1844. His mission was to awaken the people and announce the presence of Baha'u'llah, who already lived among them.

The central message of the Bab in 1844 and of Baha'u'llah in 1863 was that the latter had come to fulfil all other prophecies which had been made since the beginning of the world: "He (Baha'u'llah) brought to mankind the recognition of the oneness of God, the oneness of his Messengers, and the oneness of the human race. He brought to

reality the ancient vision that humanity will at last be united in one universal common religion” (Dlamini, in Mzizi 2001 :12).

Paul Knitter (1998:24) explains the inclusive approach to interreligious relations, which recognises the value of other religions and identifies what is common to them all. In an inclusive approach, salvation is the common thread, expressed in Christological terms: “What is common to all religions is the saving presence of Christ or of Christ’s spirit. Christ, though present clearly and fully in Christianity, is not limited to Christianity; he is active, in camouflaged ways, throughout the “cosmos”, especially in the religions of the world. It is this Christ who gives the other religions their value” (Knitter 1998:24).

Knitter and Dlamini may be using different words to express the same approach. The fact of the matter is that they use their personal experiences and religious contexts to describe the concepts they purport to espouse. This was also true of John Hick (1973; 1989) and Karl Rahner (1966; 1974), among others. Knitter admitted this difficulty when he observed that inclusivism has its own problems because you can only be nice to other religions by fencing them within the parameters of your own.

Peter Kasenene (1988:44ff) collapsed the popular and the secular readings of Somhlolo’s dream into one. He concluded that Somhloism was not only an ideology, but also a civil religion in the sense that it sought to unite the Swazi people by appealing to a royal historical experience:

That system establishes or maintains social cohesion and unites the people in that society. It is both civil and religious. It is civil in so far as it deals with the basic public institutions exercising power in a society, nation or other political units and religious in so far as it evolves commitment and, within an overall world-view, expresses a people’s ultimate sense of worth, and destiny (:44).

Kasenene (1993:104ff) sees nothing wrong with civil religion *per se*. To be sure, he feels that the Swazi state’s accommodation of

other religions owes its inspiration to Somhloism. He narrates the story of the royal encounter of members of the Baha’i faith: “The King graciously told them that anyone coming with the word of God was welcome in Swaziland. This was in accordance with Somhlolo’s vision.”

The religious reading of the dream, therefore, holds that Somhlolo’s vision was about religious accommodation. The Baha’i view about the unity of all religions finds credence in the vision. Considering the fact that the Swazi state has allowed other faiths, including various Christian denominations and sects, to operate, and the reality that Swazi Traditional Religion is the cornerstone of Swazi hegemony, the religious reading of Somhlolo’s dream does not contradict the secular reading. In fact, the two complement each other, while they remain distinguishable. The secular and religious readings of the dream thus stand in tension with the popular reading. I shall suggest some practical implications in my conclusion.

The Christian Clause debate

The Christian clergy in Swaziland who espouse the popular reading of Somhlolo’s dream were shocked to the marrow when the Christian clause declaring Christianity an official religion was removed from the constitution bill of 2004. The constitutional drafting process in Swaziland was set in motion in July 1996 when the Swazi King appointed a Constitutional Review Commission (CRC) with the mandate to consult the entire nation and study other country’s constitutions. The CRC was expected to present a draft to the King in two year’s time. However, delays caused by internal and external constraints resulted in the granting of extensions to the CRC because it could not finish its work on time. The CRC presented a report in 2000 which recorded all the major submissions of the nation on what should be contained in Swaziland’s new constitution. The matter of an official religion had not been raised in any of the CRC’s consultations, hence there was nothing recorded on religion in the official report.

A Constitution Drafting Committee (CDC) was set up, following the CRC report. Instead of just concentrating on the documents it had received from the CRC, the CDC decided to allow time for more submissions, with the hope that even those groupings and individuals who had not submitted anything to the CRC would respond. It was during this time that members of the Swaziland Christian Churches United in Christ (SCCUC) took a resolution to submit a proposal to the CRC that Christianity should be enshrined in the Kingdom's constitution as Swaziland's official religion. The SCCUC is a new ecumenical formation to unite Swaziland's three Church federations, namely, the Swaziland Conference of Churches, the Council of Swaziland Churches, and the League of African Churches. Rev. Dr. Nicholas Nyawo, referred to above in the Somhlolo debate, is the founder chairperson of this body.

I investigated the reasons for the Church leaders' resolution on this score and found that there was an implicit fear of an Islamic threat on royalty. This fear stemmed from the fact that the current government and king's foreign policy seemed to be tilting towards Eastern Islamic countries. Swaziland has diplomatic ties with Qatar, Malaysia, Brunei and some Islamic states in the Middle East. In addition, the Swazi king appears to be friends with some of the influential leaders of these Islamic countries. When he returned from Qatar in the latter part of 2002, he was clad in Islamic attire. The Christian community was shaken by this, thinking that the King had converted to Islam.

The king summons the Christian clergy

At the height of the debate on the Christian clause, which involved not only members of the public through the public media, but also Parliament through the heavy lobbying of the Christian Pastors, the Swazi king summoned the entire Christian clergy to his palace on July 6th, 2005. In his well considered presentation, the king assured the Christian leaders that the country would not abandon the Christian heritage grounded in the Somhlolo dream. He admitted that he had

made a personal study of two major faiths, Islam and Buddhism. His findings were that Christianity was unique because it was tolerant and accommodative of other faiths, even of non-believers. He had found the two religions he studied very legalistic and strict in many ways. Secondly, the king diplomatically asked the Christian leaders whether they were not, by advocating an official religion, employing the same ideology as Islamic states.

The king gave his reflections of the Christian faith, dwelling on the theme of non-violence and forgiveness. He cited the Gethsemane experience of Jesus Christ, which showed that violent zealotry – as had been demonstrated by Simon Peter when he cut off the ear of a Roman soldier with a sword was not part of his mission. The king then allowed the church leaders to talk, and it transpired that very few of them had clearly understood what the king's intentions were, and why he wanted them to think deeper on the implications of the Christian clause.

The proposal to include a Christian clause in the Swazi Constitution, therefore, emanated from one section of the Christian community, under the leadership of the SCCUC. There is no evidence that each of the three church federations was consulted to make resolutions on the clause in their individual assemblies. There is also no evidence that a wide spectrum of Christians was consulted to contribute to the debate. Members of the SCCUC took their resolutions to the CDC under the guise that they were representing the entire Swazi church. A member of the CDC was asked on the July 7th, 2005 why they had proposed the Christian clause. He replied that the CDC felt that Christianity was the national ethos of Swaziland and also cited what obtains in Islamic states.

Section 4 of the 2003 Draft Constitution

Section 4 of the *Draft Constitution of the Kingdom of Swaziland* (SWAZI LAND GOVERNMENT 2003:3) reads:

4 The official religion

1. The official religion of Swaziland is Christianity.
2. The provisions of subsection (1) shall not prevent the existence or practice of other religions.

Section 24 of the Bill of Rights in the Draft Constitution (SWAZILAND GOVERNMENT 2003:17) contains a comprehensive clause entitled "Protection of freedom of conscience or religion." Despite the characteristic claw-back clauses in the entire Bill, the provisions of Section 24 conform in significant ways to international law. There is the provision of freedom of thought, conscience and religion; the freedom to enjoy one's options in these matters, including the freedom to worship alone or in community and to change religion or belief; the freedom to establish a religious community that may pursue religious educational objectives. Religious freedom is curtailed when matters of defence, public safety, public order, public morality, public health, and the freedom of other persons, are at stake.

The debate that ensued as a result of Section 4 was on two levels. First, the argument was that it was not possible to enshrine an official religion clause and at the same time allow for the free practice of other religions. What is the added value of having the official religion clause in the first place? Secondly, enshrining Christianity as the official religion grossly overlooked the presence and efficacy of Swazi traditional religion, the real ethos that has held the Swazi nation together under a kingship beyond the one hundred and sixty odd years which is Christianity's life history in the Kingdom. If Christianity were to be made the official religion, would that not pose a danger to some traditional customs and practices that are known to be in tension with some, teachings of certain churches?

As the public debate progressed, the SCCUC clergy were engaged in serious lobbying with members of both Houses of Parliament and the general public. It is not clear whether they were disclosing the real fears they had, viz. of an impending Islamic invasion in Swaziland.

What is evident is that some of them had spiritualised the whole endeavour, in the same spirit as the Somhlolo Festival of Praise organisers. In October 2004 the Draft Constitution was taken to the National cattle kraal for further debate, before being taken to Parliament. Much support was expressed there for the Christian clause, with little analysis being made of its ramifications or implications. However, pressure from the Swazi National Council Standing Committee (SNCSO) for the Christian clause be removed prevailed in the end. The power of this body supersedes that of Parliament and the Executive in the sense that it advises the king on any matter deemed fit by the king.

When the *Constitution of the Kingdom of Swaziland Bill, 2004* was eventually taken to Parliament, Section 4 read simply: "Swaziland practices freedom of religion" (SWAZILAND GOVERNMENT 2004). The SCCUC clergy then lobbied Parliament to restore the original clause. It was clear that they were on a collision course with the king. Whereas Parliament restored the clause without much debate or reflection, it was the king who had to assent to the Constitution for it to become law. The king's attempt to call the church leaders on July 6th, 2005 was an indication that he had decided that the clause should be removed. There was much consternation amongst the clergy who still insisted that the Christian clause should be retained. One fundamentalist Christian pastor wrote in the *Weekend Observer* of July 9, 2005

When the Pastors decided that Christianity should be the official religion, I knew there and then that those who will oppose it are destined for the grave. It cannot be otherwise. No one has ever opposed the agenda and counsel of Jehovah and continued to breathe. I am speaking this under the unction of the Holy Spirit and know for sure that because the Constitution has already been dedicated to God, by the Christians of Swaziland, who happen to represent the God of heaven, many are bound to fall because of this historic document. May those who have ears heed the warning

of the Holy Spirit. It was the Finger of God, not man, that put the Clause that declares Christianity as the official religion. It is therefore the Finger of the same God, which will rise and destroy all the opponents of the clause....

The Constitution Bill was returned to Parliament to attend to about eight clauses with the purpose of effecting the changes the king and his council suggested. Parliament effected the changes and the king signed the constitution into law on July 26th, 2005. The Christian clause had been removed. Preparing the disputing church leaders for this eventuality, the king preached a moving sermon at the occasion of the 2005 Somhlolo Festival of Praise on July 22nd. He stressed time and again that Christianity does not require any earthly protection for it is the power of God. The king observed that those who were calling for the official religion clause had entered the arena of politics. He thus put laid to a long and heart-rending debate.

Conclusion

The thrust of the argument in this essay takes its orientation from Aloysius Pieris' views on the functional meaning of ideology. While in agreement with Peter. C. Hodgson (1989:156), who holds that ideology is a "set of prescriptions for taking a position in the present world of social praxis and acting upon it either to change the world or to maintain it in its current state", Pieris (1998:29) maintains that all ideas, visions and spiritualities can only effect significant change in human history if they are "verbalized into an ideology or religion."

Advancing his view of ideology within the context of the liberation theology debate, Pieris posits that ideology is based on a five-point system, namely, a world-view; programmaticism; a this-worldly future to be realised; social analysis of the socio-political order; and a requirement that ideology be transcended by the truth it seeks to articulate. Pieris thus concludes that ideology is both a vision of a future – the memory of the future in the present – and an impetus or mission to effect change in the present disorder to realise that future.

To this end, Pieris maintains that ideological freedom of mind means choosing the right ideology, acquiring the right frame of mind and formulating the right questions, for indeed ideology is:

exclusively concerned with what it conceives to be a radical amelioration of the socio-political order with concomitant changes in the psycho-spiritual sphere... Ideology compliments religion when it provides the institutions, strategies, and structures that religion uses to incarnate the Absolute Future. (ibid. p.30)

The argument of this essay has taken a critical view, not of Somhloloism as an ideology in its own right, but of the evangelical attempt to use it to 'change' the national consciousness of the Swazi. My view is that the evangelical position makes dishonest assertion that all that Swaziland has is based on a biblical philosophy of sorts. No attempt to delineate that philosophy is made by the populist interpreters of Somhlolo's dream. The deliberate dishonesty in claiming that Swaziland is a Christian country, in my view, negates the spirit of community, accommodation and tolerance. On the other hand, the Swazi state, while fully aware that the evangelical claims are at best flattering, and at worst nonsensical, makes dishonest agreements with the evangelical position. I conclude, therefore, that the popular reading of Somhlolo's dream is not helpful at all. Should this reading be rejected forthrightly? Perhaps this is a choice that must be made by evangelicals themselves, for indeed wrong ideologies can never make anyone realise the "absolute future".

But perhaps a middle ground position can be considered. The secular and religious readings of the dream of Somhlolo can be used to enrich the evangelical position, and thus avoid an outright rejection of the popular reading, while both the secular and the religious may tap something from the evangelicals for the sake of creating a truly homogenous Swazi society. It should be the goal of all religions, and indeed all ideologies, to create community, not at the expense of individuality, but for the common good. I take Nzongola-Ntalaja (1997:

11 f) very seriously when he says:

In African societies, the individual is conceptualized as a *vital force*, whose existence transcends the temporal body in which the person is objectified in his or her earthly life. This is the essential or more fundamental difference between humans and other living species, including animals. Hence the necessity of respecting the originality and the particularity of each person, respect of the latter's *individuality* or individual human worth. This is the foundation on which Africans, like peoples elsewhere, base the idea of the *inviolability* of the human person and as well as his or her *inalienable* right to life and security.

Nzongola-Ntalaja is not espousing a doctrine of individualism here, but, like all thinkers on an African world-view, he holds that the individual is only fully human through his or her dialectical and symbiotic relationship with society. Individuality has meaning in community, hence, "I am because we are, because we are. therefore, I am". In the same vein, any ideological position which aims to destroy the spirit of community must be rejected. It is on this score that I conclude that King Somhlolo's dream in 1838 was not meant to be a long nightmare for future generations in Swaziland.

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CRITICAL SIGNS OF THE TIMES: ALL LIVING BEINGS IN THE COSMOS ARE GROANING UNDER THE REGIME OF THE GLOBAL EMPIRE AND MARKET

Kim Yong-Bock

A Cosmic Groaning

The suffering and cries of people and other living beings is the most outstanding sign of our times, as their victimization proceeds systematically, universally, and in an unprecedented manner under the global empire/market regime. At this beginning of the 21st century, all living beings in the cosmos face the threat of death and destruction. Their groaning echoes throughout the universe, and is joined by the Spirit's groaning. As expressed in Romans 8:2, the powers and principalities of this world – that is, the global empire – are “causing creation to groan, in bondage, waiting for its liberation.”

What is distinctive about this cosmic groaning is its global reach, to the ends of the earth, to the ends of the universe, to the bottomless depths of spirit and body and from microcosm to macrocosm of the

entire ecology of the earth. Such massive suffering and victimization can only be understood as a Cosmic Groaning. The shocking global statistics on hunger, poverty and disease are not just numbers, but signs of the immeasurable depth and intensity of suffering imposed by the global capitalist market and the dictates of the global empire. This is not just the result of natural shortages of resources, nor is it a “natural” disaster; it is human-made suffering.

The victimization of all living beings and the violence perpetrated against them by the cruel regimes of the global empire and market are a challenge to life itself, to the base of life, to cultures and civilizations, religious faiths and even to the Creator of life. The suffering of the hungry, the impoverished, the sick, the weak – including children, women and the elderly – is negating the very spirit of faiths and cultures for life, the very basis of life in justice and peace, and the political economies of life on earth.

Though the suffering of living beings caused by human civilizations has been long-lasting and consistent, today the entire ecosystem is threatened by the human conquest of nature for “survival,” as well as by the excessive greed for economic, military and geopolitical security. The very earth – the body of all living beings – is under serious threat of death and destruction.

The “omnipotent” power of military weapons systems of mass destruction and intensive, totalistic warfare is being exercised by the global empire in the name of peace and security. It is not that there were no wars among peoples in history, but that the root of wars such as the Crusades, the Conquest of the Americas, and the colonial wars against the racial and ethnic peoples in Asia and Africa have caused massive victimization of the people; and this has grown into a historical process of systematic conquest and massive destruction of peoples and the earth in modern times. World Wars I and II, the US atomic bombing of the Korean and Japanese peoples, the US Cold Wars against the Korean and Vietnamese peoples, and the Kosovo,

Afghanistan and Iraq wars against people and their communities have evolved into total wars of omnicide, causing massive destruction and victimization of life by modern weapons and warfare using new military technology. Current developments in global militarization threaten the total destruction of earth as a living abode, in apocalyptic proportions. The nature of war has been radically transformed into limitless war in time and space under the geo-politics of global hegemony by the global empire. The omnipotent power of empire can never obtain “complete security.” Its absolute power through modern military technocracy – omniscient weapons systems and a sense of omnipotent power – constitutes a tyranny over all living beings.

The victimized beings who struggle and aspire for liberation under the global empire suffer martyrdom, witnessing to a life of justice and peace for all beings, just like those who have struggled for justice and peace for life and have suffered death at the hands of the powers and principalities of the symbiotic system of global empire and global market regime.

Colossal is the destruction and fierce is the violence of the wars waged by the global empire. At the same time, there is intense violence by the people and the oppressed groups, basically a counter violence of national independence and people’s liberation against the powerful and against the global geo-politics of the empire, and just as deadly. There emerges a permanent, vicious cycle under the global empire and market regime, for it negates the pivotal base of justice and peace for life. It subjugates all living beings on earth under the domination of the global economy/empire symbiosis. The omnipotent power, which can never be secure, seeks to establish its absolute authority over people and life; and limitless, unsatisfied greed erects Mammon through sacrifices of the economic and natural victims. Absolute power and limitless greed are the core of the regime of the global empire and market.

Economic and political globalization made slaves out of the African and Asian peoples; it conquered the original peoples in the Americas,

Asia and Africa. The colonial powers, as agents of early globalization, brought about the subjugation of people on all continents and living beings everywhere on earth.

Global Empire and Global Market erect “Temples” to their values and world views, worshipping power and greed.

Global empire has enshrined freedom and the Free Market, Human Rights and Liberal Democracy, Development and Prosperity, Efficiency and Growth, Equality and Justice, Peace and Security, and Wellbeing and Happiness. These are the values hypocritically promoted by the global empire and its market.

The power of the global Empire/Market regime gives “institutional birth” to free individual persons (liberal person), free corporate persons, sovereign states, and technocratic or tochnetric agencies – trans-human agencies. All the above values are practiced by natural human beings but also by the transhuman agencies of the empire. All values are subsumed under Modernity as Technocracy (Regime of Science and Technology) and its symbiosis with the global Market/Empire. Cultures and Civilizations under the Global Empire suffer corrosion, destruction (cultural genocide), occupancy and hegemonic transformation in the very hearts of the community of living beings. This process leads often to cultural and religious genocide and illicit hybridization of people and living beings.

Cultural institutions such as education and communications media are technocratic institutional instruments that inculcate the values of the global regime of Empire and Market into the hearts of the people and their communities.

Mother Earth is Suffering under the Global Regime of the Market/Empire.

The conquest and destruction of the earth due to greed and the pursuit of security under the global regime of the empire/market is destroying the basic systems of natural life. Industrial technocracy

executes radical “species-ism” against all living beings, against even human beings. All biological beings and their abode (the ecosystem) are subjugated and subject to destruction, distortion and manipulation in the name of human survival, human security and human improvement. The modern industrialized economy, with its neo-liberal ideology and its modern technocratic efficiency, is destroying Mother Earth, the bosom of life.

Western modernity, Western industrial civilization and Western technocracy – the regime of science and technology – have turned the earth into an epistemological object as they exploit all natural resources according to their greedy appetite for limitless profit and for the conquest of nature, in the name of “security and survival.”

Western modernity has desacralized, demystified and secularized the earth, stripping her of her sacred character, her mystery and her wholeness. The Western Christian doctrine of creation has played a devastating role in this secularization process, in the process losing the truth of life on earth. Now is the time to recover the wholeness of Earth as our abode, as the caring bosom for all living beings together.

Genderism, the Arche of the Domination Hierarchy

The absolute authority of the global empire and the universal reach of the global market are the ultimate subversion of mutual and convivial serving and caring for the life of all living beings. This perverted paradigm is centered in the imperial patriarchy, which has the deepest historical roots and the most pervasive expanse on earth. It subverts the participation of all living beings for their own life.

The groaning of all cosmic living beings is the cry of Mother Earth over the denial of the basic subjecthood (Juchesung) of all living beings and their communities. Love as subjecthood (Juchesung) of life and care for life is the heart of Mother Earth. The global regime of the empire/market breaks the heart of Mother Earth.

The gender ideology of patriarchy is the pivot of all domination hierarchies, not only in human society but in the communities of all

living beings. This is manifested in all spheres of life, but especially in the global market and the geopolitics of the global empire.

The relations among all living beings, including socio-cultural relations of class, caste, race, ethnic and national identity, will not be convivial or mutually caring for life in justice and peace, without the overcoming of patriarchy as the pivot of absolute authority of the global regime of the empire /market.

Global Christendom

Western Christianity has become a global religion, now mutated into an Imperial Religion in modern times. The globalized Christian religion of the past and present Crusades is symbiotically intertwined with global capital and with the power of the global empire, and it damns all other religions and faiths of the world. It condemns the Islamic faith and its people. It has condemned the Jews in the past. It damns all the people’s different religious and cultural heritages simply because they are not Christian. The religions of the original communities of people on earth are destroyed. The “high” religions of civilizations such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism and Islamic Religion are suppressed.

The illicit convergence of Christian religion with Western secular modernity has destroyed the religious and cultural life of peoples and their communities in the world. Now the powers and principalities of the global market and global empire are being baptized by Christianity. Global Christianity is the main cause of religious conflicts and global bigotry.

The Christian religion of the global empire names the gentiles to be conquered, the “Evil Empire” to be destroyed and the “Axis of Evil” to be eradicated from the earth; the goodness of the global empire must overcome these evils. Christianity has been turned into the religion of the empire in both Rome and the US. It is becoming a demonic religion, its messianic spirit is imbued with demonic spirit.

The integrity of faith(s) is destroyed, and the identity of Christian faith in Jesus is radically questioned and eroded. The very foundations of all faith(s) are destroyed by religious claims such as economic, political, military and geopolitical soteriology and the messianic spirit of the global empire. The spirit of the Empire lives in the interior of the soul, and the power of the global empire influences the bodies of living beings. It moves the whole domain of the global empire and builds temples for the global market to serve Mammon. It is everywhere on earth.

Convergence of Horizons against the Global Empire/Market

If the rise of the global empire is the special sign of our times, it is counterposed by visions of the people for a civilization of convivial life of all living beings. These visions are rooted in the experiences of suffering and struggle of the people, which contain revitalized wisdom from their philosophical, cultural and religious traditions of the past and the present. Buddhist wisdom to overcome greed, Hindu Dharma of cosmos, Confucian wisdom of Li/Ki, Taoist wisdom of the Way (Tao), Islamic wisdom of Justice and many Native American, African, Asian and Pacific original peoples' cultural and religious wisdom provide reservoirs for the foundation of visions of new civilization.

Such visions will be antithetical to the global empire, to Western modernity and to global Christendom. They will open ways to a civilizational and cultural "evolution" or "mutation," in which perhaps the vision of Jesus against Pax Romana may be fused and integrated. Such movements are signs of hope, rising among the communities of people and all living beings.

This convergence of visions of life in the midst of suffering and struggle of the people with all living beings against the global empire is a definite alternative to the technocratic convergence of science and technology with the power and the greed of the global regime of the empire/ market.

There are many signs of hope. The people's movements are resisting and struggling against the tyranny of the global empire and against the totalistic control of the global market. People in many localities of the earth are practicing alternative economic and political life to build alternative local communities. Civil societies are also seeking practical and concrete alternatives in every corner of the earth, drawing wisdom from their philosophical, cultural and religious traditions.

Now the Spirit moves, hovering over the cosmos, exorcising the destructive spirit of the global regime of the empire and market, moving in the hearts and communities of all living beings, quickening the spirit of life on earth and energizing the movements and communities to build the cosmic garden of life in justice and peace.

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