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Book Reviews

1. Identity and Community in Biblical World: Collected Essays on Identity and Community from Biblical Perspectives ed. by B. Lalnunzira and Varaprasad Gosala
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2. Transformative Actions for Common Future: Biblical and Theological Reflections from the Margins by Wati Longchar
Holika

Editorial

Most of the six essays that appears here concerns problems that arise out of various Indian settings and attempts are made by the respective authors to address them from a biblical and theological perspective. It is hoped that they will be of interest to our readers.

The first essay, “The Markan Incipit: A Postcolonial Mizo Reading”, Lalmuanpuii Hmar who hails from Mizoram looks at the opening statement in Mark “The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God” (Mark 1:1) from a postcolonial perspective. Having analyzed the statement, she attempts to draw a parallel between the colonial setting of Markan community under Rome and that of the Mizo community under the British Empire. Finally, she draws out certain theological implications relevant for the Mizo Christians. In the second essay Khrotsolo-u Teno, a Chakhesang-Naga focuses on the “Role of ‘Qualifying’ Forgiveness (Mt. 18:15-17) in Resolving Conflict.” She looks at the text from her experience of the Indo-Naga conflict in which her community suffered enormously. She pays attention to the Matthean community context in understanding the various procedural steps of forgiveness suggested, provides an interpretation of “sin” and suggests what Naga community can learn regarding forgiving the enemy from the episode. The focus of the third essay by Menjiwapong Jamir entitled, “Reading 2 Peter 3:1-13 Ecologically” is an attempt to re-read the much-abused Petrine passage on eschatology from an ecological perspective. Looking at the text from its ecological setting, an attempt is made to re-read statements such as the “fate of the present cosmos,” “passing away of the heavens,” “dissolution of the elements” and argues that the passage is concerned with a transformed earth rather than the dissolution of the present earth, which calls us for an ecologically sustainable living.

In his article on the “Christian Roots of Modern Science” Rodinmawia Ralte argues against the common perception that Science and Religion, particularly, Christian Faith is antagonistic towards science. Tracing the history of the development of Science, Rodinmawia contends that Christianity and Biblical Faith has, in fact, encouraged the study and advancement of science and scientific temper. Citing examples of modern Christian scientists, he underlines their contribution towards the development of science. Hence, he concludes that “Christianity is the root of the modern science.” The fifth essay “Postmodern Construction for a New Biblical Cosmology,” A.C. Thomas looks into postmodern science, particularly physics, with regard to its influence on theological thinking and argues that the modern scientific thinking, despite its positive contributions, is responsible for the present ecological crisis. He therefore suggests the need to formulate a biblical cosmology based on new physics that he terms *Unienergeia Cosmology* to unify the “whole reality into one harmonious system.”

The sixth essay “The Two Natures Christology of Chalcedon: Is it still Relevant Today?” by Wandahilin Kharlukhi looks at the Christological debate from its origin and the developments of Christological thinking leading to the Council of Chalcedon. She then gives a detailed analysis of the positive gains and negative impact of the Christological formulation of Chalcedon asking the question “Does Chalcedon achieve its purpose?” While she does recognize that Chalcedon did make an important contribution to our understanding of the person of Christ, the language used for its expression is difficult for most cultures to understand. She concludes that in the current context there are more pressing issues of “pluralism, cultural colonialism, economic imperialism, poverty, and ecological degradation” which need greater attention in the formulation of our Christological articulations.

V. J. John
Editor

The Markan Incipit: A Postcolonial Mizo Reading

*Lalmuanpuii Hmar**

Introduction

Mark’s incipit proclaims the good news of Jesus the messianic Son of God. Since an incipit is important for communicating the intention of a literary work, any theory regarding the purpose of Mark’s Gospel must adequately explain his incipit.¹ In Jesus’ and Mark’s time, it was commonly used as part of the imperial claim to “bring good news.” The gospel of Caesar was the *Pax Romana*, the “peace of Rome” provided by the gods, and embodied in the reign of the emperor. However, Mark begins his Gospel by claiming his narrative to be the “beginning” of a counter-gospel, the heralding of one he calls both “Messiah” (Christ) and “Son of God.” The title “Son of God” echoed royal claims in both Hebrew Scripture and the Roman world. In either context, it sought to provide divine legitimation for human kingship. Thus, Mark provocatively starts his story by introducing the reign of a new divinely authorized king.² Through a postcolonial reading of Mark’s incipit, attempt will be made in this writing to bring out the message it conveyed during the author’s time and what message it would authorise for the postcolonial Mizo society in particular and our present world in general.

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1. Postcolonial Exposition of Mark's Incipit

The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God
(Mark 1:1)

“The Beginning”

Mark 1:1 beginning with an anarthrous noun (Ἀρχή) and containing no verb has the form of a heading, title or superscription.³ Simon Samuel lists three important points⁴ that must be noted in understanding the use of ἄρχη. Firstly, the Jews who read the LXX may perceive ἄρχη. in reference to the lineal “starting point” or “beginning” of time when God began his creative activity (Gen 1:1) or the “commencement” of the word of the Lord by (in) a prophet (Hos 1:2) or God himself as “the beginning and end” (Philo, *Plant.*, 93; *Ant.* 8.280; *Sib.* 8.375). Secondly, it can mean a “foundation” referring to, for example, the fear of the Lord as the “foundation,” “source” or “beginning” of wisdom (Prov 1:7; 9:10; Ps 111:10a). Thirdly, it can refer to the “dominion” of the colonial power of the enemies of Israel (Dan 6:26; 7:12, 26), or of a Son of Humanity who comes to the Ancient of Days (Dan 7:14).

In the Roman colonial environment, the word “beginning,” Latin equivalent word *imperium*, carries a wide range of meanings. It may mean beginning, empire, realm, power, the original material from which everything has evolved, or supreme power, sovereignty, sway, dominion, etc. The “beginning” of Rome is usually expressed and enforced through the cult of Roman emperor, who was worshipped as god or the son of god. The “beginning” of Rome was often revived by a “good news” of Roman victory. It also refers not only to the Roman power but also signifies the beginning of its power over its subjects.⁵

Since ἄρχη has a double meaning of “beginning” and “authority,” there seems to be more to the incipit than a mere temporal designation; there is also a sense of authority or origin. Granted, further, that Gospel was not read, as it is today, to denote a literary composition, it primarily carries the familiar meaning

of the oral announcement of the salvific significance of the Christ event.⁶

“The Good News”

The use of the word εὐαγγελιον in Mark's incipit is highly significant. Marxsen suggests that Mark introduced the noun εὐαγγελιον into the synoptic tradition.⁷ The use of εὐαγγελιον in Mark's incipit connects to the imperial notions of “good news” relating to the fulfillment of Jewish messianic expectations and a new “beginning” established by a victorious founding event. Josephus relates that when Vespasian returned to Rome, he was hailed as “their Benefactor and Saviour.”⁸ This may be a significant reason why Mark never entitles Jesus as “Saviour,” although he does imply that Jesus, and not a human emperor, “saves” (Mk 5:23, 28, 34; 6:56; 10:26, 52; 13:13; 15:30-31).⁹ In what appears to be a reappropriation of Jewish messianic expectations, Mark declares them to be fulfilled not by Vespasian and the Flavian dynasty, but in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Although clearly distinguished from the anti-Roman uprising, Mark's incipit here represents a rather clear oppositional and subversive position that reclaims an indigenous tradition and its messianic expectations. While Rome was proclaiming the gospel of the Flavians, Mark proclaims the gospel of Jesus Christ.¹⁰

A reference to εὐαγγελιον occurs in LXX in connection with the proclamation of the good news of Deutero-Isaiah (Is 40:9; 41:27; 52:1-7). Here the prophet announces the advent of a victorious reign of YHWH and the release and return of his people from colonial captivity.

The good news, for Isaiah, is about YHWH's *imperium* (reign) implying indirectly the end of Persian *imperium* over God's people. The coming of a messenger with this good news, according to Isaiah, suggests the beginning of the good news of YHWH's reign (Is 52:7), an idea which Mark exploits when he quotes and puts together a conflated Isaianic prophecy, and

implies it to be fulfilled by the coming of John (Mk 1:2a, 4a; Is 40:3) at the very outset of his story of Jesus.¹¹

The word in the plural (εὐαγγελία) was often used by the Roman Empire to indoctrinate its subjects to believe that the birth or accession of the Roman emperor meant good news for the entire world. One's lot in life depended on one's emperor. Mark's original readers would have thought of such a connection since they were subjects of the Roman Empire. But the surprising twist to this is that Mark uses not an emperor's name but the name Jesus for the definition of this good news. Moreover, Mark uses the singular form which denotes that he is subverting the Empire's message. There is only one gospel and it has nothing to do with the Empire but with Jesus.¹²

The εὐαγγελία of the Roman emperor was a concept that most inhabitants of the Roman Empire would have known. The language of Mark's incipit is so similar to this language of the imperial cult that it is hard to deny an intended allusion. Certainly, a first-century Greco-Roman reader would recognise such a similarity and see that Mark's Gospel was proclaiming the εὐαγγελία of Jesus Christ, son of God rather than that of Caesar, son of god.¹³ This is one of Mark's main objectives; namely, to proclaim the superiority of the good news of God's Messiah – and the new world order he brings – over that of Caesar. Mark's Gospel speaks of the fulfilment of Jewish hopes, namely Isaiah's prophesied εὐαγγελιον fulfilled in Jesus Christ, Son of God. At the same time, the Gospel responds to the claims of the Roman imperial cult by announcing Jesus Christ, Son of God, and not Caesar, son of god, as the beginning of the εὐαγγελιον.¹⁴

“The Son of God”

The υἱός θεου (Son of God) is an important theme in Mark's Gospel (cf. 1:11; 3:11; 5:7; 9:7; 12:6; 13:32; 14:36, 61; 15:39).¹⁵ The term υἱός θεου (Son of God) potentially invokes a plurality of meaning in the context of biblical and postbiblical Judaism in addition to its meaning in the context of Roman imperial cult.¹⁶

The worship of the Roman emperor (Caesar) as god and saviour in Roman imperial theology began with the deification of Julius Caesar after his assassination in 44 BCE. Each Caesar thereafter assumed “divinity” or was recognised as divine. Caesar Augustus (63 BCE – 14 CE), who ended the Roman civil war that erupted after Julius Caesar's death, and ruled during the time of Jesus' birth, was worshipped as the “Son of god,” the “saviour,” and “Father of His Country.” Elites, ever eager to move up the ladder of patronage, vied with one another to honour Caesar in grand ways. Temples in which Caesar was worshipped and monuments to Caesar were important ways to gain status.¹⁷

In an inscription from Priene, the birth of Augustus is described as marking for the world “the beginning of good news,” since he has come as “a saviour who put an end to war.”¹⁸ Augustus also called himself “son of a god.” The possibility that Mark intends the drawing of a comparison is greatly strengthened by the fact that his assertion of Jesus' identity in the incipit and the climactic proclamation, “Truly, this man was son of God” (Mk 15:39) is made by, of all people, a Roman centurion.¹⁹ The Markan evangelist presents Jesus as the true Son of God and in doing so deliberately presents Jesus in opposition to Rome's candidates for a suitable emperor, saviour, and Lord.²⁰ Thus, the *imperium* of the good news of Jesus Messiah, Son of God, affiliates and abrogates the imperial gospel of Rome and all it represents, and its emperors' divine claims as sons of god.²¹ Mark's incipit, in fact, continues with an empire-shattering message from heaven at the time of Jesus' baptism that he is God's Son, the Beloved, with whom God is well pleased (1:9-11).²² The divine voice that calls Jesus “my beloved son” reveals knowledge to the implied reader which the other characters in the narrative lack, thereby forming a major theme in Mark: seeing Jesus as God's Son and realizing what that means.²³

The above postcolonial reading of Mark's incipit scrutinizes and exposes the elements of colonialism intrinsically embedded

in the Gospel of Mark that have been left out by traditional interpretations but have been studied by postcolonial interpreters. It brings out the importance of deconstructing and overturning colonial rudiments. This could be an intensive challenge for all the colonial subjects of today to work towards restoration by transcending all the dominating aspects of colonial ideologies and colonial exploitation.

2. Precolonial Mizo Society and the Impact of the “Good News”

Mark’s Gospel portrays how Jesus’ life and work were carried out under the Roman imperial occupation. It describes how the colonial power was felt by Mark’s subjects in all realms of life consciously or unconsciously. Parallel to Mark’s subjects is the Mizo society which experienced colonisation under the British Empire and subsequently had the “good news of Jesus Christ” brought to them by the British missionaries in the late nineteenth century. The introduction of education and a new religion, i.e., Christianity changed the perspective and the world view of the Mizos. In other words, new culture, custom, tradition, beliefs and practices of the Mizos developed. Though all the changes that happened are worth-discussing, only a few of the traditional beliefs and practices of precolonial Mizo society and the impact “the good news of Jesus Christ” had on them will be discussed in the following.

2.1. Blind Faith and Superstition

Before Christianity reached the Lushai²⁴ hills as early as 1890s, the belief system of the Mizos was dominated by blind faith and superstitious beliefs. These blind faiths resulted in many social problems. For example, a normal person cannot construct a house with a window because of superstition or omen.²⁵ If two members of the same family take a journey in north and south directions in the same day it is believed that misfortune and bad luck will fall upon them.²⁶ They built a thick fence of timber and bamboo

around a village and embedded sharp spears on it to keep plague and contagious diseases at bay. In that way, the Mizos had their own particular beliefs and practices which were intrinsically connected to their day-to-day affairs.²⁷

Their superstitions on the other hand were normally attached to cultivation, animals, birds and snakes. It was prohibited to kill certain animals or do certain things. The life of the society depended on *Thiang* (holy) and *Thianglo* (unholy). For example, certain dreams, acts and sights were believed to be *Thianglo* (unholy).²⁸ Any unusual occurrences are taken as indication of misfortune. In this regard, *Sadawt* (priests) are consulted in order to avoid them.

The early Mizo society surrounded by blind faith and many superstitions somehow enforced restrictions in their daily life, but the entry of Christianity ended all such superstitions. Formal education introduced by the missionaries began to have a big impact on the social and cultural life among the Mizos.²⁹ Colonialism and Christianity both contributed to providing a changed outlook among the Mizos.

2.2. The Fear of Evil Spirits

The traditional narratives of Mizo religion can be described in many dimensions. The general acceptance of Mizo religion before the coming of Christianity was ‘animism’ as they believed in the existence of spiritual beings or spirit.³⁰ They lived in constant fear of evil spirits and offered sacrifices to appease them.³¹ This is supported by certain writings which recorded that they worshiped anything unusually large, be it tree, rock or river, out of fear of the reprisals of unseen devils.

The early Mizos also believed that sickness was caused by the mischievous work of demons. In order to cure the sickness, they had to make sacrifices to the demons.³² Rev. Edwin Rowlands in his “Report of the Lushai Hills 1899-1900” states, “They generally sacrifice to demons, of whom they are in great fear.³³ At the same time, they also worshipped some imaginary spirits

whom they think can bring about blessings. Unfortunately, their fear of curses from evil spirits outweighed their hope for blessings from the good spirits.³⁴ The “Report of the Lushai Hills 1898-99” by the missionary D. E. Jones states,

The first difficulty which the Lushai raises against accepting Christianity is the danger that he will be killed by the Evil Spirits, and when it is said that Christians do not become the prey of the Evil Spirits, they say in answer that our religion does for us and theirs for them. Yet some are ready to believe in Christ if they will be kept from illness in so doing. Any sickness which they cannot understand is attributed to Evil Spirits, and sometimes, if a man meets with great afflictions, they acknowledge the hand of God. No meat is eaten by them but that is sacrifice to the Evil Spirits, and many families have sacrificed what animals they possessed to appease their anger. A priest is to be found in almost every village, and it is he that look after the sacrifices. The Lushais are fond of hearing that Jesus Christ has conquered the Devil and Death. Perhaps it is the truth of the Resurrection that strikes them most at first.³⁵

The concluding statement of this Report clearly brought to light the impact of the good news of Jesus Christ on the life of the early Mizos. Just as Mark’s incipit repealed the imperial gospel of Rome and all that it represents such as emperor worship, the good news of Jesus likewise abrogated the worship of demons and evil spirits among the Mizos. The sacrificial system disappeared and the traditional primal world view of the Mizos, characterised by fear and superstition had been replaced by more rational attitudes brought by the Christian philosophy.

2.3. The *Bawi* System

Slavery was practiced in the traditional Mizo society in the form of *bawi* (slave). The chief of the village had complete control

over the *bawi* family. But the *bawi* system in the traditional Mizo society was different from the kind of slavery practiced in other parts of the world because it was not meant to suppress anyone. However, the missionaries regarded the *bawi* system incompatible with the teachings of the Bible and wanted to abolish it. Upon evangelisation, they encouraged the Mizo Christian chiefs to free their *bawi* (slaves) and even requested the British administration to end the *bawi* system. But it was difficult to arrive at a mutual consensus since the *bawi* system was different and was not against the social norms of the Mizos. At the end, the *bawi* (slavery) system was finally abolished with the introduction of the new religion and many *bawi* were liberated from their masters.³⁶ A settlement was reached on the basis of the recommendation made by J. Hazlett, Superintendent of Mizoram in March 1914. The use of the term *bawi* was to be discontinued. The *bawi* now have the liberty to leave their owner chiefs at will, and the chiefs no longer had the right to force them to remain in their service. The system of *bawi* therefore came to an end in Mizoram in 1927,³⁷ and the end of this system amongst the Mizos was undeniably a result of the impact of colonialism in the Lushai Hills.

Even though the missionaries transformed the society by setting up modern institutions and abolishing the evil practises, they, however, considered themselves superior and consistently maintained an exclusive attitude towards the Mizo tradition and culture. Apart from what had been highlighted above, several other changes took place in the Mizo society as a result of Colonialism and Christianity. Major ones among them are the abolition of chieftainship; loss of many old establishments and institutions such as the *Zawlbuk*; rejection of *Zu* (rice beer) which was an indispensable part of Mizo society; substitution of traditional Mizo festivals by Christian festivals; banning of the use of drum in the church for a considerable period mainly because drums were one of the most important instruments used during the traditional festivals. All these made it evident

that Christian missionaries came to Mizoram with stereotyped opinions. They mostly came without any knowledge of the Mizos and their social system. Assuming that what was good for them would also be good for the Mizos, they brought along with them western culture, western lifestyle and western Christianity upon the Mizos effecting changes in their social life.³⁸ Naturally, the so-called ardent followers began to think that everything practiced and believed by the Mizos were wrong while all things new taught by the new religion and the missionaries were right.³⁹ The period saw psychologically traumatic times under the impact of foreign rulers whose religion they had come to accept. With the British annexation of the country and the introduction of Christianity, the nineteenth century marked the beginning of a new era for the Mizos in their socio-political and religious life.

As time went on, the introduction of Christianity in Mizoram disrupted the religious unity by creating a new problem in relation to religion and community life. The traditional Mizo society was based on community which was a close-knit society. The missionaries restricted the newly converted Christians from joining or taking part in social activities like festivals, drinking any kind of rice-beer, singing the Mizo traditional songs and tune, taking part in traditional dances and participating in the sacrifices.⁴⁰ Though the belief in spirits, blind faith, superstitions, the practise of *bawi* system and sacrifices eventually came to an end, there began a more complex and bigger problem, i.e., the conflict between the church represented by the missionaries and the traditional system of administration represented by the village chiefs and elders during the early period of Christianity in Mizoram. The idea of such a concept of sacred and secular among the Mizos was inherited from the missionaries. The condemnation of certain cultural elements of the Mizo society as secular and worldly is undeniably a rejection of Mizo culture by Christianity. This dichotomist concept of life further spoilt the moral life of Christians and produced many irresponsible citizens.⁴¹

Anthropologically-minded British administrators of Mizoram such as Major *A. G. McCall* and N. E. Parry who both served as Superintendents of Lushai Hills were concerned about the traumatic cultural changes that had come upon the Mizos as a result of the impact of western culture through activities of both the government and Christian missions.⁴² While admitting that it was the advent of British power that “staggered” and “bewildered” and “paralysed the people,” they were convinced that the most active, dynamic and sustained instruments of change were the missions. In fact, they tended to see government as the upholder and preserver of the customs of the people over against the “full-scale assault” on those customs launched by the missionaries whom, Parry believed, were denationalizing the people.⁴³ The Mizo culture and tradition had their own beauty and distinctiveness and they were hardly mixed with the outside world.⁴⁴ Both McCall and Parry shared the concern to preserve the pristine nature of the Mizo culture. While admitting that change was inevitable, McCall pleaded that it should be indigenously ignited and properly guided, and not forced on the people by “over-zealous” outsiders.⁴⁵ The process of modernization of cultural change had begun, and the old isolated cultures began a slow process of disintegration.⁴⁶

3. Theological Implications of Incipit for the Mizo Setting from a Postcolonial Perspective

The major task of the hermeneutical exercise in a postcolonial context is to understand the undercurrents and dynamics of the socio-political arenas in the situation,⁴⁷ and postcolonial criticism moves from the experience of people in modern colonial contexts.⁴⁸ What postcolonialism does is to reverse the depiction of subject people as passive and docile and overturn the stereotypical images of colonialism and assert the authenticity of the “natives” as subjects and their desire to be independent. This has been manifested in certain texts such as Mark’s incipit which stimulates the subjected people to resist the Empire (1:1). The “good news” of Jesus Christ brought an end to any collaboration with Empire

and perceive life from the perspective of God's in-breaking reign rather than that of imperial propaganda. His mission in Galilee and other villages focused on healing the debilitating effects of imperial violence and revitalizing the people's cultural spirit and communal vitality. Thus, this mission of Jesus presents a stark contrast with the Roman imperial order.⁴⁹ It clearly presents Jesus as having divine authority over Rome's emperor, and brings Jesus beyond its colonial heritage, fighting the functioning of Empire in the form of colonialist expansion, exploitation, discrimination and domination.

Though there could perhaps be no better news than the good news of Jesus who conquered demons, put an end to the age-old beliefs in spirits and superstitions, and brought freedom to the enslaved Mizos, a postcolonial study of Mizo Christianity however could not fail to notice the uncritical acceptance of Christianity by the Mizos and therefore could not escape a critical analysis of its impact. The missionaries propagated the belief in Christ as a tool to conquer and degrade the Mizo culture. As mentioned earlier, they advocated that a believer should no longer retain native Mizo cultural practises like consumption of *Zu*, use of drum, singing traditional songs and vice versa because they considered almost everything that the Mizo culture has to offer as paganistic. They imposed the belief that involving in such activities is disloyalty to Christ. Christ, eventually became a colonial invader to the Mizos. The Christianity that the missionaries brought was a Christianity that was established from the perspective of the cultural and religious norm of the West. It was projected as originally owned by the British and later imparted to the Mizos. The understanding of God brought about by the new religion led to cancellation of the Mizo cultural practises. The good news of the gospel cannot serve its purpose when one experiences the loss of one's culture and identity.

Homi Bhabha's concept of "hybridity" can be an appropriate tool in order to deconstruct the British imperialism or colonial

mission in Mizoram,⁵⁰ or the "third space of enunciation". Hybridity allows for a convergence of two oppositional ideologies. In this case, the two oppositional ideologies are Christianity and Mizo culture. Hybridity allows two cultures to come together and exist harmoniously together in the so called "third space" and allows the pollination of the good of Christianity and the beauty of Mizo culture. As these two traditions merge together, the binary structure of centre-margin diminishes. The conjunction of these two traditions in the "hybrid" or "third" space develops a new Christianity that moves from just being a western Christianity to a Christianity that embraces new interreligious and intercultural resources. In such a situation, the Mizos can also construct a liberating Christ from their own perspective and develop a local Christianity that is not tainted by colonial epistemology and ideology that reinforced the superiority of Western religion and culture but one which will take seriously the local resources and traditions. For example, the once neglected Mizo cultural festivals after the advent of Christianity can now be revived and incorporated to the religious realm. In doing so, the Christianity of the 21st century Mizos will cease to be a borrowed Christianity⁵¹ and becomes a culture-based Christianity. The reverence for one's culture will also have a desirable impact upon resisting the forces of globalisation which hugely is an attribute of the West.

Postcolonialism as a critical enterprise is an "act of exorcism" for both the colonised and the coloniser. For both parties it must be a process of liberation: from dependency, in the case of the colonised, and from imperialist, racist perceptions, representations, and institutions.⁵² In analysing the history of the Mizos, it can be rightfully concluded that the missionaries were the most significant agent to change the Mizo society constructively and destructively. While they transformed some of the bad cultural elements to better ones, they also destroyed many of the inherent cultural elements and perpetuated a totalitarian ideology common among imperialistic nations. As Mark's incipit represents a clear

oppositional and subversive position that reclaims an indigenous tradition, simultaneously the Mizos today can work towards carrying out confrontational measures such as retrieving any significant lost culture and tradition and reviving them, rewriting Mizo history in order not to overtly celebrate colonialism, fighting against social vices, serving the interest of the community, sharing resources with one another thereby promoting humanising relationship, and proclaiming Jesus' mission which stands against dehumanisation and colonial subjugation.

Conclusion

What can be discerned from the above assessment is that Mark's incipit is not only an antithesis to imperial rule but also a stimulation to the audience to resist the empire and identify themselves with the Jesus movement. The impact of Mark's depiction of how the coming of Jesus overthrew the hegemony of Roman imperial rule, in fact, can be seen on the first-century followers of Jesus. Today, this serves as an inspiration and challenge to faithfully carry out Jesus' mission in the context of power, privilege, status, inequity, and so on. Jesus would not conform to the inducements and incentives of empire. Rather, he confronted the Roman imperial ideology, challenged the status quo, stood in solidarity with the marginalised, and is the agitator of eternal life as distinct from the Roman Empire. Thus, the message of the incipit upholds the authority of Jesus and invites everyone to join in Jesus' mission of proclaiming liberation, justice, empowerment, and to radically engage in resisting the exploitive ethos.

End Notes

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- 3 Robert A. Guelich, "Mark 1-8:26," *Word Biblical Commentary*, Volume 34A (Dallas, Texas: Word Books, 1989), 6-7.

- 4 Simon Samuel, *A Postcolonial Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus* (London/New York, T & T Clark, 2007), 92-93.
- 5 Simon Samuel, "In the beginning of Mark (Mk 1:1): A Postcolonial Reading," *Doon Theological Journal* 2/1 (January, 2005): 43ff.
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- 7 W. Marxsen, *Mark the Evangelist* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1969), 125.
- 8 Josephus, *Jewish War* 7:71.
- 9 Brian Incigneri, *The Gospel to the Romans: The Setting and Rhetoric of Mark's Gospel*, Biblical Interpretation Series, edited by R. Alan Culpepper and Rolf Rendtorff (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 169.
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- 20 C. Evans, "Mark 8:27-16:20." *Word Biblical Commentary 34B* (Nashville: Nelson, 2001), lxxxix.
- 21 Samuel, *A Postcolonial Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus*, 107.
- 22 Howard-Brook, *Come Out, My People! God's Call out of Empire in the Bible and Beyond*, 400.

- 23 Leander, *Discourses of Empire: The Gospel of Mark from a Postcolonial Perspective*, 286.
- 24 The Mizos are formerly known as Lushais. Lushai is the other name given to the people of Mizoram by the British administrators. J. Shakespear writes, "Lushai is our way of spelling the word, the proper way to spell the word, so as to represent the actual sound, as spoken by the people, is Lushei." J. Shakespear, "Lushai Tribal and Family Name," *Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal* LXVII/III (2) (September, 1898).
- 25 cf. V. S. Lalrinawma, *Mizo Ethos: Changes and Challenges* (Aizawl: Mizoram Publication Board), 2005.
- 26 James Dokhuma, *Hmanlai Mizo Kalphung* (Aizawl: Author, 1992).
- 27 Rebecca Angom, "Christianization and its Impact on Mizo Culture," *Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Studies* (2/1, January, 2020): 57.
- 28 Ibid, 56.
- 29 T. Lalremruata, "Impact of Colonialism on the Traditional Beliefs and Practices of the Mizo," *Mizoram University Journal of Humanities & Social Sciences* V/1 (June 2019): 142.
- 30 However, it should also be noted that some ignore the presence of any elements of theism in the Mizo religion and classified it as primal rather than animism.
- 31 H. Lalrinthanga, *Church and State Relationship in the Mizo Socio-Political Life: 1952 to 2006* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2013), 22.
- 32 Lalremruata, "Impact of Colonialism on the Traditional Beliefs and Practices of the Mizo," 143.
- 33 "The Report of the Lushai Hills, 1899-1900" in *Reports of the Foreign Mission of the Presbyterian Church of Wales on Mizoram 1894-1957*, compiled by K. Thanzauva (Aizawl: Synod Literature and Publication Board, 1997), 7.
- 34 Mangkhosat Kipgen, *Christianity and Mizo Culture* (Aizawl: Mizo Theological Conference, 1997), 106.
- 35 "The Report of the Lushai Hills, 1898-99" in *Reports of the Foreign Mission of the Presbyterian Church of Wales on Mizoram 1894-1957*, compiled by K. Thanzauva (Aizawl: Synod Literature and Publication Board, 1997), 4.
- 36 Lalremruata, "Impact of Colonialism on the Traditional Beliefs and Practices of the Mizo," 146.
- 37 Angom, "Christianization and its Impact on Mizo Culture," 59.
- 38 Lalrinthanga, *Church and State Relationship in the Mizo Socio-Political Life*, 32.
- 39 Angom, "Christianization and its Impact on Mizo Culture," 59-60.
- 40 Lalsawma, "Kristianna leh Mizo Hnam Culture" in *Thu leh Hla*, 20/3 (March, 1994): 2.
- 41 K. Thanzauva, *Towards a Tribal Theology: The Mizo Perspectives* (Jorhat: Mizo Theological Conference, 1989), 106.
- 42 Cf. A. G. McCall, *Lushai Chrysalis* (London: Luzac & Co., 1949) and N. E. Parry, *The Lakhers* (Tribal Research Institute, Mizoram, 1932).
- 43 Kipgen, *Christianity and Mizo Culture*, 9.
- 44 Lalremruata, "Impact of Colonialism on the Traditional Beliefs and Practices of the Mizo," 142.
- 45 Kipgen, *Christianity and Mizo Culture*, 9.
- 46 Frederick S. Downs, *Essays on Christianity in North-East India Essays* (New Delhi: Indus Publishing Company, 1994), 186-187.
- 47 C. I. David Joy, *Mark and Its Subalterns: A Hermeneutical Paradigm for a Postcolonial Context* (London: Equinox, 2008), 5.
- 48 V. J. John, "Studying the New Testament in Indian Settings: Issues on Method," in *Methodological Issues in Theological Research*, Volume III, edited by P. G. George (Serampore: SATHRI, 2016), 46.
- 49 Richard A. Horsley, *Jesus and Empire: The Kingdom of God and the New World Disorder* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 126.
- 50 Cf. Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994).
- 51 Synonymous with V. S. Naipaul's "borrowed culture." V. S. Naipaul, *The Middle Passage* (London: Penguin, 1975), 45.
- 52 Samia Mehrez, "The Subversive Poetics of Racial Bilingualism: Postcolonial Francophone North African Literature," in *The Bounds of Race: Perspectives on Hegemony and Resistance*, edited by Dominick LaCapra (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1991), 258.

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Role of 'Qualifying' Forgiveness (Mt. 18:15-17) in Resolving Conflict: A Chakhesang Naga Perspective

*Khrotsolo-u Teno**

Introduction

The concept of 'forgiveness' (ἀφεσις) is a theme that runs through the theology of the Gospel of Matthew. Coming as it is from a socio-political context of perpetual conflict, 'forgiveness' stands out as a recurring theme. Some of the forgiveness themes that appear include: Reciprocal Forgiveness (6:14-15); Healing Forgiveness (9:1-8); Qualifying Forgiveness (18:15-17); Unconditional Forgiveness (18:21-35) and Once for All Forgiveness (26:26-30). In this essay our focus shall be on "Qualifying Forgiveness." Though it emerges just once in the context of dealing with the procedural steps towards forgiveness in Matthean theology, is of extreme importance in the overall theme of forgiveness. It deals with the circumstances that evoke such a forgiveness (Mt 18:15-17).¹ It asserts that an errant person is forgiven on the basis of one's repentance from personal sin.

1. Procedural Steps towards 'Qualifying' Forgiveness

The Matthean narration of "Qualifying Forgiveness" deals about the procedural steps involved in dealing with an errant brother or sister within the community. The first step was when the two of them (offended and offender) were alone, the offended should point out to the errant person the fault committed by him/her

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(v.15). If the person refused to listen, the second step was that the initiator must take one or two others along for a witness (v.16). On a failure at the second occasion, a third attempt were to be made by taking the matter to the church (v.17a). In the event of a failure there, the final procedural step was to treat such a brother/sister like a pagan, or a tax collector (v.17b).

It is interesting to note that verse 15 has a variant reading. The textual reading is, "If your brother should sin, go and speak to him between you and him alone"² while the variant reads, "If your brother should sin 'against you,' go and speak to him between you and him alone."³ The words "against you" is placed in brackets both in Nestle Aland 27th and United Bible Society 4th editions, indicating perhaps, it as an interpolation. C. H. Talbert gives different nuances of meaning involved when the variant is retained and when it is omitted. He states,

If the variant *against you* is accepted as the original reading, then what follows is a disciplinary procedure to be used when one is sinned against by a fellow disciple. If the variant is omitted, then what follows is speaking about the responsibility disciples have for holding straying members accountable.⁴

R.T. France considers the Matthean text of 18:15a is a problematic one is of the view that Matthew 18:15-17, 18, and 19-20 were originally separate sayings, but were brought together for better understanding of the instructions. According to him, vv.15-17 was not concerned with the punishment of an offence, but an attempt to help an errant person from danger.⁵ Regarding the variant reading "against you" D. A. Carson points out two things:

If the words "against you" are included, Jesus is looking at offenses within the messianic community from the opposite perspective-from the view-point of the brother against whom the sin is committed. If "against you" is omitted, Jesus is telling the

community as a whole how to handle the situation when a brother sins; and in the immediate context, the sin is that of despising another brother.⁶

However, unless sins were committed against a brother or sister, how can there be a wrong doing for one to approach a person confronting him/her with an offense.⁷ Mark R. C. Grundeken sums up the discussion in the following words:

The focus of the internal procedure is the formation of the community. Its goal is to bind the community members closely together, not to maintain group purity by excluding deviant members. Matthew 18:15-18 is not so much an illustration of sectarian tendencies, but of strong pastoral concerns.”⁸

Likewise, France states that though the subject is dealing with “sin” within the disciple community, the concerned focus is on the personal care. He views the member’s dealing is more with pastoral concern than on disciplining. In the Matthean discourse, ἄδελφος is referred to a fellow disciple.⁹ It is assumed to be speaking in the context of “discipline,” if that term is understood to connote one person exercising authority over another. The word ἄδελφος stands on an equal footing, and the motive for the approach is personal concern, a concern which an offending member has freedom to ignore or to reject. Reference to such an initiative may be found in Leviticus, “You shall not hate in your heart anyone of your kin; you shall reprove your neighbour, or you will incur guilt yourself” (Lev 19:17).¹⁰

2. Context of “Qualifying” Forgiveness within the Matthean Community

The social setting of the Matthean community is assumed to be that of a marginal community.¹¹ In such a context, a mistake or conflict couldn’t be hidden away as it spreads out to the whole community members within a short while. The sin of the ἄδελφος

was an open secret and spread like a wild fire. Matthew, hence, proposed certain procedural steps in order to help an errant person to repent as well as to build up a healthy community. They are as follows:

The first procedure was rebuking an errant person by the offended. Heart to heart talk was necessary if a fellow believer committed sins. The personal approach was to win the errant one rather than to condemn such a one. The second procedure conveyed the place of team effort in order to reconcile between an offender and an offended. The third procedure indicated that listening to the Church meant listening to God. Thus, anyone who failed to listen to the Church, cut oneself off from the fellowship of God’s people. The fourth and the last procedure was, if an offender was unwilling to say “sorry” for one’s fault and kept defending one self, such a one was disqualified for forgiveness and distanced oneself from God’s love to belong to the community any longer.

3. Understanding “Sin” in a Marginalized Matthean Context

The Matthean text did not mention what sort of “sin” ἄδελφος committed against fellow being. Perhaps “sin” which the Matthean community laid for the sanctity of the Church. So, it is difficult to categorize “this sin” or “that sin.” The passage seem to suggests that Matthean audience exercised not only forgiveness, but also worked hard to change the wrong attitude of a fellow being who committed sin.

The phrase “if a brother sins” showed that one member of the congregation got the clue that one of his fellow-being committed a sin, yet the nature of sin is not disclosed. France is of the view that Matthew 18:15 is referring “sins” in general, and not an injury to another member. So reading v.15 in the light of “grievance” or of “conflict resolution” would be inappropriate. The word “win” is understood to be the pastoral approach to a fellow Christian who committed sins. The idea of winning someone from “sins” conveys a brother/sister was in danger of

missing the mark. Thus, in the first procedural step, the initiator was to try by all means to regain such a one to their folk.¹² The second procedural step was a team work in order to let the errant one listen to them and change one's attitude from committing a mistake again. The phrase "two or three witnesses" echoes the Old Testament law concerning witnesses. The Deuteronomist says, "A single witness shall not suffice to convict a person of any crime or wrongdoing in connection with any offense that may be committed. Only on the evidence of two or three witnesses shall a charge be sustained" (Deut 19:15).¹³ The third procedural step was to tell to the Church, if an errant one refused to listen to the initiator and the team. The fourth procedural step was finally, if the dialogue between an errant one and the Church did not work out positively, then the community were to consider such a person to be as a "Gentile and a tax collector." France states that the terms "Gentile and tax collector" were "being used in their conventional Jewish sense, and that the disciple is being instructed to suspend normal fellowship with the offender."¹⁴ The exploration of the text showed that Matthew reminded his audience to play a vital role in helping the errant brother/sister within the community by following aforementioned procedural steps

4. Instructions for Resolving Internal Conflict

According to Overman's analysis, Matthew provided an instruction for his community about dealing with dissension and errant members. It is assumed that Matthew arranged and composed it to help members confront the problem of internal conflict.¹⁵ It constituted a unity and aimed at dealing with the problem of division within the community through stressing service to fellow being. "Qualifying" forgiveness was the last resort, but if it failed, there was no other effort left to help the errant member.¹⁶

Douglas Sean O'Donnell reiterates that the instruction to confront was only "if" a sin had occurred.¹⁷ One may concur with O'Donnell's statement, because the Greek word *ἐὰν* means "if." It points to a condition and not the moment of time "when." The first

step in the confrontation was a conversation within two *ἄδελφοί* (v.15a). The phrase, "you have won" (v.15b) indicates restoration of a brother/sister to God and also to have fellowship with the Church. In step two, bringing witnesses and giving chance to listen were necessary to "qualifying" forgiveness. In step three, the initiator and witnesses were asked to inform the Church about an errant member who refused to listen to one's associate and also the witnesses. Finally, the errant one runs out of any further chance for mercy, but was to be treated as a Gentile and tax collector. O'Donnell states, "If a sinner won't cut off his sin, the church cuts him off," as our Lord makes clear in verse 17."¹⁸

The text makes it clear that if the errant one's persistent refusal to listen others for "qualifying forgiveness," then the Church is asked to disassociate him/her, who created problem in the Matthean community.

David L. Turner also mentions Matthew 18:15-17 contains a three-step procedure for discipline. He views "This intramural emphasis and Peter's question in 18:21 render the disputed words "against you" in 18:15 plausibly authentic despite their absence in many early MSS."¹⁹ He outlines this unit (18:15-17) as the three stages of community discipline. In his structure of Matthew 18:15-17 highlights four confrontations. These confrontations have four steps. The first step is "Personal confrontation" (15b). The second is "Peer confrontation" (16b). The third step is "Community confrontation" (17b). The fourth step is "Extracommunity confrontation" (17d).²⁰ Turner states that the first three confrontations provide to the offender every opportunity to acknowledge error. He further states,

These three stages of confrontation ensure the fair treatment of both offending and offended individuals with as little fanfare as possible. Though church discipline is often taken lightly, it is an ominous matter, an aspect of doing God's will on earth as it is in heaven (6:10). Repeated rejection of the overtures

of a fellow disciple, of two or three additional witnesses, and then of the entire community is tantamount to rejection of Jesus and the Father.²¹

It perceived Matthean community faced an internal conflict among fellow-believers, so they created procedural steps for reproving a defiant person who committed sin. They were advised to adopt the following process when dealing with an errant member. The steps included: an individual approach (18:15), to take one or two as a witness (18:16), the case be brought before the church (18:17a), and then finally disassociate the erring person in the fellowship (17b).²² Similarly, Craig A. Evans describes this unit of Matthew 18:15-17 as community discipline in the life of the Church. The community discipline is laid to teach an errant member who resists correction. The phrase “if he listens to you,” “if he out listens to you,” “if he refuses to listen two/three witnesses,” or “if he refuses to listen even to the Church,” show a process of willingness to forgive an offender repeatedly, if necessary. In such conflict situation, the goal of discipline was to restore right relationship and fellowship with the errant one.²³

John Barton emphasizes that “If one Christian sins against another, the offended party, imitating the shepherd who goes after the lost sheep, should first seek reconciliation in private by bringing up the fault.”²⁴ He further states that “one is to speak in love to an offender, forgive if repentance is made, and do all this in secret.”²⁵ Correspondingly, Carson views that treatment of a sinning member is not to score points over him/her but to win him/her over. However, if a sinning person refuses to listen to another member, the team witnesses, and the Church, then the offender was to be treated as “a pagan or a tax collector.”²⁶ Similarly, Brian Wintle emphasized the goal of the procedural forgiveness was to win the wrongdoer back both for reconciliation and for restoration to the community.²⁷ Thus, “Qualifying” Forgiveness was to be practised within the community of Matthew.

The Matthean audience was asked to point out the fault of the offender in private, perhaps to avoid earning disrespect from the crowds. We find the continued refusal of the errant one to listen to one’s fault from another member, and the continuing procedural steps to point out his/her fault. These steps were indication that the community had a deep concern to regain the offender from one’s sins. The procedural steps led to stronger action if the offender refused to listen to one’s mistake, as s/he was left behind without punishment.

5. Relevance of “Qualifying” Forgiveness in Chakhesang Naga Setting

In Christian tribal context, people are community oriented, therefore community involvement in the second and third procedural of qualifying forgiveness may be beneficial for peace-making in the society. The Church ministry and mission is to build a good relationship within the community members, and also with other community.

Indeed, it is a proper way of dealing with an errant member to listen to others and change one’s attitude from wicked behaviour. It is important because it gives space for an errant person to realize one’s past misdeed not acceptable in the community of faith. It is therefore, the Church’s responsibility to help the errant member by adapting the Matthean procedural forgiveness. The team work of the Church is important to combat evil things in society, so that there would be reduced animosity among members and avoid further conflict.

The passage of the procedural steps conveys that an individual has a moral responsibility to help a fellow-being, not only to repent from “sins,” but also to change one’s attitude from committing sins. The procedures of confrontation clearly indicate that an errant member requires “Qualifying Forgiveness,” in order to be counted as a continuing member of the community, and not “a pagan or a tax collector” meaning as those outside the fellowship of the Church.

The Matthean procedural steps of “Qualifying Forgiveness” (18:15-17) is relevant to Christian community, as it directs the errant person to realize one’s shortcoming which leads to one’s committing of sins. It is important for a community where stealing, raping, corruption, and other misdeeds are part of their daily experience. These steps of confronting are significant as they make a person receive forgiveness and change one’s attitude from a wrong behaviour to a better human being. Changing one’s attitude becomes important as humans need to be in a right relationship with their fellow beings.

Perhaps, the procedural steps of personal confronting, confronting errant one with witnesses, and confronting the wrong doer in the presence of the Church authority are applicable against “seen sins” committed by a Church member. But in the context of murder, qualifying forgiveness may not be the proper way to resolve conflict as victim would no longer be around from whom the perpetrator could beg for forgiveness and the same be granted. However, this qualifying forgiveness may be helpful for Church members in disciplining those involved in child abuse, mismanagement of Church money, misuse of Church property, and so on.

In the present scenario, personal confronting with errant member outside the family members is not easy to put into action. However, it is possible to rebuke one’s own family member, when one commits “sins,” which becomes open secret. The three procedures of “*Qualifying*” *Forgiveness* is significant for Christian community as most tend to ignore them.

Therefore, the theme “Qualifying” Forgiveness is essential for helping an errant person to know his/her own wicked way, and if possible, change his/her attitude from conflict behaviour. The procedural steps of “Qualifying” forgiveness is relevant in Christian community for peaceful coexistence. The Matthean procedural of “Qualifying” Forgiveness is also important, in order to motivate people to rebuild the broken relationship due to one’s mistake or sin within their own community.

End Notes

- 1 Translation from the Greek New Testament (Fourth Revised Edition): And if your brother/sister may sin [against you], go rebuke him/her among you and him/her alone. If he/she may listen you, you won the brother/sister; and if he/she may not listen, take with you one or two, so that testimony of two or three witnesses may stand all charge; and if he/she may out listen them, speak to the Church; and if he/she may out listen the Church, let him/her be to you just as the Gentile and the tax collector (Mt. 18:15-17).
- 2 This reading is supported by *Sinaiticus* and *Vaticanus*, some versions, and several early church fathers, such as Origen.
- 3 This variant is supported by D, K, L, X, numerous *minuscules*, some versions, and a number of Church Fathers like Cyprian.
- 4 Charles H. Talbert, *Matthew*, 219. See Harrington (1991), 268; contrast, Turner, *Matthew*, 444 (2008).
- 5 R. T. France, “Matthew,” in *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*, edited by Leon Morris, Vol. I (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 1985), 172.
- 6 D. A. Carson, “Matthew,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, edited by Frank E. Gaebelin, *et al*, Vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 402.
- 7 Even though, *Sinaiticus*, *Alexandria*, and other writings are omitted εἰς σε, yet the researcher also in line with the description of Davies and Allison that the Greek phrase εἰς σε is intended. They express, “Because we accept the reading εἰς σε as original, the sin – which must be both serious and intentional to be subject to the following regulations – is specifically that committed against a Christian brother. Further, the offence is not of a public nature, otherwise the initial concern for privacy would be out of place.” See W. D. Davies, and Dale C. Allison, “The Gospel According to Saint Matthew,” in *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, Vol.11 (London/New York: T & T Clark International, 1988-1997), 782.
- 8 Mark R. C. Grundeken, “Community Formation in Matthew: A Study of Matthew 18:15-18,” in *The Gospel of Matthew at the Crossroads of Early Christianity*, edited by Donald Senior (Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters, 2011), 463. See different views like Overman, *Matthew* (n. 2), 270: “The focus of this action is the community and its health, not pastoral care of the deviant member.” Cf D. R. Catchpole, “Reproof and Reconciliation in the Q Community: A Study of the Tradition-History of Mt 18:15-17, 21-22 /Lk 17:3-4,” in *SNTU*, A 8 (1983), 79-90, revised, see Catchpole, “Reproof and Reconciliation, in *The Quest for Q*, Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993, 135-150 (n. 6), 143: “... the procedure ... is above all concerned for the maintenance

- of peace and the achievement of reconciliation, and not with the definition of the boundary between those inside and those outside,” and Davies – Allison, *Matthew* (n.2), 751: “In short, the way in which Matthew encircles vv.15-20 is proof of his deep pastoral concern.” Cited from Grundeken, “*Community Formation in Matthew* (n. 53), 463. See also, D. C. Duling, *Matthew 18:15-17: conflict, confrontation, and conflict resolution in a “Fictive Kin”* 18.
- 9 For instance, Mt 5:22-24, 47; 7:3-5, 12:49-50, 25:40; 28:10; 18:21, 35; 23:8.
- 10 R. T. France, “The Gospel of Matthew,” in *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, edited by Ned B. Stonehouse, F. F. Bruce, and Gordon D. Fee (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 1632.
- 11 Warren Carter, *Matthew and the Margins: A Sociopolitical and Religious Reading* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2000), 43-49.
- 12 France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1635-1636.
- 13 In Deuteronomy 17:6, two or three witnesses is important to exercise the capital punishment. It states, “On the evidence of two or three witnesses the death sentence shall be executed; a person must not be put to death on the evidence of only one witness. Similar reference is described in Numbers 35:30, “If any one kills another, the murderer shall be put to death on the evidence of witnesses; but no one shall be put to death on the testimony of a single witness.”
- 14 France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1640.
- 15 Overman, *Matthew’s Gospel and Formative Judaism*, 101.
- 16 Göran Forkman, *The Limits of the Religious Community: Expulsion from the Religious Community within the Qumran Sect, within Rabbinic Judaism, and within Primitive Christianity*, translated by Pearl Sjölander (Lund, Sweden: CWK Gleerup, 1972), 123; see Overman, *Matthew’s Gospel and Formative Judaism*, 101.
- 17 Douglas Sean O’Donnell, *Matthew: All Authority in Heaven and on Earth* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2013), 1214.
- 18 O’Donnell, *Matthew*, 1222. In Old Testament passages, references of disassociation with an unqualified person are described. For example, “So shall my covenant be in your flesh an everlasting covenant. Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.” (Gen 17:13-14). In Exodus 12:15 states, “Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread; on the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses, for whoever eats
- leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day shall be cut off from Israel.” (cf Exodus 12:19; 30:33, 38).
- 19 David L. Turner, “Matthew,” in *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, edited by Robert W. Yarbrough and Robert H. Stein (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 444.
- 20 Turner, *Matthew*, 442-444.
- 21 Turner, *Matthew*, 445.
- 22 Richard S. Ascough, “Matthew and Community Formation.” In *The Gospel of Matthew in Current Study*. Edited by David E. Aune (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001), 115.
- 23 Craig A. Evans, “Matthew,” in *New Cambridge Bible Commentary*, edited by Ben Witherington III, et al (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 334. Similar moral teaching is also found in the *Twelve Patriarchs*. It states, “Love, therefore, one another from the heart; and if one sin against you, cast forth the poison of hate and speak peaceably to him, and in your soul hold not guile; and if he confess and repent, forgive him.” (*Testament of Gad* 6:3).
- 24 John Barton, “The Gospel of Matthew,” in *Oxford Bible Commentary*, edited by John Muddiman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 58.
- 25 Barton, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 59.
- 26 Carson, *Matthew*, 402-403.
- 27 Wintle, *Matthew*, 1260.

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Reading 2 Peter 3:1-13 Ecologically

*Menjiwapong Jamir**

The Second Letter of Peter is shrouded in mystery with regard to its authorship or its intended audience. At present three opinions exist about its authorship: (a) Petrine authorship; (b) pseudonymous authorship, and (c) product of someone belonging to “Petrine school/circle.” Considering the genre of this letter, pseudonymity is more preferable.¹ Regarding its addressees the letter itself does not provide any information. But an implicit reference to a “first” letter in 3:1 may provide some clue. Many commentators argue that this verse is an indirect reference to 1 Peter.² This reference does not give any conclusive answer for its authenticity but it provides crucial clue about its intended audience. 1 Peter 1:1 explicitly states that it is written “to the exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.” The argument that 2 Peter 3:1 refers to 1 Peter holds more weight than others³ and this allows us to work with the theory that 2 Peter was written to the Christians of Asia Minor (modern day Turkey). This is also supported by the “Asiatic” style of Greek rhetoric that 2 Peter reflects.⁴

1. Ecological Setting of 2 Peter

Asia Minor was inhabited by mixed ethnic groups. By the first century CE the Jews have had a long history of settlement in this region. Christian communities there reflected this composite character, majority of them from Gentile background. According to John H. Elliott, Christians of Asia Minor belonged mostly to

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unprivileged social class.⁵ They were susceptible to economic exploitation and social exclusion.

Asia Minor was rich in natural resources due to which it attracted the attention of the wealthy and powerful elites. Urbanization made cities to be consumer centres. The poor masses and the environment bore the brunt of exploitation. Though Hellenism had taken root in centres like Lykia by late fifth century BCE,⁶ much of Asia Minor remained rural settlements until its complete takeover by the Romans in the second century BCE, which ushered in rapid urbanization of the region. Topographically, large areas of Asia Minor were not productive agriculturally and pastorally. Whatever land was arable was therefore exploited to the hilt to extract produce from it. In spite of a high level of local ecological variations in the area, the region shared the bounty of the richness of the Mediterranean region with abundance of biodiversity of flora and fauna.⁷ The natural resources of Asia Minor were mined and quarried.⁸

Richness of the land became a curse for itself because rulers extracted them and made profits for themselves out of it. Exploitation of ecosystem became the norm especially during Roman rule. The use of plough accentuated permanent cultivation of a larger area of land with a result of higher surplus. More demand was laid on land for higher yield and more intense activities on it put greater pressure on the land. This was accentuated by the introduction of *latifundia* which gave license to the elites to exploit both the poor peasants and the land.

2. Ecological Reading of 2 Peter 3:1-13

2.1. Approach of Study

The method of research adopted here is ecological hermeneutics. It tries to take an eclectic approach to integrate the three approaches within ecological hermeneutics: recovery, critical and revisionist approaches. Through *hermeneutic of suspicion*, it investigates how anthropocentric interpretations have neglected the ecological

message of the passage. The *revisionist approach* would assist us to gather ecological message from it in the light of biblical and Christian theological formulations. The *hermeneutic of retrieval* and *recovery approach* is employed in this study to discover the neglected or hidden aspect of ecological vision in the text. 2 Peter contains clues to read this passage not as annihilation of the present earth in the *eschaton* but as transformation of it.

2.2. Ecological Interpretation of the Passage

Do the images of destruction carry the meaning of total cosmic annihilation? Does Peter mean to say that the present earth is destined to be completely destroyed and that God is going to create an entirely new one *ex nihilo*? Or does the passage contain any sensible meaning for redemption of the earth? While the dominant reading of this passage dismisses any hope for the present earth, a careful reading of it suggests that the earth is not eternally doomed in God's scheme of things.

2.2.1. Scoffers' Rejection of Divine Intervention (vv. 1-4)

Vv. 1-4 contain Peter's second major "reminder" of the letter (vv. 1-2; cf. 1:12-15) which serves as the platform to launch his refutations of the scoffers' claims and to the exhortation section beginning from v.11. The main proposition of the scoffers is God's theodicy not on cosmology based on which they rejected future judgment. Main points of this section are:

2.2.1.1. Call to Be Grounded in the True Teachings (vv. 1-2)

These verses contain Peter's "deliberative rhetoric" by which he wants to "advise and dissuade" his readers "to a particular way of thinking and course of action."⁹ Particularly, in 3:1-13 we see the judicial style of rhetoric in which Peter "accuses" the opponents and puts forth his "defence" of true Christian teachings.¹⁰ In 2 Peter, "remembering" means "the dynamic process of applying truths to the new situations and problems that the believer confronts."¹¹ This reminding serves as a polemic against false teachers in 2

Peter. "Sincere intention" (εἰλικρινή) literally means "unmixed" or uncontaminated and in a moral sense "pertaining to be sincere, pure," etc.¹² In this verse εἰλικρινή denotes pure thought or mind and sincere understanding.

"Holy prophets" refer to OT prophets.¹³ The authentic Christian message came to the readers from Jesus through the apostles (τῆ τῶν ἀποστολῶν τοῦ κυρίου καὶ σωτηροῦς) in which Peter wants them to be rooted. The "commandment" (ἐντολή) is used in 2 Peter to emphasize the ethical aspect of the gospel (cf. "holy commandment" in 2:21).

2.2.1.2. Scoffers as the End-Time Phenomenon (v. 3)

Scoffers who rejected the notion of God's interference in world history as a sign of the *eschaton*. The very presence of those who questioned the *Parousia* functions as evidence for its fulfilment. The "last days" (ἐπ' ἔσχατων τῶν ἡμερῶν) captures a long Jewish and biblical tradition of a time in the future when God would bring about a definitive event in history (cf. Gen 49:1; Ezek 38:16; Dan 2:28; Hos 3:5; Mic 4:1; 2 *Clem.* 14:2; etc.). Generally, the expression is used to refer simply to the future¹⁴ but in apocalyptic literature the expression became a standard way to refer to the time when the OT prophecies would be fulfilled. It became a normal expression to denote the "eschatological" future (cf. CD 4:4; 6:11; 1QSa 1:1; 1QpHab 2:5; 9:6; 2 *Apoc. Bar.* 6:8; 41:5; 78:5).¹⁵ From a realized eschatological position the early Christians thought of themselves as living already in the "last days" (cf. Heb 1:2; 1 Pet 1:20; 2 *Clem.* 14:2; *Asc. Isa.* 9:13) but they also looked to a future time when the final consummation of all things would take place (cf. Jas 5:3; 1 Pet 1:5; Did. 16:2, 3). Therefore, the early Christians could use "last days" as a reference to both the past and the future. As Jude and 2 Peter perceive it the arising of the scoffers as a mark of the final stage of history before the *Parousia* has arrived.

2.2.1.3. Scoffers' Eschatological Perspective and Cosmological Idea (v. 4)

For the first time in 2 Peter, the thesis of the false teachers is stated directly in verse 4. Rejecting God's promises the scoffers themselves "promised freedom" (2:19) which heightens their challenge of God's authority.¹⁶ The non-fulfilment of the Lord's return provided some unease among early Christians but the scoffers took it to a higher level by completely disparaging its whole idea. The identity of the scoffers is a debated issue with proposals ranging from gnostics to Epicureans.¹⁷ But it is hard to identify them with a single thought. Hence Gene Green opinion that they were amalgamators of different thoughts seems the best answer.¹⁸

"Where is the promise of his coming?" implicitly denies judgment. Their denial of the *Parousia* is based on their perceived divine policy of non-interference in world history, either in providence or in judgment. According to them, the past indicates the future: *Parousia* has not come yet so it *will* not come. The scoffers were members of the Christian community but had fallen prey to false ideas. By asking "where" they are not questioning the source or origin of the promise but its fulfilment. Whose παρουσία is meant here – God's or Jesus'? The early church consistently understood the *Parousia* as Christ's coming back in glory for judgment (cf. Matt 24:30-31; Mark 13:26-27; Luke 21:27; 1 Thess 4:16; 2 Thess 2:1). Though majority of scholars consider that "the fathers" refer to first generation Christians, it is unlikely because in Judaism, the NT and the early Christian literature οἱ πατέρες is used to mean the OT patriarchs or more generally to the righteous men of the OT times in a spiritual sense (John 7:22; Acts 3:13; 13:32; Rom 9:5; Heb 1:1; *Barn.* 5:7; 14:1; *Apoc. Pet.* E 16; *Ep. Apost.* [Coptic] 28). Such consistent usage of the term weighs heavily in favour of taking it to mean the OT figures.¹⁹ Just like the claim of universal permanence by Epicurus in *Letter to Herodotus* 38 and Lucretius 1.225-237, the scoffers

claim that everything in the universe "remains the same" forever. This idea of universal permanence is the ground of their scepticism and mocking of a promise of divine interruption. Thus, according to Peter, scoffers are the signs of the last days but ironically the scoffers reject the very idea of the last days.

2.2.2. God's Past Actions Portents His Future Cosmic Plans (vv. 5-7)

Beginning from v. 5, Peter rebuts the erroneous view of the scoffers' understanding of God and history by three meta-arguments:²⁰ (i) God's creation of the heavens and the earth; (ii) God's intervention in the world in the past, and (iii) God's future judgment at the *Parousia*. For Peter *Parousia* is a certainty; only its timing remains uncertain.

2.2.2.1. God's Word and Water as Agents of Creation (v. 5)

Peter's first "meta-argument" deals with the fact of God's creation of the world which substantiates that God had indeed intervened in world history. But the scoffers grossly ignored this fact and derived a wrongful conclusion due to their arrogance. God created the ordered world out of a chaotic state (Gen 1:2). The phrase λανθάνει γὰρ αὐτοῦ· τοῦτο θελοντὰ suggests that the scoffers while zealously defending their position are blinded from seeing the facts before them. Their *a priori* position of universal permanence makes them to "forget" or "overlook" the facts of divine intervention.

2 Peter is rooted in the thought-world and conceptual framework of the OT, particularly Genesis. Likewise, he attunes to the thought of the existence of the heavens to the creative power of the "word of God" in Genesis 1. "Heavens" refer to the heavenly bodies like Sun, moon, stars, etc. and earth refers to the inhabitable world.²¹ "Out of" and "by means of water" (ἐξ ὕδατος καὶ δι' ὕδατος) refer to the instrumentality of water in Genesis creation account in spite of attempts to connect it to Greek philosophical thought as Bigg, Fornberg and Adams do.²² However Peter

consistently relies on the Genesis account, particularly alluding to how God separated “the water from the waters” (Gen 1:6, 7) and created the “dry land” (Gen 1:9, 10) as well as by the use of flood imagery (v.6). It shows that God used the natural element as an instrument of creation. He chose to employ “water” making it play an important role in the creation of the earth. While talking about creation Peter is not talking about a *creatio ex nihilo* and this is an important aspect for our interpretation of the verses that follow, specifically in relation to “new heavens and new earth.”

2.2.2.2. Destruction of the Ancient World Presages the Coming Destruction (v. 6)

But water does not only play this creative role because in v. 6 Peter assigns purging role to it too. This refers to the Noachian flood of Genesis 6-7 as he had explicitly mentioned it in 2:5. There is a flood typology in Peter’s rhetoric argument in this passage²³ and Sam Meier would even argue that their parallels extend beyond concepts to semantic and syntactical similarities in the way Peter describes the flood and the future cosmic conflagration.²⁴ Just as the flood inundated the ancient world and purged it of wickedness (cf. Gen 8:11), the earth will be renewed and transformed at the *Parousia*. In Peter’s thought the reason for destruction of the “ancient world” and the future “cosmic conflagration” is human sin. Creation is not judged, condemned and destroyed *per se* but for Peter humans and creation are interrelated both in sin and redemption. This is an important reference point for our interpretation of vv. 10 and 13.

2.2.2.3. The Fate of the Present Cosmos (v. 7)

Peter’s third “meta-argument” affirms two points: (i) *Present Cosmos is Reserved for Fire*: Peter continues to claim that it is “the same word” that “preserves” (τεθησαυρισμενοι) the earth now for future destruction. This he presents in terms of continuity and discontinuity. Peter reiterates the primacy of “the word of God” both in the creation of heavens and earth (v. 5) and in their

destruction (in the past, v. 6 and in future, v. 7). Peter is aware of Genesis 9:11 that rules out water for future cosmic destruction but he is equally aware of Judeo-Christian traditions of eschatological fire. The mention of “fire” (πυρι) here (and in v. 10) made some commentators to conclude that Peter aligns himself with the Stoic doctrine of cosmic conflagration (ἐκπυρωσις), especially by Edward Adams in *The Stars Will Fall from Heaven* where he argues that Peter borrows the cosmic destruction by fire from the Stoics and describes the violent end of the present creation.²⁵ We do not dispute about the possibilities of Peter’s awareness of Greco-Roman cosmological discussions²⁶ but the rhetorical character of 2 Peter, particularly in this pericope, suggests it otherwise because Peter faithfully bases his arguments on the thought world and conceptual framework of the OT.²⁷ It is to be noted that Peter nowhere uses the Stoic favourite terms ἐκπυρωσις or παλιγγενεσια in his explication of eschatology. What Adams failed to recognize is the consistent primacy assigned to God by Peter both in the creation of the world and in its destruction. The destruction by fire in Peter’s thought is clearly associated with judgment, the main theme of the chapter, but judgment is never a part of Stoic conflagration theory.²⁸ Peter exhibits a thoroughly theistic view of history and cosmic system in which God is able to act, re-act and re-enact. Such glaring difference is possible to ascertain if Peter’s thought is understood only in terms of Judeo-Christian tradition.²⁹ The OT has ample of passages that use the fire imagery for divine judgment, mostly eschatological, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah serving as the paradigmatic one.³⁰

(ii) *Cosmic Destruction is Only a Corollary to God’s Destruction of the Godless*: According to Peter, judgment and destruction of the godless is the main focus of *Parousia*. The “heavens” is best taken as an allusion to the physical reference within the created order and only in this verse Peter will connect the “earth” with “fire” in which the thought seems to suggest that

the whole created universe is destined to be burnt up with fire. But so far Peter has been using the “earth” in a general sense (the inhabited world) in vv. 5 and 7 and only later on in vv. 10 and 12 he will clarify that the “earth” *per se* will not be totally destroyed. What this verse says about earth must be understood only in relation to the latter verses. As the last phrase of the verse shows he is more focussed, not on world history but, on the final judgment of the ungodly people.³¹ The judgment is not of the creation but of human beings, just as the flood and judgments of Sodom and Gomorrah were. However, the creation also bears the consequence of the divine judgment. The judgment is limited by the need of purging the human evil, but not destruction of the creation *per se*. The Day of Judgment will be a day of destruction for the ungodly but a day of vindication and reward for the just and renewal of the earth (vv.11-13). This is the eschatological message of hope Peter offers. According to Peter human wickedness is the reason for God’s judgment.

2.2.3. Sovereignty of God and Cosmic Transformation at the *Eschaton* (vv. 8-10)

Peter challenges the scoffers’ faulty premise now by giving theological reasons. His concern also moves to the dangers these scoffers present to the believers.

2.2.3.1. God Transcends Time and History (v. 8)

Here Peter refutes the scoffers’ thesis of God reneging on his promise by giving theological reasons for the apparent delay of the *Parousia*. The “but...you” (δέ.....ὐμᾶς) construction emphasizes the contrast between the scoffers and the readers whom Peter once again addresses as “beloved” (cf. v.1). In the NT, “the day of the Lord” is understood as Christ’s second advent but here “Lord” refers to God the Father.³² Consequently, “his promise” in v. 9 refers to God’s promise about sending his Son as a judge at the *eschaton*. The argument from God’s reckoning of time in v. 8 is an allusion to Ps 90:4 (LXX 89:4) which asserts the eternity of

God and temporariness of human beings (vv. 2, 5). Human life span is too brief but God transcends time. Due to this essential difference, what humans consider “slow” or “quick” is not so with God. Herein lies what Neyrey would call “an honour challenge against God” by “trespassing in God’s arena.”³³ Thus Peter states that God is not late; only his time has not come.

2.2.3.2. God’s Magnanimity Does Not Conceal His Promise (v. 9)

Peter states that God’s apparent “slowness” is not to be misconstrued as his inability to act on his promise. Rather what is happening is the outpouring of God’s love that makes him to delay his coming. Daryl Charles succinctly states that for Peter “mercy and not impotence is the reason for the delay”³⁴ and M. Green rightly states, “Delay in no way suggests non-fulfilment.”³⁵ Delay exhibits God’s power not weakness because it shows that he is in control.

2.2.3.3. Cosmic Transformation at the *Eschaton* (v. 10)

The placing of the verb ἤξει at the beginning of this verse emphasizes the certainty of the *Parousia*. This fact remains confirmed for Peter; only the timing remains uncertain. The important points Peter makes in this verse are:

(i) *The suddenness of the Parousia (v. 10a)*: Peter describes the events surrounding the *Parousia* in cataclysmic terms: it will be sudden, decisive, cosmic, and final in nature. Alluding to Jesus and Paul (cf. Matt 24:43; 1 Thess 5:2) Peter insists that the *Parousia* will happen swiftly at an unexpected time. The rest of the verse is fraught with exegetical problems. “Each of these clauses presents problems of translation and interpretation, with the difficulty increasing as we move through them.”³⁶ The idea of a cosmic annihilation and the creation of a new one *ex nihilo* is what is surmise from this passage and some would not only assume it but strongly argue for it.³⁷

(ii) Passing Away of the Heavens (v. 10b): Here Peter explains in onomatopoeic language (ροιζηδον) the passing away of the heavens with a loud noise. The Greek word παρέρχομαι as used in this verse means “come to an end, disappear”³⁸ and Gene Green understands it in the sense of destruction.³⁹ Davids alludes to it as sky being simply disappearing⁴⁰ but Emerson argues that this verb occurs 21 times in the NT in at least seven different ways but none of these “refer(s) to annihilation, obliteration, or total destruction of anything.”⁴¹ Such wide gap in deciphering its meaning cautions us from using this phrase to support annihilationist understanding of this passage because we need to understand it in relation to Peter’s use of other imageries. As in v.7, “heavens” refer to physical elements within created order. The “loud noise” (ροιζηδον) may be compared with sounds produced by various things but the context demands that it refers to the roaring sound of the Lord coming in wrath for judgment. Similar ideas are echoed in *Sib. Or.* 4:175; 1QH 3:32-36.

Some scholars argue that it suggests cosmic destruction.⁴² But a closer examination of the passage shows that except in v. 7 Peter makes a careful distinction between “heavens” and “earth”. “Heavens” and “elements” are to be burnt up or dissolved, while the earth will be “disclosed”. This suggests to us that Peter is not conceiving a climacteric annihilation of the “earth” when the eschatological destruction would occur. It means that there is scope of “retrieving the earth from conflagration”⁴³ in this passage.

(iii) Dissolution of the Elements (v. 10c): What constitutes στοιχεια? Wink cautions us to first understand the context well in order to get each particular meaning of this word.⁴⁴ There are four main lines of interpretation of the word στοιχεια in this verse: (a) *basic elements of the universe*, (b) *spiritual or angelic powers*, (c) *False teaching*, and (d) *heavenly bodies*. Considering Peter’s rhetorical character in this pericope, the fourth interpretation is preferable because he makes a clear distinction between elements and earth. So far, in this verse, Peter is talking about the destruction

of heavens and the heavenly bodies but nothing about earth’s destruction.

(iv) Revelation of the Earth (v. 10d): The interpretation of this clause presents the greatest difficulty. According to Bauckham, “This is a *crux interpretum*.”⁴⁵ The textual problem accentuates this difficulty. The main problem lies in the verb at the end of the verse, the two most prominent ones being ευρεθησεται (“will be found”) and κατακαησεται (“will be burnt up” in sl.). While it is to be noted that the text is corrupt beyond retrieval, the basic lines of interpretation can be categorized into three: (a) support for variant readings; (b) emendations of the text, but not supported by MS evidence; (c) attempts to make sense of ευρεθησεται. But we argue that the third line of interpretation is the best option to surmise the meaning of the verse.

In spite of the popularity of the Textus Receptus’ κατακαησεται it does not belong to the earliest MSS and, it would be impossible to explain the other readings if this were the original reading.⁴⁶ Most of the leading text critics dismiss it as unreliable and spurious and regard Alexandrian text to be the oldest and most accurate.⁴⁷ However, κατακαησεται fits perfectly well within the context and this explains how it crept into the text through an early scribe who found ευρεθησεται redundant.

The MSS with ευρεθησεται and its modifications represent the oldest texts (from 3rd cen. CE). Other variants like ούχ ευρεθησεται and ευρεθησεται λυομενα are seen as attempts to smoothen the meaning of the verse. But like κατακαησεται their attestation is very weak and according to Metzger, ευρεθησεται best explains the origin of the other variants.⁴⁸ The retention of ούχ ευρεθησεται in *UBS-GNT 5* is an attempt to remain close to the best attested textual variant (ευρεθησεται) but controlled by the meaning of the TR (κατακαησεται of minuscule 2344). As J. Moo has pointed out, this reading is not based on “any fresh manuscript evidence” but may only be that the editors “have decided to treat all of the readings that attest to the idea of destruction, burning or

removal as mutually supportive rather than as reflecting...original reading, εὑρεθησεται.”⁴⁹

Though εὑρεθησεται remains the best attested textual variant, it is very hard to surmise its meaning. Hence several scholars have attempted to emend the text.⁵⁰ But such emendations are devoid of any textual support and they are mostly attempt to reconcile this clause with “cosmic conflagration” idea that this passage is thought to advance. Therefore, εὑρεθησεται is the best choice variant and both Wilson and Bauckham suggest that it carries the sense of “will be revealed” for the purpose of condemnation at the judgment.⁵¹ Many recent commentators support this judicial sense with every motive and thoughts of persons being found out or discovered by God.⁵² Thus εὑρεθησεται expresses the idea of “uncovering and exposing” which is similar to the Noachian flood that destroyed human evil. Though the earth too undergoes this destruction it is only a corollary to the divine judgment; it serves as a sub-text. There is only a moral discontinuity between the present and future worlds; not its material substance. Hence the best reading of this text (εὑρεθησεται) indicates that the annihilation of the earth is not taught in this passage.

2.2.4. Conducts Necessitated by the Vision of a Transformed World (vv. 11-12)

Peter now turns to imperatives from the indicatives to give eschatological parenthesis bringing out moral obligations of his eschatological teaching. He now turns his appeal from orthodoxy (cf. v.2) to orthopraxy. In Peter’s eschatological orientation, *Parousia* is not a threat but a hope of renewal and transformation.

2.2.4.1. Vision for a Transformed World Demands Holy and Godly Conducts (v. 11)

Cosmic dissolution is not in Peter’s view but his focus is on the eschatological hope⁵³ because the negative consequence of the *Parousia* (destruction) is only one side of the story because,

more importantly, it has positive vision (“new heaven and a new earth”). This hope should direct the believers for godly living and Peter wishes his reader to be found blameless to enter the new earth by holy and godly living. ποταπουζ (“what kind of”) suggests that Peter refers to moral character (cf. Luke 7:39), reflecting an expectation of a positive character. The phrase ἐν ἀγια ἄναστροφαῖ καὶ εὐσεβειαῖ literally means “in holy forms of behaviour and godly acts.” It deals with divinely acceptable lifestyle “agreeing with God” in everything.⁵⁴ According to Peter, eschatological hope does not negate the importance of the present. Rather the future hope begins to have a grip upon the lives of the believers in the now-time. The focus here is on its immediate relevance. They need to start living the future in the now. This godly and holy living in the present include love and care for the earth because God is going to make his dwelling on it.

2.2.4.2. Reasons for Good Moral Conducts (v. 12)

Two important verbs define believers’ response to the *Parousia* hope: “wait for” and “hasten” (προσδοκωνταζ καὶ σπευδονταζ) the day of God. Peter’s call for holiness and godliness is to hasten God’s Day. However, this is not entirely a passive waiting⁵⁵ because Peter urges his readers to “hasten” (σπευδονταζ) it’s coming. Quite a few Jewish traditions assign this hastening to human behaviour (cf. *b. Sanhedrin* 97b-98a; *y. Ta’anit* 1:1; *b. Yoma* 86b; *b. Baba Bathra* 10a).⁵⁶ Therefore Rossing’s interpretation of this verse as ecologically destructive⁵⁷ misses this point because she fails to understand that Peter places his tenor at the climax of his exhortation on the positive side of *Parousia* when there will be a renewal of the heavens and the earth. In this regard, Jonathan Moo asserts that what the believers hasten is the renewal not destruction.⁵⁸ This would mean that “hastening” the Lord’s Day is indeed good news for the creation too. Care for creation must begin now in the expectation of what God is going to do with it at the *Parousia*.

2.2.5. The Climax of the *Parousia*: A Transformed Earth (v. 13)

Though the divine judgment brings destruction, Peter's message does not end there but the positive result of the judgment. Gene Green rightly captures this aspect in Peter's thought, "the Christian hope is the renovation of creation and not its annihilation."⁵⁹ Peter's choice of words clearly suggests this: he uses *καινοζ* rather than *νεοζ* to speak about "new" heavens and a "new" earth. While *καινοζ* expresses newness in quality, *νεοζ* expresses new in time or origin. Peter's idea here is that the "new heavens and a new earth" is a transformed state of being rather than bringing something to existence *de novo*. Peter again explains this in terms of a "promise" of God (το *ἐπαγγελμα* *αὐτου*). "Promise" refers basically to Isaiah 65:17 and 66:22 in which God speaks of creating "new heavens and a new earth." In Peter's argument God never fails his promises and since renewal, not annihilation, is God's eschatological promise they need to "wait" for it. The emphasis is on radical discontinuity between the old and the new but these passages show that they intend to describe a renewal, not an abolition, of creation.⁶⁰ God takes materiality seriously in his salvific plan so his promise include transformation and redemption of the earth at the *Parousia*.⁶¹ The creation *per se* is not something inherently useless. Thus, the new creation will be "new heavens and new earth" where "righteousness dwells" (*δικαιοσυνη κατοικει*) unlike the old-world order which is filled with evil deeds. Harink asserts that there is no need to worry that vv. 10, 12 undercut all motivation for Christians to care for creation and the environment. He understands that Peter's call for "holy and godly lives" directly challenges lustful, greedy, undisciplined consumption, and gluttony of life that takes a heavy toll on the environment.⁶²

Conclusion

God's eschatological intervention in world history is not simply to eradicate evil but, more importantly, to re-create a new world order of righteousness. God's destructive judgment will bring an end to godlessness. The earth too will undergo this process. But in Peter's theology obliteration of the earth is not God's promise of *Parousia*. Since the fate of the earth extends beyond the *Parousia* believers are to look forward to and prepare now for this day. But they should not become too futuristic to ignore the importance of godly living now. Hence the idea of renewal takes effect in the present when believers live "holy and godly lives" here and now so that they inherit the renewed heavens and earth (cf. 2 Pet 3:14-16). Since the material creation will find its existence beyond the *eschaton* the passage lays upon the believers a responsible attitude and conduct towards it. Godly living in the present encompass creation care because the fate of humans and the fate of the earth are intertwined in God's plan. Eschatology does not negate ecological nurturing; rather eschatology must propel us for affirmative action for creation care. The end in God's scheme is the end for a new beginning for the earth.

End Notes

- 1 It is written in "testament" genre in which Apostle Peter is presented as giving his farewell speech predicting about things that will arise in the future. But by the time this letter was written these "future events" have already become a "present" reality. Hence "Peter" is used to refer to the "implied author" not necessarily meaning its authenticity.
- 2 For example, Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, NAC 37 (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 276; Ruth Ann Reese, *2 Peter & Jude*, THNTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2007), 122; Catherine Gunsalus Gonzalez, *1 and 2 Peter and Jude*, BelTCB (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2011), 160-161.
- 3 Other theories are: (i) Chapters 1-2 of 2 Peter. But this is not persuasive because there is no serious doubt about the integrity of the epistle. For treating 2 Peter as two separate letters, see F. Lapham, *Peter: The Myth, the Man and the Writings: A Study of Early Petrine Text and Tradition* (London:

- T&T Clark International, 2003), 154-158; (ii) Jude, but this theory is almost discarded today and a question arises on why the author of 2 Peter would use "Peter" instead of Jude, and (iii) and extant letter, now lost.
- 4 Bo Reicke, *The Epistles of James, Peter, and Jude*, AB 37 (New York: Doubleday, 1964), 147.
 - 5 John H. Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless: A Social-Scientific Criticism of 1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy*, first paperback edition (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 94.
 - 6 Andrew Pearce Gregory, *Village Society in Hellenistic and Roman Asia Minor* (Ann Arbor, MI.: UMI, 1997), 1-2.
 - 7 Robert Sallares, "Ecology," in *The Cambridge Economic History of the Greco-Roman World*, edited by Walter Scheidel, Ian Morris & Richard Saller (Cambridge: CUP, 2008), 15-16.
 - 8 T.R.S. Broughton, "Roman Asia Minor," in *An Economic Survey of Ancient Rome IV*, edited by Tenney Frank (Baltimore: John Hopkins, 1938), 607-626; Bleda S. Düring, *The Prehistory of Asia Minor: From Complex Hunter-Gatherer to Early Urban Societies* (Cambridge: CUP, 2011), 1.
 - 9 Duane Frederick Watson, *Invention, Arrangement, and Style: Rhetorical Criticism of Jude and 2 Peter*, SBLDS 104 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1988), 85.
 - 10 Ben Witherington III, *Letters and Homilies for Hellenized Christians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1-2 Peter*, vol. 2 (Nottingham: Apollos, 2007), 281.
 - 11 Douglas J. Moo, *2 Peter and Jude*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 162.
 - 12 Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, A translation and adaptation of fourth revised and augmented edition by William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich. Second ed. Revised and augmented by F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker (Chicago/London: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1979), 222 (henceforth BAGD).
 - 13 Contra E.M. Sidebottom, *James, Jude and 2 Peter*, NCB (London: Thomas Nelson, 1967), 118 who considers it as "New Testament men."
 - 14 G.W. Buchanan, "Eschatology and the 'End of Days,'" *JNES* 20 (1961): 188-193.
 - 15 Richard J. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, WBC 50 (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1983), 104.
 - 16 Jerome H. Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude*, AB 37 (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 228.
 - 17 Charles H. Talbert, "II Peter and the Delay of Parousia," in *Vigiliae Christianae* 20 (1966): 141-142 has argued for Gnostics; for C.P. Thiede, *Simon Peter: From Galilee to Rome* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1986), 180, they were influenced by Essene teachings; Neyrey has argued for Epicureans, cf. Jerome H. Neyrey, "The Form and the Background of the Polemic in 2 Peter," *JBL* 99 (1980): 407-431.
 - 18 Gene Green in *Jude and 2 Peter*, BECNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2008), 157-158.
 - 19 Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 291-292, understands that it refers to the first generation Christians but admits that the use of "fathers" for first generation Christians is not attested elsewhere.
 - 20 Kraftchick sees only 'two "meta-arguments"' by omitting the first one. Cf. Steven J. Kraftchick, *Jude, 2 Peter*, ANTC (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002), 154.
 - 21 E.g., Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 316; Peter H. Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude*, PNTC (Nottingham: Apollos, 2006), 285; J.N.D. Kelly, *The Epistles of Peter and Jude*, BNTC (London: Black, 1969), 364.
 - 22 Charles Bigg, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1978), 293; Fornberg, *An Early Church in a Pluralistic Society*, 67; Edward Adams, "Creation 'Out of' and 'Through' Water in 2 Peter 3:5," in *The Creation of Heaven and Earth: Reinterpretations of Genesis 1 in the Context of Judaism, Ancient Philosophy, Christianity and Modern Physics*, Themes in Biblical Narrative, Vol. III, ed. by George H. van Kooten (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 199-206.
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 - 24 Sam Meier, "2 Peter 3:3-7 – An Early Jewish and Christian Response to Eschatological Skepticism," *Biblische Zeitschrift* 32/2 (1988): 255-257.
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- 35 Michael Green, *The Second Epistle General of Peter*, 148.
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- 40 Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude*, 283.
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- 44 Walter Wink, "The Elements of the Universe in Biblical and Scientific Perspective," *Zygon* 13/3 (Summer 1978): 228.
- 45 Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 316.
- 46 Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 317.
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- 48 Bruce M. Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, second edition (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft/UBS, 1994), 636.
- 49 Jonathan Moo, "Continuity, Discontinuity, and Hope: The Contribution of the New Testament Eschatology to a Distinctively Christian Environmental Ethos," *TynBul* 61/1 (2010): 31, f.n. 18.
- 50 For details see Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 636-637.
- 51 Wilson, "Ἐὐρεθήσεται in 2 Pet. iii.10," 44-45; Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 316-321.
- 52 Along with Wilson and Bauckham, others like Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude*, 243-244; Richard, *Reading 1 Peter, Jude and 2 Peter*, 382; Kraftchick, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 163 support this interpretation. Others who work with annihilation view in this pericope also come to the same conclusion in v. 10. For example Adams, *The Stars Will Fall from Heaven*, 228-229; Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 386-387.
- 53 Moo argues that $\lambda\upsilon\omega$ does not necessarily mean total physical destruction but a dissolution or a radical change in nature. Cf. Douglas J. Moo, "Nature in the New Creation: New Testament Eschatology and the Environment," *JETS* 49/3 (September 2006): 449-488.
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- 57 Barbara R. Rossing, "'Hastening the Day' When the Earth Will Burn? Global Warming, Revelation and 2 Peter 3," *CTM* 35/5 (October 2008): 363-373.
- 58 Jonathan Moo, "Continuity, Discontinuity, and Hope," 37.
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- 60 Douglas Harink, *1 & 2 Peter*, BTCB (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2009), 184-185.

- 61 Gonzalez, *1 and 2 Peter and Jude*, 199; Vanlalnghaka, "Pauline Concept of Sōma in Relation to Salvific Work of Christ: A Study on Select Texts from the Letters of Paul" (D.Th. dissertation submitted to the Senate of Serampore College, 2005); N.T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* (New York: HarperCollins, 2008)
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Christian Roots of Modern Science

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There is a book, well-received by the academic community all over the world, named *Galileo Goes to Jail and another Myths About Science and Religion* published in 2009 by the Harvard University Press. It is a collection of 25 essays written by eminent scholars and professors in the field of science and religion. Chapter 9 of this book is entitled: "Myth 9: That Christianity Gave Birth to Modern Science" and is written by Noah J Efron, who chairs the Program in Science, Technology and Society at Bar-Ilan University in Israel and serves as the President of the Israeli Society for History and Philosophy of Science. This Essay primarily denounces the idea that it is Christianity *alone* that gave birth to modern science. Although the Essay is an attempt to prove wrong that Christianity is *exclusively* responsible for the birth of modern science, the author Noah J. Efron never misses to point out the role of Christianity for the genesis, growth and development of modern science as we shall see in the following discussion.

Many people have a wrong impression that Science and Religion, especially Christianity in our context now, are two separate entities which have no connection let alone relations. They originated at different locations and are heading towards different ends. Scientists and theologians have nothing in common. A truly religious person cannot be a genuine scientist. Such and many like assumptions are in circulation among the people. My intention

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with this essay is to prove wrong such ideas by producing how science and Christianity are not only connected but are deeply and inseparably related; and that how Christianity is responsible for the emergence of modern science and how a genuine Christian, deeply committed to Christian faith and strongly believed in God can be a leading scientist. Thus, this essay is, in a way, a demonstration that modern science cannot be divorced from its religious root and foundation. We shall briefly look at not only the harmony between science and religion but also how Christianity helped, nurtured and influenced the genesis and growth of modern science.

1. The Pioneers

Pierre Duhem (1861-1916), a distinguished physicist and mathematician, maybe the first scientist who maintained that Christianity had played a vital role in the emergence of Modern Science. His 10 volumes books, five of which were published several decades after his death, narrated the history of science and depicted the contribution of Christianity for the birth of modern science. Stanley Jaki, a prominent figure in the philosophy of science and the author of *The Road of Science and the Ways to God* praises Duhem in the following lines: “What Duhem unearthed among other things from long-buried manuscripts was that supernatural revelation played a crucial liberating role in putting scientific speculation on the right track.”¹ Peter E. Hodgson, a professor of Nuclear Physics at Oxford University, also mentions the contribution of Duhem as follows:

The work of Duhem is of great relevance today, for it shows clearly the Christian roots of modern science, thus decisively refuting the alleged incompatibility of science and Christianity still propagated by the secularist establishment. Science is an integral part of Christian culture, a lesson to be learned even within the Christian Church.²

Alfred North Whitehead, a famous mathematician, co-author with Bertrand Russell of *Mathematica Principia*, strongly supports the idea that modern science owes much from Christianity. He says in his celebrated book: *Science and the Modern World*, “the faith in the possibility of science, generated antecedently to the development of modern scientific theory, is an unconscious derivation from medieval theology.”³ Although Noah J. Efron tries to argue that modern science alone has not birthed by Christianity, he admits that Christianity played a crucial role in the development of modern science. Here is what he says,

To be fair, the claim that Christianity led to modern science captures something true and important. Generations of historians and sociologists have discovered many ways in which Christians, Christian beliefs, and Christian institutions played crucial roles in fashioning the tenets, methods, and institutions of what in time became modern science. They found that some forms of Christianity provided the *motivation* to study nature systematically.⁴

He continues to point out that several pioneers of modern science, such as René Descartes (1596–1650), Isaac Newton (1642–1727), etc. credited their faith in the Christian religion as a driving force in their scientific endeavour. He quotes Descartes as saying that his physics “is in much better agreement with all the truths of faith than that of Aristotle.” He also maintains that Newton believed that his system restored the original divine wisdom God had provided to Moses and had no doubt that his Christianity bolstered his physics, and that his physics bolstered his Christianity.⁵ Thus he concludes, “one cannot recount the history of modern science without acknowledging the crucial importance of Christianity,” but maintains his original thesis that, “this does not mean that Christianity and Christianity alone produced modern science.”⁶

Peter Harrison, the Andreas Idreos Professor of Science and Religion at the University of Oxford, claims that despite the widespread view of the conflict between science and religion, “historians of science have long known that religious factors played a significantly positive role in the emergence and persistence of modern science in the West. Not only were many of the key figures in the rise of science individuals with sincere religious commitments, but the new approaches to nature that they pioneered were underpinned in various ways by religious assumptions.”⁷

To claim that Christianity alone produce modern science may be presumptuous but to ignore the contribution of Christianity for the genesis, growth and development of modern science is equally arrogant. The following discussion will throw more lights on this issue.

2. Church Supported Scientific Research

False impression was created among the people that Church and scientific development were enemies and that Church was against many scientific truths. However, as of now, we know that many of these claims evaporated in the light of new findings in the history of science. James Hannam, who has a Ph.D in the History and Philosophy of Science from the University of Cambridge and is the author of *The Genesis of Science: How the Christian Middle Ages Launched the Scientific Revolution* makes a vivid comment on this issue:

The ongoing clash of creationism with evolution obscures the fact that Christianity has actually had a far more positive role to play in the history of science than commonly believed. Indeed, many of the alleged examples of religion holding back scientific progress turn out to be bogus. For instance, the Church has never taught that the Earth is flat and, in the Middle Ages, no one thought so anyway. Popes haven't tried to

ban zero, human dissection or lightning rods, let alone excommunicate Halley's Comet. No one, I am pleased to say, was ever burnt at the stake for scientific ideas. Yet, all these stories are still regularly trotted out as examples of clerical intransigence in the face of scientific progress.⁸

The Catholic Church was at the forefront in sponsoring scientific research in the Middle age. The church sponsored priest, monks and friars to study the cosmos. John Heilbron writes in his book - *The Sun in the Church*: “The Roman Catholic Church gave more financial and social support to the study of astronomy for over six centuries, from the recovery of ancient learning during the late Middle Ages into the Enlightenment, than any other, and probably all, other institutions.”⁹ Hannam notes that the church even insisted that science and mathematics should be a compulsory subject in the syllabus. “By the seventeenth century, the Jesuit order had become the leading scientific organisation in Europe, publishing thousands of papers and spreading new discoveries around the world. The cathedrals themselves were designed to double up as astronomical observatories to allow ever more accurate determination of the calendar. And of course, modern genetics was founded by a future abbot growing peas in the monastic garden.”¹⁰

3. Christian Faith Encouraged People to Study Science

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, peoples wanted to study the natural world because of their Christian conviction. A strong faith in God and his works prompted many people to study science to discover the works of God. Their curiosity to know more about God's hidden work was the main driving force of a number of scientific discoveries. We may go along with Hannam to state that it was faith that led Copernicus to reject the Ptolemaic geocentric universe; it was his Christian conviction that drove Johannes Kepler to discover the constitution of the solar system, and it was his faith in God that convinced James Clerk Maxwell

that he could reduce electromagnetism to a set of equations so elegant they take the breath away.¹¹

Peter Harrison in his celebrated book – *Bible, Protestantism and the Rise of Natural Science* writes how Christian faith inspires the study of science. As a response to a question as to why science arose in the West, and why in the seventeenth century, he says,

The Christian doctrine of creation assumes an intelligible world, created to be understood by its human inhabitants, and to serve their needs. Throughout the patristic and medieval periods, the book of God's works was interpreted, like scripture, and served both spiritual and physical needs. A change took place in the sixteenth century which challenged the assumption that the purpose of the material world lay in its referential or symbolic functions. Henceforth the quest for the divinely-instituted purpose of nature is diverted solely into the search for its practical utilities. The literal approach to texts precipitated this change of attitude towards the world, while the literal content of key passages of the Bible further motivated natural philosophers in their quest to master nature.¹²

4. Science Progressed under Medieval Christianity

That the growth of science is galvanized by religion or to be specific Christianity is self-evident from the facts that the era most dominated by Christianity in the history of the world, the medieval period, interestingly, witnessed intense scientific activities and inventions. Had it not for the positive attitude and contribution of the Church, such scientific progress would have not been possible. Michael H. Shank has the following words in support of Church's support to the studies of science during the medieval period,

Put succinctly, the medieval period gave birth to the university, which developed with the active support of

the papacy. This unusual institution sprang up rather spontaneously around famous masters in towns like Bologna, Paris, and Oxford before 1200... About 30 per cent of the medieval university curriculum covered subjects and texts concerned with the natural world.¹³

Lael Weinberger, a lawyer and historian who is currently the Olin-Searle-Smith Fellow in Law at Harvard Law School, writes how Christians in the medieval period devoted themselves to the study of science,

The Platonic tendency to divorce the biblical narrative from the physical and the natural was mitigated somewhat in the Middle Ages. Theologians were willing to pay more attention to the physical. Human relations were now seen as a subject of symbolic communication, a move toward legitimizing "this-worldly" inquiry. The universities fostered philosophical discussions about nature, and helped produce natural theology that explored God's communication to man (*sic*) through His creation.¹⁴

Weinberger maintains that it is no wonder that Christianity inspires the development of science because it is God who is the Truth wants the truth of nature to be revealed - "That Christianity would inspire and foster the development of science is a logical consequence of a religion that proclaims its adherence to the Redeemer who is the Truth and who revealed truth to mankind."¹⁵

5. Bible Played an Important Role for Scientific Development

Several scholars in the field of the history of science and religion maintain that the Bible played a positive and constructive role in the development of modern science. After the Reformation when the literal interpretation of the Bible became popular, many scientists became aroused and encouraged by the new form of

biblical interpretation and made them turn to the study of the nature in a drastically different form. A well-known scholar in this field, Peter Harrison, explains this new development as follows:

Strange as it may seem, the Bible played a positive role in the development of science... Had it not been for the rise of the literal interpretation of the Bible and the subsequent appropriation of biblical narratives by early modern scientists, modern science may not have arisen at all. In sum, the Bible and its literal interpretation have played a vital role in the development of Western science."¹⁶

He continues to say that the new literal reading of the Bible, especially the creation narratives in Genesis provided the seventeenth-century thinkers with powerful motivating images for pursuing the natural sciences. He says,

Adam was thought to have possessed a perfect knowledge of all sciences, a knowledge lost to posterity when he fell from grace and was expelled from the Garden of Eden. The goal of 17th century scientists such as Francis Bacon and his successors in the Royal Society of London was to regain the scientific knowledge of the first man. Indeed, for these individuals, the whole scientific enterprise was an integral part of a redemptive enterprise that, along with the Christian religion, was to help restore the original race to its original perfection. The biblical account of the creation thus provided these scientists with an important source of motivation, and in an age still thoroughly committed to traditional Christianity, the new science was to gain social legitimacy on account of these religious associations."¹⁷

Jonathan Sarfati, after discussing the Christian roots of modern science makes the following conclusion:

Science requires certain presuppositions to work at all, and these are found in the Bible. Europe in the Middle Ages, with its general Christian world view, advanced greatly in science and technology. The Reformation, with its emphasis on the authority of Scripture and a historical-grammatical understanding, led to a great leap forward in science as such methods were carried over into the study of nature. Belief in a literal first man Adam and his Fall inspired science as a means to rediscover knowledge Adam had before the Fall. It is futile to expect continued fruits of the scientific enterprise while undermining the roots in biblical Christianity.¹⁸

The argument is loud and clear and even convincing that not only Christianity, but the Bible itself inspired and encouraged people to turn to the natural order and study meticulously to unveil things hidden by God. Thus, we may say that the Bible is one of the roots of modern science.

6. Mathematical God!

There was a pertinent question with which the medieval people were wrestling with – whether mathematical truths are human construction or they are eternal reality embedded in God? The Mediaeval scholarship tends to hold that mathematical principle, though useful in many senses, could not provide a true description of the natural world. However, it was considered that mathematics provides a useful tool for a correct prediction of reality. Peter Harrison notes,

Hence, mathematical astronomy, while regarded as falling short of offering a true account of the nature of heavenly bodies and the causes of their motions, was regarded as useful because made it possible to predict their positions. Mathematical models were thus thought of as useful fictions.¹⁹

There was a great shift of idea about mathematics and it was Galileo who initiated this change – for him, the heliocentric cosmology (the idea that the sun, not the earth is at the centre) propounded by Copernicus was not only a mathematical truth – a fictitious truth as was held by scientists of his time but was an accurate description of the physical world.

Thus, Galileo and many other scientists of modern time including Johannes Kepler, Rene Descartes, and Isaac Newton held that “mathematical truths were not the product of human minds, but of the divine mind. God was the source of mathematical relations that were evident in the new laws of the universe. Like the Bible, the ‘book of nature’ had also been written by God and, as Galileo was to insist, this book was ‘written in the language of mathematics.’”²⁰ The idea that it was God who is the source of all activities made scientists of this period believe in the truth of mathematical calculation. Over against the Aristotelian world view that nature acts according to their internal properties which dominated the philosophical thinking of the medieval period, the seventeenth-century scientists came forward in asserting that it was God who controls the activities, internal and external, of nature. For examples, Johannes Kepler, who discovered the laws of planetary motion, argued that God had used mathematical archetypes in his creation of the cosmos. Rejecting the Aristotelian view of mathematics as a human product, he says, “the reason why the mathematical is the cause of natural things (a theory which Aristotle carped at in so many places) is that God the Creator had Mathematics with him as archetypes from eternity in their simplest divine state of abstraction.”²¹

Thus, the Christian idea of God as the author of everything including mathematics influence the way scientists perceive the natural world and their approach to it. In the same line Descartes also maintained that God had created the laws of logic and mathematics, the equation $2 + 2 = 4$ was true only because God had so willed it. Descartes even took the help of the Bible to support

his position that mathematical truth was in God: “Thou hast ordered all things in measure and number and weight” (*Wisdom of Solomon* 11.20). The great scientist, Sir Isaac Newton also described the cosmos as inhabited by an ‘infinite and omnipresent spirit’ in which matter was moved by ‘mathematical laws.’²²

Observing these great Christian scientists’ position of a mathematical God, Peter Harrison concludes:

Identifying God as the author of mathematics was thus a crucial step in asserting the reality of mathematical relations, and it was this development which enabled the subsequent application of mathematics to the subject matter of physics. Combined with the idea of a divine legislator, this insight produced the modern view that nature is governed by mathematical laws.²³

7. Nature Operates According to God’s Law

It is to be noted here that the scientific idea which became prevalent in and after the seventeenth century that nature operates in a fixed law is the consequence of God’s legislative moral power to the physical world. Rene Descartes was one of the pioneers of this new understanding of laws of nature and he said that “God alone is the author of all the motions in the world.”²⁴ The scientific idea which became popular in the modern period was that there are orderliness and constancy in nature because of the law of God.

The famous scientist and a deeply committed Christian, Robert Boyle, who is considered as the father of modern chemistry, opined that creation operates according to the fixed law which God alone established. In the same vein, Rene Descartes approved that there is fix law under which nature operates and maintained that because these laws had their source in an eternal and unchanging God, the laws of nature are also eternal and unchanging. Again, the famous mathematician, Isaac Barrow, whom Isaac Newton succeeded as the Lucasian Chair of Mathematics at Cambridge, maintained that the only reason for having confidence that repeated experiments will yield general principles is because we can be assured that the laws of nature that God has instituted are

constant. We have no reason to believe that Nature is inconstant, for that would imply that “the great Author of the universe is unlike himself.”²⁵

Thus, the Christian principle that nature is governed by constant and unchangeable principles appointed by God became an important precondition for experimental science since the seventeenth century depicting explicitly the influence of Christianity on modern Science.

8. Some Prominent Christian Scientists of Modern Time

Today there is a visible demarcating line between science and religion and many people even think that they are always at war. But we have already established in our discussion before that the conflict between science and religion exists only in the minds of few people who were influenced by the enlightenment scepticism. In reality, by and large, there was and is no such deep real conflict between science and religion. In the light of such a wrong idea of science and religion conflict, it is almost impossible to think of religious scientist – a scientist who is deeply committed to God and religion. But, when we look back a few hundred years, we will notice that such dichotomy between science and religion or scientist and theologian was simply absent. Ian H. Hutchinson lucidly put this development in the following words:

The strict separation we commonly observe between a researcher’s scientific ideas and his or her “personal beliefs” is a modern, and even recent, norm. From antiquity through the Scientific Revolution, science was viewed as a form of philosophy, and many of the thinkers we have retroactively dubbed “scientists” freely intermingled their speculation about the natural world with theological, philosophical, and mathematical writings, often expending a great deal of their scholarly time and energy on religious study. Kepler’s seventeenth-century laws of planetary

motion, for example, seem to his modern readers like needles of scientific inspiration buried in a haystack of theological speculation. Newton and Boyle likewise intermingled physics and philosophical theology without apparent hesitation.... By the nineteenth century, however, natural philosophy had become more natural and less philosophy. Theology and natural science were substantially separated.²⁶

There could be a long list of well-known scientists who are deeply committed to Christian faith. To name few – Francis Bacon (1561 –1626), an English philosopher and scientist who is credited with developing the scientific method that became popular through the scientific revolution. Johannes Kepler (1571-1630) who was famous for his laws of planetary motion discovered among other that the planets move around the sun in elliptical orbits. Robert Boyle (1627-1691) who was regarded as the father of modern Chemistry is known for his law called Boyle’s law which describes the inversely proportional relationship between the absolute pressure and volume of a gas under constant temperature. John Ray (1627-1705) an English naturalist and botanist who contributed significantly to progress in taxonomy - the classification of living and extinct organism. Michael Faraday (1791-1867) who is considered as one of the greatest scientists of the 19th century; his scientific contribution mainly lies in the area of electromagnetism. Arthur Compton (1892-1962) an American physicist who was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1927 for his discovery of what is called ‘the Compton effect’ which demonstrated the particle nature of electromagnetic radiation. James Clerk Maxwell (1831-1879) who is a Scottish physicist famous for his contribution in the formulation of electromagnetic theory. He is regarded as one of the greatest and most influential scientists of the 19th century who is ranked with Sir Isaac Newton and Albert Einstein for his contributions. George Lemaitre (1894-1966) who was a Belgian priest, astronomer and cosmologist,

formulated the famous Big-bang theory and the expansion of the universe.

There are still many famous Christian scientists whose contributions to the scientific world are tremendous: Sir Isaac Newton (1643-1727), who is one of the greatest scientists of all time and also a theologian – he wrote more about theology than science! He is famous for his three laws of motion which became the basic principles of modern physics. These three laws resulted in the formulation of his famous law of universal gravitation. Our next important Christian scientist is John Dalton (1766-1844), who is a pioneer in the development of modern atomic theory and famous for his atomic theory known as ‘Dalton’s atomic theory’. Sir Joseph John Thomson (1856-1940), a British physicist who discovered the electron, the first subatomic particle to be discovered is another famous Christian scientist. He received a Nobel Prize in Physics in 1906 and knighted in 1908. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955), who was a French Jesuit priest, scientist, philosopher and theologian well known for his theory that human, is evolving mentally and socially, toward a final spiritual stage. Another Christian scientist in our list is Sir John Houghton (1931-2020), a Welsh atmospheric physicist who helps Britain to become a global leader in climate science. He led the United Nations panel on global warming that won a Nobel Peace Prize in 2007 with Al Gore, the former president of USA. Houghton was also knighted in 1991. At the age of 88, he passed away on 15th April 2020 due to complications caused by Covid-19.

There are several *living* scientists who contributed tremendously in the various fields of science and are strongly committed to Christian faith. Few of them may be pointed out here: Don Knuth (b. 1938), an American Computer scientist, who is called the ‘father of the analysis of algorithms.’ William D Phillips (b. 1948) is another important person in our list of Christian scientists. He is an American physicist and a Nobel Laureate who developed methods of laser cooling and atom

trapping which earned him a Nobel Prize in 1997 with Steven Chu and Claude Cohen-Tannoudji. Francis Collins (b. 1950), who is an American physician and geneticist, becomes famous as the head of the Human Genome Project. Rosalind Wright Picard (b. 1962), who is an American inventor and a professor of Media Arts and Sciences. She is the founder and director of the Affective Computing Research Group. She is also the co-founder of *Affective, Inc.* and *Empatica, Inc.*

The list of scientists who are deeply committed to Christian faith can go on and on as there are many others who are not less important but I could not mention here. This very brief discussion affirms that science and religion are not enemies but are companions, in dialogue with each other, complimenting one another in the service to God and humanity.

Concluding Remark

A brief survey presented above concerning the role of Christianity in shaping and moulding, influencing and maybe to some extent giving birth to modern science depicts the eternal truth that both science and religion are not only compatible but also are the extension of God’s activity in the universe. The seeming conflicts between them in history is because of the limited knowledge human had gained in both the fields. The misinterpretation of science and religion brought conflict in the past, it will also create disharmony between them in future. As these two are from God, there is no chance of conflict if understood, interpreted and used correctly.

It may be concluded without hesitation that Christianity is the root of modern science, though this does not mean that Christianity has exclusively birthed modern science. It supplies a fertile soil for the growth of science, it is the impulsive force behind its development, it is the galvanizing agent for the precipitation of scientific discoveries and it encourages scientific research. It is hoped that in future also Christianity will play this positive and proactive role in developing science.

End Notes

- 1 Donald DeMarco, "The Christian roots of modern science" in <http://www.churchinhistory.org/pages/science/roots-of-science.htm> (12.12.2020), p. 2.
- 2 *Ibid.*
- 3 Quoted in Noah J. Efron, "Myth 9: That Christianity Gave Birth to modern Science," in *Galileo Goes to Jail and Other Myths about Science and Religion*, edited by Ronald L. Numbers, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 79.
- 4 *Ibid.*, p. 80.
- 5 *Ibid.*, p. 81.
- 6 *Ibid.*, p. 82.
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Postmodern Construction for a New Biblical Cosmology

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Key Terms: *Cosmology, quantum physics, chaos and complexity theory, system theory, creation theology, ecology*

Introduction

The paradigm shifts that occurs in every branch of knowledge are governed by the changes that happen with the worldview generated by the branch of Physics. After the scientist Albert Einstein, the worldview has been changed tremendously and it has its deep impact on every branch of knowledge, be it social sciences, empirical science, philosophy or theology. This paper is an attempt to look into postmodern science, especially physics, and its impact on theological engagement and will try to formulate a new cosmology in the context of new physics. To have a better understanding of postmodern science, it is good to have a look at the philosophical project of modernity first.

1. The Modernity

Modernity is a philosophical project of the modern era, which covered approximately 200 years from the end of the 18th century. Francis Bacon (1561-1626), René Descartes (1596-1650) Isaac Newton (1642-1727), Gottfried Leibniz (1664-1716), Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-

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1831) are master shapers of modernity as the age of technology. It is characterized by the industrial revolution, the rise of the nation-state, the nuclear family, clearly marked gender roles, and a faith in reason to establish general standards of truth, beauty, and rightness. It developed on reason, the rights of individuals, and belief in progress through science, which emerged with the Renaissance.¹

The French Revolution of 1789 was a high point in the spread of this intellectual, spiritual, and political-economic-social ferment in western society. The process lasted from the mid-eighteenth to mid-nineteenth century, is still spreading geographically. It encompasses all aspects of culture and all cultures, which adopt the urban technological industrial system, with its Capitalist mode of production: all based on human sovereignty and autonomy.² This paper approaches the philosophical project of modernity from a perspective of ecological paradigm and environmental stability.³

2. Modern Paradigm and the Theological Discourses

Modernity believes that humans can achieve unlimited material progress through modern economic and scientific technology and can reinvent Eden on earth. It believes in the *infinite perfectability* of human as it is held by Francis Bacon. He had the unquestioning confidence in the power of science and logic to solve at last all problems.⁴ It defines culture as a triumphant force progressing in opposition to nature by continually improving it. The inventions of science, technology, and capitalism by the time of the Scientific Revolution of the seventeenth century are seen as tools for attaining the power to manage and control the earth.⁵ The worldview goes back to the fifth century BCE Greek philosophers. The modern Biblical interpretations have been dominantly influenced by the dominion principle of modernity. Wati Longchar notifies that dominant Christian theology has been too individualistic, anthropocentric, hierarchical, mechanistic, and dualistic in its approach and content. It promoted greedy exploitation of resources, destruction of earth resources; marginalization and subjugation of indigenous people through war, cultural genocide,

alienation, denial, and suppression are deeply rooted in such a view of life.⁶

The project of modernity goes back to Plato. Modernity established a dichotomy between a changing natural world and an unchanging abstract world of ideas. Plato (427-347 BCE) stood for the distinction between the ever-changing world of appearance and the unchanging real world of pure forms, exemplified by mathematics and ideals such as *the good*. For Plato change equals death and decay. Since the body is the location of death and decay, the human body and all bodies were found lacking existence. Plato imagined divine power existing totally apart from the changing world. God not only did not have a body; he was also separate from all bodies. Carol P. Christ argues that this has been called the first theological mistake of classical western philosophical and theological tradition.⁷

Plato argued that the natural world can never lead to truth. Truth is constituted only by the world of pure forms divorced from nature. The appearances, therefore, constitute the unpredictable, natural world, while mathematical ideals become the basis for the predictable, managed world. The notion of an organic, living spiritual universe was replaced by that of the world as a machine. This narrative justifies the takeover of New World lands and peoples and the management and transformation of forests, fields, and deserts.

Reductionist materialism holds that the facts about mentality are reducible to physical facts.⁸ Reductionism led to the elimination of divinity and creativity from nature.⁹ Modernity aims to define the ultimate goals for society, civilization, and humanity.¹⁰ This powerful myth, Code argues, is capable of doing untold damage to the spiritual life of this culture.¹¹ Code continues, “All nonhuman forms of life are in the process of being turned into commodities on the dubious metaphysical grounds that they consist only of the various configuration of ‘dead,’ ‘insensate’ or ‘inert’ matter.”¹² This scientific materialism together with reductionism wrought unlimited violence on nature. In this case, modernity is dualistic.

Elizabeth Grey notes that this mind-body dualism tends to see all of the human achievements in the mental or cultural realm and none in the bodily realm. As a result, death becomes the great threat that reaches out to darken the whole human race.¹³

Descartes evolves a system of rationalism by placing the individual thinking self at the centre of thought. The individual is a rationally self-sufficient entity. The anthropocentric cosmology of Aristotle and Plato led to a Christian version of the great chain of being on the hierarchical ladder led from a transcendent God, angels, men, women, and children, down to animals, plants, and inanimate realm.¹⁴

The church father, influenced by this mind-body dualism, Origen valued the soul over the material world. It led to otherworld spirituality and then approved the unlimited exploitation of natural resources.¹⁵ With this Christian spirituality, salvation theology is separated from creation theology that the earth will be destroyed and the soul will be saved eternally. In short, salvation is detached from creation.

It was believed that there was an enormous gulf between humanity and animals. Only humanity was thought to have a rational and sensitive or feeling mind and soul. “For many philosophers and theologians,” Carol P. Christ says, “only ‘man’ had a fully rational mind, capable of communing with the eternal ideas in the mind of God. For them, ‘woman’ was said to think through her body and thus to be more like the animals than man.”¹⁶ Bacon and Descartes claimed that modern science would allow ‘man’ to regain a command over nature, which had been lost with Adam’s fall in the Garden.¹⁷

Aristotle called humans ‘thinking animal.’ Consequently, human has two natures, a rational nature, and an animal or bodily nature. These two natures, it was thought, were continually at war with each other. Whereas reason should have been able to rule the body, all too often, it seemed, the body asserted its own needs and desires.¹⁸ The soul finds its true destiny by escaping from nature,

creation, and the world. The created world is purely material and fleshly, a full expression of evil. Origen's view supports this idea where he says that God created the world because of a spiritual rebellion in heaven. The fallen spirits were put into the material world that had been created from them.¹⁹

Descartes restricted the scope of science to only what is material by bifurcating the universe as matter and mind. Then science was unable to perceive anything that extended beyond three spatial dimensions. Descartes' mind-body dualism resulted in the view that only human beings have minds (or souls); all other creatures were merely bodies (machines), they have no mental life, and could feel no pain.²⁰ In this "scientific materialism," all living things of nature including animals and even human beings act according to scientific laws. All behaviour is determined by these scientific laws.²¹ Jürgen Moltmann is right to suggest that a subject-object relationship between human and nature in Bacon, Descartes, and Hegel led to the pattern of domination and exploitation.²² It robbed of values and faith from the inquiry of science. The divine is in no way immanent to nature.²³

In short, the world has been objectified, reified for the sake of analysis and use.²⁴ This paved the way for a reductionist, compartmentalized, fragmented linear, individualistic cosmology.²⁵ This philosophical project of modernity led to the global destruction of nature in a short time that has taken eons to evolve. In the name of 'objective truth', this *Grand Myth of Scientific Super-rationality* has become a tool for the systemic destruction of other cultures. This imperialistic reason not merely conquered foreign nations, but also subjugated the belief systems of others.²⁶

This invasion happened in Biblical scholarship also. The philosophical project of modernity has its influence on the Biblical interpretations of the last two centuries. For example, while the primeval discourse in Genesis has a historical intention,²⁷ a Kantian influence made Gerhard von Rad assert a nature/history binary

while dealing with the same.²⁸ It bifurcates the actual course of history different from the action of God in history as it was viewed by Israel.²⁹ This underplayed the importance of creation thought.³⁰ William P. Brown joins with other critics that the subordination of cosmology to soteriology represents another example of Western civilization's tendency to set human culture and history over and against the natural realm.³¹ Biblical interpretations influenced by this modernity approved the binaries such as human/nature, male/female, civilized/uncivilized, developed/underdeveloped. The mechanistic worldview does not consider the elements grow organically as parts of a whole.

Newtonian physics has become a powerful weapon for constructing devices for the control of nature. Human beings stood completely apart from the scheme of nature.³² The Being was wholly external to the world that imposed motion and laws upon it from without. It is called a "mathematization of nature."³³ The result was a complete dualism between the human soul as subjects and nature as objects and between spiritual and physical worlds.³⁴ The task is now to look into the ecological paradigm within the postmodern engagements.

3. Postmodern Paradigm

The defining characteristic of postmodern societies is the holistic, ecological thinking about nature.³⁵ With the arrival of 'new physics' after the Cultural Revolution in the sixties, there is a new way of representing the essential character of the cosmos. New Physics includes the theory of relativity, quantum theory, and chaos and complexity theory. Postmodernity tries to recover the truths and values from various forms of premodern thought and practice that had been dogmatically rejected by modernity. It involves a creative synthesis of modern and premodern truths and values.³⁶

Albert Einstein thought of a field spread through all space, instead of separate particles. If you bring two particles together, they will gradually modify each other and eventually become

one. Thus, the universe is “one seamless, unbroken whole.”³⁷ And then the quantum theory can be seen as a fully non-mechanistic worldview.³⁸ In the 1920’s quantum theory forced the physicists to accept the fact that the solid material objects of classical physics dissolve at the subatomic level into wave-like patterns of probabilities of things, interconnections, or correlations, between various processes of observation and measurement. In other words, subatomic particles are not ‘things’ but interconnections between things, and these, in turn, are interconnections between other things and so on. The qualities of the physical world are mysterious—the reality is veiled. All we can know is how things appear when we observe them.³⁹ In quantum theory we never end up with any ‘things’; we always deal with interconnections.⁴⁰ Then we cannot decompose the world into independently existing elementary units. Quantum theory asserts that perfect objective knowledge of the world cannot be had because there is no objective world.⁴¹

Nature appears as a complex, web of relationships between the various parts of a unified whole. The world appears as a complicated tissue of events, in which connections of different kinds alternate or overlap or combine and thereby determine the texture of the whole.

Thus, it is the whole that determines the behaviour of the parts and organizes the part.⁴² The situation is reversed from mechanistic reductionism.⁴³

With the quantum theory, the parts of a whole are internally related. However, the organs, brains, mind, and person function differently in different contexts. The quantum theory suggests that this context-dependence is true of the ultimate units of nature.⁴⁴ Then, the quality of an element depends on the context, that is, there is a non-local connection.⁴⁵ This is a *synergic reaction*. Everything in the universe within it has the pattern or information of the entire universe. Perhaps everything is made up of the same information. The emerging scientific concept that the universe has

derived from a pre-existent ‘information field’ can give insights into theologies.⁴⁶

The shifts from the worldview of modern science to postmodern science are from (i) rational to experiential, (ii) individual to community, (iii) uniformity to diversity, (iv) mechanistic to organic, (v) exclusivism to pluralism, and (vi) progress to centre lessness. In contrast to the mechanistic paradigm, the parts of an organism all grow together with the organism.⁴⁷ Each species depends for its health on the presence of other living organisms, plants, and animals, both up and down the ecological ladder. A healthy ecosystem is one in which there is great diversity.⁴⁸ The universe of the new cosmology is an evolving organism. It is no longer governed by changeless mathematical laws.⁴⁹

After the 1960s, Chaos and Complex theory developed from the work of meteorologist Edward Lorenz.⁵⁰ Charles Jencks’ adaptation of complexity and chaos theories for cultural and aesthetic analysis claims that nature evolves through a fine balancing of order and disorder. Increasing complexity within nature leads to the potential for complete randomness and breakdown.⁵¹ Accordingly, the behaviour lies at the border between order and disorder. The system is dynamic, aperiodic, and unstable.⁵² “The biosphere may be poised at the edge of chaos, and once in a while may fall in.”⁵³ The system is nonlinear and sensitive to initial conditions. The system may involve *synergic reactions* in which the whole is not equal to the sum of its parts.⁵⁴ The complex behaviour of a system allows numerous independent elements to interact continuously and spontaneously organize and reorganize themselves into more and more elaborate structures over time. Thus, the components of a system cannot be divided up and studied in isolation. Complex systems can naturally evolve to a state of a self-organized entity, in which behaviour lies at the border between order and disorder. A perfect order is a lifeless situation.

If nature is aperiodic and complex, the stance of modernity that everything mathematically structured is to be challenged.⁵⁵ Gregory of Nyssa affirms that creation lies between the opposites and acts as a mean between the extremes. Creation is the offspring of rest and motion, both brought into being by the Divine will.⁵⁶ The order and chaos are vertical and horizontal facets of dynamic aspects of creation.⁵⁷ The ecological paradigm assumes that “there is no good or evil in nature” and nature is without blemish with its ability to produce life. Nature in its harmonious wholeness is perfect.⁵⁸ This goes against the cosmos-chaos binary opposition.

The agricultural scientist from Japan Masanobu Fukuoka supports this view when he states, “In the natural world which transcends time and space, there is, properly speaking, no large or small, no life or death, no rise or fall. Nor was there ever the conflict and contradiction of opposing pairs: right and left, fast and slow, strong and weak.”⁵⁹ A rice plant can be understood as life passing into the seed and continuing into eternity.

The science of chaos and complexity suggests that we should consider ourselves as partners with the nonhuman world. We should think of ourselves not as dominant over nature (controlling and managing a passive, external nature to order it) or of nature as dominant over us (casting humans as victims of an unpredictable, violent nature) but rather in a dynamic relationship to nature as its partner. It goes against dualism.

From an ecological paradigm, human beings have an essential kinship with animals.⁶⁰ Humans have the earthy root that they were created *from dust*. The earth, soil, and its various forms of life—plant, animal, human—are distinct features of the same organic system, sharing a common essence from the soil. Earth initiates life-giving activity first or earth becomes the first subject of divine creativity before *Adam*. Holmes Rolston supports that the brooding spirit of God animates the earth and earth gives birth to life.⁶¹ An ecological worldview should acknowledge the immanence of the Creator.⁶² It then should incorporate the truths revealed by the religious experiences to a scientific one.

Fukuoka demands humans to understand the wisdom of nature and it should be given priority over human rationality.⁶³ This wisdom can be understood as the “language of the earth.” The whole thin green rind of life including soil is one single form of life and thus has one language.⁶⁴ David Ray Griffin’s effort is to mute the idea of immanent creative intelligence, which is an effort to negotiate a path between materialism (naturalism) and transcendentalism (supernaturalism) to find a participatory role of the human being.⁶⁵ Spirit is both immanent and transcends in all phenomena. Griffin is right to demand the integration of science and religion into a single worldview to overcome the threatening civilizations today such as the global ecological crisis. For, we have to develop a “scientific worldview” that incorporates the truths revealed by religious experience to provide normative values to guide the future course of culture.⁶⁶ From here we start an inquiry of a worldview that helps human beings to be a partner with nature.

Fritjof Capra calls for a major scientific/social/spiritual paradigm shift to a deep ecology worldview to deal with the contemporary environmental crisis.⁶⁷ When the whole organizes the parts, there is a cosmology of the universe, which is a dynamic web of interrelated events. No properties of any part of the web are fundamental and everything must be defined in terms of everything else. The force behind nature’s vigorous renewal is universal energy. There is a moving stream of energy constantly changing into the matter and back again into energy—in a cosmic dance. An internal relatedness at all levels helps to overcome an ultimate dualism between subjects and objects.⁶⁸ Modernity is unable to grasp the totality of these interrelationships. The moment nature is broken down, parts cease being parts and the whole is no longer a whole. When collected together, *all* parts do not make the *whole*. *All* refer to the world of mathematical form and *whole* represents the world of living truth.⁶⁹ Therefore, interrupting nature using

the objective knowledge detached from nature is different from participation with nature in its wholeness.⁷⁰

Then, nature is a “complex garden” to be tended, respected, harvested, and loved. The real value lies in the whole, not in individual creatures. The individual has value only in contributing to the complex network of relations, which is the whole. It rejects any human pretension of their superiority and duality with nature.⁷¹ If it is the case, the role of human being also should be understood not in isolation but with the whole. Ecotheologian H. Paul Santmire holds that the theology of dominion must be read in the context of that all-pervading, harmonious world of *shalom* where human beings and animals enjoy a marked commonality and where the Creator has purposes for all of creation that transcends instrumental human needs.⁷²

4. Biblical Cosmology Based on New Physics

In terms of space and time, the creation narrative in Genesis presents being of God exactly opposite to created being. God has no beginning. Gen 1:1 reads, “In beginning when God created.” Time starts with the beginning of the earth. The act of creation is also an act of separation.⁷³ The term “to create” *bara* (Hb) can be a naive term for separation, renewal, reshaping, and transforming. Through this continuous process within the mineral kingdom, life emerges on earth. It goes back to the preliminary act; it can be stated like this: God separated the universe from out of the Being. The Genesis discourse tells no creation of chaos (1:2). It was and is there with God all along.⁷⁴ Chaos exists eternally without any beginning or end.⁷⁵ In the context of new cosmology after quantum physics, chaos can be understood as the womb of God in which God conceived the visible universe (Gen 49:25). Chaos is beyond the reach of humans and thus it is excluded from the domain of ‘loving care’ (or commonly known ‘dominion’) of humans (Gen 1:28). It is in contrast to the Babylonian, Greek, and modern cosmologies that the cosmos is inherently evil and gods/ruling class/civilized have the responsibility to contain,

tame, and improve it. The Hebrew discourse refers to the totality of God’s involvement in the ongoing existence of the universe as well as the history. Gregorios’ opinion is valuable here, “In the Judaeo-Christian tradition, there was no such process as a desacralization of nature, because in it not only was the concept of nature as sub-human creation unknown, but also nature was never ‘divine’ since it was not God, but only a created reality.”⁷⁶ Surely, with the Hebrew discourse, creation is not a divine being but it has continuity with the divine. Chaos may be the link for this continuity.

There is both continuity and discontinuity between the Being and being. It rejects both the desacralization of nature and divinization of culture as in Ancient West Asia cosmogonies. Creation’s discontinuity with the Creator is in terms of its limits to time and space and continuity is in terms of the constant presence of creative energy of God with creation constantly renewing and reshaping it. Gregory of Nyssa⁷⁷ calls it the creative *energeia* of God. Gregorios explains that the creation is a dynamic entity. It is a process for which the source is the creative *energeia* of God. Thus, Gregorios argues, creation has no-self-existence, only the creator has such existence. The *energeia* of God is its source, goal, and dynamic.⁷⁸ He even questions the use of the term *nature*. “Nature does not exist, only the creation exists. Nature is a false concept bound to mislead.”⁷⁹ Then, the creative energy pervades through the universe and the visible matter is one of its many manifestations.

There is nothing within Genesis, or within most of the books of the Hebrew Scriptures to suggest that its authors made a radical, qualitative, ontological separation in the universe between what is material and what is spiritual.⁸⁰ Hence, the universe is a manifestation of the Being. It is seen that the first verse can also be understood as “God separated the universe from his Being.” The opposite pairs of heaven and earth represent the totality of space, day and night represent the totality of time, man and woman that

of humanity. Just as, Creator and creation represent the totality of Reality. Then the Reality has no beginning.⁸¹

The breath of God (Gen 1: 2 *ruah*) is the atmosphere that includes fire and air. Through his breath, the atmosphere, God is indissolubly connected with the Universe. The atmosphere delivers the resources of rain, sun, and wind to ecosystems.⁸² The atmosphere we inhabit is not just stuff, but an aspect of God's presence in creation. It is God's atmosphere –the sacred. Life comes out from a 'formless void and darkness' with the breath of the creator God brooding over the chaos. Thus, chaos and ocean are "good" from which the life on earth emerged. The dynamic relationship and interaction between breath and water created life on earth. Water is euphemistically used to indicate semen (Isa 48:1; Num 24:7) of God in which God's seeds germinate. In polemic to AWA cosmology, God sees the ocean as *good*. It is something in which life reverberates, God chose the ocean to produce life for the first time (Gen 1: 10, 20). Chaos, being a stage of the creation process just before life appeared, is being symbolized as the result of the judgement. When the evil leaps, the creation will take a reversal to reach the stage of chaos in which life is not present. This is part of God's saving act of his creation for a fresh start. Chaos is not evil.

Chaos was the primal stuff before the separation of it into light, darkness, water, and earth. The separation of these elements is in the process of creation because it needs the creative power of God. The firmament was separated from the earth, water was separated from the land and then the greenery was separated from the land. Green attire was put on earth in which all the elements so far separated participated with the creative power of God. In short, all the visible and invisible elements in the universe were spun out of the primal chaos. Then it is infinite and from this infinite, all the universe came out. In reverse order, the chaos contains the entire universe in the form of *dark matter*.⁸³ The world progressively develops into a nonlinear cosmos by the systematic application

of God's creative power.⁸⁴ "All creative processes... emerge in the quasi-magical place between order and disorder.... This is the domain of 'chaos' wherein lies creativity.... What emerges is that creativity is a property of chaos itself."⁸⁵ Then, it can be said like this, God conceived the universe in "her" *womb chaos*. The earth conceived the plant, animals including human in her *womb humus*, the upper thin rind of soil and separated from her body as mother separates her child from her body through a delivery. So, God gave birth to the cosmos; the earth gave birth to flora and fauna. Thus, God becomes Mother to the Universe and earth becomes the mother of all living things on earth.

5. *Unienergeia Cosmology*

To conclude, based on the discussion above, the present writer would like to bring a new theology in tune with the new cosmology. It can be *Unienergeia Cosmology* in which unifying the whole reality into one harmonious system. It is not *mono-* because God is not the "Other One out there." Monotheism ultimately made a gap between the divine and the material universe which allowed the misuse and abuse of nature. Pantheism, Monism, and Panentheism could not address simultaneously the continuity and discontinuity between Being and being. In *Unienergeia Cosmology*, the life-giving creative *energeia* trickling down to become the matter. In other words, "Word became flesh" or *Chethana* (divine energy) evolved into *padartha* (matter). Hence, there is no binary opposition between the Being and being or divinity and the material world, rather the relationship is dynamic and interconnected through the web of relationship. However, *Being* is infinite while *being* is bound by time and space. *Energeia* is a connecting field in which the material world swim as a fish swim through the ocean. Fish has no existence outside the ocean because fish is in the ocean and the ocean is within the fish and fish is the ocean, but limited by time and space. This is the same case with the human and material world. *Energeia* is trickling down into matter and pervading through matter and matter has

no existence outside this infinite ocean *Chethana*. Psalm 104: 29 reads, "When you hide your face, they are dismayed; when you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust."

End Notes

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- 28 Gerhard VonRad, *Old Testament Theology*, trans., D. M. G. Stalker, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1970), 105. Also John H. Hayes, *An Introduction to Old Testament Study* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1979), 237-239.
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- 30 James Buchanan, "Creation and Cosmos. The Symbolics of Proclamation and Participation," *Concilium* 166/(June, 1983): 39. Also Hayes, *An Introduction to Old Testament Study*, 238.
- 31 William P. Brown, *The Ethos of Cosmos. The Genesis of Moral Imagination in the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1999), 7.
- 32 Paulos Mar Gregorios, *Science, Technology and the Future of Humanity* (New Delhi: ISPCK, 2007), 110.
- 33 Mathew S. Linck, "Truth and Genesis," *Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory* 6/3 (Fall, 2005): 97.
- 34 Griffin, "Introduction", 3.
- 35 Steven Seidman and Jeffrey C. Alexander, "Introduction," in *The New Social Theory Reader*, ed. Steven Seidman and Jeffrey C. Alexander (London: Routledge, 2001), 13.
- 36 It is the revisionary strand within the project of postmodernity. There is another strand within postmodernity. That is the deconstructive postmodernism propagated by the people like Jacques Derrida. This paper confines itself to the revisionary strand. This revisionary strand of postmodernity advocates a new science, a new spirituality, a new society without bifurcating material from mind and spirit. It looks at both what is constructed and what is real. It has a multiple perspective of time, space, symbols, visual images and stories to understand our culture and the Biblical text.
- 37 Bohm, "Post Modern Science", 63.
- 38 Jean-Francois Lyotard and Charles Jencks place quantum physics as a postmodern science. Jeff Lewis, *Cultural Studies. The Basics* (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2004), 228.
- 39 Latha Christie, *Beyond the Boundaries of Science. Exploring the Cosmic Story* (Bangalore: Kumar Brothers Publishing, 2019), 7.
- 40 Werner Heisenberg was one of the founders of quantum theory. Capra, *The Web of Life*, 30.
- 41 Christie, *Beyond the Boundaries of Science*, 12. And also Nigel Brush, *Limitations of Scientific Truth. Why Science Can't Answer Life's Ultimate Questions* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2005), 48.
- 42 Bohm, "Post Modern Science", 63f.
- 43 Capra, *The Web of Life*, 30.
- 44 Fritjof Capra, *The Turning Point. Science, Society and the Rising Culture* (London: Fontana Paperbacks, 1989), 63ff. Bohm gives an example for this context dependence. If a person comes into a group, the consciousness of the whole group may change depending on what he/she does (quantum theory). In addition, the person's actions depend on the group of which he/she is a part. Bohm, "Post Modern Science", 61.
- 45 Non-local connection means that things could be connected with other things any distance away without any apparent force to carry the connection and a system cannot be analysed into parts whose basic properties do not depend on the state of the whole system. David J. Bohm and B. J. Hiley, "On the Intuitive Understanding of Non-Locality as Implied by Quantum Theory," *Foundation of Physics* 5/1 (March, 1975): 93.
- 46 Jojo Joseph, "Creation. A Convergent Scientific and Religious Perspective," *Omega* 4/1 (June, 2005): 119.
- 47 Bohm, "Post Modern Science", 60.
- 48 Robin Clarke and Geoffrey Hindley, "Food Farmers and Dollar Farmers," in *The Organic Farming Reader*, ed. Claude Alvares (Mapusa, Goa: Other India, 2002), 9.
- 49 Rupert Sheldrake, "The Law of Nature as Habits. A Postmodern Basis for Science," in *The Reenchantment of Science of Postmodern Proposals*, ed. D. R. Griffin (Albany: State University Press, 1988), 80.
- 50 Evan Eisenberg, *The Ecology of Eden* (New York: Vintage Books, 1999), 279.
- 51 Lewis, *Cultural Studies*, 358.
- 52 Garnett P. Williams, *Chaos Theory Tamed* (Washington, D.C.: Joseph Henry Press, 1997), 11-12.

- 53 Eisenberg, *The Ecology of Eden*, 429.
- 54 Williams, *Chaos Theory Tamed*, 9-10.
- 55 Williams, *Chaos Theory Tamed*, 11-12. Also see Christie, *Beyond the Boundaries of Science*, 6. Before this, Isaac Newton and other scientists thought that all matter strutted and paraded on the stage called space time. But, Einstein showed that that stage itself dances –folding and wrapping, stretching and growing or collapsing. Matter tells space-time how to curve and space-time tells matter how to move. Christie, *Beyond the Boundaries of Science*, 19.
- 56 Gregory Bishop of Nyssa, *On the Making of the Man*, Summa Theologica Cd Rom Library.
- 57 Sony Paul, "Chaos. A Call to Participate in Creation," *Indian Journal of Spirituality* 13/1 (2000): 119.
- 58 Masanobu Fukuoka, *The Natural Way of Farming. The Theory and Practice of Green Philosophy*, trans., Frederic P. Metreud (Madras: Bookventure, 2001), 121.
- 59 Fukuoka, *The Natural Way of Farming*, 122.
- 60 Albert Howard, "The Way Nature Farms," in *The Organic Farming Reader*, ed. Claude Alvares and others (Mapusa, Goa: Other India, 2002), 38.
- 61 Holmes Rolston III, "The Bible and Ecology," 23.
- 62 Immanence is not immanentism in which God is seen everywhere and in everything, but it is the presence of God's operative energy (*energia*) that drives the whole cosmos in its beginning, moving and reaching the destiny. The creation is God's will and word, and that is the principle of immanence. When the will and word is withdrawn, there is only non-existence. At the same time, God is transcendent. Paulos Mar Gregorios, *A Human God* (Kottayam: Mar Gregorios Foundation, 1992), 22. Many leading scientists lead us to infer that "Mind of God" enveloping, influencing and controlling the universe continually. Joseph, "Creation. A Convergent Scientific and Religious Perspective": 117. L. Stanislaus asserts, "God not only creates, protects and perfects all the creatures but also indwells, accompanies, participates and delights in them, calls for a relationship of mutuality between creatures and us, humans." L. Stanislaus, "Ecology. An Awareness for Mission," *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection* 63/8 (Aug, 1999): 584.
- 63 Wes Jackson, "Designing Systems That Forgive Human Folly," in *Fugitive Faith. Interviews by Benjamin Webb* (New York: Orbis, 1998), 44.
- 64 Fukuoka, *The Natural Way of Farming*, 120. Also Gunther Wittenberg, "Alienation and Emancipation from the Earth. The Earth Story in Genesis 4," in *The Earth Story in Genesis*, ed. Norman C. Habel and Shirley Wurst (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press Ltd, 2000), 109. Also Cheryl Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, eds., *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996), xix.
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- 69 Fukuoka, *The Natural Way of Farming*, 119f.
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- 72 H. Paul Santmire, "The Genesis Creation Narratives Revisited. Themes for a Global Age," *Interpretation* 45/4 (Oct, 1991): 374f.
- 73 Ellen Van Wolde, "Why the Verb Bara Does Not Mean 'to Create' in Genesis 1.1–2.4a," *JSOT* 34/1 (Sept 2009): 3
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The Two Natures Christology of Chalcedon: Is it Still Relevant Today?

*Wandahilin Kharlukhi**

Introduction

Christology is one of the important subjects in the history of Christian thought. Since the early part of the century, the epoch that marked Christianity was the emergence of Christological controversies. Christology, thus, has been at the center of the life of the Church and was a fundamental concern right from the Council of Nicaea (325 CE) until the Third Council of Constantinople (680 CE). During this period, the Christological views within the broader Christian community have led to accusations of heresy, which eventually culminated in ecclesiastical condemnation and excommunication. One of the major Christological concerns of the early Church was to address the question of the nature of Christ, and how the divine and human natures are related in the person of Jesus Christ. This Christological question has created a schism between various theological traditions. As a result several councils and meetings have been held to settle the crisis.

The Council of Chalcedon (451 CE) was called to solve the Christological disputes left unresolved by earlier councils, and to contest against explicit Christological teachings of Apollinarius, Nestorius and Eutyches. The Council was also expected to formulate the Christological understanding for Christian faith.

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In its meetings and deliberations, the Council came up with the Christological interpretation that Christ's being consists of both divine and human natures and that he is, therefore, truly God and truly human. This Chalcedonian interpretation of Christ completely overturned the Christology of the three above mentioned theologians that finally led to their anathematization and condemnation.

The outline of this paper includes a summary of the Christological positions of Apollinarius, Nestorius and Eutyches, out of which earlier Christological controversies arose. It also examines the Chalcedonian Christology developed by the Council as a response to challenges posed by Apollinarianism, Nestorianism and Eutychianism. Following this, the paper summarizes the primary purpose and problems faced by the Council and investigate whether the Council successfully fulfilled its primary objective of unifying the Church. The paper concludes by examining the relevance of the Chalcedonian Christology to contemporary times, and the general conclusion of the essay.

The Council of Chalcedon (451 CE)

The Council of Chalcedon (451 CE) or the Fourth Ecumenical Council was held in Chalcedon. The Council was called to settle the Christological issues arising from earlier Christological controversies that have already been in existence in the fourth-fifth century, and the Christological crisis that had been precipitated by the *monophysite* doctrine of Eutyches. The main agenda of the Council were the confirmation of the decision in Nicaea 325 CE, Constantinople 381 CE, and Ephesus 431 CE, and the explicit condemnation of Apollinarianism, Nestorianism, and Eutychianism, the forms of both Antiochene and Alexandrian Christological traditions.¹

To understand the Christological development that led to the formulation of the Chalcedonian Christology at Chalcedon (451 CE), a brief outline of the Christological viewpoint of Apollinarius, Nestorius and Eutyches is discussed below.

Apollinarius was a representative of the Word-Flesh Christology. His name appeared right at the beginning of the Christological controversy proper. As a champion of the unity of the incarnate Word, he insisted on the real union of God with human flesh in Christ. Apollinarius speaks of Christ as ‘God incarnate,’ ‘flesh-bearing God’ or ‘God born of a woman.’² The Incarnate Word for Apollinarius is a compound unity in human form. Thus, his Christological description is “one nature composed of impassible divinity and passible flesh.”³ In short, Apollinarius’ Christology is one nature of the divine Word, which became flesh.

Working within the Word-flesh model, Apollinarius insisted that the divine Word became human in the sense that he became embodied in human being. He conceived of the incarnation as the mind of God becoming enfleshed.⁴ The Word is the directive, intelligent principle in Christ as well as the principle of life of his flesh. But for Apollinarius, the divine intellect although resides in the flesh remains to be the divine original intellect or the logos himself. The divine essence is not changed, diminished, and altered. Neither is he decreasing or increasing.⁵ This is because, according to him, it was only the divine Wisdom that functions as the rational part of Jesus. In addition, it was also the *Logos* who became the life principle of the flesh.⁶ The presence of the human rational mind in Christ’s flesh is completely denied by Apollinarius, for he believed that the human and the divine mind cannot coexist in Christ. Jesus Christ became one composite nature or *hypostasis* in which flesh and divine intellect share the same life. In Jesus Christ, the Godhead and manhood have converged into unity. Christ then is an organic vital unity just as a man made up of soul and body is a unity. It is a unity of nature between his Word and his body. Christ is one nature since he is

a simple, undivided person. The word nature for Apollinarius means ‘one self-determining reality of Christ or *hypostasis*’. The incarnate Word is “one nature” devoid of a human soul, and while emphasizing on this he coined the famous phrase “one incarnate nature of the divine Word” which became crucial in later Christological debates.⁷

Contrary to Apollinarius, Nestorius developed a Christology of the two natures of the incarnate Word, which remained unaltered and distinct in the union. He explained the Godhead as existing in the ‘man’ and the ‘man’ in the Godhead without mixture and confusion. For Nestorius, Christ’s divinity and his humanity coexist side by side, each retaining its peculiar properties and activity and each has a nature.⁸ It is this view of duality in Jesus Christ that is held together in union that led Nestorius to refrain from using the title *theotokos* to Mary. According to him, Mary gave birth to the man Jesus not the Word, for the Word was and remained omnipresent, although from the beginning he dwelt in Jesus in an inconceivable manner.⁹ As a counter argument against Nestorius’ view, Cyril argued that Mary is truly *Theotokos*. Cyril maintained a differentiation between the word *Theikos* and *Sarkikos*. He interpreted the word *Sarkikos* as “according to the flesh” and not carnality. *Sarkikos* means that Mary was the parent not of a simple man but of God the Word, but she was a parent not in that he was God, but that he had taken on flesh. *Theikos* means that God was the parent of the Son not because of the flesh but because he was divine and was God. Such distinction was not made by Nestorius.¹⁰ Nestorius never also accepted any approach to a *hypostatic union*. To explain the union in Christ he proposed the notion of “conjunction by interrelation of the respective *prosopa* of the two natures. He argued that the notion *hypostatic union* would destroy the distinction of nature.¹¹

While describing the associative difference in Christ, Nestorius employed a *prosopic* theory, although the *prospopic* theory is a problematic term, and was charged to have a strong

docetic view. This theory explicates that there are two *prosopa* which indicates that two different natures coexist in Christ's being.¹² Christ is the common *prosopon* of divinity and humanity, but each nature continued to subsist in its own *prosopon* as well as in the *prosopon* of union. The common *prosopon* or the *prosopon* of union¹³ is not identical with either the *prosopon* of the Word or of the humanity. It is the result of the union of the two natures or *ousiai*. Nestorius did not only speak of Christ's one *prosopon* but also of the union between the *prosopa* (plural) in Christ. Hence, he also speaks more of the union of two natures rather than the union of the *prosopon*, but argued that the two natures were united by their union in a single *prosopon*.¹⁴ Nestorius' *prosopic* theory does not indicate that Christ is simply the logos or that Christ is simply Jesus, for Christ is indivisible in his being Christ. Christ is a single being where union of the two realities of divine and human existence takes place. This *Synapheia* of two realities is founded on the freedom of mutual love not on the necessities of nature—at the level of *prosopon* not of *ousia*.¹⁵ The incarnate Word is therefore indivisibly one in *prosopon*, while remaining twofold in nature. This view of Nestorius was strongly criticized by his opponents, especially by the Alexandrian camp. While proposing for a single *prosopon* with two divided natures Christology his opponents accused him of maintaining the “two Sons” Christology--the Eternal Son of God and Jesus the Son of God, which he completely rejected.¹⁶

The *monophysite* doctrine of Eutyches was condemned in 448 CE at a home synod in Constantinople. Eutyches was rehabilitated the following year at the Synod which was held in Ephesus. When his *monophysite* position came to the table again in Chalcedon, Eutyches' teaching was completely repudiated. Eutyches gave a new twist to the Alexandrian insistence on the unity of Christ.¹⁷ His view stated that after the union Christ's humanity was absorbed in his divinity and to accept the two natures was Nestorianism. Eutyches maintained that Christ is

‘from’ two natures but not ‘in’ two natures. Only one ‘nature’ *physis*, remains after the union, and therefore refused to say that Christ remained consubstantial with human beings.¹⁸

The Christological positions of Apollinarius, Nestorius, and Eutyches became the central concern of the Council of Chalcedon. In order to renounce their positions, the Council formulated the following statement.¹⁹

Following, then, the holy Fathers, we all with one voice teach...that our Lord Jesus Christ is one and the same son, the Same perfect in Godhead, the Same perfect in manhood, truly God and truly man, the Same (consisting) of a rational soul and a body; *homoousios* with the Father as to his Godhead, and the same *homoousios* with us as to his manhood; in all things like unto us.... One and the Same Christ, Son, Lord, Only begotten, made known in two natures (which exist) without confusion, without change, without division, without separation; the difference of the natures having made in no wise taken away by reason of the union, but rather the properties of each having preserved, and (both) concurring into one Person (*prosopon*) and one hypostasis—not parted and divided into two persons (*prosopa*), but one and the same Soul and Only – begotten, the divine Logos, the Lord Jesus Christ...

The above formulation of the creed was drafted to challenge Apollinarianism, Nestorianism and Eutychianism. To articulate the Chalcedonian Creed the Council draws its resources and language from Leo, Cyril and the Formula of Reunion 443 CE. The *Tome of Pope Leo* was viewed as the introduction to the Chalcedonian formula and the Cyrillian language of the unity of Christ was preserved and appropriated. The Council also accepted the central emphasis of both Antiochene and Alexandrian school of thought.²⁰ Based on these resources, the Council took three fundamental decisions: firstly, it affirmed the Nicene Creed as

expression of orthodoxy; secondly, it rejected Apollinarianism, Nestorianism and Eutychianism; finally, it adopted a statement of its own, which was to be a standard of Christological orthodoxy for many years to come.²¹

The Application of *Hypostatic Union* Principle: A Response to Apollinarianism, Nestorianism and Eutychianism

To challenge the Christological positions of Apollinarius, Nestorius and Eutyches, the Council of Chalcedon used the concept *hypostatic union* that became the official phrase at the Council of Chalcedon (451). The phrase signifies the union of the two natures (divine and human) united in the one person of Christ.²² The theory *hypostatic union* in the Chalcedonian Council was adopted from the Christology of St Cyril of Alexandria drawn from the Second letter of Cyril to Nestorius, which contained the phrase.²³ Cyril used the term to describe the manner of the union in Christ. McGuckin noted that Cyril frequently said, for example, that the union took place *Kath Hypostasin: hypostatically*, or on the basis of a *hypostatic* level.²⁴ He argued that what Cyril meant by this is that the union of God and man in Christ is properly understood to have been effected precisely because it was a single individual subject, the *hypostasis*: God the Word, who realized the union of two distinct realities, divinity and humanity, by standing as the sole personal subject of both. For Cyril, McGuckin concludes, this is the *hypostatic union*, the only proper way of securing the theology of the incarnation.²⁵ What can be surmised from this is that Christological union, which is a *henosis kath' hypostasin* or *hypostatic* union was instituted on the singleness of a *hypostasis*.

The Concept *Hypostatic Union* and Apollinarianism

This teaching of Apollinarius has been seriously challenged by the Chalcedonian creed. The limitation of his Christology is that while he speaks of a single *hypostasis* in Christ and emphasizes

on the real union of logos with human flesh, he also denies the full humanity of Christ.²⁶ This denial of the completeness of human nature in Christ is refuted by the Chalcedonian principle of *hypostatic union*. Countering Apollinarianism, the creed affirms that Christ has a rational soul and a truly human body, complete in Godhead and complete in manhood. He is truly God and truly man. There is nothing that is taken away from Christ while explaining his unity.²⁷ With this explanation the Word-flesh model of Apollinarianism is seriously reversed.

The Concept *Hypostatic Union* and Nestorianism

The formula *hypostatic union* which recognized that ‘the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten exists in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation’²⁸ is a response to the theory of *Prosopic union* propounded by Nestorius. The creed declared that in the hypostatic union the natures with their respective properties and faculties are preserved intact without confusion. The manhood of Christ is not confused with the Godhead because the manhood is converged with the Godhead of God the Son, both in Christ’s person and in his life at every moment. In every word which he spoke and in every deed which he performed ‘manhood’ was there with him in a state of union.²⁹ Therefore, the *hypostasis* of Godhead and manhood is without confusion and without blurring of the boundary. The Word while united with the flesh never ceased to be God and remained unchanged. By *hypostatic union* of the Godhead and the manhood, the Godhead and the manhood of the Son are coming together without any change either in the Godhead or in the manhood he assumed. The body of the Word is not separated from the Word himself. It is not that there are two sons, and one is united with the flesh. Christ therefore cannot be separated or divided into two; he is without division and separation.³⁰

As noted in the preceding discussion, Nestorius never used the term *hypostasis* in his discourse on incarnation. He asserts that because of its close semantic association with generic term

nature (*ousia*, *physis*) the term *hypostasis* was not a good term to speak of a ‘distinct reality ‘of a thing—individualness. For him, the term *prosopon* is an appropriate word to signify the distinct individualness of a thing. The Chalcedonian Creed is a reversal of Nestorius because Christ’s nature is defined more in terms of *hypostasis* (the union of nature that is inward and real, the entire *ousia* that has come into concrete existence) rather than *prosopon* (which signify the external aspect of the object or person).³¹ This does not mean that the Chalcedon abandoned the word *prosopon* completely. The creed did mention at the very end that the property of each nature come together in one *prosopon* and one *hypostasis*. However, Nestorius’ notion of the union of Christ by conjunction of the respective *prosopa*, never fit in the Chalcedonian framework. As argued earlier, this view divides Christ into two. In sum, the concept *hypostatic union* incorporated in the Chalcedonian creed completely upended this Nestorian view of the union of Christ.

The Concept *Hypostatic Union* and Eutychianism

Over against the Christological teachings of Eutyches, the Council stated its own position. It contested the errors associated with Eutychianism: the confusion of two natures in Christ, a heavenly substance which Christ took, and two natures before, and one after the union. Grillmeier asserts that in order to refute the teachings of Eutyches, Chalcedon return to the key word of Nicaea. So, the term *homoousios* is recalled to be used of both the Godhead and the manhood. The creed reads, “*homoousios* with the father as to his Godhead, and the same *homoousios* with us as to his manhood; in all things like unto us, sin only excepted ... of Mary the virgin *Theotokos* as to his manhood.”³² The key word *homoousios* is recalled to challenge Eutyches who while conceding this *homoousios* to Mary in her relationship to us, he did not allow it for Christ, for he posited that his flesh was not of the same substance as ours. The above statement in the Chalcedonian formula therefore strongly contradicts and opposes Eutychian *Monophysitism*.³³

To defend the notion that Christ is truly human, and that his humanity is not absorbed by his divinity after the union, the Chalcedonian principle proceeds that the Son is consubstantial with the Father in Godhead, consubstantial with us in manhood, and that his birth is from the Father before all ages as touching his Godhead. His birth is also from the Virgin Mary, *Theotokos* as touching his manhood. Again, in order that Christ’s humanity is not denied, the definition states that Christ is fully God and fully man; the two natures coexist without confusion, without change, without division and without separation.³⁴ Furthermore, to refute the Eutychian teaching that the humanity of Christ is absorbed by divine eternal Word after the union, the Chalcedonian *hypostatic union* indicates that the distinction of the two natures is preserved in the union. Nevertheless, it states that each keeps its characteristics as they combine in the one person (*prosopon*) and substance (*hypostasis*) but come to carry the properties of the other through the mediation of the divine *hypostasis* which, we find traces of Leo’s teachings.³⁵

The limitation of this definition of *hypostatic union* is that the notion “each nature conserves its own properties” might suggest a separation of divided category. Hence, human being can never be deified by Christ’s divinity. Moreover, the language that was used suggests that Christ possessed a dual personality, which was actually not the intention of the Chalcedonian formula. Again, by saying that ‘the two natures retain their distinction but carry the properties of the other through the mediation of a divine *hypostasis*’ would mean that Christ is not a human person but a divine person, who possess a human and a divine nature. It is because of this view Chalcedon was always accused of having docetic overtones.³⁶

Although the formula of Chalcedon draws on multiple resources, the fundamental historical meaning of the doctrines lies in its delicate balancing of ‘one divine single subject’ Christology of the Alexandrians and the ‘two natures’ Christology of the

Antiochenes.³⁷ In this sense, it can be concluded that Chalcedon gave “equal recognition to both unity and duality in the God-man”³⁸ in the Chalcedonian formula. From the Alexandrian School, the creed embraced its explicit affirmation of “one *prosopon*” and “one *hypostasis*”, the identity of the pre-existent Word with the incarnate Christ, the emphasis on Christ remaining “without division, without separation,” the denial of two *prosopa*, the affirmation of *theotokos*, and the exchange of attributes. From the Antiochene School, the creed incorporates the affirmation of the full humanity of the incarnate Word, the two natures after the union, the insistence of two natures “without confusion, without change” and the preservation of the property of each nature in the union. The position of each side was embraced in the Chalcedonian definition, without going too far to the extreme of each side.³⁹

The Goal and Purpose of the Council of Chalcedon

The primary purpose of the Council to develop the two natures Christology, based on the *hypostatic union* principle, was to serve the acute needs of the proclamation of faith. The intention was also to address a crucial question of how the confession of ‘one Christ’ may be reconciled with the belief in the ‘true God and true man,’ perfect in Godhead, perfect in manhood’; and to express and identify the distinction in and completeness of Christ.⁴⁰

Secondly, the goal was to end the Christological controversies that have been in existence for many centuries, and to unite the Eastern and Western Churches. But whether the fourth ecumenical council succeeded in fulfilling its noble purpose is the question that we will consider below.

Does Chalcedon Achieve its Purpose?

The Council of Chalcedon proved a lasting success in regulating language about Christ. Its Christological teaching of ‘one person in two natures’ came from a brilliant synthesis of the Alexandrians and the Antiochene traditions. As mentioned earlier, its Christological position was considered to be the standard belief of Christian

orthodox teaching. In this sense, the Council was successful in its attempt to develop a Christology that became normative down through successive centuries. However, in contrast to this, it is also tenable to state that theologians also argued that in many respects the Council has also failed to fulfill its goals and purposes.⁴¹ Few explanations of its limitations are enumerated below.

The Chalcedonian Council failed to define the key terms ‘nature’ (*physis*) and ‘person’ (*prosopon*, *hypostasis*) respectively. This is because, as pointed out by Norris, Chalcedonian formula is essentially only a rule of Christological language, a linguistic game played to fit in the Christological views of the two schools involved in Christological controversy. Again, the Council did not give a logical relation between the divine and human natures in Christ or present an account of what those two natures consist of.⁴² Sarah Coakley is right when she argued that the Chalcedonian creed drafted in the council of Chalcedon was simply a linguistic game rather than an expression of ontological reality. She also added that linguistic terms in the Chalcedonian definition are used only to find acceptable solution to the Alexandrian-Antiochene problems. Therefore, its key terms ‘nature’ (*physis*) and ‘person’ (*hypostasis*) remained unclear and undefined. The formula only sets the boundary on what can and cannot be said about Christ.⁴³

The Council of Chalcedon also failed to answer the crucial question of how Christ is truly God and truly man, perfect in Godhead and perfect in manhood. The Council never explained how this happened and how they did it. Evidently, therefore, Chalcedon failed to present a logical relation between the divine and human natures in Christ, the precise manner in which this is articulated, and gave no account of how those two natures coexist in one person. This issue perhaps was not its fundamental importance.⁴⁴ Assessing this, Coakley further argued that to discover how divinity and humanity coexist in Christ one has to probe into the debates that preceded and succeeded Chalcedon because such explanation is not reflected in the text.⁴⁵

To identify some of the limitations of the Chalcedonian formula and to assert what Chalcedon cannot and does not solve, Coakley comes up with the following points⁷⁴⁶

Thus: (1) Chalcedon does not tell us in what way the divine nature and human natures consists; (2) it does not tell us what hypostasis means when applied to Christ, (3) it does not tell us how hypostasis and physeis are related, or how the physeis relate to one another (the problem of the communication idiomatum), (4) it does not tell us how many wills Christ have; (5) it does not tell us that the hypostasis is identical with the pre-existent logos; (6) it does not tell us what happens to the physeis at Christ's death and in his resurrection; (7) it does not tell us whether the meaning of hypostasis in this Christological context is different, or the same, from the meaning in the Trinitarian context; (8) it does not tell us whether the risen Christ is male.

It is important to point out here that while some of the points noted by Coakley are justified and valid, some do not. While points 1, 2, 3, 7, and 9 are valid arguments, points 4, 5, and 6 were beyond the agenda of the Council and these issues were only discussed much later in other councils.⁴⁷ Point 8 is altogether a contemporary issue and it will be unjustified to consider it a fair question to consider. Such issue was not even an issue in the 5th century.

The attempt to unify the Church by resolving the Christological conflicts was also proved to be a failure. The Chalcedonian definition did not unite the Church as expected. It certainly failed to satisfy either the *monophysite* or the *Douphysite*.⁴⁸ The fact is that the Nestorian groups established for themselves their own form of Christianity in Persia and Asian countries. The *monophysites* formed separate ecclesiastical organizations in Egypt, Ethiopia, and Syria. The Creed also caused divisions among orthodox churches. On one hand, the

Eastern Orthodox Churches under the Patriarch of Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem together with churches of the West accepted the Christological formula of the Chalcedonian Council and considered it as the Fourth Ecumenical Council. On the other, the Oriental Churches, the five ancient churches—Egypt, Syria, Armenia, India and Ethiopia rejected the formula and never recognized it as the Fourth Ecumenical Council. They accepted only the three ecumenical councils that were held prior to Chalcedon.⁴⁹ To conclude, we can argue that although the Council proposed its Christological definition that contained both Antiochene and Alexandrian Christological standpoints,⁵⁰ there was still so much discontentment among the groups. The semantic confusion that was never clarified by the Council was one of the causes of the dissatisfaction of the schools in conflict.⁵¹

In support of the view that Chalcedon failed in its attempt to reach its intended goal, Kelly concluded, “Chalcedon failed to bring permanent peace”⁷⁵² among the disputed schools at the Christological debates. Along the same vein, de Vries, also makes his conclusion clear

when he concludes, “we must all admit as a matter of fact that the Council of Chalcedon did not fulfil the expectation placed in it. Not only did it fail to restore peace in the universal Church, it even caused a schism, which has unfortunately continued to our day.”⁷⁵³ Corroborating this conclusion, Michael Kinnamon stated three important reasons to indicate that the purpose of Chalcedon was defeated. Writing from the perspective of his own Church he commented that the fourth-fifth century Christological controversy may be considered,⁵⁴

... as a tragic episode in the history of Christianity, because (1) as a result of Chalcedon the Church was divided; (2) the Conciliar formulations have frequently been imposed as a yardstick of orthodoxy, undermining the importance of the personal encounter with the living Christ and the witness of the Scripture; and (3) these

formulations have led many to conceive of faith as a matter of intellectual assent rather than self-surrender.

While holding the validity of Kinnamon's view stated above, one can also add that even with the formulation of Christological formula, Chalcedon did not achieve its noble purpose or put an end to further discussion of the matter. Unquestionably, Chalcedon was followed by successive councils that were called to discuss about the mystery of Christ. The controversy continued up until the first part of the seven centuries, but regrettably, ecclesiastical schism continued even to this day.

Problems Faced by the Council of Chalcedon

An analysis of the Council's attempt to solve the Christological conflicts of the fourth and fifth centuries would indicate that there were many problems behind its failure.⁵⁵ But to be precise, only two of them that are fundamental are described here. Firstly, although both Antiochene and Alexandrian traditions have strong influence in the formulation of the Chalcedonian Creed, they both have a different understanding of the relationship between human and divine nature. This means that both schools conceived the unity of the person of Christ differently. The latter emphasizes on 'oneness' and operates within the model of unity, the former stresses on duality and operates within the model of distinction.⁵⁶ Again, the theological traditions of Alexandrian and Antiochene schools also developed their own distinct Christological approaches: one followed the *logos-Sarx* approach and the other the *logos-Anthropos* approach. These two schools have differing theological anthropology behind them and provided their adherents with two different starting points for understanding Christ.⁵⁷

Secondly, there was also a problem of differences in the use and understanding of terminologies. Remarkably, for the two traditions the same terms that they used do not necessarily convey the same meanings. An example that can be adduced is the use of the Greek word *physis* or nature. In the Antiochene thought,

the word *physis* means that humanity or divinity is conceived as a concrete assemblage of characteristics or attributers.⁵⁸ So when they speak of two natures it does not necessarily suggest division or separation. On the contrary, the word *physis* in the Alexandrian thought connotes a 'concrete individual or independent existent and this has come to be its traditional meaning.'⁵⁹ One can argue here that if the word *physis* means to the Alexandrian a concrete and independent existent it is no wonder that the term evoked fear, as this would mean two concrete individual after the union. It is therefore accurate to say that a difference in the interpretation of concepts and terminologies is one of the causes that prevented the two parties from coming into terms and settle their Christological controversies.

The Relevance of Two Natures Christology to Contemporary Context

Some theologians argued that the Church in contemporary times have least interest in probing into traditional Christology of Chalcedon. This is especially noted by contemporary theologians, like Jon Sobrino.⁶⁰ Investigating this, Sobrino argued that while these texts are useful theologically, besides being normative, they are also limited, as is widely recognized today. This is due to its Christological focus, the language used, and the place in which it is formulated.⁶¹ Clearly, the linguistic framework to construct the truth about Christ is clothed with philosophical speculation and language drawn from Greek culture that is alien to other cultural contexts in the world.⁶² Terms such as *hypostasis*, *ousias*, *physis*, *prosopon*, *homoousios*, are confusing and difficult to understand by many. To understand them requires a profound knowledge of Aristotellian and Platonic philosophy. In relation to this, Patrick Paterson argued that one of the critiques of Chalcedonian definition is its alien terminologies and thought forms. He affirms that the Chalcedonian definition was clothed with Greek philosophical languages which are irredeemably contaminated by corresponding metaphysical modes of thinking that no longer

applied to the twentieth century.⁶³ Furthermore, Paterson contends that in today's context its alien terminology and thought form only impede and obscure the gospel which must be redefined and reinterpreted in familiar contemporary categories.⁶⁴

Corroborating Paterson's view, Tiran Nersoyan also commented that "the Church has already long ceased to be obsessed with philosophical terms such as *ousia*, *physis*, *hypostasis*, *prosopon* and other similar terms in her efforts to communicate the truth of Christ to the world. These terms have done their work and have now gone to their rest".⁶⁵ In the present context, the Church today is no longer interested in the linguistic game played by the disputed schools, or in a rule of Christological language, even more so in finding a new fixed formulation and definition of Christology. To the contemporary Church, all these have become just part of church history. The Church today is more engaged with the task of responding to other or more pressing issues that the world is thrusting at it. Its interest is to get involved more in the ongoing intra-inter religious dialogue, to discuss serious issues like religious pluralism, different forms of colonialism and imperialism, environmental degradation, denigration and elimination of indigenous cultures, and other similar concerns. Having these issues that affect human and non-human lives in hand, the contemporary Church has diverted its Christological focus. Paul Mar Gregorios sums up this argument in these words:

It is also noteworthy that while the fourth and fifth century debate was an attempt to deal with the person of Jesus in terms of his metaphysical identity, the twentieth century debate is more concerned with intellectual and ethical positions. The concern then was about the being of Jesus. Today it is about his actual saying and doing.⁶⁶

Following Gregorios' view, one can add that the church's belief and practice is not grounded in the Chalcedonian formula, but in the gospel of Christ written in the scripture. It is not certain that the Church still experience the contemporary implication

and application, which continue to flow from this definition. In line with this thought, Paterson said that whatever continuity the Chalcedonian principle may have had with the gospel, whatever the original vitality of the struggle and debates that produced it, these have been long forgotten. He continues to say that the Chalcedonian definition has also lost connection with the event of revelation. With the loss of that connection, it has become hardened into an end in itself, encouraging a form of dogmatic fundamentalism that reduces the gospel to certain propositional and ideological principles.⁶⁷ Resonating Paterson's conclusion, the Chalcedonian formula have lost its significance in the Church today. As noted above, the believers discover the mystery of the revelation of Christ not through the creed but through the Scripture. Moreover, while the church is no longer interested in debating about the natures of Christ, but rather in the gospel message of Jesus Christ, the Chalcedonian dogma in modern churches has become less significant.

Interestingly, despite modern and contemporary critiques of the classical definition⁶⁸ by these theologians, others still held that the Chalcedonian formula is still important to the Church today. Referring to this, Gregorios similarly came to this same conclusion. His strong conclusion was that traditional Chalcedonian Christology is still relevant to "Christians who still believe that 'the *Logos* became flesh and dwelt among us'".⁶⁹ It is appropriate to say, that although fatally paradoxical, the Church today still advocates the classical understanding that Jesus is a truly perfect God and perfect man'. Additionally, the formula "one person in two natures" still reserves central biblical message in the Church that salvation comes from meeting the true God in human Jesus. Chalcedon has become an important milestone in the Church's progress toward this deeper understanding of Jesus Christ, but it also left plenty of scope for further Christological construction. Echoing this line of thought, Karl Rahner commented that the clearest and most sanctified formulation at Chalcedon is

not “the end but the beginning, not the goal but the means, truth which opens the way to the ever greater truth.”⁷⁰ Rahner here advocated an “open-ended Christology” suggesting that classical Christology is flexible and open to new interpretations in every age and culture.

It is of interest to note that Rahner’s open-ended Christology provides the premise to pursue and explore further new ways of Christological construction that can offer a fuller vision of the truth of Christ. Hence, while classical Christology, based on the *hypostatic union*, is still tenable for the Church today, it also needs to be revised, expanded and reconstructed. Issues facing the world today call the Church not to pursue a coherent and singular Christology as done in the early church. The Church would find it to be more meaningful if it allows Christians in different context of the world to express their own Christological experience of Jesus Christ based on their own cultural belief systems, symbols and struggles, but at the same time stay faithful to the Church traditions.⁷¹ The classical doctrine of Christ covered with Greek cultural philosophical language is not totally null and void today. It still holds true in the Greek culture in which it is developed. But when this specific cultural and philosophical expression of Christ is transposed to other cultures, each culture must find their own cultural and philosophical language that is intelligible to their own theological systems.⁷² Such view paves the way for different cultural epistemologies to find expressions and make Christology more inclusive, meaningful, and relevant to the culture in which it is formulated.

The idea of an open-ended Christology also provides the scope for engaging in the task of reconstructing classical Christology so as to bring into focus other aspects of Christology. So far, the Chalcedonian formula was drafted only from a one-sided, imbalanced Christological thrust based on the sole aspect of the “Son of God” Christology. In this way, it is narrowly focused on a dual relationship of divine-human natures of Christ

leaving an equally important “cosmic or the third” dimension that is intrinsically embodied in Christ’s being. In fact, as Maximus the Confessor contends, the original Chalcedonian *hypostatic union* formula is also very cosmic in nature.⁷³ But in the context of prolonged struggle and heated debates on the issue of Christ’s divine-human constitution only, the Council had completely overlooked this equally important aspect of the nature of Christ. This has prevented the Church from expanding its view of Christ, which Pierre Teilhard de Chardin calls the “total Christ.” The ‘total Christ’ is the Christ that encompasses the triad natures of divine-human-cosmic nature.⁷⁴ It is imperative to argue that the Christological debates of the Fourth Council still remained an unfinished business. Since Christological construction is not merely a thing of the past, another ecumenical council to discuss the cosmic nature of Christ is crucial. This would provide the platform to expand the Christological formulation beyond the traditional Christological framework, while still upholding the validity of divine-human nature of Christ. The Church’s articulation of the ‘triad natures’ of Christ is fundamental especially in the wake of ecological catastrophe of our times. We need to expand our Christological understanding for the Church, and produce a Christology that is more open, more inclusive, more accommodative, and more flexible.

Conclusion

The Council of Chalcedon with its Christological development is the most significant event in the history of Christianity. The fact is that the Christian understanding of Christ and Church traditions are solely based on the Chalcedonian affirmation that Jesus Christ is both God and human, the Christological interpretation that became normative to Christianity even today. However, while highlighting the importance of the Chalcedonian two natures Christology and its implication on the Christological understanding of the Church, the crux of the argument remains to be the issue pertaining to the significance of the Chalcedonian two-natures

Christology today. For the Church in the present context, the two natures Christology is still relevant and meaningful because Christianity still maintains that Jesus is both divine and human and rests its faith on this affirmation. At the same time, given the reality of the present context and the problems that the world is propelling on us, the Church requires to extend its Christological understanding beyond the restricted boundary of divine-human Christology, yet grounding it on this same conceptual Christian tradition. This would ensure both continuity and change in Christological thinking. It is also critical that the Church today broaden its Christological discussions by concentrating more on issues that unite rather than divide the Church. As repeatedly stated, the contemporary Church is no longer confronted with questions of Greek philosophical categories or terminologies, but rather with serious issues of pluralism, cultural colonialism, economic imperialism, poverty, and ecological degradation. In the midst of these, the Church should not concentrate on the task of developing a coherent, singular, fixed and systematic Christological preposition, but provide a space for a plurality of Christological constructions in order to unfold different aspects of Christology relevant to our contemporary times. It would be more meaningful if churches in different contexts today articulate their own Christological understandings of Jesus Christ so as to respond to their own complex contextual realities. This is a necessity for our Church today.

End Notes

- 1 John A. McGuckin, *St Cyril of Alexandria: The Christological Controversy, Its History, Theology, and Text* (New York: E. J. Brill, 1994), 142. See also George Sabra, "The Christological Controversies of the Fourth and Fifth Centuries" in *Bangalore Theological Forum* 32, 1 (June, 2000): 77-90.
- 2 J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (New York: Harper and Row, 1978), 289.
- 3 Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrine*, 291.
- 4 Stuart, G. Hall, *Doctrine and Practice in the Early Church* (London: SPCK, 1991), 155.
- 5 Richard A. Norris, *The Christological Controversy*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 22-23.
- 6 Roger Haight, *Jesus Symbol of God* (New York: Orbis Books, 1999), 264, 289.
- 7 Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrine*, 293. This phrase is crucial because it was later adopted by Cyril of Alexandria to emphasize the union of two realities so as to form one Christ. Cyril appropriated this phrase because he believed that it must have come from Athanasius, but in fact originated from Apollinarius. Cyril was accused by his opponents of falling into Apollinarian scheme although Cyril never used the phrase in an Apollinarian sense. Gerald O'Collin, *Christology: A Biblical, Historical and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 187.
- 8 Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 312.
- 9 See Nestorius, "Nestorius's First Sermon Against the *Theotokos*" in Norris, *The Christological Controversy*, 124.
- 10 McGuckin, *St Cyril of Alexandria*, 28-29, Phillip Schaff (ed), *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*. Vol. 14, Ser 2 (Peabody, MA.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), 206&208.
- 11 McGuckin, *St Cyril of Alexandria*, 161.
- 12 McGuckin, *St Cyril of Alexandria*, 163.
- 13 McGuckin, *St Cyril of Alexandria*, 161.
- 14 Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrine*, 315.
- 15 McGuckin *St Cyril of Alexandria*, 163.
- 16 Cyril of Alexandria, "Second Letter to Nestorius" 4 in *Cyril of Alexandria Selected Letters*, edited. and translated by Lionel R. Wickham (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 6-9, also Cyril of Alexandria, *St Cyril of Alexandria on the Unity of Christ*, translated by John Anthony McGuckin (Crestwood, NY.: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1995), 73-4.
- 17 Eutyches was initially a disciple of Cyril and anti-Nestorianism. His Christological position of "one nature" of Christ after the union was an extreme interpretation of the Cyrilline Christological formula. Later on his teaching contradicted Cyril's position after Cyril conceded to the view of the two nature of Christ. See J. Dupius, *Who Do You Say that I am? Introduction to Christology* (New York: Orbis Books, 1994), 92, Kelley, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 332.
- 18 O'Collin, *Christology: A Biblical Historical and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ*, 191.
- 19 Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition* I, 544, Jeroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine, The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600)* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1975), 264.

- 20 Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, 544, Michael Slusser, "The Issues in the Definition of the Council of Chalcedon" *Toronto Journal of Theology* 6.1 (1990): 64.
- 21 Millard. J. Erickson, *The Word Became Flesh: A Contemporary Incarnational Christology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1991), 65.
- 22 A Richardson and J Bowden (ed) "Hypostatic Union" *Westminster Dictionary of Christian Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983): 250.
- 23 V.C. Samuel, *The Council of Chalcedon Re-Examined: A Historical and Theological Survey* (Madras: The Christian Literature Society, 1977), 247-248.
- 24 McGuckin, *St Cyril of Alexandria: The Christological Controversy*, 142.
- 25 McGuckin, *St Cyril of Alexandria: The Christological Controversy*, 142.
- 26 This view was also challenged by the Antiochene School especially by Theodore of Mopsuestia. Theodore's contention was that Apollinarius's Christology has a strong docetic overtone. He argued that if Christ's humanity is denied how could he then be a human yet lack a human mind or how can Christ save the human rational soul which is the seat of sin, if he was not assumed? Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrine*, 296-297.
- 27 Aloys Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition: From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon* vol. I (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1975), 547.
- 28 This is a positive Creed based on the Formula of Reunion with some variations, and particularly with the insertion of a number of phrases from Cyril's Second Letter to Nestorius, and from Leo's Tome. For the Formula of Reunion see Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 328-329. For Second Letter of Cyril to Nestorius and Leo's Tome. See Phillip Schaff (ed.) *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 198-201, 254-258.
- 29 Samuel, *The Council of Chalcedon*, 249.
- 30 This argument clearly reflected the insertion of Cyrillian's style of emphasis on the unity of Christ, except that Chalcedon recognized Christ's two natures over Cyril's single subjectivity after the union. But it is also important to note that later on Cyril was also ready to admit the terminology of the incarnate Word's two *physeis* (natures) as long as the opponent kept the central principle of single subjectivity, and as long as Christ is not divided. This shift in Cyril's thinking is possible because of the concept of 'exchange of properties' or 'communion of idioms' or an 'ascription of sayings' that can be theologically reflected. McGuckin, *St Cyril of Alexandria*, 190.
- 31 John S. Romanides, "St Cyril's "One *Physis* Or *Hypostasis* of God the Logos Incarnate" and Chalcedon" in *Christ in East and West*, edited by Paul R Fries and Tiran Nersoyan (Macon, GA.: Mercer University Press, 1987), 19.
- 32 Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, 544.
- 33 Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition I*, 545.
- 34 Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition I*, 545.
- 35 Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition I*, 545.
- 36 Sarah Coakley, "What does Chalcedon Solve and What Does it Not? Some Reflections on Status and Meaning of the Chalcedon 'Definition'" in *The Incarnation: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Incarnation of the Son of God* ed. Stephen T Davis, Daniel Kendall, et.al (Oxford: University Press, 2002), 162-63.
- 37 Roger Haight, *Jesus, Symbol of God*, 287.
- 38 Kelley, *Early Christian Doctrine*, 341.
- 39 Kelley, *Early Christian Doctrine*, 341.
- 40 Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition I*, 547.
- 41 Wilhelm de Vries, "The Reasons for the Rejection of the Council of Chalcedon by the Oriental Orthodox Churches" in *Christ in East and West*, edited by Paul R Fries and Tiran Nersoyan (Macon, GA.: Mercer University Press, 1987), 13.
- 42 Norris, *The Christological Controversy*, 30.
- 43 Sarah Coakley, "What does Chalcedon Solve and What Does it Not? 144 & 161.
- 44 Norris, *The Christological Controversy*, 30; Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Christology: A Global Introduction* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2003), 78.
- 45 Coakley, "What does Chalcedon Solve and What Does it Not? 148.
- 46 Coakley, "What does Chalcedon Solve and What Does it Not? 162.
- 47 For example, the divine and human will of Christ was discussed only in the Council of Constantinople (680), two hundred years later. O'Collins, *Christology*, 195-7.
- 48 Wilhelm de Vries, "The Reasons for the Rejection of the Council of Chalcedon by the Oriental Orthodox Churches", 2.
- 49 de Vries, "The Reasons for the Rejection of the Council of Chalcedon by the Oriental Orthodox Churches", 8-12.
- 50 The Alexandrian especially were really angered about the affirmation of the "two natures" after the union. This was felt by them to be a betrayal of Cyril and a harsh blow to their Christological affirmation. For the Alexandrian camp, Chalcedon was the battle they have lost. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrine*, 341-42.

- 51 Even some contemporary theologians have pointed out this flaw of the Council. Sarah Coakley raises some of the key concepts and issues that Chalcedon failed to solve. See Sarah Coakley, "What does Chalcedon Solve and Does not Solve, 143-63.
- 52 Kelley, *Early Christian Doctrine*, 342.
- 53 de Vries, "The Reasons for the Rejection of the Council of Chalcedon by the Oriental Orthodox Churches", 13.
- 54 Michael Kinnamon, "Does Chalcedon Divide or Unite: A Disciples of Christ Perspective", in *Christ in East and West* edited by Paul Fries and Tiran Nersoyan (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1987), 188.
- 55 George Sabra argued that there were also all kinds of non-theological factors-political, social, ecclesiastical and personal which played very important roles in intensifying, and directing the various phases of the controversy. For more on this see George Sabra "The Christological Controversies of the Fourth and Fifth Centuries", 77-90.
- 56 Stephen W. Need. "Language, Metaphor, and Chalcedon: A Case of Theological Double Vision" *Harvard Theological Review* 88, (1995): 244.
- 57 George Sabra, "The Christological Controversies of the Fourth and Fifth Centuries", 87.
- 58 Kelly *Early Christian Doctrines*, 318. See also V. C. Samuel, "One Incarnate Nature of God the Word" in *Christ in East and West* edited by Paul R. Fries and Tiran Nersoyan (Macon, GA.: Mercer University Press, 1987), 125-26.
- 59 Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrine*, 318.
- 60 Jon Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads: A Latin American Approach*. Translated by John Drury (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1978), 4-5. *Christ the Liberator: A View from the Victims* translated by Paul Burns (New York: Orbis Books, 2001), 221.
- 61 Jon Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads*, 4-5, see also Leonardon Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator: A Critical Christology of Our Times* translated by Patrick Hughes (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1978).
- 62 Cf Aloysius Pieris, "Universalidad del cristianismo?" in *El rostro asiático de Cristo* (Salamamca, 1991), 166 quoted in Sobrino, *Christ the Liberator*, 224.
- 63 Patrick Paterson, "Chalcedon's Apprentice: Karl Barth and the Twentieth-Century Critique of Classical Christology" *Toronto Journal of Theology* 16, no. 2 (2000): 193.
- 64 Paterson, "Chalcedon's Apprentice", 193.
- 65 Tiran Nersoyan, "Problems of Consensus in Christology: The Functions of Council" in *Christ in East and West* edited by Paul Fries and Tiran Nersoyan (Macon, GA.: Mercer University Press, 1987), 63.
- 66 Paul Mar Gregorios, "The Relevance of Christology Today" in *Christ in East and West* ed. Paul Fries and Tiran Nersoyan (Macon, GA.: Mercer University Press, 1987), 105.
- 67 Patrick Paterson, "Chalcedon's Apprentice: Karl Barth and the Twentieth-Century Critique of Classical Christology", 212.
- 68 For modern critique and response to the classical Christology consult also Patrick Patterson, "Chalcedon's Apprentice: Karl Barth and the Twentieth—Century Critique of Classical Christology" 193-216.
- 69 Gregorios, "The Relevance of Christology Today," 106.
- 70 Karl Rahner, "Current Problem in Christology" in *Theological Investigations* I trans. Cornelius Ernst (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1961), 150-51. Here, it is an affirmation of this Rahnerian conclusion that contemporary theologians like John P Keenan, Lai Pai-Chiu, and Thomas Cattoi resorted to read the Chalcedonian principle from a pluralistic religious tradition, like Buddhist tradition, and connect or synthesize or compare their distinct epistemologies with Chalcedonian Christological formula. See John P. Keenan, *The Meaning of Christ: A Mahāyāna Theology* (Maryknoll, NY.: Orbis Books, 1989); Lai Pai-chiu, "A Mahāyāna Reading of Chalcedon Christology: A Chinese Response to John Keenan" in *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 24 (2004): 209-228; Thomas Cattoi, *Divine Contingency: Theologies of Divine Embodiment in Maximus the Confessor and Tsong kha pa* (Piscataway, NJ.: Gorgias Press, 2008), "What has Chalcedon to Do with Lhasa : John Keenan's and Lai Pai-chiu's Reflection on Classical Christology and the possible Shape of a Tibetan Theology of Incarnation" in *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 28 (2008): 13-25; "The Incarnation Logos and rūpakāya: Towards a Comparative Theology of Embodiment" in *Religion East and West* 8 (Oct, 2008): 109-129.
- 71 For examples of such Christological constructions consult *The Asian Faces of Jesus* edited by R. S. Sugirtharajah (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1993), Michael Amaladoss, *The Asian Jesus* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2005).
- 72 Gregorios, "The Relevance of Christology Today," 112, also Olivier Clement "Chalcedonian and Non-Chalcedonian: A Few Clarifications" translated by Constantin Simon in *Diakonia* 33, 2 (2000): 188.
- 73 For more on this refer to Polycarb Sherwood. *The Earlier Ambigua of St Maximus the Confessor and his Refutation of Origenism* (Herder: Orbis Catholicus, 1955).
- 74 See Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Heart of Matter*, translated by Rene Hague (London: Collins, 1978), 93.

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Book Reviews

Identity and Community in Biblical World: Collected Essays on Identity and Community from Biblical Perspectives. ed. by B. Lalnunzira and Varaprasad Gosala, Bangalore: Society for Biblical Studies in India/Delhi: Christian World Imprints, 2020, pp. vi-210, ISBN: 978-93-5148-438-7.

Society of Biblical Studies in India (SBSI) organized a Biennial Conference 2018 for the first time in the North East region of India in Aizawl Theological College since the establishment of SBSI in 1962. The book *Identity and Community in Biblical World* is an outcome of the SBSI Biennium 2018 where scholars from different parts of India representing various denominational traditions presented scholarly papers. Edited by B. Lalnunzira and Varaprasad Gosala, the book is a collection of the proceedings of the meeting held at the Aizawl Theological College, Mizoram, including a presidential address, keynote address, nine scholarly essays, and three dissertation excerpts, synopsis, and abstract. Quest for identity and community is an important issue and more so from a northeast Indian setting where the tribal community have been on struggle to retain their respective identities. From such a background, the scholarly articles contained in this book have made a remarkable attempt to look at a bit more closely the idea of identity in relation to life of community within the biblical world.

The book starts with an introduction by the editors and the presidential address by V.J. John where he introduced the concept of identity and states that identity is “epistemic significant and are empowering” and the main stress should be on critical realism (p.5). He shared the identity and community as represented in

biblical stories as subjugated identity, contested identity, and reclaimed identity. The keynote address by Vanlalnghaka Ralte discussed briefly with clarity about the identity of people of God in biblical tradition both from the Old Testament and the New Testament.

Of the nine essays, four are from the Old Testament and five from the New Testament. The first essay is about the “Quest for Identity in Community Formation: Ancestral Narratives for Model Communities in the Book of Genesis” by K. Jesurathnam. Studying the ancestral narratives in Genesis regarding its view of identity he highlighted their implication for issues of identity in our contemporary global and Indian context. The second essay, “The Chronicler’s Blueprint for Israel’s Identity in Community Formation: Reflections from 1 Chronicles 1:1 - 2 Chronicles 9:31” by Jose Varickasseril emphasized that Israel’s identity of community formation was God-centred and people-oriented (p.59). In the third essay, “The Role of Human Being in Identity Formation in Wisdom and Poetry” Tekayaba portrays the role of wisdom and the role of the individual in identity formation. For him, “safeguarding one’s identity is one of the main issues dealt in wisdom literature while explaining the purposes of creation” (p.65). The fourth essay, “Quest for Israelite Identity in the Exilic Prophets,” by B. Lalnunzira focuses on the book of Ezekiel in the quest for Israelite identity. Focussing on Northeast India, his counsel to the Indian Christian community seeking to find an identity was “instead our quest for identity should promote a healthy community.” (p.83)

The fifth essay is from the New Testament on “The Matthean Community: Diverse, Complex, and Overlapping,” by Zakali Shohe looks at the multiple identities of the Matthean community especially in the context of the teachings of the law and the prophets. She argues that the motifs of justice, mercy, and faith are integral to fully understand the identity of the community (p.96-97). In the sixth essay, “Early Evidences on the Identity of Matthean Community,” Laurence Culas studied the Acts of the Apostles and

Paul's letter to the Galatians to bring out the early evidence on the identity of the Matthean community in Antioch. He emphasized "Matthew's community first began in Syria Antioch with the Jews and then an increasing number of the Gentile converts joined the community, becoming a new people of God, where Peter was a prominent figure." (p.116)

In the seventh essay, "Quest for Identity Traits in Community Formation: Luke-Acts," Virginia Rajakumari Sandiyagu opines that there is an inclusive Christian community in Luke-Acts. C. Gregory Thomas Basker in his essay on "Quest for Identity in Community Formation in the Gospel of John and its Relevance to the Indian Context" argues that the Johannine community "strives to be identified as a community not defined by ethnic, racial, religio-cultural and political labels/terms and it is imagined to be boundary-less, inclusive society, fundamentally anthropocentric, defined by its belief in Christ" (p.151). The last essay by Prema Vakayil, "Identity Formation of the Christian Community in 1 Peter: Dialectic of Continuity and Discontinuity" studies the titles and identities of the Christians associated with the Old Testament people of God from 1 Peter 2:9-10. She contends that "in this context the identity formation of the Christian community in 1 Peter is the dialectic of continuity with the Jewish tradition as well as a discontinuity with it as far as it is in dialogue with the Greco-Roman culture and tradition" (p.165). The book also provides three recent dissertation excerpts, synopsis, and abstract by Joseph Lalfakmawia, *Identity and Community in Biblical World* is thus enriched with an insightful knowledge by the works of biblical scholars from pluralistic settings. Quest for identity and community are serious issues in the present context and the contributors have attempted to study the issue thoroughly from the biblical perspectives. It is an important contribution in the context of increased multiplicity and plurality that threatens life in community with assertions of self-identities. Had the book covered the entire spectrum of the Old Testament and the New

Testament literature, it would have added more weight. However, the book is worthwhile reading and I highly recommend it to all the biblical scholars, theologically trained, and laity as it helps to understand clearly the formation of identity and community in the biblical world as we grapple with issues of identity and community within our own contexts.

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Transformative Actions for Common Future: Biblical and Theological Reflections from the Margins by Wati Longchar, PTCA Contextual Bible Study Series – 2, Dimapur: Discipleship Bible College/Serampore: Programme for Theology and Cultures in Asia, 2020, pp. viii-185, ISSN: 1687-6089-21.

Dr. Wati Longchar is a theologian whose work and action are focussed on transforming and bringing change. His theological contributions have provoked many minds and thoughts. His recent published book *Transformative Actions for Common Future: Biblical and Theological Reflections from the Margins* contains a thought-provoking perspective towards bringing transformation for a better future. Reading the Bible and bringing theological reflections locating in the context of the margins is a great challenge in a rapidly changing world driven by increasing corruption and violence in every aspect of life whether social, political, economic or religious. The aim of the book is "to give a perspective on the transformative reading of the Bible for the grass-root workers" (p. ix).

The book has twenty-four articles and the author re-reads the Bible from selected passages by locating them in the context of the margins to bring transformative actions for a better future. The author introduced the book brilliantly by referring to Ezekiel 37:1-

5 and titled it as “Go and Prophecy in the Valley of Death.” The author compared the Israelites who were considered as dry bones with the marginalized people in the present context. God was with the Israelites and dry bones became flesh so also God is with the marginalized and they will come back to life if we (people) go and build solidarity (p. 2).

The book talks about “Material Growth without God.” The author referred to Genesis 13:1-18 where Abraham and Lot separated for the sake of wealth and also how Jesus challenged the money lovers in Matthew 25:14-30. The author challenges to choose the value of life and not money. The book also talks about “Money and objectification of Humans,” where the author brought a great example of objectification of humans and body for money of a floating village in Tonle Sap, Southeast Asia’s largest Lake in Cambodia and talks about “Tourism and Objectification of God’s Creation.” The book also discusses about the issue of food crisis due to unjust economic system and the author says that “when money and the market fail to overcome crises, then trust in people’s power and solidarity are the options.” (p. 37)

In the “Groaning of God’s Creation,” mother earth cries because there is no eco-justice for this earth. Covid-19 is also seen as a mother earth’s way of shedding tears of pain (p. 38). Also in “The Land is Sacred – Take off your Sandals,” the author emphasises how land should be kept sacred by not exploiting and abusing it. In addition, the issue of disabilities and ableism is discussed in the book. The author talks about how abled people exclude the disabled people in family, church, and society at large. So, the author calls for an inclusive community where every individual should be included. In “Discerning God’s voice among the Marginalized,” the author takes the example of the slaves of Naaman in 2 Kings 5:1-19 as a voice for healing. God’s voice can be heard from the marginalized like women, poor, persons with disabilities, and excluded groups like LGBTQI+.

The book also contains a relevant article about the ongoing pandemic, “God’s Liberation Amidst COVID-19 Pandemic.” The author calls Covid-19 a blessing and considers it a call for rural transformation. Covid-19 has also shown that racism is deeply rooted in society that creates violence and division and has dealt the issue properly in “Racism: A Threat to Peaceful Coexistence.” Further, the author also deliberates on the topic, “The Last Words to Loved Ones: COVID-19,” where he states that there is a power in the last words and the last words of the dying person are always remembered by loved ones but Covid-19 denies the last words. The pandemic is seen as one of the darkest hours that humanity faced in history. In “Having a Name, Not Having a Name,” there is a reference from Luke 16:19-21 about the Rich man and Lazarus. Jesus did not name the rich man because his wealth was his God but introduced Lazarus with a name. The author raises the issue about many nameless persons and communities in today’s world and encourages readers to give a name to a nameless person or community (p. 119).

In “The Church and Socially Excluded People,” Dr. Longchar writes, “therefore, envisioning church from a socially excluded perspective demands not only binding the wounds of the victims or offering actions of compassion, but also calls the churches to confront and transform the unjust structural forces which cause denial, suffering, and deprivation.” (p.128) And, the author beautifully discusses the topic of “Jubilee: The Year of Repentance,” from Leviticus 25:8-17 as repentance against ecological injustice, from economic exploitation, from social exclusion, and from political manipulation. The author talks about the injustice of politics, religious fundamentalism, wealth, status, and power that is threatening the common future. While coming towards the end of the book, the author talks about the Cross. He delivers a powerful message, “The cross goes beyond our human narrow mindedness. The cross is the power that transcends individualism, racism, casteism, sexism, ableism, classism,

regionalism, and narrow worldview. The future of our society lies in how we are willing to bear the cross for one another.” (p.178) In conclusion, the book ends with a powerful message about Easter, how the women shamed the Romans on Easter morning in Mark 16:1-8, focusing on the Power of the Powerless.

Thus, the book has dealt with the issues locating them in the context of the marginalized and is written with immense creativity. The book challenges the readers to re-read the Bible and have a clear picture of what the Bible is teaching about the marginalized and to take up transformative actions for a better future. Some articles relating to the issues in the book have been repeated which perhaps could have been avoided although the author has mentioned in his acknowledgment that his purpose was to stress on the importance of the issues. Nevertheless, the book has been translated/adapted from ten national and regional languages which is a great step in writing and making them available for the benefit of a wider public. I recommend this book to pastors, theology students, mission workers, and laity who are eager to read the Bible from the marginalized context. It contains really insightful knowledge and thought-provoking perspectives.

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