



Search for a New  
Just World Order  
Challenges to Theology

Ecumenical Association of  
Third World Theologians  
1996 Assembly,  
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**Search For A New Just World Order**  
**CHALLENGES TO THEOLOGY**

**Papers and Reflections from the Fourth Assembly of the  
Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians  
December 1996, Tagaytay, Philippines**

**Edited by  
K.C. Abraham**

**ECUMENICAL ASSOCIATION OF  
THIRD WORLD THEOLOGIANS**

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## Editorial

This special number of *Voices* contains the proceedings and some background papers of the IV Assembly of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians held at Tagaytay, Philippines, from December 10-17, 1996. We regret the inordinate delay in publishing this. Our usual practice is to ask Orbis Books to publish a book out of assembly materials. For various reasons, the Committee entrusted with this responsibility was unable to do it, the primary reason being the undue delay in securing all the papers from the resources persons. Nevertheless, we hope this special assembly issue of *Voices* will be available not only to the EATWOT members, but also to others who are interested in the developments of Third World theologies.

The theme of the assembly was "*Search For a New Just World Order: Challenges to Theology*". The main presentations analysing the process of globalisation were given by Samir Amin. Responses to Samir Amin's presentations and theological reflections on globalisation are included in this volume. The assembly was significant in that it has received a report and recommendations from a commission appointed for evaluating the work of EATWOT. Reports of the theological commission as well as women's commission as they had presented at the assembly are included in this volume. On the whole, it is a volume that reflects contemporary concerns of the Third World theologies.

The process of globalisation continues to raise fundamental challenges to theologising in the Third World. In our December 1997 (Vol. XX No. 2) issue we tried to provide several papers on the same theme. Permit us to quote the editorial below which will serve as an introduction to the volume on the assembly.

The new Executive Committee of EATWOT at its first meeting adopted the theme *Struggle For Fullness of Life: Theology in the Context of Globalization* for its programme in the next five years. "Its aim," the Executive Committee adds, "is to understand and help in the transformation of global structures, joining and working with many peoples who seek a new just world order. Theological reflections shall be made on issues raised by globalization, meaningful forms of resistance to death-dealing elements should be engaged in and a search for alternatives worked out." We hope that in our forthcoming issues of *Voices* this concern will be reflected. We invite our readers to give your comments and thoughts on this theme and to share with us your struggles for life. In this issue we shall attempt some reflections on globalization and theology.

In our previous issues we had published many articles on the process of globalization. The last general assembly of EATWOT (December 1996) has given some attention to this. Third World perspective on globalization is clear. Globalization is not a neutral process. An alliance forged by the forces of domination for profit is the driving force of much of globalization. The poor and the marginal do not find protection and security under it. The global order it builds does not ensure values of justice and plurality. The search is for a global order where life-affirming values are preserved and strengthened. This would mean an economic system that is free of oppression. C.T. Kurien, an Indian economist, points out that today the powerful and all pervasive market has become "a tool of oppression." What they (people) need, therefore, is not greater market friendliness but 'people friendly markets'. A people friendly market,

he further states, is a social institution used, deliberately under human direction and control. The dictum 'leave it to the market' has no place here.<sup>1</sup>

An alternative development paradigm should be supported by an alternative vision of human bond to one another and to the earth. It is important that this new vision emerges from the experiences of the poor and the marginalized. The Nairobi assembly of EATWOT declared: "It is our conviction that a new paradigm for just development must emerge from the experiences of the poor and the marginalized."<sup>2</sup>

Can theology be pressed into service towards building a just global order? Does theology deepen our commitment to a new global solidarity based on justice and peace? The vision for theologizing should emerge from the experiences and traditions of faith of the people. Sometimes theologians turn such visions into rigid systems and absolute ideals. But the emphasis on contextual theology is an effort to ground theology in the immediate experiences of oppression and suffering of people.

The faith articulation of women and indigenous groups struggling for their dignity and freedom has helped us in our search for a relevant theology. They are important for our task of building a global solidarity. A holistic view of reality and non-hierarchical form of community are integral to their vision of life. This vision has to be recaptured in our theology. Some of our feminist writers and theologians who are committed to develop ecological theology are beginning to articulate this new vision of doing theology.

### **Holistic View of Reality**

Our perception of the structure of reality changes as we become aware of new areas of human experience and knowledge. The dualistic model of classical understanding – spirit/matter, mind/body – is not adequate to interpret our contemporary experience. Moreover, our feminist thinkers rightly point out that such a dualist view of reality is

largely responsible for maintaining a patriarchal and hierarchal model of society. A holistic model is closer to our life experiences, including our relation with nature. In fact, theologians who write about ecological concerns are united in their opinion that a holistic view of reality is basic to a responsible relation between humans and nature. An organic model of reality should replace a mechanistic model in our time. An organic model can interpret "the relation between God and world in ways commensurate with an ecological context."

Radical inter-relatedness and interdependence of all creation is of paramount significance as we perceive reality. "By reality," writes Samuel Rayan, "is meant every thing; the earth and all that it contains, with all the surprises it holds for the future; people and their creations; the conditions in which they live, their experience of life as gift, their celebration of it, no less than their experience of oppression and death, and their struggles and hopes and wounds and songs."<sup>3</sup>

Leonardo Boff goes further and affirms that "ecology constitutes a complex set of relationships. It includes everything, neglects nothing, values everything, is linked together. Based on this we can recover, Christianity's most early perception; its conception of God."<sup>4</sup> For him "world is a mirror of Trinity."

This provides a new perspective on Christology. Our tendency in modern theology to subsume all the new questions of theology under a framework that may be described as "Christocentric Universalism" is perhaps not the most helpful paradigm. Too much weight is put on this. Christ-in-relation seems to be a better way of affirming the Trinitarian concern of the process of transformation and renewal. A spirit-filled theology that responds to the pathos of people and their liberative stirrings should be evolved. The characteristic posture of the spirit is openness and an ability to transcend limits. The affirmation of the solidarity of the poor is the spirit's creative activity. To discern the spirit's working, we need 'Christic' sensitivity, but it can never be wholly interpreted by Christological formulations.

If radical inter-relatedness is the characteristic of the reality and therefore of the divine, then openness to the other is the essential mode of response to God. The openness becomes the seed for creating new relationships and a new order.

The struggle today is for open communities. Again the awareness of the need for the communities is not new. But today we face a situation where the identity struggle of different groups is projecting the shape of communities as classed, each group defines its boundaries over against the other. The question is how can we build a global solidarity of open communities. A community of communities that accepts a plurality of identities in a non-threatening, but mutually affirming way is the core of our vision. In fact, the Church is meant to be this solidarity. Leonardo Boff writes:

The ecclesial community must consider itself part of the human community which in turn must consider itself part of the cosmic community. And all together part of the Trinitarian Community of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.<sup>5</sup>

We have a long way to go if we take this vision seriously. The churches are so introvert that they are incapable of becoming a sacrament of this community of open communities in this world.

Mission has to take seriously this task of recreating communities. It means a critical awareness of the process and structures that are inimical to an open community. Forces that threaten life, practices that seldom promote justice and love, and above all an attitude of apathy towards change.

#### **Liberative Solidarity: A Form of Global Mission**

A holistic vision of reality is the basis for non-hierarchical open communities. But this vision of wholeness should have a concrete direction. In the prophetic vision of a community, compassion is the concrete dimension of it (Micah 6:5). It is solidarity that is liberative and life-affirming. Justice and loving mercy are the words used by the prophet. Together they may be translated into liberative solidarity.



The logic of justice as developed in the West emphasizes rights and rules, and respect for the other. It is a balancing of duties and rights. But in the prophets justice includes caring. Justice expressing compassion is the biblical emphasis. Prophets were not talking about balancing interests and rights, but about caring, the defending of the poor by the righteous God. This emphasis comes with poignancy when we consider our responsibility to the earth. It is a defenceless and weak partner of humans in creation. Caring love comes from compassion by standing at the place where the poor are and being in solidarity with them. It is the solidarity that makes us raise questions to be dominant models of globalization.

It also points to a new direction for global community that celebrated sharing and hope. Jesus rejected the imperial model of unity, which in his time was represented by the Roman empire and the power wielders of Jerusalem temple. He turned to Galilee, to the poor and the outcasts, women and the marginalized. He identified with them. His own uncompromising commitment to the values of the Kingdom and his solidarity with the victims of society made himself an enemy of the powers-that-be. Conflict was very much part of his ministry. It resulted in death. On the cross, he cried aloud, "My God, my God, why have you forgotten me?" It is a cry of desperation, a cry of loneliness. But is a moment of solidarity – a moment when he identified with the cries of all humanity.

In solidarity with the suffering, Jesus gave expression to his hope in the liberating God who has his preference in defending the poor and the dispossessed. It is in this combination of total identification with the depth of suffering and the hope that surpassed all experience that we see the clue to Jesus' presence in our midst and future he offers us. New wine, a new logic of community that comes from a solidarity culture was projected against the old wine, the old culture.

The promise of God's future in such a solidarity culture is an invitation to struggle, advocacy for the victims, and compassion.

People who are drawn to the side of the poor come into contact with the foundation of all life. The Bible declares that God encounters them in the poor. With this step from unconsciousness to consciousness, from apathetic hopelessness regarding one's fate to faith in the liberating God of the poor, the quality of poverty also changes because one's relationship to it changes.<sup>6</sup>

The solidarity culture is sustained by spirituality, not the spirituality that is elitist and other-worldly, but that which is dynamic and open.

In our struggle for a new global order we need to mobilize the superior resources of all religious traditions, not only the classical religions, but the primal religious traditions as well. In fact, the classical religions tend to project a type of spirituality that is devoid of a commitment to social justice. There are, however, notable exceptions. We begin to see a new search for the liberational form of spirituality in these religions. See for example the writings of Swami Agnivesh and Asghar Ali Engineer.<sup>7</sup> Tagore's words express this kind of spirituality:

Here is thy footstool and there rest thy feet where live the poorest, lowliest, and the lost.

When I try to bow to thee, my obeisance cannot reach down to the depth where thy feet rest among the poorest, the lowest and the lost. (*Gitanjali*)

But a distinct challenge comes from the Indian spirituality tradition. Its focus upon interiority is to be considered important when we talk about a commitment for action. Amalorpavadosh, one of the founding members of EATWOT, in all his writings emphasized this. Freedom also means liberation from pursuit, acquisition, accumulation and hoarding of wealth (*arta*), unbridled enjoyment of pleasures, comfort (*kama*), without being regulated and governed by righteousness and justice (*dharma*), without orientation to the ultimate goal (*moksha*).<sup>8</sup>

Mention has already been made about the spirituality of indigenous groups. Their holistic vision and communitarian value systems are



essential for the emergence of a new global order. They are signs of freedom we long for. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" (Paul). Our longing for a free and open order is a spiritual longing. Only when communities live with mutual respect, when they together eliminate all caste atrocities, when they together remove poverty and hunger, when all their religions sing the song of harmony, when they together celebrate God-given unity, then the Spirit is free. Towards that global solidarity let us commit ourselves.

#### Notes

1. C.T. Kurien, *Global Capitalism and the Indian Economy* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1994), p. 120.
2. K.C. Abraham (ed.), *Spirituality of the Third World* (New York: Orbis, 1994), p. 1.
3. J.R. Chandran (ed.), *Third World Theologies in Dialogue*, (Bangalore: EATWOT India, 1991), p. 47.
4. *Voices From The Third World*, Vol. XVI, No. 1, p. 115.
5. *Ibid.*
6. Dorothee Solle, *On Earth as in Heaven* (USA: Westminster, 1994), p. 16.
7. Asghar Ali Engineer, *Islam and Liberation Theology: Essays on Liberative Elements in Islam* (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1990).
8. *Theology of Development* (Bangalore: NBCLC, 1979), p. 15.

## The Future of Global Polarisation

*Samir Amin*

### Introduction: a Historical Look at Capitalism

Inequality in the development of human societies has been part of known history since antiquity, yet it is only in the modern era that polarisation has become the immanent product of global expansion of a system that, for the first time in history, has included all people of the planet, that system being capitalism.

This modern polarisation (capitalist) has taken on successive characteristics which correspond to the evolution of capitalist production. First, the mercantilist era (1500-1800), just before the industrial revolution, was led by the hegemony of dominant Atlantic centres of capital, and created peripheries (the Americas) as a function of their complete submission to the logic of capital accumulation.

Second, the category that one could label as "classic" was organised after the industrial revolution, which defined thereafter the central forms of capitalism, while the peripheries (progressively all of Asia – except Japan – and Africa, as well as Latin America)

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This essay represents a condensed argument of several books and articles by the author. Written originally in French, this is a translation by Lord Harunarun and Matutrin Houngruxpa.

remained rural and non-industrialised. Because of this, their participation in the global capitalist division of labour could only be in the areas of agricultural and mineral production. This dominant trait of polarisation was accompanied by a second, but no less important, characteristic of the system: the crystallisation of industrial systems at the centre as a controlled national system – constructed parallel to a national bourgeois state. The following two characteristics illustrate the dominant dimensions of national liberation ideology which emerged as a response to the challenge of polarisation: (i) aspirations for industrialisation – a synonym for progress and a way to “catch up”; (ii) aspirations for the construction of a nation-state like the central models. The ideology of modernisation is defined in these essential aspects of the term modernity. These forms of polarisation defined the world system from the industrial revolution (after 1800) to the post-WW II period.

Third, the post-war period (1945-1990) saw the progressive erosion of the two characteristics explained above. The national liberation movements seeking to establish political autonomy grew, in the peripheral states, and facilitated industrialisation in those areas. Although industrialisation was unequal, it was a dominant factor in Asia and Latin America. This period is simultaneously marked by the progressive dismantling of a national, autocentred system of production, and by the states becoming part of an integrated world system of production. This double erosion is the most recent manifestation of increasing globalisation.

Fourth, these transformations emerge as a result of the collapse of equilibrium characterising the post-WW II world system. The result is not a new world order marked by new forms of polarisation and other phenomena, but rather a “world disorder.” The chaos which defines the present situation is a result of the triple failure of a system which has not

i) developed new forms of political and social organisation

transcending the nation-state – a new requirement of the globalisation of the production system;

ii) defined adequate systems of economic and political relationships reconciling the vigorous industrialisation in the new peripheries – Asia and Latin America which have become competitive on the world market – with the pursuit of growth worldwide.

iii) defined relationships with Africa – which is not engaged in competitive industrialisation – other than those of exclusion.

This chaos is manifested throughout the world, displayed in all dimensions of political, social and ideological expressions of each region’s crisis. It is at the root of the difficulties experienced in a Europe which suddenly seems incapable of pursuing market integration and the parallel development of political forms. It is also at the root of the changes which affect all the peripheries – Eastern Europe, the semi-industrialised former Third World, and the marginalised new Fourth World. Far from supporting the progression of globalisation, this present chaos renders it extremely vulnerable.

Fifth, this present chaos should not keep us from thinking about different possible evolutions which could steer us toward a “new world order,” even if these evolutions take many forms, and if different types of future “world order” are possible. The objective of this essay is to call for a discussion of these questions, including the unavoidable globalisation discourse which boasts its triumph even when all the facts illustrate its previous nature.

The reader will have no doubt noticed that the method proposed by this analysis of the history of world capitalism is not centred on the question of “hegemonies.” I do not follow the method which proposes the reading of this history as one of successive hegemonies. The concept of hegemony – always defined in a vague manner in my opinion, not – scientific and often sterile – should not constitute the centre of the debate. On the contrary, I have developed the idea that

hegemony, far from constituting the rule, was the exception in real history which was marked in a dominant way by conflict between partners resulting in the failure of hegemony itself. The hegemony of the United States, which seems to impose itself presently – maybe because of a lack of alternatives amid the chaos – remains fragile and precarious like the globalisation process.

### **Today's World System**

The debate must, in my opinion, open with a profound discussion of what is new in the world system that resulted from the erosion of the former system. As stated earlier on this issue, I believe there are two elements:

- i) the erosion of the autocentred nation-state and the resulting disappearance of coordination between the domain of the reproduction of accumulation, and that of political and social management. Until now, this coordination had been precisely defined by the borders of each autocentred nation-state.
- ii) the erosion of the following contrasts: centres = industrialised regions, peripheries = non-industrialised regions; and the emergence of new dimensions of polarisation.

The position of a country in the world hierarchy is defined by its competitive capacity on the world market. Recognising this fact in no way implies that one subscribes to the point of view that this position is attained through a “rational” political economy! We do not believe in this vulgar bourgeois economics, for its rationality is precisely measured by adhering to the so-called “objective laws of the market.” Contrary to these fallacies (claimed to be true), I suggest that the “competitiveness” in question is the complex product of a set of conditions which operate in the realm of reality – economic, political and social. Furthermore, in this unequal battle, the centres put in place what I call their “five monopolies,” which articulate the efficacy of their actions. These five monopolies encompass social theory in its totality:

i) Monopolies from which the contemporary centres benefit in the area of technology: such monopolies demand huge expenditures that only the state – the large and rich state – can envision supporting. Without this support, which the liberal discourse implicitly excludes, and specifically the support of military expenditures, most of these monopolies could not be maintained.

ii) Monopolies operating in the realm of control of world financial flows: the increasing permeation of major financial institutions which operate on the world financial market has given these monopolies an efficacy without precedent. Until only recently, the major part of a nation's savings could only circulate in the space commanded by financial institutions at the national level. Today, it is no longer the case: these savings are centralised through the intervention of financial institutions, for which the field of operation is the entire world. They make up financial capital which is the most globalised segment of capital. It remains the case that this privilege rests on a political logic which renders financial globalisation easily acceptable. This logic could be challenged by a simple political decision of delinking which would limit globalisation to the domain of financial transfers. However, the free movement of globalised financial capital operates in domains defined by a world monetary system which I deem obsolete. This system is based on the dogma of the market controlling the fluctuation of currencies and on the dollar being the universal currency. The former has no scientific foundation and the latter only functions as an alternative. A national currency can only play the role of an international currency in a satisfactory manner if the condition of international competitiveness generates an export surplus, thereby insuring the financing of structural adjustment of other countries. This was the case in nineteenth century Britain. It is not the case in the United States today because the U.S. finances its deficit by the loans which it imposes on other countries. This is also not the case for its rivals; Japan's surplus (Germany's having disappeared after reunification) is not large enough to meet the needs of other countries'

structural adjustment. Under these conditions, far from being a “natural solution,” financial globalisation is artificial and fragile. In the short term, it brings about permanent instability, not the stability necessary for an efficient adjustment process.

iii) Monopolies operating with access to the planet’s natural resources: the thoughtless exploitation of these resources now presents dangers to the planet, and capitalism, with its short-term social rationality, cannot overcome these problems. At the same time, these problems reinforce the control of developed countries over these resources as they do not want this wasteful behaviour to be repeated elsewhere.

iv) Monopolies operating in the domain of communication and media: these not only promote a uniform world culture, but also provide new means of political manipulation. The expansion of modern media’s market is already one of the major components of the erosion of both the concept and practice of democracy in the West itself.

v) Monopolies operating in the field of weapons of mass destruction: formerly restrained by the bipolarity of the post-WW II era, this monopoly is now the weapon used only by US diplomacy just as in 1945. If “proliferation” brings about obvious dangers it is because there is no democratic control over the use of these arms.

Collectively, these five monopolies explain the framework by which globalisation is expressed. Far from being an expression of “pure” economic rationality that one could separate from social and political frameworks, the law of value is the condensed expression of all of these conditions. I posit here that these predispositions prevent peripheries from achieving the goals of development through industrialisation and devalue productive work, while they overvalue the so-called value-added attached to activities performed by these monopolies for the benefit of the centre. They then create a new hierarchy of global income distribution – more unequal than ever –

which reduces the periphery’s industries to the role of sub-contractor. Because of these relationships global polarisation will continue to shape the future.

Counter-balancing the dominant ideological discourse, I contend that “market globalisation” is simply a reactionary utopia against which we must develop an alternative theoretical and practical humanist project based on a socialist perspective.

The realisation of such a project implies constructing a global political system which is not “at the service” of the world market but which defines its domain of operation, similar to the way in which the nation-state historically has represented not the area of activity of the national market but the social framework for that activity. A global political system would have important responsibilities in each of the following four areas:

- i) the organisation of global disarmament at the appropriate levels, which would free humanity from the threat of nuclear holocaust and other atrocities.
- ii) the organisation of equitable access – or increasingly less unequal – to the planet’s resources, and the creation of global systems of decision-making in this area including putting tariffs on resources which would force the reduction of waste, and the redistribution of the value and rent from these resources. By so doing, this would even create elements of a world fiscal system.
- iii) open and flexible, yet controlled, negotiations concerning economic relationships between unequally developed regions of the world with the goal of progressively reducing the technological and financial monopolies of the centre. This implies, of course, the liquidation of institutions presently charged with managing the world market (the IMF, GATT, the so-called World Bank, etc.), and the creation of other systems to manage the world economy.

iv) the organisation of negotiations allowing for a legitimate management of national/global dialectical conflict in the areas of communication, culture and politics. Such an administration implies creating political institutions which permit the representation of social interests at the global level. In many ways, the creation of such a “world parliament” would go beyond the present concept of state institutions.

### **Obstacles to the Realisation of this Project**

It is quite obvious that the above-mentioned proposals do not correspond to tendencies in the world today. Nor do the objectives of this humanist project coincide with the stakes of present conflicts. I am not at all surprised, and would be even more surprised if the case were otherwise. The erosion of the old world system did not prepare the way for its successor, which in the immediate time-frame can only emerge a chaos. The dominant forces set out their plan of action in this chaos looking only for short-run benefits. By so doing, these powers aggravate the chaotic situation. Their attempt to legitimate their choices through the insipid ideology of the “self-regulating” market, by the affirmation that “there are no alternatives,” or by pure and simple cynicism is not a solution to the problem; rather, it is part of the problem. People’s immediate responses to the degradation of their conditions are not any more positive; in the confusion they could only be illusory. For example, responses such as the rise of fundamentalist or chauvinistic behaviour could mobilise a considerable number of people. Acting in accordance with its historical vocation, the Left must attempt to construct, in theory and in practice, conditions for a humanist response to the challenges. Until the Left puts this humanist response into practice, regressive and criminal reactions remain the probable world agenda.

The difficulties which European integration faces provide a good example of the impasse constructed by the “globalisation of the market.” Amid the enthusiasm, that the project originally evoked,

these difficulties were not imagined despite the fact that they could have easily been foreseen. These problems had been anticipated for a long time by people like me who never believed that the common market alone would shape a unified Europe. We were saying that a project as ambitious as that one could only be carried out by a European Left capable of incorporating the construction of a unified market within a progressive social and culture project without which the very edifice would remain fragile, even reversible with the slightest incident. The European Leftists must impose a double series of measures in each step of market integration: first, by assuring that the benefits of the project go back to the workers reinforcing their social power and their unity; and second, by initiating the construction of a political system which transgresses that of nation states. This would be the necessary political format for the efficient management of an enlarged European market. Nothing like this has occurred. The European project has been led by the Right, reduced to its mercantile dimension while the Left has been rallying all along for their proposed model without imposing their conditions. The result is obvious: changes in the world economy have forced European partners into adversarial positions where they only alleviate their own problems (specifically unemployment) to the detriment of others, and again without employing the most efficient means to accomplish this. Without the means to control market logic, they will be more and more tempted by reactionary solutions. Important politicians from both Germany and France, from the Left and the Right, have sincerely proclaimed their will to avoid these solutions, but only through political rhetoric.

The current European Community’s difficulties emerge at the same time as a larger Europe adds new dimensions to the challenge. The European project provided the Left with the opportunity to re-think and to initiate a grand economic and political (“confederal”) Europe by reconstructing the unity of labour at a European level. The Left has let the occasion slip away, and instead has allowed the Right to

profit from the dissolution of the Soviet system by substituting a savage capitalist system. It is clear that this project to “Latino-Americanise” Eastern Europe can only weaken the opportunities for a Leftist redesigning of the European project, and the project will only accentuate the disequilibrium in the heart of “Europe of Twelve” to the benefit of the only partner capable of capitalising on this evolution: unified Germany.

One of the major challenges confronting the new globalisation is this crisis within the European project. But Europe is certainly not the only place one finds reactionary manifestations – tragic and inadequate responses to the challenge of constructing a renewed world system. All over the former Third World, especially in regions marginalised by the dissolution of the former world system (within the Islamic, Arab and African worlds), and also in the new Third World of the East (the ex-USSR and ex-Yugoslavia), the self-destructive responses are far from meeting the extent of the challenge.

### **Possible Future Scenarios**

Taking into account the present maze of forces in conflict, the analyst who claims to be realistic, imagines several possible scenarios. I will examine a few in order to show that all these scenarios are short of satisfying the demands of a stable and acceptable world order, and that consequently they do not allow us to escape from the chaos.

The European question is central to the future of globalisation. With the European project at a standstill, threatened by disintegration, those who are committed to the European idea may believe that accepting the “second best” solution – that of a German Europe – is useful and plausible. Based on the German expansion in a latino-americanised Eastern Europe (following a tradition from Bismark to Hitler), this project will only tolerate association with France, Italy, and Spain if they do not hinder Germany’s actions. With this hypothesis, it is quite possible to think that the British “vessel” will sail in American waters, distancing itself from “Continental” Europe.

We are well on our way to this eventuality illustrated by the priority given in this model to a “neutral monetary management” (a technocratic concept based on political ignorance of money management), which has naturally been entrusted to the Bundesbank. I do not believe that this caricature of the original European project could really be stable, because in the long-run neither Russia nor France would accept the inevitable erosion of their positions. No matter which scenario emerges, whether it be Germany as the lone rider or a German Europe, neither will jeopardize the privileged functions of the United States. Because it is clear that neither of these options will be able to threaten the American position in any of the five monopolies which I described above, German Europe is forced to remain in the wake of the United States.

From there we move on to the actors in the second scenario, that of the return of “American hegemony” since there is no alternative. This scenario embodies many variants, the most probable including a certain degree of “sharing the burden” in accordance with a neo-imperialistic regionalisation, harnessing Latin America to the American chariot, Africa to the Germano-European chariot (within which mere morsels are left for France). Yet, Europe will not wield power in the petroleum-rich Gulf region nor in the “Middle East Common Market” which remain within the domain of the U.S., whose presence is direct by way of military occupation in the Gulf and indirect through their Israeli alliance. Similarly Japan dominates Southeast Asia. Yet, this division does not imply equality between the three regions – the U.S. remains in its privileged position. Here again, I do not believe that neo-imperialist options of this nature guarantee the system’s stability. They will be challenged here and there by revolts in Latin America, Asia and Africa.

We must therefore fix our attention on Asia which is outside the Euro-American conflict. It is often remarked that even in the present global crisis, Asia is somewhat of an exception. In Japan as in China and Korea, and to a lesser degree in some Southeast Asian countries

(Singapore, Thailand, and Malaysia) and even in India, their successes have been indisputable – in terms of growth and efficiency – measured by competitiveness on the world market. Yet, it would be too easy to conclude that Asia will be the next hegemonic power. One must acknowledge that Asia, although divided into distinct nations, is more than half of the world population. Asia as the main region of capitalist accumulation could easily replace hegemony since the latter concept is somewhat vague. Again, we must explain how this accumulation will function, how different nations of the region will interact among themselves and with the rest of the world. Herein lies the rationale of the variants. The scenario most often imagined, that of Japanese imperialism dominating the region, is in my opinion, the least plausible. Japan's vulnerability remains a handicap which is too often underestimated by admirers of their recent economic success, and to overcome that vulnerability Japan remains in the wake of the United States. The claim that China or even Korea will be subordinated to Japan has no strong basis. Under these conditions the intervention of other outside powers would be required in order to manage the inter-Asiatic equilibrium. As the U.S. alone can fulfil this role, it would propagate its domination in the world system.

In any case the position of Asian countries will become strengthened, especially that of China. How will the U.S. react to this evolution? In my opinion, all the strategies of the world alliances depend on this question because it is clear that China's development will indeed challenge all global equilibrium. This is why their development will be seen as a threat to the U.S. I believe that the major conflicts of the future will be between Americans and Chinese. What will the European position be in this conflict? Presently, it is difficult to say.

### **Conclusion**

The different possible scenarios into which present events may evolve do not challenge North-South polarisation. The logic of the

capitalist system perpetuates the centre/periphery polarisation by constantly renewing its modes of operation. The five monopolies on which I based my earlier reasoning will provide a foundation for this activity.

The reader will notice that there is nothing brand new in this perspective, that is, polarisation is considered almost as a natural phenomenon. I will not conclude here precisely because all the changes of the past five centuries centre on this topic: people marginalised by world capitalist expansion who seemed to have accepted their fate for too long, have decided to no longer accept it during the last 50 years or so, and will accept it less and less in the future. The positive aspect of the globalisation which capitalism has initiated (and in the current truncated version will not be able to surpass) is the worm in the fruit. The important aspects of the Russian and Chinese revolutions – going beyond the system and evolving people of the periphery – will be pursued in new forms. Herein lies the ultimate reason for the instability present in the construction of "world systems." Surely, the conflicts of the future will be characterised by unequal relations, just as in the past. My intuition says that conflicts between the people of Asia and the dominant system will be determinant factors in the unfolding of history. This does not exclude others from this general revolt against polarisation, just as this does not exclude advancements and transformations emanating from the centre of the system itself. I have expressed my views elsewhere on the problematic of a world socialist transformation and will not return to that topic here. Even with these possible evolutions, one cannot ignore the potential for dramatic failures if people turn inward and refuse a universalistic perspective. I have also talked about this elsewhere.

The project of a humanitarian response to the challenge of globalisation initiated by capitalist expansion could appear "idealistic" to the reader, but it is not "utopic." On the contrary, it is the only possible realistic option in the sense that initiating this project will encourage all the powerful social forces capable of imposing their



logic to come together. As far as I am concerned, moving in this direction should renew the perspective of world socialism. To prepare the conditions, one must first reorganise the ideological and political forces capable of combating the five monopolies by which capitalist polarisation reproduces itself, and then impose a “mutual adjustment” in place of the unilateral adjustment encouraged by capitalist logic. On the ideological and cultural front, this combat requires rethinking the debates which I deem fundamental: i) the universal/particular dialectic; ii) the relationship between political democracy and social progress; iii) the dialectic between the so-called economic efficiency (that of the “market”) and the values of equality and solidarity; iv) the definition of the world socialist objective in light of the preceding reflections.

In the area of world politics, we must advance systems of organisation which are more authentically democratic and therefore capable of reorganising economic relations of an increasingly equal basis. I feel that a high priority should be reorganising the global system by supporting regional groups including peripheral areas. Setting up regions such as Latin America, the Arab World, Southeast Asia, including China and India, is important. I propose that this objective be the first priority of a renewed agenda for the “Non-Aligned Movement.” These regionalisations do not exclude others such as Europe or the ex-USSR. The reason for this requirement is simple: the five monopolies in question in our analysis can only be combated efficiently at this level. Thus, the creation of a truly global economic and financial system, present at each stage (national, regional, global) will soon be possible.

I am aware that transformations begin with the development of the struggle at the foundation of societies. Without the transformation of ideological, political and social systems at their national bases, the discourse of globalisation and polarisation will remain one of analysts operating postmortem.

## Reorienting Our Hopes?

*Bastian Wielenga*

The collapse of the Soviet Union, the crisis gripping various types of revolutionary and reformist movements, the weakness of forces which are ready to resist the onslaught of capital on people and on the environment, and the systematic promotion of a culture of hopelessness and violence by the mass media, are contributing to the epidemic spreading of a spirit of resignation. Why should we exhaust ourselves in struggles which are bound to be defeated? Some may get desperate and start throwing bombs, others may withdraw and try to find meaning and satisfaction in a quiet private corner. If we don't want to surrender to despair or seek a private escape, on what grounds do we believe that it makes sense to be involved on the side of the poor struggling for survival? Can these struggles against all odds usher into the reorientation and transformation of society which humankind needs in order to survive?

There are good reasons to encourage each other to pursue these questions in the context of concrete struggles, keeping closely in touch with people who don't have middle-class options of escape. Whatever our doubts about the prospects of success, solidarity with those who struggle for survival should not be dependent on changing political and ideological conditions.

There is meaning in practising solidarity and compassion and in fighting injustice even if there is defeat again and again. But meanwhile we must try to find out the reasons for disappointments and defeats. We have to ask how the longing for life and for a bit of happiness which sustains people in their daily life struggles and the search for a better society which can provide livelihood and dignity for all, can be connected in a more fruitful way. In other papers I have – in dialogue with others – discussed the reasons for the collapse of the Soviet Union.<sup>1</sup> My main conclusion has been that the attempts of communist parties in Eastern Europe and also of national liberation movements in Africa, Asia and Latin America to break away from imperialist control and capitalist structures have failed, because they did not break with the civilization model of the West. They opted for its pattern of industrialisation and modernisation, had to impose tremendous hardships on the majority of people, and lost democratic legitimation in the process. The question is whether an alternative orientation would have been possible, still is possible.

There are two fundamental reasons why an alternative orientation has to be found and pursued. The prevailing model based on economic growth within an integrated world market cannot absorb hundreds of millions of people who are now living and dying below the poverty line. It has to marginalise and exclude them, like the rich man does with Lazarus in Luke's parable. Neither can the prevailing, growth-oriented model solve the mounting ecological problems which are caused by it. If we want the brothers and sisters of Lazarus to survive in a world which can feed everybody we have to find a new perspective.

This reorientation is a difficult process. Communists and others tended to promise abundance in the style of the rich man. And the capitalist media have clinched the issue: happiness and meaning of life is to be found in the accumulation of wealth and rising consumption levels. It looks much more difficult to motivate activists

to struggle if the fruits are going to be eventually so limited, at least in terms of the present standards set by the rich man. The very idea of limits seems to be bound to undermine enthusiasm.

In the present paper I am trying to address that problem. It is all very tentative, but I have the feeling that we may find unexpected sources for a reorientation and recharging of our hopes in the limited but very basic aspirations of people in their daily life struggles. They are struggling for survival. That is basic. Their aspirations are limited. In that respect they are not yet fully integrated into capitalism. C.T. Kurien shows how many households are still geared to working for utilitarian values, even if they have to acquire them through the exchange process. They are not (yet?) hooked on to accumulation as the purpose and fulfillment of life. That means that within capitalist society there are still many people whose hopes are very close to the hopes of people in earlier pre-capitalist societies.

We cannot go back to these earlier societies, but we can look back at them, as we are discovering that the promises of modern capitalist society are illusory, and try to recover from them elements for a reorientation and reconstruction of our hopes under new conditions in search of a new society. Such a reorientation of hope sounds for many leftists as a total break with the socialist/communist project based on revolutionary acceleration of progress. In the next section I try to sow some doubts regarding that position by referring to Walter Benjamin and Karl Marx.

#### **A. Storm From Paradise**

One basic ground for reorienting our hopes rather than giving up is the insight that modern development, be it under capitalist or communist management has been moving towards disaster. It dawns on many that hopes based on progress in the sense of more of the same are illusory and contributing to catastrophic developments. In that context hope turns to whatever can stop or slow down the movement towards disaster. In a train speeding towards an abyss across

which there is no bridge there is no point in hoping on reaching the other side. Instead the elementary hope of survival will focus on the emergency brake. That is the image which Walter Benjamin used for proletarian revolution: it should stop humankind from rushing towards disaster as a result of further progress along the capitalist road. Such an understanding of revolution was rather a provocation in the spiritual climate of the Second and Third International. Marxist-oriented socialists and communists were very much relying on the process of historical evolution through technical progress. They were inclined to see revolution as the forceful removal of obstacles in that way of progress, as the unfettering of productive forces in order to include all those who had been left out by capitalism.

Against this trend of thought Benjamin placed his view of history as an ongoing catastrophe. Meditating on a painting of Paul Klee he evokes the image of the angel of history – the historian? – facing the past with its heaps of ruins. The angel wants to raise the dead and restore the ruins, but a storm from paradise blows into his wings and drives him backwards into the future while further heaps of ruins are rising before his eyes. “That what we call progress is this storm.”

In this view revolution is an end, a break, a stoppage in the ongoing catastrophe. Benjamin connects this with the coming of the Messiah as a redemptive intervention, a break which brings a new beginning, a return to paradise as it were, a restoration of all things.<sup>2</sup> It would be easy for traditional leftists to dismiss this as romanticism, or the like, if not Benjamin had associated himself so closely with the hopes of the proletarian revolution and with a Marxist orientation.

It is a moot question whether Marx himself basically belongs to the evolutionist camp which believes in progress. He certainly has given plenty of possibilities for his late followers to think so. It would be amazing if he would have been fully free from that spirit which so much dominated 19th century thinking. But there are important counter-indications which bring him closer to Benjamin’s approach.

When in the latter part of his life Marx turns to history, especially to the study of pre-historical pre-class societies, his purpose is not just to establish an evolutionary scheme of history which many were fond of doing. His interest was to call to mind, to recover from that early past, the human experience of a non-exploitative society. Michael Löwy draws at this point a parallel with Benjamin who with the help of Bachofen studied early communist society, in search of clues for future, post-capitalist society.<sup>3</sup>

Marx in a letter to Engels, written on March 25, 1868 and referred to by Löwy, distinguishes his interest for primitive society from the romantic appreciation of medieval conditions among those who reacted against the French Revolution and Enlightenment. “The second reaction is to look beyond the Middle Ages into the primitive age of every nation, and that corresponds to the socialist trend.” Those who do so “find what is newest in what is oldest – even equalitarians to a degree which would have made Proudhon shudder.”<sup>4</sup>

In the same letter Marx comments on a book of Fraas, *Climate and the Vegetable World Throughout the Ages* with the conclusion “that cultivation when it progresses spontaneously and is not consciously controlled leaves deserts behind it – Persia, Mesopotamia, Greece. Hence again socialist tendencies without being aware of them”. In other words, ecological catastrophes are the result of spontaneous development and uncontrolled progress and require conscious interventions. This connects once more with Benjamin who appreciated Fourier’s attempts to establish a balanced relationship between humans and nature and found that they did not contradict Marx.<sup>5</sup>

A few years later we find Marx rethinking on the role of the modern centralised state in the wake of the Paris Commune, the “Greatest Revolution” of the 19th century. “It was a Revolution against the State itself” whose machinery had only been perfected in the course of the preceding bourgeois revolutions. This stoppage, this break, this attempt to put an end to the state is seen by Marx as the

“reabsorption of state power by the popular masses,” a “resumption by the people for the people of its own social life.” There is an element of “return” to what has been earlier in this understanding of the Paris Commune which played such an important role in the revision of Marx’s thinking about revolution.

A further step in the revision of hopes results from his intensive dialogue with revolutionary Narodniki in Russia, who refused to base their expectations on the pattern of Western progress. Marx comes to see capitalist development in Russia, pushed by the Tsarist state in alliance with trading and usury capital not as the inevitable next phase in historical progress but as a destructive threat to communal land ownership and to the farmer as “Russia’s greatest productive force.” The rural commune and the revolutionary peasantry appear as key factors for a revolutionary regeneration of Russia. Revolution, therefore would not be the destroying of archaic relations of production in order to unfetter the forces of production pushing Russia on the road of capitalist progress.

On the contrary, it should be a timely intervention, a decisive interruption and break of a destructive development, the destruction of destructivity. It would be a pulling of the emergency brake, a rescue operation. “To save the Russia Commune there must be a Russian Revolution.”<sup>6</sup> It would be a revolution which would open a “new chapter that does not begin with its own suicide.” Instead of going through a phase of destruction of communal property there would be a path of transformation with the help of certain technical achievements of contemporary capitalism leading to the new society as a “revival in superior form of an archaic social type.”<sup>7</sup>

The new perception of the destructive role of capitalism penetrating in the peripheries applies also to India. Whereas Marx in the 1850s spoke of British colonialism as having initiated the “only social revolution in Asia” he calls in his draft letter to Vera Zasulich the “suppression of communal land ownership nothing but an act of English

vandalism which drove the indigenous population backward rather than forward.” In other words the way forward is no longer that of modern progress but of preserving or recovering certain archaic forms. Of course, Marx does not advocate a return to the past like Gandhi did. But he affirms that the archaic past has a crucial role to play in the future.

## **B. Walking Backwards Into the Future**

Raymond Williams has been one of the most stimulating Marxist thinkers whose critical analysis of contemporary society and culture and constructive reflections have much to contribute to our search for a viable way to a viable socialist alternative. He is no longer there to update his analysis, but his basic insights remain valid. In an article written in 1985 he argues that the idea of socialism has been related to the idea of progress, yet has to be distinguished from it.

Whatever the confidence or lack of confidence in the future socialism is counterposed as an idea of society to an individualist approach. The socialist idea has posed the question: “Was life an arena in which individuals should strive to improve their own conditions, or was it a network of human relationships in which people found everything of value in and through each other?”<sup>9</sup> The socialist movement shared with capitalism the enthusiasm about technological progress and modernization, expecting that it would prepare the ground for a fair distribution under socialism. Many socialists were much less enthusiastic about the break-down of customs and the break-up of settlements and human communities. Against it they affirmed new relationships of solidarity while expecting socialism to rebuild social relationships in the whole of society.

But now it becomes increasingly clear that the very process of capitalist development and technological progress makes more and more people not only temporarily but permanently redundant. What does that mean for the socialist idea of society as a network of relationships in which people find value and meaning in and through each other? What has the socialist project to offer to that large part of

humankind which is excluded by the process of capitalist modernisation and which, for ecological and economic reasons, cannot be reintegrated if socialism would base itself on the same logic of economic growth? The problem is that a future society which is inclusive and provides for all requires indeed an increase in productivity. At the same time those who want such a society cannot agree to “kinds of production, and kinds of monetary and trading relationships which make whole groups of our people, whole regions and communities, redundant.”<sup>10</sup>

We have to walk “backwards into the future” as the title of Williams’ article puts it. He does not elaborate on that, but I take it to mean that socialist cannot move forward without caring for those who drop out, are pushed aside and left behind. They cannot turn their back on them and on that what they have to contribute to the future of humankind. That is what the have’s in present-day capitalism may do, including even sections of the working class. Socialists who are committed to an inclusive society have to see who all are left behind and what precious heritage is discarded in the ruthless economic march forward of contemporary capitalism. Keeping in eye-contact with the “backwards” they have to “walk” at a pace which does not exclude but includes, backwards, into the future. The key to this way of moving into a socialist future according to Williams is popular democracy, starting from the organisation of work and of community. The social democratic welfare state and the bureaucratic socialist state were inclusive when it came to distribution. But we need a socialism which begins with sharing of power, of decision making, of control of common resources, on the level of organising work, livelihood and community life. Deep down many are longing for it, Williams claims. There is enough social energy which can be mobilised to develop popular democracy on all levels. To find the proper forms is a basic challenge.

We may be inclined to think that the “idea of society” belongs to the past, that people have surrendered to the idea of the arena and to individualistic pursuit of private aims. But we can see even in the

distorted and dangerous forms of group and gang formation and of communalism and revivalism how much social energy indeed is there for collective action, for a certain commitment to sharing, for a search of meaning in belonging to a community. People want to belong. They flock around those who promise some form of social community in which they will be included. Capitalism leaves that longing and need unsatisfied. Communalism responds to it. However, it does so while excluding at the same time, by defining the community over against others. This communalism can be fought only by projecting and working towards a society which is really inclusive. We have to recover from the past the hopes and aspirations which have been associated with the idea of socialism, of an inclusive society based on justice. That is one more reason to walk backwards into the future. A socialist project is the only alternative to the murderous exclusivism of both capitalism and various forms of communalism and chauvinism.

Who are left behind by the blind march of economic and technological progress? Initially the message of Marx and others for subsistence producers and other marginalised sections was that they had only one way to escape from becoming obsolete. They had to accept to join the ranks of the proletariat, leaving behind their old mode of life. Only then they could hope to become part of a better future in the course of the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat.

Today even more and more workers are becoming obsolete. Modernisation and industrialization are not only unable to absorb those who are uprooted from subsistence production and traditional commodity production. Nowadays the threat of redundancy also looms over workers in the modern sector. The working class is not going to disappear, as some are predicting. We are not going to have a post-industrial society. Industry will be there. But it will absorb and employ a decreasing percentage of members of society. More and more people are pushed into the informal sector where they have to struggle for survival under murderous conditions.

That growing sector resembles in some ways older practices of subsistence production and of exchange relations. And it is impressive to see the skills with which people manage to survive. But this sector basically differs from earlier traditional society in fundamental respects. There maybe sub-structures of social solidarity – based on kinship or neighbourhood – but they have to survive in a ruthless social environment of market conditions which know no pardon. They are beyond the protection of laws, at the mercy of moneylenders, employers, landlords. Those who struggle to build up people’s organisations in this sector are up against tremendous odds. How can this arena be turned into a space where solidarity grows?

### **C. Looking Back in Hope**

Few people are left who look with optimistic confidence and expectation forward to a better future. The fear of a nuclear holocaust may have receded somewhat. The fear of global ecological catastrophes and a sense of crisis that society may be unable to cope with the mounting problems is widespread.

As things develop at present the future does not offer a perspective, certainly not for the whole of humankind, at best only for a minority for a limited period till the planet collapses because of over-exploitation.

The question arises whether those who are walking backward into the future, would be able to discover in the past not only ruins and not only the victims of a catastrophic history, but also human potential, experiences, and memories of attempts to build viable communities, skills and social forms and a cultural heritage which could become signposts and assets for the search of paths into a more promising future.

Dick Hensman (Sri Lanka) in his study *New Beginnings* is looking back even beyond early human communities to breakthroughs and beginnings in cosmic and biological evolution in order to tap sources of hope against the death-dealing powers which deny life-space to those who don’t count.<sup>11</sup>

Today the scientific study and technological engineering of the basic elements of life are subordinated to the accumulation of power and wealth in the hands of the few who count. Against their death-dealing regime Hensman calls the powerless to plumb the mysteries of the coming-into-being of the universe and of the revolutionary emergence of life, of the biological cell as a miniature world in itself as a source of hope. The cell speaks of the principle of autonomous self-organisation, the capacity for planning and designing of living things on an increasingly complex scale, of versatility and innovation. Seen in that perspective life challenges us in each new human being “to learn how to live, how to self-manage, in order to complete it and perfect it in the shape of a community of freely living and cooperating and mutually serving and loving persons.”

Like Marx, Hensman finds historical evidence for the potential of humans to respond to the challenge of life in the achievements of early human communities. He then turns in an extensive commentary on Luke to the probing of the potentials of this particular religious tradition for fostering new beginnings beyond the cross and the triumph of death-dealing powers.

Objections may be made that this looking back to a faraway past is futile, as we cannot pick up the threads which have been cut by a history of repression and exploitation. Marx and Hensman are well aware of that history and speak eloquently of it. Yet they seem to assume that what has been repressed must not be lost provided we do remember. Walter Benjamin speaks of a messianic restitution of what got lost due to the storm of progress. The way to live up to this hope is to remember the experiences of the victims of history. Remembering restores to the human community what dismemberment in the course of “development” has cut off.<sup>12</sup>

This comes close to basic biblical insights. To remember is fundamental to biblical faith, and, I suppose, to all life-affirming cultural and religious traditions. Significantly the Hebrew language

calls the past that which is “before the face” (*lifne*) and the future that what is “behind”, in the back (*aharon*). Its very much hope-oriented faith implies a backward walking into the future.

When Hebrew slaves broke away from Egypt, and formed a tribal league with shepherds and peasants in Canaan, they consciously rejected the dominant, most developed civilizational model of Egypt and the Canaanite city-states and opted for a decentralised peasant economy without a centralised State apparatus. Theirs was not a tribal agricultural economy naturally emerging from primitive clans of gatherers and hunters, moving one stage up on the evolutionary ladder. They were victims of high civilization, its slaves, its exploited peasants, its dropouts remembering the social values and advantages of a tribal way of life and social organisation, and integrating them into an alternative set-up in order to survive.

The classless tribal society of Israel survived only for about two centuries. But the experience of this break remained with Israel as a source for prophetic critique of unjust social structures and practices. That all have a share in the land, that the poor have a claim on the support of the community, that the neighbour is to be loved as an equal, all that and much more becomes part of the criteria by which the prophets – looking back – condemn the landlordism, the exploitation and oppression of later class society. Elijah condemns Ahab in the case of Naboth on that basis and so do the other prophets. They are “conservatives” not in the sense that they want to uphold the status quo, but in the sense that they criticise the status quo by referring to God’s original purpose as it has been witnessed to earlier, and thus reopen the way to the future.

The formation of the Hebrew Bible which originates in exile is the fruit of recalling experiences of Abraham, of the Exodus, of the tribal covenant, of a more egalitarian society and of critically evaluating historical developments in that light in order to make a new beginning after the return from exile. The Hebrew word for

“return,” (*shub*) is at the same time the word for “repent.” And practical repentance would require release of slaves, cancellation of debts and redistribution of land – in other words return to a society not based on claims which allow endless accumulation of wealth.

Peasants may have an important role to play in pulling the emergency brake and in contributing to a reorientation of hopes. Of course, many agriculturists have been drawn into mechanised, industrialised farming as a business. For them land and crops are just a matter of investments, for the sake of profit. New absentee landlords are entering the scene: “even if you don’t have a green thumb, even if you can’t tell phosphate from nitrate, Maxworth Orchards can make you a wealthy gentleman-farmer without having to set foot on a farm.”<sup>13</sup> But there are still, at least in India, hundreds of millions of people for whom land and crops and cattle are means to make a livelihood. They are satisfied when the rains are good and the crops can carry them through to the next season. They are becoming increasingly dependent on the market but that does not (yet?) mean that they get hooked on to the idea of accumulation. That is especially true for women and adivasis.

Unfortunately traditional Marxists have tended to look down on peasants and to suspect them. On the one hand they have held against them that they were primarily concerned about their own survival and not interested in the great questions of politics and historical progress. Marx, the Marx of 1853 who differs from the Marx who writes on the peasant commune twenty-five years later, speaks in harsh terms of India’s “idyllic village communities.” They restrain “the human mind within the smallest possible compass, making it the unresenting tool of superstition, enslaving it beneath traditional rules, depriving it of all grandeur and historical energies.” He speaks of the “barbarian egotism” which concentrates “on some miserable patch of land” without bothering about the fall of empires. He assumes that “this undignified, stagnatory and vegetative life,” this “passive sort



of existence” evoked on the other hand “unbounded forces of destruction.” Finally he refers critically to caste, slavery and the “brutal worship of nature, exhibiting its degradation in the fact that man, the sovereign of nature, fell down on his knees in adoration of Hanuman, the monkey and Sabbala, the cow.”<sup>14</sup> While Marx sympathises with their sufferings, he sees all features of traditional peasant life in a negative perspective, whether it is caste, or cow worship, or petty ownership, or what he calls passive existence. There is even a moral overtone in his judgement; obviously he is convinced that traditional village life – even without caste – would be below human dignity.

On the other hand there was the suspicion that peasants were all potential petty capitalists. As petty owners they would all try to become big owners, if given the chance. That was the suspicion dominating the mind of the Bolsheviks forging an uneasy alliance between workers and peasants. They hardly took into consideration the still surviving collective practices of the Russian village, which Marx had learned to value. Nor did they reckon with the possibility that many peasants would limit their hopes to an improvement of their livelihood.

I suppose that this point can be elaborated by studying on the one hand Chayanov’s theory of peasant economy and on the other hand maybe literature in the form of novels and poems about peasant life. I will limit myself to a short, tentative survey of biblical expressions of a peasant outlook, arguing that their mode of existence has an inbuilt tendency towards a healthy limitation of hopes which is relevant for today. It may help to find viable links between the struggles for survival, the hope for a better life and the need for a different type of society.

The Hebrew Bible depicts the promised land as a “land flowing with milk and honey.” Flowing with milk and honey evokes the picture of a good life which offers more than the bare satisfaction of basic needs, and which on the other hand is not strangled by accumulation of goods. It speaks of an economy of enough which sustains the flow of life in a fullness which remains enjoyable.

As the down-to-earth wisdom of Proverbs puts it:

“My son, eat honey, for it is good  
and the drippings of the honeycomb are sweet to your  
taste” (23:13). And it adds:

“Know that wisdom is such to your soul;  
if you find it, there will be a future,  
and your hope will not be cut off” (24:14).

That wisdom knows the limits:

“If you have found honey, eat only enough for you,  
lest you be sated with it and vomit it” (25:16).

This is more than a piece of advice to spare one’s own stomach. It has to do with a training in self-control which has social relevance (Cf. Prov. 25:27f.). It is such self-control which distinguishes the righteous from the wicked who don’t know any limits in their greed for accumulation.

Survival on milk and honey, that seems to be the promise according to Isaiah 7 in the time of devastating crisis caused by the political foolishness of the faithless King Ahaz of Judah. He refused to listen to Isaiah to trust in God and called for the help of the Assyrian empire against the threat of his northern neighbours Ephraim and Syria. Assyria’s help would mean war and destruction and fields turning into thorny bushes. Yet there will be the chance of survival: “In that day a man will keep alive a young cow and two sheep; and because of the abundance of milk which they give, he will eat curds; for everyone that is left in the land will eat curds and honey” (Is. 7:21-22). That survival is connected with the sign given to the unwilling Ahaz namely the birth of a child who is to be called “Immanuel.” “He shall eat curds and honey when he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good” (Is. 7:14-15); this seems to indicate that when he will have grown up, he will share the conditions of life and survival announced in verses 18ff. We don’t know whom the prophet had in mind, but this name conveys the promise of God’s presence in the

crisis and keeps alive hope against all odds, still nurtured by milk and honey.

The other end of the scale of a viable economy – stretching from the satisfaction of survival needs to the enjoyment of the goodness of life – comes in sight in Ezekiel's critique of Jerusalem being unable to remain modest with the splendour of God's good gifts of life (Ezek. 16:13). It starts worshipping luxury and wealth and ends up with sacrificing sons and daughters, the future, to that Moloch (Ezek. 16:19ff.).

This urban mixture of accumulation of wealth, refined consumption undergirded by human sacrifice, leads to breakdown and exile as announced by Ezekiel. It cannot be sustained. In exile the hope of return is kindled by the promise that trees shall grow instead of the thorns and briars of Isaiah 7 and by the invitation to buy wine and milk without money and without price (Is. 55:1 and 12-13; cf. Joel 3:18).

It may be noteworthy that milk and honey don't play a role in Israel's cult. There is only the repeated injunction not to boil a kid in its mother's milk (Ex. 23:19). Whereas blood is associated both with life and the loss of sacrifice of life, milk represents only the flow of life and its gifts without pain. (Is that the reason why it should not be mixed with the consumption of meat—an injunction which father Abraham, to the distress of Talmudic commentators, did not respect when he provided hospitality to the three visitors? (Gen. 18:8).

One of the basic impressions conveyed by the texts referring to milk and honey is that they speak of an attitude towards life which is not petty or narrow but basic. They express the hope of peasants in the context of great events of Exodus and wars and exile. There are indeed times in which survival and livelihood take priority over what happens to the State. Jeremiah advises the exiles to build houses and plant gardens in Babylon and find their welfare in its welfare (Jer. 29:5-7). That sounds like political opportunism, but it may be better

understood in the sense that the preservation of life in times of defeat and exile is the basis for hope (cf. 29:11). In any case, the large horizon in which people hope for land and life does not detach them from the down-to-earth realities of cows and goats, water and a patch of land. The great turning points of history, the breakthroughs, when the Lord "restores our fortunes," find their affirmation in the simple restoration of life, when the sowing with tears is followed by the homecoming with shouts of joy in the harvest time (Psalm 126). That may sound petty for those who are used to think in terms of world historical epochs and perspectives. It will be closer to the hopes of those who are struggling for survival from day to day, whose basic questions are access to land, to water and a safe place to live.

That is the reorientation we need: in many mobilisations people's hopes and needs have been taken up for tactical reasons to get them involved in the larger – "real" – struggles for State power. After that they are asked to sacrifice for the development of the country, and so on.

Instead the first goal of all struggles should be the satisfaction of those basic needs. The great historical battles have to be converted into battles for peace which allow people to plough, to get their livelihood, and their rest under vine and fig tree. That is the criterion for revolutionary politics which Isaiah 2 and Micah 4 offer. Nations learn to beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks.

#### **D. Opening Up Communitarian Spaces**

The crucial question in all this is whether there is any material socio-cultural basis on which such memories and hopes of human solidarity can be incorporated into a new project aiming at building a new inclusive society under the new conditions prevailing now. Part of the answer is that there are still forms of human solidarity surviving even in class society. That is an important implication of C.T. Kurien's analysis of pre-capitalist forms of organisation of economic life and their survival – however precarious and reduced – in capitalist

society.<sup>15</sup> Many Marxists have assumed that they were appealing to the solidarity of the proletariat as something new on the basis of the new social structures created by capitalist industrialisation. But it may be well worth exploring historically to what extent the solidarity ethos of the working class has been nurtured by the memory of solidarity experience in earlier social settings.

Applied to the erosion of working class solidarity today the question arises whether this could be related to the fading of the memory of such experiences. Probably we should assume with Raymond Williams both a historical and an anthropological basis for the expression of solidarity. He has argued – referring to his own experience – that the sense of solidarity is nurtured in concrete human communities, such as neighbourhoods and villages or sports clubs and that even uprooted people rebuild structures and networks of solidarity in the course of time in new settings. The onslaught against it by consumerist capitalism has been heavier than ever. Yet, human beings can hardly live without it. Still people don't behave according to the theoretical models of modern economics. They still cherish some values and continue some practices which transcend the calculation of individual gain.

One of the reasons why the working class movement tended to ignore other forms of solidarity and social coherence resisting modern atomisation was that traditional forms of solidarity were and are often exercised within structures of discrimination and inequality. This appears in the critique of Marx of feudal, clerical and conservative socialism in the *Communist Manifesto*. Solidarity in tribal Israel was intertwined with patriarchal discrimination. To those who cherish the values of village community life eventually tend to downplay the cruelty of feudal exploitation. This is the gigantic problem with the social forms of solidarity of traditional Indian society which are surviving as social security networks in modern society. Without family and sub-caste networks most people would be unable to survive.

In these forms they experience and practice mutual social support. But it is intertwined with patriarchal exploitation of women and caste-based denial of human solidarity across the barriers of caste. The ambiguous social forms and networks of family, kinship and caste at the same time sustain people and are the cause of tremendous suffering. The question is how the struggles against their dehumanising aspects can be conducted in such a way that we don't end up with a social atomisation and uprootedness which will be the most fertile ground for fascist communalism as a substitute for lost social coherence. Alternative forms of community and social solidarity networks, not only on the abstract level of class-based mass organisations but on the experiential level of daily life, have to be in place to provide space for real inclusive solidarity to grow.

But that again will not be enough. Local initiatives of marginalised people to organise their lives in an alternative way in order to survive will need sooner or later the protection and support of political and economic institutions on higher levels. That remains valid in the Marxist critique of isolated alternative projects, ignoring the power structures at large. We cannot get away from the questions of national and international credit—can alternative banking become a factor in the struggle for transformation? And we cannot bypass the questions of State power on various levels in forms which allow effective democratic pressure and eventually people's control of resources.

Alternative movements cannot withdraw into isolated corners. It is at this point that we are challenged most by the collapse of the State-socialist projects as well as by the crisis of social-democratic State-welfarism to rethink on the political dimensions of the struggle for an alternative society. In this respect we have to carefully evaluate the unique and rich experiences of the Indian Left, including its recent steps, at least on the practical level, towards a reorientation.

On the theoretical level we will benefit from a study of some of the suggestions made by C.T. Kurien about alternative planning

structures in his earlier book, *Poverty, Planning and Social Transformation*.<sup>16</sup> The experience in Yugoslavia shows how complex the problem of centralisation and decentralisation is.<sup>17</sup>

Whatever the outcome of a new approach to the role of the State at various levels, we can be sure that the State can and should not again become the focus of a sort of messianic hope, as if the conquest of State power will open the way to the delivery of whatever goods we desire. Hopes should be rather reoriented to the re-creation of viable forms of communities on various levels. The socialism of the future will have to be one of cooperatives and communities, protected and promoted by State power on various levels.

There is no point in being romantic about efforts to build cooperatives and communities. It is a matter of survival against many odds. The informal sector under the pressures of the “free for all” market economy is rather a jungle, in which co-operative ventures are extremely vulnerable. Economic and political support structures are needed. That is one of the areas on which the efforts of the organised left should focus, building links between the organised and the unorganised sector, tapping public resources, and building up public awareness. The drama of abandoned inner cities in places like the USA, the scare about rising levels of criminality, have to be translated into programmes for reopening public spaces by the rebuilding of neighbourhoods and by strengthening rural economies. Whatever their theories the successful agricultural reforms of the Left Front in West Bengal have reduced the flow of pauperised migrants from the countryside into Calcutta. That story may also imply important insights for the question of State support for decentralisation of power and resources (panchayats).

In Canada, devastated by the modern agricultural practices of multinational giants like Cargill, a counter-practice is spreading called “Community Shared Agriculture” or “Community Supported Agriculture” as it is called in the USA. Agricultural production is

organised as a community enterprise from seed time to harvest. The sharers sign a contract with the farmer. They own the food, from the seeds on, that the farmer grows for them. They bypass the market, share the risks of better or less good crops, and have the guarantee of healthy, non-poisoned, fresh food. Growing ecological concern is the driving force in this.<sup>18</sup> The next logical step would be a community land trust. Among it old /new forms of social interaction are growing.

It shows how the increasing concern about ecological problems can be turned from passive despair into active forms of developing alternative practices. Where ecological and economic concerns get linked up we are getting closer to the emerging socialist alternative. Modern capitalist economy is preoccupied with keeping the flow of goods and money going. Slow moving traffic and other obstacles have to be removed. There is no time to ask where all that traffic is going. Is there an exit at the other end to the tunnel?<sup>19</sup> An alternative socialist economy is concerned not about moving fast, but about building a house – *oikos*, the word that is the root of the terms economy and ecology, in which there is space for all. It requires the participation, interaction of all inhabitants to take care of the natural habitat and to organise the human household in such a way that this becomes and remains possible.

### E. Towards an Eco-Socialist Synthesis

In conclusion of these tentative reflections I want to point out, without going into details, that it will be part of the reorientation of our hopes to overcome old dichotomies and polarisations while confronting in a radical manner what earlier has been looked upon as a potential ally. For the sake of a socialist future, an open house for all, we have to fight tooth and nail all theories and practices and all forces which are promoting unqualified economic growth for the sake of accumulation, leading to exclusion and ecological destruction. That is the old struggle against imperialism, TNCs and so on, in a new perspective and on a new basis. In this struggle we find allies in people

and movements who were ignored or even discarded by earlier socialist generations. Relating to movements of marginalised sections of people, we will also do rethinking about discarded hopes, ideas, skills and social practices. The socialist movement of the future will be more radical and conservative at the same time. It will integrate ancient hopes and find new attraction in old practices. But it has to be a creative synthesis. It cannot ignore the tremendous impact which modernity has made. And it cannot ignore all those who have been integrated into modern capitalist society, such as the working class in the organised sector. While looking back it has to affirm whatever is viable in the heritage of modern society while negating its destructivity and exclusiveness.

In the earlier days of capitalism the working class had the power to bring the production process to a standstill. This power on which leftist revolutionaries relied has been declining for various reasons, while the power of global capital is growing. But with it new contradictions are developing. The attack of Karnataka farmers on an office of the agro-business giant Cargill in Bangalore is a hopeful sign.

Capital needs not only labour, it needs also land and other natural resources. Its attempt to monopolise these resources and exploit them provokes resistance from peasants. Is it too optimistic to dream of a new sort of alliance of workers, peasants, women and eco-groups, which on the one hand resists the onslaught of capital, by creating obstacles, causing stoppages and so on, and which on the other hand starts developing alternatives, starting from the experiments which are already going on? In many ways obstructions are going on already. The construction of big dams and of nuclear power plants is getting delayed or even given up. The list of abandoned giant projects is growing. All these struggles imply questions about the direction in which the economy is moving.<sup>20</sup> But this has to be made explicit and to be connected with pointers in a viable alternative direction. It is not enough to oppose a dam or reactor in a particular place, one has

to come up with an alternative energy policy, as A.K.N. Reddy is doing.<sup>21</sup> That is why it is so important that different movements find ways to interact.

Interesting stories are emerging from beleaguered Cuba. Economic boycott forces them to develop ecologically and economically much more healthy practices, from vegetable gardens to transport by bicycle and use of solar energy. The problem is that people may perceive this as emergency measures – we are forced to go back – instead of accepting it as walking backwards into the future. Actually it should be seen as a synthesis. For the production of bicycles and solar energy, modern industrial production processes are needed. Life-sustaining modern technologies will be crucial. But the pace and the direction will be different aiming at room for all in an open house with many mansions.

Anand Phadke concludes his report about an innovative *vidnyan yatra* of the Mukti Sanghargsh on the issue of degradation of agriculture and social life in the irrigated part of Sangli district, propagating sustainable alternatives to the green revolution strategy, with a challenge to the Left to reshape its politics around a hegemonistic programme of sustainable, people-based development.<sup>22</sup>

Such a reorientation can get people's support if their imagination is kindled by a combination of memories of life-sustaining traditions and life-supporting inventions and new ways of doing things. In any case they are likely to be pushed aside in the fast lane. They have to discover that may not be a catastrophe, but a chance to find another way.

#### Notes

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"Rich Man and Poor Lazarus" in *International Intercommunications*, No. 65, Spring 1993.
2. See Michael Löwy, *Redemption et Utopie* (Paris, 1988), ch. 6.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 148. For Marx's studies see: L. Krader (ed.), *The Ethnological Notebooks of Karl Marx*, (Assen, 1974).

4. Marx/Engels, *Selected Correspondence* (Moscow), p. 189.
5. Löwy, *op. cit.*, p. 149.
6. T. Shanin (ed.), *Late Marx and the Russian Road* (New York, 1983), pp. 116.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 111.
8. "The Future Results of the British Rule in India" (1853) in Marx/Engels, *On Colonialism* (Moscow), p. 89f. Draft letter to Vera Zasulich, Shanin, *op. cit.*, p. 118.
9. Raymond Williams, *Resources of Hope* (London, 1989), p. 283.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 284.
11. C.R. Hensman, *New Beginnings. The Ordering and Designing of the Realm of Freedom* (23/1, Sri Dharmapala Rd., Mt. Lavinia, Sri Lanka). See also: *Agenda for the Poor: Claiming Their Heritage* (CSR, 28 Deans Rd., Colombo).
12. Chung Hyun Kyung at the Canberra Assembly of the World Council of Churches, 1991, in her speech on the theme of the assembly "Come, Holy Spirit—Renew the Whole Creation."
13. Advertisement in *Indian Express*, March 20, 1993.
14. K. Marx, "The British Rule in India" in Marx/Engels, *On Colonialism* (Moscow), p. 38.
15. C.T. Kurien, *The Economy: An Interpretative Introduction* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1992).
16. C.T. Kurien, *Poverty, Planning and Social Transformation*, 1978.
17. See A. Abascal-Jean, "Former Yugoslavia – Keeping Our Mind in Front of the Horror," in *International Intercommunications* 65, Spring 1993.
18. See "The Ram's Horn," a monthly newsletter of Food System Analysis (Toronto) 103, February 1993.
19. The metaphor comes from D. Goudzwaard in his remarks at the Central Committee of the WCC meeting in Moscow.
20. See B. Wielenga, "Ecological Movements. Struggle for a Sustainable Society" in Desrochers/Wielenga/Patel, *Social Movements* (Bangalore, 1991).
21. See Amulya K.N. Reddy, "Reflection of a Maverick" in *Seminar* 409, Sept. 1993.
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## Latin American Christology in the Light of New Theological Actors

*Elsa Tamez*

Two situations lead us to affirm the need to move on from the accustomed dialogue between theologies of the Third World: The new world economic order and the emergence of new theological actors (subjects).

The present attitude of uncertainty, perplexity and dissatisfaction with theories that were familiar to us offers an excellent opportunity to pose anew the theology of liberation and, above all, to reinitiate a profound dialogue within EATWOT. Confronted by the new international order, dominated by one free-market economic system, the theologies of the Third World need to express themselves in solidarity in order to face together the avalanche of exclusion.

This dialogue becomes more urgent for us Latin Americans because since the end of the '80s and the beginning of the '90s new theological voices of indigenous and black peoples and women, who are radical new agents of theological production, have broken out in this continent. What seemed remote and foreign to Latin American theology and was considered problematic in other continents is now

forcefully visible and audible in our own house. For that reason this dialogue has become indispensable and cannot be postponed. The challenges find us unprepared, and we must turn to other theologies that have long experience with similar challenges, in order then to make our own synthesis.

In Latin America the emergence of new actors is especially challenging for christology. My fundamental concern is to discover how to articulate an inclusive christology – with all the consequences that this implies – and at the same time to consider the effects of the international economic order. In this paper I will focus on the new challenges to christology that should be considered in order to develop an inclusive and open discourse before the new international economic-political order.

I will arrange my thoughts around the three questions proposed for our meeting. First, I will summarise the principal contributions of Latin American christology; second, new challenges in the light of the new theological agents. Then I will refer to mutual learning within EATWOT and some concerns.

### **1. How do we build a Christology from the reverse of history?**

For Latin American christology up to now there would be no problem with the logic of its development if women, indigenous people and African Americans had not spoken up theologically, even if only by their questions.

Latin American christology is well developed in a coherent manner to respond to the challenges of an oppressive and repressive society from the point of view of macro political economics.

Without departing from orthodox formulations it has been able successfully to reconstruct systematic, liberating, christological thought, which begins with the reverse of history and calls for the practice of justice oriented by the Reign of God.

We Latin Americans are so familiar with this christology that rarely do we notice the great contributions that classical christological

thought has provided. When Jesus was conceived as a Liberator, however, he was not simply given one more title, along with Saviour, Redeemer, and others. Latin Americans made a comprehensive re-elaboration of thought concerning Jesus Christ, that allowed us to talk appropriately of a new christology. The famous “epistemological rupture” allowed this shift to take place.

Also we forget that at first there was merciless criticism which tried to delegitimise this christology, denouncing it as horizontal reductionism. Thus there is in the writings a style of certitude or even defensiveness in their affirmations, as if they were trying to demonstrate that they are not outside of orthodoxy. They take the same elements of dogmatic and biblical thought, but they reorder them from the perspective of the oppressed. I will summarise the principal characteristics of Latin American christology and then question them in the light of the new actors.

### ***The historical Jesus as point of departure: the emphasis on praxis***

The point of departure of Latin American christology is the historical Jesus. This is considered to be the best way to articulate the totality of christological faith. Above all it avoids the manipulation of a Christ of faith seen as an idol. The practice of Jesus of Nazareth does not allow for the creation of an indifferent Christ in the face of real oppression and misery. To see the entire history of Jesus in the practice of the historical Jesus has as its goal, according to Sobrino, “that his history be pursued in the present.”

This privileged approach to the historical Jesus thus underlines following it as an historical practice. Since the historicity of Jesus invites following today, this fact presupposes a new understanding of hermeneutics. To understand the past is to do in the present reality. Sobrino explains it this way: “Within practice we understand the text of the past: practice is not at the service of knowledge but rather of the present reality to renew it.”



***The importance of the ecclesial and social place***

Motivated by the need to go beyond a personal and passive faith, christological reflection underlines the need to locate the Christian or ecclesial community as a place where faith in Christ is practised. The theologian situates his/her reflection in the ecclesial group and takes seriously the economic-political conflict context of Latin America. The reign of God is the theological category that gathers the aspirations and desires of the new society where life is abundant, justice and peace for all. The ministry of Jesus of Nazareth, oriented by the reign of God, is read within the socio-economic and political context of the first century. The death of Jesus on the cross is read as a consequence of his struggle for justice over against the institutions that condemned him. And the resurrection is seen as the hope and promise through which the innocent crucified one is raised by God, as the first of many. This christological discourse accompanied coherently the liberating practice of many Christians in the past two decades. The blood of Jesus was seen to be made current in the martyrs produced by the dictatorships.

An important contribution that should be mentioned is the emphasis on the relational aspect of christology, avoiding in this way a "christology in itself." Many christologies absolutise Christ. Latin American christology tries to reflect in a trinitarian way about Christ. This helps to see the world in a more communitarian perspective.

***The poor as the theological locus***

Clearly for Latin American christology the poor are the theological locus. Jesus takes the side of the poor. He becomes incarnate among the humble, and they reveal the mystery of the Kingdom. To follow him is understood as a practice of liberation of the oppressed. The presence of Christ is partial toward the poor, as is the incarnation of Jesus. The resurrection and the reign of God are the utopia or hope (eschatological) of the new creation, the new society, a cause for joy for the marginalised. In fact, the very existence of the poor speaks to

us of sin (personal and structural) in the world, of the human being as sinner.

***The reign of God as the central message of Jesus Christ***

The emphasis on the reign of God helped a great deal in the move toward a more social theological vision. It motivated Christians toward a commitment and solidarity beyond the churches. The struggle for the practice of justice, the struggle for life, was not merely the consequence of conversion but a conviction of faith in God's reign, the eschatological promise. It was the central message of Jesus Christ. Jesus did not preach about himself but about the Kingdom, the place where there will be no more oppression and suffering for the poor. The small liberations or achievements in human history are considered as foretastes of the reign of God.

**2. New challenges to Christology in the light of the new theological actors (subjects)**

Now we shall discuss the role that gender, race, class, culture and other religions, ecology and scriptures play in Latin American christology.

It is obvious that in the previous point class analysis is the predominant and almost the only concern. But it must be said too that Latin American christology is very much based in a re-reading of the Bible.

When women, indigenous people, and African Americans begin to theologise, serious, polemic challenges arise. They were always present as part of the list of oppressed. But as they become creators of theological thought, the challenge deepens. Clearly for them christology, as it has been set forth classically and in Latin American christology, is a problem. It is no longer sufficient to talk about the way Jesus dealt with women or about Christ the Liberator of slaves. The very construction of theology must be reconsidered.

Until now in our context known christologies have been elaborated within accidental categories (masculine, analytical, rational, lineal

and exclusive by nature). What is needed, then, is a dis-occidentalisation of christology. The challenge that we hear is for fundamental deconstruction-construction. This obviously has strong implications for orthodoxy, the spirituality to which the people are bound, and the authority of the Bible. This has not yet been studied, but more and more demanding questions are being raised.

I will now go over the sub-points of the previous section and analyse them in the light of the new actors.

*The historical Jesus and the grace, the gender and the plurality of epiphanies*

Undoubtedly it is very important that christology should begin with the historical Jesus. The manipulation of Christ becomes more difficult. Nevertheless, it presents difficulties for the new agents.

*For women theologians:* The masculinity of Jesus, Son of God, becomes a problem. In the constant repetition of the relation Son-Father, women feel excluded, and women theologians feel uncomfortable working with a discourse so masculine and exclusive of the female gender. The fact that Jesus was a man is one of the strongest arguments for condemning the ordination of women in the church. It is true that the historical Jesus brought dignity to women, on analysing his relation to them. But the elaboration of christological discourse is very disturbing because it is a sacred discourse unbalanced in relation to gender. Women theologians want to go beyond the theme of Jesus and women. It is true that the greater emphasis on praxis rather than the person of Jesus Christ relativises gender, but the construction of the discourse concerning the Messiah as Son of the Father is masculine.

*For indigenous and African Americans:* The insistence on Jesus as the only way of salvation is questioned by the peoples of Abya-Yala (indigenous), who are loyal to their ancestral, non-Christian faith or who as Christians take on also the religion of their forebears. The same thing occurs with the spirituality of African American communities in

which there is no problem in making Jesus Christ an important element of their faith, but not therefore unique and essential. For a true and inclusive dialogue, however, we need to allow for the recognition of a plural divine epiphany. We know that this presents serious problems for theological orthodoxy. It is here that we have much to learn from Asian theologies that face constantly non-Christian epiphanies.

*The lack of a cosmic dimension:* The emphasis on praxis in following Jesus, demanded by the historic moment of recent decades, deepened the gap between historical praxis related to justice through socio-economic structures and the cosmic vision that takes into account the global nature of human existence. For this reason the concern for ecological equilibrium is very new in Latin America. The indigenous communities are contributing to this holistic dimension of thought in our context.

In the last decade women began to speak of the need to add the praxis of caring to the praxis of justice in order to humanise that praxis. The concern for the humanisation of the poor can be dehumanising if it is not accompanied by this praxis of interhuman relations permeated by grace, care, play, celebration.

*The social place of daily life, the body and nature*

In Latin America christological reflection is situated in the context and should always be so. The point of departure should be concrete life, and it should be oriented always by means of solidarity and commitment to the new creation of all.

One of the new discoveries of many liberation theologians is the little importance that we have given to daily life. Our macro-structural concern for the transformation of an oppressive society made daily life an appendage, something secondary that *should* be relegated to a lesser place by the more important transformation of the oppressive society. Thus the social and economic methods of analysis of reality were incapable of taking into account other dimensions of human existence so fundamental for daily life, the body and nature.

Today the new actors are offering these contributions to Latin American theology. Women propose the body and daily life as a new hermeneutic category. Indigenous and African Americans integrate nature as a fundamental part of their analyses of reality.

Once again we can clarify that Latin American theology and christology have spoken about these aspects. The problem is not whether they have been mentioned or not but whether the methodological approaches allowed for a real integration between the concern for economic-political change, the planet, the participation of all the agents and their subjectivity. The challenge is, thus, methodological, following the discovery of the need to include these basic elements.

***The ecclesial place in relation to cultural and religious pluralism***

The affirmation that christology is related to the ecclesial-popular community where faith is experienced was an important contribution. In this way an individualist and intimate Christology became a communitarian christology.

Nevertheless, it seems that the community model that produces this christology is popular-occidental with no contact with Christian communities composed of indigenous and African Americans. Indigenous theologians would build another Christology with non-occidental categories. Surely they would cross the frontiers of orthodoxy because, even though they are Christians they do not want to leave out their own spirituality, where Jesus Christ is not the centre nor the only canon. I do not refer here to those indigenous people who are not Christians but Mayans, Cunas or others who follow their own religion and see in Jesus Christ a sacred being of Christians.

***The poor, "locus theologicus," in relation to "anthropological poverty"***

The fundamental key for Latin American theology, christology, and rereading of the Bible was the poor as a theological place. All

theology and Bible reading changed radically., This in itself has helped the new actors to take interest in doing theology.

Since the last decade, liberation theologians (especially women, indigenous and African Americans) affirm that the poor must be given colour and sex, that the poor have a concrete face, that poverty transcends the economic. African theology enabled us to see "cultural poverty." Today in Latin America we speak of the excluded ones. We use this term because it includes marginalisation through racism, sexism, economic poverty, discrimination for differing physical abilities, etc. Also, today we speak of exclusion of the great majorities by the market.

Now if the excluded are the privileged theological place for working out christology, we have to know well the systems of oppression and marginalisation of the different faces. We already noted that the social sciences, politics and economics do not take into account sufficiently racism and sexism. We are now looking to other sciences such as anthropology, gender theories, semeiology, and others that might help us understand the situation of marginalisation of all the actors.

***The reign of God and the dignity of the person***

The unavoidable demand of the struggle of Christians for the liberation of peoples oppressed and repressed by dictatorships was motivated fundamentally by the theological category of the Reign of God. The confession "Jesus Christ my Lord and Saviour" was insufficient without a motivation that would lead to a living, real experience of Jesus Christ as liberator from the inhuman conditions created by the anti-reign structures.

We perceive a problem: the organisation of the popular movements was reflected in the organisation of the christological discourse. The struggle was collectivised: we paid little attention to the faces of the members of the movement, led almost always by mestizo and white men. I am sure that the category Reign or Kingdom of God can conceal

racism and sexism if it is not penetrated by the category New Man-New Woman. There should be no dichotomy between these dimensions. Personal sin is important because it allows us to conceive of ourselves as racists or sexists. The Reign of God or the "eschatological banquet" that leaves out the dignity of the person makes no sense.

### **3. What have we learned from Asia, Africa and minorities in the USA?**

I am going to repeat what we already know, because I believe it is important. At one point it seemed to me that we Latin Americans thought that class analysis was the fundamental analysis and that Christianity was the only religion that should concern us. Dialogue with other continents made us see, little by little, that culture, race and the experience of life in the midst of other religions called into question our position. I believe also that women in all places call into question the patriarchal and masculinising position of the theology of EATWOT.

But it was not these dialogues that finally were able to challenge our christology. It was the subjects themselves. Latin American actors in their own context, who broke through. The dialogue in EATWOT helped to create openness to other dimensions, but generally it dealt with distant themes and problems, except for those who were working on ministries among peoples of indigenous and African cultures. From peripheral topics we moved to radical challenges when the actors (subjects) became theologians. We are now in this stage of questions, of deconstruction, and of searching. We do not yet have constructed christological discourses.

#### **Final concerns**

A. *The Bible*: Latin American christology is, I have said, very biblical. For some of the challenges expressed here it is enough to go to the text and reread it in cosmic, ecological, cultural, and other perspectives. For other challenges the Bible does not offer the

necessary elements because it was produced in a patriarchal, monotheistic, and perhaps racist culture. If we want to reconstruct an inclusive christology, we will have to make a hermeneutical leap in the treatment of the sacred texts.

B. *Latin America's pluricultural context*: For the reconstruction of a Latin American liberation christology, we should take into account the context as it presents itself. Therefore there must be not one Latin American Christology but several. If we work out one, fully integrating all the challenges of the new actors, we will achieve an artificial, intellectual discourse. We must try to develop open, inclusive Latin American christologies, but one that is not alien to the daily life of communities and persons.

C. Alongside the new challenges we should always take into account the challenge of the growing exclusion of capitalism's New International Economic Order and together with Third World economists, seek a christological discourse that will integrate economic alternatives and the challenges of the new actors. We do not want an economic proposal that is sexist or racist or alien to the problems of the planet or merely constructed with the categories of occidental rationality.

# A Response to Elsa Tamez

*Elizabeth Amoah*

The paper clearly demonstrates the urgent need for dialogue between theologians of the Third World in the light of the new economic order and the emergence of what is described in the paper as the “New Theological Actors.”

Prior to the awareness of these theological actors, Latin American christologies, according to the paper, have tended to focus mainly on the analysis of justice through socio-economic structures. This the writer argues did not take into consideration the global nature of human existence. Thus it resulted in christologies which tended to be exclusive and ignored issues such as ecology, racism as expressed in “anthropological poverty” as seen by some African theologians, and the plurality of religions as a reality of Asia and other parts of the world.

The emergence of the new theological actors is seen as a hope and it broadens the perspectives of Latin American theologians. Thus the indigenous and the African Latin Americans are taken seriously as subjects of christologies.

The concern as expressed in the paper that “we should always take into account the challenge of the growing exclusion of capitalism’s new international economic order and together with Third World economists, seek a christological discourse that will integrate economic alternatives” must be taken seriously. For “we do not want an economic proposal that is sexist or racist or alien to the problems of the planet” and people, and exclude others as if the world could go on without them.

# American Indians and Jesus: Reflections Towards an EATWOT Christology

*George (Tink) Tinker*

American Indian peoples in North America stand in a relatively peculiar position of colonisation and oppression that is significantly different from most people in the Two-Thirds World because we are physically, and geographically, surrounded on all sides by our coloniser and conqueror. While this is similar to the context of indigenous peoples in Central and South America, Australia and New Zealand, for instance, it is still more intense and complicated because we live in a territory that is co-inhabited and fully controlled by the one state presumed by the whole of the Two-Thirds World to be both the most powerful state politically and economically and the common oppressor of the whole of the Two-Thirds World. Given the particularity of our history of oppression and particularly the role of missionisation in the conquest of our territories and our indigenous nations, it is important to begin the process of sorting out what the function of Christianity and christology is and might be for us as we continue our struggle and resistance against ongoing colonisation. The conquest is not yet complete.<sup>1</sup>

## 1. Contributions of the Other EATWOT Regions

I would like to begin by addressing the third of the three questions posed for each participant of this conference. It seems to me that the question of intercontinental influence in our theological and christological reflection can best lead me into a reflection on the first question: how I might construct a christology “from the underside of history.” My response to the second question on the related concerns of gender, race, class, culture and religions, ecological issues and scriptures would seem to flow naturally out of my earlier remarks.

### *Political Analysis and Theology*

It was first of all from Latin America that we finally discovered the critical truth that all theology is inherently and at least implicitly political.<sup>2</sup> We now know that there can be no existentially useful theological or christological reflection that does not engage in critical political analysis. How one identifies the Christ and understands the functions of christology determines much of one’s political reality and how one deals with it. A comfortable christology, which ignores the reality of systemic injustice in the world, can do much to ease the consciences of those who function as oppressors and to rationalise the oppression they perpetrate as just or at least necessary. As R.S. Sugirtharajah describes it, the practical christology of the coloniser’s mission efforts, Jesus was made to be the ally of the coloniser:

Jesus was manipulated to validate the ideological and class interests of the exploiters, the privileged and the powerful. He was projected as a preacher of timeless truths who conquers and vanquishes the cultures and religious traditions of other people, a proclaimer of cosmic catastrophe who was indifferent to current social issues and a pacifist who was remote from human tensions and turmoils.<sup>3</sup>

This too continues to be the American Indian experience of Amereuropean missionary colonialism and their preaching about Jesus in our communities.

In contrast to such theological rationalising of power and privilege,

liberation theologies decidedly established that a genuine understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ results in a commitment to the liberation of the oppressed and poor of the world. Thus, christological interpretation in the Two-Thirds World has been an exercise in articulating Christ as a spiritual force for liberation from political contexts of oppression.<sup>4</sup>

In the United States, it is crucial that American Indian intellectuals pay close attention to the past five hundred years of colonialism and conquest if we are to plan a future that includes genuine healing and empowerment of our indigenous communities. Since our history of colonialism includes a correlative history of colonial missionisation, our political analysis must focus in no small measure on the ways that Jesus and the doctrine of the Christ has been used as a tool of the conquest of our nations and our eventual subjugation as small, poverty-ridden internal minorities in what has become the wealthiest and most politically powerful state in the world community of states. As an example of missionising colonialism, let me point to the relationship between Jesus and the Amereuropean cultural affectation of individualism. Much of the missionising process among Indian peoples has been a studied attempt to encourage Indian converts to develop an individual relationship with Jesus at the cost of the inherent Indian cultural commitment to the community as a whole and to a communitarian value system. Thus, the missionary victory involved cultural conversion as well as spiritual conversion, the destruction of one set of cultural values and the imposition of a new set. It is much more clear today in retrospect that this sort of Amereuropean cultural proclamation of the gospel did as much as the U.S. Army to change the political landscape of each Indian nation.<sup>5</sup> It needs to be said here that the oppression of Indian peoples in the United States continues today. We remain colonised peoples; more or less rigidly controlled by the government that surrounds us; too often appealing targets for the extraction of natural resources; and the on-going subjects of poverty, joblessness, diseases, and other symptoms of colonisation.

***Cultural Analysis***

It was theologians from Asia and Africa who pressed us toward the next step beyond political analysis. Today it would be unthinkable to do political analysis in our theological and christological reflection without paying close attention to cultural analysis as well.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, it has become axiomatic in Two-Thirds World theological discourse to talk of contextualising and inculturating theology. Likewise, culturally discrete interpretations of Jesus have become common place in world Christianity.<sup>7</sup> In the American Indian world, we have found that it is important to affirm who we are, not just socially and politically but in terms of our traditional cultures and value systems. Having begun the unending process of analysing the ongoing political aspects of our colonial reality, it is apparent to many of us that we must move intentionally and assertively to affirm in great detail the ongoing importance of our own traditions. This means that some of us will struggle to understand the Christ in terms that are more culturally compatible with those traditions. From time to time I have myself reflected on the possibility of seeing traditional Indian mythic or historic figures such as Corn Mother or White Buffalo Calf Woman as appropriate Indian Christ equivalents. Others in the Indian world will continue to press the more radical question as to whether Jesus and Christianity can be rescued as a significant source of spiritual sustenance for Indian peoples at all.

One important example of the role of cultural analysis in articulating an American Indian christology would be the destructiveness caused by the varieties of the typical “fall and redemption” evangelism proclaimed in Indian mission contexts. In the Lutheran variation of this type of theology, the “law” (nomos) is paired with the gospel as its natural and logically necessary antecedent. One must be convinced of the need for salvation by the preaching of the law as a preparation for hearing the good news of the gospel. Yet this intrinsic emphasis on human sin and sinfulness violates Indian people in two devastating ways. First of all, Indian cultures do not

inherently share the same sense of human depravity that is so pervasive in European cultures and has there given rise to the doctrine of original sin. Thus Indian peoples, who are inherently open to varieties of spiritual expressions and experiences, are forced to experience the foreign emotive sense of depravity and sinfulness before they can enjoy the deep spiritual insights of the power that emanates from God in the witness of Jesus. Secondly, and more importantly given the social dysfunctionality that reigns in Indian communities as a result of our history of colonialism and oppression, this emphasis on sin and depravity impedes any hearing of the good news among a people demoralized both spiritually and emotionally by their experience of conquest. In our internalising of our own oppression we have taken to heart too much the continual insistence of the missionaries, the government and virtually all White Amereuropeans that everything Indian is necessarily less good than the superior cultural values and structures brought to us by Amereuropeans. Yes, it is unfortunate, but we have learned to hate ourselves and to value things that are White. Generations of abuse have caused us, like too many abused children, to internalise the abuse as wholly deserving on our part. As unhealthy and wrong as this is, it is only reinforced by fall and redemption notions of christology.

Culturally, any proclamation of the Gospel among Indian peoples must begin with some sort of affirmation of Indian people as Indian and as human beings. It is not even enough to focus on the affirmation of Indian individuals, as such; rather, it is the whole of an abused community who must be built-up by such affirmation. Thus, I have always proposed that spiritual proclamation or teaching in American Indian communities must begin with creation and the affirmation of the community and each individual as an equal part of the whole of creation. In a Christian or biblical context, for instance, this would mean an initial emphasis on human beings as created “in God’s image.” Hence, if God has created me, and created me as an Indian, then I must be good, just as all of creation is good, and being Indian



must also be a part of God's good design. Likewise, our Indian communities with our unique cultures and values must also be rooted in some created sense of the goodness of all of creation.

Of course, those christologies that build first on some notion of human sin and the need for salvation that is answered by Jesus as the Christ of God also tend to emphasise the universality of both this worldview and of Jesus. As a result, Amereuropean missionaries have consistently tried to disallow any traditional expression of spirituality on the part of Indian people. Their notion of original sin can allow for access back to an alienated God only the way they would prescribe. Any notion that God may have provided a panoply of ways to relate to God's self would be anathema. Again, Indian people are taught that they are somehow less than White people. Again, we are excluded. Our own christology must do better than that.

## **2. An Indian Christology from the Underside of History?<sup>8</sup>**

There are a number of considerations involved in thinking about how an American Indian christology might be constructed from the "underside of history." There are several aspects that are unique to the situations of indigenous peoples and are not universal to the context of all marginalised peoples. These involve aspects of both political and cultural analysis and must invariably gravitate around traditional Indian community patterns of thought and values, especially in terms of the spiritual well-being of the people. This christology must begin with and continually be in touch with the analysis of the political context, but it must today especially include the results of colonisation, particularly the psychological state of the community and the psychology of the act of colonisation.<sup>9</sup> At this point perhaps it is enough to simply list a few of these considerations and then to reflect further on the basis of these.

a) Jesus, that is, the Jesus manufactured by the colonisers, has been systematically imposed on Indian peoples as a replacement for internal, cultural forms of spiritual involvement. The mission

programme dictated by this artificial Jesus construct had more to do with altering the traditional social, economic and political foundations of self-sustaining communities, attempting to bring them into line with European and Amereuropean norms, than it had to do with supporting social structures that nurtured the well-being of Indian communities. In the course of this imposition (missionisation), traditional forms of spirituality have been defamed, belittled, disallowed and even outlawed, by the missionaries or by the government under explicit pressure from the missionaries.

b) The U.S. government has been historically involved in encouraging missionary activity as a means toward the pacification of Indian peoples. In spite of its constitutional claim to insure freedom of religion, the government has consistently supported and even funded missionary projects among Indian peoples. Christianisation was assumed to be an important foundation for the civilization of "savage races."

c) The christology that has been imposed on Indian peoples in the course of missionisation has been, in every context, one of control and manipulation of Indian peoples by the denominations that did the missionisation. The churches have provided little or no opportunity for Indian communities to determine the parameters of the Gospel for themselves, let alone for them to determine their own christology.

d) Christianity has been from the beginning and continues to be divisive of Indian communities. In every case, the first missionary to win a convert in an Indian community effectively split the community into two camps that have not been reconciled to this day. The tragedy in this process is that, ideally, Indian cultures function as communitist value structures, as integrous wholes with each person and each part of the community's life related to everyone and everything else. In traditional life one was never forced to make a choice between competing spiritual forms. If the community had a ceremony on a given occasion, everyone was included and had a part to play in

fulfilling the ceremony. Suddenly, with the arrival of the Amereuropean missionary, the Church imposed on Indian peoples, and ultimately on each individual, a choice between the community's ceremony and the new form of spirituality proclaimed by the missionary. Our communities would never again be whole and would never again pray together as a whole and united people.

e) Any attempt at this late date to develop an Indian Christology "from the underside of history" must begin by claiming its own freedom in Christ Jesus: "For freedom Christ has set you free. Do not submit again to the yoke of slavery" (Gal. 5: 1). Our question about this "freedom" eventually must extend to asking if it includes the freedom to choose a return to traditional native religious structures. Pressing toward an Indian articulation of this gospel freedom begins with (1) defining christology and the Gospel for ourselves in ways that might be more compelling and more culturally appropriate for us. It moves then towards (2) claiming the freedom to embrace and participate as Christians in the traditional ceremonies and belief structures of our own peoples. But at its most radical, the question must (3) ask whether a colonised, conquered and subjected people might now choose to return entirely to its own traditional forms of prayer, whether Jesus does not bless us in our prayers apart from reciting his name. The contemporary Indian experience in North America is that many people are finding greater health and liberation in abandoning the colonising relation in favour of such a return to the ancient ways of the people.

f) Great care must be taken to ensure that, whatever sort of christological statement we decide to make, it not result in another exercise of participating in our ongoing colonisation and oppression.<sup>10</sup>

Given the implicit and explicit participation of the churches' missionaries in the colonising oppression and cultural genocide of American Indians, what relevance can Jesus have for Indian peoples? This, I think, is the principal and foundational question facing any

attempt at articulating an American Indian christology. This is a constantly recurring problem for us at Living Waters Indian Lutheran Ministry where I serve as pastor. How will we proclaim Jesus to a community that has been constantly hurt not by the Gospel but by the proclamation of the Gospel and those Amereuropean colonisers who have proclaimed it?<sup>11</sup> Yes, there have been continual missionising efforts on the part of many of the U.S. mainline churches, and indeed many Indian peoples have been converted to one denomination or another. The competition on some Indian reservations among the denominations is so great that many Indian converts report having been baptised three or four or more times by different denominations. Yet in spite of what has now been more than three centuries of effort, it must be said that Christianity has not established itself among Indian peoples with any great tenacity or vitality. To the contrary, there are growing numbers of Indian peoples today who are explicitly rejecting Christianity in favour of a return to their traditional ceremonial spirituality.

### *Jesus and Indian Traditionals*

Over the years I have often made the observation that among Indian peoples the problem is not with Jesus but with Christianity and the Church. My point has been that Indian people seem relatively accepting Jesus as a spiritual source of power for living life, whereas the Church is seen as a continuing source of oppression and the imposition of cultural change. This is true of many traditional leaders (so-called medicine people, their helpers, knowledgeable spiritual elders and oral traditors) who have come to Living Waters, or with whom I have dialogues in many reservation communities.

Traditional spiritual elders, medicine women and men rather consistently expressed their respect for Jesus as a spiritual person and even as a manifestation of Wakonda, the Sacred Mystery (namely, God, or something like what Amereuropeans mean by God). While these spiritual elders and medicine people may have significant resistance to Church and Christianity, they find that they are quite

able to participate at Living Waters, since Living Waters represents an Indian community more than it represents Church. Moreover, they are more likely than many other traditional people to participate fully in our service, even participating in the sacred meal of communion. Jesus poses little problem for these elders. They can respect him as having been a spiritual presence and even as a continued spiritual presence in the world. As these people have expressed themselves, Jesus is much more acceptable than the church.

When traditional Indian people attend Living Waters' Sunday service – and many of our regular participants are – they are faced with a choice when it comes to the Eucharist, whether to participate or not. Never having considered ourselves Communion police in deciding who can and cannot participate, we assume a spiritual foundation in all Indian people and always leave the decision to participate to each person. Many find Living Waters a culturally comfortable place to pray with Indian people, yet they are not always ready to concede the efficacy of this important Christian ceremony. The political compromise of participating in the conqueror's ceremony is simply too great. Abstaining from bread and cup is a final act of resistance and a clear political choice.

On the other hand, many choose to go ahead and participate. There are various reasons for their acquiescence. 1) Traditional values often dictate that spiritual respect for another's ceremony supersedes one's political conviction. 2) For many there is recognition of spiritual power in Jesus that goes beyond ethnicity or culture and is similar to the spiritual power already experienced in traditional Indian ceremonial life. 3) There is a traditional valuing of sharing hospitality: When in someone else's camp, one does what they do.

For Amereuropean Christians there is a curious aspect to our Indian Communion ceremony in nearly every case. Whether an Indian participant in our Eucharist is Christian or not, they come to our communion with a belief (even faith) in the presence of Jesus in the

sacrament. I would even go so far as to say that there is a stronger or more lively sense of the “real presence” of Jesus in the sacrament than there is in most suburban Lutheran congregations. Perhaps I can explain this phenomenon in terms of Indian cultures and the customary experience in our spiritualities of the numinous in so many different ways. For Indian people to find the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist credible is merely an extension of their experience of a variety of real presences in their own cultures. This has little or no correlative in Amereuropean society where the numinous survives too often as no more than a historical memory or as the experience of credulous and disreputable fringe groups.

### *Jesus Language and Colonisation*

If Jesus is not necessarily a problem, language about Jesus can be quite problematic. Nigerian theologian Ukachukwu Ch. Manus describes a significant indigenous christology that has emerged in a Nigerian community as part of the spiritual expression of an indigenous church among the Yoruba people. He argues that the “lordship” aspect of christology becomes particularly relevant for these peoples because of the historical tradition of kingship (the traditional institution of the *oba*) among Yorubas.<sup>12</sup> At least this one aspect of their spiritual life might make this particular church, not a European or Amereuropean denomination, relatively comfortable within the family of the World Council of Churches, where the proclamation “Jesus Christ is Lord” is the bare bones common confession of the great variety of communions who make up the World Council of Churches, the doctrinal glue that holds us all together, one of the few doctrinal proclamations to which the entire family of churches in the WCC can agree.

Over the past decade the colonial oppressiveness of this proclamation for Indian peoples has begun to weigh on me in ways that I had never before considered. As foundational as this confession is for the World Council of Churches, it is the one scriptural metaphor

used for the Christ event that is immediately unacceptable and even hurtful to American Indian peoples. There was no analogue in North American indigenous societies for that which is usually signified by the word lord. To the contrary, North American cultures and social structures were fundamentally marked by their egalitarian nature. Even a so-called “chief” had typically very limited authority which even then depended much on the person’s charismatic stature within the community. The American Indian experiential knowledge of lordship only begins with the conquest and colonisation of our nations at the onslaught of the European invasion. What we know about lords and lordship, even today, has more to do with Washington, D.C., the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the modern tribal governments created by act of Congress. Unfortunately, by extension, even the church becomes a part of these new colonial relationships, with lords in the form of bishops and missionaries (both male and female) to whom we have learned as conquered peoples to pay lordly deference.

To this extent, then, to call upon Jesus as Lord suddenly began to strike me as a classic example of the colonised participating in their own oppression.<sup>13</sup> To call upon Jesus as Lord is to concede the colonial reality of new hierarchal social structures; it is to concede the conquest as final and become complicit in our own death, that is, the ongoing genocidal death of our peoples.<sup>14</sup>

It can be objected that the lordship metaphor for Christ is actually helpful for White, Amereuropean Christians, because it puts many into a posture of humble surrender to which most are quite unaccustomed. Yet, I would argue that the metaphor does exactly the opposite. It rather seems to excuse Amereuropeans from any earthly humility or surrender, and to facilitate often a lack of consciousness with regard to the impropriety of relationships of exploitation. Since one has surrendered to an overwhelmingly powerful numinous other, no other surrender or act of humility is called for. Indeed, many Christians seem to feed on a worldview of hierarchy which puts them at the top of a pyramid of privilege second only to God who has

foreordained this “righteous empire.”<sup>15</sup> Rather than humbled in submission, they are empowered and emboldened – even to imposing their own brand of submission on others. Having submitted to the lordship of Jesus, there is no longer any earthly authority to which the Amereuropean individual must submit or pay homage. Indeed, humbled as vassal before Jesus, the Amereuropean becomes empowered as Jesus’ champion in the world of political and economic conquest.<sup>16</sup>

### **3. Culture, Gender, Class**

What role does gender, race, class, culture and religions, ecological issues, and scriptures play in constructing Christology?

Class and race are not concepts of much significance among Indian peoples. The latter may seem especially radical a claim simply because of the Indian experience of consistent and abject racism in the United States. However, in our own spiritual thinking, and hence in my own christological musings, race does not play a role, at least not nearly as extensive a function as does culture. Indeed, the role race does play in our spiritual praxis is too often one of dysfunctionality. As colonised peoples surrounded by the coloniser, too often we fall into a trap of thinking that nothing we do is of any merit by comparison with the coloniser – unless it can win the approval of some of the colonisers. Thus, Indian traditional spirituality is today a prime target for Amereuropean New Age aficionados who are buying their way into traditional ceremonies in increasing numbers.

Religion is a category that is ultimately foreign to Indian communities across the United States, one that we have only learned to use as it has been imposed upon us by the coloniser’s academic specialists. In a traditional Indian community what Amereuropean specialists would categorise as “religion” is rather thought of as simply “the way we live.” Like the New and Old Testaments, no Indian language has a word that would function as a translation for “religion.” Thus, while we want our ancient religious traditions to be taken

seriously, we resist reducing them to a category called “religion.” Any reasonably healthy Indian christological understanding must be fully inculturated into our cultural way of life – inclusive of our spirituality. In the context of American Indians there can be no distinction between our cultures and our ways of being in communication with the numinous since these spiritual ways of communication are so thoroughly infused throughout everyday life.

While the Christian scriptures are interesting to Indian peoples, and relatively important among those who have made some sort of Christian commitment, we are at heart oral peoples yet today and value our own oral traditions above the written word. Moreover, as Robert Warrior has demonstrated, American Indian appropriation of the Christian scriptures can be quite problematic. In Warrior’s example it must be recognised that the Exodus story, so seminally important in the liberation struggles of African Americans, is a story of bondage and not liberation for us. Namely, in any Indian reading of the Exodus story we are forced to see ourselves as the Canaanites and not as the Israelites. From the beginning of the European invasion of our lands in North America, they have seen themselves as the New Israel.<sup>17</sup> Thus when we are forced to affirm the Exodus story as somehow our own story, we are being forced to participate in our own oppression, implicitly affirming the New Israel’s conquest of our lands. Scripture must be used carefully and critically.

More important to an Indian christological reflection will be the categories of gender, culture, the land (ecology), with gender and land as subcategories to culture. I have argued in other essays that the American Indian cultural value of land is rooted in the priority of spatiality in our thinking, in contrast to the temporal priority of the Amereuropean thinking. Hence, the most natural understanding of the gospel notion of *basileia tou theou* (“kingdom of God”) is as a spatial realm of God, in contrast to the eschatological/temporal interpretation of virtually all American and European scripture experts.

And my own spatial interpretation would relate the *basileia* to the whole of creation as the realm where God rightfully rules.<sup>18</sup> In any case, a close relationship to the land is critical for any American Indian self-understanding and will be critical for any articulation of an Indian christology.

For the purposes of this essay, I would like to address the cultural aspect of gender and give an example of how it might affect an Indian Christology. In every Indian community the underlying notion with respect to gender, as in all things, is balance. This is to say that the ideal calls for a balancing of power and responsibility between the genders.<sup>19</sup> In most Indian communities there are cultural devices which insure a maximum balance between the genders, with many social institutions oriented toward the particular empowerment of women. The mythologies of tribes also move consistently toward the empowerment of women and the role of women in our cultures. This notion of balance does not mean that men and women do the same things within these societies, but rather that what each does is fully respected by the other as necessary to the balance and well-being of the community. In some tribal communities there is a specific prioritising of women. For instance, in many Sun Dance traditions it is thought that the men perform this ceremony precisely to compete with the superior status of women as life-givers. Thus in the shedding of blood in ceremonies of self-sacrifice, men are doing their share to maintain life, something that is given naturally to women by the Creator, both in childbirth and in the monthly menstrual cycle.

For Indian people, gender balance in any human community is an ideal that is equally sought in the world generally. Hence, the common Indian symbol of the circle represents this balance in polyvalent ways. Most importantly, it represents the balance of the created order of two-leggeds, four-leggeds, winged and living moving things (rivers, rocks, trees, mountains, fish, and so on). Moreover, balance is sought from the realm of the numinous, as well, since the ultimate well-

being of the whole depends on the relationship with the numinous. Thus, God, the Sacred Mystery, the Wholly Other, has no inherent gender, but has regularly revealed itself to Indian peoples first of all as a duality of balance, as a necessary reciprocity of powers that include male and female. God is always called on as Wakonda Monsita and Wakonda Udseta, as the Sacred Above and the Sacred Below, as Sky Power and Earth Power, as Grandfather and Grandmother.<sup>20</sup> Even God reveals God's self, then, as necessarily a combination of maleness and femaleness.

Hence any Indian equivalent for the Euro-Christian notion of the Christ would include examples that are explicitly female. For instance, the revered mythic and historic figures of Corn Mother and White Buffalo Calf Woman, examples from two different Indian cultural traditions, would perhaps come close to functioning in ways that could be conceived of as christological. As narrative oral texts they certainly approximate the earliest Asian narratives about Jesus, and as in Christianity each of these figures continues to be significantly involved in the day-to-day well-being of the communities that tell each of these stories. Both function to bring some element of "salvation" and wholeness to the peoples who honour the stories.

Of course, there is an implicit assumption here with regard to the universality of the Christ and the historical particularity of Jesus as a temporal manifestation of that Christ. This Christological notion builds on a reading of John 1:1-14 which implies that the preexistence of the Logos (Christ) dare not be simply confused with the historical incarnation of that Christ in Jesus. Surely, the preexistence of Jesus is indefensible on any grounds, even a nineteenth century kenotic notion of the Christ. If we are led by John's Logos hymn to differentiate between Jesus and the Logos, then we are finally free to reflect on the possibility of other manifestations of the Logos in the world. To think that God was satisfied to withhold God's love and concern from American Indian peoples for some fifteen hundred years until

European Christians had reached the spiritual maturity that enabled their conquest and enslavement of the rest of the world seems reprehensible. It would be a God not worthy of our faith or our faithfulness.

### Notes

1. An allusion to a very useful book by an American Indian legal scholar, Robert Williams, *The American Indian in Western Legal Thought: The Discourses of Conquest* (New York: Oxford, 1990). Williams demonstrates historically from legal texts of the time that systemic forces running through European and Amereuropean colonisation history could not be satisfied until the "conquest" was decisive to the extent that all normative divergence was disallowed.
2. I have in mind, for example, Gustavo Gutierrez, *Liberation Theology* (1973); Jose Miguez Bonino, *Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation* (1975) and *Faces of Jesus* (1984); Leonardo Boff; and many others who taught us so much in the 1970s.
3. R.S. Sugirtharajah, "Jesus Research and Third World Christologies," *Theology* 93 (1990): 387.
4. Of course, one of the consistent criticisms of liberation theology in the U.S. – by both government and church officials – has been that it explicitly politicises Jesus. To the contrary, it was early Latin American liberation theologians who first exposed and described the political currents inherent in the theologies dominant in the European immigrant churches. It was the colonisers who first politicised Jesus in the Americas. It seems evident from the colonisers' own strategy and view that Jesus exists in the world and is not divorced from political realities in the world. Latin American liberation theologians in particular met this oppressors' idea head-on with their own rendering of how Jesus exists in the world – including the political/economic world – but articulated this from the underside of history. This is what gives liberation theology its power and authenticity. What I do not yet understand is how to press this discussion with American Indian thinkers who have already decided on the outright rejection of Jesus as the culture hero or spiritual centre of the oppressor. It could be powerful for Indian thinkers to challenge the persistent rendering of Jesus by the privileged as a means for insuring the continuation of their privilege at the cost of American Indian well-being. While I am very sympathetic to Indian reluctance to invest themselves in any type of Christianity, an argument could be made for an Indian christology that would respond effectively to the resurgence of right-wing, racist, oppressive theologies in the U.S. that pose a new (renewed) threat to Indian peoples today. A serious Indian reflection on christology could provide new energy and creativity to confront this new round

of colonialism (which we call “internal colonialism”).

5. Tinker, *Missionary Conquest: The Gospel and Native American Cultural Genocide* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993).
6. For Asia: David Kwang-Sun Suh, Chung Hyun Kyung, Kwok Pui Lan, Virginia Fabella, Samuel Rayan. For Africa: see J.N.K. Mugambi and L. Magesa, *Jesus in African Christianity: Experimentation and Diversity in African Christology* (Nairobi: Initiatives Publishers, 1989). In his “Response to the Presentation by Diego Irarrazaval,” *Voices From the Third World* (June, 1995), David Kwang-Sun Suh acknowledges a similar shift in Latin American thinking: “It is good news to us Asian theologians that the Latin American colleagues are taking the peoples’ cultures and religions seriously” (p. 81).
7. Diego Irarrazaval, “How Is Theology Done in Latin America?” *Voices From the Third World* (June, 1995), attests that cultural analysis is playing an increasing role, for instance, in Latin American liberation theologies.
8. I use the assigned categorisation here of “history” in spite of my own critique of the category as already too Western and European. See Tinker, “Spirituality, Native American Personhood, Sovereignty and Solidarity,” *Ecumenical Review*, 44 (1992): 312-24.
9. I have in mind here the work of Albert Memmi, *Colonizer and Colonized* and Ashish Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy*. But note also Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, and Aime Cesaire. I mention these “classics” out of concern that they are too often overlooked in our concern for liberating theologies, yet their analyses of colonialism and the ongoing symptoms of colonial oppression are crucial to our own agenda.
10. To wit, the critique of intra-Asian missionary endeavours today voiced by Aruna Gnanadason, “Asian Theological Methodology: An Overview,” *Voices from the Third World* (June 1995)! “An added phenomenon is the growth of missionary movements within Asia – notably from South Korea. These groups replicate the same mistakes the Western mission movements had made in the last century. They impose a religious mindset which is alien and which exploits the vulnerability of the poor in some countries in Asia, including China, but also in Eastern Europe” (p. 85).
11. See Tinker, *Missionary Conquest: The Gospel and Native American Cultural Genocide*, for a description of missionary participation in injustices committed against Indian peoples.
12. Ukachukwu Ch. Manus, “Jesus Kristi Oba: A Christology of ‘Christ the King’ among the Indigenous Christian Churches in Yorubaland, Nigeria,” *Asian Journal of Theology* 5 (1991): 311-30.
13. I was gratified to see this issue of the “lordship” of Jesus raised independently

by Virginia Fabella in her keynote paper which began our intercontinental dialogue.

14. See Tinker, *Missionary Conquest: The Gospel and Native American Cultural Genocide*.
  15. Martin Marty’s terminology, but significantly appropriated by then President Ronald Reagan in his allusion to the USSR as the “evil empire.” See Marty, *The Righteous Empire: The Protestant Experience in America* (New York: Dial Press, 1970).
  16. “Lord” is one of those biblical metaphors that seems to have lost all symbolic moorings in modern American society. The problem is that there are no “lords” in our society and no use of “lord” as a form of address that might conceivably give the metaphor content. In other words, before a modern American can appropriate any spiritual content from the proclamation of Jesus as Lord, she or he must engage in enough of a history lesson to have some idea what the word might mean.
- There is a further problem in that the most accessible use of the word for Amereuropeans (and undoubtedly for many of the rest of us because of our experience of colonialism in America) is not its use in the eastern Mediterranean world of Jesus’ day, but rather its use in European cultures which continues to some extent even today – in places like England, for instance, which still maintains in Parliament a House of Lords. Yet the European use of the word, rooted as it is in the social structures of medieval feudalism, is in actuality a far cry from the Palestinian use that would have been familiar to Mark or even the Greek use that would have been the experience of Luke.
- What we are close to saying here is that to continue to use the metaphor in literal translation may be leading the faithful astray, especially the faithful in White North America. Again, it can be argued that it is the preacher’s responsibility to interpret, to teach the correct meaning, to unpack the metaphor for the ecclesial community. Yet it seems ludicrous to think that the only path to salvation is in an ancient history lesson focussing on the linguistic culture of a foreign people.
- More to the point, what we are experiencing is a shift away from the useful, meaningful, experiential use of language, to what can only be categorised as “religious language.” It can be further argued that religious language is by definition and *de facto* language that has lost its meaning and serves only to elicit ceremonial attachment.
17. Warrior, “Canaanites, Cowboys and Indians,” *Christianity and Crisis*.
  18. Tinker, “A Native American Reading of the Bible,” *New Interpreters Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994).
  19. It should also be noted that Indian peoples customarily think in terms of more than two genders, allowing for individuals who appear to be physiologically of one gender but function emotionally and economically as the opposite gender.

See Tinker, "American Indian Berdaches and Cross-Cultural Diversity," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* (1988).

20. I explain this somewhat more fully in "An American Indian Theological Response to 'Creation as Beloved of God'," set to appear in a volume edited by Jace Weaver for Orbis Press on American Indian ecojustice.

## **Response to Tinker's Paper**

*Virginia Fabella*

Before all else, I would like to express my appreciation for Tinker's paper. His intention was to begin "a difficult discussion about the viability and even legitimacy of an American Indian christology which would make Jesus more authentically accessible to Indian people." This he accomplished in an absorbing manner. My response is from a Filipino rather than an Asian perspective. The Philippines is different from the rest of Asia in that it is largely a Christian country. My response to Tinker's presentation will simply be a sharing of a few similarities and differences.

I resonate with Tinker when he says that Indian christology "must begin with and continually be in touch with the analysis of the political context, but it must include the results of colonisation, particularly the psychological state of the community and the psychology of the act of colonisation." He says it is "important to affirm who we are . . . in terms of our traditional culture and value system." As a vital part of the theologising and hence christologising process in the Philippines, the Filipino EATWOT members are reclaiming the life-giving aspects of our indigenous roots and traditional heritage (e.g. respect for women, the centrality of land for life, and human interconnectedness with the rest of the cosmos) and delving into the



liberational re-interpretation of Filipino psychology, so long misrepresented by Western colonialists and Western-educated anthropologists and psychologists. In Tinker's statement, however, I would expand the term "colonisation" to "globalisation."

While Tinker acknowledges the Indian experience of consistent and abject racism in the U.S.A., in Tinker's own christological musings, "race does not play a role, at least not nearly as extensive a function as does culture." This is also true in Filipino theologising. Perhaps it was only within the past few decades that Filipinos began to realise that being called "little brown brothers" by our colonisers was not cute and endearing, but rather "classist, sexist and racist."

Unlike Tinker's claim that "Christianity has been from the beginning and continues to be divisive of Indian communities," for Filipinos, the introduction of Christianity was a unifying element for the people as a whole, except for pockets of Muslim and other minority groups that continue to resist Christianity till today. Most Filipino Christians, however, practice some form of "popular" Christianity in varying degrees.

I noted little mention of symbols, images, and titles for Jesus in Tinker's paper. Except for the detailed critique of the title "lord," Tinker says nothing of Indian images or symbols for Jesus. On the other hand, the Philippines abounds with titles, symbols and images for Jesus, from the Santo Nino (the little Jesus) to Hesus Nazareno (the black Jesus carrying his cross). From the images and titles alone, one could probably construct a Filipino "popular" Christology. But to centre on Jesus alone would give an incomplete picture. Tinker mentions that "any Indian equivalent of the Euro-Christian notion of the Christ would include examples that are explicitly female," for example Corn Mother and White Buffalo Calf Woman. In this respect, there is a parallel in the Philippine situation. There can be no talk of Jesus without mention of Mary, his mother. In fact, Mary outshines Jesus in popularity. More churches are named after Mary and the

saints than after Jesus. To many Mary functions more effectively than Jesus. Mariology is implicit Christology in Philippine religiosity. Incidentally, I was happy to note that Tinker used "reciprocity" rather than "complementarity" in describing the relationship between women and men.

As Tinker doubted the viability or even legitimacy of an American Indian christology that would make Jesus more accessible to Indian people, so I question the authenticity of a Filipino christology that would truly speak to the majority of the Filipinos with their myriad images, titles, and understandings of Jesus, and the priority status they give to Mary. Thus I raise the question: "For whom is our Christology?"

## **Christology and Popular Religions: An African Constructive Statement**

*Elizabeth Amoah*

African Christians have been reflecting on and living on their experiences of and encounters with Jesus Christ of the Gospel and of what was brought by the Euro-American missionaries. This has been a continuous process of christologising.

African Christians have never lived in isolation. They live with other Africans who have embraced other religions, especially Islam. Even before the advent of Christianity and Islam in Africa, there were the indigenous African religions practised by the indigenous people. Thus there seems to be ambiguity in the use of the term “popular religions” if we take into consideration the fact that every religion, including Christianity, has its own popular aspect. This complex and ambiguous aspect is seen as the living faith of people. It can be liberating, life-giving and sustaining. On the other hand it can be enslaving and destructive. The phrase “popular religion” can be used to describe aspects of religiosity in Christianity, Islam and the indigenous religions in Africa.

At this point, a brief account of the various contexts from which African Christians do their christologies will be pertinent. Africa has been exploited, and today it is literally dying and yet very little is known on Africa. The death of Africa is linked with new forms of colonisation some of which are expressed in the dehumanising and racist policies concerning trade, enforced by the rich countries from both of the north and south, and of course, the famous World Bank and the International Monetary Fund story in Africa.

There have been devastating results from these. A few will be cited below: unemployment especially of the youth who see nothing but a very grim future, social unrest, violence, ethnic conflicts, genocide, refugee situations, breakdown of systems and of moral values, drug abuse, the dreadful AIDS and the rise of other diseases, the falling standards of education, and so on. One could go on and on multiplying the realities in Africa.

As if these are not enough, there is the problem of having meaningful communication with each other due to differences of language and the fragmentation of the continent by those who literally scrambled for Africa.

There is also religious pluralism even within the major religions, namely, the indigenous religions, Islam and Christianity. Currently there is an influx of oriented religious groups in Africa, each trying very hard to find space. The two dominant religions, Christianity and Islam, – the guest religions – are doing everything possible to destroy the indigenous religions. Support from within and outside is encouraging religions to scramble for and tear Africa apart. The host religions, namely the indigenous religions, are very hospitable, receptive and accommodating. They emphasise the existence of one creator God, but this does not rule out God being in other spirits, be they the god/goddesses and the ancestors who, it is believed, have great influence and power over life. There is rarely any conflict of powers.

The indigenous Africans depended on them for both material and

spiritual well being. They asked for their plentiful harvest, rains, good health, prosperity of land, protection from evil, continuation of the lineage and the general fullness of life for individuals and the whole community. These religions are life-centred and communitarian. There is very little dichotomy between the religious, political, economic, social and moral dimensions of the wholistic life.

It is within this general context that Islam came preaching that there is no God but Allah. Islam emphasises the unity of God. Christianity came preaching Christ the Lord and the only name under the sun. The early missionaries emphasised Christ as the only way to salvation. Thus the Africans were told to abandon the powers they had depended on for their fullness of life and to embrace a new personal Saviour. Some of them, of course, accepted Christianity with its material and spiritual benefits and added Christ to the many spirit powers they were familiar with. Meanwhile the many problems that face Africans still exist and in fact they are becoming worse and unbearable. The religions, with their various programmes to save Africans, are increasing.

With two complex situations the christologies that are emerging from Africa will be many.

### **Christological Models that Emerge from such Contexts**

#### ***a) The inculturation model***

With the emergence of nationalism all over Africa south of Sahara, many Africans protested against colonial and racist ideology which saw the black man as a “baboon on two legs” who had nothing to offer but to be exploited. The inculturation model starts by questioning colonialism and racism. It is argued that this is very fundamental to any discourse on christology. It affirms one’s human dignity and identity as equal partaker in the common wealth given by God who is the creator of all. This model is what has been clearly expressed in the discourse on “anthropological poverty” by the late Engelbert Mveng and other African theologians especially in the western and

central African regions. This model has been criticised for not analysing socio-economic and political issues.

#### ***b) Liberation model***

This model is articulated clearly by African theologians mainly from the Southern African region, who strongly opposed the racist apartheid system of the Whites in South Africa. In this context Jesus Christ is seen as the one who liberates one from racist, economic, social and political systems which dehumanise. It is further argued that not only Africa but all humanity should be liberated.

#### ***c) Inclusive model***

African women theologians demand inclusive christological categories. They question the existing christological models as being one-sided and not taking women’s concerns into consideration. They see Jesus as supporting, enhancing and giving life to all humanity. Thus there is the need to re-read the Gospel, listen with the ears on the ground and get to the root of what Jesus is all about. There is the need to search for christological models that include all humanity for the good news is for all people that dwell on earth. Thus African woman identifies with Jesus who acts as the mother who loves and gives life to and nurtures all.

African christologies are for life, struggle and empowerment of people. They begin with actual life situations one needs to listen to do.

Spontaneous prayers and songs have been made especially by some contemporary African Christians. In their thinking and logic if Jesus Christ as expressed by the missionaries is the Lord of all, then one should see Jesus as someone capable of saving them from all forms of evil. Thus they happily sing about and affirm Jesus as “husband, wife, brother, sister, mother” and so on. In short, they consider Jesus as anything that is good, that affirms their well-being. The challenge of such christological categories is that Jesus Christ becomes too personalised and some things prevent them from dealing concretely

with problems concerning the economic, social, political issues. All the same Jesus becomes very alive and real to them. They identify with Jesus very much, with Jesus who by his life and teaching, showed concern for human welfare, be it physical or spiritual, the one who enables and makes it possible for people to be liberated from all types of social, political and economic systems which push them down. They identify with Jesus Christ who makes it possible for people to question oppressive, rigid and excessive dogma and ritualism in religion.

### **What Have We Learned**

So far we have learned from each other the need to affirm pluralism of christologies. At the same time we have learned christologies should be made relevant to our situations, contexts, handicaps and needs. We are challenged by our realities the need to include socioeconomic and political issues in our christologising. We have also learned that we are all searching for and struggling to make Jesus Christ meaningful to us. There is the need to listen to and to know and learn from the faith experiences of the other. The two disciples travelling to Emmaus listened to the person they readily dismissed as the “stranger,” the “other,” and they discovered the Jesus Christ they thought they had lost. Finally the challenge to us all is in a new world order which is excluding others and if the world can go on without them, whom do we say Jesus Christ is? The answer to this will definitely not be the same, for our contexts and needs are not the same.

## **Response to Elizabeth Amoah**

*Pablo Richard*  
(trans. by Virginia Fabella)

**1. “Africa is dying . . .”** The situation in Africa. Rwanda, Somalia, Sudan, hunger, unemployment, wars, AIDS, . . . Is this the beginning of the end of the Third World? Is the death of Africa the future fate of the Third World? We are already experiencing in Latin America what is happening in Africa. All this call us to solidarity with Africa. If we are not capable of saving Africa, then it is the end of the Third World. The death of Africa is the triumph of the new international order.

**2. The religious fragmentation of Africa** The reality of the traditional African religions is that the two dominant religions (Christianity and Islam) seek to destroy the traditional religions and also fight among themselves for power. Islam wants to make Africa a Muslim continent; the churches want a Christian Africa. EATWOT cannot join this battle of religions; it must seek a different path; a macro-ecumenism from the poor and for the defence of life. Christianity should not compete with Islam; rather it should dialogue with Islam in the defence of life. The macro ecumenism should start from the cultural and religious identity of the people.

**3. Racism and New International Order** The free market economy is not for everybody; it is a system that excludes 60 to 80

percent of people in the Third World. This system only serves to reinforce racism. Racism is the “spirit” of this new free market economy. There is racism already integrated in the dominant culture; therefore, the system is well prepared to accept with “clear conscience” the death of Africa and subsequently the death of all the excluded.

4. Africa teaches us the women’s capacity to critique culture and religions as well as the capacity to defend life. The women’s movement in Africa appears as the root and mother of all the other movements.

5. It is evident in Africa how all the religions are responsible for the global destination of the world. If we assume our responsibility as Christians, it is urgent to return to the origins of Christianity. This does not mean returning to Jesus or making christology a central problem. The historical Jesus is revealed in the first 100 years of existence of the first Christian communities. We should recover the pluralistic multicultural origins of Christianity. The “historical Jesus” and christology are scientific constructions. We cannot take a scientific construction as the centre of the renewal of Christianity. Our path must be that the poor recognise themselves in the historical origins of Christianity. The identity of Christianity lies in the re-encounter with and identification of the origins of Christianity with the (present) historical movements of the poor and the excluded.

## **The Impact of Women’s Theology on the Development of Dialogue in EATWOT**

*Mercy Amba Oduyoye*

### **A Process of Conversion**

Before settling for the above title I tried several ways of presenting the concerns outlined below which are questions to which this address seeks to speak. I tried, “Feminism in EATWOT: who cares?” I considered “Feminism in EATWOT: is there a dialogue?” I asked, “Should there be a focussed dialogue on women’s theology?” “Does women’s theology make any impact on EATWOT?” and many more. The challenge is this: EATWOT is in the process of self-evaluation and needs to know what has happened since the New Delhi “irruption within the irruption.”<sup>1</sup> Our present conversations should take into account at least four aspects of this challenge:

Is gender a dividing line in EATWOT?

The nature of “cross-gender dialogue” in the four EATWOT regions.<sup>2</sup>

The nature of intercontinental dialogue on the subject of women’s theology.

Why has it been so difficult for women and men to talk about women's issues in theology, church and world?

It seems to me that one can put all this together and ask the question: "To what extent does patriarchy continue to reign in EATWOT?" What I suggest is that we look for evidence of the beginnings of a process of conversion in "the Association" and then start to work intentionally towards a mutually agreed vision and goal of EATWOT.<sup>3</sup> Humanity and human communities are in a process of becoming, and the Association is no exception.

I am using conversion as a paradigm for evaluating the Association, for what the subject before us demands of EATWOT is a change of direction. When cultures meet, the interaction is complex. Conversion is never an uncritical acceptance or obtuse rejection of what is new. A complex process of syncretising is set afoot in which change happens for any number of complex reasons. There is always the factor of differing agendas when cultures and persons meet, but in all this one finds the inter-related elements of openness towards creating space for shared thinking, partnerships, a conscious effort to maintain self-determination, and the development of collaboration. Encounters are mutual and each partner is interested in determining the nature of change. The dialectic nature of the relation between the powerful and the powerless cannot be overlooked in this analysis.<sup>4</sup> Encounters in EATWOT are subject to all of these.

The conversations that went into the creation of the Association were centred around the theme of liberation from theological constructs that are domesticating to peoples described as "Third World". It was a men's conversation, there was no specific feminist consciousness involved, indeed there were no women at the informal stages of testing this need for a fresh approach to Christian theology. Virginia Fabella in *Beyond Bonding* has traced the theological journeys of women in the Association, showing how they came to an overt assertion of their presence in EATWOT.<sup>5</sup> A brief survey of this history

will enable us to begin an appreciation of the development of a feminist consciousness in the Association. We turn therefore to the question: "Is gender a dividing line in EATWOT?" The answer is obvious, but the challenge is to be able to admit it, voice it and as a community, to confess it.

### **Along the Lines of Gender**

My starting point for this survey pre-dates the founding of the Association, for I see the roots of EATWOT in Detroit 1975, the meeting of "Theology in the Americas" (TIA). There were women at this meeting, whose focus was on a search for an alternative to the "white male" theology of the USA and the Liberation Theology of Latin America, also basically "white" and "male". It was a North-South dialogue that antedated the Association but which involved some of the persons who later found themselves in EATWOT. At Dar-es-Salaam 1976 where the Association began, Virginia Fabella and Beatriz Melano Couch were present, but their input was not specifically as women. All officers of the newly born Association were men, so it is noteworthy that Fabella co-edited *The Emergent Gospel* with Torres. Was this a deliberate choice, was there a conscious element of gender balance and inclusiveness? Was it a matter of convenience? Was Fabella present at Dar? If so, in what capacity? If not, then how does she become a co-editor? In the introduction to her book, Fabella points out that "one flaw in the process (of the development of EATWOT) is the absence or mere token presence of women's perspective and contribution." She highlights what seemed to be a general assumption the "male theologians were more competent and knowledgeable resource persons" for EATWOT conferences. There is therefore no doubt concerning the existence of gender-divide in EATWOT. The situation lies at the founding of the Association.

On the other hand, EATWOT was conscious from its inception that "women have been discriminated against and oppressed on all levels of both society and Church."<sup>6</sup> Only nothing concrete was done

to rectify this, neither by way of theological reflection nor in the praxis of the Association. That was to wait till Sri Lanka '79 though that conference too was male-dominated. Marlene Perera's editorial for *Voices*, Vol. VIII No.3 highlights aspects of Third World women's theology that could be the locus of dialogue. Several of them are traditional on the agenda of systematic theology, but the issues of the presence of women in the Bible and Church and the challenging of the exclusively male imagery of God are new. So are some of the methods of doing theology. To assess the state of dialogue on women in the Association one could try to find out how EATWOT men have responded to the agenda of women theologians. From the "Final Statement" of Dar onwards, women are present as victims of exclusion and marginalisation, yet nothing liberative was done at the level of the Association until the synthesis conference.

New Delhi 1981 (which was also the second Assembly of EATWOT), began to shake the androcentric and "machistic" orientation of EATWOT. Even after New Delhi, feminist perspectives and the voices of women remained peripheral, ostensibly because women themselves had not demanded a voice and a space. The New Delhi statement had more on women. Sexism was named. The gender-divide was admitted, the first step towards *metanoia* had been taken. "If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us." The fact that we are civil, friendly, helpful, liberal and even generous does not make us any less sexist and chauvinistic. But admitting wrong direction and turning to face the right way is not one single movement. The Association, as Fabella notes, "remained patriarchal at heart" though the presence of women had been declared.

Significant in this development is the fact of "presence". At Accra, there were 17 women and 73 men. Colombo had 18 women and 62 men. At Sao Paulo less than one in five of the 180 participants were women, and at New Delhi it was 10 women and 32 men. It is significant that with a smaller group and a higher proportion of women, the women's presence was more overt, but that even at this meeting,

not one of the 10 women was selected to be a resource person and once again all three officers were men. Not one of the Regions thought of women neither as resource person nor of the calibre required for leadership of the Association. It is a well known, though undocumented fact, that certain women who joined in the fund raising that enabled EATWOT to take off, initiated the discussion on the necessity for the Association to include women. Otherwise it would have had the history of an "all male club," that reluctantly took in women. EATWOT was opened up for women by women, so it does not come as a surprise that the impact of women on the Association had to be specially won by women.

The irruption at New Delhi elicited an awareness that the Association was made up of women and men but it could not sustain a cross-gender dialogue on women, nor was that fact allowed to influence the Association's process and priorities. Word and action on women was no more liberative than it had been before. Christian theology is famous for its captivity to the male voice and ethos. It was beginning to appear that liberating it from its captivity to eurocentredness was not to affect the captivity to androcentredness. However at the end of the New Delhi Assembly, EATWOT was confronted for the first time with the gender divide and with the presence of sexism and *machismo* in the midst of persons working on a theology/theologies that it was hoped would be liberative. Women insisted that given the claims and aspirations of the Association, statements on the oppression of women alone are not enough, the practice of liberation should be mandatory and our language about and before God must become inclusive, as well as respectful of difference and diversity.

"Doing something about it" began with the North-South dialogue, Geneva 1983, where there were 12 women and 46 men, but the Association's focus on regional efforts did not allow this seed to prosper. The seed had been thrown among thorns. The Women's Commission was born but it had not yet come alive. The Association's

focus on regional efforts acted as thorns to impede the flourishing of the seed that had just germinated. The women's commission was mandated but could not take off. The vision was clear and necessary, it was to promote "a theology of liberation from the perspective of women in the Third World." It was almost like "the women's wing of a men's association." The EATWOT Committee that authorised it did not set it up for cross-gender dialogue. It was pre-dialogical but it was important as evidence of a consensus in EATWOT that women's concerns and perspectives are necessary to make liberation theology whole.

The work of the Women's Commission could not be that of an EATWOT commission *on women*. What the women undertook, did not appear to touch the men of EATWOT. I am not even sure whether it is owned as an integral part of the theological efforts of EATWOT. The commission committed itself to a process similar to that of the Association. Work was done on national and regional levels under great disabilities. Conferences were held in the regions (see *Voices*, June 1993 for papers from the Asia conference on "Spirituality for Life: Women Struggling against Violence). Connections were made with feminists in Europe and North America. This culminated in a South-North dialogue in San Jose, Costa Rica, 1994, with a focus on "violence against women." It was an all-women's forum. It served to build women's solidarity, widened their networks, deepened friendships and theological insights, demonstrated the support of EATWOT for women's theology, but that does not constitute a cross-gender dialogue on women.<sup>7</sup> Have women accepted the gender divide? Is the Commission a preparation for dialogue or an end in itself? How have the men members of the Association been preparing themselves for the dialogue? To date all that one is entitled to say is that EATWOT approves, promotes and indeed funds women's theological effort, yet the reluctance to see women's findings present in shaping the future is palpable. The Association recognises the presence of women and their competence as theologians, but does it

eschew patriarchy and *machismo*? Does EATWOT disavow sexism? Does it have a feminist consciousness? Hugo Assman seems to speak about EATWOT when he responds to Tamez's question on the integration of women as follows: "To have things clearly in our minds doesn't mean we know how to live them."<sup>8</sup> This applies to the whole Association and its members, women and men alike.

The dividing line of gender is most dangerous where it is masked by "friendship," polite conversation and avoidance of conflict. Both sides of the dividing line have avoided dialogue. Rather EATWOT women have taken the line of Church women's societies, creating their own space and functioning within it. In such a space, where their "subjectness" and autonomy cannot be questioned, women have been able to expose the taboo questions. Can EATWOT develop a cross-gender theological dialogue on these taboo questions and other priority issues raised by women? To survey this ground we turn to the Regions which were the scene of EATWOT activities in the post-New Delhi era.

### **Regional Efforts**

What has been the women-men encounters and relationships in EATWOT's four regions? Has there been regional cross-gender dialogues to facilitate drawing upon the "Irruption within the Irruption" of New Delhi? Is there evidence of impact of women in the regional efforts? If the Association turned attention to regional development, did the Regions include the need for women's perspectives in EATWOT? Was there a deliberate effort to understand and respond to the irruption of women on the public arena? Reading the Association's "doing" and "saying" and "being" in the post-1981 period requires one to approach it through its regional conferences, workshops, publications, its leadership and other ways of "being". To do this we have to refer to the regional programmes from 1981 to 1985. Prior to New Delhi 1981, the subject of women was among the priorities chosen during the preparation for the 4th conference of



EATWOT held in Sao Paulo in 1980. The preparation for this input was done by women and is reported in *Voices*, Vol. VII: 3, 1985, pp. 38-45. The conclusion of the report of the meeting states: "We invite all liberation theologians to reformulate their theological categories from women's point of view and thus deepen revelation." Did the men theologians of the Association take this up? The preparation for, and the holding of the Assembly at Oaxtepec is equally critical.

We need to review the regional process from Oaxtepec to Nairobi 1991 and examine the process in Nairobi itself. This regional overview will be provided by other persons present here. What I do here is to point out what strikes me as especially significant for the cross-gender dialogue in the Association as a whole. I restrict myself to one or two happenings per region and then give a little more space to Africa. My starting point in this section is Latin America, and with a happening funded by the World Council of Churches and undertaken by a woman whose membership of EATWOT is post-New Delhi. I am speaking of Tamez and her book referred to above.

Tamez's interviews with 15 liberation theologians of Latin America held between July 1985 and August 1986 were unique and a courageous step, initiating cross-gender dialogue on the issue of women. I remember John Eagleson of Meyer Stone Books trying to talk me into undertaking the same in Africa. My response was, "Our men are not ready." So on cross-gender dialogue, a woman enabled Latin America to be the first. In her preface (Sept. 1986) Tamez writes:

personally I believe that the value of these interviews is not so much the level of consciousness of women's oppression, be it high or low, that the theologians demonstrate. It is rather the effort they are making to reflect perhaps for the first time in some cases, from the angle of those discriminated against because of their sex, an angle that is foreign to some but that needs to be appropriated.

Tamez promised a second volume which will "include the reactions and commentary of women theologians to the interviews." This she

did almost immediately in Spanish as *Las Mujeres Toman la Palabra* (ed. Tamez, San Jose, Costa Rica, DEI 1989). But she could not find publishers for an English edition, so it remained inaccessible to the English users of the Association. Language of course has always been a challenge to dialogue in EATWOT. A translation of the book would have been a strong foundation put in place for women and men of EATWOT to sit together at a round table and to look at "women's liberative theology" as a theological focus and a healing process for the whole community.

This process as outlined and initiated by Tamez is in unique theological dialogue anywhere. Tamez's challenge to her region is this: "the theology of liberation will have to appropriate the oppression of women, as it has the oppression of Blacks and Indigenous peoples, to be faithful to its methodology."<sup>9</sup> And Gustavo Gutierrez agrees. The question is, "Is this happening?" Enrique Dussel's direction is that men have to study women's theology including the writings of the contemplatives of the third and fourth centuries. Again, is this happening?<sup>10</sup> Rubem Alves takes the line that a study of feminine images in Protestant churches and a comparison of these with the Pietas of Roman Catholic Church, would be a creative point of departure.<sup>11</sup>

It is worth noting that at least the men interviewed, a number of them being members of EATWOT, admit the oppression of women and were open to listening to women's point of view and to begin a dialogue that seeks avenues for transformation. In *Through Her Eyes* edited by Tamez, the women theologians of Latin America focused on the praxis of caring, that is, collegial relationships between women and men, for the community; this is important for dialogue. Will the women's agenda invite this colleagueship? Tamez's experience of men's response to her writings suggest that EATWOT stands a better chance of dialogue if the focus is not on the oppression of women presented in what men see as a frontal attack. Rather the themes for discussion should follow traditional systematic theology but use the

experiences of women as the starting point. It seems however that the women in *Through Her Eyes* "indicate that they are not willing to compromise their critique of imperialistic patriarchal structures for the sake of collegiality that remains hierarchical and male dominated."<sup>12</sup> Simply put, Gebara says women theologians are not seeking male legitimation.<sup>13</sup> They are doing their own theological reflection and reshaping themes as basic as the concept of God.

It seems to me then, that a way of assessing how much dialogue has happened would be to find out how much of women's theological agenda coincides with that of the men, and to what extent they are talking to each other. The final statement of the Latin American conference, Buenos Aires 1985, underlined the theology from the perspective of women. The women demonstrated their readiness to share their joy with all. How did men of EATWOT respond to this offering?<sup>14</sup>

The EATWOT scene in Africa is a little different. There had been an atmosphere of denial but this is melting away. Theological associations have become curious about what women theologians have to say. To quote Tamez, "It is extremely important that men pass through this first stage of accepting the reality that is unjust to women under the present system, a reality that favours men. And that men with their daily behaviour reinforce."<sup>15</sup> Contributions to *Culture, Religion and Liberation* indicate that some African men theologians are beginning to own up the reality that African women have unveiled.<sup>16</sup> Few however will admit to their privileged position derived from their being men, and fewer still seem to be reading what African women theologians write.

When EATWOT was inaugurated in Dar, there was no African woman present, the obvious one had been contacted at the last moment and she had other ecumenical assignments to take care of. No African woman appears in *Emergent Gospel*. In Accra 1977 there were several women and *African Theology En Route* have contributions from four

of them as against 16 papers from men. The final communiqué identified racism and sexism as part of the African reality.<sup>17</sup> This said there was no deliberate follow up. EATWOT-Africa took no specific steps, there was no affirmative action on behalf of women to ensure the inclusion of women's theology. It was simply assumed that it would happen naturally. Women had to sew up their own torn backs, while *Voices from the Third World*, the Association periodical, monitors them in the hope that their word may be read beyond their women's circles.<sup>18</sup>

*Voices*, Sept. 1985 was issued to present "Women in Third World Theology." Of the five articles four were by women. The fifth was that of Charles Nyamiti on the subject of "The African Sense of God's Motherhood in the Light of Christian Faith." Here one finds an African man identifying with the women's concern to probe African culture and religion as a gender dialogue in the Association on the nature of God when he states that "maternal characteristics of God are not necessarily wrong" (p. 97).

In October 1989 African women demonstrated their intention to do their theology on their own initiative and around their own concerns. They created a "Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians" with a focus on "African Women in Religion and Culture." EATWOT men became interested. At the Cairo meeting of EATWOT-Africa, there were two subjects, one was "Spirituality and Liberation in Africa." The other was "Men and Women in the Service of the Church in Africa." Among the papers discussed was one on the re-reading of Salvation history which drew on the ancient Egyptian deities Isis and Osiris as an example of complementary roles of the female and male principles in the history of salvation, (*Voices*, 1985 p. 113). This principle of complementarity was carried into the second discussion. Being a debatable concept it should generate cross-gender dialogue in Africa. One could say that Cairo has initiated this process, women and men have talked together "on women."

The report of the EATWOT Pan-African Theological conference features a contribution on “Culture as a Source of Oppression of Women in Africa.” This is indicative of the awareness of the concerns of African women theologians.<sup>19</sup> Five of the 15 chapters were by women and were all substantial critiques of religion and culture from various perspectives. This African cross-gender dialogue on religion and culture has provided a forum and a format for pursuing the conversations on women’s theology. The final statement of the meeting acknowledged that “the presence of women as presenters and leading thinkers has enriched the debate over questions of inclusive language, women’s ordination, and ‘bride price’.” This, the statement said, “reflects positive movement in African theological discussions” (p. 166).

In a way one could say that it is Asia that kept up the flow of dialogue in EATWOT through the publication of *Voices* and specifically provided a forum for dialogue by bringing together the happenings in the four regions. The five volumes of *Voices* – “Women in the Third World” (Sept. 1985), “EATWOT Women Theology” (June 1989), “Emerging Concerns of Third World Theology” (June 1993), “Spirituality for Life: Women Struggling against Violence” (June 1994), “EATWOT Women on Violence” (June 1995) – have all been immense resources for dialogue on women. Indeed the 1993 issue is itself a locus of dialogue as it features women and men on the theological concerns of the Association. It was from an Asian woman that the first protest against the sexism of the Association was publicly made.<sup>20</sup> *In God’s Image* – the Asian women’s theological journal-is another call to dialogue that is influencing the ethos of EATWOT.

Women members of the USA Minorities have provided critical issues for cross-gender dialogue not only on sexism but also on women and racism as well as raising much of the inclusive language concerns. The women have also been instrumental in sharpening the intercontinental dialogue among women and in demonstrating the varieties of women’s theology in that region and their contextual and

historical roots. The necessity for this careful elaboration and nuancing of the women’s theological scene for dialogue cannot be overstated. There is not a monolithic structure to buy into or to dismiss. This should challenge and stimulate the Association, its leadership and its men to be as serious about this internal dialogue as they are about the North-South axis. The women members of the US Minorities have insisted on plurality, true universality and inclusiveness that does not deny uniqueness. This perspective is critical not only to women-men relations in EATWOT, but also to the whole process of globalisation which poses a threat to particular identities.

In all regions of EATWOT women have intensified their theological endeavours in the period beginning 1985. This has caught the attention of the world and of male colleagues. There is evidence of an openness to dialogue but the structures for this are yet to be put in place. Meanwhile we have *Voices* and we have our intercontinental conferences and Assemblies, so we now turn to the latter in the hope of discovering seeds of cross-gender dialogue on women, as they appear in these encounters.

### **Intercontinental Dialogue**

After New Delhi, the next intercontinental dialogue was at the Third Assembly of EATWOT which was held at Oaxtepec, Mexico, five years later in 1986. In the interval the dialogue at New Delhi Assembly was published. It was this book that featured a review of the first and unprepared, unplanned intercontinental dialogue of the Association on the subject of Women and Women’s Theology. Oduyoye identified this happening as “The Irruption within the Irruption.” The Assembly at New Delhi was planned to accommodate a conference that would examine how “The irruption of the Third World” challenges Christian theology. This fifth international conference of EATWOT was innocent of the impact and relevance of the global fact of women’s overt demonstration that women are history-makers, subject and not just accessories to a male design. In

the theological field, however, women continued to qualify as “those who, until recently, were not heard.” Certainly this would be true of theology in the Third World.<sup>21</sup> This was also the basis of EATWOT praxis that had gone unexamined.

What happened at New Delhi was more protest from the underside of EATWOT than a cross-gender dialogue. The anticipated dialogue was the one on the “commonalties and uniqueness of the efforts to contextualise theology in their different continents and regions.”<sup>22</sup> It was a cross-cultural effort not one of cross-gender. It hoped for a synthesis, not one more element of diversity. Three men made presentations (two from Asia and one from Latin America). The most significant input by the women participants was a worship service described as “devotional, prayerful, and theologically challenging.”<sup>23</sup> Speaking about God and to men colleagues through the language of worship, the women were heard on the subject of the “countless non-persons,” “half-persons,” that is, those neither male or female.

The invitation was for the men to join in “an hour of history” which for the women was “an hour of hope.” The response was mixed, to say the least, for some were visibly scandalised. Through the medium of worship the women declared: “We are part of the irrupting millions who seek a rightful place in history.” The women invited the men to do the following: meditate on a poem written by a woman, read the story of Hagar through a woman’s eyes, sing Mary’s song with all who long for total liberation and pray together to Mother/Father God, the Source of our hope, our Creator, Sustainer and Liberator.<sup>24</sup> This was a women’s agenda for a cross-gender dialogue in EATWOT. Was any of this picked up in New Delhi or thereafter?

Sexism was picked up in the final statement as part of the litany of “discrimination based on race, colour, sex and caste.”<sup>25</sup> Sexism was also expounded upon as the last item of the series and in terms of women suffering from “male-dominated patterns of social organisation” and closing with the statement: “All religions without

exception are guilty of discriminating against women.” Nothing was said about EATWOT’s own sexism. There was only an admission that the Association is encouraged by the “feminist movement of the First World,” an unspoken admission that the Association is not ready to hear Third World women. When whiteness and maleness is decried, this fact is not brought home to roost in EATWOT. In short, the “irruption within the irruption” seems to have washed off the back of EATWOT as water slips off the back of the duck.

Another significant happening between the two Assemblies, New Delhi and Mexico, was the opportunity for EATWOT to re-visit New Delhi. This came in the form of the North-South dialogue held in Geneva 1983, the papers of which were published as *Doing Theology in a Divided World*.<sup>26</sup> More women were there as contributors. Did this divided conflictual world include the gender-divide and the conflict over feminism? The social analysis done at this meeting revealed how unprepared the theological world was for the concerns of women theologians and especially those of women from the Third World.<sup>27</sup> The latter’s insistence that sexism was not a women’s issue but that of men as well was not heard. The women had to have a separate caucus to sort out their collaboration on this issue. As indicated above “Doing Something” about New Delhi could no longer be postponed. Plenary discussions were held, sexism in EATWOT could no longer remain closeted, it had to be named as a systemic sin.<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless the question still remains, whether in the Association there is a mutual openness to cross-gender dialogue on women. Have individual men of EATWOT taken up the women’s agenda?

The first attempt to touch the Association’s “being and doing” was challenged by some men. The male-centred persons ridiculed the idea that one-third of EATWOT membership should be women as a frivolous numbers game. They would not take the first step of removing “women’s invisibility.”<sup>29</sup> The minutes of the Executive

Committee of EATWOT which prepared the 1986 General Assembly in Oaxtepec, expressed readiness to have the Women's Commission influence the future of EATWOT, critique EATWOT process and organisation to help in deciding the future orientation of the Association.<sup>30</sup> Important also was the view that men should begin to read women's works, see women's point of view and join in promoting feminist perspectives and methods in such a way that the doing of liberative theology will become more holistic. Women offered alternative theological methodology. How is this affecting EATWOT? The Association has stimulated and affected Third World women's theology, but is this theology shaping EATWOT's priorities and ethos?

The last and most recent intercontinental EATWOT dialogue is the one of the Assembly at Nairobi, January 1992. As if Geneva and Oaxtepec had not happened, all the presenters at this conference were scheduled to be men. Women were to participate as responders. Then entered the serendipities of life. The "Keynote" was the responsibility of Latin America. The region had appointed a man. When it became clear at the last minute that the person could not make it to Nairobi, the Latin American delegates first considered another man. But this time, the selection did not go unchallenged. Once again it was the women of the delegation who raised their voices.<sup>31</sup> Latin America gave EATWOT its first woman keynoter. The keynote was a joint responsibility, with the woman being the first speaker. This most significant happening has been ignored in the records of the Association. (I am looking forward to being proved wrong on this as of course on any of the other observations.) Women participated as respondents.

All one can say to this is that the Association needs to undergo a cultural revolution with regard to its understanding of the humanity of women. The entrenched machistic relationship between men and women has to be exorcised. The Mende of Sierra Leone and the Yoruba of Nigeria have to teach EATWOT that "if a man sees a snake

and a woman kills it nothing is lost." The needed task has been accomplished. The Association has to stop behaving like the Akan of Ghana who say, "While the male soul is alive, the female does not have to crack nuts." The traditional reasons for assigning strict divisions of labour and gender roles have no unchanging validity. Accepting this intellectually, however is not as difficult as learning to live by it. Cross-gender intercontinental dialogue on women is yet to become a part of EATWOT process.

With the establishment of the Theological Commission at the Nairobi Assembly have come intentional efforts to have intercontinental dialogue on theological concerns. The first one was held in June 1992. The commission has a better gender balance and is small enough to engage all participants and so can become the forum for cross-gender dialogue on women. This meeting is evidence that EATWOT is on the way to developing a locus for this gender of dialogue.<sup>32</sup> The first of the series of three was an evaluation of the theological dialogue so far. The second focused on "Christologies and People's Religion" and decided on the theme of "Women's Experience of the Sacred . . ." that has brought us together. It has taken that long to do something about the "irruption within the irruption" as far as a deliberately prepared cross-gender dialogue is concerned.

### **Why so Difficult?**

From the above it is obvious that it has been difficult for women and men to talk about "women's issues in theology, church and world." Denied a place on the theological stage, women who have found one another want to study and to talk by themselves. In all EATWOT regions women who are members of the Association have also created a wider network of women theologians, to cope with their isolation and with the quota system that EATWOT operates. These have become their theological homes while they retain memberships in other professional associations. In this autonomous space, women can be

self-directed. They can identify and prioritise the theological issues that relate most closely to their experience and to the daily struggles of life that is the substance of women's theological reflections.

There seems to be little desire to call in men who are reluctant to listen to, or even to read what women have to say. This has not made for cross-gender dialogue. On the other hand women had the opportunity to develop their own theology and to gain the confidence which marginalisation in the Association and elsewhere had denied them. The women's effort has prepared them to contribute significantly to a change in the style of EATWOT meetings but has not yet stimulated a cross-gender dialogue on women, certainly not on the inter-continental level. Men's traditional "fear" of women, and women and men who fear conflict have joined together to prevent dialogue from taking place.

A second difficulty is the subject of dialogue. Men would not touch what they hear as threatening. Sharing personal experiences as a starting point for theologising threatens men. Subjects that state the oppression of women are heard by men as an attempt to end them on a guilt trip. Such issues are usually brushed off by men with "women have to answer this themselves." Women want to deal with the rich variety of imagery relating to God. Men hear this as dethroning the dominant male through this diversification of what has been a uniquely male "model of being God." They see this as the contemporary version of the old battle between Yahweh and Ishtar. Women want to explore revelation from their own perspectives, so as to give room to their new empowering messages. Men are unhappy about sharing the theological stage.

An area of much caution is the focus on the language about God. This makes many men (and some women) uncomfortable. In *Voices* (Sept. 1985) Marlene Perera outlined several aspects of women's theology in the Third World which when read in the light of the responses to Tamez's interview questions, reveals some of the difficulties men have with the input of women. If God-talk is

threatening, talking of the Church is no less so, not to talk of issues raised by women globally.<sup>33</sup> See *Voices*, (No. 1, 1989) where women talk about sexism in the Bible, Christianity and in other religions. Here women call for the re-examination of Pauline language and theology of subordination *vis-a-vis* women<sup>34</sup> while an African theologian quotes Paul to silence women and to label feminism demonic.

The Association has studiously avoided women's ordination and ministry while many women examine especially the latter – issues that are critical for women. Women's words on these have appeared in *Voices* (No. 1, 1989) in the theological theme of ecclesiology. Christology and anthropology are approached from the experience of women who have to sell their bodies to feed their children. The Church history commission had no particular focus on women and yet the Church's sexism is rooted in its history. EATWOT is yet to take the opportunity to call the Church to a self-examination. "Can Christianity survive outside the patriarchal paradigms?" is a question EATWOT women would have the Association examine.<sup>35</sup>

EATWOT men's world includes women only as one of many entities that suffer from powerlessness. Women's world on the other hand includes such specific hopes as those expressed above. Women want to confront militarism and misogynist religion as experiences that have negative influences on daily life. The Biblical vision of "Shalom" – peace, well-being, healing, freedom, justice, community, unity and wholeness are not just abstract principles but matters of the moment and of each day. From experience and the analysis of the same, women do the theological reflection that points them to seeds of transformation, for in women's liberative theology, reflection, ethics, spirituality and liberative praxis belong together. To be true to its origins one has to be able to say the same about EATWOT.

The difficulty with embarking upon intra-Association dialogue on any issue seems to be that of "the fear of exposing irreconcilable

differences.”<sup>36</sup> In the New York dialogues sponsored by the Theological Commission several of the unspoken reasons for the lack of dialogue, and especially for the marginalisation of women, were voiced.

### **Signs of Hope**

That men’s voices are beginning to be heard on women’s theology and women’s concerns is a sign of hope. The late Mveng was very deliberate in his promotion of women’s efforts in Africa. Deigo Irarrazaval’s characterisation of women’s agenda is an indication that some men are pondering this agenda (*Voices*, June 1994, pp. 68-69). Kim Yong-Bock’s article in *Voices* (June 1993) shows sensitivity to the realities that Asian women live (p. 98). It is also a sign of hope that men realise that inclusively brings its own challenges, and that to do theology from the perspectives of the challenges of race, class and gender to confront models of oppression that are also intertwined.

As a forum for dialogue, issues of *Voices* provide evidence that some EATWOT men are reflecting on subjects that coincide with EATWOT women’s priorities. The contribution of M.P. Joseph to the June 1993 issue, “A Male Perspective of the Feminist Critique”<sup>37</sup> and Tissa Balasuriya’s “Mary and Human Liberation” are signs of hope for they indicate that there is common ground for cross-gender dialogue in EATWOT.

The Association is also beginning to lose its fear of women’s leadership and since on the personal level we have always had cordial relationships, it seems to me that with the experience of the elections at Nairobi one can say that EATWOT will never again have an all male leadership; New Delhi has been honoured. Having a Women’s Commission with its own coordinators has meant that leadership at regional level is shared between a man and a woman. (It could of course be two women.) We can pluck up courage and propose a wider dialogue on Third World women’s agenda and to reflect on women’s theology.<sup>38</sup> The experience of women’s impact on the methodology of the Nairobi meeting is an indication that women may yet affect

how theology is done under the auspices of EATWOT.

Finally, the fact that the Theological Commission is calling attention to the absence of intentional cross-gender dialogue in EATWOT spells hope for the Association.

### **In Sum**

I have tried to trace the history of women’s participation in the form and content of EATWOT. Those women were treated as “observers” and “students” of men’s theological effort is clear. It is also a fact that it has been difficult for women to gain a voice and standing in the Association. We have observed how slow the men of EATWOT have been with regard to taking women’s theology seriously enough to deserve response. Leadership, both in terms of theological content and methodology, has been dominated by the men. While women’s first impact was felt in worship and style of meeting, it has taken the Association slow and painful steps to come to the realisation that inclusiveness does not mean absorption. Yet there is hope, in that the objective of the Association and its methodology do require dialogue and liberation from dominant structures that stifle the processes of transformation that could lead to fullness of life.

### **Notes**

1. Amba Oduyoye, “Reflection from a Third World Woman’s Perspective: Women’s Experience and Liberation Theologies” in *Irruption of the Third World: The Challenge to Theology*, ed. Fabella and Torres (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1983), pp. 246-255.
2. I am using “cross-gender dialogue” to signify an intentional conversation of women and men on the challenge of gender as a construct.
3. “The Association” in this address is the short form for the Ecumenical Association of the Third World Theologians (EATWOT).
4. S.A. Yambase, *Dialectics of Evangelism*, unpublished Ph.D. thesis on the Mende-Missionary encounter in Sierra Leone, Cambridge University, UK, 1992. Yambase highlights the fact of mutuality often overlooked in mission studies.
5. V. Fabella, *Beyond Bonding: A Third World Woman’s Theological Journey*, a joint publication of EATWOT and Institute of Women’s Studies, Manila, 1993.

has provided the historical framework for this assessment.

6. All "Final Statements" of EATWOT conferences and assemblies attest to this observation that Fabella makes.
7. "On Women" is used in this paper as a comprehensive term inclusive of, women as human beings; women's perspectives, insights, visions; theological and other reflections; women's style and methodology; women's issues, concerns and priorities, all that women bring and stand for in the human community.
8. Elsa Tamez, *Against Machismo* (Oak Park, Ill: Meyer Stone Books, 1987), p. 36. This book of interviews features conversations with 15 Latin Americans on the "Struggle of Women." They were conducted between July 1985 and August 1986.
9. Tamez, *Against Machismo*, p. 46.
10. Tamez, *op.cit.*, p. 65.
11. Tamez, *op.cit.*, pp. 70-71.
12. Delores S. Williams, Foreword to Tamez, *Through Her Eyes: Women's Theology from Latin America* (Orbis Books, 1989), originally published in Spanish, 1986.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 48.
14. Tamez (ed.), *Through Her Eyes*, pp. 150-153.
15. Tamez, *Against Machismo*, p. 134.
16. Simon S. Maimela (ed.), *Culture, Religion and Liberation*, Proceedings of the EATWOT Pan-African theological conference, Harare, Zimbabwe, Jan. 6-11, 1991; Pretoria, 1994, p. 166.
17. Kofi Appiah-Kubi and Sergio Torres (eds.), *African Theology en Route* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books 1979), pp. 193-194.
18. Since the creation of the EATWOT Women's Commission, the editors of *Voices from the Third World* – a publication of the Association – has had four issues on women to share the women's Word with the Association and all who follow its developments. The four issues are: Sept. '85, June '89, June '94 and June '95.
19. A B T Bryaruhanga-Akiki in Simon Maimela (ed.), *Culture, Religion and Liberation* (Pretoria: AACC African Challenge Series, 1994), pp. 32-47.
20. Amba Oduyoye in Fabella and Torres (eds.), *Irruption of the Third World*, pp. 246-254. The person referred to is Marianne Katoppo of Indonesia.
21. Fabella and Torres (eds.), *Irruption of the Third World: Challenge to Theology* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1983). See the Preface.
22. *Ibid.*
23. *Ibid.*, p. xi.

24. Fabella and Torres, *op.cit.*, Supra pp. 181-187.
25. Fabella and Torres, *op.cit.*, p. 193.
26. Fabella and Torres, (Orbis Books, 1985).
27. Fabella and Torres, (1985), pp. 182, 186.
28. *Ibid.* pp. 208-210.
29. M.P. Joseph, "A Male Perception of the Feminist Critique," *Voices*, Vol. XVI, No. 1, June 1993, pp. 61-69.
30. *Voices*, Vol. VIII, No.3, p. 111, EATWOT News.
31. Conversations with Ivone Gebara. The joint presenters of the Keynote were Ivone Gebara and Pablo Richard. Since they were replacing the appointed keynoter, Gustavo Gutierrez, it is my opinion that their presentations should be recorded as the Keynote for Nairobi.
32. *Voices*, Vol. XVIII, No.1, June 1995 carries eleven papers from this meeting three of them by women. This meeting had eight participants – three women and five men.
33. The NGO Forum of the UN's Beijing Conference on women raised social justice issues that EATWOT women have been working on. Significant also is the workshops on religion, especially those on religious fundamentalism.
34. Elsa Tamez, "Hermeneutical Guidelines for Understanding Galatians 3:28 and I Corinthians 14:34," *Voices*, Vol. XVI, No.1, June 1993.
35. First EATWOT inter-continental dialogue called by the Theological Commission, July 12-15, 1994 in New York spread a sense of euphoria that members of the Association can actually talk to each other on common concerns rather than concentrate its dialogical mode with "dominant theologies".
36. Cone, *Voices*, June 1994, p. 9.
37. Note however that his dialogue is with the so-called First World women; he is yet to dialogue with women of his own region.
38. "Mary and Human Liberation," *Logos*, Vol. 29, Nos. 1 & 2, March/July 1994.



## **Response to Mercy Oduyoye**

*Diego Irarrazaval*

Thank you for uncovering deep problems and for demanding a change of direction. Patriarchy and sexism need to be named, exorcised, resolved through joint efforts. Your voice, Mercy, has the weight and warmth of an African theologian, of a women and church leader; your experience and wisdom are the source of your challenge to all of us. We certainly need conversion and a change of direction, so that cross-gender dialogue and liberation does take place.

Concerning the Latin-American situation, my opinion is that real and honest dialogue is not yet taking place. I agree with you that some steps have been taken. For example, Elsa Tamez's interviews with 15 liberation male theologians (published in 1987) shows that women have a real concern for dialogue. But in general terms, as men we are not yet considering women's theological agenda. Some talk about women's suffering and oppression. But, as you say, "a way of assessing how much dialogue has happened" is possible if men listen and dialogue with "women's theological agenda." For this goal to be achieved there is certainly a need for genuine conversion. As male theologians we have to listen to how you women think, feel, celebrate; that is, how you are theologians with your own agenda and your language of God.

You say that the Yoruba of Nigeria teach us, theologians, that "if a man sees a snake and a woman kills it, nothing is lost." May I interpret this proverb, for us it is saying that men have to open their eyes to the ways women are doing theology. Not only to women's issues and experiences, but also to their epistemology, their spirituality, their process of thinking through symbols and concepts.

I agree with you that dialogue is a challenge and a task that has to be carried out honestly and thoroughly. It is good to acknowledge masks. You say that the dividing line of gender is "masked by friendship, polite conversation and avoidance of conflict." In many societies and cultures there is a ritual use of masks. They protect and cover persons, and they also allow a symbolic interaction between persons. But here you are speaking of unauthentic relationships and of not facing real conflicts. What are our masks in this meeting? What do we hide? What do we wish to communicate – through a mask – to others? Why are we using masks, among EATWOT members? Which are more characteristics of men? Which are often used by women?

You underline the difficulties of dialogue. You ask "why is it so difficult?" An excellent question. As you point out, there is fear, we men feel threatened; it is also difficult to have as a starting point the personal experience of each of us, to consider the oppression of women, to deal with the variety of imagery relating to God. And then you also underline the need for a cross-gender dialogue. May I offer another metaphor: a pilgrimage dialogue, a walking and dancing together, as different persons but as going forward in a journey. Walking together does not mean the same footstep, not the same movements of our body. Each person and each gender has her/his way of moving and walking. What is important is to accept and enjoy our differences and our common efforts, dreams, struggles. I have difficulty with the expression cross-gender dialogue; as if we cross each other and do not have a common ground, an experience of being together and walking on the road of liberation.

One final comment. You speak of the New Delhi “irruption within the irruption” in 1981, and that the “most significant input by the women participants was a worship service.” It seems to me that the ways you women speak to and about God, how you communicate the experience of Mystery, is the heart of theology. Many of us men do wish to listen and to speak and also be silent before the mystery of Life.

May you continue teaching the language of worship, of celebration of joy. May we speak together to God, and with different images and symbols. And may we make a real effort to understand different symbolic theologies.

*Thank you, for your challenges to each and all of us, and also thank you for listening to my response.*

## **Globalisation and its Effect on the Third World**

### **A response from Latin America focussed on gender**

*Elsa Tamez*

From the biblical-theological perspective we affirm that human beings are created in the image and likeness of God and that before God “there is no longer Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female.” For women, these foundational affirmations of faith provide basic criteria to judge the realities of the world at the macro and micro structural level.

What we see and feel daily in the world, in nature, in our countries, in the workplace, in school, in business, in the family, as couples, in ourselves, reveals to us whether the faces of persons or the cosmos really reflect the face of the God of Life and God’s will that there be equal relationships between all women and men.

On the one hand we have the ideologue’s dominant discourse of globalisation and the free market, and on the other hand we have what we observe, live and feel. The difference is obvious. We are confronted with an asymmetrical globalisation as Samir Amin has

indicated. For men and women of the Third World the concrete realities are primary: that there be justice and life for all men and women and our environment and that we be happy.

I am going to mention briefly four points: 1) The impact of asymmetric globalisation on women. 2) A critique of the neoliberal ideology from the perspective of gender. 3) A contestatory theological framework, and 4) Some challenges.

### **The Impact of Asymmetric Globalisation on Women**

Samir has analysed the tremendous polarisation that occurs with globalisation to the detriment of the poor countries. The inequality between poor and rich is growing, and poverty is one of the worldwide challenges. Right now we are in the year declared by the United Nations as the Year for the Eradication of Poverty. If we stop to look at the face of poverty, we come to the conclusion that it has a woman's face.

#### ***1. The feminisation of poverty***

In recent years there has been talk of the feminisation of poverty. I do not know to what extent international organisations apart from women's organisations, have taken seriously this alarming reality. In the first World Summit on Social Development in Copenhagen, March 1995, the dramatic facts showed that poverty has a woman's face. The statistics are alarming. According to the studies used at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, we find the following:<sup>1</sup>

- a. Of the 1,300 million poor in the world, 70% are women. Poverty among poor women is growing in rural areas. Indigenous women are the poorest of the poor.
- b. Of each 100 who are illiterate, 66 are women. In Africa and Asia 70.
- c. Of the 23 million refugees in the world, 80% are women.
- d. Of the existing labour force in the world, it was estimated in 1990 that less than 32% were women and that they held undervalued positions and were poorly paid.

- e. With regard to violence, here are some examples: in India 5 women are burned every day because of authority disputes; in New Guinea 67% of women are victims of domestic violence; in the United States a woman suffers physical abuse every 8 seconds, and a woman is raped every 6 minutes.

These are just a few of the statistics. In contrast, one-third of the families in the world are directed by women, yet the proportion of women in government decision-making positions is 6.2%, and only 3.6% are placed in economic ministries. In 144 countries of the United Nations there are no women in these areas.

If this is the way it is, we must take seriously the feminisation of poverty as well as the need for the feminisation of measures that would work toward solutions to combat these realities.

#### ***2. Consequences of neoliberal economics***

Within the framework of the neoliberal economic society and asymmetrical globalisation, women belong to the most affected sectors. The reason is that economic policies are established within the patriarchal culture. The combination of these policies and patriarchal society reinforces the oppression and marginalisation of women in all sectors. It is easy to underline three aspects of the problem: exclusion, consumerism and competition. In all of these, women are the primary victims.

With respect to exclusion, we know through the daily news that unemployment is one of the big problems in today's system. If economic growth in a certain country rises, the rate of unemployment rises two or three times higher. Unemployment is one of the causes of the deepening of poverty. It is often the case that the lack of basic resources leads to crime and domestic violence. Women and children are those who most often suffer the consequences of exclusion. They are the first ones to lose their jobs. It is they who administer the poverty in the home (it is said that men administer wealth and women poverty), because they are the ones who have the ingenuity to make do with the

little they receive from their companion or from their work. And they are the ones who suffer the physical and psychological violence generated from the frustrations of their spouses. Therefore, among the excluded, it is women who suffer the worst conditions: their dignity is not recognised either by the system, by their companions or by themselves.

With respect to consumerism, we know that the publicity machine for consumption is directed toward women. It has been said that women and adolescents are the number one victims of consumerism. One need only to spend one hour watching television or visit a shopping centre to confirm this affirmation. The law of consumption is one of the most dangerous weapons that wound women's subjectivity by impeding the deepening of the construction of their identity as free and worthy. Poor women remain totally excluded by their incapacity to buy.

Free competition leaves women aside. The neoliberal ideology affirms equal opportunity for all within the framework of free competition, but in practice it is unequal. On the one hand, the winners of this uncontrolled competitive struggle are the strong and unscrupulous governed by their own interests. On the other hand, it generates rivalry among women because each one is forced to find her own salvation. Free competition endangers solidarity between women.

### **A Critique of the Neoliberal Market Ideology from the Perspective of Gender**

The feminisation of poverty is the fruit of the inequality that has existed since ancient times because of the patriarchal culture present in the majority of the world's cultures. The proclamation of free competition accelerates that feminisation, with the impact even greater in the Third World, where women have less opportunities, for education, health care and employment.

The polarisation in globalisation has its theoretical support in the postulates of its Liberal and Neoliberal ideologues. I am going to

examine one that is used most frequently, the concept of law/freedom, taken from the ideologue *par excellence*, the economist Friedrich Hayek. I will later critique it from the perspective of gender and Christian theology, especially focusing on Pauline contributions. In Hayek we find two concepts of law, one negative and one positive. The law that Hayek rejects is that which intervenes in the activities of individuals to regulate them. Within the economy it deals with the law which plans, projects goals and means, regulates what is produced, how and when produced; price controls, distribution of wealth and so on. Laws that organise and plan society are obstacles that limit individual freedom. According to this thought, it would be out of order to have any law that would be in favour of women with the intention of balancing the distribution of income or of equal opportunities.

For Hayek, there is a higher law by which individuals should orient themselves. It deals with a self-regulated order where no human consciousness intervenes. There are no explicit purposes or goals. It is a spontaneous order in which individuals act on their own knowledge and possibilities, oriented only by their own interests. It is a general, universal law that does not mention either circumstances or time. It is a law that has been created by tradition, habits and so on. According to Hayek, blindly following this law guarantees individual freedom because by not intervening in the plans of a third party, all have the possibility to compete. This is called the rule of law. Here, according to Hayek, the law rules, not humans.

The market is the ideal order that regulates itself and does not permit interference. It is an extensive order that covers not only trade relations but the everyday life of all men and women. Free competition is the platform to produce better: more for less cost.

It is here that we find the basic problem from the perspective of gender. Hayek does not take into account that the ideal order of self-regulation, created in time by habits and traditions, is impregnated

with patriarchal, hierarchical culture. When seeking to follow this order, the patriarchal culture is reinforced and elevated to immutability and then imposed to be followed blindly. Therefore, when we speak of asymmetrical globalisation, we not only make allusions to the polarisation between rich and poor countries, or the rich and poor within the same country. The asymmetric globalisation carries within itself patriarchal, hierarchical ideology. In other words, to obey the spontaneous order of the market is to follow patriarchal ideology.

If that is the case, for women, interference with the spontaneous laws of the market by a feminist consciousness expressed through laws which take seriously the feminisation of poverty and seek to eradicate it is vital. Contrary to the neoliberal ideologues, production and reproduction must be planned and have clear purposes and goals so that women will not be excluded.

#### **A Contestatory Theological Framework**

The Apostle Paul, like Hayek, also contrasts law and freedom. And we can add as well that Paul speaks of a spontaneous order as preferable to the law: the order of the Spirit or of faith. Nevertheless, he comes to affirm that in Christ there is neither male nor female, master nor slave, Jew nor Greek (Gal. 3:38). With this it seems that Paul is removing the frontiers of inequality. In Hayek's thought the polarisations intensify. How does this happen?

In Galatians and Romans we observe two ways in which Paul understands the law. One is negative and the other is positive. The law that Paul rejects is that which dominates and enslaves human beings, that is above human beings, that becomes an order in which there is no intervention of the human conscience, but where the law is followed blindly without taking into account situations, places or times. It means the rule of the law, because the law demands that it be followed. It does not follow an orienting criterion that gives life to its subjects. This is a law that unites with structural sin (*amartia*); to apply this law is to give life to sin.

Law that is formulated to regulate human relations for the good of all men and women is good, just and holy. The moment it is placed above human beings and is absorbed by sin, it becomes negative.

The other law that is alluded to by Paul, of a spontaneous order, is the law of the Spirit, that blows where it will and is oriented by grace. It comes out of the heart of those who do not follow any law blindly, but in accord with a conscience filled with the Spirit.

This order, also called faith or grace, has goals and means. The goal is the "New Creation" (Gal. 6:15). Paul says in Romans that the tendencies of the Spirit are peace, justice and life. Even though the goal is the "New Creation," it is an unregulated order. The law is followed that regulates human relations only when it affirms the life of all persons, and the law is transcended when it is shown to be useless. Persons who are oriented by this law are free subjects with their own conscience, masters of their own destiny, with a sense of themselves.

This law does not legitimate any competition that excludes, because persons are guided by grace, the love of neighbour and themselves. This spontaneous order is free from any patriarchal, racist, classist, or sexist ideology that saturates all cultures, traditions and institutions.

Now, we could also say that in the phenomenon of globalisation there are no Jews nor Greeks, men nor women, rich nor poor, because all are free to participate in free competition. Nevertheless, because the foundation is unequal and the starting point self-interest, the polarisation in globalisation is inevitable. The free market knows neither mercy nor grace.

In Pauline theology the starting point is equality by the grace of God and the love of one's neighbour and oneself. The consequence of orienting oneself by this logic would be the establishment of new interhuman relations. Here, not only would there be a search for the same quality of life for all men and women at the material level, but dignity that belongs to the daughters and sons of God.

### **Conclusion: Some Challenges**

If we speak of a feminisation of poverty, persistent in the process of today's globalisation, any economic and political alternative that is put forth will have to include the preoccupation and perspectives of gender. It is interesting that the Swedish minister, Ingvar Carlsson, spoke in Copenhagen of the need to feminise the struggle against poverty for the significant sharing of power and responsibility.<sup>2</sup> For us it would also mean reformulating the traditional categories of economics from the perspective of gender. As the economist Maria Arcelia Gonzales says, the categories of capital, labour, etc. are abstract concepts of development planning. They have as assumptions an androcentric world. A critique would have to be made of the categorical framework and new categories created that have to do directly with groups of excluded persons, such as informal domestic workers.<sup>1</sup>

From the theological point of view, it seems as if we find ourselves confronted with "another gospel," which is condemned by Paul: that which demands the blind fulfillment of the law. We women reject submission to any law, institution, or logic that does not take into account the particular situation of women, their oppressions, desires and aspirations. We know that the logic that rules in our midst is that of patriarchal and hierarchical tradition. To affirm the gospel of freedom from the law in Paul would be an important step in the creation of alternatives that would lead to the creation of "a world with room for many worlds."<sup>2</sup>

### **Notes**

1. Maria Arcelia Gonzales, "Ciencia economica y perspectiva de genero," unpublished monograph, Mexico.
2. A phrase of the Zapatists taken up by the theological workshops of CETELA.

## **Response to Samir Amin From the US Minorities Perspective: Race**

*Rita Nakashima Brock*

The presentation by Dr. Amin provoked much discussion today at lunch among the US minorities. I want to thank him for his thorough and provocative lecture. I will confine my remarks to two main points, the first concerning his statement that labour is not globally integrated and the second regarding his neutral use of the term globalisation. Then I will ask a few questions.

It is the position of the US minorities that the US already represents a history of a capitalist globalised labour force. This globalisation process began in 1492, when Columbus decided the Arawak people he found as a traveler to the Caribbean would make good slaves. The first effort by the foreigners to the Caribbean and North America was to use the indigenous peoples for cheap labour, usually by enslavement. From the time of Columbus to the present day, the indigenous population of the US declined from an estimated 90-140 million to 1.9 million. Because the indigenous peoples died from epidemics of European diseases and in rebellions, the European colonisers then turned to the importation of people from Africa. To

confront the continuing presence of indigenous peoples, the Europeans used genocide, forced removal, and prisons called reservations, where the remaining native peoples were classified as foreigners ON THEIR OWN LANDS AND IN THEIR OWN COUNTRY. In addition to being made foreigners, Native American children were forced to attend Christian boarding schools, made to convert to Christianity and punished for speaking their own language.

As the US government became interested in stopping the trade of Africans as slaves, plantation owners and other slave holders turned to forced reproduction of enslaved Africans by the raping of African women and selective 'breeding' by using African men as stud machines, the way one would use domestic animals. Physical violence, torture, and other forms of brutality were used to control and discipline enslaved Africans, as well as laws and practices that denied them their own languages and religions. In addition, segregation laws kept freed Africans oppressed by separation from access to the rights of citizenship. To replenish the cheap labour supply that was dwindling from Africa, the US Euro-capitalists turned to Asia at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and they were aided by the European colonizing efforts there.

First, because of the British Opium Wars, millions of Chinese fled to the coastal cities where the men were kidnapped and taken to work on plantations in the Caribbean. The Chinese men worked alongside enslaved Africans on Cuban plantations, as well as replacing native Hawaiians on US owned plantations in Hawaii. Chinese men were also used in the California gold rush and to build the Western half of the US railroad system. To preserve white dominance, Chinese men were discouraged from remaining in the US after they were exploited for their labour. One way this discouragement worked was to prohibit Chinese women (i.e. wives) from coming to the US. Instead, a tiny number of Chinese girls and teenagers were brought to the US to service the labourers as prostitutes.

As the Chinese began their own businesses and organized labour movements for better wages and working conditions, the US turned to other countries to bring a competitive labour force to keep wages low. They therefore turned next to Japan, passing the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, then to Korea, the Philippines, and Mexico, as well as the Caribbean. The underlying strategy of this globalization of labour was to keep profits high by keeping labour costs low. To keep different labour groups from organizing and creating an alternative power structure, the US capitalists brought groups that did not speak the same language. They also used the political and historic animosities of various Asian countries to keep groups of labourers from developing solidarity. In the south, after the Civil War that ended slavery, Chinese labourers were sent there to compete for lower wages when freed Africans began to demand reparations. In addition, the US annexed northern Mexico by force in the middle of the nineteenth century and created a frontier across which people became "illegal aliens." Finally, at the end of the nineteenth century, the Spanish American War resulted in the annexation of Puerto Rico and the Philippines and the taking of Cuba as protectorate.

From 1790 to 1952, a US immigration law forbade naturalized citizenship to anyone who did not look white. The basis of this law was to protect the Anglo Protestant hegemony. It was not based in 'biological race, but in appearance, so that even Caucasians from South Asia were denied citizenship because they did not look white. During the nineteenth century, immigrants from Finland, Ireland and other European countries had to sue for their citizenship rights under this law. This pattern to keep non-Anglos in the category of foreigners is part of the legacy of white supremacy in the US that continues to impact especially those of us of Asian and Hispanic ancestry, as well as Native Americans and African Americans who are usually not regarded as foreigners, but as unwelcome disposable people. Because of the way we look Asians and Hispanics are always regarded as resident foreigners. But we are as much citizens of the US today as

anyone who is white. Often when I travel overseas, I am told “you do not look American.” I am how an American looks; Jung Ha Kim is how an American looks; James Cone is how an American looks; Ana Maria Pineda is how an American looks. The perception that the only real Americans look white is part of white supremacy in the US.

Part of the history of the globalised labour market, which has been integral to US history from the beginning, is the deliberate attempt to protect white male hegemony. When the US government has acted to address its history of racism and ethnic discrimination, it has done so more often because of international issues than because of a concern for its oppressed citizens from African, Asian and Hispanic backgrounds. When the naturalized citizenship exclusively for whites was ended in 1952, it was done so because the US had just fought a war against fascism and was embarrassed that its own immigration policy resembled Nazi policy. When the Supreme Court ordered an end to segregated education in 1954, the US government ‘friends of the court’ briefs cited Cold War politics as a reason for desegregation. Communist propagandas using US white supremacy as an argument against Western capitalism, and the US wanted to demonstrate its superiority by cleaning up its act. Now that the Cold War has ended, we can see the disinterest in justice in the US, as overt racism and ethnic discrimination have unashamedly and openly reasserted themselves, affirmative action laws are being repealed, and anti-immigrant hostilities have grown.

Although the dominant culture’s rhetoric and self-perception is that the US is a free, open, and democratic society, a liberal discourse of the Enlightenment, this perception is illusory. The founding of the republic was based on the protection of landed Anglo males and their interests. Every change in that structure has been won at great cost to Africans, Asians, Hispanics, Native Americans, and women. For US minorities, the white norm is racism, and it is not a benevolent norm. The rhetoric of democracy masks and mystifies white ideology and a globalized labour market, where darker-skinned and foreign peoples

are still disposable and still trafficked across US borders to be exploited. Even white attempts to eradicate racism and ethnic discrimination look like new forms of racism and ethnic discrimination to people of colour because whites tend to treat discrimination as an evil to remove rather than as systemically embedded in all aspects of society.

Another manifestation of white racism and ethnic discrimination is the movement for globalisation of education in US seminaries. For US minorities, the term globalisation is neither positive nor neutral. It is negative. The globalisation of theological education is partly a response to liberation theology and issues raised by members of EATWOT. And US minorities do not want to be seen as not caring about the situations of our brothers and sisters around the world. Our critique is of the manifestation of continuing white supremacy in the way globalization of theological education is being done. Seminaries receive grants to send their faculty and/or students overseas for global immersion trips. After a week or two in China or Nicaragua, these mostly white US citizens return as “experts” on Third World peoples. Or, faculty use sabbatical leaves to teach in Third World countries and to write as experts, or to edit collected works written by members of those countries. In the meantime, most seminaries occupied with globalising have paid little or no attention to their responsibilities for racism and ethnic discrimination in their own backyards. The trips to the Philippines have not resulted in institutional or faculty solidarity with Asian Americans living in poverty or coping with racism or ethnic discrimination. Visits to Guatemala or South Africa have not produced greater solidarity with Hispanics or Africans living in our own US cities next door to these seminaries.

The globalisation of theological education has not, we believe, created greater justice on the whole. Instead it is an extension of colonial tourism, in which the exotic foreigner becomes a commodity for professional development. Because such trips do not create communities of accountability for whites, they are free to say and do what they wish once they return to the US. This freedom does not



exist with US minorities, for we can call for accountability, which is one reason we believe the seminaries have avoided us. If members of EATWOT want to be in solidarity with US minorities, you must refuse the role of exotic foreigner who shows the white society how compassionate it is. Our sisters and brothers of EATWOT must ask, when you are invited to visit seminaries engaged in globalisation, 'what are you doing for ethnic and racial minorities in your own neighbourhoods? What are your acts of solidarity with those whom you ought to be accompanying?' US minorities are disposable theologically because we do not provide theological capital for theological tourists. We challenge the globalisation movement of US seminaries to confront their own racism and ethnic discrimination.

To summarize, the globalization of labour has dominated the experience and history of US minorities, as it continues to affect us in many and diverse forms of racism and ethnic discrimination, which are systemically embedded in the dominant culture and its institutions. The current interest in the globalisation of theological education (what we call theological tourism) is another manifestation of this structurally embedded racism, not a breaking of it.

Now to my questions. I wonder if capitalism is polarizing, or if it is a manifestation of a deeper and older tendency to polarization already found in the biblical texts and especially developed in Western patriarchal culture with its many conceptual dualism. Is not capitalism a more complex and sophisticated tool to enforce a dualistic view of the world found in classical Western, male-dominated monotheism? This dualism is the intellectual substructure of the oppression of non-Anglos as subhuman. If this is so, we should add a sixth monopoly to the first five. That additional monopoly is that of religion, culture, and language.

The US minorities saw the use of the term universalism as a sign of this sixth monopoly and its hegemony. It is an imposition of Western values. How can we speak of universalism without this hegemony?

How can it be transformed into a language of mutuality, cultural respect and interchange? Is this not one of the reasons for our being here at EATWOT? Not just to find our common commitments, but also to learn about each other's distinctive identities without homogenizing or disappearing them by imposing one culture's categories on all peoples experiences, or by doing an analysis of globalisation that does not take race/ethnicity/gender/culture into consideration?

With these questions I will end my remarks and thank Dr. Amin again for a rich presentation that has provoked lively discussion and thought.

## **EATWOT and Theological Methodology: Struggle, Resistance, Liberation and Indigenous Peoples**

### *Tink Tinker (Osage)*

Wako<sup>n</sup>da Mo<sup>n</sup>shita! Wako<sup>n</sup>da Udseta! Witzigoe ski Ikoe!  
Wi<sup>n</sup>achno<sup>n</sup>! Grandmother! Grandfather! Sacred Mystery Above  
and Sacred Mystery Below! Thank you for this day, for life  
itself, and especially for this gathering of relatives in the  
struggle for liberation.

I am an American Indian, a member of the Osage Nation, Ni U  
Konska, a nation surrounded by the United States – in more ways  
that one. As an Osage, I am what is called a “mixed blood.” That is,  
I am Indian on my father’s side, and an ordained Lutheran cleric on  
my mother’s side. For those of you who do not know much American  
history, Osages once controlled the southern mid-section of the North  
American continent, from the Mississippi River west and from the  
Missouri River south as far as the Arkansas River. In 1803 the US  
bought our land – from the French, in what was called the Louisiana  
Purchase. Only a couple of years later, we were forced also to cede

our lands to the US, in return for a permanent territory to the west.  
“Permanent”, it turns out, means in English “around seven years,”  
since we were forced to sign seven treaties in forty-nine years, each  
time ceding new pieces of territory and having to move again to smaller  
unknown lands. Indian people today are the poorest of all ethnic groups  
in the United States, suffering a sixty percent unemployment rate; the  
highest rates of alcoholism and teen suicide; and the highest rates of  
disease and death, dying more than twenty years sooner than the US  
average.

I would like to say something briefly about my opening words of  
prayer. American Indian experiences of “god” were almost invariably  
a bi-gender, reciprocal duality of male and female. Colonization of  
language, however, has meant that even traditional speakers when  
speaking in the colonial language (English) will customarily reference  
the bi-gender Wako<sup>n</sup>da with the male pronouns, “he”, “his”, and “him”,  
although they would never do this in their native language. Yet when  
we pray in the traditional way, we still call upon that bi-gender duality  
of male and female, represented by Sky and Earth, the two great  
fructifying powers of the Creator.

It was with considerable dismay that I finally took time to read the  
proposed schedule for our General Assembly after I had boarded the  
airplane for Manila. I say dismay because it was immediately apparent  
to me that our association, the most significant intercontinental  
religious association with a liberation agenda, had once again  
marginalised women speakers as far as I could tell from the speaking  
slots that had been filled in with names. Three addresses were  
announced for Samir Amin, and one each for Leonardo Boff and  
Samuel Rayan, with only the hope of finally addressing the  
empowerment of women in our midst on Sunday afternoon with an  
African presentation on “Women and Gender Issues.” I want to say  
to my EATWOT brothers, we will not be whole until we begin to  
realize that our women are competent to speak on more than gender

issues, that we need to hear their voices address us on the topic of a “New Just World Order!”

While I gave some thought to withdrawing my name from the program as just another inconsequential male voice, I decided that it might be useful for a man to speak to this issue particularly, and that EATWOT’s still naive understanding of indigenous peoples’ issues also deserved some assisting clarification. Both of these issues have very much to do with theological methodology.

*Methodology* is a most effective means of colonial intellectual control, including theological control. All too often the world of Ameroeuropean and European academic theology can dispatch with what the Third World has to say theologically by judging us somehow inferior on methodological grounds. It is not always a matter of blatant racist deprecation by our coloniser colleagues. More often, our best intellectual reflection is dispatched with as merely interesting, or even “excellent for our context.” And always, it seems, our work is not “heard” even when it is read.<sup>1</sup> The colonization of the mind is such that we even will say about our own colleagues, in marginalising words: “She is very good on gender issues.”

And yet, the most important gift we have to give back to our coloniser may be the foundational discursive modalities of the intellectual tradition of the oppressed. We have a different way of seeing the world and engaging in critical analysis of the world that is transformative and liberating. If this is true, then we need to focus our attention on the question of how we will do theology with increasing care and diligence, even in the face of a growing globalization that will insist that we speak in ways that conform to a more universal discourse in order to function more pragmatically within the present reality. The emergence of methodological discussions in EATWOT’s discourse is anything but simplistic. It is as complex as it is powerful and liberating. But it must continue to be a methodology rooted in resistance to oppressive power and in struggle for the freedom of our peoples.

I want to identify some of the complexity of the emergent methodological currents in Third World theological thinking and offer my response as a member of the US Minorities delegation. I will not try to summarize the variety of methodological concerns that have structured EATWOT liberation theologies: contextualisation, grass roots participation, praxis, and the like. They are well established and continue to be vitally important to our theological enterprise. I propose here to add to the discussion by broadening our analytical tools and methodologies from the perspective of an indigenous, that is, American Indian person, and to call for discussion and even debate among us. I hope that some of what I have to say will generate some controversy here, but in the sense of honest, collegial dialogue that holds the promise of advancing our common cause: the freedom of our peoples, and our sense of intercontinental unity.

It seems to me, in terms of methodology, that there are four critical aspects that call for our attention today as forms of resistance to coloniser’s destructive intentions. The first has to do with the close connection between race and the politics of oppression that we have experienced as Third World communities. The second has to do with the inappropriateness of treating indigenous peoples as a part of a larger class of the poor that surround them, even though the indigenous are almost always the poorest of the poor. Then I will move the discussion to an analysis of the colonization of our language, the extent to which our use of language is shaped by the coloniser, even when we think we are doing our best work. Finally, we must begin to reflect critically in our theological constructions about the marginalisation of women. I want especially to press Third World men to ask ourselves plainly where our participation in the marginalisation of women comes from.

### **1. Colonization and the Racialisation of Politics**

In the United States we have experienced, consistently and persistently, a radical racialisation of all politics, whether civil politics

or ecclesial/theological/academic politics. From my reading of EATWOT literature and discussions over the years with EATWOT colleagues from other continents I am aware that the racialisation of politics characterizes the colonial arrangements in the Third World as a whole, but let me address the issue from my own immediate experience. Our attention to this phenomenon is a crucial methodological link. Without the ability to identify and analyze the racialisation of politics, within the US and in the context of globalization, we will continue to pursue liberation without a full analysis of the power relationships that are the source of our peoples' oppression.

Political racialisation has always served a specific purpose, most certainly related to the economic aspirations of the coloniser, from the beginning of the European invasion of the Americas, Africa and Asia, even as it has been played out differently depending on the context and the specific needs of the coloniser. For instance, African Americans were historically denied any integral participation in American life on the basis of their skin color even after slavery was officially abolished in the 1860s. The general rule was that a single drop of African (black) blood was (and is) enough to contaminate the person with this disease of Blackness, and thus, even mixed-blood African Americans could not shed the stigma no matter how light their resulting skin color. With regard to American Indians, however, the US government has concocted a scheme to determine exactly when we stop being Indian and can be safely considered to be White. Both of these are racialised political responses to the world.

We can see how the racialisation of politics is manipulated through government policy and is determined whether the colonizing power profits through cheap labor or the acquisition of the land and resources of the colonized. In the case of Africans and African Americans, there was and still is a persistent coloniser need to maintain a sizable and clearly defined poverty sector of the population that can be relied on for cheap labor. Hence maintaining the stigma is critical to

maintaining economic control of the system. In the Indian case, seemingly to the contrary, the legitimate and moral aboriginal claim to territory is so compelling that it is in the government's best interest to get rid of Indian peoples once and for all simply to clarify issues of land ownership.<sup>2</sup> Extermination is no longer a politically correct notion. A subtler means is to marry us off to White Americans and move to disqualify us as Indians as quickly as possible. In Canada, for instance, until recently, any Native woman who married a non-native was automatically removed from the tribal rolls by Canadian law and could never be readmitted to membership in the tribe even should she divorce her husband. Jace Weaver recalls seeing Frieda McDonald's birth certificate, stamped boldly after her marriage with the message, "No longer an Indian." Thus are the ranks of aboriginal land claimants thinned in the economic interests of the coloniser. Of course, this is not to suggest that the actual treatment of Indian people is defined only by law, but to demonstrate that the racist deprecation of Indian people and other people of color even extends to legal discourse.<sup>3</sup> What we can add here is that no birth certificates were marked, "No longer poor," or "No longer Black," or "No longer urban." The varieties of US government policies included a not-so-subtle measure from 1954 until 1970 called "termination," whereby the government took upon itself the responsibility to decide whether any particular tribe continued to be a tribe, and hence a separate people, or not. In the early years of the policy dozens of tribes were determined to be ready for assimilation into the general population of Americans. The government thereby terminated their tribal existence and abrogated all treaty relationship with each tribe so terminated, resulting in significantly reduced treaty obligated financial expenditure by the government and the hope of fewer complications in terms of land rights and future acts of indigenous resistance. Thus, there are structural reasons that cause states to treat indigenous peoples differently and to create legal forms of oppression.

These are systemic issues of racism and oppression that call for

resistance and struggle with the goal of liberation. The methodological question, of course, is this: how will our theologies identify systemic issues like the racialisation of politics and respond with hope for liberation?

## **2. Class Analysis and the Liberal Coloniser Solution to Colonial Violence**

Our methodology must become much more open to categories of analysis other than the sort of class analysis that we have learned from Marxist theory. As useful as the analytical tools of Marxism have been over the past three or more decades, including our incorporation of it into liberation theologies, it may be time for EATWOT theologians to reckon with the *Europeanness of this mode of discourse* and to see it as a liberal coloniser solution to coloniser violence, after the fact. It may be time to look for new sorts of political discourse, new social visions of the future that can embrace all of us more satisfactorily in the Third World. As Aruna Gnanadasan would remind us, class analysis can be helpful, but liberation involves much more than class struggles.<sup>4</sup> In fact, indigenous peoples are struggling with existence in ways that are not and probably cannot be addressed by class analysis at all. Our oppression and the resulting poverty is *not* primarily due to any class status. Rather, it is rooted in the economic need of the coloniser to quiet our claims to the land and to mute our moral judgment on the US's long history of violence and conquest in North America.

What we want most of all is to have our cultural differentness recognized and respected as political entities based on specific land territories. To reduce us to some notion of class is to obviate that differentness and to replace our community identity with participation in a general class struggle for mere economic sufficiency. Such a movement must eventually impose notions of value, ethics and aesthetics on indigenous communities, just as the coloniser governments and missionaries have always done. Only this time, the

imposition is from a more liberal side of the coloniser with the “good intention” of building solidarity among a presumed class for the sake of the economic well-being and even survival of the class as a whole. Thus, our land will still not be ours but would enter into the collective possession of a much larger coloniser proletariat that is also foreign to our land and must be considered invaders. Isasi-Diaz's insistence on the need to embrace “difference” will be more critical in EATWOT as we move forward into the future of liberation.<sup>5</sup>

Indigenous peoples want something very different. We want our lives back, our ways of being – rooted, of course, in connection to the land itself. We want back the sovereignty that was ours before the invasion of European colonisers. Class analysis presumes the validity of the modern state as much as democratic capitalism does. The difference is that class analysis usually has some vision of exerting influence or control of the state in order to mitigate the oppression of the identified class. American Indians who are most engaged in struggle and resistance will refuse to acknowledge the validity or legality of the United States' claim to occupation or governance of North America, or at least of the right to claim our lands and our peoples as subjects.<sup>6</sup>

Up until now there has been no discourse or language in the international arena (legal, international relations, political theory, even human rights theory) to account for the existence of indigenous peoples. States of all varieties have a vested interest in resisting any development of this sort of language. We know now that the situation was no better in the former Eastern Bloc than it is in democratic capitalist states. Indigenous nations in Siberia, for instance, were (and are yet today under the hegemony of Russia) oppressed and marginalised. Likewise indigenous national communities in China have had their identity denied and even destroyed. Tibet is only the most celebrated example. And in January 1994, at the beginning of the Chiapas uprising, the US press insisted for several days that the irruption was some sort of “peasant” revolt in southern Mexico. Only

after several days of letters to the editor did the press begin to correctly identify the event as an “Indian” uprising of ancient, aboriginal Mayan communities that had been too long oppressed by the state that presumed territorial and governance rights over their lands. Both socialist and democratic capitalist states have a vested interest in the continued oppression of indigenous communities in all parts of the world. We must be clear about this one thing: states must necessarily oppress indigenous peoples, must destroy our self-identity, our cultures, our religious and spiritual traditions. States have no choice because our ancient claim to the land is a constant and persistent challenge to the legitimacy and coherence of the state and its claim by virtue of discovery (read conquest) of our territories.

Our analysis and the resulting theologies we write must now begin to seriously consider indigenous issues as relating to the poorest of the poor in virtually every region of the world. But those who suffer such continuing violence suffer not because of their class affiliation but because of their cultural identification and ancient relationship to particular lands coveted by the modern states that claim jurisdiction over their people and their territories.

### **3. The Colonization of Language and Categories of Analysis**

Colonizer’s control of the colonized means that the colonized is forced to concede the coloniser’s language, social structures, economic structures, and political structures. In the church, which is one of the coloniser’s main instruments for enforcing the colonizing arrangements, the same sort of imposition has always been critical to colonizing missionary control. If we are serious about the continued emergence of theologies of liberation, our methodologies must begin to seriously challenge the very categories of analysis and modes of discourse that have been imposed on us as normative by the European and Amereuropean church structures with which we are affiliated.

For instance, as long as we continue to accept uncritically the western notion of God as the apex of a male hierarchy, we will not be

whole or liberated.<sup>7</sup> This male image of God was a metaphor that worked in the Judeo-Christian world of the first Christian century. From an American Indian perspective, I want to argue it is fatally flawed for our vision of liberation today. The problem is that the churches (all mainline denominations) have made God’s maleness a doctrine rather than understanding it in a literary sense as a metaphor. If it is a doctrine, then the language cannot be changed. If it is a metaphor, then we have an absolute responsibility to translate the metaphor in ways that our people can understand and claim as their own. It is like the “*basileia tou theou*” (the so-called “kingdom” of God). Proclaimed by Jesus, the metaphor worked in that culture at that time. Today, quite apart from the inherent sexism of the English literal translation, the concept is incomprehensible except as religious language. There are no longer very many peoples in the world who continue to have experiential knowledge of kings (or even queens, for that matter), especially those who actually rule. Thus the metaphor must be translated to be understood.

If the churches are to insist that the maleness of God is doctrine and not metaphor, then we need to pursue a much deeper understanding of this doctrine. Do we really want to anthropomorphize God as male to such a full extent? Do we really imagine God as a male in our own image? For instance, does God’s maleness not require us with utter consistency to imagine God as a fully complete male with the correct biological appendage that would identify God as a male? And if so, what would be the purpose of such an appendage and how does it function?

If these sorts of questions embarrass you or are an affront, then we need to ask again, what does it mean to call upon God as “He”? If it is the parenting metaphor that is at stake, then why not allow God to be referenced as “mother”? Or if we are serious about our own liberation, why not allow each region or national community to look at their own world of experience and symbols to translate the metaphor

in ways that speak more directly to that community rather than imposing a metaphor from some other language and culture? Can we not begin at least to discuss alternatives for this fundamental theological act of signifying God?<sup>8</sup>

One of our most spiritually rich elders among American Indians more than a decade ago taught me much about our indigenous American Indian notions of the sacred. At my invitation this revered medicine person spoke to a large audience at the Graduate Theological Union. As per this teacher's request, I had placed a small table holding a fist-sized rock next to the podium. At one point in the lecture, this elder asked the assembled crowd, "I understand that you are all theologians or studying to be theologians. Do you mind if I take this opportunity to ask you something I have always wanted to know? What does God look like?"

Receiving only silence from the audience, the elder finally conceded that it had been a trick question. No one knows what God looks like, of course. But then, this elder picked up the rock and asked, "If you do not know what God looks like, can you tell me absolutely, without a doubt, that this rock is not God?" Again, there was silence as this theological audience mulled over the logical possibilities for an absolutely certain answer.

Finally, after tossing the rock gently to me, the elder asked the most telling question. "I, too, do not believe that this rock is God. But tell me, if you cannot describe God to me and cannot tell me with absolute certainty that this rock is not God, how is it that your missionary ancestors told Indian people that they were worshipping a false god when we pray to the sun? The sun is the most powerful physical presence in our lives. Without it we could not live and our world would perish. Yet our reverence for it was considered idolatry.

"But your missionary ancestors misunderstood even that much, because we never worshipped the sun. We merely saw in it the reflection of the sacred, the creator, and used its image to focus our

prayers of thanksgiving for Creator's life-giving power. It is, for us, a constant reminder of the creative power of God, as we greet the sun in the morning when we first arise and again in the evening. In between, as we go about our day, we constantly will see our shadow on the ground and will be reminded again of God's creative goodness. We can stop, look up, and say a short prayer whenever this happens."

The elder went on to teach about the American Indian understanding of God in a way that is very complex and sophisticated, although the missionaries have taught us – all too well – that our ways were simplistic and childish, at best. Wako<sup>o</sup>da, said the elder, has no sexual identity. Rather, Wako<sup>o</sup>da is unknown and unknowable until Wako<sup>o</sup>da decides to reveal Wako<sup>o</sup>da's self. Only then does Wako<sup>o</sup>da take on characteristics that can help us to image Wako<sup>o</sup>da as a tangible reality. But Wako<sup>o</sup>da is never limited to a single manifestation, but makes itself manifest in a variety of ways to help different people at different times. It is in this context that the elder noticed that the first manifestation and most important manifestation of Wako<sup>o</sup>da was as a duality of reciprocal completion, as the Sacred Above and the Sacred Below, as male and female, as Sky and Earth (again as representations or mirrors of Wako<sup>o</sup>da Above and Below). This duality is reciprocal because the two parts of Wako<sup>o</sup>da are necessary for there to be a sense of wholeness or completion.

When we pray at Four Winds American Indian Survival Project, we always begin our prayers with this image of Wako<sup>o</sup>da in mind, as Grandfather and Grandmother. For us the notion of hierarchy is shattered: politically, spiritually, socially and sexually. I am not suggesting this image of God to you for your consumption. That would be wrong. But I am suggesting this as a paradigm for taking the missionary, colonizing categories and deconstructing them in order to replace them with categories from our own cultural worlds of experience that can speak to our peoples with a new liberating voice.

I am, however, left with little choice but to assume that our image

of God has definite political consequences for our vision of a “Just New World Order,” just as the coloniser’s image of God seems to constantly reinforce and undergird coloniser’s control and domination in the world.

#### **4. Colonization and the Marginalisation of Women: Knowing Our Own Past**

History, we are told, is written by the victors. Yet this is the very notion that we must resist. Any methodology for a liberation theology must begin by remembering who we are, an activity that the coloniser has a vested interest in stopping. As the conquerors, the coloniser would always prefer to substitute their own telling of our histories. Then, their scholars become the experts about us. Their scholars are the ones trusted and used in courts of law to testify on issues that affect us. And eventually, even we have to turn to their books and their expertise to learn about ourselves. This is an important coloniser methodology designed to enforce the colonization of our minds. To break this cycle of intellectual dependency, we must become even more critical and analytical than the presumed scholarly status of the coloniser’s academic specialists. I would like to offer an example of how deeply we must engage this critical task as a foundational methodology for our theological reflection.

I fully agree with EATWOT women who call us to confession and repentance with regard to sexism within our organization.<sup>9</sup> I believe that we must be vigilant in open self-criticism as we evaluate our participation in aspects of our societies that are dysfunctional or oppressive. We cannot call for liberation unless we are ourselves open to a critique of behavior that can fall into oppressive patterns. I am deeply touched by women’s stories of violence, and not just the systemic violence generated from outside of our communities, but the violence perpetrated by men in our societies themselves<sup>10</sup> I am touched by continuing stories of structural exclusion and oppression women have experienced within our liberation movements and within

EATWOT. Our theological methodology must begin with a commitment to listen to our own people, those out of whose midst we do our theological construction. This means listening, as well, to those in our own midst who experience us as participants in oppressive acts.

Yet I believe that we must carefully distinguish between our cultures as they stand today, as dysfunctional colonized residuals of what we once were when we were still free peoples. We must vigorously reclaim the best of our past even as we engage in self-criticism in the present. Even as I am touched by our women’s stories of cultural and social structures that marginalise them, even as I witness the marginalisation of our brightest and ablest women right here at the General Assembly, I am not convinced by the occasional pronouncement that women have always and everywhere been oppressed and marginalised by men. This cannot be, lest there be no hope for the future.<sup>11</sup>

I understand the sentiment when I hear these things spoken by White feminists. They have a racially vested interest in arguing that other cultures are just as vicious towards women as their own culture, because it excuses them from taking our liberation seriously. It allows them to continue to enjoy the comfort and wealth of their own culture guilt-free, as it were, because they have successfully reduced us to their own level. Like male White scholars, these White feminists have resorted to a presumed expertise that allows them to define and describe us in ways that plays the game of blaming the victim.

I am more concerned when we engage in speaking these sorts of disparagements about ourselves in uncritical and unreflected ways. Let me repeat what I have already indicated above: this is in no way to deny the experiences of our women to which we men must pay attention, both socially and theologically, unless we intend to liberate only men, bringing the women along for good measure like the Ronald Reagan “trickle down” theory of economics. (If we can only liberate



the men, perhaps the women will receive some benefit as well?)

My concern here is that we be clear that our cultures are experiencing the results of some five hundred years of colonizing pressures continuing today in the neo-colonial garb of capitalist globalization. As a result, what we have today, even when we call it traditional culture, is far from what we were. For instance, many American Indian men were surprised to discover that they were supposed to be the head of the household, when until the missionaries came to them they had not even owned the houses in which they lived. The net effect of a couple of hundred years now of missionary and government schooling has destroyed the old social arrangements that affected the balance of power between genders. Those schools were training centres, not educational centres, and their self-identified task was to destroy the Indian culture and replace it with the coloniser's own value system and social structures. The extended kinship family arrangement was willfully destroyed in the vain hope of teaching us European nuclear family arrangements. The sense of community that gave us life had to be destroyed in favour of European radical individualism. As one commissioner of Indian Affairs in the mid-nineteenth century proclaimed, "We must teach the savage to say, 'This is mine,' instead of 'This is ours.'" Or as General William T. Sherman reported with dismay in 1869, "It will take a lot longer than I thought to civilize these Indians. For they know no greed, and until they know greed, they will not understand the private ownership of property."

These historic colonizing pressures cannot have left us unaffected. Indeed, it is remarkable that American Indians have survived at all. It should not be surprising that our communities are in considerable disarray and in serious poverty in the US today. Still, there are pieces of our cultures that we are able to reclaim and to begin to live. And it is this process of reclaiming ourselves and living out of that reclaiming that will bring health and well-being to our communities. Among other cultural treasures, we American Indians are trying very hard to

reclaim something of those social arrangements that made for greater gender balance in our ancient communities, and we are finding that our women have not forgotten those arrangements and are perfectly willing to remind the men of their obligation in those arrangements. This means that we are trying to reclaim women's participation in decision-making, political leadership, and participation in our intellectual development and liberative praxis.

Our American Indian societies were unashamedly "pre-axial"<sup>12</sup> and non-hierarchic. Neither were they patriarchal in the oppressive sense that we have come to identify.<sup>13</sup> To the contrary, many of them would have and still qualify as matriarchal. Still today in many Iroquian tribes in the US and Canada, each male chief is appointed to this responsibility by his clan mother. He serves at her pleasure, and no decision can be made in council without final ratification of the clan mothers. In a great many other tribes, the home itself was characteristically owned by the women, an intentional social device for balancing gender power relationships within the society.<sup>14</sup> M. Annette Jaimes Guerro has argued that political decision-making in aboriginal North America was predicated on a domestic base, that is, on the smallest social unit of the female controlled home, rather than hierarchically from some ruling council, from the top down.<sup>15</sup>

The contemporary problem is that we American Indians seem to have forgotten much of this, having been taught our history by coloniser scholars and missionaries who were either unprepared to recognise the intentional and inherent empowerment of women in our social structures, or had a vested interest in destroying that reality and replacing it with the coloniser's own value system, invested in hierarchical and patriarchal structures from the home all the way to the statewide governing institutions.<sup>16</sup>

I must admit that the coloniser has been largely successful – although the conquest is not yet complete.<sup>17</sup> First of all, no matter

how oppressed American Indian peoples are as a group, we men can count on some benefit from the inherent male privileging of the White coloniser society. Even historically, anthropologists and US government officials have always preferred to talk with our men (thus empowering them – in that strange, co-dependent, colonizing way) and even ignored our women. Even White female anthropologists did this. The missionaries, on the other hand, were far more explicit in actually teaching male privilege to Indian peoples, as were the schools (mission and government run) that were designed especially for civilizing the children of Indian savages.

I know that many of these experiences resonate with other indigenous (tribal) peoples around the world. Africa, of course, comes quickly to mind in this regard. Ultimately, I want to ask about all of our cultures. What was the aboriginal gender relationship and how can we begin to reclaim a better past as we set our eyes on a liberated future? Yes, there will be enormous colonial baggage that many of us will have to unload to discover that past. Others will have to go back even further in time, before the birth of male hegemonic structures of control in order to discover what the people were. Yet this process of critical excavation of ourselves is important for understanding the economic relationships of hegemony and oppression that we hope our theologies will liberate us from.

### **Conclusion**

From EATWOT's beginning, our constructions of theology have promised an intercontinental dialogical perspective. It was what many considered to be the failure of EATWOT in establishing a genuinely intercontinental dialogue that led the Nairobi General Assembly to mandate the three EATWOT Intercontinental Dialogues that were held over the past two years.<sup>18</sup> And now I am sensing a growing insistence that our methodology must press forward in this regard. We cannot afford the luxury of constructing our theologies in isolation from one another any more than we can isolate ourselves from the

experiences of our peoples. The presumed division between the liberation theologies of Latin America and the inculturation/cultural analysis/Africanisation theologies of Africa, dare not separate us for long, lest the coloniser find a wedge to drive in the crevice. Divide and conquer has long been a colonizing strategy that has worked all too well both in colonizing political and economic arrangements and in the subsequent ecclesial arrangements of mission church structures. American Indian peoples have a particularly burning need to connect with allies in the struggle for freedom around the world, because we are so outnumbered today by our coloniser.

At the same time, James Cone has noted, there are enormous pressures on theologians in each region to dialogue more directly with the dominant theologies of the north rather than with each other.<sup>19</sup> Those pressures have not stopped us from talking to one another within our regions, but it has hampered the intercontinental dialogue. I should add that this insistent pressure that we focus on dialogue with the theologies of dominance in the north affects US minorities even more ferociously that it does the rest of you. Remember that I and my US minorities colleagues teach on faculties dominated by white Amereuropean scholars who constantly, both implicitly and explicitly, challenge us to speak their language and to force our arguments into their methodological frameworks.

Third World theologies are theologies of liberation and begin from a focus on people's experiences of oppression, conquest and colonization. Indeed, Third World theologies have defined the category of liberation theology since the 1960s and especially since the seminal and defining work of Gutierrez in 1971.<sup>20</sup> They have been characteristically theologies of resistance and struggle and have engaged the coloniser's missionary theology by way of challenge and deconstruction. It must be emphasized that Third World theologians discovered the principles involved in deconstruction long before we discovered Derrida.<sup>21</sup> This commitment to a

theological methodology that speaks “from the underside of history,”<sup>22</sup> is precisely what has held us together in precarious unity for some twenty years.

I want to emphasize that my call for cultural analysis is not a call to abandon socio-economic and political analysis, but rather to enhance it, to give it new power. As Kwok Pui Lan said at the Nairobi General Assembly, what we need is more analysis. I am arguing for deepening our analysis and enlarging our assortment of analytical tools for shaping our vision and praxis of liberation. Nor am I suggesting that we completely abandon what we have learned from Marxist analysis itself. Yet what we learned in that endeavour must now be significantly augmented by bringing culture and gender issues into the analysis. Never should we abandon our hope for a “New Just World Order,” especially one that is inclusive of female voices and leadership and inclusive of a concern for justice for indigenous peoples as the poorest of the poor.

It must be clearly said, at this point, that the values and cultural structures of indigenous peoples may help point the way to this new just world order in ways that are unexpected. Our ancient cultures already celebrated a much greater gender balance and a more egalitarian social structure. And yet today, indigenous peoples stand in opposition to the globalization of the New World Order of late technocratic capitalism; against mass consumption; against the exploitation of our lands; against ecological devastation that particularly affects poor communities and communities of color; against the devaluation of women; and against the devaluation and exploitation of any human being

Indigenous cultures present us with the beginnings of a new, critical paradigm that could generate a liberative force in the world today.

#### Notes

1. See Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?”

2. This distinction in form of oppression is noted by Englebert Mveng, “African Theology: A Methodological Approach,” *Voices* 18:1 (1995), pp. 108f.
3. I recall here Rita Nakashima Brock’s very well constructed response paper delivered at the General Assembly on December 12, 1996, responding to Samir Amin’s presentation on contemporary globalization.
4. “Asian Theological Methodology: An Overview,” *Voices* 18: 1 (1995), pp. 88f.
5. “The Present-Future of EATWOT: A Mujerista Perspective,” *Voices* 19:1 (1996), pp. 98ff.
6. See, for instance, Ward Churchill, “The US Right to Occupancy in North America,” in *Since Predator Came* (Littleton: Aigis, 1995).
7. Women members of EATWOT, of course, will continue to name God-language as a key piece of the cross gender theological dialogue that needs to take place in EATWOT. See Mercy Amba Oduyoye, “The Impact of Women’s Theology on the Development of Dialogue in EATWOT,” *Voices* 19:1 (June, 1996), p. 29. It is Oduyoye who also argues for the use of “cross-gender dialogue” as signifying an “intentional conversation of women and men on the challenge of gender as a construct” (p. 33).
8. See Mary John Mananzan, “Gender Dialogue in EATWOT – An Asian Perspective,” *Voices* 19:1 (June, 1996), pp. 57- 83, especially the discussion beginning on pp. 61 ff. Also, Teresa Okure, “An African Historical Perspective on EATWOT Christologies and Popular Religion,” *Voices* 18:2 (1995) and Charles Nyamiti, “The African Sense of God’s Motherhood in the light of Christian Faith,” *Voices* (September, 1985).
9. Most recently in print, see Oduyoye, “The Impact of Women’s Theology.” She develops there the notion of conversion, requiring confession and repentance, as the initial process that will move EATWOT men beyond our sexism towards a genuine interaction with women’s theological experiences and ideas.
10. See the important collection of essays edited by Mercy Amba Oduyoye and Musimbi R.A. Kanyoro. *The Will to Arise: Women, Tradition, and the Church in Africa*. Orbis, 1992.
11. As an American Indian, I am not an evolutionist and do not concede that there is either a natural or a divine process toward future progress or improvement. I rather believe that the future is up to us as people of faith committed to political and social transformation as a natural part of our spiritual practice.
12. Or is it “axial”? At least it is pre-post-axial. In any case, this language is the newest, most politically correct way to refer to indigenous peoples as “primitive” and as somehow “less than” modern, more rational, post-axial capitalists and marxists. It has become the easiest way to dispense with the political and economic

concerns of “tribal” peoples without taking them seriously.

13. See the suggestive but all-too-short comment by Mveng, “African theology,” pp. 114f.

14. Thus, many American Indian nations were matrilineal and/or matrilineal. Oduyoye notes that the Asante of Ghana were matrilineal: “Violence Against Women: Window on Africa,” *Voices* 18:1 (June 1995), p. 172.

15. In a public lecture, August, 1994. See also M. Annette Jaimes and Theresa Halsey, “American Indian Women,” in Jaimes, *The State of Native America. Genocide, Colonization and Resistance* (Boston: South End, 1992), pp. 311-344.

16. I use the word “statewide” here rather than “national.” I refuse to concede nation status to the modern state, which is after all not really a nation but an artificial political construct designed for controlling and ruling diverse nations. See Glenn Morris “International Law and Politics,” in Jaimes, *State of Native America*, 55-86; and Rebecca L. Robins, ‘Self-Determination and Subordination,’ in Jaimes, *State of Native America*, 87-122.

17. Robin Williams, *American Indians in Western Legal Thought: The Discourses of Conquest* (Oxford, 1990), argues that colonization generates a pressure to complete a conquest totally, not just militarily but legally, culturally, in all ways, similarly to Mveng’s explanation of “anthropological poverty” as including cultural, political, economic, militarized, technical, moral and spiritual pauperization (Mveng, pp. 109f.) This, argues Williams, explains the continuing oppression of American Indian peoples today: the conquest is not yet complete. It also counts for the continuing movements of resistance among the colonized, particularly in Williams for the continuing resistance among American Indian peoples.

18. These three meetings, organized by James H. Cone, were held in New York and Seoul from the summer of 1994 to early 1996. The papers have been published in three issues of *Voices* 18:1 (June 1995), 18:2 (December, 1995), and 19:1 (June, 1996).

19. James H. Cone, “Editorial Report: First EATWOT Inter-Continental Dialogue,” *Voices* 118:1 (1995), pp. 7-16.

20. Gutierrez’s work was defining in the sense of a starting point: *Teologia de la Liberacion* (Lima: CEP, 1971); James Cone in the United States.

21. Jacques Derrida, of course, is French-Algerian. His work, however, unlike that of Michel Foucault, shows little interest in the structures of political power to which Third World theological reflection must persistently respond.

22. Note the title of the volume edited by Sergio Torres and Virginia Fabella: *The Emergent Gospel: Theology from the Underside of History* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1978). While I have criticized the use of “history” as a European (and now Ameri-European) category of cognition that does not fit with American Indian

intellectual traditions, which are predicated on spatiality rather than temporality, it is also clear to me that the United States functions politically and socially in the world as a historical amnesiac. For the US the violence of its past is always forgotten in the self-righteous necessity for perpetrating ever new acts of violence in the world.

# The Task of Rewriting Christology

*Rienzie Perera*

## Introduction

I have been assigned a tremendous responsibility and a gigantic task. On the one hand the task of the Third World theologian, especially the Asian, is to wrestle with and dismantle the inherited baggage of Christology which is worked out in a context which is alien to the majority of us. On the other hand, the guardians of orthodoxy will not only accuse us of “heresy” but will make every effort to persecute and deny us the decision-making positions in the ecclesiastical set up.

It is important to note that every work of theology involves some revision of what has been said in the past. It always seeks to say something new. For if it only repeated what had been said before, there would be no point in writing it; it would be easier simply to refer people back to what has been said in the past. Maurice Wiles in his book, *The Remaking of Christian Doctrine*, says:

Christian doctrine is concerned with the present, with what has to be said here and now. It cannot be content simply to repeat what has been said before; we are involved in a continuous process of

“remaking.” Yet it is not a remaking from scratch; what is to be said now is in important ways dependent on what has been said in the past. If we are to fulfil the present task of Christian doctrine responsibly, we do well to begin with some general picture of how that present task is related to past formulations.<sup>1</sup>

Although I agree with Maurice Wiles when he says Christian doctrine must be concerned with the things of the present, I do not think this task can be achieved especially in the Asian context simply by revising the doctrines reflecting upon past formulations. The Asian context demands a dismantling of the inherited doctrinal baggage and “rewriting” from scratch in the light of Asian experience and the presence of Asian religions. This is a major task and this task must be undertaken by the Asians living in Asia.

It is an accepted fact that every generation attempts to redefine Christian doctrine in order to resolve the conflict between inherited doctrines and modern realities. Christology is one of the major doctrines, which is constantly revised by Western theologians. They are forced to engage in this task as the West is going through major changes, especially in the areas of belief in God, the secularization of life, the challenge of science and the growth of technological culture and the critiques on theology from the perspective of gender.

Western theologians are engaged in the revision of theology in the light of these challenges in order to redeem the faith from becoming unbelief. When we look at this process carefully we notice that the West has failed to take the reality of religious pluralism seriously and as *one of the major sources* for doing theology. Whether we like it or not we have to accept that today we are living in a religiously plural world in which there are “other lords” and “other saviours” who are accepted by millions of neighbours of other faiths. Therefore to do theology in any context in the world without recognizing the theological significance of the presence of people of other faiths is sheer arrogance and a continuation of Christian imperialism. There

is a significant group of theologians in the world who believe that the task of rewriting Christology in the context of religious pluralism must be undertaken by a forum of Third World theologians. Are we prepared to take this risk and do we have the spiritual depth and capacity to suffer the pain of loneliness and face the theological wilderness. What I intend to do is to draw your attention to some of the Christological issues and invite you to the task of re-writing Christology with an Asian sense.

### **1. Religious Pluralism as a Challenge to Christianity**

Asia is the world's largest continent in land mass and population. The majority of the religions of the world such as Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Shintoism and Taoism were all born in Asia, and today they are very much alive. These religions have made a tremendous contribution to the shaping of Asian cultures, and over the centuries, influenced the moulding of the lives of millions of Asian people. The influence of these religions on the lives of Asian people is so immense that one cannot speak or even think about the cultures, customs, life-styles, symbols, concepts, and philosophies of Asia apart from its religions.

However one also needs to acknowledge that these religions have played and do play an oppressive role by legitimizing as well as allowing themselves to be legitimized by oppressive systems that create and maintain the evils of exploitation, marginalisation, racism, sexism, classism, and repression of the revolutionary spirit of the wretched of the earth.<sup>2</sup>

For example, all these religions have culturally sanctioned and theologically legitimized oppression of women. Karl Marx's famous phrase "religion is the opiate of the people" was indeed an attack and condemnation of religions that were oppressive and other-worldly in orientation. However this is not the whole truth of religion because religions that are oppressive and enslaving also have within them a "liberative core."

Aloysius Peiris reminds us of the "liberative core" of Christianity asking ". . . After all, has not the same Christian religion produced a theology of domination and a theology of liberation?"<sup>3</sup> One has to acknowledge that one can say the same thing about other Asian religions.

The presence of many diverse religions in contemporary Asia, therefore, is not merely a passive but a dynamic presence and one in which complementary and conflicting religious claims and philosophical concepts exist side by side questioning the right of a particular religion to hold a privileged status.<sup>4</sup> What this means is that in a religiously pluralistic situation a single religious faith finds it extremely difficult to claim that it holds a monopoly on human salvation or a privileged status in relation to matters of faith and spirituality. In other words the atmosphere of religious pluralism does not approve of any religion acting in a self-righteous manner.<sup>5</sup>

However, one has to understand that religious pluralism does not warrant us to accept the claims of every religion as equally true, but it does provide an opportunity to express our convictions in a spirit of openness and the freedom to speak about them to others in a climate of tolerance, confidence, and mutual trust. Therefore, one can say that a religiously pluralistic context provides an opportunity for a believer to practice one's religion without becoming either an intolerant fanatic or an uncritical relativist.<sup>6</sup>

Pluralism means existential acceptance of the other as the other, that is, without being able to understand or coopt him. Pluralism is humble, only knows that I or we may not possess the whole truth and does not pass judgment as to whether the other may also be right, or as it may turn out, wrong.<sup>7</sup>

One has to admit that in the overwhelming multi-religious context of Asia one cannot any longer articulate a creative and a convincing word about Jesus Christ and his salvific claims, without taking into serious consideration the presence and the faith claims of other Asian

religions. In addition, religious pluralism today is too dominant a reality to be bypassed easily or even ignored. This means the relevance and the significance of Jesus Christ to Asian people must be articulated in dialogue with Asian religions. It is precisely this gigantic christological task that the Asian Christians have failed to accomplish and it is this failure that is largely responsible for the alienated state of the church from Asian religions and cultures. Therefore C.S. Song of Taiwan invites the Asian churches to engage in this task by saying:

More and more, Christian mission must expect creative impact from other religions. It is in the context of mutual impacts that the truth of God in Jesus Christ will be rendered with more clarity. Exegesis of Christian faith in Asia must, therefore, take place in multi-religious contexts. The work of Christian theologians cannot be said to be sound until its results are tested by other religions . . . .<sup>8</sup>

## **2. The History of Christianity Amidst Asian Religions**

Although C.S. Song says Christian mission must expect creative impact from other religions and exegesis of Christian faith in Asia must take place in multi-religious contexts the experience of people of other faiths has been just the opposite. However, we must acknowledge that there were just a few missionaries who have tried to live by the words of C.S. Song. But, on the whole Christianity came to Asia in a dominant way hand in hand with the expansionism of Western colonialism. Christianity coupled with an imperial power propagated an exclusive Gospel and this exclusive understanding of Christianity is still the dominant trend in Asia. The exclusive thrust of Christianity carries within itself the stand that revelation in Jesus Christ is the sole criterion by which all religions, including Christianity can be understood and evaluated: For example, Hendrik Kraemer has brought out this idea of exclusivism clearly in his book, *Why Christianity of all Religions?* In it he writes:

If we are ever to know what true and divinely willed religion is,

we can do this only through God's revelation in Jesus Christ and through nothing else.<sup>9</sup>

Kraemer applied this exclusive understanding of Jesus Christ to other faiths and concluded that ". . . in this light and in regard to their deepest, most essential purport they are all in error."<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, he linked this understanding of exclusivism to missionary work and evangelism and said:

Surrendering to Jesus Christ means in effect making a break with one's own past, religiously speaking, however impressive that past may be and often is; and the Christian Church is duty bound to require this break, because one must openly confess Him.<sup>11</sup>

The missionary movement to Asia from the sixteenth century onwards has to be understood to a large extent from this exclusive perspective of Christianity and the majority of missionaries who came to Asia were firm believers in the universality and particularity of Christianity that led to exclusiveness.

According to this approach the majority of the missionaries saw their task solely in terms of converting peoples of other religious beliefs to the particular exclusive faith in Jesus Christ rather than grappling with the reality of religious pluralism to restate the meaning of Jesus Christ within the Asian context. This meant replacing all Asian religions with Christianity and anything but conversion of believers of other religions were viewed by them as a betrayal of their mission and a betrayal of Jesus Christ.

The conservative Asian Christians who are convinced of the exclusive stance of Christianity and christology carry out their evangelistic work in contemporary Asia almost in an identical manner to their missionary predecessors. K.L. Seshagiri Rao, a Hindu, critiques this attitude of Christianity in saying:

Some Christian theologians see in Hinduism an invitation of the devil to draw people away from truth; they see all other religions as fundamentally 'unbelief' to be displaced by Christianity.

The Asian Christians who view Asian religions in a negative manner, instead of re-interpreting the Gospel of Jesus Christ in dialogue with Asian religions, have played the role of faithful custodian and thereby have perpetuated the interpretation of Jesus Christ as received from and handed down by the missionaries. Thereby they have made Jesus Christ captive to a particular exclusive tradition, way of thinking and interpretation. One can describe these faithful and zealous Christians as those who are faithful to the missionary version of Christianity and who rigidly attempt to live up to the literal meaning of the biblical verse which says “For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received” (1 Cor. 15:3, RSV).

Furthermore, if any religion makes its particular doctrinal beliefs exclusive, then there is always an inherent danger for those particular beliefs to become absolute. When the doctrinal beliefs of a particular religion are regarded as absolute truth then that religion very often tends to become self-righteous and thereby ceases to see truth in any other religion than itself. When a religion believes that it is the sole custodian of the absolute truth then that religion isolates itself from other religions and does not see any reason to enter into dialogue with other religions. It also refuses to enter into dialogue with other religions because of the fear of syncretism. The fear of syncretism is based on the understanding that syncretism will dilute and distort the absolute truth a particular religion believes to be in its possession. Wesley Ariarajah of Sri Lanka, makes the following critical observation regarding the fear of syncretism and our tendency to absolutise religion. He writes:

. . . the greatest obstacle to genuine theological thinking is the fear of syncretism. This arises only when one tends to absolutise a religion, a doctrine or a theological system as the ultimate truth. When it is understood as a human phenomenon, a human myth to convey the truth, it is possible to break away from the bondage to dogmatism into the freedom of the spirit.

Those Christians who have negative views about Asian religions in contemporary Asia are also committed to this absolutist view of Christianity, and therefore they do not see the rationale behind the idea of creative dialogue with Asian religions. According to them, the only need is to proselytize the believers of other religions whom they see as pagans. As this is a dominant understanding among the majority of Asian Christians, it is not only Christians who hold negative views about Asian religions and believers of other faiths that need to be redeemed from their negativity, but Jesus Christ himself, presented by the Asian churches in exclusive and absolutist doctrinal forms, who needs to be liberated in order for any authentic christology to emerge in the light of the Asian context of religious pluralism and cultural diversity. Until Jesus Christ is liberated from the grip of exclusive traditions he will remain exclusive and therefore alien to believers of other religions.

### **3. The Challenge of Religious Pluralism to Christian Exclusivism**

As stated earlier, religious pluralism is a context where more than one religion makes pronouncements on ultimate reality and where thousands have made a commitment to live by that reality. S.J. Samartha of India describes religious pluralism as:

. . . a part of the larger plurality of races, peoples, and culture, of social structure, economic systems and political patterns, of language and symbols, all of which are part of the total human heritage. Religious pluralism, that is, the fact that the different religions respond to the Mystery of Ultimate Reality of *Sat* or *Theos* in different ways is important because it touches ultimate questions about human life and destiny.<sup>12</sup>

Therefore religious pluralism poses a theological challenge to any religion or belief which says it is the sole custodian of God’s revelation and the only path of God’s salvation. According to S.J. Samartha religious pluralism poses a challenge to any religion, ideology, or



culture which makes exclusive claims on its belief, thus condemning other people's culture and religion to an inferior status to be humiliated, dominated, exploited and conquered not just physically, but spiritually as well.

Religious pluralism is also an expression of finite human beings' response to infinite God who cannot be confined to any one particular experience or expression of faith. Therefore, the question is: how can we finite beings say that God who is infinite and a mystery can be experienced only in one way and expressed only through the Bible, Christian experience, Christian symbols and rituals? I am fully conscious that Christian theology has used and does use the concept of mystery to avoid facing issues of reason and justice. This is where I agree with S.J. Samartha when he says,

... emphasis on Mystery is not meant as an escape from the need for rational inquiry, but it does insist that the rational is not the only way to do theology; the mystical and the aesthetic also have their necessary contribution to theology; Mystery lies beyond the theistic/nontheistic debate. Mystery is an ontological status to be accepted, not an epistemological problem to be solved. Without a sense of Mystery, Theos cannot remain *Theos*, nor Sat remain *Sat*, nor can Ultimate Reality remain ultimate" (*One Christ – Many Religions*, p. 95).

The very fact that the Christian scripture itself speaks and gives testimony to the God of Creation, God who cannot be confined to one particular nation, history, culture or people (Psalm 139; Isaiah 44:28 to 45:1f, Amos 9:7ff; Matt. 8:11f) compels us to reconsider some of the major Christian doctrines and our understanding of Jesus Christ and human salvation. In order to encourage you to explore these areas, I wish to highlight a few areas where theological positions have got hardened and become militant.

#### (a) *Salvation History (Heilsgeschichte)*

The plurality of religions calls into question the Christian

understanding of "Salvation history" which is at the heart of exclusive claims. Salvation history and the dominant role it plays in Christian mission have compelled Asian, African and even some Western scholars to question the traditional theory of salvation. Some Asian and African thinkers, rather than accept the history of Israel as the norm for all history, are looking for the theological significance of their own histories. The theological issue involved in the theory of salvation history is that God's entire activity of salvation is confined to the history of Israel and to the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. The question we have to ask is: how does this theory of salvation do justice to our own histories and are we by accepting this particular interpretation of salvation denying God's activity outside the history of Israel? If we deny, then our God is a tribal God and not the God of creation and all histories. In fact today many biblical scholars "point out that Biblical criticism does not offer any firm ground either to conclude that Israel's history is the 'unique' realm of God's revelation or to affirm that there is only one 'normative' Christology in the New Testament. It is now affirmed that in the New Testament there is 'one Jesus but many christologies', which means that any exclusive or normative claim on behalf of one particular christology does not seem to have the support of the New Testament." (S.J. Samartha, *Ibid.*, p. 7)

If we grant the premise that God's salvation is not confined to one particular history then we must be humble enough to acknowledge that God does work through other histories and religious experiences. Furthermore, one also has to acknowledge that 'when alternative ways of salvation have provided meaning and purpose for millions of persons in other cultures for more than two or three thousand years, to claim that the Judeo-Christian-Western tradition has the only answer to all the problems in all places and for all persons in the world is presumptuous if not incredible.'

This is not to deny the validity of the Christian experiences of salvation in Jesus Christ, but it is to question the exclusive claims

made for it by the Christians, claims that are unsupported by any evidence in history or in the institutional life of the Church, or in the lives of many Christians who made such claims. If salvation comes from God then we should be open to recognize the validity of other experiences of salvation. This calls us to explain some of the exclusive texts in scripture and the christological doctrines we perpetuate in our own contexts.

*(b) The Uniqueness of Jesus Christ*

The faith affirmation that Jesus Christ is unique comes from the tradition where Christians have identified Jesus ontologically equal to God. This christology has been advocated in the history of the Church and today by the majority of Christians to show that Jesus Christ is superior in every way to the founders of other religions. When one makes an ontological equation of Jesus Christ with God then there is hardly any room for discussion or even to tolerate other religions. Today one could see very clearly that the Church has fallen into the temptation of elevating Jesus to the status of God and limiting Christ to Jesus of Nazareth. Church must be redeemed from the heresy of "Jesuology" and "Christomonism."

This identity of Jesus with God goes beyond the witness of the New Testament. One could certainly say that God is revealed in Jesus Christ. But one cannot at the same time say God is confined to Christ. That is the reason V. Chakkarai of India said "to believe that God is best defined by Christ is not to believe that God is confined to Christ." This in no way amounts to denying the divinity of Christ. One can say that "God present in Jesus is God himself. It is not that Jesus in his own being is identical with the God who is present in him." One can say that Christ is the "exegesis of the Father," but Christ is not the Father. When one says God is not confined to Jesus Christ it has many implications. It also means God is not confined to maleness of Jesus Christ.

Having stated the above arguments, I wish now to draw your

attention to the biblical witness. The first thing I want to say is that throughout the Bible the priority of God is taken for granted. The belief in the ontological priority of God is also taken for granted by Jesus Christ and his hearers in the New Testament. Jesus started his ministry by declaring that "the time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand" (Mark 1:15). New Testament writers emphasize God's initiative over and over again. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son" (John 3:16). "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself" (II Cor. 5:19). "And when all things are subjected to Him, then the son also will be subjected to him, who put all things under Him that God may be all in all" (I Cor: 15:28). It is important to note that the Christocentrism of the New Testament does not lose hold of Jesus' original theocentrism. Jesus never takes the place of God. Even in the three texts in which Jesus is proclaimed as God or as divine (John 1:1,20,28; Heb. 1:8-9), an evident subordination is preserved. Even Paul, in urging his radical Christocentrism, reminds his communities that "you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God" (I Cor. 3:23). One could say that "the New Testament maintains a delicate, sometimes difficult, balance between Christocentrism and theocentrism."

Furthermore, it is important to state that the synoptic portrait of Jesus is that he is the one appointed by God to bring in the Kingdom of God. However the Gospels come nowhere near to saying that Jesus is "the Very God of Very God." Even in the Nicene Creed, in spite of its emphasis on the "co-equal divinity" of Christ with God with the phrase, "being of one substance with the Father," the distinction between "one God the Father" and the "one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God" is not abandoned.

When one comes to what are regarded as the authentic epistles of Paul the historic Jesus has receded from the scene, and Christ, crucified and risen, has taken over. To Paul Jesus is the Lord and the Son of God in an exclusive sense, the Son, God's heavenly companion,

enthroned at the right hand of God. The historical Jesus, his words and deeds and signs, the Kingdom of God he ushered in, the vocabulary about his humanness and temptations, his prayers and struggles, have all receded to the background. The emphasis is wholly on Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as the exalted cosmic Lord. But the New Testament scholarship informs us that “it is a mistake to assume that Paul makes Christ co-equal with God.” What seems to have happened is a quick and fateful slide from the humanity of Jesus to the divinity of Christ and later on, to the claim that Jesus Christ is God. It should not be assumed too quickly that Paul identifies Jesus Christ with God. Paul is extremely careful not simply to identify Jesus Christ with God. Throughout his writings God the Father and the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, are always two distinct beings, closely associated, but never identified. No one would deny that to Paul Christ is central to Christian life and faith.

Paul routes all traffic between God and the world through Christ, and affirms that the only way to salvation is through Christ. But Paul, in spite of his radical Christocentrism, is extremely careful to retain the ultimacy of God. It is God who “was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself . . .” (II Cor. 5:19). It is God “who raised up Jesus from the dead” (I Cor. 6:14) and it is God “who will sum up all things in Christ” (Eph. 1:10). He reminds the Corinthians “you belong to Christ and Christ belongs to God” (I Cor. 3:23). And in his great resurrection text Paul affirms that when all things are subjected to the Son, the Son also will be subjected to God “until God be all in all” (I Cor. 15:28). To Paul; “Theos remains the ultimate horizon for faith in Christos.” (see S.J. Samartha, *Ibid.*, pp. 127f for a detailed study of this idea.)

In this section I have struggled so far to show that the christologies we received through the efforts of the missionary movement and guarded and perpetuated by us is a Christology with an over-emphasis on the divinity of Jesus the Christ and a disregard for his humanity.

This to me is a heresy which the early church condemned as Docetism. Therefore I wish to state that at the heart of our Christology is a heresy which we can no longer condone. It is this heresy which is responsible for two major flaws in the history of missions. It is this heresy which is at the heart of our faith, which does not give due recognition to Jesus’ humanity, which is largely responsible for leaving out the concern for human rights and justice from the central thrust of the mission mandate of the Church. It is this over-emphasis on the divinity of Jesus which has made the church more comfortable in speaking on issues of life after death at the expense of issues on life after birth.

*Second*, it is this heresy which has marginalised Jesus the Christ from the Godhead or the Trinitarian Fellowship in the Godhead and elevated Jesus to the status of being ontological equal with God. This equality has made the Christians uncomfortable with the question of dialogue with people of other faiths or even made them look upon dialogue as a betrayal of mission. When we make Jesus, ontologically, one with God, then there is no room for God’s activity in histories other than the history of Israel and no room for salvation outside that particular history and any room for God’s revelation outside the Bible. When we confine God to Jesus of Nazareth alone and emphasize that God’s activity in Jesus Christ is *once and for all* then the object of mission becomes to invite all these outside the Church to become part of the Church and thereby mission becomes an extension of the Church and concentration on numbers rather than extending the reign of God and the Church becoming like the salt of the earth.

This understanding of Jesus Christ does not in any way undermine the centrality of Jesus Christ – God with us – to Church’s mission. This stance on Christology does recognize the decisiveness of Jesus Christ to our faith and mission and goes further by identifying true discipleship as a call to imitate Jesus the Christ in contemporary history. One’s faith perspective compels one to affirm that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the world and decisive to anyone who accepts Jesus

as Lord. But the faith perspective in the Triune God should guard against the heresy of Christomonism and allow us to explore the faith in the God of surprises whose activity in the world cannot and should not be confined to Jesus' ministry alone. To believe in Jesus is to believe in God who called Cyrus God's anointed and to affirm the words of Jesus "... for the Father is greater than I ... ." (John 14:28) and therefore "... I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham" (Matt. 3:9). At the heart of Christology is a God of surprises and we Asians must discover the God of mystery who will always lead us to surprises.

#### **4. The Asian Poor and Jesus Christ**

As stated earlier one has to take the people of other faiths as one of the primary sources for doing theology in Asia to be worth the name Asian. On the other hand, one's theological task is not complete until one takes the Asian poor and the oppressed also as one of the primary sources for doing theology in Asia. These two dimensions must be held together in a dialectic tension to carry forward the task of rewriting Christology in Asia.

Entering the continent of Asia through the gateway of Asian religiosity, one's faith is shattered as well as called into radical question by the overwhelming presence of the poor. The poor are the majority of Asians and the poor of Asia are also the majority of the world's poor. According to Kevin Rafferty:

Asia ... has the largest number of absolutely poor people in the world: 600 million out of a total of 800 million according to the World Bank's *World Development Report*.

Thus, one of the distinctive features of Asia is that the majority of the world's poor reside there. By the term 'poor' I mean the broken and mutilated people, the uprooted people, marginalised people, the ignored people, the wretched of the earth. As indicated earlier, it is the multifaceted Asian religiosity that makes Asia distinct from the

rest of the continents. Likewise "... the common denominator between Asia and the rest of the Third World is its overwhelming poverty." As poverty is the overwhelming reality of Asia as well as the common link between Asia and the rest of the Third World one cannot genuinely wrestle with the question who is Jesus Christ for the people of Asia without relating Jesus Christ to the impoverished of Asia.

As the poor are a significant part of the Asian continent, no christology worthy of the name Asian can ever be formulated without reference to the poor. This, however, is not to romanticize the poor, to canonize a particular social class or even to suggest that poverty is a precondition for entrance into the Kingdom of God.

The emphasis on the poor is done for two major reasons which cannot be overlooked. These are as follows: (a) The poor are the majority of Asians and therefore one cannot possibly speak of the significance of Jesus Christ to the people of Asia without taking note of them. (b) It is clear from the Scripture that God in Jesus Christ is biased towards the poor and the oppressed because of their powerlessness. This stance of God in Jesus Christ is described by James Cone in the following manner:

It seems clear that overwhelming weight of Biblical teaching, especially the prophetic tradition in which Jesus stood unambiguously, is precisely because they are poor. The kingdom of God is for the helpless, because they have no security in this world. We see this emphasis in the repeated condemnation of the rich, notably in the Sermon on the Mount and in Jesus' exclusive identification of his ministry with sinners.

Therefore, apart from Asian religions, the Asian poor as stated earlier, will be another point of entry to discuss the theme, rewriting christology for Asia. The implications of these dual points of entry, namely religious pluralism and Asian poor is to suggest that when the churches are engaged in the task of rewriting christology to overcome Jesus Christ's alienation from Asian religions they should

not engage in that task overlooking Jesus Christ's alienation from the poor of Asia or *vice versa*. Even if Jesus Christ is liberated from one of these alienations he will still remain an alien figure to Asia because in "people of Asia" these two dominant Asian realities are simultaneously embodied. This is to say "people of Asia" are both *poor and believers of other faiths*. Therefore, for Jesus Christ to become relevant and credible for the people of Asia he needs to be liberated from his dual alienation simultaneously to become the Christ of Asia. Because of this unique situation, these two Asian realities, namely, *the Asian religious pluralism* and the *Asian poor*, should form the main contexts for re-writing christology in Asia.

Another point of clarification is essential before one proceeds with the rest of the topic. That is, as in the case of religion even in poverty there is an enslaving and liberating aspect. "Voluntary poverty" is liberating and "forced poverty" is always oppressive and dehumanizing.

It is against this oppressive aspect of "forced poverty" Jesus revolted. The Incarnation is God's revolt against forced poverty. Therefore, Jesus Christ embraced "voluntary poverty" to demonstrate his life style not to glorify poverty, but to rebel against the evil nature of "forced poverty" which unleash death in human beings created in God's image. Hence, in this paper when one exposes the evils of "forced poverty" and highlights the need to overcome Jesus Christ's alienation from the poor, what one is advocating is, for the churches, that claim to be the body of Christ, to engage in the continuation of the ministry of Jesus Christ and revolt against the principalities and powers that cause "forced poverty." Therefore in the midst of "forced poverty" churches are always challenged to wrestle with the question who is Jesus Christ for the poor of Asia.

##### **5. The Social, Economic, and Political Reality and the Asian Poor**

The Asian poor who are the world's majority of the poor are victims of "forced poverty." Therefore they constitute a majority amongst the

majority of the world's poor and they are poor not because they are lazy or because of their fate or *karmic* effects,<sup>13</sup> but because of the exploitation and the oppression by the rich in their own countries and in the world at large. This is indeed a complex problem and needs a great deal of social, economic, and political analysis. It is for this reason that K. Mathew Kurian, director of the Institute for Development Studies in Kerala, India, says:

Socio-economic and political reality in Asia cannot be understood by a mere narration of discrete data on poverty, unemployment, rising prices of commodities of common consumption, degradation in terms of social and political existence, and so on . . . it must be emphasized that without a detailed scientific analysis of the dynamics of socioeconomic and political systems as they operate in each country in Asia, we can never hope to understand reality . . . Asian reality, again, cannot be considered in isolation from the changes that are taking place in the socio-economic and political arena the world over.<sup>14</sup>

However, one feels that it is valid to state at least some general observations in regard to the causes of poverty in Asia in particular and the world in general in order to maintain the stance that poverty is the work of human hands, and therefore it can be eradicated.

In spite of many negative assertions about the physical and genetic causes of the poor, there are many economists, politicians, and social scientists who see poverty as a cause of the injustice of the global and national social, economic and political systems.<sup>15</sup>

Michael Harrington in order to expose the injustices of the global structures of economics says that the ". . . major capitalist powers have two-thirds of the globe's income, but only 20 percent of its population; the underdeveloped nations, with more than 50 percent of the people, have less than 13 percent of the income."<sup>16</sup> This economic imbalance and accumulation of wealth in one part of the world as opposed to the other is no mere accident but it is a systematic

process of plunder which has its roots in colonialism, neo-colonialism, exploitation and global domination.<sup>17</sup>

Michael Harrington confirms the plunder of the resources of the globe by a privileged few when he writes:

. . . the United States participated vicariously in the Western European social revolution. And in that revolution, the accumulation of wealth that made it possible to turn a slight edge into an industrial-technological chasm was based, in some measure, upon two hundred years of piracy, robbery and rape. African slaves, American Indians and the masses of the Indian subcontinent made an enormous contribution, exacted from them by force of arms, to the system that was to keep them in economic inferiority until this very moment.

What that accumulation of wealth did was to provide capitalism with a running head start for a gigantic leap into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.<sup>18</sup>

Therefore, he says:

. . . the world in which we live was created by European capitalism and its overseas progeny. It was not, and is not, the result of the inexorable workings of some inhuman necessity – geographic, geologic, genetic, or what have you—but of economic and social structures. The chief features of this man-made world is that it is divided into rich and poor nations. At the beginning, that was done by means of an international system in which the wealthy minority industrialized and the impoverished majority were the hewers of their wood and the bearers of their water. More recently . . . that essential unfairness has changed its form in order to preserve its content . . . The creation of the world with a North Pole of affluence and a South Pole of wretchedness is the outcome of a systematic process . . . it is men and women who fabricated these evils rather than an implacable nature that requires them . . .<sup>19</sup>

The economic exploitation of the world is a clear indication that the problem of poverty cannot be discussed or solved without critically dealing with the wealth of the world and raising the questions as to who owns the wealth of the world and how did they come to own it. This means that the rich and the poor, the developed and the under-developed, wealth and poverty are not divorced one from the other but are two sides of the same coin that need to be dealt with together in order to eradicate the evil of “forced poverty.” This also means that when one speaks of the evil of poverty one also has to address the issue of the evil of wealth and the oppression of those who indulge in wealth and luxury at the expense of the victims of “forced poverty.” Our attention is drawn to this aspect of the problem of poverty and wealth by C.T. Kurian of India, in his book *Poverty and Development*.

One of the most striking statements I have come across in following the ‘Limits of Growth’ discussion is the claim in a U.S. Senate Report that the American people consumed in the decade 1959-68 more of the resources of the world than all the people of the earth consumed in all previous history. The fact that a mere five to six per cent of mankind could and did consume in ten years more resources of the earth than all mankind in all previous ages epitomizes the ecological and economic crises of our times. The problem is not that we have one spacecraft earth, or even that its resources are finite, but that it has a minority of first-class passengers who are in a position to use and abuse its scarce resources while the majority of the passengers somehow manage to survive. Hence the problem of mass poverty in the world today and the modern ecological crisis are the twin manifestations of the same basic malady – the irresponsible use of the scarce resources of this world by an affluent and acquisitive minority.<sup>20</sup>

The global dimension of the unjust economic system as shown above, also has its counterpart in each national economic structure. The local elite and ruling class enhance and perpetuate these unjust

economic structures within their own countries. What this means is that in each country there is a privileged minority that exploits the majority in collaboration with the international power elite. In other words there is almost an unsigned treaty between the owners of capital and owners of natural resources.

C.T. Kurien explains in specific terms certain basic implications of the exploitative economic system that is controlled and perpetuated by the elite and the ruling class in Asia. Even though his case study is confined to the context of India, some of his analysis can be applied to other Asian countries too. In analysing the Indian context, Kurien remarks:

When we turn to the specifics of the Indian situation, the most striking phenomenon is the dire poverty of the many millions in our land. If this is our major problem, the eradication of it must be our primary task. But if the abolition of poverty is to become an operational task, and not merely a desirable objective, we must not talk about poverty in the abstract, but must attempt to identify those for whom poverty is a reality . . . On the basis of nutritional criteria . . . an average Indian requires goods and services worth Rs. 200 a month to have a physiologically determined minimum level of living. And it was reckoned that close to 50 percent of our population lived below even this very modest figure.<sup>21</sup>

According to his analysis, the causes of this inhuman situation are as follows:

Compared to the 50 percent of our population living below poverty line we have a small section at the top which owns and controls most of the non-labour resources in the economy and derives much of the income generated by the total economic activity in the system. Inequalities of income and wealth are common in most parts of the world, but where the vast majority of the people live in rock bottom poverty the concentration of economic resources in the hands of a few at the top gives rise to special problems. The

concentration of economic resources in India is in fact glaring . . .<sup>22</sup>

In order to be more specific, he writes:

. . . we can identify two distinct sections of population in the country. The first consists of the top 10 per cent, affluent in terms of the ownership of resources and claims on income. The second section consists of the rest, but among them the bottom 50 per cent must be specially identified because of the dire poverty of their situation. The benefits of the growth of the past twenty years or so have gone to the top 10 per cent almost to the complete exclusion of the bottom 50 per cent.<sup>23</sup>

In light of this economic analysis, one needs to state that the poor live in poverty in Asia because of the greed of the affluent. Therefore it is a distortion for Asian rich and elites to consider the poor as the problem and the rich as the solution. Instead they should admit that the exploitation and oppression of the poor by the local elite and international powers are the major causes for condemning the majority of Asians to be poor.

In the particular context of Asian poverty and suffering one should not confine oneself only to Jesus' relationship to the poor. One also needs to probe into the relationship of Jesus Christ to the rich who exploit the poor. The relationship of Jesus Christ to the poor as well as to the rich is vital to our discussion because ". . . good news to the poor is always bad news to the rich."<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, Jesus' relationship to the rich and the poor are of equal importance because ". . . the liberation of the rich is mediated by the liberation of the poor, not *vice versa* . . ."<sup>25</sup>

It is important to state that if one acknowledges that Jesus Christ is biased towards the poor then one has to liberate Jesus Christ who is presented by the Asian churches to be the spiritual sustainer and nourisher of the rich and the oppressors in order to become the Jesus of the poor. It is this Jesus of the poor who said to the rich young man who wanted to follow him "you lack one thing, go sell what you

have, and give to the poor . . . ” (Mark 10:21, RSV). Because that was the stance of Jesus towards the rich, one possibly cannot claim to be a true disciple of Jesus Christ and at the same time be enslaved to material wealth.

A Christian cannot be faithful to Jesus of Nazareth who said “. . . woe to you that are rich . . . ” (Luke 6:24, RSV) and indulge in accumulation of wealth. Therefore in light of Scripture one needs to confess that wealth and Jesus Christ should not be mingled together. If wealth and Jesus Christ should not be mingled together, then Jesus Christ definitely becomes a challenge to capitalism and capitalist values. Therefore the Church which claims to be the body of Christ in Asia cannot nourish itself on capitalist values and ideology that dehumanize and exploit people created in the image of God and still claim to be the authentic body of Christ.

Thus far the approach to understand the causes of poverty has been pursued mainly from political and economic perspectives. Apart from it there is at least another dimension to the problem of poverty that the Asian Christians need to take a serious note of within the religiously pluralistic context. Apart from radically changing national and international social, economic, and political structures there is a religious and a cultural dimension to the causes of poverty. That is what M.M. Thomas of India means in saying:

. . . there are also other non-economic dimensions of poverty to be considered. Poverty is not simply an economic or even an economic-political phenomenon; it is very much intertwined with the sociocultural framework in which political economy operates . . .<sup>26</sup>

In an earlier section it was acknowledged that Asian suffering for the most part is the suffering of the believers of other faiths and ideologies. Acknowledging that fact also involves the necessity to recognize that apart from Christianity other religions also have wrestled and do wrestle with the problem of poverty and suffering. For example, Buddhism addresses the issue of poverty and suffering,

and it is a central problem to the teaching of Buddha. According to Buddhist teachings poverty is a condition created by human beings because of their acquisitiveness or avarice and greed. In Buddhist terminology poverty is caused because of human beings' enslavement to “. . . *tanha* (insatiable 'thirst' for more and more), *Upadana* (obsessive 'clinging' to the evanescent phenomena), and *lobha* (greed).”<sup>27</sup>

It is one's enslavement to these forces that makes one thirst for more and more material wealth and leads one to acquire for oneself even at the expense of one's neighbor. This is the reason Buddhism as a system of thought is centred mainly on *viraga* (non-attachment). It is the practice of *viraga* according to Buddhism that helps one to overcome greed, which causes “forced poverty.”<sup>28</sup> Even though Buddhism advocates non-attachment it is neither an other worldly religion nor does it claim “. . . that to become economically weak would make one spiritually strong . . .”<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, according to Ven. Anuruddha, Buddhism or for that matter any religion “. . . must have some existential meaning for people, and for that reason it should include not just an analysis of the present problems but also a solution of the same here and now.”<sup>30</sup>

As Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism have their own distinctive approaches to the problem and solution of poverty, Christianity has no monopoly on concern for the Asian poor. Therefore the question is not only whether Jesus Christ has a monopoly or concern for the poor but whether Jesus Christ, who is proclaimed by the churches as liberator of humanity, offers a solution to the problem of “forced poverty” in Asia? This indeed is a challenge to Jesus Christ in Asia and the relevance and the significance of Jesus Christ to the poor within the religiously pluralistic context of Asia depends greatly on the type of christological response of the Asian churches.

This challenge becomes more critical because, in spite of the Church's presence in Asia for more than four hundred years and the



preaching of the good news of Jesus Christ to the people of Asia, the misery of the poor has not improved drastically. When one looks at this problem from a sociological point of view it may indicate that the minority status of the Asian Church is a sign of its failure. It may even suggest that the minority status of the Christian community is an indication that the message of Jesus Christ has been rejected by the poor as salt without flavour. This may sound strange because it was the poor and the wretched of the earth that were drawn to Jesus' message when it was originally preached by him because of its liberational stance. This good news which was preached by Jesus Christ with a bias to the poor is rejected by the poor themselves in Asia today because of its distortions and biased interpretation in favour of the rich. Therefore Jesus Christ in Asia is not only alien to believers of other Asian faiths but he is also alien to the Asian poor. Unless Jesus Christ is liberated from this double alienation, namely, religions and the poor, he will remain a stranger to Asia.

### Notes

1. Maurice Wiles, *The Remaking of Christian Doctrine* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1978), p. 17.
2. For a detailed discussion of the liberating and enslaving aspect of religion see Aloysius Pieris, "Mission of the local Church in relation to other major religious traditions," in *Bulletin of the Commission on Theological Concern* (Singapore: CCA, April 1983, Vol. 4, No. 1), p. 3.
3. Aloysius Pieris, *Bulletin of the Commission on Theological Concerns*, *op.cit.*, p. 32.
4. W.A. Visser 't Hooft, "Pluralism – Temptation or Opportunity?"
5. S.J. Samartha, *Courage for Dialogue: Ecumenical Issues in Inter-religious Relationships* (Geneva: WCC, 1981), p. 24.
6. *Ibid.*
7. Raimundo Panikkar, *Salvation in Christ: Concreteness and Universality* (Santa Barbara, California, 1972), p. 11.
8. C.S. Song, *Christian Mission in Reconstruction – An Asian Analysis* (New York: Orbis Books, 1975), p. 181.
9. Hendrik Kraemer, *Why Christianity of all Religions?* (London. Lutterworth Press, 1962), p. 79.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 93.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 99.
12. S.J. Samartha, *One Christ, Many Religions* (N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1991), p. 4.
13. The most popular interpretation of the doctrine of Karma suggests that one's present life is a consequence of one's past actions. In other words, one's present state of poverty, oppression and exploitation is a Karmic effect of one's past actions. But the question is whether the original teaching of Karma was taught by Buddha to justify social injustice and to preserve the status quo or is the above understanding of Karma distorted interpretation of the doctrine of Karma to justify the status quo? Ven. Dr. K. Anuruddha Thera, in order to clarify this misinterpretation says, "... the Buddhist notion of karma presented in the early scripture was never supposed to promote social injustice or to provide justification for the status quo ... If it were so, it wouldn't have been possible for Buddhists to reject the Jain notion of *Pubbekatahetu vada*, which went to the extent of claiming that every experience the men had in this life was a consequence of a past act. The Buddha has left no room for the view that poverty is an unavoidable burden that has come to us in consequence of our past *kamma* ..."
14. K. Matthew Kurian, "Socio-Economic and Political Reality in Asia' in *Asia's Struggle for Full Humanity*, p. 60.
15. See Michael Harrington, *op. cit.*, C.T. Kurien, *Poverty and Development* (Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1974); K.M. Kurian, "Socio-Economic and Political Reality in Asia," *op. cit.*, pp. 59-74; Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1974); Gunnar Myrdal, *Asian Drama: An Inquiry into Poverty of the Nations* (New York: The Twentieth Century Fund, 1968).
16. Michael Harrington, *op. cit.*, p. 16.
17. See specially "Asian issues ... Problems and Prospects" in *Struggling with People is Living in Christ* edited by George Mathew (India: Urban Rural Mission-Christian Conference of Asia, 1981), p. 11f; *Escape from Domination, op. cit.; People Against Domination, op. cit.*
18. Michael Harrington, *op. cit.*, pp. 113-14.
19. *Ibid.*, pp. 102-103.
20. C.T. Kurien, *op. cit.*, p. 31.
21. C.T. Kurien, *op. cit.*, pp. 51-52.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 53.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 54.
24. "Mission of the Local Church in Relation to Other Major Religious Traditions" by

Aloysius Pieris in *Bulletin of the Commission on Theological Concerns (CTC Bulletin)*, (Singapore: Christian Conference of Asia, April 1983), Vol. 4, No. 1: p. 31.

25. *Ibid.*

26. M.M. Thomas, *Religion and the Revolt of the Oppressed* (Delhi: Indian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1981), pp. 48-50.

27. "Monastic Poverty in the Asian Setting" by Aloysius Pieris, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

28. For a more detailed Buddhist understanding of poverty, see "The Buddhist Attitude to Poverty" by Ven. Dr. K. Anuruddha Tera and "Monastic Poverty in the Asian Setting" by Aloysius Pieris, *ibid.*, pp. 90f.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 99.

30. *Ibid.*

## First EATWOT Inter-Continental Dialogue

*James H. Cone*

"This dialogue opens a new era for EATWOT," proclaimed Engelbert Mveng, during the closing session of the first of three EATWOT inter-regional dialogues, held at Union Theological Seminary in New York (July 12-15, 1994), under the auspices of the Theological Commission on Inter-continental Dialogue. A leading participant in the early development of EATWOT and at the centre of the heated debates between Africans and Latin Americans regarding its theological identity, Mveng repeatedly characterised the New York dialogue as a turning point for EATWOT. "We have opened a door for a better mutual understanding and solidarity, for a deeper analysis of liberation theology and Third World anthropological poverty, and for a deeper appreciation of the contribution of women in our theologising programme."

Ivone Gebara, an active member in EATWOT for nearly 15 years, was equally euphoric. "For the first time, we recognised women's contribution in theology, their special method, and the need to struggle against patriarchal systems in our different specialities." As Mveng acknowledged the notable contribution of Latin America to theology

and the creative new ways women are doing theology, Gebara repeatedly affirmed the important contribution of African theology to Third World theologies especially its analysis of cultural liberation and anthropological poverty. “For the first time,” Gebara said, as she offered critical reflections on EATWOT’s history, “we reflected together about racism as an internalised behaviour present in different and subtle forms not only in society but in Christian theology and theologians. We gave occasion to African theologians to express what they have been speaking since 20 years ago about ‘anthropological poverty’.”

No one was without high praise for the meeting. “It was really a dialogue,” commented Elizabeth Tapia, a newcomer to EATWOT. “There was an atmosphere of trust and openness: mutual listening, equal sharing, and confident presentations. The small size of the group and the mutual display of respect and friendship created a flowing and productive dialogue.” Takatso Mofokeng made a similar observation: “We have shown that small inter-regional groups are very suitable for the development of community, trust, and openness.”

Teresa Okure also spoke about an “atmosphere of friendship that prevailed throughout,” enabling us “to raise issues which until now were not addressed frankly and directly by EATWOT, especially issues connected with racism and anthropological poverty.” David Suh reflected on how the dialogue enlarged his theological vision. “I have learned that over and above the theological methodologies which we have so far adopted in doing theology in the Third World context, liberation paradigms of feminist theology and black theology should be added in our common theological efforts in EATWOT.”

Diego Irarrazaval, however, aware that we were only eight people, cautioned the group about too much euphoria and reminded us that our dialogue will be a success only to the degree we are able to incorporate a spirit of dialogue in the larger membership of EATWOT. “We must,” he emphasised over and over again, “find a way to share

our experience of mutual trust and openness with all EATWOT membership and invite them to share their dreams and insights on where we can walk together *as EATWOT*, and thus go beyond the ‘Latin American Catholic’ character of EATWOT’s mistakes.”

### **Tasks Before the Dialogue**

As a long-time member of EATWOT and a student of its history, I was greatly surprised and deeply inspired by the New York dialogue. An atmosphere of mutual trust and openness, respectful listening and fair critiques created a high level of integrity in our conversations. This was a new experience for me in EATWOT. I have not seen anything like it – except perhaps during brief moments in our early history, before regional tensions and personality conflicts undermined our initial mutual trust and understanding. But even then, there was little commitment to genuine inter-regional dialogue, even though the organisation was originally called, as Teresa Okure reminded us, the “*Ecumenical Dialogue of Third World Theologians*.”

The eight theologians who met for four days in the library conference room at Union Seminary were determined to reinstate “dialogue” as the centre of EATWOT’s existence.<sup>1</sup> Painful as it might be, we knew that our first task was to critically evaluate EATWOT’s past attempts to engage in inter-regional dialogue. Why was it so difficult and painful for Third World theologians to dialogue with each other? If we were fighting a common enemy and seeking similar goals, why didn’t we fight and seek together? Was there a fear that dialogue would expose irreconcilable differences which would divide us or give others the opportunity to do so?

Our second task was to have a conversation about what each region has learned from the others on theological methodology. Why do we speak so rarely about each other in our theological writings? What insights have Latin Americans gained from Africans, Asians, and U.S. minorities? What have Asians, Africans, and U.S. minorities learned from Latin America and from each other?

The seven preparatory essays in this volume initiated our dialogue. In my opening address, I endeavoured to do three things: 1) to define the purpose of the New York dialogue; 2) to present the views of U.S. minorities on EATWOT's past dialogical history; 3) to say a word about theological methodology. The three other members of the Theological Commission were asked to review his/her region's perspective on past attempts at dialogue in EATWOT. They were urged to present not only their individual views but, even importantly, the views of the people in their regions. It is important to know where we have been before we can appreciate where we are and where we hope to go as EATWOT.

The second set of three papers focused on the theological methodologies that are currently being developed in Asia, Latin America and Africa, in the context of three important questions.

1. How do we construct a theology of life from the underside of history?
2. What role does culture, politics, and the Bible play in doing theology?
3. What has each continent or region learned from each other?

It was made clear to the participants, before and during the New York meeting, that the purpose of the gathering was to fulfil a directive from the Nairobi Assembly: to initiate an *intercontinental* dialogue in EATWOT. All participants, therefore, were urged to write their papers in that light and to be prepared to engage in serious and frank conversation about our theological concerns.

To encourage dialogue and define the focus of the regional papers, the Theological Commission requested the authors of the papers to prepare their contributions in the light of a critical reading of three essays from each major region and one from the minorities in the U.S. We suggested the following essays:

*Asia:* Samuel Rayan, "Third World Theology: Where do We Go from Here;"<sup>2</sup> Virginia Fabella, "A Common Methodology for Diverse

Christologies?;"<sup>3</sup> and Aloysius Pieris, "Towards an Asian Theology of Liberation: Some Religio-Cultural Guidelines."<sup>4</sup>

*Africa:* Engelbert Mveng, "Third World Theology – What Theology? What Third World? Evaluation of an African Delegate;"<sup>5</sup> Mercy Oduyoye, "Reflections from a Third World Woman's Perspective: Women's Experience and Liberation Theologies;"<sup>6</sup> and Frank Chikane, "EATWOT and Third World Theologies: An Evaluation of the Past and Present."<sup>7</sup>

*Latin America:* Gustavo Gutierrez, "Reflections from a Latin American Perspective: Finding Our Way;"<sup>8</sup> Ivone Gebara, "Women Doing Theology in Latin America;"<sup>9</sup> and Leonardo Boff, "What Are Third World Theologies?"<sup>10</sup>

*U.S. Minorities:* James Cone, "Black Theology: Its Origin, Methodology, and Relationship to Third World Theologies."<sup>11</sup>

As Diego Irarrazaval pointed out in his evaluation, most of the prepared papers for the New York meeting were "insufficient on intercontinental dialogue." They did not engage the recommended essays and thus "did not refer to insights and reflections of other continents." The papers illustrate how difficult it is to talk to each other about our differences in an informed, critical, and disciplined way.

### **Attraction of Dominant, Powerful Theologies**

What was not achieved in the preparatory papers was accomplished in our daily discussions. On the first day, we focused on the failures of EATWOT's past attempts at dialogue, examining each continent's perspective on our difficulties. We talked openly and at length about many sensitive topics. They included: the heated confrontations between Latin Americans and Africans, especially at the First and Second Assemblies in New Delhi, India and Oaxtepec, Mexico; the creative impact of the "irruption within the irruption" and the subsequent formation of the Women's Commission; the

marginalisation of the U.S. minorities and the racist implications of their invisibility; the reasons for the absence of a sustained dialogue between Asians and Africans; and the public identity of EATWOT as a Latin American Catholic organisation.

For me, what was most surprising and refreshing was the trust and respect that came to define our relationship with each other, enabling us to speak to each other frankly. No one felt the need to defend him/herself or their region's behaviour. We listened to each other with attentiveness and understanding, striving to relate in a constructive way in order to correct past mistakes and begin to build a new future for EATWOT.

On the second day, we discussed the theological methodologies of each region, paying special attention to culture, politics, the Bible, and what each region has learned from the other. All participants were familiar with Latin American Liberation theology and were prepared to engage the strengths and the weaknesses of its methodology for EATWOT and their respective regions.

However, it soon became apparent that other regional theologies were less familiar to participants. Asians did not know much about African theology and Black theology. In fact, Asians seemed to know more about Latin American theology than they did about the variety of theologies on their own continent. Africans knew less about Black theology than Latin theology, and even less about Asian theology. Latin Americans seemed partly embarrassed by the attention their theology received from the others, since they did not know other Third World theologies as well as their theology was known. This lack of knowledge of each other may have contributed to the historical difficulty of dialogue in EATWOT. At the same time, the lack of dialogue may have been a reason for this ignorance. Either way, we could not deny that the two were inevitably linked.

The questions we discussed included: Why was Latin American liberation theology so well-known by EATWOT people and African

theology, Asian theology, and the theologies of U.S. minorities virtually unknown? Is Latin American theology functioning in EATWOT like the dominant theologies in Europe and North America function in the world? Notwithstanding our fight with European and North American theologians, we do take them seriously. We have studied their theologies and know them well. But we do not know each other's theologies, except for Latin American liberation theology, and even it is known less than dominant theologies in Europe and North America. Since EATWOT is nearly twenty years old, why do we still know so little about each region's theologies?

We did not find it easy to talk about these sensitive issues. But we did it anyway – openly, respectfully, and honestly. When our discussion veered off course (because it was more comfortable to talk instead about our own regions or about the role of Marxism in Latin American theology), someone would put us back on course by reminding us of the directives of the Nairobi Assembly regarding *inter-regional* dialogue. The more we talked the more we deepened our mutual understanding and trust. We began to acknowledge that dominant theologies are very attractive to us, even though we fight them. They are attractive because they are powerful—intellectually, culturally, politically, and economically. What the dominant theologians of the First World say about God has great consequence in the lives of our people. We cannot ignore them because the lives and livelihood of the poor are at stake. But in this process of fighting against the imperialism of First World theologies, we also internalised many of their intellectual, cultural, and spiritual values and thereby acquired many of the negative stereotypes about each other advocated by oppressors. This is perhaps the main reason why we know so much about the dominant theologies in Europe and North America and much less about Third World theologies.

The attraction of the powerful is also a major reason why Latin American theology is so widely known and discussed in EATWOT

(in contrast to, for example, African theology) and why EATWOT is so closely identified with it. When we speak about the EATWOT method of doing theology, we mean the Latin American way of doing theology. Latin American liberation theology became the dominant theological expression in EATWOT because they have been the most prolific, western, and white, thereby making their theology more acceptable to white theologians and churches in the First World who alone control the resources for public exposure.

Is not the attractiveness of dominant theologies the main reason why Asia and Africa are in critical conversation with Latin America but not with each other? Asia and Africa seem to be ideal dialogical partners, since they are both profoundly different and similar. In fact, the initial idea that led to the founding of EATWOT was first conceived by an African, O.K. Bimwenyi of Zaire,<sup>12</sup> during his visit to India. After seeing the commonalities between Asia and Africa, he suggested that Third World theologians needed an organisation in order to dialogue among themselves. While EATWOT began with an encounter between Africans and Asians, it quickly changed its course and became an organisation closely identified with Latin American liberation theology. The African-Asian encounter was soon forgotten, largely because both preferred to dialogue with Latin America.

### **“Anthropological Poverty” Discussed**

A long overdue discussion of “anthropological poverty” began in the afternoon of the second day when Engelbert Mveng read his preparatory essay. We discussed not only the meaning of anthropological poverty for Africa and other blacks throughout the world but also for women and other oppressed people whose humanity has been seriously called into question by dominant cultures. Why has EATWOT taken so long to put anthropological poverty on its theological agenda? Is it a result of racism within EATWOT? Three of EATWOT’s major intercontinental conferences have been held in Africa. But one would not know it by examining the theological

themes of the “Final Statements.” Africa’s theological contribution is hardly noticeable. The invisibility of Africa was so conspicuous in the “Final Statement” of the Nairobi Assembly that the late Sister Rosemary Edet of Nigeria raised strong objections to it.

In the New York dialogue, the African slight in EATWOT received most of our attention. We recalled when the words “inculturation,” “indigenisation,” “Africanisation,” and “anthropological poverty” were regarded as anti-liberation and reactionary. These terms were mainly associated with African theology and were never advanced as an essential ingredient of EATWOT’s theological identity.

While the Theological Commission planned the structure for the first two days, the focus of the final two days was left to the group to define. Anthropological poverty, racism, and the contribution of women to theology (especially eco-feminism) focused the remainder of our time together. When we asked, “What is missing in our theological methodology,”<sup>13</sup> our discussion centred primarily on EATWOT’s reluctance to talk about racism. In our discussion of anthropological poverty during the last day, we linked it with racism, eco-feminism, and “cosmological poverty.”

By the time we came to the end of the four days together, we were surprised at the caring community we had become—defined not by our regions but by a deep commitment to and love and appreciation for EATWOT, especially its ecumenical and dialogical character. We worshipped together daily – with prayers, songs, and scripture readings. We talked, laughed, and enjoyed each other’s company over meals and coffee breaks as our friendship blossomed. We closed our meeting with the determination to share our experience with others and with the hope that the next two dialogues in Korea and Brazil will be equally successful.

### **Notes**

1. Illness prevented Aruna Gnanadason of India, Pablo Richard of Costa Rica, and K.C. Abraham of India, President of EATWOT, from attending the meeting.

2. In Leonardo Boff and Virgil Elizondo (eds.), *Theologies of the Third World: Convergences and Differences*, Concilium, # 199, Oct., 1988, pp. 127-140.
3. In Virginia Fabella and Mercy Oduyoye (eds.), *With Passion and Compassion: Third World Women Doing Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1988), pp. 108-117.
4. In Virginia Fabella (ed.), *Asia's Struggle for Full Humanity* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1980), pp. 75-95.
5. In Virginia Fabella and Sergio Torres (eds.), *Irruption of the Third World: Challenge to Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1983), pp. 217-221.
6. In *Ibid.*, pp. 246-255.
7. In K.C. Abraham (ed.), *Third World Theologies: Commonalties & Divergences* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1990), pp. 147-169.
8. In Fabella and Torres (eds.), *Irruption*, pp. 223-234.
9. In Fabella and Oduyoye (eds.), *With Passion and Compassion*, pp. 125-134.
10. In Boff and Elizondo (eds.), *Theologies of the Third World*, pp. 3-14.
11. In Virginia Fabella and Sergio Torres (eds.), *Doing Theology in a Divided World* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1985), pp. 93- 105.
12. See O.K. Bimwenyi, "The Origins of EATWOT," *Voices From the Third World*, vol. IV, no. 2, December, 1981, pp. 19-26.
13. See Thursday's schedule.

## Evaluation of EATWOT

*Julio de Santa Ana*

### Our Present Agonies

During the last five years it has become commonplace to say that we live at the end of a century characterised by dramatic changes. Some of the certainties with which we lived during several decades, since the end of the Second World War, have vanished. We have become increasingly aware of many uncertainties about world history with its tensions and contradictions. An era of indefiniteness is being experienced by people. Among them, those of the Third World are the most affected by the ongoing crisis. Crisis is the concept which is most employed when talking about the current situation. That is, there is an increased feeling that some of the beliefs which seemed to represent the plight of people so accurately have become obsolete. And at the same time, it is also felt that we lack the key which could help us to build up a common view of the world and its processes.

One of the main characteristics of the ongoing crisis is the tension between growing globalisation of markets and the inherent polarisation of this economic trend. The impact of modern technologies at the level of information is accelerating the process of integration of markets. However, at the same time, people experience differentiation, because some important markets are not considered participants in

the process of unification. This is the case, among others, of the job market, where great unevenness can be perceived, especially between rich countries and the Third World. The job market is not integrated at the world level, but is truncated. This differentiation is inherent in the prevailing economic system. The gap between the well-off and the poor creates unbearable tensions which are becoming increasingly impossible to manage.

One of the ways by which those in power try to control this situation is to apply more and more mechanisms of exclusion. They are not new, but in our time of crisis they are applied in such a way that a vast proportion of human-kind, as never before, is seriously and painfully influenced by them. As has happened in the past, the situation continues to be unacceptable. It indicates that the culture of the ruling groups in the world is one of irresponsibility, resentment and violence. However, at the same time, those who are the victims affirm the need for solidarity. The rights of human beings, people's rights, cannot be dictated by the imperatives of the prevailing economic system. Unfortunately, the logic of this system seems to be encouraged by the principle of exclusion: Africa, especially between the Sahara and the Zambesi, is the area of the world most affected by this logic, but also the Northeast of India, Bangladesh and Nepal, as well as Central America, the Northeast of Brazil and some of the islands of the South Pacific. In the latter France still insists on testing nuclear weapons, and in so doing continues to deteriorate the environment in such a way that life is seriously damaged in that part of the planet.

Pain and unnecessary burdens are imposed upon Third World peoples. The prevailing system, which functions for the sake of the rich and powerful, is relentless. There are people's movements which try to counterbalance the logic of the systemic powers. It is possible to say that they are "antisystemic." This does not mean that they are out of the system; they operate within the dominant system, but resist it. In this way the system is somewhat eroded, and some changes are

introduced. These antisystemic movements are different in nature: the social movements which resist and combat White racism, the feminist movements, as well as those which are concerned for the environment and struggle for a sustainable society, are the most important. All of them are very active among Third World people. They express, in one way or another, the expectations of most men and women in the Third World in this period of crisis. In doing so, they manifest the vitality of the Third World.

### **The Christian Communities and EATWOT**

During this century which is soon to end, Christianity has evolved in a very surprising way. At present, most of the Christians in the world live in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America and the Pacific. The Christian faith can be embraced by peoples of all cultures in the World, but the Christian "Church" has become really universal during the second half of the 20th century. That is, the Christian communities are ceasing to be Western agents in non-Western lands, and they are becoming rooted in the cultures of the people. The growth of Christianity, which has been less than the growth of Islam, nonetheless has been amazing in the Third World.

An important transformation of Christianity is going on: new Christian communities are coming into being, with new liturgies, new songs, new spiritualities and new theologies. The theologies of the Third World are developed by the peoples of Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America and the Pacific in their own contexts as well as in those lands where the diaspora of these peoples finds itself now, be it in North America or in Europe. The theological reflections of Third World people grow from their agonies and hopes, taking into account the plight of their cultures. Therefore, these reflections cannot be an echo of traditional Western and Eastern Christian theologies. Though the importance of traditional theologies is recognised, with their positive contributions for the affirmation of the Christian faith, as well as their shortcomings and – above all –



with their complicities in the enterprise of conquest and colonial domination of Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, the Americas and the Pacific, Third World theologies give priority to the life of Third World peoples and their cultures. In doing so, they are faithful to the universal dimension of the biblical faith in God, who is not the Supreme Being of some people only, but of men and women of the whole world. Third World theologies also affirm that God's presence in the world cannot be limited to the history and cultures of the people who developed the early Judeo-Christian tradition. Because of these characteristics, Third World theologies are inclusive. They affirm the relevance of all local cultures, because this is the way to be universal.

EATWOT has become and has developed in a short period in the context of these two processes: the crisis of the prevailing economic and inter-state system, as well as the new developments of Christianity (which cannot be delinked from other transformations in the religious field of the world). EATWOT was created in 1976, at Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, when the situation of Third World people seemed to be more hopeful than it is now. Since that time, the evolution of historical situations in the Third World and elsewhere has created new conditions which influence people's lives. Some people's movements have declined and others are becoming more dynamic. This is the case, for example, of women's movements, which introduced new concerns and claims for more inclusive and comprehensive ways of life and thought. It is also the case of groups which express other theological concerns. Many Third World theologians, women and men, are open to these movements. Therefore, innovations are introduced in Third World theological reflections. Being aware of this evolution, and eager to perceive some of the most important lessons from EATWOT's short life, as well as aiming to see more clearly some of the lines to be pursued in the near future, the Executive Committee of EATWOT took the decision at its meeting in April 1994, in Hamburg, to launch an evaluation process of the Association.

### **The Evaluation Process**

The Executive Committee appointed a small Evaluation Committee whose members are: Virginia Fabella, Ana Maria Pineda, Mercy Oduyoye, Simon Maimela, Erhard Kamphausen, Mais Boekaert (these last two as representatives of the group of cooperating agencies supporting EATWOT) and Julio de Santa Ana. K.C. Abraham and Carmela Alvarez, president and executive secretary of EATWOT, are also members *ex-officio* of the Evaluation Committee. Up to now, the committee has met twice: the first time at the Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis (end of November 1994), and the second meeting was at Stony Point Conference Centre, near New York (beginning of September 1995).

At the meeting in Indianapolis the process of evaluation was organised. Given the limited resources available, the committee envisaged that four levels of reflection should be taken into consideration: a) the members of EATWOT; b) a group of theologians of different contexts, most of whom are from the Third World but are not members of EATWOT, and who are also sympathetically critical of the work of the Association; c) a vast group of presidents, rectors and directors of theological schools, both in the Third World and the First World, to which was also added a smaller group of church leaders. Each of these three groups received a different type of questionnaire, which had been discussed and formulated during the meeting in Indianapolis. The most detailed of these questionnaires was for EATWOT's members, and covered different aspects of the Association. Special attention was given to the questions addressed to the second group. The answers of the third group would enable the members of the Evaluation Committee to assess the impact of EATWOT on theological education and on the life of the churches.

The fourth level of reflection was different. Taking into consideration different dimensions of the world crisis, and how they affect Third World people, it was thought necessary to organise a

seminar to which could be invited a small number of EATWOT's members to join the evaluation team. The seminar was held at Stony Point, under the leadership of Prof. Samir Amin, from Egypt, who is the Director of the Third World Centre in Dakar, Senegal. On September 4 and 5 a small group of 10 persons studied and discussed some of the dimensions of the ongoing crisis, seeking to understand how it influences the Third World, and consequently the life of EATWOT. This reflection was perceived by the Evaluation Committee as necessary in order to obtain a better assessment of EATWOT's activities in today's world.

At the conclusion of the seminar with Prof. Amin, the members of the Evaluation Committee continued their work, analysing the answers received to the three types of questionnaires. The members of the evaluation team were aware that the seminar had been a very helpful step, contributing to clarify many issues which, in some way or other, needed to be taken into account in the report that the Evaluation Committee has to submit for discussion to the participants of the next Assembly of EATWOT, which will take place in the Philippines in December 1996.

### **Some Elements of the Evaluation Report**

The first draft of the Evaluation Report is in the process of being produced as these lines are being written. It will be circulated among the members of the committee, who will send their remarks, if needed, to the rapporteur. On the basis of these remarks a second version of the report will be drafted, which again will be shared with the members of the Executive Committee of EATWOT, as well as among a group of 25 members of the Association who have been selected according to regional criteria. Those who receive the second draft of the Evaluation Report will be requested to send back their opinions to the Evaluation Committee, which will meet in Hamburg during the last week of June 1996 in order to consider these contributions. The task of the committee at that time will be to finalise the elaboration of

the report. Immediately after, the report will be shared with the members of the Executive Committee of EATWOT, which is the authority requested to implement the evaluation process. If accepted and received by EATWOT's executive, then it will be sent to all members and friends of the Association. The Evaluation Committee intends to analyse data, interpret it, and make recommendations to be submitted for discussion at the next Assembly.

Following are some indications of the most important trends of the evaluation. It must first be said that of the 187 questionnaires which were sent to EATWOT's members, 52 were returned. That is, the proportion of those who responded is significant. In the same way, some of the comments received about EATWOT were long and carefully thought out, and have been very helpful. It is expected that a few answers will still be received by this group. Obviously, this is neither the moment nor the place to give a full account of the evaluation results. We shall limit ourselves to those elements which seem to be the most important.

1) One of the chapters of the questionnaire to EATWOT's members is about the "epistemological break": at the founding meeting of Dar-es-Salaam it was stated that "we reject an academic type of theology that is divorced from action. We are prepared for a radical break in epistemology, which makes commitment the first act of theology and engages in critical reflection on the praxis of the reality of the Third World." Has the epistemological break happened in EATWOT's way of doing theology? An overwhelming majority, almost unanimously, answered that this was a major characteristic of their way of doing theological reflection. Five important indications emerge from the answers to the questionnaire:

- a) Experience, praxis is a necessary step in theological work. It is experience of people's struggles which is carefully analysed and interpreted in order to confirm or correct the orientation of action.
- b) The partners of the theologian are *the people*: popular movements,

ecclesial communities of the poor, women's movements and the like. *People* are a major reference for theological reflection. Some think that it is the most important one.

c) Epistemological break today means taking into account gender and environmental concerns, at the same time as the preferential option for the poor.

d) Philosophical accent on liberation is good, but the highest requirement is liberation praxis.

e) Inconsistencies should be overcome: it is necessary to do something, other than to correct academic theologies while those who make these criticisms are involved in the academic world. Once again, the emphasis should be on praxis.

2) Since the mid-1980s, it is possible to perceive in EATWOT's life a very important contribution made by women theologians. Their input is a significant one for Third World theologies, and that a feminist perspective "should be integral to EATWOT's theological formulation." A majority also affirms that the membership of women should be increased; however, in the chapter on EATWOT's *Structure and Organisation*, there is also a majority who answered affirmatively to the question whether the quota system (which fixes membership of women at 30%) should continue. This discrepancy should be necessarily discussed at the next Assembly.

3) The liberation paradigm is still valid for the majority of those who answered the questionnaire. Nonetheless, some qualifications are introduced. Liberation should be perceived as the defence and promotion of life. Thus, liberation must be understood in wider terms than socio-economic and political terms. It also involves gender, ethnicity and race, as well as cultural and ecological dimensions. That is, liberation is increasingly perceived in more holistic terms.

4) Something similar to what is happening with "liberation" is taking place with "the poor," who should be perceived as such not only from an economic point of view, but also as human beings who

are deprived of their humanity, not acknowledged by others. This is the case, for example (among many) of excluded people, racially oppressed people, Dalits in India, indigenous groups, and others.

5) Most of those who answered the questionnaire are in favour of a wider understanding of ecumenism. Though affirming that ecumenical dialogue must involve the three main Christian confessions (Roman Catholics, Orthodox and Protestants), it was also suggested that a step forward should be taken at the level of inter-religious dialogue and cooperation with other world religions and with indigenous people's religions.

6) A strong thrust appears in favour of regionalisation. In this sense the experience of the Asian region, which has been so dynamic in the last years, is leading the way. Nevertheless, a majority of opinion is against having regional secretaries working full-time for EATWOT. The possibilities opened by regionalisation programmes may be very instrumental in the renewal of EATWOT's life.

Finally, there is a strong accent and awareness among EATWOT's members of the anti-systemic character of the Association. As some commentators point out, EATWOT is perceived as one of the few existing spaces where some alternative thought can still be produced.

#### **A Few Dilemmas**

During its short history EATWOT has represented a space for dialogue and gathering, where theologians of the Third World and of the ethnic minorities of North America could meet, discuss and reflect together. A considerable number of answers to the questionnaire stated that EATWOT must become a movement. That is: what can be EATWOT's future: a forum (as has been mostly the case) or a movement with programmes and requiring its members to get involved in organised action?

How to integrate EATWOT's members in a better way? What else is necessary other than consultations at different levels (national, regional, international)? Should EATWOT follow the line pioneered

by the women's programme? What are the lessons that can be learned from the experience of dialogues and encounters organised by the International Theological Commission? Should thematic seminars be organised more frequently? And if so, what themes should be discussed?

A major dilemma is how to be more inclusive. There are some indications that the image of EATWOT is that of being somewhat exclusive. How to integrate other theological voices, of women, of younger persons, those who are not academicians, of theologians of indigenous peoples?

Lastly, how to dialogue with dogmatic and academic theologians? Some expressed the view that it is not important, while others think that it is necessary. The debate is open about this particular issue.

## **Search for a New Just World Order: Challenges to Theology**

**Final Statement of the Fourth Assembly of EATWOT held at Tagaytay City, Philippines, Dec. 10-17, 1996**

### I. INTRODUCTION

a. The Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT) held its fourth general assembly from December 10 to 17, 1996. The occasion also marked the twentieth anniversary of EATWOT's birth in Dar-es-Salaam. About a hundred participants gathered in this assembly, including delegates from Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Pacific, US Minorities, as well as some fifteen partners and observers.

b. On the morning of December 13, the African region led us in worship: "Send down your spirit, your healing, your power in the name of Jesus."

And we danced and sang:

*Bana mayo Bana c'bana Bakumbobela lesa* – (Those who believe in God are happy to serve).

We felt the Spirit present and calling us as theologians to be servants of liberation.

c. We met in Tagaytay City (Philippines), a place of great natural beauty, in the neighbourhood of Taal volcano. The atmosphere was rich with the spiritual warmth of the people. One of their treasures is the following experience:

*In Pamaliskad* (the confirmation ceremony of indigenous Banwaon leaders), Virginia Emil Saguitan and Lalat Inay di Kailngan said: “*Magbabaya* (God) is a tender Mother who breastfeeds us. In the land and in the forest, we have God’s breast which provides us with all that we need . . . That is why we hold land and women sacred and precious . . . The earth is dear to us like a mother . . . *Magbabaya* gives us strength and courage to give our life and shed our blood for this land of our birth and the tomb of our ancestors.”

What they said has been gracious news for us, women and men, doing Christian theology. People in the Philippines and elsewhere have taught us to imagine and celebrate life’s mystery. We appreciate Filipino values such as *pakirandum* (sensitivity and shared inner vision), and *pakikibaka* (resistance through cooperative action). This wisdom and courage have been present in our dialogues.

d. Before meeting in Tagaytay, we had a programme of exposure to local realities. We fanned out in small groups in and around Manila, Cavite and Laguna, and spent a day with local communities: with peasants, slum-dwellers, social workers, women activists, human rights advocates. We were moved by what we saw, heard and learned: the sufferings of the people, their grief over imposed degradations, their undying hope, their dreams of a human future, their search for the road and the steps that could take them there.

e. The theme addressed by the conference read: Search For A New just World Order: Challenges to Theology. A powerful old order is expanding at the moment, consolidating its gains, tightening its grip on our planet and negatively affecting the life of millions of people, especially the poor. We wanted to take note of, nurture and

help consolidate people’s search for a different, a just world order. From presentations made and discussions that followed, we gather the following understanding of the situation, which we shall keep in mind, in our further reflection and struggles for liberation and justice.

## II. GLOBALISATION

### A. Description

Globalisation denotes interaction among peoples of the world. Such interaction has always been happening in history through trade, travel, migration, war, or spread of ideas, skills, religions, cultures. Globalisation as currently understood, however, is bound up with growth and expansion of capitalism and the integration of the economics of different countries into its system. Developing from a mercantile slave-trading stage, passing through an industrial colonising stage, and reaching today into a corporate neo-imperialist stage, capitalist globalisation ensures unequal development and division of labour, centre-periphery dependency, and one-way flow of world wealth. By engineering competitiveness, with its dominant ideology, it creates polarisation and leads to truncated markets. Not all markets are integrated, but all are ideologically and financially controlled.

Present globalisation is based on monopolies sustained by dominant nations. It is the Third World, the ex-colonies, that are made to suffer under monopolies of technology, finance information, communication, access to natural resources and weapons of mass destruction.

Globalisation undermines identity. It effects the exclusion and marginalisation of people and regions of the world as well as the feminisation of poverty. We see globalisation not as a trans-historical reality, nor a historical necessity, but as a matter of social forces, the balance of which can be changed.

### B. Alternatives

Counter-balancing forces emerge from true inter-dependence and

interaction. Authentic interaction recognises diversity and differences in terms of gender, race, religion and ethnic and cultural realities. These are subject to change and development. There is no universality without recognition of particularities that constitute diversity. Globalisation, then, is not only a matter of economics, but also of oppressive ideologies which have to do with gender, race, and culture. A valid analysis, therefore, of globalisation will have to take these realities into account in addition to economic factors.

In creating counter-balancing forces and alternatives, we shall base ourselves on and look up to certain primary principles:

1. Human life and the cosmos with it are of intrinsic value; we revere them in the symbol of Mother Earth.
2. Opting for the poor, we reject policies and moves that hurt the people or exclude them or deny them participation.
3. Our finite world demands a development that is sustainable and is not destructive of resources, spiritualities, peoples and our common future on the earth.
4. The inter-relation of universality and particularities calls for the articulation of macro and micro realities: what happens at local levels may require global action and reflection, and *vice versa*.
5. New criteria, rationalities and paradigms keep emerging in the course of our praxis. Imagination, affectivity, and symbolic action are becoming important in our thinking and dialoguing.
6. Poverty, gender, race, ethnicity and religion and culture remain permanent elements in our theory and practice.
7. Solidarity is an ethical principle of interaction based on mutuality and equalisation of power. It is also a historical project with specific programme and methods, and has liberation for its goal.

### III. A JUST WORLD ORDER: CHALLENGES TO THEOLOGY

One beautiful morning, the Asian delegates organised a moving worship. A Korean woman theologian reminded us that "rice is

heaven, rice must be shared." This holy gift was placed in our hands and joyfully consumed. Then we heard messages from India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, the Philippines, and other peoples and acknowledged each other by sharing *shakti* (creative energy) which we received from earth and heaven, and which strengthens us to continue our quest for life.

#### A. A Tireless Perennial Quest

In the context of globalisation it is necessary to consolidate counter-forces controlled by the people and their elected institutions. Counter-forces have never been wholly absent in history. During the exposure programme preceding our sessions, some of us visited a farm. A peasant woman referred to abuses to which migrant Filipina workers are subjected, and burst into tears, and wept over their humiliation. Those tears are people's search for a different, just world. They are compassion and protest. They represent the dreams of the deprived and dispossessed masses about a humane world.

##### 1) *History of Human Quest*

The search is not new. Historically known figures such as Hammurabi, the Buddha, Confucius and Plato have shown concern for a just social order, for a world different from the one they had inherited, of oppression, violence, greed and inequalities.

The many slave revolts from the days of Spartacus, the consistent resistance of Native Americans, and of many other peoples to invasion, conquest, enslavement and colonisation, the anti-apartheid and anti-fascism movements (say in Vietnam, the Philippines, India, South Africa, Nicaragua, Cuba, Angola) are links in a long chain of search for a new world. So are the pro-democracy movements, the struggles of indigenous peoples everywhere to defend or win back their land, liberty and culture. So too are the ecological movements, women's struggles and peasant and fisher folk uprisings, as well as the cry and the restlessness of the poor. The utopian thought in the West, new proposals like the New International Economic Order (NIEO), the

new ownership patterns worked out in the Scott Bader Commonwealth are all part of humankind's tireless quest for a global set-up in which life could be lived together in dignity and friendship.

## **2) *Biblical Witness***

The Bible too is a witness to the same search. Opening with the picture of a world of lights and shadows, of blessings and curses, it leads towards a new heaven and a new earth where all is life, light, liberty and togetherness. The Abraham story affirms the primacy of the person above things, and points to a future which shall be compassion and solidarity in righteousness. The exodus is a struggle for a new order of things beyond genocide and slavery: a fight initiated by a group of women carried through the entire Israelite community. The Bible records the successful struggle of five girls for inheritance rights (Numbers 27), and the revolt of the masses against royal tyranny (I Kings 12).

The Old Testament concept and practice of the Sabbatical Year and the Jubilee year express the search for a just society and embody a dream of a new order of things: the enslaved are to be freed, debts are to be cancelled, and alienated property to be returned so that every tribe could set out afresh from a base of equality and fellowship as becomes God's people (Lev. 25; Deut. 15). In general the Old Testament evinces an abiding concern for the rights and well being of the weak, the widow, the orphan and the foreigner. The prophets are particularly strong voices of protest against oppression, of criticism of prince and priest, and of hope of a new world of prosperity and peace for the poor and the upright.

Jesus' search for a new earth finds expression in his concern for and commitment to the Basileia of God. The Basileia is offered to the poor and concretely, progressively realised in hearings, feedings, exorcisms, fellowship meals with outcasts, forgiveness of sins, entrusting of significant leadership roles to women, re-interpreting of Sabbath and purity laws, and subverting entrenched traditions and

controls in favour of freedom and life. Jesus taught his followers a prayer which projects a transformed earth through the coming of the Basileia and the sharing of food, forgiveness and security. Seeking God's Basileia and God's justice is the path to the new. Its law of love transcends ethnic, cultural and credal boundaries; it is a law having regard to human persons and their sufferings and needs.

Jesus had definite views about wealth, its purpose and meaning. For him all resources mean life and friendship. It was his inspiration and the dream gifted by his Spirit that led many early Christian groups to organise themselves as sharing communities at all levels – of faith, of spirituality, and of material goods as well. This life-style, not always free of contradictions and tensions, was pursued all around the Mediterranean Sea right into the fourth century when it was undermined by the Church's accommodation to the mores and manners of the Empire. The memory, however, of wealth sharing lived on in the Church, in the teaching of many Christian writers, in monastic and religious formations, and in several revolutionary movements, Christian and other, from the Middle Ages to our time.

## **3) *Challenges to Theology***

We bring this search for the poor and their friends for justice and full humanity, face to face with the quest traced in the Bible and in our faith. Let the two initiate a dialogue, illuminating, interpreting and challenging each other. Theology will be the fire that sparks at the point of their encounter.

(i) Theology stands summoned to explore the meaning of the perennial quest we have outlined. What anthropology or understanding of the human is involved, and what theology is implied? What depth-structures and orientations of the human heart are indicated? What are the consequences for human relationships, and for the organisation of society?

(ii) Do not the woman's tears mentioned earlier represent God's grief over the ruin of God's daughters and sons? For God does grieve

(Is. 63:10; Eph. 4:30).

(iii) Is there a connection between the early Church's experience of communitarian life and its deepening insight into the New Testament data blossoming into Trinitarian faith? That is, into an understanding of the ultimate source-and-goal reality as a sharing community? What would be the social imperatives, possibilities and promises of such view/experience of the Ultimate? May it not be that our lack of authentic community life has tended to reduce the profound poetry of the Trinity to a shallow mathematical enigma?

(iv) Is it really possible to believe in a Triune God and to share the Eucharist and the Lord's prayer and yet be rigidly individualistic in matters economic and social? We need a socio-theological critique of individualism which is a mainstay of capitalist ideology and culture.

We need reaffirmation of the inter-relatedness, inter-dependence and the social character of all human wealth, insights and achievements, so that exclusivism, privatism and patent-claims will be seen for what they really are: arrant suppression of large and vital truths concerning earthly existence.

(v) We need then a theology of human solidarity within shared Earth and a common destiny, within a plurality of perceptions, symbols, artistic expressions and life-experiences; within a dialectic of the local and the global, the small and the big.

(vi) What could be the theological significance of the cooperative egalitarian culture which indigenous people developed the world over and lived for thousands of years before the coming of "civilization?" Is not theology bound to explore afresh the relation the socialist dream and faith in one God, creator of all peoples?

(vii) A socio-theological critique of capitalism, of its globalising and neo-colonialist programmes, its divisive and destructive character, its consumerist culture and its worship of wealth and weapons is a necessity.

(viii) In the face of global market economy where only what can

be bought or sold exists, and where whoever has no money to buy does not exist, it is essential to recall the foundational experience of gratuity. Life itself is a free gift of God who puts no price tag on it, nor on anything created. Work done in solidarity is also gratuitous: the daily work of women in the homes is no merchandise; the joys and services of friendship and love have no market value. Gratuity is also a fundamental soteriological category for Christian faith, and gives us insights into what we are as human beings. To remember this against the claims of the global market, which can only bring death to the poor, is to renew our faith in life-giving grace.

In brief, one of our needs in view of a just world order is prophetic theology that will critique prince and priest, market and mammon, multinationals and war merchants and all hegemony and all plunder of the poor. It will call in question the silence of religions and churches as children die of hunger in Iraq, in Orissa, due to imperialist policies of superpowers or of local magnates. It will call in question the centuries-old oppression of women at home and in society. And it will seek to serve people's dreams and struggles for a beautiful tomorrow.

## **B. Christology**

Christology, like the rest of theology, must be remade, re-written, in terms of new realities. We have to wrestle with and dismantle our colonial theological baggage, and work with a new vision. In remaking Christology, religious pluralism and the reality of the poor will be central.

### *1) Religious Pluralism*

In the past, Christians often saw traditional religions as the devil's trap or as work of human hubris. Dialogue was avoided for fear of syncretism. Revelation in Jesus was held to be absolute and exclusive. Today we are aware that religions are the response of the finite to the Infinite. God is experienced in many ways, and the experiences are expressed in diverse symbols. God's saving action may not be seen



as confined to Judeo-Christian history. Nor is God's saving action confined to Jesus of Nazareth. Is it not an urgent need, then to consider other sources of God's Word than the Bible alone: creation, for instance, the religious experience of peoples, and their sacred Scriptures? Is there not an urgent need to dialogue with followers of other faiths and secular ideologies, and to articulate the Christian truth from within such dialogue? Then the uniqueness of Jesus will not be formulated in the language of exclusivism and superiority, but in terms of his mediation of creation and of the whole of human history. Then the Christ-centrism of the New Testament will not be isolated from Jesus' own theo-centrism.

## **2) *The Poor of the World***

The poor are central to our Christology, Jesus identifies them because God is on their side, because God is Justice-Love. In Asia, to identify with the poor is to identify with great masses of adherents of other faiths and secular ideologies. That makes Asian Christology complex. What is the mode of Jesus' presence among them? How is the Church to witness to that presence? Who is Jesus to the poor of the world? Can they recognise, in our portrait of him, their liberator or only the spiritual sustainer of the rich?

## **C. Women's Experience of the Divine**

### **1) *Theological Insights***

In EATWOT's different regions we are beginning to consider women's vision and praxis. Attention has focused on four concerns: violence, sexuality, everyday life and culture.

(i) Why is it, we ask, that our communities and cultures have needed violence to build themselves up? And why are women the major victims of violence, the "scapegoat" that cultures need? This is a central question in theology. Jesus is often taken as an innocent scapegoat. What does this theology mean concretely today? Is it an expression of our historical reality that sacrifices innocents in order

to give "abundant life" to privileged authorities? We should work to end violence and senseless suffering, and endure pain and forsakenness for a cause—for life, liberation, and the Basileia. We have in Jesus the example, the strength, and the hope of new life through travail.

(ii) What, we ask, has liberation spirituality to say about sexuality? What is liberation theology doing in the face of a distorted understanding of sexuality? Sexism, a manifestation of patriarchy is a sin. Our ancient cultures view human sexuality in its wholeness. Sexuality stands for the beauty and creativity of humans as images of God. It portrays mutual need and interdependence. As an authentic basis of life in community and communion it is part of human spirituality.

(iii) Do we, we ask, recognise the importance of "lo cotidiano," that is, of what happens everyday, the struggle for survival that is the daily bread of grassroots women's lives? For women everywhere, "lo cotidiano" is an important theological category. The daily experience of the poor and the oppressed is the epistemological framework of our theological enterprise.

(iv) Do we not, even within EATWOT, need to undergo a cultural revolution with regard to our understanding of the humanity of women? The entrenched macho relationship between men and women has to be exorcised. The Mende of Sierra Leone and the Yoruba of Nigeria teach us that "if a man sees a snake and a woman kills it, nothing is lost." The needed task has been accomplished. The traditional division of labour and gender roles have no unchanging validity. Accepting the truth of equality intellectually is not as difficult as learning to live by it. Cross-gender inter-continental dialogue on women is yet to become a part of EATWOT process.

### **2) *Gender Perspective***

During worship led by women delegates, four persons (each holding two candles) invite us to acknowledge the inner light in a

cosmic movement. We listen to the Magnificat and, together with Mary, praise God who raises the lowly and liberates all. Finally we receive a *Shibashi* blessing coming from the Earth towards each of us. This blessing moved us to consider once again the gender perspective.

Even within EATWOT patriarchal ideology and structures tend to prevail. Theology is seen as something done by men from a male perspective. Women doing theology introduce a different hermeneutics, a different epistemological paradigm, a different way of seeing reality. Women talk about feelings, affectivity, sexuality, the body, hungry children, single women heads of families, violence against women, and about ecology. Women insist that these are structural problems though men tend to think otherwise. These issues have an impact on the daily life of the poor, and are perpetuated in ideologies and institutions. They are often dismissed by men as “women’s issues” for which women are responsible.

In order to get the attention of EATWOT men, the women did the symbolic gesture of walking out of a plenary session, and later presented the following recommendations for implementation:

- a. That the executive committee sends all members at least five articles on feminist theology written by Third World women, and asks them to read and discuss them.
- b. That the executive committee asks all the regions to organise men-women dialogue on theology and gender.
- c. That all EATWOT meetings—local, regional, international—half of all presenters be women.
- d. That EATWOT be sensitive to process for its meetings: We need to have least “being talked” and more dialogue, a process that takes our experience into consideration.
- e. That the experience of grass-roots people be made obvious in our theological articulations.
- f. That without forgetting our commitment to the poor, the gender

question be always present in our analysis, theological articulation and praxis.

#### **D. Theological Methodology**

We considered four central aspects of our method. One, the connection between race and the politics of oppression as experienced in Third World communities. Two, the marginalisation of women which stains most of human history. Three, the inappropriateness of treating indigenous peoples as part of a large class of the poor. Four, the colonisation of language to the extent that our use of language is shaped by the coloniser.

Our theological method must clearly indicate our fundamental commitment to liberation, to the articulation of God’s self-revelation to and among the oppressed who seek justice. Analysis and denunciation of the many faces of oppression—exploitation, marginalisation, powerlessness, exclusion, violence—are essential to our theological work. Our analysis will not be restricted to socioeconomic realities, but will extend to religio-cultural, political, ecological and gender-related issues. Special attention is to be paid to the experiences and perspective of women, of indigenous peoples, Dalits, and peasants as well as to ecological questions.

These are not concerns added on, but are key dimensions in all our reflection.

#### **IV. REVIEW OF WORK DONE: 1992-1996**

Halfway through the Assembly, Latin American delegates led us in a worship of bonding, addressing the four directions of the Earth which we all gladly kissed. Then each one prayed in her/his own language: Come Spirit of Life.

In two sessions that followed we were informed of the work done since the Nairobi Assembly. The Women’s Commission has been active in all four regions. A series of Inter-continental Theological Dialogues have taken place despite difficulties in listening and learning

from each other. Another important activity of EATWOT during the last five years is the study conducted by the commission appointed to evaluate its work. The process of study included interviews, questionnaires, informal conversations, seminars and observations. The report contains valuable recommendations about the future of EATWOT, its priorities, its structures and programmes. On the last day of the assembly we discussed the report.

A main purpose of EATWOT was to create a forum for inter-continental dialogue among theologians of Asia, Africa, Latin America, and more recently, the US minorities. After the organising Assembly at Dar-es-Salaam (1976), EATWOT held three major international conferences: Pan-American conference in Ghana (1977), an Asian conference in Sri Lanka (1979), and a Latin American conference held in Brazil (1980). Its fifth international conference and first intercontinental assembly met in New Delhi (1981). In 1983 we met in Geneva for a dialogue with first world theologians. Our second assembly was held in Mexico (1986). In all these meetings dialogue was difficult. The gap that separated our own theologies from each other was not bridged. Each continent clung to its own analysis and spoke to itself. No wonder then that the dialogue with First World did not bear much fruit.

At the Third Assembly in Nairobi (1992), the issue on intercontinental dialogue was raised as EATWOT's original purpose. The Assembly created a commission for such dialogue, which met in New York (1992) and planned three meetings, focusing on "theological methodology," "Christology and popular religions" and "women's experience of the sacred." Participants were to explore why dialogue had been difficult in EATWOT, and were required to read a list of essays assigned.

Three points may be noted in particular:

- a. Dialogues were difficult, painful, but exciting and meaningful too.
- b. We discovered we did not know much about each other's

theology while we were familiar with First World theologies. If we want to dialogue we must study each other's theology, appreciate differences and learn from each other.

- c. Dialogue should continue and focus on neglected issues like gender, race, and Africa's deep marginalisation.

#### V. CONCLUSION: WALKING ONWARDS--THE FUTURE

In response to the evaluation commission report this 1996 General assembly has made the following observations and recommendations.

1. The term Third World remains the official identity of our association. Its meaning primarily arises from the social, economic, political, religious and cultural forces, which render our people expendable.
2. EATWOT will continue to be a theological forum committed to alternative theology, having a Third World liberation perspective; it will also be an association whose members are closely linked to people and their struggle for life and dignity. It offers space for wide networking, deeper reflection, and articulation of people's experiences in their own language and wisdom.
3. A balance is to be maintained between academic analysis and reflection on the one hand and involvement in struggles for liberation on the other.
4. EATWOT will open up more fully and respectfully to indigenous and aboriginal peoples, supporting their struggles through participation and reflection in all possible ways. It will make sure of the contribution of their faiths to its life, and promote the presence of their wisdom in its theological processes.
5. EATWOT should grow by seeking membership of Pacific Islanders, of the Caribbean peoples, and peoples of West Asia. To realise our ecumenicity more fully we shall involve with peoples of other faiths and secular ideologies in dialogue and common

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action for justice, human rights and liberation.

6. It is important to make sure that at least 20% of membership is in the 25-40 age bracket; and 50% are women.

7. Women's theologies, hermeneutics, experiences, symbolic expressions as well as ecological issues will be respected and allowed to transform and restructure all of EATWOT's concerns, approaches, struggles and discourse.

In a final celebration, to the tune of the Advent hymn, "O Come, O come, Immanuel" good news was shared among us:

*You are Immanuel.*

*Bless our ranks, so that we may struggle  
for a life that is human, with dignity upheld  
for women and men.*

*Rejoice, rejoice, all persons of goodwill.*

*Yours is the grace from Immanuel.*

This special issue of *Voices from the Third World* contains the proceedings and some background papers of the Fourth Assembly of EATWOT held at Tagaytay, Philippines, in December 1996.

The Assembly deliberated on the theme "Search for a New Just World Order: Challenges to Theology". The main presentations analysing the process of globalisation, which continues to raise fundamental challenges to theologising in the Third World, were given by Samir Amin. Responses to his presentations and theological reflections on globalisation are included in this volume.

This volume also carries the reports of the Theological Commission and the Women's Commission.



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