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Asian Ecumenical Movement
〈亞洲基督徒合一運動〉

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主編的話

本期收錄了 2018 年 4 月 12 至 13 日在香港中文大學舉行的亞洲基督徒合一運動國際會議的文章。當中的經驗來自印度、菲律賓、韓國、台灣、日本、印度尼西亞、新加坡、馬來西亞和香港。學者從多個不同角度思考基督徒合一運動在亞洲的情況，為亞洲基督徒合一運動闡述了方向。現謹先簡介各論文，然後就香港的情況作一些聯想。

首先，我們有賴品超的〈神愛和人愛：就亞洲合一再訪路德 1518 海德堡辯論〉。他的評論認為「路德在海德堡爭議中就神愛和人愛的辯證法，相對於亞洲各種宗教／哲學傳統中普遍存在的非二元主義思維方式而言，似乎來得太二元論。」「如果遵循曼多馬對路德的解釋，會發現神愛與人愛在實踐之間沒有絕對的矛盾，人類是可以實踐神愛的。此外，路德和阿奎那之間可能存在一些共同點，可以是羅馬天主教和信義宗之間對話的基礎。」

今天，基督徒合一運動由普世教會協會（WCC）代表，於 1948 年成立，可說是「基督徒合一運動的旗艦」。Kuncheria Pathil 在〈合一運動的未來〉中引用協會的觀察，「沒有一個教會可以聲稱自己是唯一有效或唯一真正的。個別教會及其身份都是我們的寶貴遺產，必須保持和保護，卻不應被視為是靜態和封閉的。沒有一個歷史悠久的教會是終極完成品，他們總是在施與受的過程中成長。」協會發起的信仰和秩序運動有以下結論：（1）教會之間的「同」遠遠超過他們的「異」，他們在基本上是團結一致的。（2）天主教和新教是兩種不同的方法，它們是互補的而不是矛盾的。（3）社會經濟

和文化因素是許多教義和神學問題的根源。(4) 團結和多元必須攜手並進，前路應以環境為本，走向「多元統一」。

正如Jan S. Aritonang在關於〈亞洲基督徒合一運動的宗派主義概述〉中所說，「基督徒之所以值得並有權被稱為基督的門徒，不是因為他們屬於某種教派，而是因為他們的生活方式和行為跟隨耶穌。」作者分別介紹信義宗、長老會、聖公會、浸信會、門諾派、循道衛理、復臨信徒、福音派和五旬節——靈恩派，也觀察了普世教會協會（WCC），東亞基督教議會（CCA）和東南亞神學教育協會（ATESEA）的運作。

當馬丁·路德在 1517 年初開始挑戰天主教會的一些做法時，羅馬教皇的首要地位受到挑戰。教皇無謬誤一直是受爭議的問題。1995 年，教宗若望保祿二世在願他們合而為一通諭裡認為，如要實踐合一，羅馬主教為首這問題是五個主要需要探討的領域之一。Philip L. Fuentes 在〈邁向團結和慈愛事工——看基督新教領袖和神學家對教宗若望保祿二世：《願他們合而為一》通諭的回應〉調查了基督新教的回應，包括路德教會、改革宗、英國聖公會、循道衛理、長老會、五旬節派、福音派、浸信會，以衡量他們對通諭的接受程度。正如 Fuentes 所觀察，「他們一致認為，教宗提供了一個平台，批判地承擔並研究了幾個世紀以來的僵局，帶來了新局面。這展現了基督新教對天主教文獻態度的重大轉變。通諭受基督新教的正面評價，其中一個原因是通諭所使用的語調有明顯的轉變——就像兄弟一般，表現出教宗的謙遜。

事實上，1999 年宗座基督徒合一促進理事會和世界信義宗聯合會簽署了《關於稱義教義的聯合聲明》，宣稱雙方教會對「通過對基督的信念，憑藉神的恩典稱義」這一觀點的一致。澄清了天主教會與改革傳統中出現的教會之間神學和解釋上的誤解。

更廣泛的合一

那麼亞洲的基督徒合一運動又怎樣呢？Kyo Seong Ahn 在〈從歷史角度看亞洲基督徒合一運動及其貢獻〉中提醒我們：「成立一個亞洲基督徒合一的組織，最初是在 1938 年印度坦巴拉姆舉行的 IMC 會議上提出的，也就是耶路撒冷會議十年之後。Aswin Fernandis 在〈印度基督教的組織團結，東正教和西方基督教走向合一之道〉一文中指出，在坦巴拉姆會議期間，「亞洲參與者，不論他們所屬的教派如何，都提出了對西方基督教的挑戰，質疑其對基督教以外的宗教的消極態度……這為今天所謂的更廣泛的合一鋪路，意味著教會與各種宗教傳統的對話與合作。」

不止一位學者提醒我們，Ecumenical（基督徒合一）這個詞來源於 Oikoumene，它最初意味著可居住的世界，含義後來被延伸為一個指基督教派合一的教會術語。Ahn 說：「自世紀之交以來，基督徒合一運動，包括亞洲基督徒合一運動，已從家族事宜轉變為與社會合作的事宜。這標誌著多元的合一，由基督徒的合一，擴展到更廣泛的合一，可居世界的合一，基層的合一。」

與西方不同，東南亞的基督教是進口的。亞洲本身是一個擁有不同宗教的地方：儒家、佛教、道教、印度教、穆斯林等。在一些國家，基督徒是他們國家的少數民族，如印度、馬來西亞、台灣、日本。Fernandis 繼續說道：「我們教會面對的問題跟西方教會面對的問題並不相同。以看待歐洲問題的方式看待我們，接受他們的解決方案作為我們的解決方案，兩者都是愚蠢的。」Ahn 認為「更廣泛的合一意指與其他宗教建立關係，這對那些基督教是少數宗教的國家來說尤其如此。」

〈從基督徒內部走向多元宗教合一——印度尼西亞〉一文的作者 Karel Steenbrink 為我們提供了印度尼西亞的宗教現象。雖然基督徒是佔 10% 的少數民族，但他們在許多方面與絕大多數的穆斯林擁有相同的權利。「除了一些例外，多元宗教已被公認為公共生活

的永久現實。」印度尼西亞 Gunung Kasih (愛之山)建於 2002 年，是一個容納五個宗教：伊斯蘭教、天主教、基督新教、佛教和印度教的地方，五個宗教的崇拜空間並列，信徒可以在鬱鬱蔥蔥的熱帶山丘上聚集、冥想和崇拜。Steenbrink 指出：「為了建立和諧的關係，印度尼西亞教會和其他宗教創造了一種對宗教非常開放的局面。」

在〈亞洲組織、新教傳統和亞洲基督徒合一運動(1910-2010)——馬來西亞和新加坡〉，John Roxborough 說：「在馬來西亞和新加坡，與亞洲許多地區一樣，宗教不是理論的建構，而是家庭、鄰居和朋友的生活方式。」儘管在神學、風格和地理位置上不同，但這些亞洲組織的一大貢獻是提倡「多元宗教就是生活一部分的事實。」

台灣的基督徒佔台灣人口的5.86%。Paulin Batairwa 在〈基督徒合一是台灣基督教的特徵嗎？初步評估方法論〉向我們提供了具體的交流事例，包括神學院之間的交流，泰澤祈禱和聖經翻譯的聯合行動。Batairwa 斷言「作為一個基督徒並不意味著文化疏離，而是在社會中生根，且有不同的活力。」這與黃錦文的〈祭祖在華人社會的合一啟示〉相呼應。在現今開放的社會裡，宗教身份和文化認同之間的矛盾已經減弱。回顧歷史，中國在 17 和 18 世紀期間羅馬天主教傳教士來華就引起了禮儀之爭。借用卡爾·拉納的符號神學，黃錦文認為「祭祖是我們孝道文化和禮儀的表達，與天主教會的經文和教會的教義完全一致。」他也認為同樣的概念適用於天主教會的圖像和雕像，這為新教和天主教之間的對話開闢了共同點。

天主教和新教之間的合作也可以在日本得到見證。日本福音派路德教會 (JELC) 被認為是「雙重少數」。在宗教改革 500 週年之際，日本 JELC 和天主教主教於 2017 年 11 月在日本南部的長崎 Urakami 大教堂共同舉辦宗教改革 500 年會議，這是一個很好的合一例子。在那裡，路德教會和天主教徒為悔改和和解而共同祈禱，為一起締造和平而祈禱。Arata Miyamoto 在〈日本在宗教改革 500 週年的合一追尋與未來〉一文論及「誰是你的鄰人」這個概念，並栩栩如生地用了頭腦、心靈和雙手的對話作比喻：「過去

50年來兩個教會之間的神學對話是頭腦的對話；共同祈禱是心靈的對話；『意向聲明』象征雙手的對話。」這些教會也開始了一些共同項目，如對難民和移民的支援。

Pathil 指出，體制和可見的合一得到的支持越來越少，反而共同祈禱、精神體驗和社會承諾的合作則得到越來越多的支持、同情和鼓勵。

印度對婦女和女孩的暴力文化不僅僅是一場國家危機，而且對印度教會和提倡性別正義的亞洲基督徒合一運動構成了挑戰。Moumita Biswas 在〈印度基督教女性改革者：轉型策略〉中，為我們舉了三位印度婦女的例子：Pandita Ramabai，Shanti Solomon 和 Mary Roy，她們為改變印度社會做出了獨特的貢獻。Shanti Solomon 的貢獻得到了亞洲和全球基督徒合一運動的廣泛認可，她在教堂內與基督徒女性一起工作，並參與禱告運動。Pandita Ramabai 是公認為基督徒的社會改革者。Mary Roy 亦被公認為印度女權運動史上的女性活動家和改革者。Biswas 強調，從亞洲女權主義者的角度來看印度的基督徒合一，必須將其置於更廣闊的人類合一之中。因此，基督徒合一運動不應僅僅局限於教會的內部發展和關係上。

公共神學

Kyo Seong Ahn，鄭仰恩和 Sivin Kit 都論及公共神學。Ahn 說：「就合一的層次而言，教會和社會的距離並不遙遠，因此，基督徒合一運動與社會的關係是必不可少的，既不是次要的也不是外圍的。」由公共神學 Ahn 提出「公共基督徒合一」，要求「教會在社會政治問題上採取新的立場：成為社會的一部分，而不是領導者，利用教會獨有的文化和遺產，與其他民間社會團體合作，追求共同利益。這是教會的全新體驗，也許也是唯一選擇。值得一提的是，在一些像韓國這樣的亞洲國家，教會沒有意識到社會環境的變

化，仍試圖對社會產生強烈影響，但社會只把他看成是一個濫權的利益集團。」

鄭仰恩於〈後殖民主義，意識形態分歧和新興公民社會：當前亞洲基督徒合一運動面臨的挑戰〉一文中承認：「基督徒是否應該參與社會和政治行動在教會仍然存在分歧。」這跟亞洲人信仰私有化的概念以及長期疏遠的公眾意識有關。借用了新西蘭神學家的理論，鄭仰恩認為可以給公共神學一些方向：有能力偶爾為公民社會的公眾利益發聲；將基督教傳統的「智慧」和「財富」引入公共對話，以促進社會福祉。

在〈分裂中的真相：馬來西亞基督教聯合會的獨立日和馬來西亞日聲明〉，Sivin Kit 概述了基督徒在該國面臨的情況。馬來西亞的基督徒也是少數，2011 年佔全部人口的 9.1%。通過研究馬來西亞基督教聯合會（CFM）發佈的獨立日和馬來西亞日聲明，作者試圖深入了解馬來西亞基督徒的生活和使命，為進一步的基督徒合一、跨文化和宗教間交往提供了橋樑，從而強化他們在公共神學的範疇。「這些陳述清楚地表明，CFM 不再僅僅代表基督徒社區和利益發言，而是會在社會問題上公開、明確和勇敢地發言。這些陳述在本質上具普遍性，針對具體事件意味著他們希望在權者和民眾都能聽到他們的聲音。」

在菲律賓，天主教是主導宗教，Lizette Pearl Tapia-Raquel 在〈社區、團結、存活——菲律賓基督徒合一運動的反思〉中審視殖民化如何埋葬這個地方的土著文化、神話和故事。今天在菲律賓建立地道神學需要傾聽最脆弱的社區的聲音：城市貧民，在該國工作的勞動者等。菲律賓的基督徒合一運動選擇了與最貧窮和最受壓迫的人群作激進團結。「始終，合一精神不僅僅是為了教會的團結，而是為那些最需要上帝的人服務。」基督徒合一運動就是要前去人們為生命而哭泣的地方。

香港的環境

在香港，可負擔的居所是很多香港人關心的議題，特別是年輕一代。以往，我們可以靠自己努力而改善生活質素；今天，年青人向上游的機會似乎少了。基督徒怎樣回應呢？在行政長官2018年的施政報告中，我們的特首林鄭月娥提出了一些土地供應計劃，包括新界棕地發展、土地共享及活化工廈的中短期規劃，以及長遠的明日大嶼人工島規劃。願景旨在推動香港經濟，改善民生，滿足住屋和就業的希望。這毫無疑問是實際的希望，但我們是否也應關心精神上的需求和發展，培養自己和下一代有愛與關懷的情操？

試想，有一個教堂，可以容納不同基督宗教的基督徒，有共享的活動空間，並提供住所予年輕人或有需要的人。位於德國漢堡的 *Ökumenisches Forum, Hafencity* 就是一座神聖的住宅和辦公樓，匯聚了 21 個教會的多樣性和傳統。地面設有共用小教堂、咖啡廳和多功能廳；上層設有辦公室、住宅區、城市修道院和客用區。

合一小教堂富有靈活性，祭壇、講台和十字架是共享元素。成員教會的多樣性體現在兩面磚牆的設計中：入口左側的磚牆以聖像畫為主，代表俄羅斯東正教、希臘東正教和羅馬天主教會。入口右側的磚牆則以文字為主，代表新教，磚塊上刻有文字。左、右兩邊圖像和文字的相互對話，讓大家雖然有差異，但仍然可共處一室。總經理 *Henning Klahn* 表示，*Forum* 在整個歐洲是獨一無二的，這些教會強調彼此間的關係，而不是差異。

香港可以參考這個做法嗎？來自不同基督宗教的基督徒能否擁有共同的禮拜空間，同時又能為有需要的人提供居所？在這個設想上我們是否有對話的空間？*Pathil* 說，不同基督教派之間在信仰和教義問題上達成完美共識是不可能的，然而他問道：「基督徒合一的優先考慮是甚麼？在教會的制度裡找尋基督，還是在社會邊緣尋求基督呢？在舊約出谷記中，上帝絕對是站在外圍那些在埃及被壓迫的人民的一邊……所有教會都必須從中心走到外圍，參與窮

人、受壓迫者和被邊緣化者的生活，從而轉化社會，成為團結人類（不論宗教信仰、文化、社會地位）的工具。

誰在香港的邊緣掙扎？希望能獨立自主的年青人？還是被社會既定規範邊緣化的人？社會有實際需要解決的具體問題。孟一仁在〈約瑟·拉辛格對基督徒合一的態度〉一文說：「我們的教會仍然執著於教義的純潔和教會的正直，以至忽視了基督為窮人和被壓迫者服務的命令。事實上，這是我們努力促進基督徒團結的重要任務之一。」孟一仁認為亞洲的基督徒合一運動有其自身的意義，因為「貧富差距正在迅速擴大……在宗教多元化的過程中，一個謀求大眾福祉的務實合一取向，會更有意思。例如，來自不同教派的基督徒，包括羅馬天主教徒，可以在慈善和社會工作中合作……拋開教義差異，共同努力解決與貧困、正義、和平和生態等問題。」這種觀點在香港尤其適用。在回應施政報告時，無論是棕地、土地共享、活化工廈還是明日大嶼，基督徒能否攜手，共同在未來的土地供應中發揮作用，以市民的共同利益為目標？

在本期刊中，亞洲基督徒合一運動可以歸納出一些共同的概念，即：接受、尊重和理解。香港中文大學天主教研究中心一直以學術方式，跟不同的基督宗教交流。2018 年舉辦了禮儀空間與建築研討會，2019 年舉辦神聖與音樂研討會暨音樂、祈禱會，邀請來自不同基督宗教的專家共聚、互相交流。我們不是做合一的事，而是合一地做事，即在日常生活中活出合一精神，如欣賞建築和分享音樂。通過這些活動，我們相互溝通和學習。正如 Batwaria 所說，「基督徒的身份並非主要來自屬於某一教派，而是來自對耶穌精神的認同，並以像似祂為己任。」

廖淑勤

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香港中文大學天主教研究中心

Editor's Word

This issue is a collection of articles from The International Conference on the Asian Ecumenical Movement held on April 12 – 13, 2018 at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Experiences from India, the Philippines, South Korea, Taiwan, Japan, Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia and Hong Kong are featured. Scholars have considered the situation of the Ecumenical movement in Asia from many different perspectives and have suggested directions for the movement. This editorial will first provide a brief glimpse into these articles, and then some ideas relevant to the Hong Kong context will be expressed.

To begin with, we have Lai Pan-chiu's article: *Divine Love and Human Love: An Asian Ecumenical Revisit of Luther's Heidelberg Disputation 1518*. Lai commented that, "Luther's 'dialectical' approach to divine and human loves in the *Heidelberg Disputation* may sound all too 'dualistic' in comparison to the 'non-dualistic' way of thinking prevalent in various religious / philosophical traditions in Asia...If one follows Mannermaa's interpretation of Luther, one may find that there is no absolute contradiction between divine and human loves, and practicing divine love is possible for human being. Furthermore, there can be some common grounds between Luther and Aquinas and thus basis for dialogue between Roman Catholicism and Lutheranism."

The Ecumenical Movement is today officially represented by the World Council of Churches (WCC) inaugurated in 1948, which is said to be 'the Flagship of the Ecumenical Movement'. Kuncheria Pathil in his *Future of the Ecumenical Movement* has quoted WCC, "no one Church can claim to be the only valid type or the only one genuine

model. All the existing individual Churches and their identities are our precious heritage which must be maintained and safeguarded although these identities should not be conceived as static and closed. No one historical Church is a finally finished product, but is always in the making by a giving-and-taking process of growth.” The Faith and Order Movement initiated by WCC have arrived certain conclusions: (1) The agreements among the churches are much more than their differences and they are united in the fundamentals. (2) The Catholic and Protestant are two different approaches and they are complementary rather than contradictory. (3) The socio-economic and cultural factors are at the root of many doctrinal and theological issues. (4) Unity and plurality must be held hand in hand and the way ahead is contextual and ‘unity in diversity’.

As put together by Jan S. Artonang in his essay *An Overview of Denominationalism/Confessionalism on the Ecumenical Movement in Asia*, “The Christians deserve and are entitled to be called as Christ’s disciples not because they belong to certain denomination, but through their life style and conduct that follow Jesus.” Works from the Lutheran, Reformed/Presbyterian, Anglican/Episcopal, Baptist, Mennonite, Methodist, Adventist, Evangelical, and Pentecostal-Charismatic are examined. The operation of World Council of Churches (WCC), East Asia Christian Conference (CCA) and the Association for Theological Education in South East Asia (ATESEA) is also observed.

The primacy of the Roman Pontiff was challenged when Martin Luther began preaching against several practices in the Catholic Church early in 1517. Papal infallibility has always been a controversial issue. In 1995, Pope John Paul II identified the question of the primacy of the Bishop of Rome as one of the five major areas that need fuller exploration for bringing about the goal of ecumenical progress in his

encyclical letter *Ut Unum Sint*. Philip L. Fuentes has in his article *Towards a Ministry of Unity and Charity: A Survey of the Christian Reformation Leaders' and Theologians' Responses to Pope John Paul II's Ut Unum Sint* selected responses from the Christian Reformation world including Lutheran, Reformed, Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian, Pentecostal, Evangelical, Baptist to gauge their level of receptivity. As observed by Fuentes, "They were in unison in saying that the platform provided by Pope John Paul II to critically undertake and look into the question of the centuries old impasse created 'a new situation'. This, in a sense, is a 'significant shift' in the attitude of other Christian traditions towards the Catholic documents... *UUS* was welcomed positively by other Christian traditions, one reason being that there is an observable shift in the language used and the tone by which the pope enunciated his message as nothing short of fraternal. They also applauded the humility that was manifested by the pope."

Indeed, the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification created and agreed by the Catholic Church's Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the Lutheran World Federation in 1999 stated that the churches now share "a common understanding of our justification by God's grace through faith in Christ." As the fruit of an extensive ecumenical dialogue, it clarified long dated theological and exegetical misunderstanding especially between the Catholic Church and churches emerging from the reformed traditions.

Wider Ecumenism

So what is the phenomena of ecumenism in Asia? Kyo Seong Ahn reminds us in *The Asian Ecumenical Movement in Historical Perspective: with Special Reference to its Contribution to Ecumenism* that "it was at the International Missionary Council conference in

Tambaram, India, in 1938, ten years after the Jerusalem conference, that the issue of the establishment of the Asian ecumenical body as a regional one was for the first time raised.” Aswin Fernandis mentioned in *The Organizational Solidarity of the Christian Community in India, both with the Orthodox Churches and Western Christianity (Churches of Reformation), in a path way to Ecumenical union* that during the Tambaram Mission Conference, “Asian participants, irrespective of the denominations they belonged to, posed a decisive challenge to Western Christianity, questioning its negative attitudes towards religions other than Christianity...which paved the way to what is known today as ‘wider ecumenism’, meaning the dialogue and cooperation of the churches with the various religious traditions.”

More than one author reminds us the word ‘ecumenical’ is derived from ‘oikoumene’, which originally means the habitable world, and the meaning has been stretched to be an ecclesiastical term indicating the unity of the churches. Ahn stated, “Since the turn of the century, the ecumenical movement including the Asian ecumenical movement has been urgently required to transform itself from a family business to a business in partnership with society. This signals the arrival of the plurality of ecumenism, which ranges from Christian ecumenism, to wider ecumenism, and to Oikumene ecumenism, together with grass-roots ecumenism.”

Unlike in the West, Christianity in Asia is imported. Asia is a place of different religions: Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism, Hinduism, Islam, etc. In some countries, Christians are the minorities in their country, like India, Malaysia, Taiwan, Japan. Fernandis continues, “The issues before our churches are not always the same as those facing the churches in the west. It will be foolish to see the European problem against our situations, or to accept their solutions as our solutions.” Ahn believes ‘wider ecumenism’ has been widely used to indicate the

ecumenical endeavor to build up the relationship with other religions. This is particularly true to those countries where Christianity is a minority religion.

Karel Steenbrink in his article *From Internal Christian towards Multireligious Ecumenical Arrangements in Indonesia* has in a nutshell provided us with the religious phenomena in Indonesia. Although in percentage Christians are a 10% minority, they have in many aspects the same rights as the vast majority of Muslims. “Religious diversity is with some exceptions accepted as a permanent reality for public life.” *Gunung Kasih* or the Hill of Love in Indonesia, built in 2002 as a spiritual center housing a Catholic Church, a Christian church, a temple, a mosque and Hindu temple is a place where religious followers from these various faiths can gather, meditate and worship side by side at the lush and misty tropical hill. Steenbrink observed that “For harmonious relations Indonesian churches and other religions have created a situation that in general is very open for religious institutions and initiatives.”

In *Asian Agency, Protestant Traditions, and Ecumenical Movements in Asia, 1910 to 2010, with special reference to Malaysia and Singapore*, John Roxborough said, “In Malaysia and Singapore, as in many parts of Asia, religion is not a theoretical construct but the way of life of family, neighbours and friends.” Despite their differences of theology, style, and in due course of physical location, the Asian agencies’s significant contribution to the wider Christian world has been “the promulgation of the idea that multiple religious belonging is a fact of life to be accepted.”

Christians in Taiwan occupy 5.86% of Taiwan population. Paulin K Batairwa addressed the situation by providing us concrete examples of ecumenical incidents, including exchanges among theological schools, Taizé prayer and joint action for the translation of bible. Batairwa asserted, “Being a Christian does not imply cultural alienation

rather a rooting in society with a different dynamism.” This echoes with Simon K.M. Wong’s *Ancestor Remembrance and its Implications on Ecumenism in the Chinese-speaking World*. The society we are now dwelling in is comparatively open-minded, the contradiction between religious identity and cultural identity has lessened. Looking back in history, the Chinese rites controversy among Roman Catholic missionaries over Confucianism and Chinese rituals during the 17th and 18th centuries had caused much disputes. Borrowing Karl Rahner’s theology of symbol, Wong argues that “ancestor remembrance is but a cultural and liturgical expression of our filial piety, which is in full harmony with the teachings of the scripture and *magisterium* of the Catholic Church.” He also believes that the same applies to icons and statues in Catholic Church, which opens a common ground for dialogue between Protestantism and Catholicism.

Collaboration between Catholics and Lutherans can be witnessed in Japan as well. The Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church (JELC) is considered as ‘double minority’ by Arata Miyamoto in *Ecumenical Trace and Future in the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in Japan*. The commemoration that JELC and Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Japan co-organize for Reformation 500 at Urakami Cathedral in Nagasaki, the southern island of Japan on Nov 2017 is a very good example demonstrating ecumenism by real action. “There, Lutherans and Catholics led common prayer for repentance and reconciliation. They came to pray together in the memory of being peacemakers.” The notion ‘who is your neighbor’, the metaphors of the dialogues of head, heart and hands vividly walk us through a promising ecumenical journey. As Miyamoto puts it, “the theological dialogue between both churches for the past fifty years is corresponding to the dialogue of head, and the common prayer to the dialogue of heart. The Declaration of Intent signifies the intention of both churches in the level of the

dialogue of hands.” Common projects for human aids such as refugee and immigrants supports also started among these Churches.

Pathil has rightly pointed out that programs for the institutional and visible unity get less and less support, programs for common prayer, spiritual experience and social commitment get increasing support, sympathy and encouragement.

The culture of violence on women and girls in India is not merely a national crisis but also poses challenges to Indian Churches and the Asian ecumenical movement that reflect ecumenism in action to promote gender justice. Moumita Biswas has given us examples of three Indian women: Pandita Ramabai, Shanti Solomon and Mary Roy who made unique contributions in transforming the society in *Christian Women Reformers in India: Strategies of Transformation*. The contributions of Shanti Solomon is widely acknowledged by Asian and global ecumenical movement as she worked within the church, with Christian women and was involved with prayer movement. Pandita Ramabai is recognized as Christian social reformer. Mary Roy is globally recognized as a woman activist and reformer in the history of feminist movement in India. Biswas stressed that in order to understand Indian ecumenism especially from Asian feminist perspective, ecumenism needs to be re-thought and placed within the wider search for the unity of humankind. Therefore ecumenism or modern ecumenical movement is not merely confined to internal developments and relationship within the on-going church.

Public Theology

Both Kyo Seong Ahn, Cheng Yang-en and Sivin Kit talk about public theology. Ahn said, “the church and the society were not far from each other in the meanings of the ‘ecumenical’, and thus the

relationship of the ecumenical movement with the society was an essential one, neither secondary nor peripheral.” From public theology Ahn coined ‘public ecumenism’, which requires “the church to take on a new stance in socio-political issues: to be a part, not the leader, of society working with other civil society groups in pursuit of common good, providing its unique ideas and legacies. On the part of the church, this will be a totally new experience, but perhaps will be the only option available for it. It is worth mentioning that in some Asian countries such as Korea, the church failed to appreciate the significance of the changed context and attempted to have a strong influence on the society, and yet the society tended to interpret it as a special interest group’s abusing the power.”

Yang-en Cheng’s article on *Post-colonialism, Ideological Divide and Emergent Civil Society: Current Challenges for Ecumenical Movement in Asia* admitted “whether Christians should engage in social and political actions still alienate Christian churches from each other.” This might be the cause of Asian mindset of privatization of faith and the long estrangement of public awareness. Cheng borrowed from Clive Pearson, the New Zealand theologian, some directions where public theology can be engaged: The capacity to address occasional public issues for the sake of the public or common good for a civil society; The need to draw the ‘wisdom’ and ‘riches’ of the Christian tradition into the public conversation in order to contribute to the well-being of society.”

In *Speaking the Truth in the Midst of Divisiveness: The Merdeka Day and Malaysia Day Statements of the Christian Federation of Malaysia (CFM)*, Sivin Kit outlined the situation Christians faced in the country. Christians in Malaysia are also a minority, contributing to 9.1% of the whole population in 2011. By taking a closer look at The Merdeka Day and Malaysia Day Statements issued by The Christian

Federation of Malaysia (CFM), Kit tries to gain an insight into Malaysian Christian life and mission, which offers a bridge for further ecumenical, intercultural and interreligious engagement to enhance their approach in doing public theology. “Those statements clearly show that CFM is no longer merely speaking on behalf of the Christian community and interests but now has ventured to speak openly, explicitly, and courageously on social issues. The statements tend to be more general in nature, the specificity of issues also suggests that CFM wishes to make its view heard to those in the corridors of power as well as the citizens on the street.”

In the Philippines, where Christianity is already the dominant religion, Tapia-Raquel invited us to revisit in *Community, Solidarity, and Subsistence A reflection on the ecumenical movement in the Philippines* how colonization bastardized the indigenous culture of the place, buried myths and stories. Constructing a local theology in the Philippine context today demands listening to the most vulnerable communities: the urban poor, the laborers working in the country. And that the ecumenical movement in the Philippines has chosen radical solidarity with the poorest and the most oppressed. “Ultimately, the ecumenical spirit is not just intended for church unity, but unity in service to those who need God the most.” To Tapia-Raquel, the ecumenical movement is about going to where people are crying out for life.

The Hong Kong Context

Affordable living space is a priority concern of many Hong Kong people, especially the young generation. Those were the days when we worked hard and living standards improved. There is discontent nowadays among young people about opportunities of moving

upstream. How can we Christians respond to this? In the Chief Executive's 2018 Policy Address, Carrie Lam presented some plans on land supply, they include short to medium planning of the development of brownfield sites, land sharing and revitalisation of industrial buildings, and there is also a long term planning of building artificial islands in the Lantau Tomorrow Vision. The vision is said to instil hope among Hong Kong people for economic progress, improve people's livelihood and meet their housing and career aspirations. While these are with no doubt practical hopes, are we not also concerned about our spiritual needs and development that will nurture us to be citizens with love and care?

Imagine a chapel that houses Christians from different denominations, with function areas to share, and affordable residential area on the upper floors for young people or those who are in need. The Ökumenisches Forum in HafenCity of Hamburg, Germany is a sacred and a residential and office building that brings together the diversity and traditions of 21 churches. On the ground floor there is the shared chapel, a café and a function room. Upper floors house offices, residential area, city convent and guest area.

The ecumenical chapel is small but elastic, with the altar, lectern and cross as shared elements. The diversity of the member churches is expressed in the design of the interior walls: the left side of the entrance belongs to churches connected more to visual expression, including icons from Russian Orthodox tradition, Greek Orthodox Metropolitan and the Roman Catholic Church. The right side of the entrance is designed by the churches of the Reformation, which feel more connected to the words. The interplay of images and words results in a dialogue that becomes the expression of being together in spite of all differences. The managing director Henning Klahn said the forum is

unique in the whole Europe, and he stresses that it is the relationship of all these churches that counts, not differences.

Can this idea be amplified to Hong Kong? Can Christians from different denominations have a common space for worship and at the same time provide dwelling place for those in need? Do we have space for dialogue on this issue? Pathil said that perfect consensus on matters of faith and doctrines is an impossible task and asks, “What should be the priority of the ecumenical movement, searching Christ at the centre within the institutional churches or at the margins of the society? God is definitely on the side of the oppressed people at the periphery as in those days of the slavery and oppression of the people of God in Egypt in the story of the Exodus of the Old Testament.” He continues, “All churches must move from the center to the peripheries and prophetically involved in the lives of the poor, oppressed and marginalized and thus become agents of transformation of society and instruments of unity among the whole humankind irrespective of religion, culture, caste and creed.”

Who are the people struggling at the peripheries in Hong Kong? Young people who want to lead an independent live? People marginalized by the social norms? There are concrete problems that need practical solutions. Ambrose Mong said in *Joseph Ratzinger's Approach to Ecumenism*, “Our churches are still so caught up with doctrinal purity and ecclesiastical rectitude that they are neglecting Christ’s command to serve the poor and the oppressed. In fact, it is one of the crucial tasks in our endeavour to promote Christian unity.” As suggested by Mong, ecumenism in Asia has its own meaning, as “the gap between the rich and poor is growing rapidly...a practical or secular ecumenical approach that strives for the common good, amid religious pluralism, is more appropriate and meaningful here. For example, Christians from different denominations, including Roman

Catholics, can co-operate in charitable and social work...putting aside their doctrinal differences, and making a concerted effort to deal with the problems related to poverty, justice, peace and ecological issues.” This observation is particularly true in the context of Hong Kong. Responding to the policy address, can Christians join hands and play a role in the future development of land supply, no matter whether it is on brownfield sites, revitalization of industrial buildings or Lantau Tomorrow Vision that aims to improve the common good of people?

In this Journal, we witness some common notions in the ecumenical movement in Asia, they are: acceptance, respect and understanding. The Centre for Catholic Studies has been promoting ecumenism in an academic way. The organizing of the Liturgical Space and Architecture Symposium in 2018 and Sacredness with Music Symposium in 2019 has gathered experts from different Christian denominations for an exchange of ideas and communication. Instead of doing ecumenical things, we do things ecumenically, i.e. we do things together which are already a part of our normal life, like appreciating architecture and sharing music. Through this kind of events we learn from each other. As Batwaria said, “Christian identity derives not primarily from the belonging to a given denomination but by the identification with the spirit of Jesus who shapes the follower in his image and likeness.”

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December 2018
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Ecumenical Approaches

基督徒合一方向

**Divine Love and Human Love:
An Asian Ecumenical Revisit of Luther's
Heidelberg Disputation 1518**
神愛和人愛：
就亞洲合一再訪路德 1518 海德堡辯論

LAI Pan-chiu

[ABSTRACT] This essay argues that Martin Luther's thesis on divine and human loves articulated in his *Heidelberg Disputation* (1518) was intended to be a criticism against Aristotelian philosophy and the related scholastic theology represented by Thomas Aquinas, but Luther's criticism was not entirely fair to Aquinas. Through making references to the contemporary studies of Luther and Aquinas, this essay attempts to articulate a dialogue between Luther and Aquinas, and to explore the significance of this dialogue for the contemporary ecumenical movement in Asia.

[摘要] 本文認為，馬丁·路德關於神愛和人愛的論點在其 1518 海德堡辯論中是對亞里士多德的哲學和聖多瑪斯·阿奎那所代表的學術神學的批評，但路德的批評對阿奎那並不完全公平。通過引述當代對路德和阿奎那的研究，本文試圖在路德與阿奎那之間構築對話，並探討這種對話對亞洲當代基督徒合一運動的重要性。

Introduction

After the signing of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification in 1999, it seems that this doctrine constitutes no longer an unbridgeable gap between Roman Catholicism and Lutheranism. One may then wonder what remains the most divisive doctrinal issue between them. Is it the doctrine of love? ¹

In his *Disputation Against Scholastic Theology* (1517), Martin Luther (1483-1546) began his criticism against the scholastic theology which dominated Roman Catholicism for centuries.² He continued his criticism in *Heidelberg Disputation*, which was presented on 26 April 1518.³ It is rather well-known that the 21st thesis of *Heidelberg Disputation* articulated a contrast between theology of the cross and theology of glory: "A theologian of glory calls evil good and good evil. A theologian of the cross calls the thing what it actually is."⁴ This signified a break with scholastic theology as well as the emergence of Luther's theology of the cross.⁵ This essay focuses instead on the 28th thesis, which is equally important for an understanding of the development of Luther's theology and his break with scholastic theology. The thesis reads, "The love of God does not find, but creates, that which is pleasing to it. The love of man comes into being through that which is pleasing

¹ Zhe Gao, "Doing Christian Intra-religious Dialogue Inter-religiously: Taking a Mahayana Theology of Agape as an Example," *Logos & Pneuma* 45 (Autumn 2016), pp.364-395 (in Chinese with English abstract).

² English translation: Luther, "Disputation Against Scholastic Theology", translated by Harold J. Grimm, in: *Luther's Works*, volume 31, edited by Harold J. Grimm (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1957), 9-16.

³ English translation: Luther, "Heidelberg Disputation", translated by C. M. Jacobs and revised by Harold J. Grimm, in: *Luther's Works*, volume 31, 39-70.

⁴ Luther, "Heidelberg Disputation", 40.

⁵ See further: Alister E. McGrath, *Luther's Theology of the Cross* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985, paperback 1990).

to it.”⁶ The contrast between “love of God” (*amor Dei*) and “love of man” (*amor hominis*) expresses not only Luther’s understanding of human and divine loves, but also his understanding of the difference between his own theological position and that of scholastic theology.⁷ In this thesis, *amor Dei* and *amor hominis* are defined by their contrastive characteristics, rather than the agent or recipient involved – God or human being. So, it might better be translated respectively as “divine love” and “human love”, rather than “God’s love / love of God” and “human being’s love / love of human being.” This is not merely a matter of translation because one has to consider the case of Jesus Christ. According to the Chalcedon Definition (451), Jesus Christ is believed to have both divine and human natures. It is thus debatable as to whether his love could be neatly categorized as either “God’s love / love of God” or “human being’s love / love of human being” in a mutually exclusive way. A related interesting question is: Is his love divine or human or both? If both, whether and how the two divergent kinds of love co-exist in Jesus Christ? In addition to the Christological issue, Luther’s thesis on the relationship between human and divine loves concerns also the dialogue between Lutheranism and Catholicism. It is because, as we are going to see, Luther’s thesis implies a criticism targeted at the theological tradition associated with Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) who is regarded as the most important representative of Roman Catholic theology.

This essay attempts to review Luther’s thesis in the perspective of Catholic-Lutheran dialogue by making references to the contemporary studies of the theologies of Luther and/or Aquinas. It

⁶ Luther, “Heidelberg Disputation”, 41.

⁷ See further: Tuomo Mannermaa, *Two Kinds of Love: Martin Luther’s Religious World*, translated, edited and introduced by Kirsi I. Stjerna (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010).

will make special reference to the Finnish interpretation of Luther pioneered by Tuomo Mannermaa (1937-2015). The significance of the Finnish interpretation for the Lutheran-Orthodox dialogue, especially on the doctrines of justification and deification, is rather well known. This essay will consider its significance for the Catholic-Lutheran dialogue by making reference to some of the contemporary studies of Thomas Aquinas. Through reviewing the theological dialogue on the relevant issues among the Christian denominations, this essay will conclude with a preliminary exploration concerning the significance of this intra-Christian ecumenical dialogue for the wider ecumenism, namely the dialogue among Christianity and other cultural / religious traditions.⁸ Due to the limit of its length, this essay will focus on Confucianism and Mahāyāna Buddhism flourishing in East Asia.

Love in Luther's Heidelberg Disputation

Luther's statements cited above might sound rather paradoxical. In fact, Luther started his *Heidelberg Disputation* with an explanation that he was going to employ 'theological paradoxes' in order to highlight his own position. Etymologically speaking, "paradox" means contrary (*para*) to the appearance or opinion (*doxa*). It usually employs two (or more) apparently contrary statements in order to express a view which is radically different from the appearance and conventional opinion. However, contrary does not

⁸ See: Peter C. Phan (ed.), *Christianity and the Wider Ecumenism* (New York: Paragon House, 1990).

necessarily mean contradictory, for it is also possible that the two contrary or paradoxical statements are complementary.⁹

The *Heidelberg Disputation* consists of two main sections. The first section covers 28 theological theses, and the second 12 philosophical theses. In other words, the 28th thesis is the last theological thesis immediately before the philosophical theses. While the thesis itself relates theology to philosophy merely in an implicit way, Luther's defense of the thesis explicitly disputes against the Aristotelian philosophy and the related Scholastic theology. It is interesting to note that although Luther's defense of the thesis highlights the contrast between theology and philosophy, it starts with the second part of the thesis concerning human love, especially the theologians' and philosophers' consensus on human love. It reads,

“The second part is clear and is accepted by all philosophers and theologians, for the object of love is its cause, assuming, according to Aristotle, that all power of the soul is passive and material and active only in receiving something. Thus it is also demonstrated that Aristotle's philosophy is contrary to theology since in all things it seeks those things which are its own and receives rather than gives something good.”¹⁰

Regarding divine love, Luther explains:

“The first part is clear because the love of God which lives in man loves sinners, evil persons, fools, and

⁹ See: Pan-chiu Lai, “Buddhist-Christian Complementarity in the Perspective of Quantum Physics,” *Studies in Interreligious Dialogue* 12.2 (2002), 148-164.

¹⁰ Luther, “Disputation Against Scholastic Theology”, 57.

weaklings in order to make them righteous, good, wise, and strong. Rather than seeking its own good, the love of God flows forth and bestows good. Therefore, sinners are attractive because they are loved; they are not loved because they are attractive: For this reason, the love of man avoids sinners and evil persons."¹¹

It is rather obvious that Luther's criticism of Aristotelian philosophy and the related scholastic theology is targeted mainly on their understanding of divine love, rather than that of human love.

Regarding Luther's characterization of divine love, whereas the thesis itself seems to focus on the doctrine of creation and assume the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*, the defense of the thesis actually refers to the doctrine of salvation, especially the salvation of sinner.¹² As David Fergusson points out, though there had been many patristic fathers and theological masters affirmed the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*, which was understood as an expression of the divine sovereignty and love, it is Luther's important breakthrough and contribution that he linked up the divine creation with the unmerited mercy of God towards sinners in his *Small Catechism* in 1529.¹³ According to our analysis above, Luther's linking up creation with salvation of the unmerited might have started in *Heidelberg Disputation* in 1518, much earlier than Fergusson suggests. Notwithstanding of this theological contribution, Luther's using the

¹¹ Luther, "Disputation Against Scholastic Theology", 57.

¹² It is noteworthy that some Biblical passages interpret salvation in terms of creation or new creation (2 Corinthians 5: 17; Galatians 6:15). Being inspired by these, Paul Tillich (1886-1965) makes use of the concept of "New Being" to explain Christ and salvation. See: Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology, Vol. 2* (London: SCM, 1978); *The New Being* (London: SCM, 1956), 15-24.

¹³ David Fergusson, "Loved by the Other: *Creatio ex nihilo* as an Act of Divine Love," in *Dynamics of Difference: Christianity and Alternity*, edited by Ulrich Schmiedel & James M. Matarazzo, Jr. (London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2015), 271.

concept of creation to differentiate human and divine loves may bring forth a complicated problem concerning whether it is possible for human being to practice divine love. Strictly speaking, according to the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*, only God can create. As a creature, it is impossible for human being to create *ex nihilo* the recipient or object of human love - no matter whether the recipient or object is divine or human. It is thus impossible for human being to love God or another human being with divine love. In other words, human being can only love God or another human being with human love and thus with self-interest. In fact, Luther had already argued in the 13th thesis of *Disputation Against Scholastic Theology* that “It is absurd to conclude that erring man can love the creature above all thing, therefore also God. This is in opposition to Scotus and Gabriel.” And, he further disputed in the 18th thesis that “To love God above all things by nature is a fictitious term, a chimera, as it were. This is contrary to common teaching.” Alas, if this is the case, one has to wonder how the dual commandments concerning love God more than oneself and love one’s neighbor as oneself are to be understood? A related question is: whether and/or how the practice of the dual commandments of love is humanly possible without becoming blasphemous?

Mannermaa’s Interpretation of Luther

Mannermaa admits that in Luther’s theology, divine love and human love are divergent – moving towards opposite directions. Similar to human intellect which aspires to something real, human love orients to something not only real but also good and beautiful,

whereas divine love orients to those of empty or evil.¹⁴ In Mannermaa's own words,

"The direction of human love is upwards, that is, it turns toward what is grand, wise, alive, beautiful, and good. God's love, in turn, turns itself or is oriented downward, that is, toward what is lowly, disgraceful, weak, foolish, wicked, and dead."¹⁵

However, Mannermaa endeavors to argue that for Luther, divine love and human love are not mutually exclusive, and it is not impossible for human being to practice divine love because this is precisely the goal of Christian faith.¹⁶ Mannermaa clarifies that Luther did not neglect the love among human beings, including that between husband and wife, among friends, among parents and children, or even people's love for animals; furthermore, what Luther attempted to emphasize is that although human beings seek their own good in their loves of God and other human beings,

"God's love helps human beings, first of all, to love God as God and not only the goodness received from God, and, second, to love other human beings for themselves and as persons, instead of loving only their precious qualities and for what could be gained from them for the benefit of the one who loves."¹⁷

¹⁴ Mannermaa, *Two Kinds of Love: Martin Luther's Religious World*, 2.

¹⁵ Mannermaa, *Two Kinds of Love*, 3.

¹⁶ Mannermaa, *Two Kinds of Love*, 5.

¹⁷ Mannermaa, *Two Kinds of Love*, 6.

So, for Luther, what the golden rule of love one's neighbor as oneself commands is not self-love and its extension to the others, but a pure love of the others without self-interest.¹⁸

As Mannermaa points out, Luther's interpretation of love aimed to counter the interpretation offered by Aquinas because, for Luther at least, Aquinas tended to emphasize that love inclines towards the good and exhibits different degrees of love towards different objects.¹⁹ Furthermore, Aquinas' understanding of friendship love (*amor amicitiae*) or benevolent love (*amor benevolentiae*) appeared to be mutual or reciprocal, aiming at sharing each other's goodness and helping each other to actualize each's own inherent good, and was thus entirely different from the divine love orienting towards "what is not" or that which is empty and evil.²⁰ According to Aristotle's philosophy, which was supposed to be the basis of Aquinas's ethics, the human endeavor of actualization one's own goodness is based on love of oneself. In this sense, self-love is the root of all other kinds of love, and this applies to not only the commandment of love thy neighbors but also God's love of Godself.²¹ Mannermaa further explains that Aquinas understood *caritas* as a free gift bestowed by God and at this point this was not different from Luther's understanding, but Luther preferred to understand the divine-human relationship in terms of faith (*fidem*), which is the reception of God's love, instead of *charitatis*, particularly not in the sense of a desiring love seeking for self-actualization.²² This is to say that it is through faith, Christians participate in God's love; and, as God's love effects one's love of

¹⁸ Mannermaa, *Two Kinds of Love*, 23-25.

¹⁹ Mannermaa, *Two Kinds of Love*, 10.

²⁰ Mannermaa, *Two Kinds of Love*, 16.

²¹ Mannermaa, *Two Kinds of Love*, 17-19.

²² Mannermaa, *Two Kinds of Love*, 22.

God and one's neighbors, the Christian love carries the characteristics of God's love, including particularly that of without self-interests.²³ In other words, due to their acceptance of the divine love embodied in the salvation of Jesus Christ, it is possible for Christians to love God without self-interest and love their neighbors as Christ loves them.

According to Mannermaa's interpretation, Luther took the salvific work of Jesus Christ as the paradigm for divine love, the clue for our understanding of God's love, and the foundation for the commandment of love one's neighbors. This Christocentric approach to the understanding of God's love was in line with Luther's theology of the cross. According to Luther, contrary to the theology of glory associated with scholastic theology and common opinion, which tends to uphold the inherent value and goodness of the object of love, a theology of the cross affirms that God's divinity is hidden in God's humanity, God's wisdom is revealed in the seemingly foolish cross, and God's love orients to the sinful, poor and foolish human beings.²⁴ Regarding the commandment of love one's neighbors, Luther repeated again and again, one should love one's neighbor as Christ loves them.²⁵ As Jesus Christ represents God's pure love without self-interests, one should love one's neighbors in the same way – love them for their own sake and not for the sake of any good or advantage we might gain from them.²⁶ In short, one should be "Christ to one's neighbors."²⁷

Mannermaa endeavors to argue that for Luther, to be "Christ to one's neighbors" is not merely a moral commandment. It is because,

²³ Mannermaa, *Two Kinds of Love*, 80.

²⁴ Mannermaa, *Two Kinds of Love*, 27-43.

²⁵ Mannermaa, *Two Kinds of Love*, 67.

²⁶ Mannermaa, *Two Kinds of Love*, 70.

²⁷ Mannermaa, *Two Kinds of Love*, 64-65.

“In Christ, God bestows upon human being not only the good gifts of the created world but also God’s own divine essence. In Christ, God begins to restore and return the paradise where God is in the hearts of human beings, and human beings are in one another’s heart.”²⁸

Mannermaa further elaborates,

“It is fair to say that Luther is a representative of a particular doctrine of divinization, to use a concept from the early church. In agreement with the common heritage of Christian churches, Luther teaches that the Word became flesh, so that the flesh might become Word. This applies primarily to Christ, but it also applies to Christians in the sense that Christ is truly present in their faith.”²⁹

As Christ’s presence in faith is real, Mannermaa argues, it is possible to say that “the Christian ‘is Christ’.”³⁰

Based on Mannermaa’s explanation, for Luther’s theology as a whole rather than the letter of the 28th thesis alone, selfless love is not absolutely impossible for human being. But the crucial question remains: is it possible for Christians to love God and their neighbors with divine love, which, according to Luther’s characterization, refers to “what is not” and evil?³¹ If it is possible, does it imply that God is either evil or non-existent or created? In other words, even with Mannermaa’s interpretation, it remains impossible for Christians to love God with divine love, according to Luther’s characterization of divine love. However, as Mannermaa explains, in

²⁸ Mannermaa, *Two Kinds of Love*, 55.

²⁹ Mannermaa, *Two Kinds of Love*, 64.

³⁰ Mannermaa, *Two Kinds of Love*, 64.

³¹ Mannermaa, *Two Kinds of Love*, 78.

addition to the paradoxical expressions, Luther employed also the method of synecdoche, meaning that Luther's characterization of human and divine loves focused merely on a particular aspect of them, namely their contrast vis-à-vis each other. In this sense, though human love is characterized as a kind of love which seeks for one's own interests and orients towards "what is" and/or valuable, this characteristic does not represent the totality of human love and does not exclude the possibility that someone – in a sense or to a certain extent - can love others with divine love. Therefore, human love is not always or absolutely in contradiction with divine love.³² Of course, one may then wonder if Luther's characterization of divine love, which was closely associated with his theology of the cross, might have similar problem of being one-sided or over-generalized.

Anyway, according to Mannermaa's interpretation, the contrast between divine and human loves made by Luther in *Heidelberg Disputation* was primarily rhetorical – aiming at highlighting their relative contrast, and should not be taken as formal definitions of human and divine loves. Given this understanding of the literary style employed by Luther, a relevant question is: whether and to what extent the 28th thesis of *Heidelberg Disputation* could accurately reflect the difference between Luther's position and that of his intended opponent(s)?

As Mannermaa admits, in the recent studies, it is found that the difference between Luther and Aquinas on the issue of human and divine loves is not as huge as previously thought.³³ According to Mannermaa's interpretation of Luther, the most distinctive contribution made by Luther might lie perhaps not in the contrast between divine and human loves made in *Heidelberg Disputation*,

³² Mannermaa, *Two Kinds of Love*, 5-6.

³³ Mannermaa, *Two Kinds of Love*, 10.

but the Christocentric approach subsequently developed. Werner Jeanrond agrees that instead of neglecting human love, Luther tended to emphasize the limitation or imperfection of human love that it always includes egoistic dimensions. Furthermore, Luther took serious the union between God and human being, and shift the emphasis from God's gift of love to God's love in Christ.³⁴ Concerning the difference between Aquinas and Luther, Jeanrond succinctly summaries "Whereas for Thomas Aquinas love was infused by God, in Luther love is essentially linked to the work of Christ and the cross."³⁵ Notwithstanding of this contrast in terms of their theological approaches to love, the question remains whether and to what extent Luther's criticism of Aquinas was valid, especially on the latter's understanding of divine and human loves.

Love in Thomas Aquinas

After the *Heidelberg disputation*, Luther made a statement concerning the disputation. The statement reads:

"These theses were discussed and debated by me to show, first, that everywhere the Sophists of all the schools have deviated from Aristotle's opinion and have clearly introduced their dreams into the works of Aristotle whom they do not understand. Next, if we should hold to his meaning as strongly as possible (as I proposed here), nevertheless one gains no aid whatsoever from it, either for theology and sacred letters or even for natural philosophy. For what could be gained with respect to the understanding of material things if you

³⁴ Werner Jeanrond, *A Theology of Love* (London: T & T Clark, 2010), 98-99.

³⁵ Jeanrond, *A Theology of Love*, 102.

could quibble and trifle with matter, form, motion, measure, and time — words taken over and copied from Aristotle?"³⁶

According to the statement, Luther's disputation aimed to show the inadequacy of Aristotle's philosophy for theology as well as the prevalent theological misunderstanding of it. Though the statement did not explicitly mention the name of Aquinas, one may wonder if Luther's thesis on human and divine loves implies his criticism of Aquinas' adoption of Aristotle's philosophy.

There is no doubt that Aquinas made extensive references to Aristotle and there seemed to be certain similarities between their thoughts. However, the differences between Aquinas and Aristotle are equally if not more important. As Michael Sherwin points out, Aquinas clearly differentiated sensual love from spiritual love, which refers to the love among the divine persons as its paradigm and to the friendship between God and human being. For Aristotle, friendship between God and human being is impossible because they are not on the same par, whereas for Aquinas, it is possible, but it is based not on the similarities between God and human being, but on God's active communication (*communicatio*), which is comparable to Aristotle's concept of participation (*koinonia*).³⁷

In similar vein, Eleonore Stump clarifies that although Aquinas also talks about the four virtues advocated by Aristotle, namely prudence, justice, courage, and temperance, Aquinas contends that

³⁶ For an English translation of "A Statement Concerning the Heidelberg Disputation, made by Luther Apparently Soon After its Conclusion", see: Luther, "Heidelberg Disputation", 70.

³⁷ Michael Sherwin, "Augustine and Aquinas on Charity's Desire," in: *Faith, Hope and Love: Thomas Aquinas on Living by the Theological Virtues*, edited by Harm Goris & Lambert Hendriks & Henk Schoot (Leuven: Peeters, 2015), 177-198, esp.189-198.

what really belonging to Christianity are the theological virtues of faith, hope and love (*caritas*). Whereas the former four virtues are to be acquired through relevant practice, the last three theological virtues are the gifts of the Holy Spirit to be infused to us through the works of God. Furthermore, for Aquinas, without love, there is no virtue at all. In short, Aquinas' ethics is not Aristotelian at all.³⁸

Dominic Farrell further highlights the Christian or theological character of Aquinas' ethics, instead of its philosophical character, by pointing out that Aquinas discussed love, faith and hope mainly from the Trinitarian and eschatological perspectives, without neglecting the Christological dimension. It is through Christ, especially his humanity, Christians can participate in the divine essence. Aquinas makes reference not only to 2 Peter 1:2-3 concerning one may share the essence of God through Christ, but also Ephesians 3:17 concerning Christ lives in us through faith. Besides, Christ, especially his paschal, is the perfect embodiment or example of love. In other words, through faith, Christians can become participants of Christ and his grace, or sharers of the divine essence.³⁹

One may thus find that although Aquinas made use of many terms from Aristotle, there were fundamental differences between their positions. Furthermore, what Luther attempted to criticize concerned Aquinas' discussion on sensual love rather than on spiritual love. Aquinas' view of spiritual love actually exhibited

³⁸ Eleonore Stump, "True Virtue and the Role of Love in the Ethics Aquinas," in *Faith, Hope and Love: Thomas Aquinas on Living by the Theological Virtues*, pp.7-24. Similar emphasis on the non-Aristotelian character of Aquinas's ethics can be found at: Eleonore Stump, "The non-Aristotelian Character of Aquinas's Ethics: Aquinas on the Passions," in: *Faith, Rationality, and the Passions*, edited by Sarah Coakley (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 91-106.

³⁹ Dominic Farrell, "Partakers of the Divine Nature through Christ," in *Faith, Hope and Love: Thomas Aquinas on Living by the Theological Virtues*, 61-78.

significant similarities with that of Luther, including their emphases on the initiative taken by God in communication and sharing with human being, the paschal of Christ, Christian participation in God's life through faith, etc.

Between Luther and Aquinas

Based on the above clarifications on Aquinas' position on love, one may find not only the major differences between Aristotle and Aquinas, but also the significant similarities between Aquinas and Luther. Furthermore, some of the implicit or explicit criticisms of Aquinas were based on misinterpretation or oversight of some aspects of his thought. For instance, there is no doubt that in *Summa Theologiae*, Aquinas did talk about that God loves the creatures according to their various degrees of perfection, and the concept of order of charity (*ordo caritatis*) is thus formed.⁴⁰ As the source of all goodness as well as the totality of goodness, God is at the top of this hierarchy, and the creatures are ranked according to the respective degrees of perfection or similarity to God.⁴¹ It is thus a graded, hierarchical, or differentiated love. However, in his *Summa contra Gentiles*, Aquinas also suggested, while it is possible to say that God loves one thing more than another, it is equally possible to say the contrary that God does not love this thing more than that.⁴² In other words, the criticism made by Luther and echoed by Mannermaa might have overlooked the universal and impartial aspect of love advocated by Aquinas.

⁴⁰ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II/2, 26: 1.

⁴¹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II/2, 26: 9.

⁴² Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles*, I, 91.

An illustrative example to the universal and impartial aspect of love advocated by Aquinas is Aquinas's concept of compassion (*miser cordia*). Contrary to Aristotle, Aquinas took it as one of the virtues, and endeavored to argue that it is a moral as well as natural virtue. According to Aquinas, although it is not a theological virtue, it is motivated by love and aims at those who are in suffering, including those who suffer because of deserved punishment.⁴³ In this sense, as a sort human love,⁴⁴ *miser cordia* may orient to sinners, fools, etc. As Paul J. Wadell points out, according to Aquinas, human love and divine love are distinct but not separate. One loves God for the sake of God and loves other human beings also because of God. Since God loves all creatures, one should love all creatures, including sinners, accordingly. In this sense, it is impartial and universal without any discrimination. However, according to human nature, one's loves towards other human beings, in terms of form and intensity, may vary according to the nature of relationships involved and how close are their respective relationships. It is a reflection of the human finitude as well as the divine wisdom. This is not to say that one should restrict one's love within the boundary of family or kin because this will lead to injustice. On the contrary, one should have *miser cordia* towards the strangers, especially those who suffer; not to see the others as unrelated strangers, but to take them as those who are loved by God.⁴⁵ Furthermore, to love the neighbors for God's sake is not to take them in an instrumental manner, but to help

⁴³ John O'Callaghan, "Misericordia in Aquinas: A Test Case for Theological and Natural Virtues," in *Faith, Hope and Love: Thomas Aquinas on Living by the Theological Virtues*, 215-231, especially 222-231.

⁴⁴ It is interesting to note that for Confucianism, especially Mencius, *miser cordia* should be a natural virtue reflecting the natural goodness of human being. See: Pan-chiu Lai, "Confucian Understanding of Humanity and Rationality in Conversation: A Chinese Christian Perspective," in *Rationality in Conversation: Philosophical and Theological Perspectives*, edited by Markus Mühling et al (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2016), 321-335.

⁴⁵ Paul Wadell, "Charity as a Way of Life," in *Faith, Hope and Love: Thomas Aquinas on Living by the Theological Virtues*, 199-214, esp. 205-211.

them turn away from sin and embrace virtue.⁴⁶ Aquinas' concept of *miser cordia* may be a counter example illustrating that human love can carry the characteristics of divine love, and thus challenging Luther's rather negative stereotype or over-generalization of human love as well as the validity of Luther's stark contrast between divine and human loves. Furthermore, closely related to it is an even more fundamental query concerning the ethical adequacy of Luther's own interpretation of love one's neighbors.

Luther's interpretation of love one's neighbor, according to Mannermaa, was based mainly on Jesus Christ's self-sacrificial love which represented the divine love towards human beings. This seems to be in stark contrast to Aquinas' concept of friendship love or benevolent love, which was supposed to be based on self-love because it was a sort of reciprocal love sharing each other's goodness and helping each other to actualize the inherent or internal goodness. As Eberhard Schockenhoff indicates, Aquinas was probably the first Christian theologian introducing the Aristotelian concept of friendship (*philia*) to analyze God's charity and to highlight the mutuality and equality in friendship (*amicitia*). According to Aristotle, friendship, which is supposed to be "love of like for like and exchange among equal partners", is impossible between God and human being. However, Aquinas argued that it is possible because God effects the communication (*communicatio*) with human being in creation, incarnation, and election; and, in the fellowship (*koinonia*) between God and human being, it is God who takes the initiative, and human being responds with love rather than merely receives in a

⁴⁶ Paul Wadell, "Charity as a Way of Life", 206-207. Here Wadell mentions that for Aquinas, only demons are to be excluded from charity's love because they resolutely set against God's good and our own. Against this, in a Mahayana Christian theological perspective, perhaps even demons can be objects of love as well. See: Pan-chiu Lai, "Reconsidering the Christian Understanding of Universal Salvation in Mahayana Buddhist Perspective," *Ching Feng*, n.s. 12 (2013), 19-42.

passive way.⁴⁷ Without denying the mutuality and equality in Aristotle's concept of friendship, Aquinas affirmed the mutuality or reciprocity between God and human being by appealing to the divine salvation which elevated human being to friendship with God.⁴⁸ Furthermore, for Aquinas, friendly love (*amor amicitiae*) is a sort of pure love (*amor purus*) which aims at benefiting one's friend, whereas concupiscent love (*amor concupiscentiae*) seeks for one's own good. Though friendly love should be mutual instead of unilateral, it can be initiated by one side of the friendship. In this case, friendly love can be altruistic or for the friend's / neighbor's good, instead of egoistic or for one's own profit. This is not to suggest a dichotomy between altruism and egoism. In fact, the actual situation is more complicated. For Aquinas, there are so many objects of love involving different forms of love. Other than God and oneself, human being may love one's parents, spouse, children, brothers / sisters, etc. in different forms with different degrees of intensity. In terms of form, for instance, one loves one's spouse with passion, but one's parents with respect. In terms of intensity, one may love those who are nearer to oneself than those with remote relationship with oneself. An order of charity (*ordo caritatis*) is thus to be formed.⁴⁹ The order of charity seems to assume the primacy of self-love, but as Schockenhoff clarifies, for Aquinas, the apparent primacy of self-love over love of neighbor refers primarily to the natural weight of the human will, rather than a statement of normative ethics.⁵⁰ Furthermore, for Aquinas, "Since the order of charity is not primarily grounded by the natural limits of the human ability to love, but by

⁴⁷ See: Eberhard Schockenhoff, "The Theological Virtue of Charity (IIa IIae, qq.23-46)," trans. by Grant Kaplan and Frederick G. Lawrence, in: *The Ethics of Aquinas*, edited by Stephen Pope (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown university Press, 2002), 244-258, especially 246-251.

⁴⁸ Schockenhoff, "The Theological Virtue of Charity (IIa IIae, qq.23-46)", 248.

⁴⁹ Schockenhoff, "The Theological Virtue of Charity (IIa IIae, qq.23-46)", 254-255.

⁵⁰ Schockenhoff, "The Theological Virtue of Charity (IIa IIae, qq.23-46)", 253.

the many-leveled orientation to God as the principle and foundation of life, its validity remains unconfined to one's 'state in life'.⁵¹

In contrast to Aquinas's concept of order of charity, which can respond to different kinds of recipients with different kinds of love, Luther's approach tends to talk about love one's neighbors indiscriminately without further differentiation. One has to wonder if this indiscriminating love of one's neighbors can adequately respond to the diversity of neighbors with various kinds of relationship with oneself. This is not merely a matter of unintended omission or under-development of Luther's thought because Luther's Christocentric approach to love one's neighbors simply does not support it. For Luther, from a soteriological point of view, everybody is sinner in front of God and there should be no difference among different persons in this regard. Assuming that in his salvific work Jesus Christ embodied divine love alone without human love, if Christians have to love their neighbors as Christ loves them, the diversity of natural relationships with one's various neighbors should play no role here. But for Aquinas, as God creates different kinds of creatures, there can be different kinds of relationship among the creatures themselves.⁵² One may then challenge, on behalf of Aquinas, if Luther's Christocentric approach to the commandment of love one's neighbors can take into proper consideration these diversified natural relationships among the creatures to form a more adequate as well as practical ethics for Christians. One may then further query, if Luther's thesis, together with Mannermaa's interpretation, misleadingly assumed the contradiction between

⁵¹ Schockenhoff, "The Theological Virtue of Charity (IIa IIae, qq.23-46)", 255.

⁵² Based on Aquinas' interpretation of *creatio ex nihilo*, one may affirm not only the diversity of creation, which reflects the richness of the divine goodness, but also the inter-dependence of the creatures. This may lead to a more environmental friendly attitude. See: David Fergusson, "Loved by the Other: *Creatio ex nihilo* as an Act of Divine Love", 270.

benefiting the others and benefiting oneself. For Aquinas, they should not be mutually exclusive or in opposition to each other because love can and should be mutual or reciprocal rather than merely unilateral. Given these differences, perhaps Aquinas might query, if he had the chance to do so, if divine and human love are as divergent as Luther articulated in *Heidelberg Disputation*.

It is important to note that underlying the important yet subtle differences between the positions of Luther and Aquinas on the relevant issues is the divergences of their approaches to the issues. First, Luther tended to understand divine love rather exclusively in the perspective of Jesus Christ's salvific work and thus highlight the divergence between divine and human love along this line. In contrast, Aquinas attempted to interpret divine love in the perspectives of not only the incarnation and suffering of Jesus Christ, but also the doctrines of the Trinity as well as creation, and then understood human love accordingly. Second, Luther took the salvific work of Jesus Christ as the paradigm for a self-sacrificial love without self-interest towards those undeserving in order to affirm the contrast between an altruistic divine love and an egoistic human love, whereas Aquinas assumed the mutuality among the divine persons of the Triune God as the basis to affirm the mutuality in the friendship between God and human being, and to affirm that self-love and altruistic love are not mutually exclusive. Third, Luther took Jesus Christ's salvific work as the paradigm to interpret the commandment of love one's neighbors and to uphold a universal and impartial love which disregards the variety of natural relations among human beings. In contrast, Aquinas preferred to interpret the commandment in the perspective of order of charity, which affirms a universal and yet differentiated love which may respond to different recipients of love with different forms of love. These differences between Luther and Aquinas indicate that Christology plays a crucial role in Luther's

approach to and interpretation of divine and human loves. The question is whether there is an alternative interpretation of Christ, including his salvific work, leading towards a more adequate understanding of the relationship between divine and human loves.

Concluding Remarks

Based on the analysis outlined above, one may find that in *Heidelberg Disputation*, Luther emphasized the contrast or tension between divine and human loves. He might have misinterpreted Aquinas and exaggerated the differences between his theology and scholastic theology. However, the most important problem is not whether Luther's criticism of Aquinas is fair, but whether Luther's own position is theologically tenable and ethically practical. If one follows Luther's characterization of divine and human loves, one has to ask if it is possible for human being to practice divine love and whether Jesus Christ, who is supposed to be fully human and fully divine, had "human love" as it is negatively characterized in the *Heidelberg Disputation*. If it is affirmed that Jesus Christ had both divine and human loves, one has to wonder whether and how human love, which seeks for one's self-interest, was united with divine love in Jesus Christ.

If one follows Mannermaa's interpretation of Luther, one may find that there is no absolute contradiction between divine and human loves, and practicing divine love is possible for human being. Furthermore, there can be some common grounds between Luther and Aquinas and thus basis for dialogue between Roman Catholicism and Lutheranism. As David Tracy suggests, the greatest contribution made by Augustine (354-430) towards the Catholic understanding of love lied at his efforts in integrating the concepts of *eros* with *agape*

in *caritas*, and affirming that in this synthesis *agape* transforms instead of rejects *eros*.⁵³ As the above discussion indicates, this position was basically inherited by Aquinas, and in line with the Thomist principle that grace perfects instead of neglects nature. According to Mannermaa, Luther might agree that due to God's love, human being may start with self-love and then learn how to love God and other human beings without self-interest. In this sense, divine love transforms rather than rejects human love. There are thus significant similarities between Luther and Aquinas in this respect, which is reminiscent of the Orthodox doctrine of deification.⁵⁴

Following this line of thought, perhaps one may further explore if the issue concerning how human love and divine are united in Jesus Christ can be addressed by exploring further the Orthodox theological tradition. Based on the Christological definition adopted at the Council of Chalcedon (451), the Third Council of Constantinople (680), under the influences of the theology of Maximus the Confessor (c.580-662), affirmed that Jesus Christ had two wills - one human and the other divine - as well as two operations (or principles of action), and that the relationship between the two wills, as well as that between the two operations, was comparable to the two natures of Christ – “no division, no change, no partition, no confusion”, and the two wills and two operations occurred most fitly in him for the salvation of the human race.⁵⁵ In line with this understanding of Jesus Christ, Orthodox theologian

⁵³ David Tracy, “God as Infinite Love: A Roman Catholic Perspective,” in: *Divine Love: Perspectives from the World's Religious Traditions*, edited by Jeff Levin & Stephen G. Post (West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Press, 2010), 139-144.

⁵⁴ For a comparison between Thomas Aquinas and orthodox theology, especially Gregory Palamas (1296-1357), on the issue of deification, see: A. N. Williams, *The Ground of Union: Deification in Aquinas and Palamas* (New York: Oxford university Press, 1999).

⁵⁵ See further: Leo Donald Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils (325-787): Their History and Theology* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1990), 258-289.

Vigen Guroian suggests, with a Trinitarian perspective, the tension between self-sacrificial love and love as mutuality is overcome in the incarnated Christ, who demonstrated that *agape* is not merely self-sacrificial love, but rather a dynamic process opens onto reciprocity, intimacy, and communion with the other, while *eros* points to the capacity for unity, especially the unity with goodness, instead of selfishness.⁵⁶ Guroian thus concludes, "In Christ, man's [sic] 'natural' 'inner' movement toward the Godhead is consummated, and man's [sic] capacity to reciprocate God's love is perfected in communion. In Christ, human love and divine love are commensurate: they are one in his Person."⁵⁷ This Christologically based understanding of the unity between human and divine loves seems to be in stark contrast to the "dialectical" understanding of divine and human loves articulated in *Heidelberg Disputation*. However, without constructing a similar Christological basis, Mannermaa's interpretation of Luther, with its emphasis on Luther's understanding of deification, seems to indicate that it is possible for Luther to accept this orthodox and balanced Christological basis for a more coherent understanding of the relationship between the human and divine loves. To this extent, in spite of its limitations, Mannermaa's interpretation of Luther's position on human and divine loves can make certain contributions to the ecumenical dialogue on this issue among the Protestants, Catholic and Orthodox churches. In fact, the Orthodox Christological approach to a more coherent understanding of divine and human loves is also relevant to the dialogue between Christianity and the religions it encounters in contemporary Asia.

⁵⁶ Vigen Guroian, "The Humanity of Divine Love: The Divinity of Human Love," in: *Divine Love: Perspectives from the World's Religious Traditions*, 201-218, esp. 210, 212-213.

⁵⁷ Vigen Guroian, "The Humanity of Divine Love: The Divinity of Human Love", 216.

It is noticeable that Luther's "dialectical" approach to divine and human loves in *Heidelberg Disputation* may sound all too "dualistic" in comparison to the "non-dualistic" way of thinking prevalent in various religious / philosophical traditions in Asia.⁵⁸ For instance, Mahayana Buddhism, which flourishing mainly but not exclusively in East Asia, emphasizes the ideal of bodhisattva which combines supreme wisdom with infinite compassion, especially the self-sacrificial love towards all sentient beings.⁵⁹ This may be reminiscent of Luther's emphasis on Jesus Christ's self-sacrificial love. However, following the early Buddhist doctrine of dependent arising or dependent co-arising (*pratītyasamutpāda*), Mahāyāna Buddhism affirms not only the doctrine of emptiness (*śūnyatā*), but also the ontological non-duality between sentient being and the Buddha through upholding the doctrine of Tathāgatagarbha or Buddha-nature, which is embodied in all sentient beings.⁶⁰ As Ernst M. Valea suggests, the Mahāyāna doctrine of Buddhahood as human perfect exhibits certain similarities with the Orthodox doctrine of deification.⁶¹ Instead of affirming some sorts of infinite *diastasis* between humanity and divinity, both traditions tend to affirm the non-duality between humanity and divinity. In similar vein, one may find also the convergence at this point between the Confucian affirmation of the unity of Heaven and humanity (*tian ren he yi*) and the orthodox (and not exclusively Orthodox) doctrine of

⁵⁸ For the non-dualistic way of thinking in Asian religious and/or philosophical traditions, see: David Loy, *Non-duality: A Study in Comparative Philosophy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988).

⁵⁹ See: Sangharakshita, *The Bodhisattva Ideal: Wisdom and Compassion in Buddhism* (Birmingham: Windhorse Publications, 1999).

⁶⁰ See: Paul Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations* (London: Routledge, second edition 2009), 103-128.

⁶¹ Ernst M. Valea, *Buddhist-Christian Dialogue as Theological Exchange: An Orthodox Contribution to Comparative Theology* (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2015), 26-79.

deification.⁶² In other words, in contrast to the position articulated in *Heidelberg Disputation*, the Chalcedonian Christological tradition advocates for a non-dualistic understanding of human and divine natures as well as loves, is more compatible to the non-dualistic understanding of humanity and divinity advocated by Mahāyāna Buddhism and Confucianism. It is thus expected that there are many grounds for the Christian dialogues with Mahāyāna Buddhism and Confucianism.

As the Chalcedonian understanding of the non-duality of human and divine natures in Jesus Christ may lead to a non-dualistic understanding of divine and human loves, the doctrinal dialogue on the non-duality of humanity and divinity may also lead a dialogue at ethical level concerning the relationship between divine and human loves and its implications for the Christian praxis in Asia. This kind of dialogue may be particularly relevant to the dialogue with Confucianism which plays an important role in the cultural and ethical traditions of East Asia. It is rather well known that Confucianism upholds the human capacity of benevolence (*ren*) as the foundation of morality, and advocates for love with various gradation (*cha deng zhi ai*) based on the diversity of natural relationships. These seem to contradict Luther's position on human and divine loves, especially his taking the self-sacrificial death of Jesus Christ as an expression of divine love towards undeserved sinners as well as the foundation for a Christian ethics of love one's neighbor indiscriminately. In contrast, Aquinas' approach to the non-duality between divine and human loves may make positive

⁶² See: Alexander Chow, *Theosis, Sino-Christian Theology and the Second Chinese Enlightenment: Heaven and Humanity in Unity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Pan-chiu Lai, "Shaping Humanity with Word and Spirit: Perspectives East, West and Neither-East-Nor-West," in: *Word and Spirit: Renewing Christology and Pneumatology in a Globalizing World* edited by Anselm K. Min and Christoph Schwöbel (Berlin & Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2014), 131-149.

contributions to the ethical dialogue with Confucianism. For instance, Aquinas' understanding of order of charity, which affirms different kinds and/or degrees of love in different kinds of relationship, is quite comparable to the graded love associated with Confucianism as well as the evolutionary understandings of human altruism.⁶³ It may also benefit the development of ecological ethics and its dialogue with Confucianism on ecological ethics.⁶⁴ Perhaps the most important contribution of a non-dualistic understanding of divine and human loves towards the Christian dialogue with other religions lies at its emphasis on the mutuality and reciprocity in love or friendship, which should be the basis as well as goal for the Christian participation in inter-religious dialogue.⁶⁵

⁶³ See: Pan-chiu Lai & Tao Wang, "Altruism in Christian, Confucian and Evolutionary Perspectives," *Sino-Christian Studies* 15 (2013.06), 183-214 (in Chinese with abstract in English).

⁶⁴ See: Pan-chiu Lai & Tao Wang, "Reconsidering St. Thomas's Ecological Ethics," *Universitas: Monthly Review of Philosophy and Culture* 37.11 (2010.11), 155-173 (in Chinese with abstract in English).

⁶⁵ This article incorporates materials from: Pan-chiu Lai, "Divine Love and Human Love: Between Martin Luther and Thomas Aquinas," *International Journal of Sino-Western Studies* 12 (2017.06), 109-119 (in Chinese with English abstract); and, "Divine Love, Human Love, and Non-Duality of Self and Other: A Sino-Christian Perspective," *Logos & Pneuma* 48 (2018.07), 197-222 (in Chinese with English abstract).

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Future of the Ecumenical Movement

基督徒合一運動的未來

Kuncheria PATHIL

[ABSTRACT] The ecumenical movement¹ is facing today a deep crisis and the future of the movement cannot be predicted, though some emerging trajectories may be identified.

In the first part of this article, the traditional approaches to ecumenism is presented on the part of the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, the agency of the ecumenical movement representing most of the denominational Churches today.

In the second part, some of the problems, challenges and ambiguities of the movement encountered today are indicated, and in the third part, some of the trajectories that are emerging are drawn, though the new directions are not definitive but mixed up with several ambiguities and uncertainties.

¹ For the History of the Ecumenical Movement, see the basic source books: Ruth Rouse and Stephen C. Neill (eds), *A History of the Ecumenical Movement 1517 - 1948*, London: SPCK, 1967 (Second Edition); Harold E. Fey (ed), *The Ecumenical Advance, A History of the Ecumenical Movement, Volume Two 1948 - 1968*, London, SPCK, 1970; Norman Goodall, *Ecumenical Progress: A decade of Change in the Ecumenical Movement 1961 - 1971*: London, Oxford University Press, 1972; David P. Gaines, *The World Council of Churches: A Study of its Background and History*, The Richard R. Smith Co. Inc, Peterborough, New Hampshire, 1960.

[摘要] 今天的基督徒合一運動面臨著深切的危機，雖然發現新興軌跡，但仍無法預測運動的未來。

本文第一部分介紹了羅馬天主教會和普世教會協會（一個基督教跨教派合一運動組織）就合一議題上傳統的取向。

在第二部分，作者指出了運動在今天遇到的一些問題、挑戰和模稜兩可的情況；在第三部分，儘管仍未確定，並存在含糊和不確定的因素，作者描繪了一些新興的軌跡。

Part I: Approaches to Ecumenism

(1) Roman Catholic Approach

With the Second Vatican Council the Catholic Church has, indeed, entered into a new era of ecumenism, in the sense that from polemics, triumphalism and condemnation, the Church entered into an era of dialogue and mutual relationship. However, I hold the view that the Catholic Church has not really made any radical breakthrough in its traditional approach to ecumenism. I also maintain that in spite of fifty years after the Council, the Catholic Church failed to translate the positive statements and insights of the Council into ecumenical acts of commitment and practice. In other words, there is a conspicuous gap between statements and the actual praxis in the area of ecumenism. The Catholic Church continues to maintain that it alone possesses the 'fullness' of the ecclesial reality and the other Churches have only some 'ecclesial elements'. For the fullness of the visible Church what is required is 'fullness of faith, fullness of sacraments and fullness of ministerial structures including the Papal ministry'. The other Churches lack fullness as they lack some or any one of these three visible elements. This is the traditional view of the Catholic Church.

This traditional view was first identified and formulated clearly by the scholastic theologian Robert Bellarmine (1542 - 1621) against the attacks of the Protestants on Catholic doctrines, teachings and practices during the Reformation. The Council of Trent (1545-63) was the official and formal response to the Protestants. Although a response to the Protestants was timely and necessary, unfortunately it was a too strong reaction which was very negative as the Council totally rejected all the views and teachings of the Reformers without evaluating them in an objective and balanced manner. The Catechism of the Council of Trent and the whole Counter-Reformation movement were extremely apologetic and they failed to see any element of truth in the Protestant teachings and doctrines. Bellarmine opposed the views of the Reformers emphasizing the visible structures of the Church as ‘divinely ordained or instituted’. He defined the Church on earth as “the congregation of persons bound together by profession of the same Christian faith, and by communion in the same sacraments, under the rule of lawful pastors, and especially of the only Vicar of Christ on earth, the Roman Pontiff”.² It was a clear-cut definition of the Church which he drafted to exclude the other churches, especially the Protestant churches and to exclude all those who belong to other religions from the ambit of salvation in the Church given by Christ. It was clearly meant to be an anti-Protestant formula. This Bellarminian ecclesiology is the backbone of Catholic tradition as seen in all the documents and teachings of the Church thereafter. Vatican II also in a way repeats this teaching in *Lumen Gentium* Nos.14 – 16. Those who know the history of Vatican II and its dynamics will agree that the Council documents do not have a perfect continuity and theological consistency. The major defect of this approach is its overemphasis on the visibility of the Church, on the visible,

² *Controv. Generalis de Conciliis et Ecclesia*, 3, 2.

institutional and juridical aspect of the Church. The mystery aspect of the Church is found missing in the Bellarminian approach.

The Vatican II documents, indeed, made a distinction between the Eastern Orthodox Churches and the Protestant Churches.³ The Orthodox Churches and the Catholic Church had to separate themselves in the year 1054 not exactly on account of "filioque" question or other doctrinal issues, but primarily due to political and socio-cultural factors and the conflict over Papal jurisdiction. The Council pointed out the apostolic origin of the Eastern Churches and acknowledged that the West had drawn in bounty from the spiritual treasury of the East for its liturgy, spiritual traditions and jurisprudence. The most important Trinitarian and Christological dogmas had been definitively taught by the ecumenical councils held in the East. In the doctrines of the sacraments, apostolic succession, ordained ministry and Eucharist, Orthodox and Catholic teachings are very close. The Council did not grant this ecclesiological status to the Reformation Churches. For, the Reformation caused a substantial break from the traditions of the Catholic Church and its doctrinal heritage and there are serious differences between them and the Catholic Church.

One has to keep in mind the background of the medieval scholastic theology and the political and imperial ecclesial structures and corrupted practices of the medieval Church in contrast to the biblical and patristic teachings for a correct understanding and right response to the Reformers teachings. The Protestant Reformation and the subsequent divisions in the Church cannot be explained by mere

³ The Eastern Orthodox Churches were recognized by the Council as 'Sister Churches', whereas the Protestant Churches were called as 'other ecclesial communities' (UR, no. 14, 19, 3). In principle, the Council granted the Orthodox Churches 'equal status'. The differences between them are only in theological formulations or expressions of doctrines, which are complementary rather than conflicting (UR nos. 14 – 18; OE, nos. 2 – 11; *Ut Unum Sint*, nos. 55 – 58).

doctrinal issues and differences. The political, cultural and social factors played the key role in the divisions.⁴ However, the council acknowledged that many significant "ecclesial elements" are present in those Christian communities, such as, the Word of God, life of grace, faith, hope and charity, some sacraments and so on.⁵ Therefore, life of grace is available in these Churches and they are indeed also means of salvation to their members due to the salvific efficacy of Christ and His One Church.

In the Roman Catholic view, the Bishop of Rome has a specific and unique role in the Communion of Churches. As the successor of Peter, the Pope is the 'visible sign of unity' and the bond of communion, 'the servant and instrument of unity'. According to this view, the communion with the See of Peter and his successors is necessary for the fullness of the unity of the visible Church. Those who know history will agree that it was Papacy which played the decisive role in the historical divisions in the Church. Papal interference in the affairs of the Eastern Churches and the Papal claim of 'universal jurisdiction' was the real cause for the separation of the Orthodox Churches in 1054. During the Reformation controversies too Papacy was the bone of contention. Luther and the Reformers accused that Papacy usurped the supreme place of Christ in the Church. Reformation was a revolt against the corruption of the Papacy and the hierarchy. Students of Church history know well that the assertion of the Papacy and its authority was a gradual historical development. In the system of Pentarchy (five Patriarchs together exercising authority in the Church), Bishop of Rome or Patriarch of Rome emerged gradually as the sole authority. Papal authority over all the Churches was doctrinally articulated, theologically elaborated and actually implemented only with the 'Gregorian Reform' of the

⁴ See "The Root Causes of the Divisions of the Church", Kuncheria Pathil, *Unity in Diversity: A Guide to Ecumenism*, Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2012, 251ff.

⁵ UR, no. 3, 19; LG, no. 15; *Ut Unum Sint*, no.64.

11th century. The final doctrinal and theological articulation was made by the First Vatican Council in 1870 by the solemn definition of Papal Primacy and Papal Infallibility.

The Second Vatican Council endorsed the dogmas of Vatican I, though they were qualified by the doctrine of Episcopal Collegiality. In 1967 Pope Paul VI in his address to the Roman Secretariat for Christian Unity said: "The Papacy constitutes the greatest obstacle to reunion". This statement seems to be still accurate.⁶ In dialogue with the other Churches, could the Catholic Church understand and reinterpret the doctrines of Primacy and Infallibility in a way acceptable to the other Churches?

(2) Approach of the World Council of Churches

The Ecumenical Movement is today officially represented by the 'World Council of Churches'(WCC), which is said to be 'the Flagship of the Ecumenical Movement'. WCC was formed and inaugurated in 1948. Indeed its central concern was the unity and co-operation of all Christian Churches for common witness. Approach of the Roman Catholic Church to ecumenism starts from the centre, a centripetal approach, centering on the concepts like 'fullness of faith' and 'unity centred on the Papacy'. The approach of the WCC, on the other hand, is multifarious, diverse and centrifugal, naturally as the WCC tried to include the various ecumenical movements. The World Council of Churches was formed out of three important separate threads or movements, 'Missionary Movement', 'Faith and Order Movement' and 'Life and Work Movement'. In all

⁶ Both Pope Paul VI and Pope John Paul II asked forgiveness from all Churches for the painful events of the past caused by the Papacy and invited the other Churches and theologians to engage in a patient and fraternal dialogue on the question of Papal ministry, and see how best it can serve the unity of the Church and how we can move beyond the past controversies (*Ut Unum Sint*, Nos. 95 – 96).

these movements the students and youth from many churches played significant roles.

Although the contemporary ecumenical movement was inspired and shaped by several historical, social and theological forces, its immediate origin and rapid growth was due to the missionary movement. It was in the mission field that the problem, disadvantage and scandal of a divided Christianity, was acutely felt, and it was the missionaries who initiated denominational cooperation and joint-action. The underlying basic approach is that mission and unity are closely interrelated. Mission requires unity and the goal of mission is unity. *The World Missionary Conference of Edinburgh* (1910) may be said to be the first ecumenical conference on mission in the full sense, and is often said to be the birth place of the contemporary ecumenical movement. The Edinburgh Missionary Conference did not directly deal with the doctrinal and theological differences between the Churches and the conditions for unity. But it was accepted by all that the mission of the Church and the question of the unity of the Church cannot be separated.⁷ In the WCC this missionary thrust is consistently present and there is a strong conviction that common proclamation of the Gospel in the context of today alone can unite the Churches.

Faith and Order Movement has been another main stream of the ecumenical movement and at present an important constituent part of the WCC. Its objective was precisely the restoration of the visible unity among the Churches by means of doctrinal dialogue for reaching consensus in 'matters of faith and order in the Church'. All the Churches which confessed 'Jesus Christ as God and Saviour' were invited to participate in this movement. Almost all the Churches

⁷ Edinburgh Conference proved that Christians of different denominational allegiances could meet and discuss and cooperate in many areas of mission and ministry without compromising their convictions (see, David P. Gaines, *The World's Council of Churches*, New Hampshire: The Colonial Press, 1966, 20).

except the Roman Catholic Church, responded positively to this call and the result was a series of conferences for common study, consultations and deliberations. The initial approach and method was to present the doctrines of the different churches, compare them and see where they agree and where they differ. To solve the differences they had tried other methods, such as, the Christological and Biblical methods and common study and search.⁸ In 1968 the Roman Catholic Church also joined the Faith and Order Movement by permitting Catholic theologians to participate in the Faith and Order meetings as official members. After frank discussions and exchange for more than a century, today the Churches in the Faith and Order Movement have arrived at certain conclusions: (1) The agreements among the churches are much more than their differences and they are united in the fundamentals. (2) The Catholic and Protestant are two different approaches and they are complementary rather than contradictory. (3) The socio-economic and cultural factors are at the root of many doctrinal and theological issues. (4) Unity and plurality must be held hand in hand and the way ahead is contextual and 'unity in diversity'. According to Konrad Raiser, if we can say that the fellowship in the WCC is of those who believe in Christ and bonded together in Baptism, then certainly this fellowship has an ecclesial nature and we have to build up on this foundation.⁹ Of course, the path ahead of the 'Faith and Order Movement' in search of visible unity by means of doctrinal convergence faces today several problems which we will take up later in this article.

⁸ For an elaborate treatment of the history and theological methods of the Faith and Order, see, Kuncheria Pathil, *Models in Ecumenical Dialogue*, Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 1981.

⁹ Konrad Raiser, *Ecumenism in Transition*, Geneva: WCC Publications, 1991, 113 – 117.

Life and Work Movement was the third wing of the contemporary ecumenical movement which brought the Churches together not to discuss their internal disputes and differences, but to witness together as Christians in the world, to promote fellowship and peace among the nations torn apart by war and conflicts, and to establish justice and lawful order in society on the basis of the Christian principles of truth, justice and love.¹⁰ The watchword of the movement was “doctrine divides, service unites”, which implied that the Churches will be reunited only by their common witness and action in the world. In the WCC, Life and Work Movement continues to function as the *Department of Church and Society*, which continuously reminded the WCC and the ecumenical movement not to become introverted with the concerns of a narrow ecumenism, but to be involved in the world in the concrete problems of the wider humanity; for *oikoumene* means not merely the Church but the Whole World. The contribution of the Life and Work Movement and its social approach is indeed very promising as well as crucial for the ecumenical movement. It has brought all the Churches together into a fellowship that seems to be irreversible. What unites them together is not only the concern for their visible unity but the concern for the unity of the whole humankind. The unity of the Church is seen as a sign and sacrament of the unity of the whole humankind. Besides, visible unity of the Churches not only means the healing of all sorts of divisions in the Church, but also divisions in the name of race, class, sex, culture, language, etc.

In the recent years one of the main thrusts in the approach of the WCC has been the attempt for doctrinal convergence on Baptism, Eucharist and ordained Ministry. The ecumenical document on

¹⁰ The immediate context of the “Life and Work Movement” was World War I, and the proposal was the formation of an *Alliance of the Churches* for promoting international friendship and peace among the nations. The leader of this movement was Archbishop Nathan Soederblom of Uppsala, Sweden.

Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (*BEM Document* or *Lima Document*, 1982), approved by the "Faith and Order" and the World Council of Churches, is an important ecumenical document meant for doctrinal convergence. It tried to articulate the common faith of all the Churches in Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry. It is a common proclamation of the faith of the One Church received from the apostolic times. On Baptism and Eucharist there emerged practically a full doctrinal convergence, but in theology and sacramental practice a healthy pluralism was endorsed. Ministry still remains to be a crucial issue.

The document made a significant recommendation to all Churches to accept the threefold ministry of bishops, priests and deacons as an ecumenical pattern, which was, indeed, normative for all the Churches until the time of the Reformation.¹¹ The doctrines of Apostolic Succession, sacramental nature of the Ordination, nature of the Episcopal ministry and Papacy are still problems to be clarified. The emerging doctrinal consensus and the proclamation of our common faith in Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry have immense prospects in view of the mutual recognition of the Churches and the restoration of ecclesial communion. This 'Lima document' was circulated among all the Churches including the Roman Catholic Churches, and the responses of the Churches were published from the WCC in VI volumes.¹² Many of the responses suggested that the serious issue underlying the Lima document is ecclesiology, and at present the focus is concentrated on doctrinal convergence on the nature of the Church. Its final result is WCC statement, "The Church Towards a Common Vision".¹³ Similar to the ecclesiology of

¹¹ *BEM Document*, no. 22.

¹² Max Thurian (ed), *Churches Respond to BEM*, VI Volumes, Geneva: WCC, 1986 – 1988.

¹³ See, Faith and Order Paper 214, Geneva: WCC, 2013. The proposal to concentrate

Vatican II, the WCC document too has its focus on *koinonia* by which the nature and meaning of the Church is presented with emphasis on unity in diversity, mission in gathering the whole creation into different levels of communion under the Lordship of Christ and communion in faith, sacraments and common ministry in the Church.

In the view of WCC, all its approaches have to lead finally to the mutual recognition of all authentic churches in their diversity, intercommunion and fellowship among the churches and a ‘conciliar way of fellowship’ for common witness and mission for the sake of the world. According to WCC, no one Church can claim to be the only valid type or the only one genuine model. All the existing individual Churches and their identities are our precious heritage which must be maintained and safeguarded although these identities should not be conceived as static and closed. No one historical Church is a finally finished product, but is always in the making by a giving-and-taking process of growth. In the vision of WCC, one reunited Church should be clearly in terms of a "Communion of Churches" or "Fellowship of Churches" or a “Conciliar Fellowship”, where all Churches must recognize each other as equals. This communion shall be grounded in the common faith and in the communion of the sacraments. Communion among the churches shall be celebrated by the ecumenical practice of intercommunion in the common Eucharistic celebration. Such a communion must be maintained, supported and fostered in a conciliar relationship among the Churches. To be clear, all the authentic Churches must be able to sit together as equals in an ‘Ecumenical Council’, which could be a visible sign of ecclesial communion. It is the vision of the WCC.

on the concept and nature of the Church mainly came from the Catholic and Orthodox Churches (See, *Churches Respond to BEM*, Vol. VI, 5). This proposal was accepted by the Canberra Assembly of the WCC in 1991, and the final document on the Church was endorsed by the WCC General Assembly, Busan, South Korea in 2013.

Part II: Problems, Challenges and Ambiguities

Introduction

Christian theology and the ecumenical movement, and its approaches both of the Catholic Church and the WCC, have their own cultural backgrounds. By and large they seem to be a project of Modernity with emphasis on rationality, academic, systematic and a movement from the centre. Today we have moved away from the culture of Christendom and Modernity and we live in a Postmodern culture and ethos which project different sets of values and thought patterns. The new trends make the traditional theological positions ambiguous and often out-dated. The Ecumenical Movement and the WCC are the products of the 20th century, when there were pioneer and dynamic movements for unity at the social, cultural, political and religious realms. Christianity was the dominating force in the world and Christian mission belonged to the West centred in Europe and America. But today Christian presence is shifting to Africa, Asia and Asia Pacific. Two more radical changes have to be noted, first, Christianity is no more considered the only 'true religion', but one among the many powerful world religions, secondly, Christianity itself is getting not more and more unified, but more and more diversified with the rapid spread of the Pentecostal and Indigenous Christianities.¹⁴

(I) Cultural Transition

Culture is the main category today in all the discourses, sociological, ideological and theological. All cultures today are in radical transition, wherever it is, West or East, South or North. Even

¹⁴ See, Melisande Lorke and Dietrich Werner (eds), *Ecumenical Visions for the 21st Century*, Geneva: WCC Publications, 2013.

the most conservative or traditional societies in remote areas cannot resist to fast changing cultural mutations today. Western Christianity encountered *three dominant cultural waves*. The first was 'Christendom'. The Church in the Roman Empire assumed a mono-cultural approach, though Christianity was born in the Biblical and Semitic cultural world which had a quite different approach and method. It must be also noted here that the passage of Christianity from the Biblical and Semitic world to the Greco-Roman world radically changed Christian theology and its method. It was a shift from the Biblical experiential faith to the doctrinal definitions and systematic rational theological speculations.¹⁵ The living God of the Biblical revelation became the God of Greek metaphysics. The Semitic idea of knowledge through experience was increasingly replaced by the category of rational knowledge. God's revelation was no longer understood as God's self-communication in history, but as communication of certain rational truths from God and about God. The gradual centralization of the Church by the assertion of the primacy of the Roman Church over the other Churches practically destroyed the legitimate diversity, autonomy and identity of the early Churches. Until late middle ages, the Church played the most dominant role in the West in all areas of life, in religious, social and cultural, in ethics, politics, economics, education, aesthetics, art, literature, music and architecture. In many countries Christianity was the official religion and it wielded authority not only in religious matters but also in politics, economics, morality and in the whole cultural area. During the colonial period it was this type of cultural Christianity or 'Christendom' that was taken to the colonies. Western European Christianity with its social, cultural, political and religious form was simply exported from Europe and imposed upon the

¹⁵ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigmshift in Theology of Mission*, New York: Orbis, 1991, 194ff.

natives of the colonies of South America, Asia and Africa without any consideration of their cultural differences and the formation of authentic 'local Churches'.

The second encounter of the Church was with the culture of Modernity. The 'Enlightenment' Movement in Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries may be said to be the main historical factor for the intellectual, social, political, cultural and religious ferment for a new age, culture and civilization. From God, Revelation, absolute truth, church and its teachings, traditions and doctrines, focus was tuned to rationality and human autonomy. Rationality and the absolute autonomy of the human subject were the two pillars of Modernity. In the culture of modernity, human mind perceives the external world instrumentally and mechanically and this autonomous reason has a totalizing tendency which erected binary oppositions and sharp distinctions of objective / subjective, intellect / senses, reason / faith, theory / praxis, monism / dualism, natural / supernatural, spiritual / material, soul / body, individual / society, determinism / freedom, analytic / synthetic, right / wrong, good / bad, true / false etc. Modernity thus provided infinite confidence in the absolute power of human reason. This absolute power of human subject and autonomous reason provided great confidence along with the concept of progress, development, human dominion over nature, progress in knowledge and human emancipation. It's Creation of meta-narratives and mega-narratives and over-arching intellectual and conceptual systems claimed absolute certainty and universality of truth.

The third wave in the cultural encounter of the Church is with the contemporary Postmodernity. Whether Postmodernity replaces Modernity or it is a later period of Modernity which does not totally reject modernity is a matter to be discussed. Some of the characteristics or features of the culture of Postmodernity may be described over against Modernity as follows: For modernity, reality

is a unified whole as presented in meta-narratives or mega-narratives or one overarching or self-subsisting system, which stands for order, stability, consistency, and it provides answers to all problems, and explanations for everything. What can be fitted into the system is accepted and others rejected or they become less important. Postmodernity casts suspicion over or even rejects such meta-narratives or mega-narratives which excludes others outside the system that cannot be fitted into it. Naturally, Postmodernity rejects all binary oppositions, and it advocates mini-narratives which are local without any claim of universality, rationality, stability and absolute certainty, but are of a provisional, temporary and fragmentary character. They do not make absolute truth claims. According to Postmodernity all rational systems have a totalizing tendency and are totalitarian in nature, similar to a totalitarian State or Party or a religious institution which claims absolute authority. For modernity the only valid knowledge is scientific knowledge which alone is objective. For Postmodernity story-telling, myths, narratives, poetry, etc are not fictions or secondary, or irrational and imaginary. For the postmodern thinkers, the so-called scientific-objective knowledge is also a narrative and not removed from fiction, story and poetry. Thus postmodern thinkers want to demolish the monopoly of scientific knowledge as the only true and valid knowledge. They establish that there are different kinds and forms of knowledge, scientific, aesthetic, religious, political, historical, mythical, theological, philosophical with their own different kinds of logic. We are living in a world which is pluralistic, fragmented and ambiguous, where contradictions cannot be avoided. By affirming plurality and the other, postmodernists want to affirm and vindicate the identity and importance of smaller people, neglected groups and their marginalized traditions.

The contemporary ecumenical movement and the approaches to it either by the Roman Catholic Church or WCC reflect the shades of

earlier cultural worlds, both of Christendom and Modernity. The ecumenical movement seems to be a project of a 'mega-narrative' and it conceals the ambitions for constructing an overarching system with control from the centre. This approach faces a serious crisis from the point of the changing culture of our time.

Most of the scholars of ecumenism admit that the movement faces today a transition. Konrad Raiser, the Protestant ecumenist and spokesperson of the WCC sees this transition as 'paradigm shift' from the Christological to the Trinitarian, from ecclesial to cosmic, from ecumenical structures to concrete fellowship.¹⁶ The Official spokesperson of the Catholic Church, Cardinal Walter Kasper, in his address to the Plenary of the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity spoke about the changing situation and the ambiguities of the future. He proposed concrete intermediate steps for the life and praxis of the churches rather than spelling out the final goal.¹⁷

(2) Religious Unity or Institutional Unity

The great historical religions of the world emerged with the extra-ordinary personalities of their founders and their unique religious experiences. Their life, work, message and the way they responded to the needs and situations of the people of their time captivated their disciples and followers who pursued the path of those founders. The disciples, followers and communities around the founders formed a nucleus and they functioned as a movement to share the original experience and to spread the message of the founder for a better world and thus to transform the society. Acts of the Apostles mentions the unifying elements of the early Christian community: the teaching of the Apostles, fellowship, the breaking of

¹⁶ Konrad Raiser, *Ecumenism in Transition*, Geneva: WCC, 1991.

¹⁷ See his Address to the Plenary of 2001, Nov. 12 – 17, 2001.

the bread and prayer.¹⁸ They were communities of a movement for the wider society and not self-enclosed institutions with meticulous rules, regulations and administrative structures.

As the religious movements were in history and conditioned by the socio-cultural factors, it was natural they gradually became institutionalized and assumed concrete structures and underwent historical developments. Developments in all religions were more or less in a similar pattern with the formation of creeds, codes and cults. I do not want to analyze here the social, cultural, psychological, anthropological and religious factors in the formation of those creeds, codes and cults. Such historical developments were indeed inevitable. But there is an inherent danger in this process. Some religions underwent extreme forms of institutionalism and they became petrified and rigid which leads to the enslavement of its members. Although religion at its origins was meant to liberate people and the original message of all religious founders was authentic and integral liberation of all people, the institutionalized religions often became tools of oppression infringing upon and violating the freedom of people. Hence there is an inherent tension between religious message and its institutionalized forms.

It is evident that different historical religions in the world have different forms and levels of institutionalization. Hindu religion does not have a centralized institution and a central authority, it is practiced, in general, by people around the local temples with their own traditions and festivals, though some of the Hindu fundamentalist movements of the upper castes today think of common religious institutions and centralized structures and organizations for their hidden agenda of capturing political power. Much less organized religion is Buddhism. Buddha's teachings and life-example alone are the commonality among the various Buddhist

¹⁸ Acts 2: 42 - 47; 4: 32 - 35; 5: 2 -15.

sects, movements and Ashrams. Islam too has no one central institution, organization and authority except the Holy Book of Koran and Islam is known for its various sects and groups who often do not see eye to eye. Roman Catholic Church is the most powerful institution today, a centrally organized religion with meticulous structures and laws, and its head the Pope wields the central authority even after the Second Vatican Council. The Pope is known for his Primacy and Infallibility. All other Christian Churches too are well organized and institution-centred. They have their top authorities or authoritative bodies for common action and decision making. Compared to other religions Christian religion is the most organized and institutionalized.

The Ecumenical Movement and the WCC are functioning in a way similar to Vatican with headquarters in Geneva, hundreds of officers and paid employers and annual budgets of several million dollars. Does the ecumenical movement crave for religious/ spiritual unity or institutional unity with new structures and organizations with new power-centres? The ecumenical models of visible unity, mutual recognition among churches, intercommunion and common decision-making bodies seem to be no more appealing to many Christian believers today, who aspire for authentic Christian spiritual experience and tend to reject all forms of extreme legalism and ritualism.

(3) Authority in the Church: Spiritual or Secular

Jesus' concept of authority in the community of his disciples was very clear and he repeatedly reminded them of it: "You know that those who are supposed to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise their authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be the first among you

must be slave of all. For the Son of Man who came not to be served but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many”.¹⁹ The early Church was a “community of little ones who believe in Jesus”, a “community of brethren”, and to this community some authority was conferred, and the function of those in authority was “service” like the shepherds who feed the sheep and have to empty themselves to the extent of even sacrificing their life for their sheep. Secondly, in the early Church there was no question of authority of one man over the community, rather the community had supreme authority and it was exercised in a collegial manner with common consensus. But this authority became gradually corrupted in the Church along the secular and imperial model due to its close allegiance with the Roman Imperial authority which ‘lorded over the subjects’, subjugated and enslaved them. Naturally authority has a tendency to corrupt itself and ‘absolute authority corrupts absolutely’.

In the early churches the members of the community who had charism (gift) for different ministries voluntarily took up the ministries or the community recognized the different charisms of the members and invited and authorized them to undertake the ministries for the service of the community. Anyhow, charism or gift of the member given by the power of the Spirit was the primary requisite for the ministry. But gradually as the institutional developments of the church happened, ordination and appointment by the church became the primary element by which the gift or charism was given in the act of ordination. Ministerial authority and the power to exercise it was simply given by the institutional church. It was indeed a distortion and deviation from the practice of the early church.

Authority in religion is really a ‘spiritual’ authority freely given by the power of the Spirit. Religious authority in Hinduism and

¹⁹ Mt 20: 25 – 28; Mk 10: 45; Lk 22: 27; Jn 13: 12 – 15.

Buddhism is generally exercised by persons who are deeply rooted in their respective traditions and who are really transformed by the authority of spiritual experience. Their authority is spontaneously recognized by people of their traditions. There is a wide complaint against Christian churches that many of their leaders today are just heads of institutions and not really spiritual leaders who are transformed by the power of the Spirit. They are often regarded as administrators and guardians of institutional churches and their fossilized traditions.

The function of religious authority is to gather together the believers in relationality, animate them and discern the faith of the community and give its authentic interpretations. Authority is located within the community and not above it. In the Church there are two basically different notions or models of faith and its interpretations. According to the first model, faith is a set of truths and doctrines entrusted to the Apostles by Christ, and it is handed down to the community by the legal successors of the Apostles. Here people including theologians do not have any positive and creative role in matters of faith; they just receive them passively and interpret them strictly according to the directives of the leaders of the church. According to the second model, faith is God's selfgift to the people which they experience and communicate inadequately in symbols, rituals, creeds, doctrines, prayers and praxis in order to nurture and promote fellowship. In this model the community has a lot to do with the teaching, understanding and interpretations of the faith. Of course in this model too the Apostles and the early Christian community played a key role as they were the *media fidei* of the original Christian experience. The correct view seems to be in between where we have to hold together the role of the successors of the Apostles in the church and the role of the living community today. Apostolic

succession in the strict sense belongs to the community of the Church and not exclusively to the leaders of the church.

Unfortunately, all the discussions on authority in the ecumenical movement is limited to the authority of ordained ministers, and role of the community in decision making and in the discernment of matters of faith based on *sensus fidei* or *sensus fidelium* is almost ignored. In other words, authority is often understood and exercised in the ecumenical movement in a secular fashion. On the other hand, those who witness and manifest the signs of authentic Christian faith experience must play an active role along with community in the discernment of matters of faith. The decision making in matters of faith should not be exclusively limited to the officially ordained ministers.

(4) Doctrinal Consensus elusive if not impossible

From the very beginning one of the main objectives of the ecumenical movement has been visible unity of the churches by means of doctrinal consensus. The assumption was that the churches were divided in history due to doctrinal differences among them. Both bilateral and multilateral dialogues were organized where differences were clarified, analyzed and attempts for mutual understanding were made. Several rounds of exercises were initiated to draft consensus statements, and the document on Baptism, Eucharist and Ordained ministry (1981) is one of the best examples. There is an endless line of reports, studies and statements, but unfortunately without any substantial progress. Mutual recognition of churches and visible unity seems to be elusive. What are the underlining deeper problems and difficulties with regard to the question of 'doctrinal consensus'?

Seven decades ago Karl Barth the great theologian of the Reformed Church pointed out that within every agreement among the churches there are concealed differences and within every

disagreement there are hidden agreements. He also underlined that the 'Catholic' and 'Protestant' churches are two different ways of being church and two different ways of doing theology. No agreements and compromise can be reached between them, but they are complementary.

Perfect consensus on matters of faith and doctrines is an impossible task for various reasons. First of all, Religious experience and faith experience belongs to the category of 'mystery'. It happens in a unique encounter between the infinite and the finite, eternal and transient, absolute and contingent. Secondly, such 'peak experiences' cannot be adequately described, formulated or defined. They can be only pointed out by means of signs and symbols, and can be presented or introduced only by means of narratives, poetry, stories and art forms. Thirdly, any linguistic formulation is historically limited, culturally conditioned and context specific. Two individual persons from two historical and socio-cultural contexts cannot formulate their faith experience in the same way. Fourthly, every language has a unique horizon, cultural, social, economic, political and philosophical. These and several other reasons make historical dogmatic definitions of churches to be considered as final or absolute. Such definitions of a Church may not be valid or acceptable to all other Churches and communities. All the same, experiences, including faith-experience, always need and crave for expressions, however they are inadequate. Therefore, formulations, doctrines and statements are inevitable, though they are provisional and contingent and subject to revisions and reformulations. It calls for a healthy pluralism and plurality of formulations that may be held together or related in complementarity. All formulations have to be held together in a creative and critical polarity. They enrich, challenge and question each other, and they must be always dialectically and dialogically related.

It calls into question the character and validity of several current consensus and convergence documents of the ecumenical movement. It demands new approaches and new methods for dialogue and mutual relationship and it challenges the relevance of the present approaches of the ecumenical movement and its objectives.

(5) Decline of Denominational Systems and Loyalties

Most of the Christian denominations of today have their origins from the background of the Reformation Movement and the craving for independence of the church from State control. Some of the traditional Christian denominations have still some relevance in their home lands. But in Asia, Africa and South America they are increasingly becoming remnants of the Colonial period due to several factors. With the political independence, the people of these countries have become today conscious of their own nation, culture and history. Even before the formation of the WCC at Edinburgh Missionary Conference in 1910, church leaders from the so-called mission countries, people like Bishop V. S. Azariah of India, raised the strong voice that denominations of foreign origin with foreign leadership have not much relevance in the new mission countries, what is needed is not a paternalistic relationship, but friendship, freedom and independence. People of these countries look at the history of their own nations where God has been also alive and active, as in the history of Israel and in the histories of other people. They turn to their own history and culture, read their original myths, stories, ancient texts, poems, folklore, music and art forms and try to interpret them and discern God's designs for them. They can very well situate Jesus and the Gospel in their own context. They try to trace Jesus within their own history and culture and a church will be born there from within and not simply imported from outside.

Today several traditional Christian denominations are in conflict and on the verge of break-up due to internal doctrinal and theological

issues such as, question of authority, autonomy of church, admission of women to ordained ministries, abortion, same sex marriage etc. Even within the Roman Catholic Church some of the issues are very serious and sometimes their internal differences are greater than those against other denominations. What I wanted to point out is that there is an increasing conflict today between denominational loyalty and national, cultural and ecumenical consciousness, which challenges the historical identity of Christian denominations and of the ecumenical movement. This is what is often referred to as 'Postdenominational Christianity'.

Part III: Emerging Ecumenical Trajectories

In the light of the new trends, cultural values and problems as spelt out above, we have to re-conceive the ecumenical movement and reset its approaches, targets and methods. It is indeed very painful to consciously break from the past traditions, models and approaches held so far. It requires courage, hope and faith, faith in the continuing presence and guidance of the risen Lord and absolute commitment to the movements of the Spirit, whose presence we have to discern by reading the signs of the times. Outlining of these emerging trajectories here are very tentative and provisional, and they are subjected to further criticism, corrections and revision.

(1) From the Institutional/Visible to the Prophetic/ Mystical

Core of every religion is religious experience which is in the realm of spirituality or the experience of the Spirit. Spirituality is the experience of being gripped by the power of the Spirit; it is the awakening to the dimension of self-transcendence; it connotes the state of being grasped by the sense of the Sacred or a sense of being rooted to the Ultimate Ground of Being. The visible institutional religion without the core-element of religious experience is an empty

shell. Any religious and liturgical celebration which does not raise the participant to the higher realm of a spiritual experience will become just a ritual and social celebration. Mystical experience is the peak of religious experience. It is the experience of being one with the Absolute where one does not feel any distinction between the subject and the object, self and the other. All religious experiences have an inner craving for the mystical and the absolute. In the mystical experience all the different religions meet and merge. One can therefore legitimately say that while religions appear to divide, spirituality and mysticism unite. “Spirituality is like the root dimension, religions evolve like branches which grow in different directions. The unity at the depth of spirituality has to be recognized, and the diversity at the level of religions has to be respected”.²⁰

Religious experience and its peak of mystical experience are not self-centred or for self-indulging, but altruistic. It leads one to the other and to the whole humanity. A mystic is at the same time a prophet. A prophet listens to God as well as to his fellow humans. At the root of every prophetic activity, there lies a mystical experience by which one is envisioned, empowered and energized. Mystical and prophetic are the two moments of the same religious experience. Devotion to God and compassion to one’s fellow humans are the hallmark of all genuine religious leaders. As Mary Grey has pointed out, the age-old Christian tension of ‘fleeing the world’ or ‘changing the world’ is a false dilemma. What we need today are prophetic as well as mystical communities. Isolated prophet or mystic is no longer relevant.²¹

The ecumenical movement today is at a turning point. Its activities, projects and programs for the institutional and visible unity

²⁰ Sebastian Painadath, “Interreligious Relations in Civil Society” in *Jeevadhara*, No. 262 (July 2014), 60.

²¹ Mary C. Grey, *Prophecy and Mysticism: The Heart of the Post-Modern Church*, Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997, 80.

get less and less support whereas its programs for common prayer, spiritual experience and social commitment get increasing support, sympathy and encouragement. The ecumenical movement has to be alert and become open combining the spiritual and the prophetic.

(2) From one and the only Definitive Meaning to Plurality of Meanings

Official Teachings of the church and their interpretations have been always dividing issues between the churches. The Catholic Church insists that some of its teachings and its meaning are definitive in the sense that they are absolutely true and therefore unchangeable. Some of its teachings are officially sealed with 'infallibility', a dogma defined by the first Vatican Council. The Orthodox churches do not hold the teaching of infallibility as such though they teach that the perennial tradition of the church bequeathed by the Apostolic church in the deposit of faith has to be always maintained as true and valid. For the mainline Protestant churches and post-Reformation Free churches in general the doctrinal teachings of the church and their meanings have to be always evaluated and revised as they have been always historically and culturally conditioned. On matters of faith we cannot insist on one and the only meaning.

The ecumenical movement has been struggling to sort out these differences and to arrive at certain consensus statements in the document on Baptism, Eucharist and Ordained Ministry (BEM Document 1982). It brought together the authority of the ordained ministers and that of the community as interdependent and reciprocal. Otherwise, there is the grave danger that the authority in the church may become distorted by isolation or domination, isolation from the community and domination by the authority over the community.

In today's postmodern cultural ethos the emphasis is not on one definitive and absolute meaning given once for all, but on the contextual and the provisional. There are different layers of meanings and these diversities have to be related to each other. The different churches, their teachings, doctrines and theologies have to be held together in a dialogical relationship rather than opting for one over against the other.

(3) From the Centre to the Margins

Basically, the ecumenical movement has been always a search for the centre and a return to it. This centre is and will be Jesus Christ in whom all Christians are bonded by their faith. There is absolutely no debate on this central point. In Christian faith Jesus Christ is proclaimed as the centre of all humanity. The debate comes when the question of the relationship between Church and Christ is discussed. In the New Testament tradition Church is said to be the body of Christ, the sign of the presence of the Risen Christ and his Spirit in our midst in the world today. Does it mean that Christ is present only in the historical churches? Is he not present and active also in the world, in other religions and cultures and in the whole humanity? But how is he present? Is the presence in the same way or in different ways, sacramentally or spiritually? These are areas of debate and topics for ecumenical discussions.

Some mainline churches like the Roman Catholic Church generally limit the 'full' sacramental presence of Christ to itself. Although the Orthodox churches do not make such absolute claims, they do believe that they have preserved the 'faith' of the Apostolic church in its entirety till today. Most of the Protestant churches maintain that they are faithful to the fundamentals of the Apostolic church, whereas some might have deviated from the heritage of the early church. According to Protestants, the Reformation was a revolt against the 'aberrations' of the Catholic Church of the middle ages

which had fallen into clericalism, institutionalism, legalism and ritualism. According to them Reformation was a bold attempt to restore the purity and integrity of the Gospel. The ecumenical movement has been struggling to face these questions and challenges for the last one hundred years, and it is still making every effort to get out of these wrangles, yet without much success. The ecumenists are going round and round with the same questions again and again, from one conference to another, and they produce volumes of reports, studies and statements.

Many people suggest today that we have to move from the centre of the institutional church and its narrow ecumenical concern of the visible unity of the churches to the periphery where people live, struggle and search like the sheep without the shepherd. There is present today immense suffering, despair and agony outside the gates of the churches and their institutional boundaries, where people are struggling for their legitimate human rights, food, clothes and shelter, millions of poor, oppressed, orphans, migrants, refugees, dalits and those who are at the margins. In such situations Christ seems to be present not just within the churches, not at the centre, but at the peripheries identifying with those at the margins. What should be the priority of the ecumenical movement, searching Christ at the centre within the institutional churches or at the margins of the society? God is definitely on the side of the oppressed people at the periphery as in those days of the slavery and oppression of the people of God in Egypt in the story of the Exodus of the Old Testament. Could the Churches declare with honesty that they too are with God and His people at the margins!²²

²² See, Joerg Rieger (ed), *Opting for the Margins: Postmodernity and Liberation in Christian Theology*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, 18.

(4) Movements for Indigenous Christian Communities

Christian ecumenical ideal has been One Reunited Church, consisting of all Christian denominations with mutual recognition, intercommunion and functioning by way of a Conciliar fellowship. As indicated above, today denominational systems and structures are increasingly being broken and in their place Indigenous Christian communities are emerging in local cultural and national settings. They may be called as '*Post-Denominational Churches*'.²³

In the post-colonial and nationalistic cultural context numerous indigenous Christian communities are emerging and spreading very fast in various parts of Asia, Africa and South America. The common features of these indigenous churches may be described as follows: They are post-denominational in the sense that they do not have perfect continuity with the denominational churches, though they maintain some elements of the so-called 'mother-churches'. They spread rapidly by the work of lay-people, both men and women who are preachers and healers. Most of these communities have a congregational set-up without having national or international denominational structures. Such communities are nurtured by deep fellowship, prayer and common worship, social commitment, witness and service to the larger society, especially to the marginalized.

Let me just mention one example of the growth of such post-denominational churches in China without entering into the complex history of Christianity in China. Today in the changed context of limited religious freedom, the local and indigenous churches are spreading rapidly. Most of them are Protestant and Pentecostal churches, if we may speak of their denominational and historical lineage. In 1982 their number was about 3 million, whereas in 1998 their number was calculated to be 16.7 million. In 2014 China

²³ Miikka Ruokanen and others, "Is Postdenominational Christianity Possible?", *Ecumenical Review* 67/1 (March 2015), 77 – 95.

has a population 1.35 billion of which 24 million belong to indigenous Christian churches. According to World Christian Database, China has today 45 - 60 million Christians of which Catholics are only about 12 - 14 million. By all evidences the future of Christianity in China seems to belong to the indigenous churches.²⁴ Indigenous churches can take the risk and courage to break from their petrified denominational heritage and lead the churches to fresh understanding of the Gospel and of Christian faith and to initiate new Christian practices relevant and meaningful for today's context.

(5) Intercommunion at the Local Level

Common Eucharistic celebration or intercommunion has been always one of the main objectives of the ecumenical movement. The problem of intercommunion has been discussed since almost a century without arriving at any concrete solution. There are two theological problems underlying this issue. The first one is the differences on the doctrine of the Eucharist. Is the Eucharist a sacrifice? How is Christ present in the Eucharist? In what sense is there *real presence*? The second problem is the question of the validity of the minister of the Eucharist i.e. who can validly preside over the Eucharist. Can any Christian preside over the Eucharist, or only an ordained minister? Who is a validly ordained minister? My intension here is not to answer or explain these questions. I only want to say that these theological and doctrinal issues still remain unresolved and they cannot be completely solved once for all. Therefore common Eucharistic celebration and intercommunion among all the churches remains still a mere dream.

²⁴ See the articles in *The Ecumenical Review*, 67/1 (March 2015), *Christianity in China*

What is the way ahead? I would like to suggest that approaches to intercommunion and its practical negotiations must be shifted to the bi-lateral and local level. This is the only practical way to arrive at concrete solutions and to reach tangible results. Practical solutions can be arrived at only on the local level where the picture and the problems are very concrete and therefore solutions can be more practical and not merely theological, academic and speculative. On the local level the problem is not merely theological and speculative, but it is a question of life and death for the actual communities in each place. The approach and the solutions must emerge from the local context and their common commitment. It has to be a 'leap of faith' in context and a concrete act of ecumenical commitment for which the local Christian communities must be called, challenged and moved by the Spirit. Common Eucharistic sharing is a sign of mutual hospitality among Christians and an act of Christian love. It should not be simply a ritualistic and legalistic act initiated by the institutional churches and their authorities in the name of the visible unity of the Churches.

Conclusion

I have argued in this article that the ecumenical movement has arrived at a point of stalemate or impasse in our Postcolonial and Postmodern cultural and religious context. The century long hard work undertaken by the churches in search of visible unity and the target of mutual recognition, intercommunion and a conciliar fellowship among the churches is still elusive and the future of the movement is clouded with a lot of ambiguities and uncertainties. Unless the Catholic and Orthodox Churches change their view that they alone possess the 'fullness' of the ecclesial reality and that the Protestant Churches have only some visible elements of the church, and ready to revise their traditional approach in the light of the new ecumenical experiences of today and grow accordingly, the

ecumenical movement will not be able to overcome this impasse. The WCC also must move from its emphasis on the visible and institutional and turn to the religious, spiritual, prophetic and mystical unity centered on Jesus Christ and the Spirit. All churches must move from the center to the peripheries and prophetically involved in the lives of the poor, oppressed and marginalized and thus become agents of transformation of society and instruments of unity among the whole humankind irrespective of religion, culture, caste and creed. The target should be not be limited simply to the visible unity of all churches, rather the focus must be the emergence of the 'Reign of God', a 'New Heaven and Earth', which has radical implications for the whole humankind and the whole Cosmos.

**An Overview of
Denominationalism/Confessionalism on the
Ecumenical Movement in Asia**

亞洲基督徒合一運動的宗派主義概述

Jan S. ARITONANG

[ABSTRACT] Most of the church organizations in Asia were initiated and founded by missionary societies that came from western world. Many of those missionary societies emerged from denominational-confessional churches (Roman Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran, Reformed, Baptist, Evangelical, Pentecostal-Charismatic, etc.) although not necessarily institutionally-based. From the time of International Missionary Conference held in Edinburgh in 1910 (followed by Jerusalem 1928, Tambaram 1938, etc.) those missionary societies tried to cooperate and to build common understanding on mission (including evangelism and church planting).

The founding of World Council of Churches (WCC) in 1948 and East Asia Christian Conference (EACC) in 1957 (in 1973 renamed Christian Conference of Asia, CCA) were also intended to build cooperation and basic concept of the task and calling of the

various churches. However, there are many denominational-confessional churches in Asia do not join WCC and CCA. They would prefer to found their own communion or fellowship, like World Evangelical Fellowship (WEF) and to strengthen their confessional characteristics.

WCC as well as CCA does not intend to underestimate or neglect denominational-confessional characteristics of the churches. They even build cooperation with some confessional council like Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and World Council of Reformed Churches (WCRC), since they acknowledge the contribution of those confessional streams on the ecumenical movement.

This article will inquire the positive and negative impact of Denominationalism or Confessionalism on the Ecumenical Movement in Asia, rooted in the concept of some reformers (especially Martin Luther and John Calvin) on church unity and referring to several countries in Asia.

[摘要] 亞洲大多數的教會組織都是西方世界的傳教團體發起和創立的。許多傳教士團體來自不同教派（羅馬天主教、英國聖公會、路德教會、改革宗、浸信會、福音派、五旬節派——靈恩運動等），儘管不一定以制度為基礎。從 1910 年在愛丁堡舉行的國際傳教會議（隨後是 1928 年在耶路撒冷，1938 年在塔姆巴拉姆等）開始，這些傳教團體試圖合作並就使命（包括傳福音和建立教會）建立共識。

1948 年普世教會協會（WCC）和 1957 年東亞基督教議會（EACC）的成立（1973 年更名為亞洲基督教議會，CCA），旨在建立合作和呼籲各教堂的基本概念。然而，亞洲有許多教派並沒有加入 WCC 和 CCA，他們更願意建立自己的團體，如世界福音聯盟（WEF），並加強他們宗派的特徵。

WCC 和 CCA 並不打算低估或忽視教會的教派特徵。他們與世界信義宗聯會 (LWF) 和世界改革宗 (WCRC) 等建立合作關係，因為他們承認這些團體對基督教合一運動的貢獻。

本文參考了亞洲一些國家的情況，就一些改革者（特別是馬丁·路德和約翰·卡爾文）關於教會團結的概念，探討宗派主義對亞洲基督徒合一運動的影響。

Preliminary Remarks

Although we are aware that most of the church organizations in Asia were initiated and founded by missionary societies that came from western world and many of those missionary societies emerged from denominational-confessional-churches (Roman Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran, Reformed, Baptist, Evangelical, Pentecostal-Charismatic, etc.), there were only very few literature that elaborate this issue.¹ This may raise an impression as if it is taken for granted that it is by nature that missionary works and churches established in Asia consist of various denominations or confessional groups and nothing to discuss on this matter. But this article would like to show that there are many things and ongoing matters to discuss.

This article does not use the term “sect/-arian/-ism” although certain literature used it.² I’d prefer to use a neutral term, “stream”, or denominational/confessional group, because the term “sect” tends

¹ In the quite extended bibliography of Samuel H. Moffett, *A History of Christianity in Asia, vol. II (HCA II)* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005), 655-723, we only find two writings that explicitly refer to this issue, i.e. William Dean, *The China Mission. Being a History of the Various Missions of All Denominations among the Chinese* (New York: Sheldon, & London: Trübner, 1895), and Robert Hunt et al. (eds.), *Christianity in Malaysia: A Denominational History* (Selangor, Malaysia: Pelanduk Publications, 1992). Hunt et al. describes the history of some denominations, among others: Roman Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Baptist, Methodist, Pentecostal/Assemblies of God, Mar Thoma, and Evangelical Free Church.

² For example Douglas J. Elwood, *Churches and Sects in the Philippines* (Dumaguete City, Philippines: Silliman University, 1968).

to identify or judge the referred religious group or church as a kind of schismatic group that split from the "mainstream" or "mainline" and does not have a complete system of doctrine and praxis. I am also aware that the term "mainstream" and "mainline" is artificial and debatable, depends on context, and also temporary.³

The attention of this article is limited to several main Protestant denominations in South, Southeast and East Asia; therefore it does not include the denominations originated and still exist in Central and West Asia. This article will only mention in passing the Roman Catholic Church and some other denominations or churches like the Nestorian and Orthodox Church (incl. Mar Thoma or Syrian Orthodox Church) as well as some independent churches. Not because they are not significant in Asia, but because there are more experts on them. This article will also not take internal schism in certain churches or denominations into its account.

Among many issues concerning this topic, this article will pay more attention and put more emphasis on main doctrine, method of work, connection with colonialism, evaluation and attitude to the cultural and religious realities, social ministry, and institutionalizing process of respective denominations. Since elaboration of these issues needs rigorous inquiry, and many writings had done it, this article will only provide a general picture or observation.

³ For example, Baptist and Pentecostal were in some places, including in Asia, valued as 'peripheral', not to say 'sectarian', but in many other places are [more and more] mainstream or mainline.

Historical Background

As described and stated by Ninan Koshy,⁴ and some other historians and writers, Asia is the place of origin of Church or Christianity. It has been existing there since the first centuries of the Common Era, expanded to many countries of Asia (besides some other continents), and some of the old Asian churches still exist up to now (Mar Thoma, Armenian, Jacobite, etc.). Although Philip Jenkins⁵ and some other observers talked about “Christianity is moving to South” (including to some countries of Asia), it doesn’t necessarily deny the origin of Christianity. We will not discuss further these churches and issue here.

Since the sixteenth century, and even before,⁶ up to the twentieth century many churches from various denominations came together with the imperialist-colonialist western power (Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch, British, etc.); later some church denominations were gradually present and established in Asia. Started with the Roman Catholic brought by Portuguese and Spanish, it was followed by the Reformed (Calvinist) brought by the Dutch; Lutheran by the Danish, Dutch, German and later also American; Anglican and Salvation Army by the British; Mennonite by the Dutch; Baptist by the British and American; Methodist, Adventist, and Pentecostal-Charismatic by the American; etc.

Some of the missionary societies or missionaries that worked in Asia did not strictly maintained and promoted their denominational or confessional characteristic, especially those who were not officially commissioned by their respective churches. But many of

⁴ Ninan Koshy, *A History of Ecumenical Movement in Asia, vol. 1 (HEMA I)*, (Hong Kong: WSCF, YMCA, and CCA, 2004).

⁵ Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 6-23.

⁶ For example, some Roman Catholic missionaries (John of Montecorvino, John of Plano Carpini, etc.) already worked in China/Mongolia in the thirteenth and fourteenth century.

the missionary societies were established by the churches that held strongly those confessional identities, and many of the missionaries are sent by their respective churches. Because mission was pursued by the churches separately, denominational and national churches were consequently transplanted into the mission fields, the churches they planted were also characterized by these denominational and confessional identities.

These identities are also maintained and expressed in the supporting and ministering institutions they established, like in education or schools, including theological education. We may assume and acknowledge that each denomination has its own strength and contribution to the expansion of Christianity and to the role of Christianity in the respective country where they ministered. But in many cases there are also competition, or even conflict and rivalry among them. Each denomination and national church put forward its own claims and emphasized its own distinctiveness. Therefore, the church divisions of the West were not only exported to Asia, but were even multiplied.⁷ This in turn on the one hand brought negative impact on the presence and profile of the church and Christianity, although on the other hand there were also a number of efforts to cooperate and to unite and to bring positive impact. We will see some examples in the following section.

Some Examples

1. Lutheran

Lutheran denomination traced its identity to Martin Luther's teaching and some praxis, among others centrality of the word of

⁷ Scott W. Sunquist et al. (eds.), *A Dictionary of Asian Christianity (DAC)* (Grand Rapids, Mi.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2001), 258-9.

God, two sacraments, infant baptism, priesthood of all believers, and the importance of sacred music and hymn in its liturgy.⁸

These were shown by some Lutheran churches that can be found in many Asian countries. Like most of the other ‘mainline’ churches, they, too, trace their roots to early European and North American mission work. Bartholomew Ziegenbalg and Henry Plutschau that arrived in India in 1706 and ministered in Tranquebar, a Danish colony, sent by Danish Lutheran Church and Danish-Halle Mission, marked the beginning of Lutheranism in Asia.⁹ Around one century later some Lutheran missionaries in India helped by some Anglican mission organizations (SPCK, SPG, CMS) and church to do their ministry; for example they used the Anglican *Book of Common Prayer* in their church service.¹⁰

In the nineteenth century there are a number of Lutheran missionaries commissioned by some missionary societies to Asia; for example Karl Gützlaf to China by the Dutch Missionary Society. He was followed by a number of missionaries who worked in many countries of Asia, like Indonesia, Japan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Philippines, and Malaysia. They planted and established a number of churches with Lutheran identity. Some of the missionary societies that promoted Lutheran tradition did not explicitly mentioned themselves as Lutheran, for example the Rhenish Missionary Society from Germany, either because they were not purely Lutheran or by other considerations and reasons. In turn, the churches they planted and established do not all explicitly used Lutheran in their name. Related to this, in certain country, like in China, during the 1950s the Lutheran church disappeared as Chinese Lutheran Church; they entered the so-called post-denominational era. Yet Lutheranism did not vanished from Chinese people. New Lutheran churches were

⁸ Aritonang, *Berbagai Aliran*, 51-9.

⁹ Sunquist et al. (eds.), *DAC*, 501; Moffett, *HCA II*, 238-41.

¹⁰ Sunquist et al. (eds.), *DAC*, 25; Moffett, *HCA II*, 245.

established in Chinese communities outside Mainland China (Hong Kong, Taiwan, etc.).¹¹

Since the Lutheran tradition has also variety within itself, the churches established by the Lutheran missionary societies were also varied. Some of them affiliated to the Lutheran [State] Church in Scandinavian countries, some to Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LC-MS) in USA, and not all of them become member of Lutheran World Federation (LWF).¹²

2. Reformed (=Presbyterian)

Sunquist et al.¹³ describes Presbyterian and Reformed churches as the Protestant churches whose origins are related to the mission work of churches in this tradition or who have come to regard the Calvinist tradition as an important part of their identity. Some of John Calvin's teaching and Calvinist tradition are the sovereignty and glory of God, predestination, sanctification (implemented among others in church discipline), church order and polity (a relatively democratic structure of presbyterial-synodal system with four-fold office: minister, presbyter, teacher, and deacon), Psalm in liturgy and hymn, and church-state relationship.¹⁴

The Reformed church was brought to Asia since the beginning of the seventeenth century by the Dutch United East India Company (*Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie*) that was formed in 1602. This company worked among others in Indonesia (Dutch East India), Sri Lanka, Malay Peninsula, and Formosa (Taiwan). Most of the

¹¹ Sunquist et al. (eds.), *DAC*, 502.

¹² Sunquist et al. (eds.), *DAC*, 503-4.

¹³ Sunquist et al. (eds.), *DAC*, 672.

¹⁴ Aritonang, *Berbagai Aliran*, 75-95; cf. Sunquist et al. (eds.), *DAC*, 672.

formerly Roman Catholic members were ‘protestantized’, while the new converts were very limited.¹⁵

In the nineteenth century there were a number of missionary societies from Calvinist or Reformed and Presbyterian tradition from Europe and America worked in many countries in Asia (besides in those four countries, also in India, Pakistan, Myanmar, Thailand, Korea, Japan, Philippines, and Singapore) and planted a lot of churches there. Since the Reformed and Presbyterian denomination has also variety in doctrine, praxis and affiliation, this variety is also expressed in the life of the churches. Although the two big ecumenical institutions (World Alliance of Reformed Churches [WARC] and Reformed Ecumenical Council [REC]) already merged to be World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) in 2010, not all Reformed churches join this communion.¹⁶

Presbyterian missions were often associated with a commitment to higher education, besides evangelism and medicine/health ministry. That is why in many Asian countries they founded a lot of colleges and universities with Western education system (we remember among others Alexander Duff from Church of Scotland in India, and Daniel McGilvary from Presbyterian Church of USA in Thailand). Like some other missions, the Presbyterian missions also emphasized the Three-Self principles, as John L. Nevius attempted in China and Korea. The effort in higher education is also perceived as supporting the Three-Self ideas to produce autonomous and responsible national church.¹⁷

¹⁵ Moffett, *HCA II*, 213-28.

¹⁶ For example in Indonesia there is a Reformed church that also claims itself as evangelical, i.e. Gereja Reformed Injili Indonesia (Indonesian Evangelical Reformed Church) led by Stephen Tong; this church does not join WCRC as well as Communion of Churches in Indonesia (*Persekutuan Gereja-gereja di Indonesia*).

¹⁷ Sunquist et al. (eds.), *DAC*, 672.

3. Anglican/Episcopal

As a product of Reformation in England, the Anglican church/denomination (in England is officially called the Church of England, while in the USA and many other countries also called the Episcopal Church) is identified by some teaching and praxis such as three-fold authority in the church (the Scriptures, tradition, and reason), incarnation, the two sacraments (Baptism and Holy Supper), Penance and Absolution, priest ordination, and the Five Points of Mission.¹⁸

The Anglican started to work in Asia in the beginning of the eighteenth century, among others in cooperation with the Danish and Lutheran mission in Tranquebar, India (see above). It worked through its mission agencies, such as the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK), the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG), and the Church Missionary Society (CMS). Since the Church of England is a state-church, in the area colonized by England and its agencies (like East Indian Company) this church provided Anglican chaplains; but their activities were severely limited by the terms of company's charter. Nevertheless, gradually the chaplains and the missionaries sent by CMS etc. began to reach the Hindus and Muslims among whom they were living.¹⁹ Since the beginning of the twentieth century the mission of Anglican Church of Canada also worked in many countries of Asia (esp. China), followed by the Anglican Church missions in Australia and New Zealand.

In 1930 the Church of India, Burma, and Sri Lanka (joined by Pakistan in 1947) became an independent province of the Anglican

¹⁸ This document was just declared in the conference of bishops at Canterbury some years ago; consists of (1) proclaim the Gospel; (2) make disciples of all nations; (3) serve and love the poor; (4) combat against injustice; and (5) respect and perpetuate the planet of Earth. Quoted in Aritonang, *Berbagai Aliran*, 123.

¹⁹ Sunquist et al. (eds.), *DAC*, 25; Moffett, *HCA II*, 242-5.

communion and was set free to develop a form of Christianity that would be Asian. The most important decision taken by the Indian [Anglican] Church made possible in 1947 the formation of the Church of South India (CSI) through the union of the four South Indian Anglican dioceses along with the Methodist, Congregational, and Presbyterian bodies in South India. When the Church of North India (CNI) was formed in 1970 with seven participating denominations, the Anglican was one of them.²⁰

Besides in India and the surrounding countries already mentioned, the Anglican or Episcopal Church and its missions also worked in Malaysia, China (incl. Hong Kong and Taiwan), Japan, Korea, Thailand, Indo-China (Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia), Indonesia, and Philippines. Adding to evangelism and converting many people to Christianity (more than four million in the whole Asia) and attempt to express and contextualize Christianity in Asian culture and tradition (including in indigenous leadership), the Anglican established and maintained educational, medical, and pastoral work (in India mostly) among underprivileged villagers. This church is also active in ecumenical movement; besides in forming the CSI and CNI, also in theological education such as in Trinity Theological College in Singapore.²¹

In the epilogue concerning the Anglican in Asia, Sunquist et al. said: The Anglican Church in Asia has moved far since the days of British chaplains and colonial bishops. The form it takes varies subtly from country to country, but the distinguishing marks of the Lambeth Quadrilateral are still there: the Scriptures, the historic creeds, the Gospel sacraments, and the episcopate. It struggles to understand its own identity and distinctiveness amid a plethora of Christian church forms and a background of other faiths.²²

²⁰ Sunquist et al. (eds.), *DAC*, 25; Moffett, *HCA II*, 242-5.

²¹ Sunquist et al. (eds.), *DAC*, 26-33 and 263.

²² Sunquist et al. (eds.), *DAC*, 33.

4. Baptist

The Baptist movement began in England in 1612 (the leading figure is John Smyth). Baptist denomination and churches – as a descent of Anabaptist movement, part of Radical Reformation in the sixteenth century – are distinguished by their insistence that the church is made up of autonomous congregations of believers, and their consequent rejection of infant baptism in favour of the baptism of believers. They also emphasized separation of church and state.²³

Most of the Baptist churches in Asia trace their roots to missionary endeavour from British (i.e. Baptist Missionary Society, founded in 1792 as the first modern missionary society, led by William Carey) and later from North America (incl. Canada), Australia, and New Zealand. Their first mission field in Asia is India where the very well-known Serampore Trio (William Carey, Joshua Marshman, and William Ward) served for tens of years.²⁴ In India, like in many other countries, the Baptist churches would prefer to establish their own union or communion rather than joining ecumenical institutions where they served. There are some limited examples, like the Baptist community in North India. Some of the Baptist churches there have joined the CNI in 1970, where they retain their distinctive principle of baptism.²⁵

²³ Sunquist et al. (eds.), *DAC*, 58; Aritonang, *Berbagai Aliran*, 171-7. Stanley Grenz, in *The Baptist Congregation – A Guide to Baptist Belief and Practice* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1985), 82 (quoted in Aritonang, *Berbagai Aliran*, 171-2), said that *BAPTIST* may stand for and express seven subjects that very much emphasized and becomes the identity of this denomination: **B**eliever's baptism; **A**utonomy of the local congregation within the associational framework; **P**rimacy of the Scripture; **T**rue believers only in the Church; **I**ndividual competency and believer priesthood; **S**eparation of church and state; and **T**wo ordinances.

²⁴ Moffett, *HCA II*, 253-8.

²⁵ Sunquist et al. (eds.), *DAC*, 58.

Next to India, the Baptists worked in Burma (Myanmar), Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Philippines, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. Among those countries, the relatively most successful result is in Myanmar, thanks to Adoniram Judson and his wife Ann; more than half of the Christians in this country are the Baptist, especially among the tribes in Upper Myanmar (Karen/Kiyin, Kachin, Chin, Shan, Zomi, etc.).

Besides sharing in some mass movements toward Christianity (in India, Myanmar, Indonesia, etc.), mostly among the villagers that resulted thousands of local churches, the Baptists also contributed significantly in Bible translation, Christian literature, education (mainly in elementary level, but also in theological education), and medical/health ministry (hospitals, leprosy, etc.).

To overview the Baptists in Asia, Sunquist et al. among others said: Today there are at least three million Baptists in Asia, affiliated with different national Baptist conventions and fellowships. Besides this overview, we need also to note that a number of Baptist churches join the CCA (see below), while in some countries of Asia there are a number of Independent Baptist Church that do not join any convention or communion.²⁶

5. Mennonite

This older sibling of Baptist – as descent of the Anabaptist movement – originated in the Netherlands and worked in Asia since mid of the nineteenth century. Started in Indonesia in 1851 by *Doopsgezinde Zendings-Vereeniging* (the Dutch Mennonite Missionary Society), this mission society was supported among others by the Mennonite missions from Russia (Mennonite Brethren)

²⁶ Sunquist et al. (eds.), *DAC*, 65. In Indonesia, for example, besides six Baptist churches or conventions that join the Communion of the Baptists in Indonesia (described in Sunquist et al. (eds.), *DAC*, 63-4, and Aritonang, *Berbagai Aliran*, 167-70), there is also the Independent Baptist Church in Indonesia, led by Suheno Liauw.

and USA (Mennonite Central Committee etc.), and since 1890s they expanded their mission field to India, Nepal, China (incl. Hong Kong and Taiwan), Vietnam, Philippines, Japan, Korea, Pakistan, and Bangladesh.

In addition to evangelism and church planting, the Mennonite missions and churches, for example in Indonesia and India, are also active in social, relief, and medical service (assisting the war-devastated, war refugees, famine, etc.), in education and training, and in development projects. In some countries (like in India) they cooperated with the Baptists.²⁷

6. Methodist

Methodism is a Protestant denomination, initiated by John and Charles Wesley, separated from the Church of England (Anglican) in the eighteenth century. Some of its basic teachings and practices that reflects its Revival characteristics can be found in the Twenty Five Articles of Religion (modification of the Thirty Nine Articles of Religion of the Anglican) are: Rebirth (born anew), Holy Spirit testimony, universal redemption and salvation, holiness and perfection of Christian life, evangelism and evangelical spirit, and – contrary to the Anabaptist – permit to take an oath.²⁸

Methodism in Asia had a complex beginning. Methodist missionaries came to Asia from USA and UK, and thus brought varying traditions of Methodist polity, theology, and liturgy. They started to send their missionaries in mid of the nineteenth century, first to China, and later to India, Myanmar, Malaysia & Singapore, Japan, Korea, Indonesia, and Philippines.²⁹

²⁷ Sunquist et al. (eds.), *DAC*, 533-4; Moffett *HCA II*, 369.

²⁸ Aritonang, *Berbagai Aliran*, 197-202.

²⁹ Sunquist et al. (eds.), *DAC*, 535-46; Moffett, *HCA II*, *passim*.

Methodism was deeply committed to evangelism. For that task, the founding of schools, hospitals, and publishing houses constituted the backbone of Methodist mission strategy, esp. in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. The legacy of the institutional mission strategy is, however, ambivalent. Most institutions were self-supporting, and in the case of schools and publishing houses generated considerable revenue for missionary salaries. These characteristics, however, link them with the colonial establishment and its economic order, thus affecting their social witness, such as the case of opium in China and some other countries.³⁰

Related to this is the consciousness and respect of the Methodist to local culture and social life. Many of the missionaries preferred the expatriate culture (incl. using English in their schools that produced high level society rather than enhancing the life of the poor). Fortunately this is not the whole picture. In some countries (like India and Malaysia) many of the Methodist pastors are critical of their inherited role as teacher/pastor and are working out contextually relevant models. While many of the Methodist missionaries focused on the spiritual task of evangelism, some of them showed an equal or greater concern to protect the rights of the workers and create means of social advancement.

In some countries the Methodist built cooperation with some other denomination, and even joins union with some of them to form new church (like CSI and CNI in India). This is not surprising, because one of the main figures in ecumenical movement is a Methodist, i.e. John Raleigh Mott, the chair of the International Missionary Conference (IMC) in Edinburgh 1910 and later of the International Missionary Council.³¹

³⁰ Sunquist et al. (eds.), *DAC*, 535-8.

³¹ Koshy, *HEMA I*, *passim*.

It must also be noted that the development of the Methodist movement cannot be separated from the religious, economic, and political movement and situation which shaped the different Asian societies. Communist rule in China, for example, has led to the kind of ecumenism which made the Chinese Methodist movement, now part of the China Christian Church/Council post-denominational. Therefore, a challenging task is to identify the different factors which shaped Methodism in the different Asian countries: social, cultural, economic, political, ideological, historical, and individuals.³²

7. Adventist

The biggest church among this denomination is the Seventh-Day Adventist (SDA) that was officially founded in 1860 in USA. As summarized in Sunquist et al., the name SDA denotes that the church accepts the Second Advent (Coming) of Jesus Christ as the Blessed Hope and the grand climax of the Gospel. Also, the name "Seventh-Day" denotes that the church accepts that the great principles of God's law are embodied in the Ten Commandments and exemplified in the life of Christ. They express God's love, will, and purpose concerning human conduct and relationship to God and humankind. The Sabbath is God's perpetual sign of the eternal covenant between God and God's people. The church formulates and accepts 27 (later 28; jsa) fundamental doctrines as taught in the Bible.³³

The workers (colporteur, missionary, etc.) of this church started to work in Asia since 1880s (one of the first is Abram La Rue, who went to Hong Kong in 1888 as an independent colporteur), and since the first decade of the twentieth century the SDA churches in Asia

³² Sunquist et al. (eds.), *DAC*, 536.

³³ Sunquist et al. (eds.), *DAC*, 746.

are organized in three divisions, covering many countries: China (incl. Hong Kong, Taiwan and Macau); Malaysia, Singapore, and Brunei; India, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Pakistan, and Bangladesh; Indochina and Thailand; Indonesia, Japan, Korea, and Philippines.³⁴

Along with evangelism or proclaiming the Gospel according to its teaching and planting the church, the SDA also develops its ministry in education, health (incl. hospital or medical care and literature on health care), publishing, and social service (relief etc.). Among so many schools, colleges and universities, one of the top and famous higher education institutions is Adventist International Institute for Advanced Studies (AIAS) in Silang, Cavite-Philippines.

8. Evangelical (esp. Salvation Army and Christian & Missionary Alliance)

Actually the term “Evangelical” cannot be strictly identified as a denomination, because so many and various meaning, interpretation, implementation, and usage of this term. However, we may refer to some churches or missionary societies that call themselves Evangelical.³⁵ Here we only take two examples, the Salvation Army (SA) and the Christian & Missionary Alliance (C&MA).

SA was founded by [General] William Booth and his wife Catherine in the UK in 1865. Formerly Booth ministered in the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society or Methodist New Connection. This Methodist tradition and concern encouraged Booth to combine evangelism and social service (esp. to the poor, sick, and hungry people).

³⁴ Sunquist et al. (eds.), *DAC*, 747-52; Moffett *HCA II*, 519, 543 and 561-3.

³⁵ In this article the Evangelicals are those who accept and retain the “five fundamentals of faith”.

Sunquist et al. said that the Salvation Army (SA) is more of an international charity organization than a Protestant denomination.³⁶ But the SA also establishes and calls itself as a church, an evangelical church, complete with its statement of faith, i.e. the eleven points of teaching.³⁷ This teaching and statement of faith is quite similar to that of the Protestant churches; however, the SA ruled out all sacraments normally performed by other churches. The SA serves mainly people from the lower classes of society by providing necessities and doing evangelism. Because of the SA's involvement in providing needy service, among others in World War I, the SA was finally accepted with other world Christian organizations. Since then the SA expands its ministry all over the world, in more various fields, including the rehabilitation of alcohol and narcotic addiction.

The SA started to work in Asia since 1880s, among others in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Malaysia - Singapore, Indonesia, Philippines, Japan, Korea, and China (incl. Hong Kong and Taiwan). The officers adopted the food, dress and custom of the people, and by doing so it gave its mission ready access to the people, especially in the villages. In addition to evangelistic work, the SA provided educational facilities, mostly in elementary and secondary level and vocational training.³⁸ It also runs a higher level, including to the officer candidates. It also runs hospitals and clinics, children homes and orphanages, and a lot of social service and rehabilitation institutions. One of the methods to raise fund and simultaneously help the poor is opening shops and

³⁶ Sunquist et al. (eds.), *DAC*, 727.

³⁷ See "The Doctrine of the Salvation Army", in *The Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine* (London: Salvation Books, 2010), xv-xvi. Indonesian translation (¹1981) is quoted in Aritonang, *Berbagai Aliran*, 346-8.

³⁸ Sunquist et al. (eds.), *DAC*, 727-9; Moffett, *HCA II*, 519 and 543.

workshops where anyone may donate the used goods and later the SA sells them with low price or even gives for free of charge.

The C&MA was founded by A.B. Simpson in New York in 1897. It regards mission as the responsibility of the whole church. It retains characteristics of the Holiness movement (that we find strongly in the Methodist tradition) of which it was part. It believes in the creation of indigenous churches, including the “three-self” formulation. Local Bible schools are basic to its mission strategy. The C&MA has sought to transfer its missionary passion to other cultures and to future generations through the education of the children of missionaries.

Simpson and C&MA sent their first missionaries to Asia since 1887; to India, China, Japan, Philippines, Tibet, Indochina (Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia), Indonesia, and Thailand. One of its missionaries who is very famous and influential in Asia is Robert Alexander Jaffray. He worked and visited most of the mentioned countries. Meanwhile, because Pentecostal gifts were a contentious issue since 1906, some of C&MA missionaries transferred to the Pentecostal missions. Adding to its evangelism, church planting, and Bible school, C&MA – in cooperation with other evangelical mission organizations (among others Overseas Missionary Fellowship, formerly China Inland Mission) – is also active in Bible translation.³⁹

In certain country, like in Indonesia, the churches established by C&MA use “Gospel Tent” (*Kemah Injil*) in their names to emphasize their evangelical identity. Some of them join the ecumenical communion founded by the mainline Protestant churches, while some others join the particular evangelical communion.

³⁹ Sunquist et al. (eds.), *DAC*, 160.

9. Pentecostal-Charismatic

Sunquist et al. describes Pentecostalism as an evangelical restorationist movement that emphasizes the baptism and gifts of the Holy Spirit for the life and mission of the church and indigenous forms of worship and church structure. This dictionary also specifies the landscape of modern Pentecostalism that includes (1) "Classical Pentecostals", those believers attending denominational or independent churches that highlight classical Pentecostal doctrines – divine healing through the atonement of Christ, pre-millennial eschatology, and especially the function of speaking in tongues as a vital evidence of Spirit baptism; (2) "Neo Pentecostals" or "Charismatic" from the mainline Protestant churches, the Roman Catholic Church, and the Orthodox churches who have experienced or promote the spiritual and charismatic gifts, including claims of supernatural miracles, signs and wonders; (3) Neo Charismatic and indigenous group, often called the "Third Wave", which includes the "New Apostolic Reformation churches" that have underscored the importance of "sign and wonders" in ministry, and, notably in the latter, the return of the apostolic and prophetic offices.⁴⁰

The Pentecostal missionaries from USA started to work in Asia since 1904-7, although Pentecostal-like movements and expressions had appeared in Asia for almost half a century in various places. Notwithstanding those Western categories, classical Pentecostal churches in Asia reflect more diversity in beliefs and practices than their Euro-American counterparts by focusing more attention on the broader range of Pentecostal phenomena. Due to the belief that the Holy Spirit confers gifts and calling directly upon the believers apart from ecclesiastical institutions, Pentecostalism is easily been

⁴⁰ Sunquist et al. (eds.), *DAC*, 132 and 646.

contextualized. In many places of Asia, Pentecostal spirituality formerly has appealed to marginalized and low class of populations. However, in recent decades it has also attracted the middle classes and the wealthy people, as for example obvious in the membership of the large Yoido Full Gospel Church in Korea, Trinity Christian Centre and City Harvest Church in Korea, and Bethany Successful Family Church in Indonesia.⁴¹

The Pentecostal missionaries from the earlier period onwards made long-term contributions to Asian Christianity through their activities in evangelism, church planting, education, and charitable enterprises. Their legacies are easily found in the Pentecostal-Charismatic denominations that emerged from their ministries. Almost from the inauguration of Pentecostal missions, however, indigenous Pentecostal congregations and organizations began to take shape for various reasons. That is why in many countries of Asia, like in America, the biggest amount of church organization is from the Pentecostal denominations.⁴²

Whatever we say or complain regarding the three waves of Renewal done by the Pentecostal-Charismatic movements and denominations, including what they did in Asia⁴³, as a matter of fact they are the most successful in terms of number of members. Among the Christians in Asia – like all over the world – their number is the largest and they still grow. If many of the members of the mainline

⁴¹ Sunquist et al. (eds.), *DAC*, 646-8; cf. Aritonang, *Berbagai Aliran*, chp. 8 & 9.

⁴² Sunquist et al. (eds.), *DAC*, 648. In Indonesia, for example, among around 400 church organizations, around 150 are Pentecostal-Charismatic churches. Some of them also call themselves evangelical, but certain evangelical theologians and figures express sharp criticism on the Pentecostal-Charismatic and do not agree to identify them as evangelical.

⁴³ A very frequent complain and accusation thrown toward the Pentecostal-Charismatic churches is “sheep stealing”. But they argue that the traditional churches did not feed their sheeps with green grass and good spiritual nutrition. The “sheep stealing” has actually already happened before the Pentecostal existed. This is part of competition and rivalry among the missionary societies from different denomination. See, for example, Kaj Baago, “‘Sheepstealing’ in the 19th Century”. *Bulletin of the Church History Association of India* (November 1966): 31-6.

or 'traditional' churches moved and joined them, we may assume that they find spiritual needs and answers in those denominations.

10. CCA and ATESEA

CCA (formerly East Asia Christian Conference, EACC) was officially founded in 1957 after some preceding and preparatory meetings, consultations, and conferences (in Bangkok 1949 and 1956, etc.). The change of name from EACC to CCA took place in 1973. Its founding was sponsored by IMC and WCC; therefore the first members of EACC/CCA are churches and national council members of IMC and WCC in Asia. When the assembly of the EACC was held in Prapat, North Sumatra, Indonesia, from 17 to 26 March 1957, there were 107 official participants from 15 Asian countries and from eight Western nations. Among them were the 44 delegates from the 21 Asian member churches of the WCC and 10 Asian member councils of the IMC.⁴⁴

There is no detailed information or list of those 21 churches. But when we see the list of member churches of the CCA in Yap Kim Hao's book there is a list of 96 member churches from 16 countries (including Australia and New Zealand). Among those 96, we find Anglican, Baptist, Methodist, Reformed/Presbyterian, Orthodox Syrian, Mar Thoma Syrian, Salvation Army, Lutheran, Mennonite, Evangelical, Pentecostal, Quaker (Society of Friends), and some independent churches and united/uniting churches.⁴⁵ In other words, we find almost all denominations as example above, except the Adventist.

⁴⁴ Yap Kim Hao, *From Prapat to Colombo. History of the Christian Conference of Asia (1957-1995)* (Hong Kong: CCA, 1995), 6-22; Koshy, *HEMA I*, 123-33.

⁴⁵ Yap Kim Hao, *From Prapat*, 192-3. Most of the 96 members of CCA are the so-called 'mainline' denominations or churches: Lutheran, Anglican, Reformed/Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist, and their union or merger (like CSI and CNI in India, UCCP in the Philippines, and Uniting Church in Australia).

We may assume that, from the beginning of the existence of this ecumenical body, each denomination retains its identity and distinctiveness. But we can also assume that each of them also contributed and played important role to implement the dream, plan and program of CCA that put emphasis on the life and struggle of Asian countries and nations. The findings of the Bangkok conference of 1949 on “The Asian Church in Social and Political Life”, for example, provide an insightful analysis of the political situation in Asia, and even in the whole world, and Christian response to it.⁴⁶

During around sixty years of its existence CCA had produced quite a lot of documents and literature that inform and express its concern in various issues: social, politics/ideology, economic, cultural, religious, health, human rights, environment and ecology, migration and refugee, disability, HIV/AIDS, etc. All of these issues are elaborated and implemented in its program. Still to be observed and analysed whether and how far its members with variety of denominations participate in all of these programs up to the moment, while the activity and potentiality of CCA tends to decrease during the last years.

We may call the Association for Theological Education (formerly Schools) in South East Asia (ATESEA, formerly ATSSEA) that was founded in Singapore in 1957 as the sibling of EACC/CCA. Some of the sixteen founding members are union, i.e. founded, owned, or supported by more than one church (among others Trinity Theological College – Singapore, Sekolah Tinggi Theologia Jakarta – Indonesia, Seminari Theoloji Malaysia, Myanmar Institute of Theology, and Union Theological Seminary – Philippines).⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Yap Kim Hao, *From Prapat*, 7; Koshy, *HEMA I*, 99.

⁴⁷ Yeow Choo Lak, *ATESEA Celebrates Its Golden Jubilee – A Story of ATESEA in 50 Years [1957-2007]* (Quezon City – Manila: ATESEA, 2007), 11ff.

After 50 years, in 2007 ATESEA has 104 members in 14 countries. More and more of its members belong or affiliated to certain denominations or churches (Lutheran, Baptist, Reformed/Presbyterian, Methodist, Adventist, Evangelical/Alliance, and Pentecostal), and many of them are members of CCA.⁴⁸ Like their respective founding churches, these schools or theological education institutions retain their identity and characteristics. But through this association they learn to build cooperation, to respect each other, and to construct Asian ecumenical and contextual theology.

In a document entitled "Covenant with the Churches in Asia", presented at the ATESEA General Assembly 2005, it was stated that "the Asian world has changed rapidly in all aspects of economic, political and social development. Christian Churches in Asia continue to struggle and to witness the message of the Gospel and the promise of the reign of God to be actualized among the people of Asia." For that aim, ATESEA identified and listed eleven propositions that colour the changed context and show paradigm shift of today's Asia: Religious Fundamentalism; Gender Justice Issues; Ecological Problems, Disease and Disasters; Globalization and Global Empire Building; Colonization; Spirituality; Identity and Power Struggle; People's Movement and Ecumenism; Information and Technological Change and Challenges; Social Challenges; and Reclaiming Indigenous Identity and Minority Rights.⁴⁹

To respond that change and shift, and in order to be more ecumenical and contextual, in 2007 ATESEA formulated eight points of "Guidelines for Doing Theologies in Asia", or "Guidelines for Theologizing and Theological Education in Asia"; among others: (1)

⁴⁸ See the list in Huang Po Ho et al. (eds.). *Handbook of ATESEA & SEAGST 2007-2008*. Quezon City – Manila: ATESEA, 2007), 5-49.

⁴⁹ Huang Po Ho et al. (eds.), *Handbook of ATESEA & SEAGST*, 87-90.

responsive engagement with the diverse Asian contexts; (2) Critical engagement with indigenous cultures and wisdom for the preservation and sustenance of life; (3) Reflective engagement with the sufferings of the Asian people in order to provide hope for the marginalized, women, indigenous people, children, differently-abled people and migrant workers; and (4) Interfaith dialogue as well as intra-faith communion and communication for the fullness of life and the well-being of the society.⁵⁰ These guidelines are expected to be reflected and implemented in the curriculum as well as the program of the schools and theological education institutions members of ATESEA.

Closing Remarks

A series of very basic questions concerning denominationalism or confessionalism are: is it God's plan, purpose, and will? Does Jesus Christ whom we confess as Head and King of the Church want and like His Church divided into so many denominations and organizations?

Referring back to Philip Jenkins observation, i.e. Christianity is moving to the South, we see that the moving churches still maintain their respective denominational and confessional characteristics and identities. As Koshy said, what we need in Asia is not [only] the extension of Western religion but the renaissance of a religion that is Asian in its origin, history, and identity.

Martin Luther, in one of his writings among others asked his followers not to make any reference to his name. "Let them call themselves Christian, not Lutheran. What is Luther? Eventually the teaching is not mine."⁵¹ But still during his life and the years soon afterwards his followers were in conflict and divided. The Formula

⁵⁰ Huang Po Ho et al. (eds.), *Handbook of ATESEA & SEAGST*, 90.

⁵¹ *Luther's Works* 45, 70-1; quoted in Aritonang, *Berbagai Aliran*, 26.

of Concord of 1570 could not fully restore and strengthen their unity. As we have seen, when the Lutherans came to Asia, they were divided and in turn produced various version of Lutheranism. The LWF is one of the ecumenical institutions that tried to gather and unite all Lutherans, and even built cooperation and in 1999 formulated a Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification by Faith with the Roman Catholic Church. However, there are some Lutherans still outside this ecumenical federation.

John Calvin in some of his writings emphasized the importance and essence of church unity.⁵² But, as we have also noted, there are various version of Reformed and Presbyterian teaching, tradition, and practise (including in the method and strategy to produce three-self churches, formulated and trained by John L. Nevius). Some of them combined the Reformed and the Evangelical, that just raise debate and conflict among Calvin's followers.

From brief observation on some denominations and confessional churches we see that each of them owns and maintains strength and distinctiveness, either in doctrine, confession, concept, and method, or in the practices, programs, and activities to implement those more theoretical things in order to live, work, and serve together, especially in Asia. They may share their own to enrich and strengthen the other churches. On the one hand we need to appreciate, acknowledge, and pay respect to them, although we may express critical notes and assessment on them. On the other hand we see that sometimes some of them claim themselves or theirs as the best, and this claim is used to influence and agitate the members of

⁵² The elaboration of this topic see among others in two of Agustinus Batlajery's works: (1) "The Unity of the Church according to Calvin and Its Meaning to the Churches in Indonesia (dissertation, SEAGST, 2002); and (2) "The Unity of the Church according to Calvin ...". *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church*, vol. 16, nr. 4, 2016, 259-72.

other churches to move and join them. This negative side of denominationalism is not infrequently bringing conflict and rivalry as well as prevents and hampers cooperation, and solidarity and unity in fulfilling the common calling and task in Asia.

D.T. Niles (1908-70), a Methodist pastor and theologian from Sri Lanka, and the first General Secretary of EACC (1957-68), told in the first assembly of EACC at Parapat 1957 that the determining concept of EACC is “life together” which means that the churches in East Asia accept that they belong to one another and are willing increasingly to live a shared life. In that assembly the churches expressed their readiness to share in the world-wide Christian mission, particularly in the evangelistic task in Asia, to engage in it unitedly, and convinced that “we can do together what we cannot do separately”.⁵³ This beautiful concept and resolution on the one hand has been attempted to be implemented by the churches from all denominations, not only in Asia but also all over the world; not only among the Christians but also among all humankind from all religions and beliefs or faiths. But on the other hand we may ask: do all denominations and churches in Asia reflect and prioritize this concept, or they are busier with “life within ourselves”? Do they really take the “together” task and program more into their account, or more busy with their home and internal business?

In short, we need to be aware of the positive as well as the negative side and impact of denominationalism and confessionalism. We need to acknowledge its strength and richness as well as its weakness and limitation. In line with this, we need to encourage each denomination to be more ecumenical and contextual.

Banawiratma, referring to Matthew Fox’s book⁵⁴ and Heinz Schilling’s article⁵⁵, noted that we are now in post-denominational

⁵³ Yap Kim Hao, *From Prapat*, 18 and 23.

⁵⁴ Matthew Fox et al. *Natural Grace. Dialogue on Creation, Darkness, and the Soul in Spirituality and Science* (New York: Imager Books, Doubleday), 1997.

era. The postmodern generation does not know anymore the difference between various denominations, and probably doesn't care about it. Nevertheless it does not mean that the denominations already passed. Just the reverse, the various denominations should seek for the prosperous treasure inherited from the history and simultaneously release the not functional or disturbing inheritance to live the Gospel of Jesus Christ here and now. The Christians deserve and are entitled to be called as Christ's disciples not because they belong to certain denomination, but through their life style and conduct that follow Jesus. This is what we mean with post-denominational era, the era to dig spirituality.

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⁵⁵ Heinz Schilling, "Reformation, Disagreement between Confessions, Religious and Cultural Differentiation: a Historian's Views on the Contemporary and Future Significance of Early Modern Church History", in *Reformation: a Global Perspective* (ed. Marie-Theres Wacker et al. Norwich: SCM Press, 2017), 13-24 = *Concilium* 2017/2.

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**Towards a Ministry of Unity and Charity:
A Survey of the Christian Reformation
Leaders' and Theologians' Responses to Pope
John Paul II's *Ut Unum Sint***

**邁向團結和慈愛事工
看基督新教領袖和神學家對
教宗若望保祿二世：願他們合而為一通諭
的回應**

Philip L. FUENTES

[ABSTRACT] This study intends to survey and examine a number of the responses, specifically the responses by the Christian Reformation leaders and theologians with a view to assessing the level of reception of the encyclical letter and of the papal office across the Christian Reformation world. This study attempts to highlight the significant contribution of ecumenical dialogue in relation to the attitudinal and paradigm shift that have happened both in the Catholic and the other Christian Churches. In the concluding part, it will highlight the influence of the ecumenical movement, in

particular, Pope John Paul II's encyclical letter *Ut Unum Sint*, in the joint project between the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) and the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) which is the International Conference on the Asian Ecumenical Movement in 1996 in Hong Kong.

【摘要】 本研究旨在調查和研究基督新教領袖和神學家就教宗若望保祿二世：《願他們合而為一》通諭（*Ut Unum Sint*）和教皇辦公室的接受程度。當中突出天主教和其他基督教會中態度和範例的轉變，並為合一對話帶來重要的貢獻。在結論部分，突出合一運動的影響，特別是在願他們合而為一通諭之下，由亞洲基督教議會（CCA）和亞洲主教團協會（FABC）主辦的聯合項目：1996年在香港舉行的亞洲基督徒合一運動國際會議。

Introduction

Almost half a millennium after the Great Schism (1054 A.D.) took place in the Church of Christ –the division between the Western Church (The Roman Catholic Church) and the Eastern Church (The Greek Orthodox Church) – that undermined not only the unitive aspect but also the holiness of the Church, a series of divisions ensued and this time it happened within the Roman Catholic Church. This series of separations is called Reformation Era. And 2017 marks the 500th anniversary of this painful event in the life of the Church of Christ.

Before the turn of the third millennium, a sign of hope for a possible unity of all Christians was foreseen brought about by the ecumenical movement. Realizing that the anomaly of disunity undermines the Christian proclamation of the gospel-truths, some of the Christian churches and ecclesial communities in the early years of the 20th century initiated the ecumenical project in which the

Catholic Church would officially embrace in the Second Vatican Council.

While substantial agreements between the Catholic Church and the Christian Churches and ecclesial communities have developed, several issues persist, needing further examination and clarification. Although the ecumenical movement has already made some progress towards the achievement of Christian unity, there remains a critical issue, a fundamental stumbling block which is at the heart of the ecumenical project of *koinonia*. In his encyclical letter *Ut Unum Sint*¹, Pope John Paul II identified the question of the primacy of the Bishop of Rome as one of the five major areas that need fuller exploration for bringing about the goal of ecumenical progress. Thus, he invited all concerned to participate in a "patient and fraternal dialogue" to help "find a way of exercising the primacy which, while in no way renouncing what is essential to its mission, is nonetheless open to a new situation."²

This study will focus on Pope John Paul II's invitation to reexamine and reinterpret the issue of primacy of the Bishop of Rome. At the onset, this article will briefly look into the solemn declaration of the First Vatican Council's *Pastor Aeternus* on the papal ministry in relation to the Petrine commission in order to put into proper perspective the issue of authority in the Church. It will

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¹ John Paul II, "*Ut unum sint*" (Rome, May 25, 1995). [Hereafter *UUS*]. Website: http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_2505_1995_ut-unum-sint.html.

² *Ibid.*, n. 95.

proceed by way of examining the salient theme on primacy as spelled out by the pope in *UUS*. The bulk of the study focuses on the responses of the other Christian Churches and ecclesial communities to the pope's invitation with a view to assessing the level of reception of the encyclical letter and of the papal office across the Christian Reformation world. This study attempts to highlight the significant contribution of ecumenical dialogue in relation to the attitudinal and paradigm shift that have happened both in the Catholic and the Christian Reformation Churches and ecclesial communities. In the concluding part, it will highlight the influence of the ecumenical movement, in particular, Pope John Paul II's encyclical letter *Ut Unum Sint*, in the joint project between the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) and the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) which is the International Conference on the Asian Ecumenical Movement in 1996 in Hong Kong.

I. First Vatican Council's *Pastor Aeternus*

The problematic of the twin concepts of authority and power in relation to the agency of leadership in the Church is not just a modern-day phenomenon. It is in fact one of the incommensurable situations confronted the apostles of Jesus Christ.³ Unfortunately, the passage of time did not really mitigate, if not terminate, the controversial issue. Rather, it was further intensified to the point where it reached its breaking point in several occasions: events like the Great Schism and the Reformation to name a few. The

³ In Matthew 20:20-28, it narrates about the mother of the two apostles who appealed to Jesus Christ about the possibility of her two sons to sit, "one at your right and the other at your left, in your kingdom." This, in turn, angered the other ten followers upon hearing such appeal. See New American Bible (Revised Edition). Website: <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+20%3A20-28&version=NABRE>.

controversial issue of authority had reached a new level of gravity when the Catholic Church dogmatized the two papal doctrines of primatial authority and infallibility.

In 1869, Pope Pius IX convoked the 20th Ecumenical Council of the Catholic Church in Vatican. This particular council of the church is considered as one of the most controversial, if not the most controversial, because of the two papal dogmas it defined which are enshrined in its conciliar document *Pastor Aeternus*, First Dogmatic Constitution on the Church of Christ. In the fourth chapter of *PA*, Vatican I solemnly declares:

that the Roman Pontiff, when he speaks *ex Cathedra*, that is, when in discharge of the office of Pastor and Teacher of all Christians, by virtue of his supreme Apostolic authority, he defines a doctrine regarding faith or morals to be held by the Universal Church, by the divine assistance promised to him in blessed Peter, is possessed of that infallibility with which the divine Redeemer willed that His Church should be endowed for defining doctrine regarding faith or morals: and that therefore such definitions of the Roman Pontiff are irrefrangible of themselves, and not from the consent of the Church.⁴

This solemn declaration of the papal ministry implies several things, namely; that God is the author of all power and authority which the Church exercises, that the papal ministry is divine in origin being born out of the Petrine ministry, that the papal primacy

⁴ Pope Pius IX, "*Pastor Aeternus*, First Dogmatic Constitution on the Church of Christ," (Vatican, July 18, 1870). [Hereafter *PA*]. Website: <http://www.catholicplanet.org/councils/20-Pastor-Aeternus.htm>.

signifies the immediate and universal jurisdiction of the Roman Pontiff over the entire Church of Christ, and that the teaching office of the pope when he speaks *ex cathedra* in relation to matters of faith and morals is infallible.⁵

However, these articulated significations of the twin papal dogmas of primacy and infallibility triggered a new level of animosity by the other Christian traditions towards the office of the papacy due to the fact that it “can evoke not only feelings of refusal, disappointment and even hatred.”⁶ The intention of the council fathers may be to put an end to the controversy of papal authority, it nonetheless incurred a negative result.

II. Pope John Paul II’s Encyclical Letter *Ut Unum Sint*

Living out the spirit of the Second Vatican Council’s conciliar document *Unitatis Redintegratio*⁷ [UR] that which avers that ecumenism “is not just some sort of ‘appendix’ which is added to the Church’s traditional activity”, but instead it “is an organic part of her life and work, and consequently must pervade all that she is and does,”⁸ John Paul II succinctly opines that “at the Second Vatican Council the Catholic Church committed herself *irrevocably* to following the path of the ecumenical venture.”⁹ So far there are still

⁵ Norman Tanner, ed. *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils, Volume II: Trent to Vatican II* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1990), 811-816.

⁶ Walter Cardinal Kasper, *That They May Be One: The call to unity today* (London: Burns & Oates, 2004), 137.

⁷ Second Vatican Council, “*Unitatis Redintegratio*, Decree on Ecumenism. Rome,” (Rome, November 21, 1964). [Hereafter UR]. Website: http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19641121_unitatis-redintegratio_en.html

⁸ *Ibid.*, n. 20.

⁹ *Ibid.*, n. 3. Edward Idris Cassidy explains that *UUS* is the Holy Father’s response to the challenge of laxity of the ecumenical movement. “The reason for the movement away from the pursuit of full, visible unity within the ecumenical movement, which has in the past always been the goal of the Faith and Order Commission of the World

issues that "need fuller study before a true consensus of faith can be achieved."¹⁰ One of the major areas that need fuller study is the primacy of the bishop of Rome.

This is exactly what he initiated in *UUS*. This was a significant moment for the ecumenical movement. In *UUS*, John Paul II officially identified the question of the primacy of the Bishop of Rome as one of the five major areas that need fuller exploration for bringing about the goal of ecumenical progress. As such, he recognized the immensity of the role of his office in addressing the issue of primacy. At the same time, he recognized that his office is considered the 'biggest stumbling block' that impedes the accomplishment of the project. That is why, he offered a platform to directly address the issue. This he did by extending an invitation to all concerned to participate in a "patient and fraternal dialogue" to help "find a way of exercising the primacy which, while in no way renouncing what is essential to its mission, is nonetheless open to a new situation."¹¹

II. The Christian Reformation Leaders' and Theologians' Responses to *Ut Unum Sint*

To have a general appraisal of the responses of the Reformation leaders and theologians to *UUS* and their level of reception of the

Council of Churches, is to be found, I believe, mainly in frustration and disillusionment at the slow rate of progress in this search for greater communion. The difficulties that the churches are encountering in this quest bring a natural tendency to limit the goal. *Ut Unum Sint* is a response to this challenge." See Edward Idris Cassidy, "Ut Unum Sint in Ecumenical Perspective." In *Church Unity and the Papal Office: An Ecumenical Dialogue on John Paul II's Encyclical Ut Unum Sint*, by Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (eds.) (Grand Rapids and Cambridge U.K.: Eerdmans, 2001), 13.

¹⁰ John Paul II, *Ut unum sint*, n. 79.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, n. 95.

issue of the primacy of the Bishop of Rome, a brief survey of these responses is undertaken in this article. It is interesting to note that this work, by no means an exhaustive attempt, is rather selective one. From the pool of responses, the research shall select several responses that are available and representative of their own traditions with a view to assessing the level of receptivity of the papal office across the Christian Reformation world.

A. Lutheran

Martin Luther never intended to undermine the dignity of the office of the papacy. His intent was to correct the misgivings and abuses of the already diminishing integrity and credibility of the Catholic hierarchy. When he posted his ninety-five theses at the door of castle church in Wittenburg, he intended only to expose certain abuses committed by the hierarchy to the many uneducated laity. “His primary concern was to bring to light again and to make once more the original Gospel message of God’s grace in Christ, which alone and gratuitously reconciles man with God.”¹² In fact, it has been said that “[t]here are passages in the Lutheran Confessions which, theoretically, at least, seem to leave open the possibility of a certain primacy of the bishop of Rome, though strictly *de iure humano*.”¹³ He was, therefore, convinced that the reform he was suggesting was a form of service to the Church. It was due to the subsequent and unfortunate mishandling by the Catholic hierarchy of the incident that led to the definite break of Luther from the jurisdiction of the papacy and therefore from the Catholic fold. What

¹² Adriano Garuti, O.F.M., *Primacy of the Bishop of Rome and the Ecumenical Dialogue* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004), 98, cited from Meyer, “L’ufficiopapale”, 66.

¹³ *Ibid.*, cited from the document of the Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue, “A Lutheran Understanding of Papal Primacy,” 130.

followed thereafter were the many "tag-of-wars" of impolite and unchristian-like accusations and condemnations against one another. As to the systematic criticism against the papacy, the Lutheran formalized it in 1537 in the Smalcald articles¹⁴.

Considering the historical antagonistic attitude of the Lutheran tradition towards the papal office, how was John Paul II's encyclical received by the Lutheran adherents? In the light of *UUS*, how do the Lutherans receive the papal office now?

In the light of the invitation of Pope John Paul II, the Lutheran tradition dedicated its issue of *Concordia Journal* to review the question of primacy. This is to appraise whether there is a "new situation" in the understanding and praxis of the primacy that would make it palatable to the Lutherans. Drawing from their historical and confessional terms, six articles were collated in the manner that provide a panorama of the Lutheran understanding of the "papacy and its claim of primacy."¹⁵ Since it is a prerequisite that when we talk of renewal it needs the review of the past, the articles put a lot of emphasis on the historical development of the Lutherans' attitude towards the papal office.

In his article, *The Beginnings of the Papacy in the Early Church*, Quentin F. Wesselschmidt reviewed the historical and confessional perspective of the Lutheran tradition on the Petrine ministry.¹⁶ He argued that the papal primacy is unsubstantiated scripturally. If the Catholic Church should insist on the divine origin of the primacy of

¹⁴ See *Ibid.*, 102-103, Cf. footnote 64: von Allmen, *Il primato della Chiesa di Pietro e di Paolo*, 47.

¹⁵ Quentin F. Wesselschmidt (ed.), "Editor's Note," *Concordia Journal* Vol. 29, No. 4 (October 2003): 351.

¹⁶ See Quentin F. Wesselschmidt, "The Beginnings of the Papacy in the Early Church," *Concordia Journal* Vol. 29, No. 4 (October 2003): 374-391.

the pope, he argued that it should present “[i]ndisputable evidence on which claims of papal primacy are built.”¹⁷ What happened, he insisted, was a later assertion on the part of the Catholic Church by way of reading “back into the earlier period.”¹⁸ A case in point was the listing of the bishops of Rome. To assert the authority of the bishop of Rome against the prevailing heresies of the time, he stressed, some Fathers of the Church traced the continuity of his authority back to the Apostle Peter. Another waterloo of the papal office that he underlined was the failure of the papal office to produce an individual that could equal the stature of the Fathers of the Church.¹⁹

The Lutheran tradition, according to him, saw the leadership in the Church as collegial and not monarchical: “there was no overall centralized authority” during the early period of Christianity. Instead, “all congregations were independent and able to make their own decisions.” It was their common belief and worship that enabled them to “have a sense of interdependence among congregations throughout Christendom.”²⁰ With the increasing need for visible authority after the glorious days of the Roman empire, the bishop of Rome, he opined, “gradually began to fill this vacuum....The bishop in Rome gradually became the most significant and recognized leader in the city.”²¹ This was a major shift that took place in the historical development of the primacy. With this survey, he concluded that “the Roman church went beyond what can be supported by historical evidence and biblical justification.”²²

¹⁷ Ibid., 374.

¹⁸ Ibid., 374-376.

¹⁹ See Ibid., 376-378.

²⁰ Ibid., 379.

²¹ Ibid., 383.

²² Ibid., 391.

This assertion was affirmed by Charles P. Arand in his survey of the *Confessions* framed by the reformers during the Reformation period. In his article, *AntiChrist?: The Lutheran Confessions on the Papacy*, Arand examined the historical framework of the Lutheran Confessions.²³ Considering the radical transformation and renewal the papal office undertook for the past recent years, the questions he asked were: "what do we do with those statements on the papacy? Do we simply repeat them today? Do we ignore them? Do we try to explain them away?"²⁴ To better understand the Confessions, Arand contended, it is important to recall the historical factors that led the reformers to frame as antichrist, the Bishop of Rome. The use of the label "antichrist" for the pope, Arand pointed out, was a common practice during that time. This however may not be the case anymore. But then again this new situation in the history of the Lutheran Confessions regarding the papacy created a sense of uncertainty to the Lutherans. In this new situation, two possibilities can be gleaned: on one hand, whether to treat the statements of the Confessions as "historical judgments", on the other hand, whether to treat them as "doctrinal decisions". Either of the treatment is simply problematic. "The former can easily relativize the confessional statements...and not take them with due seriousness. The latter runs the opposite risk of treating" them "as binding dogma upon Lutherans for all times regardless of historical context."²⁵ The alternative that he found feasible is to affirm the two possibilities but with the caveat that they should be seen in a different light. This is because he does not disregard the possibility that the historical instances may still happen in the future if the person in the papal office returns to the old

²³ See Charles P. Arand, "Antichrist?: The Lutheran Confessions on the Papacy," *Concordia Journal* Vol. 29, No. 4 (October 2003): 392-406.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 392.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

negative and abusive ways. “Thus, the church cannot be complacent. It must continue to watch and pray.”²⁶ Arand strongly emphasized that the Catholic’s claim regarding the headship of the pope in Christendom by divine right (*de jure divino*) has no substantial evidence, especially from the sacred scriptures. He reiterated the Confessional statement that the head of the Church is Jesus Christ. For him, the leadership exercised by the pope is only by human right (*de jure humano*) and nothing more. Nonetheless, he applauded the recent popes for living out the ideas and ideals of the papal office.

The third article, *The Papacy in Perspective: Luther’s Reform and Rome*, sketched the specific event that led Luther to attack the papacy.²⁷ Robin Rosin pointed out that the papacy was not the primary target of Luther. It was the abuses of Rome that he strongly criticized. The papal office became an accessory to his desire for reform in the Church.²⁸ His “efforts at reform” was centered “on justification.”²⁹ Unfortunately, reforms undertaken by Rome could hardly be felt and seen. If they were be felt, it was only for a time because the clerics would eventually return to their old ways. It was in 1520 that Luther “upped the ante by calling the Roman pope the Antichrist.”³⁰ Did Luther have a sense of hope for Rome and in particular the papacy? “Of course. Everything Luther had said to this point included that possibility...Luther prayed for that.”³¹ Was the prayer of Luther realized? This seems to be the case with the recent event in the Catholic Church, the Second Vatican Council. Individuals like Fr. Yves Congar, a Catholic theologian, and Jean

²⁶ Ibid., 403.

²⁷ See Robin Rosin, “The Papacy in Perspective: Luther’s Reform and Rome,” *Concordia Journal* Vol. 29, No. 4 (October 2003): 407-426.

²⁸ Ibid., 409.

²⁹ Ibid., 415.

³⁰ Ibid., 417. “Antichrist is no label to be tossed out lightly and is not used by Luther simply in anger but with awareness of the theological implications he was making.”

³¹ Ibid., 420.

Jacques von Allmen, a Swiss reformed theologian, claimed that both the Counter-Reformation and the Reformation had come to close by virtue of the Second Vatican Council. It seems like the long-prevailing issues were now of an end.

But according to Richard H. Harneck, in his article *Vatican II's Conception of the Papacy: A Lutheran Response*, this is not really the case.³² He said that "Lutherans reading the documents of Vatican II are painfully aware of the major rift between Rom[an] and Lutheran theology." Harneck identified the problem of primacy as the distinctive factor for the separation: "Lutheran theology is clearly at odds with this Catholic principle."³³ That is why, he posed the question: "Will the encyclical of Pope John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint*, succeed in alleviating Lutheran concerns over papal authority?"³⁴ According to him, the possibility of a significant alleviation will only take place when Rome reconsiders its position on the divine origin of the primacy. This claim appears to the Lutherans as "inimical to the Gospel of Christ."³⁵ Lutherans lamented the fact that very minimal space was given to the issue of justification by the conciliar documents. However, it should be noted that as far as Pope John Paul II's firm defense of the fundamentals of the Christian faith is concerned, especially pertaining to moral and social issues, the Lutherans found it highly commendable.

There is indeed a deep chasm between the Catholic Church's theology and that of Lutheran theology. This is the confession of Samuel H. Nafzger in his article, *Ut Unum Sint and What It Says*

³² See Richard H. Harneck, "Vatican II's Conception of the Papacy: A Lutheran Response," *Concordia Journal* Vol. 29, No. 4 (October 2003): 427-446.

³³ *Ibid.*, 441.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 440.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

about the Papacy: Description and Response.³⁶ This great divide, Nafzger said, is very much evident in the texts of the Lutheran Confessions and the Vatican I's *Pastor Aeternus*. However, there were attempts committed to address the separation. One concrete attempt was John Paul II's *Ut Unum Sint*. Nafzger applauded and commended the pope for taking the initiative to address the issue of the primacy. He also applauded the pope for recognizing the need of the two parties to be involved in "resolving what has been a longstanding impasse between Protestants and Catholics over the 'ministry of unity of the Bishop of Rome.'"³⁷ He enjoined his Lutheran brethren to "join the Pope in emphasizing that genuine agreement on this issue cannot be achieved by asking either side to compromise its doctrinal convictions."³⁸ However, he recognizes that there were serious questions that the pope raised in the encyclical pertaining to the issue of the Petrine ministry. In his personal assessment, the most important concern "has to do with the understanding of the church upon with the Pope's fraternal invitation is based, and the implications this understanding of the church has for the dialogue to which he invites 'other Christians'."³⁹ Nafzger takes issue with the fact that while the encyclical has a fraternal tone compared to other Church's documents, it cannot dismiss easily the implications of the following statements: that the pope has the sole "'definitive judgment'...on the reception of the results of the dialogues" and that "'the communion of all particular Churches with the Church of Rome' is 'a necessary condition for unity'."⁴⁰ For him, this signified an irony to the fraternal invitation because it seemed

³⁶ See Samuel H. Nafzger, "Ut Unum Sint and What It Says about the Papacy: Description and Response," *Concordia Journal* Vol. 29, No. 4 (October 2003): 447-462.

³⁷ Ibid., 457.

³⁸ Ibid., 457-458.

³⁹ Ibid., 458.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 459.

like the final outcome for the fraternal dialogue "has already been decided."⁴¹ It is in this regard that he proposed that before attempting to find some practical aspects that need some changes in the primacy, some changes should be made to *UUS* at least as to how it sees the doctrine of the Church, together with what it signifies.⁴² He ended his response by affirming the pope's concluding statements which is the high priestly prayer of Jesus: *that they may all be one*.

The last contributor was Edward J. Callahan. In his article, he tried to locate the element of primacy in the *koinonia* ecclesiology proposed by *UUS*.⁴³ Callahan pointed out that before the attempt made by Pope John Paul II to locate the primacy within the ambit of the Church, there was already a seeming shift in the attitude of the Lutherans towards the Petrine ministry. This can be gleaned from the document of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue, entitled *Differing Attitudes Towards Papal Primacy*. This shift is a valuable opportunity to further the dialogue on the question of the primacy. It was very helpful, according to Callahan, that Pope John Paul II highlighted the threefold source of the Lutherans' rejection of the primacy, namely: "theological reflection, concerns about its growing power, and experienced abuses."⁴⁴ With the growing sense of need for a universal leadership in the Christian world especially in this very challenging period, a new and positive attitude towards the Petrine ministry is on the rise. There is a willingness to change the Lutheran tendency of repudiating the concept of primacy to being open to it. In fact, Callahan noted, there is now a sense of willingness

⁴¹ Ibid., 460.

⁴² Ibid., 461.

⁴³ See Edward J. Callahan, "Papacy as a Constitutive Element of *Koinonia* in *Ut Unum Sint*? *Ut Unum Sint* and What It Says about the Papacy: Description and Response," *Concordia Journal* Vol. 29, No. 4 (October 2003): 463-482.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 473.

to reinterpret the Lutheran position on the issue of the primacy at least within the context of the need of the Church. Taking the hint from *UUS*, Callahan contended that the exercise of the Petrine ministry should be for the sake of service to unity and charity in the Gospel-truths.

B. Reformed

In his article, *The Ministry of Unity and the Common Witness of the Churches Today*, Lukas Vischer, sketched the Reformed attitude towards the papacy. Vischer tried to discover the possibility whether there is a space where the centuries-old impasse on the problematic of the primacy could maneuver in the Reformed world. The fact that at its conception the Reformed tradition categorically rejected the papal office, which seemed to be the status quo in the Reformed-Roman Catholic relations. Unlike the case of Luther where he directed his criticism to the abuses in the Church, “Calvin did not confine his critique to denounce the corruption of papal Rome but called into question the institution of the papacy as such.”⁴⁵ In other words, Calvin questioned the legitimacy of the papal office. It was his firm conviction that the Bishop of Rome “went beyond the evidence found both in the Bible and in the writings of the Fathers of the early centuries. The papacy in the form it acquired, in the course of the centuries, up to the Reformation, he argued, has to be considered the result of an erroneous development.”⁴⁶ This led him to label the pope as ‘antichrist’. Another consideration is that part of the tradition of the Reformed is their “mistrust of all forms of personal authority.”⁴⁷ That is why,

⁴⁵ Ibid., 137.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 140.

their theologians tried to lay out the valuable role of synods or councils.

Having these considerations in mind, is there still a possibility for the Reformed tradition to entertain the Petrine ministry? While the idea of the Petrine ministry was not readily applauded by the Reformed churches, they nonetheless considered the idea of a "ministry of unity."⁴⁸ Vischer pointed out that this idea conformed to the desire of their theologians to strengthening the role of synod or council, which they have not found any way of actualizing it. But the caveat is that this ministry of unity should be exercised within the framework of the "charismatic succession". This is based on the idea that Peter was appointed/chosen leader of the College of the Apostles not because of his person but due to the charism gifted him by Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Vischer believed that only the one that exudes holiness should be considered as the minister in the ministry of unity. Vischer acknowledged that the setup of the ministry of unity is not really compatible with that of the papal ministry. That is why, the rest of his article revealed his sense of pessimism to the possibility of reframing the papal office to be of service to unity and charity. Vischer said that the different differing positions between the Reformed and the Catholic significantly contribute to the said difficulty. However, Vischer recognized that *UUS* had created "a new conversation", a conversation for the need of a minister for the service of unity in the Church of Christ.⁴⁹

C. Anglican

⁴⁸ Ibid., 141-144.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 150.

The Anglican Church “did not mean” to “break with catholicity, but rather desired a reform of the Church from within, with a view to establishing a Church that would be *simul catholicae reformatata*.”⁵⁰ But with the decision of Pope Pius V to excommunicate Queen Elizabeth I, it ushered in the partial breach in their relationship. The primary reason for the break therefore is not theological, but more political. Again, at the center of the controversy is the office of the primacy of the Bishop of Rome.

How did they see and receive then the pope’s invitation to help him look into the possibility of reinterpreting the manner in which the primacy should be exercised?

House of Bishops of the Church of England’s Response to *Ut Unum Sint*

After Vatican II, a series of dialogues was initiated between the Anglican communion and the Catholic Church in order to address the scandal of disunity. The result is considerably hopeful. An attitudinal shift from both sides is increasingly evident. This, in a sense, colored the way the Church of England welcomed the invitation of Pope John Paul II. That is why, immediately after the publication of *UUS*, the Church of England issued their initial response on behalf of Lambeth Palace and the PCPCU on May 30, 1995. At the end of their initial note, the Church of England promised a more considerable “response to the Encyclical and” they encouraged their members “to explore the text with their Roman Catholic brothers and sisters.”⁵¹ In June 1997, two years after the promise was made, the House of the

⁵⁰ Ibid., 198.

⁵¹ House of Bishops of the Church of England, “Initial Response of the Church of England to *Ut Unum Sint*,” (1995): #5, an Appendix in *May They All Be One: A Response of the House of Bishops of the Church of England to "Ut Unum Sint"*, (London, Church House, 1997).

Website: http://www.churchofengland.org/media/36072/may_they_all_be_one.rtf

Bishops of the Church of England issued their comprehensive response to *UUS*.⁵²

The Church of England put significant emphasis on the increasing relationship between the Anglican and the Catholic Churches since they commenced their bilateral dialogue. That is why, they could easily delineate a lot of critical issues from the encyclical that they find highly agreeable. It includes the primacy of common prayer, the need for repentance and conversion, recognition of our common baptism and the degree of communion that stems from it, the firm belief that unity is necessary in fulfilling the mission of the Church of Christ. In their response, they strongly stressed the valuable contributions of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) as instrumental in the effort to repair the ruptured relations, in which they agreed with the words of *Unitatis Redintegratio*, acknowledging that indeed "people of both sides were to blame."⁵³ It states that both the Anglican and the Catholic "histories have given birth to emotive and polarized language, which has often played a large part in the continuing separation of our churches." One important step ensuring a different "future lies in a generosity which willingly leaves behind the language of the past polemics in the search for a common understanding in faith."⁵⁴

The House of Bishops agreed with Pope John Paul II's claim that there are still critical areas that need fuller study, one of which is the role of the Bishop of Rome. A section is devoted to their reflection on the ministry of the Bishop of Rome. In the section, *The*

⁵² House of Bishops of the Church of England, "May They All Be One: A Response of the House of Bishops of the Church of England to '*Ut Unum Sint*,'" (London, Church House, 1997).
Website: http://www.churchofengland.org/media/36072/may_they_all_be_one.rtf

⁵³ *Ibid.*, #12.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, #16.

Role of the Bishop of Rome, they were “grateful for the Pope’s admission that the exercise of his ministry is a question for all Christians.” They assured the pope that they have a similar “understanding of the episcopate as a ministry, involving not only oversight of each local church but also a care for the universal communion of which each church is a member.” They highlighted ARCIC-I saying that “the office of the universal primate” is “an expression of care for universal communion among Christians that is inherent in the episcopal office itself.” That is why, they stressed that “Anglicans are thus by no means opposed to the principle and practice of a personal ministry at the world level in the service of unity.”⁵⁵ The caveat however is that they strongly believe that this ministry should “have both doctrinal and disciplinary elements.”⁵⁶

In their response, they expressed their concern regarding the issues faced by papal infallibility. While the House of Bishops acknowledged that the Anglican and the Catholic are in one in their appraisal of the episcopate as a ministry that involves oversight, “it would be quite another to agree to infallibility without the understanding of reception as” what they have indicated in ARCIC-I. They therefore encouraged further study on this issue.⁵⁷

The House of Bishops also admitted that it is difficult to agree on the “claim that the Bishop of Rome has by divine institution ordinary, immediate and universal jurisdiction over the whole Church.” They explained that this appears to be a “threat to the integrity of the episcopal college and the apostolic authority of the bishops.”⁵⁸ This showed the difference in the level of difficulty between the nuances of primacy as an oversight and primacy as a

⁵⁵ Ibid., #44.

⁵⁶ Ibid., #45.

⁵⁷ Ibid., #46.

⁵⁸ Ibid., #47.

jurisdiction. They said that this is not just about advocating a mere primacy of honor, "or for the exclusion from a universal primacy of the authority necessary for a world-wide ministry in the service of unity," but the fact that this claim has been found wanting and defective, especially in its developed form. History has it that the ministry of primacy was not able to serve the cause of unity but instead became instrumental to the many divisions that happened in the Church.⁵⁹

The House of Bishops proposed that these concerns be studied fully and significantly considering the experience of the Church regarding the exercise of primacy during the first millennium in juxtaposition with the pressing concerns presented by the 'signs of the times'. Important consideration, according to them, should be focused on the relationship between primacy and collegiality in the Church; an issue that is at the forefront of all ecumenical discussions and reflections as far as the problem of authority in the Church is concerned, in particular the question of the Petrine ministry. This issue is especially important to the Anglicans, they confessed. "It is widely recognized that within our Anglican Communion there is a danger that 'provincial autonomy' may be taken to mean 'independence'. Some consider that a primatial ministry with an appropriate collegial and conciliar structure is essential if this danger is to be avoided."⁶⁰ It can be sensed here the rich experience of the Church of England as far as the problem of authority is concerned. The Anglicans have experienced the exercise of both realities: primacy and collegiality. The Anglicans have seen the unpleasant consequences of advocating an extreme position. It is therefore their

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid., #53.

belief that a more balanced approach be recognized and utilized as a means to better serve the unity in the Church of Christ.

Bishop John Hind's Response

In his introductory remarks in the symposium organized by the Society of the Atonement in preparation for its 100th anniversary of foundation, Bishop John Hind, a diocesan bishop and the chairman of the Church of England's Faith and Order Advisory Group, stressed that his response is not made on behalf of these two institutions he represented. Rather it was a personal response to the invitation of Pope John Paul II for a 'patient and fraternal dialogue'. In his response, he argued "that all forms of primacy, including the ministry of the Bishop of Rome, are forms of episcopal ministry."⁶¹ For the Anglicans, the framework from which they see the Petrine ministry is the 1988 Lambeth Conference. In its Resolution no. 8, it acknowledged the indispensable need for authority in the Church. In their case, they still struggled to frame the concept "of oversight that properly belongs to the Communion and the relation of personal oversight, primacy and collegiality appropriate at a level above the provincial."⁶² Reiterating the response of the Church of England to *UUS*, he said that the Anglicans are not really "opposed to the principle and practice of a ministry at the world level in the service of unity."⁶³ He believes that the reason for this kind of openness to this idea of ministry is a fruit of the ecumenical dialogue. He recalled the historical sentiment that led to the rejection of the primacy by the Anglicans. He said that it was the belief of "[t]hose who spoke and

⁶¹ Bishop John Hind, "Primacy and Unity: An Anglican Contribution to a Patient and Fraternal Dialogue," in *Petrine Ministry and the Unity of the Church: "Towards a Patient and Fraternal Dialogue"*, edited by Fr. James F. Puglisi (Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1999): 35.

⁶² M. Thurian, ed., "Churches Respond to BEM III," *Faith and Order Paper* 135, no. 158 (Geneva: W.C.C., 1987): 37.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 38.

wrote so intemperately...that the Roman Church had rejected the Catholic Church.” It is also the firm belief of “the Anglican theologians” that “the papacy...had not proved a safeguard against doctrinal error.”⁶⁴ But still there are some that take a more moderate stance on the primacy. This opening, according to him, could be utilized in furthering the reflections on the value of primacy in the Church at the universal level. Another valuable opening is the new situation presented by Pope John Paul II. That is why, Bishop Hind underscored that “the Anglican Communion rejoices at Pope John Paul II’s invitation and looks forward to the development of the papacy as a ministry in the service of the unity of the whole Church—‘a pope for all Christians.’”⁶⁵

D. Methodist

The relationship between the Methodist and the Catholic Church has already gained pace since they started their conversation in 1967, says Geoffrey Wainwright. In his article, *The Gift Which He On One Bestows, We All Delight to Prove*,⁶⁶ he pointed out that “recently Methodists have become more willing to recognize the Roman Catholic Church as an institution for the divine good of its members.” Likewise, he underscored that “the Catholic Church since Vatican II certainly includes Methodists among those who, by baptism and faith in Christ, enjoy ‘a certain though imperfect communion with the Catholic Church.’”⁶⁷ But he acknowledged that

⁶⁴ Ibid., 39-40.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 56.

⁶⁶ See Geoffrey Wainwright, “‘The Gift Which He On One Bestows, We All Delight to Prove’: A Possible Methodist Approach to a Ministry of Primacy in the Circulation of Love and Truth,” in James F. Puglisi, ed., *Petrine Ministry and the Unity of the Church* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999): 59-82.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 61.

a lot of difficulties remain. One serious difficulty is papal primacy. That is why, in this article, he applauded the pope for the language he used in *UUS*. He opined:

They will resonate much more readily with the language of John Paul II when he speaks of ‘a ministry which presides in truth and love,’ so that the ship of the Church ‘will not be buffeted by the storms and will one day reach its haven.’ Those are the terms—‘truth and love’—under which the notion of a ‘presiding ministry’ may begin to find understanding among Methodists; and perhaps also, in the long run, the idea that it is as a ‘function of Peter’ that such a ministry ‘must continue in the Church, so that under her sole Head, who is Jesus Christ, she may be visibly present in the world as the communion of all his disciples,’ and just possibly, in the even longer run, the thought that such a Petrine function belongs historically and theologically to the bishops of Rome.⁶⁸

This is the language that is quite familiar to Methodists, he claimed. The language ‘truth and love’ is the characteristic feature of their ecclesiology. This provides, according to him, the basis for a future dialogue on the question of the primacy.

Relying on the biblical narratives as to how Apostle Peter exercised his ministry, Wainwright believed that it would be interesting if the idea of an “itinerant superintendency” be introduced to the table of dialogue.⁶⁹ In a sense, what he was proposing is to revive something in the primitive life of the Church that was found absolutely effective. The bulk of his response focused on the

⁶⁸ Ibid., 62.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 69.

different documents produced by the Joint Commission emphasizing the significant areas that the Methodist and the Catholic Church agreed upon, especially in the area of ecclesiology. This, according to him, could help a lot in the appraisal of the Petrine ministry. Towards the end of his response, he offered a suggestion how the pope could exercise his ministry.

My respectful suggestion is that the pope should invite those Christian communities which he regards as being in real, if imperfect, communion with the Roman Catholic Church to appoint representatives to cooperate with him and his appointees in formulating a statement expressive of the Gospel to be preached to the world today. Thus the theme of the 'fraternal dialogue' which John Paul II envisaged would shift from the *theory* of the pastoral and doctrinal office to the *substance* of what is believed and preached. And the very *exercise* of elaborating a statement of faith might—by the process of its launching, its execution, its resultant form, its publication, and its reception—illuminate the question of 'a ministry that presides in truth and love.'⁷⁰

E. Presbyterian

In its publication, *Journal of Presbyterian History*, December 2000 issue, an article entitled *The Successor to Peter* was published. It was co-authored by Case-Winters, Anna, and Lewis Mudge. Although their co-authored response to the invitation of Pope John Paul II was personal in nature, it was nonetheless recognized by the

⁷⁰ Ibid., 82.

Presbyterian Church in the USA during its General Assembly in 2001.⁷¹ In a sense, it elevated the status of the article as an official response. In their article, they appreciated the initiative of Pope John Paul II for providing a platform to address the question of primacy. This new situation manifested the sincere desire of the pope to collaborate patiently and fraternally with the separated brethren in findings ways by which his office should be exercised. They commended the rhetoric employed by the Holy Father in his encyclical, which was quite different from the usual rhetoric of the past. They also applauded the pope for initiating a paradigm shift in viewing the Petrine ministry wherein it did not only take the biblical foundation of the Petrine ministry to justify its legitimation but rather he took it to deduce the essentials of the ministry of the Apostle Peter.

Although they recognized that there is an increasing need for some sort of universal ministry for the service of unity and charity, they confessed that they still struggle to reconcile the idea of absolute authority with collegiality. They found it difficult also to connect the idea of a universal ministry with a particular person for the sake of unity. Nevertheless, they were open to an idea that a credible and spiritual individual can exercise the universal ministry at the universal level. But still, this, he noted, is a serious difficulty that requires deeper reflection from both sides. It is in this regard that they were grateful for the initiative of John Paul II.

F. Pentecostal

⁷¹ See Anna Case-Winters and Lewis Mudge, "The Successor to Peter," *Journal of Presbyterian History* Vol. 80, n. 2 (Summer 2002): 83-102.

Pentecostalism is a new wave in the life of the Church of Christ specifically attributed to the mysterious works of the Holy Spirit. It was only recently that they involved themselves in the ecumenical movement. Part of better defining and understanding themselves, "the Society for Pentecostal Studies has brought together scholars from a variety of traditions studying the theology, history and ecumenical relations of the classical Pentecostal churches."⁷² One of the areas they dealt with was the invitation of the pope in his *UUS*. In the journal *ONE IN CHRIST: A Catholic Ecumenical Review*, two articles being published were responses of two Pentecostal theologians. The first one is the article of Terry L. Cross and the other one is that of Glen Menzies.

Terry L. Cross, an ordained minister in the Church of God, wrote an essay entitled, *Possintne Omnes Unum Esse? A Pentecostal Response to Ut Unum Sint*.⁷³ Cross commenced his article by indicating the kind of sentiment the Pentecostals have towards any institutionalized hierarchy or structure in the Church of Christ. This is the characteristic feature of Pentecostalism: an antagonistic attitude towards "one grand church" since for them this "weaken[s] the Gospel message".⁷⁴ The presence of the Pentecostals in the ecumenical movement is already an enigma for some of them. Nevertheless, he cannot but praise "John Paul II's plea for unity...[as] so genuine and his call for 'patient and fraternal dialogue' so reasonable."⁷⁵ Cross confessed that his personal experience manifested the difficulty Pentecostals face whenever they engage in

⁷² See "An introductory note by the editor to the Pentecostal Responses to *Ut Unum Sint*," *ONE IN CHRIST: A Catholic Ecumenical Review* Vol. 41, No. 1 (January 2006): 3.

⁷³ See Terry L. Cross, "*Possintne Omnes Unum Esse? A Pentecostal Response to Ut Unum Sint*," *ONE IN CHRIST: A Catholic Ecumenical Review* Vol. 41, No. 1 (January 2006): 3-22.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 4.

ecumenism. Cross identified the cause of the difficulty to “the leftover fundamentalist DNA that hangs on to the Pentecostal leaders and constituency.”⁷⁶ In any case, his response to *UUS* is a manifestation of his strong approval considering the fact that his reading of the documents of the two Vatican Councils gave him the impression “of superiority instead of a genuine interest in dialogue.” For him, *UUS* showed “a massive change of tone and for the first time in my ecumenical experience, I felt some type of genuine unity might be possible.” It helped a lot that “Pope John Paul II’s tone is pastoral and confraternal; his assessment of ecumenical attempts is both personal and hopeful; his theme seems to be *dialogue*.”⁷⁷ In any case, he proceeded by saying that the five issues or areas indicated by the Holy Father that needs fuller study may not necessarily be the main concerns for the Pentecostals. As such, he outlined the major and necessary issues that the Catholics and the Pentecostals may talk about over the table of dialogue. First, on the visible unity of the Church. Secondly, the papal primacy, Petrine ministry in the context of the ecclesiology of Pentecostalism. Here he confided that he sees “John Paul II’s view of the Petrine ministry as one of unique service that only someone in his position could fill at this time in history.”⁷⁸ However, while Pope John Paul II’s description of the role of the Bishop of Rome as servant of unity is palatable to the Pentecostals, his description of primacy as servanthood remains problematic due to their difficulty in reconciling the concept of ‘primacy’ with that of ‘servanthood’. So for him there still remains areas on the issue of the primacy of the Bishop of Rome that need fuller study and dialogue between Catholics and Pentecostals. The remaining pages of his response was in fact a challenge addressed to his fellow Pentecostals: “it should

⁷⁶ Ibid., 3-8.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 9.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 11.

cause us to ask what we can bring to the table out of respect for our host."⁷⁹

In his article, *A Pentecostal Response to Ut Unum Sint*,⁸⁰ Glen Menzies, an ordained minister of the Assemblies of God who has been involved in Evangelical-Catholic dialogue for approximately nine years, started his response with a great expression of admiration and respect for Pope John Paul II for what he did on behalf of Christianity against "widespread attack...from the forces of humanism, materialism, secularism, and pluralism." His "forceful defense of Christian belief in the face of attacks from these enemies" merited great esteem from the Pentecostals. In fact, he confided that what led to the change of attitude of the Pentecostals from "that uncharitable posture toward Catholicism" is their common defense of fundamental Christian morality. Just like Cross, Menzies noted that there is a softening of that "long-time anti-ecumenical stance in the Assemblies of God."⁸¹ *UUS* is admirable, Menzies says, because while it proposes full and visible unity, it manifested no "compromising stance" which is one of the qualities of Pentecostalism. "*Ut Unum Sint* repeatedly warns of the dangers of skirting real differences in order to achieve some sort of false peace."⁸² As for the issue of the primacy of the Bishop of Rome, he acknowledged that Pentecostals believe in the necessity of leaders in Church(es). He pointed out that "many Pentecostals would also be willing to acknowledge a special place to the Bishop of Rome as the most visible spokesman for worldwide Christianity" but with the caveat that "this special place" does not "involve any sort of ecclesial

⁷⁹ Ibid., 9-15.

⁸⁰ See Glen Menzies, "A Pentecostal Response to *Ut Unum Sint*," *ONE IN CHRIST: A Catholic Ecumenical Review* Vol. 41, No. 1 (January 2006): 23-33.

⁸¹ Ibid., 23.

⁸² Ibid., 23-25.

or doctrinal authority over Pentecostals, but merely to reflect the reality of the situation.”⁸³ A clear indication is that in the Pentecostal communion, *UUS* created a significant stir for further studying and understanding the papal office. The Christological prayer used by Pope John Paul II has great psychological efficacy for the Pentecostals. For them, as Menzies pointed out, “If we choose to remain faithful to our commitment to stand under the authority of Scripture, we must each wrestle with whether or not we ourselves are impediments to the fulfillment of Christ’s prayer that those who believe in him ‘may all be one’.”⁸⁴ This is the fundamental reason why the encyclical is hard to ignore.

G. Evangelical

While the Evangelical sentiment on the problematic of primacy in the Christendom is not as intense as that of the Catholic counterpart relative to the level or degree of concern that requires immediate attention for the simple reason that the themes on papal primacy and the promotion of full and visible unity of the Church are not really high on their agenda, they nonetheless share the concern. They appreciated the fact that the pope had initiated to tackle the long-overdue concern in the Christian world. Such appreciation was expressed explicitly on several occasions.

Faith and Order Commission of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA (NCCCUSA)

⁸³ Ibid., 31-32.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 33.

The Faith and Order Commission of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA responded to PCPCU's document, *Petrine Ministry: A Working Paper*. NCCCUSA's response was entitled, *To The Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity*.⁸⁵ The Faith and Order Commission expressed gratitude to Pope John Paul II for the invitation for further dialogue in areas that still remain problematic in the actualization of Christian unity. The reason is that they share the same concern. The Faith and Order Commission expressed a willingness to "engage in the process of dialogue in a spirit of deep humility before Christ and in a spirit of willing openness to his will for the whole people of God". It acknowledges the value of studying the issue of primacy as a response to, as well as a reception of, the Petrine ministry. It acknowledges that there are still divergences in the understanding of the nature and exercise of the Petrine ministry. But one thing is for sure, the various biblical studies on the scriptural foundation of the primacy provide valuable insights on the issue. Then again, despite the fact that there is only one bible, there still occurs a plethora of interpretations, each colored by particular traditions. It also clarifies an important concern regarding the communions' reception of the Petrine ministry. Notably, the level of reception varies from communion to communion, given the different appraisals of the Petrine ministry. It is not safe, therefore, to assume that when dialoging with others that they have only one treatment of the Petrine ministry. Interestingly, the different understandings among the communions on the nature of the church greatly affect the communions' reception of the Petrine ministry.

⁸⁵ Faith and Order Commission of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA, "To The Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity." Website: www.nationalcouncilofchurches.us/shared-ministry/unity/Pontifical.pdf.

Paul Anderson

Paul Anderson is an ordained minister of the Evangelical Friends International. He has been involved with the ecumenical movement for quite some time due to his line of interests in Johanine studies and the early Church. His essay *Petrine Ministry and Christocracy: A Response to Ut Unum Sint*⁸⁶ is an unofficial personal response. It was an act of courtesy in response to the request of the NCCCUSA to provide a response to PCPCU's document *Petrine Ministry: A Working Paper*. Although his response was directed to the PCPCU document, it was nevertheless framed within the context of the invitation of *UUS*. As such, his response was an indirect one. In his response to the two documents, *Petrine ministry* and *Ut Unum Sint*, he expressed his appreciation of the Christological prayer of the pope since it was also his prayer for the Church of Christ. It is, therefore, his hope that his modest response could contribute to "further the vision for that unity and its actualization."⁸⁷ He believed that the pope's initiative opened 'a special window of opportunity' for the realization of unity. Moreover, he stressed that the Petrine ministry should be viewed within the context of Christocracy. By Christocracy he meant that Christ continues to lead His Church through the Holy Spirit: "The ministry of Peter in the early Church serves the leadership of Christ (Christocracy) rather than supplanting it."⁸⁸ His emphasis on the fundamental necessity of a centralized leadership as was exercised even during the time of Christ and the apostles allows us to appreciate the institutionalized structures in the Church. Taking the analogy of the body as a framework for structural leadership, he

⁸⁶ See Paul Anderson, "Petrine Ministry and Christocracy: A Response to Ut Unum Sint," *ONE IN CHRIST: A Catholic Ecumenical Review* Vol. 40, No. 1 (January 2005): 3-39.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

stressed that the scriptures are rich in passages about the centrality of the leadership of Peter. His reflection on certain Johannine passages, such as, chapters 10 and 17, provided valuable perspectives on the characteristics of the leadership of Christ, as well as on Peter's leadership. In a sense, his response was an elaboration of the new situations presented by *UUS*. But what is commendable is that his reflection was not only intended as a comment on the scope and limitations of the Petrine ministry, but also as a word to "all Christian leaders in all settings," that is, it was intended "to be catholic".⁸⁹ He divided his contributions into four major themes as proposed by the pope: the pastoral aspects of episcopal service, ecumenical responsibility, ways of exercising primacy, and an open ecumenical invitation.⁹⁰

Regarding the third theme, he acknowledged that "Christ indeed desires the unity of his church, and Christian leaders participate in that desire by virtue of their charge to care for the flock of Christ."⁹¹ He proposes that inasmuch as Christ desired unity, Christian leaders should manifest a firm resolve to live it out. He strongly stressed that the "[p]articular responsibilities of Christian leaders root in serving the particular needs of those under their care, and the full and visible sign of Christian Community will ever be the love of Christ." For him, the vocation to love "should be the embodiment of the love of Christ in the Church and in the world."⁹² This theme is a reflection of what Pope John Paul II elucidated, that the primacy should be an exercise of charity/love. Furthermore, he pointed out that the "primacy itself deserves to be recovered, not as a factor of position, privilege, authority, or power, but as a function of stewardship,

⁸⁹ Ibid., 14.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 15-33.

⁹¹ Ibid., 24.

⁹² Ibid., 25.

service, responsibility, and love.”⁹³ He also opined that in this ‘emerging new situation’ in the new ecumenism, the role of the Catholic Church, in particular the role of the primacy of the Bishop of Rome, could be rediscovered in the fulfilling of its mission or vocation to be of service in forging Christian fellowship. For him, re-envisioning of the Catholic vocation necessitates going back to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Like Christ, the Bishop of Rome “should find a way to transcend particular church traditions inviting into fellowship the scattered sheep of Christ across the world’s time-worn landscapes.”⁹⁴ By magnifying the lordship and leadership of Christ, “this could lead to its being recognized even more broadly within and beyond the Roman Catholic Church.”⁹⁵

Commendable in Anderson’s response is his tendency to be more objective and forward-looking. Just like the wish of the Holy Father and the Second Vatican Council as a whole, significant steps could be taken only when Christians learn to avoid using imprudent language that would have significant psychological impact on others. Anderson definitely offers valuable insights that further deepen one’s understanding and appreciation of the universal leadership in the Church.

H. Baptist

The characteristic feature of the Baptist tradition is that the individual is of high priority. It is devoid of a sense of unity. “There is no unity among Baptist folk even though we have the [Baptist World Alliance] BWA. The emphasis on the individual find its expression in the so-called autonomy of the local church—a principle

⁹³ Ibid., 26.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 34.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

that is a distinguishing mark of Baptists."⁹⁶ This is the confession of Erich Geldbach. Hence, his reflection on the Petrine ministry should be treated as "a Baptist perspective, not *the* perspective."⁹⁷ In any case, his response covers the essential features of the Baptist tradition.

In his article, he recalled the beginning of the Baptist tradition. Geldbach said that it was part of the Puritan movement in the 17th century. Its first theologian who tried to frame its ecclesiology was John Smyth who wrote a book *Differences of the Churches of the Separation* in 1608. It contained the general description of what constitute the true church: it should be the true spouse of Christ. He further qualified that "[t]he distinctive mark of the new church...is not only its true constitution which is reflective of the true, primitive, apostolic Church, but also the *true apostolic mode of baptism*."⁹⁸ According to him, the critique of Smyth was directed to two major institutions: the Church of England and the Roman Catholic. The Church of England, he branded it as harlot, while the "Roman Church as the source of all evil, as 'Antichristianisme,' and...the pope [as] 'Antichrist'."⁹⁹ Geldbach said this kind of polemical tone was not surprising during the seventeenth century this is because it was very common.¹⁰⁰ In the course of his presentation, he defended the Baptist's pessimistic and antagonistic view of the Catholic Church in general and the papal office in particular. He said that

⁹⁶ Erich Geldbach, "The Petrine Ministry and the Unity of the Church: A Baptist Perspective," in *Petrine Ministry and the Unity of the Church: "Towards a Patient and Fraternal Dialogue"*, edited by Fr. James F. Puglisi (Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1999): 153.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 156. [Emphasis added.]

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 157.

looking at history, it revealed to us the objectivity of the criticism of the Baptist tradition against the Catholic Church.

If this is the case, how did they receive *UUS* especially its invitation for ‘patient and fraternal dialogue’ on the question of the Petrine ministry?

A paradigm shift seemed to take place, according to Geldback, “when ‘good Pope’ John XXIII summoned Vatican II and invited ‘separated brethren’ as observers. Lines of communication were opened for the first time, and an official dialogue between the two communities was held between 1984 and 1988.”¹⁰¹ In their series of dialogues, they underscored certain areas that needed further study. One crucial area is *koinonia*. Geldback pointed out that their reflections on this theme revealed the great chasm that divide the Baptists and the Catholic Church. The Baptist see *koinonia* in an egalitarian context whereas the Catholic Church see it in the context of an institution, that is, hierarchical. Again, another impasse was discovered. Although he seemed to take the idea of the Petrine ministry introduced by Pope John Paul II, it remained problematic because such a ministry is concentrated only in one person. “Given these limitations, there seems only one possible solution for the Petrine ministry to be exercised. It is along the lines of a spokesperson for the world-wide Christian community.” But then again, he strongly insists that this should “never be done by one person alone.” What he was proposing was to model it on the ‘conciliar fellowship’ exercised by the World Council of Churches.¹⁰² Towards the end of his article, he noted that a lot of

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 161.

¹⁰² Ibid., 167.

things still need to be considered that which requires "much patience—on both sides."¹⁰³

III. Assessment of the Level of Reception

A survey of other Christian traditions' responses to *UUS* mostly come from scholars – historians, theologians, ecumenists – who, in one way or another, are involved in the cause of ecumenism. Their responses are either personal or representational of their churches' traditions. There are also responses that at the beginning were only considered personal but eventually are adapted as an official response by their church or ecclesial community. A case in point is that of the Presbyterian tradition. The nature of the examined responses, though varying according to the occasion was issued, delivered or published. There were those that were really the official response of a particular church or ecclesial communities, like the responses of the House of Bishops of the Church of England, the Bishops' Conference of the Church of Sweden, and the Presbyterian Church in the USA. It is notable that except for the House of the Bishops of the Church of England, no other else issued an initial response right after the publication of *UUS*. Responses came about only later on. The reason perhaps because the invitation of Pope John Paul II came as a surprise to all, even Catholics.¹⁰⁴ In fact, even the response of the Catholic Church came relatively late in the form of organizing symposiums, and the like.

It is noteworthy also that those who responded in kind to the invitation of the pope relative to the Reformation traditions came

¹⁰³ Ibid., 169.

¹⁰⁴ Whitehead, *The New Ecumenism*, 118.

from a broad range of Western Churches and ecclesial communities (Lutheran, Reformed, Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian in the USA, Pentecostal, Evangelical and Baptist). Geographically, most of the responses came from Churches and ecclesial communities in Europe and USA.

As far as the reception by the other Christian traditions to the papal invitation to engage him in finding ways to better exercise his office, it is notable that the general sentiment expressed by the other Christian traditions manifest a great sentiment of approval and gratefulness. They were in unison in saying that the platform provided by Pope John Paul II to critically undertake and look into the question of the centuries old impasse created 'a new situation'. This, in a sense, is a 'significant shift' in the attitude of other Christian traditions towards the Catholic documents. It is believed that *UUS* is the most accepted and recognized encyclical document, probably at par with the conciliar document of Vatican II on the decree on ecumenism *UR*, in the Christian world. *UUS* was welcomed positively by other Christian traditions, one reason being that there is an observable shift in the language used and the tone by which the pope enunciated his message as nothing short of fraternal. They also applauded the humility that was manifested by the pope, especially when he reiterated his asking for forgiveness for the mistakes committed in the past. It is interesting to note also that their appraisal of *UUS* was in conjunction with the Vatican I's *PA* and Vatican II's *UR*. On the one hand, *UUS* emphasizes the pastoral aspect of the primacy compared to *PA* where it really emphasized the doctrinal dimension. *UUS* reiterated the Catholic commitment to the ecumenical movement as spelled out by *UR*. Considering the bulk of the first part of *UUS* was the reiteration of the Church's commitment to ecumenism, it suggests that the pope was serious in committing his office to reception of Vatican II. What they sense is a continuity

and consistency in the priority and attitude of the Catholic Church after Vatican II. Another good point they saw from the encyclical is that its title was an excellent choice. They associated themselves with the intention of the encyclical. For the other Christian traditions, *UUS* is also their prayer and desire for the Church of Christ. This is one major impetus for their readiness to engage the pope in 'a patient and fraternal dialogue' regarding the possibility of helping him find ways to better exercise his ministry.

Their responses to the issue of the primacy of the Bishop of Rome was altogether a different consideration. Their appraisal of the issue of Petrine ministry vary from communion to communion. But as far as their general sentiment and reception of the ministry of primacy, there seemed to be a common awareness about the growing need for a universal ministry in the Church of Christ. The main reason articulated in their responses is that it is the 'need of the Church' at this point in time. Considering the threats of the 'culture of death', degradation of moral sense and sensitivity, and the increasing depreciation of the value the Church and in general religion in people's and societies' life, posed great amount of challenge on the Christian world on how they can still witness the Gospel-truths to the world. It definitely does not help the Church's situation where division is the most pronounced feature of the Church of Christ that which lessens its credibility of witnessing unity in truth and charity. Although there is a perception of a need for universal oversight, some of them (Lutheran, Reformed, Baptist, etc.), nonetheless, openly expressed opposition to the idea of papal oversight. The reason given is that the universal ministry should not be given to one person only, that is, the Bishop of Rome. They want to see a more democratic way of appointing or electing the one who is qualified for the universal oversight. Another reason given was

that they saw the historical events in the life of the papal office as a caution. History, according to them (Lutheran, Reformed, Baptist, etc.), revealed the undeniable fact that the office could become a disservice when the pope is not morally upright and at par with the ideas and ideals of the Petrine ministry. Absolute monarchical style of leadership, for them, is never healthy in the life of the Church.

Their theological and scriptural argument against the papal primacy is grounded on their firm belief that the Petrine ministry has no grounding in the scriptures. They rejected the idea that the Petrine ministry presently exercised by the pope has its historical link to the ministerial commission and function of Peter. They argued that the present ministry of primacy is but an evolution which is solely based on hypothetical suppositions of the Catholic theologians and the popes themselves to justify the exercise of ministry universally. The universal position of their responses is that the later assertion that the papal primacy had its historical link way back to Sts. Peter and Paul did not really help the cause of the Catholic Church in justifying the Petrine ministry. It is in this aspect that the Protestants across denominations come into agreement. Noticeable is their readings of the scriptural texts wherein they focused on how to prove the unsubstantiatedness of the Petrine ministry. Most of them argued that the Petrine commission, on one hand, was exclusive only to the person or faith of Peter, in effect, it was not transmittable. On the other hand, it saw Peter's appointment of service to the Church as representational of the College of the Apostles. This suggested, therefore, that all bishops inherit the Petrine ministry of leadership and servanthood.

The most fundamental contention of the other Christian traditions against the Petrine ministry is on the claim of the Catholic Church that the primacy is exercised by virtue of divine right. It is really their firm belief that the right that is exercised by the pope is

not by virtue of the divine right but only by human right borne out of the need of the Church to preserve and promote the visible unity in the Church. The other Christian traditions' unanimous finding that there is a non-conclusive evidence that the scriptures can substantiate the ministry of primacy led them to dismiss outrightly the Catholic's claim. The only alternative they can invoke as a ground for the legitimacy of the universal ministry is by way of human right, particularly seen in the context of the Church's need.

Another problem of the Petrine ministry indicated by the different traditions of the Reformation in their responses pertains to the twin dogma of the Roman pontificate, that is, the infallibility of the pope. They vehemently argued that the papal infallibility is superfluous. They believe that it has no biblical basis at all. For them, infallibility is but an unfortunate response of the First Vatican Council fathers to the pressing concerns of the Catholic Church during that time. Infallibility, for them, was a radical response by the Vatican I to an extreme situations posed by Gallicanism and the advent of intellectualism in Europe that undermined the Gospel-truths. They could not but express that the universal jurisdiction and papal infallibility posited by the papal office are radical departures from the Gospel-truths. According to the House of Bishops of the Church of England, the assertion of the Catholic Church regarding the universal jurisdiction of the pope as defined by the First Vatican Council as something *ordinary and immediate over all Churches and their bishops* is considered "a threat to the integrity of the episcopal college and the apostolic authority of the bishops, those brothers Peter was commanded to strengthen."¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ House of Bishops of the Church of England, "May They All Be One," #47.

The other Christian traditions, however, proposed that instead of using Petrine ministry, which from them has no biblical basis, it should be 'Petrine function'. This idea was introduced by the Lutheran tradition which refers to "a particular form of Ministry exercised by a person, officeholder, or local church with reference to the church as a whole. The Petrine function of the Ministry serves to promote or preserve the oneness of the church by symbolizing unity, and by facilitating communication, mutual assistance or correction, and collaboration in the church's mission."¹⁰⁶ One function they introduced to be played by the Petrine function is to be the 'spokesperson' in behalf of the Christian world. Considering that they were reluctant to assign the Petrine function to one person only, that is, to the pope, the other Christian traditions seemed to be in unison in proposing that this should be exercised in a more democratic way. Meaning, they are proposing that the Petrine function should be concentrated not only to the pope but also to the leaders of the other Christian traditions, especially those who manifest a 'charismatic succession'.

The other Christian traditions' common awareness about the growing need for a universal ministry in the Christian world due to the 'need of the Church' at this point in time led them to consider the ministry of oversight at the universal level. The caveat, however, is that the ministry of oversight should be exercised within the context of collegiality. This ministry of oversight should also be exercised in a more scriptural and spiritual orientation. This means that the exercise of the ministry of oversight, as what Paul Anderson proposes, should be seen in the context of the leadership of Jesus Christ. It should therefore reflect the ministry of the Apostle Peter, who assumed the leadership after the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

¹⁰⁶ Paul C. Empie and T. Austin (eds.), *Papal Primacy and the Universal Church. Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue VI*. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1974, 11.

Peter's ministry during the post-resurrection period was exercised in a more pastoral way. He also served as a teacher and a spokesperson of the remaining Eleven Apostles. For the Reformed tradition, there is also a significant shift in their appraisal of the Petrine function. The Reformed sees it in the context of the ministry of unity. The Reformed proposes that the ministry of unity should be exercised within the framework of the "charismatic succession". This is based on the idea that Peter was appointed/chosen leader of the College of the Apostles not because of his person but due to the charism gifted him by Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. For the Methodist tradition, this Petrine function as a ministry of unity should be exercised in the service of 'truth and love'. The Methodists believe that the language of 'truth and love' is the characteristic feature of the Church of Christ. Relying on the biblical narratives as to how the Apostle Peter exercised his ministry, the Methodist proposes that the Petrine function as a ministry of unity should be exercised in the form of an 'itinerant superintendency'. It is in this regard that they applauded the pastoral activities of John Paul II. During his pontificate, he visited a number of other Christian Churches and communities, as well as, the communities of other religions. For the Methodists, the pope exemplified the itinerant superintendency exercised by the Apostle Peter. For the Evangelical tradition, the exercise of leadership should be seen in the context of the leadership of Jesus Christ. Leadership should be rooted in the service of the needs of those under the leader's care. Imbued with Christ's love, leaders in the Church should embody the love of Jesus Christ in the Church and in the world. For Anderson, an Evangelical, the "primacy itself deserves to be recovered, not as a factor of position, privilege,

authority, or power, but as a function of stewardship, service, responsibility, and love.”¹⁰⁷

Concluding Remarks

In the light of this undertaking, International Conference on the Asian Ecumenical Movement (ICAEM), it must be underscored that the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences (FABC) had highlighted John Paul II’s *UUS* in its joint project in 1996 with the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) entitled, Asian Movement for Christian Unity.¹⁰⁸ The project had heavily drew inspiration from the conciliar documents, especially from *UR*. It also drew inspiration from Pope John Paul II’s *UUS*. Interestingly, this collaborative project between the FABC and the CCA took place immediately after the publication of *UUS*. Moreover, the imprints of *UUS* are clearly manifested in the project’s rationale and are interspersed in the text itself. In the ICAEM, there is a mutual recognition that while the ecumenical movement had some significant achievements that could be seen in the paradigm and attitudinal shifts that took place in the different Christian traditions, there are still some areas that need to be addressed. In line with John Paul II’s assessment of the ecumenical landscape, both the FABC and the CCA agree that the issue of the authority in the Church should be the main focus of the dialogue. While the ICAEM addresses the ecumenical project in general, it specifically underscored the papal ministry. Accordingly, it acknowledges that while the papal ministry has been considered as a major stumbling block in the completion of the ecumenical project,

¹⁰⁷ Anderson, “Petrine Ministry and Christocracy,” 26.

¹⁰⁸ Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences and Christian Conference of Asia, “Asian Movement for Christian Unity: A Joint CCA – FABC Project (*Making Visible the Unity in Christ That Already Exists*)” (Cheung Chau, Hong Kong, 12-16 March 1996). Website: http://www.fabc.org/fabc%20papers/fabc_paper_77.pdf

it nonetheless recognizes the possibility of being a ministry in the service of unity.¹⁰⁹

Taking into account the various responses to the invitation of Pope John Paul II, it is safe to say that his persuasive invitation did not fall on deaf ears. It was received across the Christian traditions. His seminal move of promulgating his 21st encyclical letter was welcomed and hailed as "providential" and "prophetic" not only by Catholics but also by other Christian traditions. It was praised for its valuable contributions to the ecumenical world. And by emphasizing the necessity to undertake the most crucial issue, that is, the primacy of the Bishop of Rome, *UUS* furthers the reflection in the ecumenical world.

A variation of reflections and discussions from a variety of responses across the traditions of the Reformation serve as valuable source of information that could help deepen our understanding of the Petrine ministry. A number of responses that we have surveyed provides us valuable insights on the question of primacy. In the responses, notable are the positive and negative comments towards the institution of the papacy. These reflections/comments/interpretations, in one way or another, help shape the scope and limitations of the understanding and applicability of the primacy.

However, significant number of responses seemed to indicate a new deadlock, and seems that nothing has been accomplished on the issue of primacy. Is this really the case?

Our survey of a number of responses by the other Christian leaders and theologians reveals that there is a significant shift in the

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 22-23.

attitude towards the Bishop of Rome. This 'shift' is greatly attributed to the paradigm shift in the Catholic ecclesiology, as well as, the attitudinal shift in the Catholic Church as initiated by the Second Vatican Council. The attitudinal shift of the post-Vatican II popes reinforces the ongoing development in the reception of the papal office. Our survey shows us that the other Christian traditions manifest a sense of willingness to consider the role of Petrine function as a ministry of unity in the Church of Christ by virtue of human right. This gradual shift among some other Christian traditions from thinking of the papacy as an oppressive burden to now seeing value in the office is probably one of the more unlikely outcomes of the ecumenical journey thus far.

Taking into account the reflections and proposals of the different traditions of the Reformation regarding the understanding and exercise of the Petrine function that it should be exercised in a more scriptural and spiritual orientation, it is, therefore, the proposal of this study that the Petrine ministry/function should be exercised as *a ministry of unity* and *a ministry of charity*.

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Joseph Ratzinger's Approach to Ecumenism

約瑟·拉辛格對基督徒合一的態度

Ambrose MONG

[ABSTRACT] This article seeks to review Joseph Ratzinger's writings on the ecumenical situation with a consideration for his familiarity with Lutheran churches. It proposes a practical and broader approach to ecumenism in view of the fact that Christianity is a minority religion, existing among ancient and diverse religious traditions in the Asian continent. Pastoral involvement in the lives of the faithful is particularly urgent in Asia where the majority of people live in poverty and lack the basic necessities. While agreeing with Ratzinger that ethos without logos cannot endure, ecumenical efforts must not be too dogmatic and abstract but must be directed to the welfare of people. We will first examine Ratzinger's negative assessment of the ecumenical situation and the various ecumenical paradigms that have been adopted.

[摘要] 本文探討約瑟·拉辛格在熟悉信義宗的情況下有關基督教合一的著作。鑑於基督教在亞洲多種古老的宗教傳統中，是一種非主流的宗教，本文提出了一種實用而廣泛的合一途徑。在亞洲，因為大多數人民生活貧困，缺乏基本必須品，所以牧民參與信徒的日常生活便有其迫切性。

作者雖然同意拉辛格，認為純粹靠情感而不理邏輯的傳道站不住腳，但合一的努力不能過於教條和抽象，而必須針對人們的福祉。本文會檢視拉辛格對基督徒合一情況的負面評價以及已經採用的各種合一典範。

Introduction

Joseph Ratzinger's theological approach to ecumenism is closely tied to his fundamental ecclesiology. In his writings on Christian unity, Ratzinger has maintained a certain consistency in his attitude towards other churches: that the Catholic faith is superior to other paths. Explicitly or implicitly, he has always upheld that the way towards the fullness of salvation is to be found only in the Roman Catholic Church.¹ For Ratzinger, the ultimate aim of Catholic ecumenical endeavour is the transformation of the separated Christian churches into authentic, particular churches in communion with Rome.

In ecumenical endeavours, while he was still Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF), Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger's preference was for a slow, "realistic and theologically attentive, approach." As a result, he was very critical of shortcuts towards unity. In recent years, Ratzinger has been frequently associated with "ecumenical winter."² Critical of the various

¹ Lieven Boeve and Gerard Mannion, eds., *The Ratzinger Reader* (London: T & T Clark, 2010), 139.

² *Ibid.*, 140. In taking a cautious and critical approach to ecumenism, Joseph Ratzinger is actually following the precedent of previous popes. Pius XI's encyclical of 1928, *Mortalium animos*, criticised the ecumenical movement and accused it of "seeking to reach unity by too easy compromise and by focussing too exclusively on service." In 1896, Leo XIII also "expressed similar sentiments" in *Satis Cognitum*. It was taken for granted that the ecumenical movement was a "Protestant affair." There was no need for Catholics to search for Christian unity because unity was already established in the Chair of Peter in Rome in the Mystical Body of Christ. There was

approaches to ecumenism that relied on sociological or political models, Ratzinger believed it was unlikely that full Christian unity would happen in the near future. However, as Pope Benedict XVI, he has confirmed his commitment to Christian unity as a priority in his pontificate.

Ratzinger's understanding of ecumenism is based on his insistence on the priority of logos over ethos and the priority of the universal church over particular churches, and it is conditioned by his critical attitudes towards relativism. He is concerned that contemporary relativism has manifested itself, not only in modern philosophy and world politics, but also in Catholic theology coming out of Asia, from writers such as Peter Phan, Jacques Dupuis and Tissa Balasuriya. Under the guise of pluralism and adaptation, it has affected the faith and relativized the truth about Jesus Christ as the only saviour of the world. Ratzinger became acutely aware that under the name of ecumenism and interreligious dialogue, Catholic understanding of Christology and Christian anthropology were being altered and weakened. Thus, Ratzinger thinks that it is very important to restate the true meaning of Christian revelation as found in Jesus Christ.

Such a concern is perfectly acceptable and as it should be for a church leader like Joseph Ratzinger. However, he tends to equate

also a fear that the ecumenical movement could "threaten the doctrine of the identity and nature of the Catholic Church." It was only in 1939 that Pius XII's encyclical, *Summi Pontificatus*, expressed "friendliness toward Protestants, acknowledging their goodwill." However, the "return" of "separated brethren" remained the aim of dialogue. Jeffrey Gros, F.S.C., Eamon McManus, Ann Riggs, *Introduction to Ecumenism* (New York: Paulist Press, 1998), 29. This article appears as a chapter in Ambrose Mong, *Dialogue Derailed: Joseph Ratzinger's War Against Pluralist Theology* (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick/ Wipf and Stock Publications, 2015) and Ambrose Mong, *Are Non-Christian Saved?: Joseph Ratzinger's Thoughts on Religious Pluralism* (London: Oneworld Publications, 2015).

religious pluralism with relativism, which he thinks is destructive. This is the reason why he has such a negative attitude towards theologies coming from the Asian continent. In fact pluralism does imply a variety of viewpoints and perspectives concerning the same reality, but it is not relativism.

Ratzinger's approach to Christian ecumenism is also influenced by his concern over the decline of Christianity in Europe. However, as we shall see, the situation in Asia is different in many ways.

Ecumenism from Below

The positive feeling about ecumenical effort, generated by Vatican II, did not last long once its resultant initiatives had been translated into official forms. Ratzinger thus remarks that "very soon after the initial conciliar enthusiasm had waned, the alternative model of 'grass-roots ecumenism' cropped up, which tried to bring about unity 'from below' if it could not be obtained 'from above.'"³ This kind of approach had the unfortunate consequence of splitting the church into a "grass-roots church" and an "official church." Ratzinger claims that in spite of its popularity, "grass-roots ecumenism" eventually divides congregations. This kind of politically motivated ecumenical activity that seeks to replace traditional ecclesiastical divisions with progressive Christianity would only contribute to more divisions and splinter groups, each recruiting members for its own party.⁴

"Grass-roots ecumenism" or "ecumenism from below" believes that authorities should be left out of ecumenical activity

³ Joseph Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2008), 133.

⁴ *Ibid.*

because eventual reunion of churches would only strengthen the hierarchy's traditional position and thus, prevent the development of the popular church.⁵ Ratzinger is critical of such an approach because it seeks to bypass the ordained leadership and appeal directly to the laity. Besides, the church authorities would be forced to accommodate the wishes of the people. There is also the danger that the hierarchy and the faithful would be divided and thus, ecumenism from below would violate the notion of communion.

Ecumenism from below also has the tendency to focus on praxis at the expense of doctrine. Ratzinger believes that a Christianity that defines itself in terms of social involvement is not able to produce long-term unity and an established church life. People remain in the Church, not because of social or political commitment, but because they think that the Church can give them answers about the meaning of life here and hereafter. Ratzinger argues that "religion still enters into people's lives, especially when the things that neither they nor anyone else can control intrude on their lives, and then the only thing that can help is an answer that comes from the One who is himself beyond us".⁶ This means that neither the popular church nor the official church, acting in isolation, can bring about effective ecumenical action.

Furthermore, Ratzinger does not believe that the ecumenical unity of the church can be built on a sociological model inspired by neo-Marxism: "it is no longer just a question of institutional ecumenism against 'base' ecumenism but of the ecumenism of a Church man can construct against that of a Church founded and given by the Holy Spirit."⁷ Such a perception suggests that Ratzinger

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Joseph Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology: Building Stones for a Fundamental Theology* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987), 303.

has a Platonic cast of mind – his “typical impulse is to see meaning as already given and fixed” and he is also reluctant to accept new interpretations or viewpoints.⁸

Ecumenism from Above

Another ecumenical strategy that Ratzinger criticises is the Fries-Rahner project. This model suggests that once church authority has decided on closer relationships with other Christians, Catholics would just follow, given the tradition and structure of the Catholic Church. This “ecumenism from above” calls on church leaders to dispense with normal criteria for entry into the Catholic Church. Such a dispensation would allow new members to gradually integrate into the life of the church and their initial reservations about Catholicism would disappear. Surprisingly Ratzinger thinks that such a strategy, as advocated by Karl Rahner is too dependent on a gross exaggeration of papal power and episcopal authority. He is doubtful that such official ecumenism will work in the Catholic and Protestant churches because it does not correspond with their understanding of the church.⁹

The “ecumenism from above” proposed by H. Fries and Karl Rahner in Ratzinger’s opinion, is “a forced ride to unity.”It is impossible to direct the various Christian denominations towards unity like a military exercise where the importance lies in the marching together and “individual thought is of lesser importance”.¹⁰

⁸ Thomas P. Rausch, *Pope Benedict XVI: An Introduction to His Theological Vision* (New York: Paulist Press, 2009), 45.

⁹ Joseph Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2008), 134. According to Aidan Nichols, “Such ecumenism from above is a caricature of the Catholic view of the ministerial priesthood, just as ecumenism from below is a caricature of the Protestant view of the priesthood of the laity.”Aidan Nichols OP, *The Thought of Pope Benedict XVI* (London: Burns & Oates, 2007), 192.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 108.

In the Fries-Rahner project, ecumenical effort implies building a bridge to all denominations, especially to those Christian communities that were established after the Reformation. Ratzinger is particularly against Rahner's thesis of "epistemological tolerance" which is fundamental to this official ecumenism.¹¹ This model implies that "in no particular Church may any proposition be rejected and excised from the profession of faith which is a binding dogma in some other particular Church."¹² The fundamental weakness of this formula is that it avoids the question of the truth of the faith. For Ratzinger, church unity should be based on "the unity of fundamental decisions and fundamental convictions" and not on "unity in action."¹³ However, this does not mean that unity in action is unimportant. In fact, it is one of the crucial tasks in our endeavour to promote Christian unity as I shall be discussing later in this chapter on practical ecumenism.

Ecumenism from the Side

Consensus ecumenism is also criticised by Ratzinger because it inverts the relationship between consensus and truth: instead of truth creating consensus, now it is consensus that creates truth. The confession of faith becomes an "achievement of consensus." Praxis creates truth and thus, action becomes the "actual hermeneutic of unity."¹⁴ Ecumenism also transcends the limits of Christian churches

¹¹ Ibid., 123.

¹² Quoted in Maximilian Heinrich Heim, *Joseph Ratzinger: Life in the Church and Living Theology* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2007), 202.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Joseph Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 260. Edward Schillebeckx, however, believes that dogma should be understood as "a proclamation of the historical realization of the salvific promise, and essentially includes an openness to *new* future historical realization." This means that our act of interpretation should lead us to action, "that orthodoxy becomes orthopraxis: the future is not an object of contemplation but a task, an engagement of life to be undertaken in the spirit of *hope*." Pavel Rebernik, "Reflections on the Philosophical Presuppositions

and becomes an “ecumenism of religions.” Since praxis is given prominence, Christianity and other religions are judged by their contribution to the liberation of human beings, justice and peace, as well as ecological concerns. Hence, these ends become the core of religious belief.¹⁵ This approach goes against Ratzinger’s belief in the priority of orthodoxy over praxis.

Connected to its stress on praxis, consensus ecumenism also focuses on the Kingdom of God in place of Christology and ecclesiology. Consensus ecumenism leaves open the question of God, as the emphasis is now on the “primacy of action.” Ratzinger argues that this means that the doctrine of God’s nature is no longer primary. It is a pluralistic understanding of religions that disregards the difference, for example, between Christian trinitarian belief and Buddhist nirvana. Ratzinger is critical of this kind of religious pluralism that treats all religions as equally valid paths towards salvation. He thinks that such pluralist theology deprives religious beliefs of their contents. Ecumenism, in this sense, is concerned, not so much with convergence, as with the coexistence of Christians and adherents of other religions.¹⁶ This emphasis on action rather than on the truth of the faith worries Ratzinger because he is primarily concerned with orthodoxy.

of the Pluralist Theology of Religions,” in Karl J. Becker and Ilaria Morali, eds., *Catholic Engagement with World Religions* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2010), 354.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., 261. Defending *Dominus Iesus*, the Declaration of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF), Ratzinger says that its teaching is “intended to transform the indifference with which all churches are regarded as different but equally valid.” If all churches are equally valid, the validity of the faith “disappears into scepticism.” This means that when everything is regarded as valid, then nothing is important. Here we see Ratzinger criticising relativism and pluralism. It is not about tolerance, he argues, but it is about the truth that we must suffer for it. See Joseph Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 241.

Orthopraxis and Orthodoxy

The emphasis on praxis in religions, Ratzinger believes, has become a dominant ideology that cannot last long: "Ethos without logos cannot endure; that much the collapse of the socialist world ... should have taught us."¹⁷ He also admits that in the sphere of pluralism, some elements of unity are possible while division still exists. Although Ratzinger rejects the priority given to praxis over logos, he acknowledges the need to work for a better world. Thus, the important subject matter of ecumenical dialogues is to determine what the commandment of love means, in practice, at this present time.¹⁸

Commenting on the path of ecumenism today, Ratzinger warns of the danger of pluralism and relativism regarding Christian doctrine. He writes: "Whenever the distinction between the personal, revealed God, on whom we can call, and the non-personal, inconceivable mystery disappears, then the distinction between God and the gods, between worship and idolatry, likewise disappears."¹⁹ We cannot work out an ethic without logos because without a standard of judgment, we end up in an "ideological moralizing." The neglect of what is distinctively Christian and the internal conflict of churches, lead to new oppositions that can be violent. Ratzinger thinks that the disregard for religious content for the sake of unity, would actually lead to more sectarianism and syncretistic tendencies.²⁰ To avoid this situation, ecumenism must always seek unity in belief and not just work for unity of action.²¹

¹⁷ Ibid., 262.

¹⁸ Ibid., 263.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., 264.

²¹ Ibid., 265.

Ratzinger believes that theological dialogues must continue in a much more relaxed way and be less oriented towards success: “it is enough if many and varied forms of witnessing to belief thus develop, through which everyone can learn a little more of the wealth of the message that unites us.” We must be ready to face a “multiplicity of forms” without developing “self-sufficiency.” We do not make the church: it is shaped by Christ in word and sacrament.²² Ecumenism is “really nothing other than living at present in an eschatological light, in the light of Christ who is coming again.” This means that our ecumenical efforts are only provisional and it is only in Christ that we are journeying toward unity.²³

Ratzinger proposes an ecumenism that involves the people’s experience of faith, the study by theologians and the doctrinal teaching by bishops. It is a process where interpenetration and maturity of insight will gradually enable Christians to unite at a deeper level. Theological unity as found in John 17 is the work of the Holy Spirit and not the result of human negotiating skills. Ratzinger argues that even joint theological statements remain on the level of human understanding and do not pertain to the act of faith. If we recognise the limits of “ecumenical negotiations” then we will not be disappointed. The most we can achieve is a good relationship in some areas but not unity itself. Ratzinger laments that the success of ecumenical efforts just after the Council, has made many people understand ecumenism only in political terms as in diplomacy.²⁴

In summation, Ratzinger rejects the primacy of orthopraxis over orthodoxy because truth is compromised and consensus determines what is valid. Thus, praxis becomes the criteria of what is true. He

²² Ibid., 266.

²³ Ibid., 269.

²⁴ Joseph Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2008), 134.

suggests that we should learn "praxeological patience," which means we must accept the necessity of division.²⁵ Ultimately, this can be overcome, only through the conversion of everyone to the truth that is in Christ.

Question of Truth

The question of truth is fundamental to Joseph Ratzinger's theology, as he insists that "ecumenical" does not mean concealing the truth so as not to offend others.²⁶ He believes that "full truth is part of full love." This means that Catholics must not look upon other Christians as opponents against whom they must defend themselves, but must recognise them as brothers and sisters with whom they can speak and from whom they can also learn. Ecumenical means that we give proper attention to the truth that others hold. It means to consider the whole and not to single out some aspects for condemnation or correction. We have to present the "inner totality of our faith" in order to let other Christians know that "Catholicism clearly contains all that is truly Christian." For Ratzinger, to be Catholic "is not to become entangled in separatism, but to be open to the fullness of Christianity."²⁷

The real differences between churches concern the confession of faith, the creed and the understanding of the sacraments. The other differences do not really matter because they do not divide the core of the Church. However, division within the central sphere threatens the Church's existence and its very being. In this regard, Ratzinger distinguishes between human and theological divides. Human

²⁵ Quoted in Maximilian Heinrich Heim, *Joseph Ratzinger: Life in the Church and Living Theology* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2007), 440.

²⁶ Joseph Ratzinger, *Theological Highlights of Vatican II* (New York: Paulist Press, 1966), 45.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 46.

division is the “silent divinization” of our own ideas and works – it is a widespread temptation of human beings. In most religious schisms, such divinization of human thinking plays an important role in the conflict. Ecumenism requires us to liberate ourselves from such subtle distortions. Ratzinger believes that differences between different Christian communities can remain, but they should not distract themselves from the nature of the church.²⁸

While Ratzinger recognises that we can tolerate differences, he insists that we must not be indifferent to the truth. It is thus important to distinguish between human tradition and divine truth.²⁹ Hence, the first task of ecumenism, according to him, is to recognise what is variable and what cannot be changed because it forms the heart of the church. Theological reflection alone does not bring about reconciliation and at the same time it is the non-theological factors that produce division. The worst scenario is when those who defend their own ideas present them as coming from God himself.³⁰

Truth cannot be determined by majority vote: either something is true or not. Ratzinger is opposed to consensus ecumenism: “it is not consensus that offers a basis for the truth, but the truth that offers one for consensus.”³¹ This means that authority comes from truth, not from agreement by many people. The Anglican, John Macquarrie, however, has argued that “truth is not something at which one arrives, but more of an ongoing process, involving the interplay of different views which sometimes agree, sometimes conflict, sometimes correct each other, but which defy all attempts to subsume them into a single

²⁸ Joseph Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 255. Aidan Nichols defines schism as “the crystallization of orthodox dissent.” For a detailed account of the concept of schism, see Aidan Nichols, O.P., *Rome and the Eastern Churches* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2010), 27 – 51.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 256.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 257.

truth."³² This means that the fullness of truth belongs only to God and we can share this fullness, only at the end of time. Joseph Ratzinger, on the other hand, believes that the church already possesses the authority to teach the truth.

We will now examine Ratzinger's writings concerning the Lutheran church that serve to highlight the differences between them and the Roman Catholic Church and the difficulties in achieving unity.

Ratzinger highlights what he perceives to be the weaknesses and untenable positions of the Lutheran churches. Their lack of central authority makes it difficult for them to discuss issues with the Catholic Church on behalf of the entire church. Their refusal to be in communion with the universal church weakens their identity and power to exercise their authority. Besides, as already mentioned, these Protestant churches regard as traditions, only those creeds and dogmas that existed before the Reformation. This means that they place their faith only in the old texts and are, thus, cut off from the living voice of the church that has continued since the sixteenth century.

Lutheranism

Joseph Ratzinger's focus on the Lutheran tradition reflects his own German background. Half of the German population are Lutherans. He is also close to the Lutheran theologian Wolfhart Pannenberg. Ratzinger thinks that as with the Anglicans, the lack of central doctrinal authority in Lutheran communities makes it difficult for ecumenical cooperation between Catholics and Lutherans. When

³² John Macquarrie, *Christian Unity and Christian Diversity* (London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1975), 34.

asked about the prospects for unity with the Lutheran church, Ratzinger replied, “As soon as there is a Lutheran church, we can discuss it.” Nonetheless, Ratzinger has great admiration for Martin Luther as the writer of a catechism and hymns and as the promoter of liturgical reform. At the same time he criticizes Luther’s theology that diminishes the role of the church in the economy of salvation.³³

The *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* (1999) is an outstanding accomplishment of the ecumenical movement, a landmark on the way towards full and visible unity among Christians. The most important declaration is this: “By grace alone, in faith in Christ’s saving work and not because of any merit on our part, we are accepted by God and receive the Holy Spirit, who renews our hearts while equipping and calling us to good works.”³⁴ Joseph Ratzinger is credited with forging this agreement between Catholics and Lutherans. First, he agrees that the goal of the ecumenical process is “unity in diversity, and not structural reintegration.” Second, Ratzinger fully recognizes the authority of the Lutheran World Federation to sign an agreement with the Vatican. Third, Ratzinger acknowledges that Christians are obliged to do good works to be justified, but the final judgment depends on God’s gracious will.³⁵

However, Ratzinger has no illusions about a quick and easy reunion with the Lutheran church. He explains that Luther, not only rejected the papacy, but also considered the celebration of the mass to be idolatrous, a return into the law and therefore a denial of the gospel. Thus, it was not just a misunderstanding, as some historians view the Reformation in the sixteenth century, but rather a serious and decisive break. To view it as a misunderstanding, according to

³³ John L. Allen, *Pope Benedict XVI* (New York: Continuum, 2000), 231.

³⁴ *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_31101999_cath-luth-joint-declaration_en.html.

³⁵ John L. Allen, *Pope Benedict XVI* (New York: Continuum, 2000), 234.

Ratzinger, is "a form of rationalistic arrogance that cannot do any justice to the impassioned struggle of those men or to the importance of the realities in question." As such, unity between the Catholic and Lutheran churches demands innovation in order to go beyond the position of the past. It cannot be a political manoeuvring. Ratzinger insists that there are serious differences in religious insights that cannot be solved by discussion on doctrine alone. We need spiritual help and strength.³⁶

Unity in the field of scholarly research is tentative and revisable. Luther had separated the teaching of the church from theology.³⁷ Luther regarded himself, rather than the magisterium of the church, as the interpreter of scripture. Ratzinger stresses that unity of churches must be based on the content of the faith. Theological pluralism and individual reading of scripture can only unite us temporarily because "there is inherent in pluralism the inability ultimately to become a basis for unity."³⁸ This reflection is consistent with Ratzinger's negative attitude towards religious or theological pluralism. He sees it as a threat to the doctrine of the faith and fears that it might lead to relativism. For Ratzinger, the guidance of the church in safeguarding orthodoxy is the basis of unity.

Ratzinger admits that agreement among Catholic and Protestant biblical scholars can help in overcoming old differences that are now seen as of secondary importance. These exegetes can also help in fostering dialogue on scripture, tradition, the Petrine office, the eucharist, etc., but we must go beyond agreements amongst scholars to achieve a unity that is assured. This means that we cannot dissociate the Bible from the church as Luther did. Ratzinger writes:

³⁶ Joseph Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2008), 105.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 106.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 107.

“... wherever a total dissociation of Church and exegesis develops, both become endangered: exegesis turns into mere literary analysis, and the Church loses her spiritual underpinnings. That is why the interconnection between Church and theology is the real issue: wherever this unity comes to an end, any other kind of unity will necessarily lose its roots.”³⁹ Thus, in Ratzinger’s opinion, Luther’s separation of exegesis from church teaching is an obstacle that must be overcome if any unity is to be forged.

Joseph Ratzinger highlights the 1979 Catholic-Lutheran document concerning the eucharist as revealing many unresolved issues, in spite of the many important agreements it contains. He cautions against a “forced ride to unity.”⁴⁰ Although unity exists in parts, it could be strengthened further. This is because “the roots had remained united despite the separation during the sixteenth century.” Quoting Cardinal Volk, Ratzinger asks whether the roots belong to a potato or an apple tree: “is everything, with the exception of the roots, merely leaves, or is it the tree that grew from the roots that is important? How deep does the difference really go?”⁴¹

Luther was convinced that the act of faith, as taught by Catholic tradition, is based on the Law and thus contrary to what the gospel says. For Luther, faith means “liberation from the Law” but the Catholic version of it appeared to him to be upholding the Law. Luther was convinced that he had to follow St. Paul’s fight against the “Judaizers” in the Letter to the Galatians, by fighting against Rome and the Catholic tradition. Thus, a fundamental aspect of Luther’s life is his identification with St Paul. Although it is popular among scholars to think that there are no more controversies concerning the teaching on justification, Ratzinger believes that there

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 108.

⁴¹ Ibid., 109.

are still unresolved differences. He also claims that some of Luther's views would seem foreign to modern Christians, especially his consciousness of sinfulness and fear of hell as well as the terror he felt in relation to divine mercy and his cry for mercy.⁴²

The Council of Trent's teaching on justification and the emphasis on grace is so strong that if the texts had been available, the Reformation would have taken a "different course," according to Harnack.⁴³ However, Ratzinger argues that Luther's insistence on his own version of justification is the fundamental difference between the Catholic Church and the other Reformed churches. The cause of the separation was due, not only to differences in theological ideas, but also to new experience needed to start a new religious movement assisted by a "total configuration of an epoch." According to Ratzinger, Luther was so struck by his own sinfulness "that God appeared to him *sub contrario*, as the opposite of God himself, that is, as the devil who wants to destroy man."⁴⁴

Luther considered that his redemption was realised the moment faith liberated itself from the demands of self-justification. This means that faith appeared to Luther to be a personal assurance of redemption, the hallmark of his teaching. It implies that the three theological virtues, faith, hope and charity underwent a significant transformation. Faith and hope became identical.⁴⁵ However, the Catholic Church maintains the difference as before: the certainty of faith refers to what God has done for us, to which the church bears witness and the certainty of hope refers to the salvation of individuals, including oneself. But for Luther, it is the salvation of oneself alone, nothing else matters. Thus, Luther discounted the importance of

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid., 109 – 110.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 110.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

charity in his radical interpretation of Paul's letter to the Galatians and insisted on "by faith alone." Love is thus excluded from the question of salvation; it belongs to work which is "profane."⁴⁶ This core teaching of Luther's on justification by faith alone clearly goes against Ratzinger's own understanding of salvation. His first encyclical as Pope Benedict XVI was *Deus caritas est* which reiterated this.

It is this approach which separates Luther's teaching from that of the Catholic Church. For Luther, faith is no longer, as it is for the Catholics, "the communal belief of the entire Church." Besides, Luther did not think that the church could guarantee personal salvation or even decide on matters of the faith. Ratzinger, however, teaches that the Catholic Church itself "is contained within the inmost movement of the act of faith" and "only by communal belief do I partake of the certainty on which I can base my life." It also corresponds to the Catholic understanding that the Church and scripture cannot be separated. On the other hand, Luther believed that scripture is independent of the church and tradition. According to Ratzinger, this, in turn, affects the issue of unity and canonicity of the scriptures.⁴⁷

The unity of the Scriptures, the Old and New Testaments, was replaced by Luther with the "dialectic of Law and Gospel" as found in St Paul. This dialectic was sharpened by two concepts of the New Testament – the gospels and the Pauline letters – from which Luther only adopted the latter. Ratzinger says that the "dialectic of Law and Gospel expresses most stringently Luther's new experience and that it illustrates most concisely the contradiction with the Catholic concepts of faith, salvation, Scripture and Church."⁴⁸ The point of

⁴⁶ Ibid., 111.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 112.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

separation in Luther's doctrine of justification is consequently reduced to the Gospel versus the Law.

Joseph Ratzinger claims that Luther had not intended to establish a Lutheran Church because Luther understood the concept of the church, as centred only in the congregation. Beyond the congregation, everything in the church was organised according to sociological or political structures. Since 1918, the Lutheran church has retained its regional structure and formed church associations. Conditioned by historical events, the Lutheran concept of church has, thus far, assumed a different meaning when compared to the Catholic Church. For Ratzinger, "regional churches are not the 'Church' in a theological sense but are, rather, ways in which Christian congregations organize themselves."⁴⁹ Although useful and necessary, Ratzinger thinks that these Christian communities change according to circumstances. He argues that Luther was able to transfer the church structure to the principalities because they were not integral to the concept of the church.⁵⁰ The Catholic Church, on the other hand, established by Jesus Christ himself, is the communion of bishops together with the Pope. As such, the Catholic Church "cannot be interchanged or replaced." The "visible sacramental structure" is central to an understanding of the Catholic

⁴⁹ Ibid., 113.

⁵⁰ According to Ratzinger, the creation of established churches in the nation states destroyed the universal or "catholic" church. He argues that even these established churches are not *ecclesia* in the theological sense. They were "incidental political structures" that were cut off from the universal church and thus, did not have a "spiritual character" that could be constituted *ecclesia* since they lost communion with the universal church. These communities can provide only an institutional and organizational framework. Ratzinger writes that for Luther, this development was not due to "adverse political conditions," it was the "expression of a theological concept." Luther regarded the universal church as so corrupted by Roman and papist ideology that it was no longer a church. He could no longer acknowledge the concrete universal church as a "spiritual entity" to be retained. Thus, in Luther's translation of the Bible, the word "church" was eliminated and replaced by "community" which better expressed his ecclesiology. See Joseph Ratzinger, *Principle of Catholic Theology* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987), 306 – 307.

Church. As a symbol of unity, the Catholic Church transcends “the various political and cultural realms in the communion of the *Body* of Christ.” This is translated into “the communion of his body in the corporeal reality of the community of bishops of all places and times.”⁵¹

Thus, Ratzinger asserts that the plurality of local churches that together make up the Catholic Church is very different from the pluralism of denominational churches. These Protestant churches have “diverse institutional forms” as well as a different theological understanding of the reality of the church.⁵² As Catholics and Lutherans have a very different understanding of ecclesiology, they have a long way to go in their ecumenical journey.

Aware of the painful history that exists in the relationship between the Catholic Church and the other Christian communities, Ratzinger maintains a cautious and realistic attitude towards the prospect of unity in the near future. Rejecting the primacy of orthopraxis over orthodoxy, he stresses the importance of truth in our search for common ground in ecumenical endeavours. In spite of scepticism towards various models of ecumenism, Ratzinger acknowledges that plurality of churches has a legitimate existence within Christianity. This means that he is ready to accept the

⁵¹ Joseph Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2008), 114.

⁵² *Ibid.* Following Martin Luther, Ratzinger regards Protestant churches as communities, but not as churches in the Catholic tradition. For Luther, the word “church” in the catholic tradition expressed all that he wanted to oppose. In Luther’s translation of the Old Testament, the word ‘church’ refers to a pagan shrine. Quoting G. Gloege, Ratzinger says that we must regard the “community as the central situs of the basic doctrines and philosophical structures of the Reformation.” The shift of terminology from “church” to “community” reveals the inner process of the “Reformation’s transposition of the structures of faith.” Luther rejected the church as *successio* and as the unity of binding tradition. He considered the church, at best, as an organization, and at worst, as the instrument of the anti-Christ. Ratzinger says at this point that Luther’s reference to gospel is confined to the message of justification as the central concept of the Bible. According to this gospel of Luther, all that is theologically true is the individual community coming together to proclaim the word. See Joseph Ratzinger, *Principle of Catholic Theology* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987), 291.

multiplicity of churches provided they are united under one universal church.

Unity through Diversity

According to Joseph Ratzinger, diversity is healthy and even desirable once the "poison of hostility" has been removed. Studying Augustine's interpretation of the Pauline statement, "there must be factions" (1 Cor 11:19), Ratzinger argues that even though divisions and factions are human realities, they are also part of "divine arrangement." We do all we can, through penance and sacrifice, to heal the divisions, but it is God who will ultimately draw all people to himself.⁵³ By this, he means that partitions and factions are a divine necessity in order to yield a greater good, through purification. Eventually, in God's time, this division will disappear, resulting in a more profound unity.

Not adverse to plurality and diversity, Ratzinger has personally experienced how Catholics and Protestants can live together peacefully, in his homeland. In Germany there is a healthy and fruitful coexistence between Protestants and Catholics. Initially, there had been great hostility between the two churches, but gradually they developed into "a positive factor for the faith on both sides." This may explain why St Paul speaks about the necessity of factions. Ratzinger questions: "Could anyone really imagine an exclusively Protestant world? Is not Protestantism instead, in all its declarations, precisely as a protest, so completely connected with Catholicism that it would be scarcely imaginable without it?"⁵⁴ Lamentably, Ratzinger does not argue that the converse is true: Catholicism needs

⁵³ Joseph Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2008), 135.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 136.

Protestantism to remind itself of the need for constant reformation and purification based on the Word of God.

According to Ratzinger, the Catholic understanding of plurality is different from the Protestant idea of independent national churches like the Anglican church, or a federation of churches like the Lutheran church. In fact, from the beginning, Catholic theology has recognised the plurality of churches. This means the acceptance of a multiplicity of churches existing within the framework of one visible Church of God. These particular churches are in close communion with one another as they help to build up the one Church. The unity is born of a “vigorous multiplicity.” Thus, there exists a church of God in Athens, in Corinth, in Rome: the members of each local community assembled together, with the bishop presiding over the Eucharistic celebration. All these churches in different localities partake of the “essence of the Church,” and is truly a “Church.” For Ratzinger, one essential element of being a church is that it must not exist in isolation, but must be in communion with the other churches, and together they form the one church.⁵⁵

Plurality of churches had a legitimate existence within the church, but unfortunately, in the course of history, this plurality eventually disappeared, taken over by a centralised system. In the process, the local church of Rome began to absorb all the other local churches so that unity became uniformity.⁵⁶ This plurality of churches had “no room *within* the Church” and “was developed *outside* of it in the form of autonomous separate Churches.”⁵⁷ The Catholic Church, since Vatican II, has tried to remedy this situation with its ecumenical endeavours.

⁵⁵ Joseph Ratzinger, *Theological Highlights of Vatican II* (New York: Paulist Press, 1966), 111.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 112.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 113.

Ratzinger admits that the Catholic Church is not yet prepared to accept the phenomenon of multiplicity in unity. It is a renewal that involves a process of opening up which takes time.⁵⁸ He asserts that there is the one Church that is identified with the historical continuity of the Catholic Church. Although Catholics cannot demand that all the other churches be absorbed into Catholicism, they can hope that "the hour will come when 'the churches' that exist outside 'the Church' will enter into its unity."⁵⁹ Ratzinger also says that they must remain "in existence as *Churches*" changing only those features that unity demands.⁶⁰

The Catholic Church considers itself the Church of Christ, in spite of its "historic deficiency." It also recognises the plurality of churches that should exist within it, but today, this plurality can only exist outside.⁶¹ As we have seen, Ratzinger recognises the valid existence of the plurality of churches under one universal church, but he is opposed to the present plurality of denominational churches, which is a particular characteristic of Protestantism. Ratzinger is also realistic enough to accept that division among churches does not simply represent evil tendency in human beings but can also be a divine necessity. This is because separation is necessary for our purification. "Unity in diversity" or "a reconciled diversity" is thus an acceptable formula for Joseph Ratzinger, in our ecumenical endeavours.⁶²

⁵⁸ Ibid., 113 – 114.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 114.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 114 – 115.

⁶¹ Ibid., 115.

⁶² Joseph Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 258. See also Joseph Ratzinger, "What Unites and Divides Denominations? Ecumenical Reflections" in Pope Benedict XVI, *Joseph Ratzinger in Communio: Volume 1, The Unity of the Church* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 1 – 9.

Fruitful Pluralism

Unity is not to be identified with uniformity in ecumenical dialogue. It is the duty of Christians to defend the legitimate interests of pluralism against the forces of uniformity. However, maintaining a healthy pluralism in unity is a complex process. There is always this tension existing between unity and division. Paul Tillich has observed:

... neither the ecumenical nor any future movement can conquer the ambiguity of unity and division in the churches' historical existence. Even if it were able to produce the United Churches of the World, and even if all latent churches were converted to this unity, new divisions would appear. The dynamics of life, the tendency to preserve the holy even when it has become obsolete, the ambiguities implied in the sociological existence of the churches, and above all, the prophetic criticism and demand for reformation would bring about new and, in many cases, Spiritually justified divisions. The unity of the churches, similar to their holiness, has a paradoxical character. It is the divided church which is the united church.⁶³

Joseph Ratzinger supports the idea of a “fruitful pluralism” and acknowledges the positive aspect of division. Thus he says that the way to promote unity through diversity is not to impose on the other party anything that threatens his or her core identity as a Christian. This means that Catholics should not try to force Protestants to

⁶³ Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, Volume III (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963), 169 – 170.

recognise papal authority, the sacraments, etc., and Protestants should not pressure the Catholic Church to allow intercommunion based on Protestant understanding of the eucharist. Such respect for the "otherness" of the other, which is inherent in the division, would not delay unity but rather, is a prerequisite for it.⁶⁴

Ratzinger rightly says that this kind of tolerance and acceptance can produce charity and closeness, whereas urgent insistence can only create tension and aversion. Ultimately, we must leave God to do what is actually His business – Christian unity.⁶⁵ While I agree with Ratzinger's cautious approach towards ecumenism in the Western context, in Asia we need to engage in practical or secular ecumenism as the situation requires Christians to respond urgently to the social and economic needs of the people.

Practical Ecumenism

Asia is a vast and diverse continent where various religious beliefs, including different branches of Christianity, continue to flourish. In spite of modernization and rapid economic development, Asia is steeped in religious traditions. At the same time, the gap between the rich and poor is growing rapidly, and many people are struggling because of a lack of basic necessities in many parts of the continent. Hence, a practical or secular ecumenical approach that strives for the common good, amid religious pluralism, is more appropriate and meaningful here. For example, Christians from different denominations, including Roman Catholics, can co-operate in charitable and social work.

⁶⁴ Joseph Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2008), 137.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 138.

Practical ecumenism implies “a unity with true existential foundations, rather than one that has come about as the blueprint devised by a high-powered ecclesiastical commission.”⁶⁶ Thus, it is not ecumenism from above. Although Joseph Ratzinger insists that ethos without logos is not sustainable, as evidenced by the collapse of socialism, he has admitted that an ecumenism of praxis has value in that it fulfils Christ’s commandment to love. However, focussing on practical ecumenism does not imply that we are indifferent to the truth. In fact, we uphold the truth as defined in Mathew 25: 31- 46.

Given the present situation where impasse in ecumenical dialogue is inevitable, practical ecumenism also has the advantage of setting “realistic intermediate goals” in keeping with what Ratzinger has suggested. While doctrinal or liturgical differences may be intractable, charitable works, as a means of witnessing the gospel, can be readily organised by different churches in harmony with one another. Likewise, Ratzinger also insists that the different churches can jointly address the “great moral questions of our time.” This can be done through joint testimonies of faith before a world torn by doubts and fears. These small efforts should emphasise the common features of Christian living which exist despite divisions. Working together in these modest projects shows that separation no longer equates to opposition, as Ratzinger has pointed out.⁶⁷ Christians will be challenged to understand and accept members of other churches as brothers and sisters in Christ.

⁶⁶ John Macquarrie, *Christian Unity and Christian Diversity* (London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1975), 23. According to Kathryn Tanner, theology is often identified with the writings of scholars and clergy “in which conceptual precision and logical coherence are at a premium.” But Christian theology has to do “with the meaning dimension of Christian practices, the theological aspect of all socially significant Christian action.” See Kathryn Tanner, *Theories of Cultures* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 69 – 70

⁶⁷ Joseph Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2008), 119.

Ecumenical effort aimed at fostering unity among Christian communities is meaningful when churches are willing to work together on the practical tasks of helping the poor, visiting prisoners, alleviating poverty and suffering, etc. In short, Christians should be united in the building of a better world. John Macquarrie argues that the basis of this practical ecumenism "is not a nicely worked out ecclesiology or even a doctrine of redemption but simply that natural morality which is common to all men by virtue of their humanity."⁶⁸ This means that we do not have to force adherents of other faiths to be baptized or call them "anonymous Christians." It is enough that they have "the law written on their hearts" (Rom 2:15). Macquarrie rightly asserts that this non-exclusive practical or "secular" ecumenism is "the recognition that all humanity is the creation of God" and "has a share in that image of God that is perfectly expressed in Christ."⁶⁹

Practical or secular ecumenism first seeks the unity of humankind rather than the unity of the churches. It reminds Christians that what will remain at the end of time will not be the church, but the Kingdom of God – the "gathering up both church and world in an eschatological unity." Therefore our primary aim should not simply be ecclesiastical unity, but a more inclusive and all-encompassing unity of the world. Once we focus on the unity of the world, the unity of the church may come more quickly as a "provisional stage on the way."⁷⁰ Augustin Cardinal Bea writes that the Church as it is, is a society which is also perfectly human, "feels itself intimately linked with all mankind, and co-operates in the

⁶⁸ John Macquarrie, *Christian Unity and Christian Diversity* (London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1975), 24.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

achieving of unity for mankind.”⁷¹

Similarly, Konrad Raiser, former general secretary of the World Council of Churches, stresses social concerns above doctrinal issues. He indicates that ecumenical effort should be directed to addressing social problems like economic inequality, sexism and other injustices rather than debating theological issues and ministry. Raiser thinks that previous ecumenical efforts were too philosophical and theological.⁷² At the same time he fears that this newer ecumenical model, which seeks to bring Christians from different confessions together, could lead to a denial of Christ’s divinity and his unique salvific role. This is also Joseph Ratzinger’s concern. However, there is no concrete evidence to show that Christians would deny the salvific efficacy of Christ or his divinity just because they are too involved in charitable and social work.

Practical ecumenism safeguards the diversity of churches. Ratzinger is right to be cautious about ecumenical efforts and rushing towards unity because of his worries over serious doctrinal

⁷¹ Augustine Cardinal Bea, *Unity in Freedom* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1964), 214. K. H. Ting claims that “The Christ who rose and now sits at the right hand of God is not only the Lord of the churches but also the Lord of the secular World. The secular movements of the people have an important significance. What man achieves in history is not finally to be negated or destroyed but, in the new heaven and new earth, will be received in Christ and transfigured.” Kim Yong Bock, “Human Rights and the Structures of Injustice,” in Ninan Koshy, ed., *A History of the Ecumenical Movement in Asia*, Volume II, (Hong Kong: World Student Christian Federation, Asia-Pacific Region, Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCA, Christian Conference of Asia, 2004), 296.

⁷² Christopher Ruddy, *The Local Church: Tillard and the future of Catholic Ecclesiology* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2006), 155. Konrad Raiser writes: “a Christian congregation can only become a parable of shared life to the extent that it shares the goodness of God’s creation with all human beings. In the course of the discussions in recent years there have been many stormy disputes as to whether sharing proves itself principally in fellowship and solidarity between Christians and churches or in solidarity with the poor in the struggle for justice and human dignity....” Quoted in Ans Van der Bent, *Commitment to God’s World: A Concise Critical Survey of Ecumenical Social Thought* (Geneva: WCC Publications 1995), 153. See also Konrad Raiser, *Ecumenism in Transition: A Paradigm Shift in the Ecumenical Movement?* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1991).

differences. Therefore I think it is appropriate that various churches begin by coming together to work on common social projects for alleviating the sufferings of the poor and marginalized. This would be a step towards ecclesiastical unity. It is also important to understand ecumenism as "the science of bridge-building, a science of dialogue across different groups." This means that eventually, ecumenism will include, not just Christians, but people of other faiths and even those who have none.⁷³

Ans Van der Bent rightly insists that there must be dialogue between the church and the world; though the church is not of the world, it is in the world to serve and minister to it. He stresses "service within the world". While the Church is discovering the world, it should also help the world to discover the Church.⁷⁴ The church must re-evaluate its structure with a view to dealing with problems such as secularisation, poverty, the environmental crisis and threats to justice and peace. Facing the same problems in the world draws churches closer together. This will help them to deepen their theological investigation and work out a plan that allows common action.⁷⁵ Quoting José Miguez Bonino, Ans Van der Bent writes:

The churches cannot address society as if they were outside it, untouched by its struggles, unspotted by its sins and injustices, exempt from responsibility. The churches can only be *credible* if they recognize their involvement and, in the necessary reforms that they demand for society, endeavour to make the corresponding reforms in themselves. By recognizing

⁷³ Gerard Mannon, *Ecclesiology and Postmodernity* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2007), 135.

⁷⁴ Ans Van der Bent, *Commitment to God's World: A Concise Critical Survey of Ecumenical Social Thought* (Geneva: WCC Publications 1995), 171.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 172.

their mutual accountability, this need for internal purification can be a part of the ecumenical dialogue and praxis.⁷⁶

There is already enough ecumenical, doctrinal and ethical consensus among most of the churches to deal with problems like torture, the foreign debt of developing countries, refugees, etc.⁷⁷ It would, therefore, seem appropriate to start from this common basis, namely, our social commitment to the world. Practice cannot be separated from doctrine. According Ans Van der Bent, “only a deep solidarity with the threatened and broken world will reveal how narrowly the social teachings of the churches are still defined.”⁷⁸ Our churches are still so caught up with doctrinal purity and ecclesiastical rectitude that they are neglecting Christ’s command to serve the poor and the oppressed. Critical of the Roman Catholic claim that the sole church of Christ “subsists” in the Roman Catholic Church, Ans Van der Bent thinks that this implies that other churches do not have the authority to produce valid social teaching.⁷⁹ For him, ‘the fullness of the church subsists in its manifestation of Christ’s redemption of the entire human race.’⁸⁰ His interpretation maintains that the main ecumenical work for all churches is to be actively involved in the pastoral task of bringing about a better world for all.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 173. See also Ambrose Mong Ih-Ren, “Crossing the Ethical-Practical Bridge: Paul’s Knitter’s Regnocentrism in Asian Perspective,” *The Ecumenical Review*, vol. 63, no. 2, July 2011, 187 – 188.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 174.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 175.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 176.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

Concern for Europe and Asian Realities

In spite of the many criticisms of Ratzinger's approach to ecumenism, there are those who interpret his writings on these issues as openness to other Christians and non-Christians. These supporters acknowledge Ratzinger's consistent commitment to ecumenism and his positive evaluation of other faiths, suggesting that his critics are not sharp enough to understand his nuanced statements and critical stance.⁸¹ A good example is Ratzinger's Regensburg Lecture in which he addressed the interdependency of faith and reason, but which many misconstrued as a speech against Islam. He has been critical of the various ecumenical models, but he is also committed to promoting Christian unity in a gradual manner. He is willing to enter into dialogue with Protestant theology:

Catholic theology requires that there be, despite all divisions and antithesis, a common theological motive; that, whether they accept or reject each other's view, the two sides be sensitive and responsive to each other. Second, it should likewise be clear that Catholic theology must not regard its role in this dialogue to be that of trying to agree with whatever is currently the strongest position of the other side but must rather look, in its own way, for whatever common ground there may be and, in doing so, not be afraid to learn from its partner.⁸²

Ratzinger rightly advocates a search for a common ground and a willingness to learn and be corrected by the other.

⁸¹ Lieven Boeve and Gerard Mannion, eds., *The Ratzinger Reader* (London: T & T Clark, 2010), 144.

⁸² Joseph Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology: Building Stones for a Fundamental Theology* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987), 180 – 181.

Be that as it may, Ratzinger's ecumenical approach is influenced by his concern for the decline of Christianity and his hope for a united Christian Church to combat the threat of aggressive secularism in Europe. Ratzinger believes that for Europe to build a humane society, it must return to its original Greek roots and Christian heritage. This means that Europe must rediscover the objective and eternal values that stand above politics, and must stress the rule of law. In view of this, he emphasises the Greek concept of *eunomia* – the enactment of good laws and the maintenance of civil order.⁸³ Ratzinger thinks that Christian values can help to halt the decline of European civilization. Thus, with a view to rebuilding Europe, Christian unity can play a significant role.

This ecumenical concern of Ratzinger's may be justifiable and timely given the present situation in Europe. However, the challenge for the churches in Asia is to be united in their fight against poverty and oppression, and promote justice and peace as part of witnessing to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Ratzinger reflects on the true and the good. Such reflections, however, always take place in a particular culture. John Paul II called for a dialogue between faith and culture, and the Second Vatican Council recognised the need for "accommodated preaching," but to Ratzinger this suggests relativism.

Although Christianity in Europe has slowly been made irrelevant by the surge of secularism, the West continues to exercise authority and control over the churches of Asia. In the Catholic Church, the papacy and the Magisterium maintain strict control over the local churches in Asia. In the various Protestant denominational churches in Asia, economic support from mother churches in the

⁸³ Joseph Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2008), 216.

West is still crucial for their functioning and even, for their survival. Thus K.M. George rightly says: "while the spiritual vitality of the Western churches is probably drying up, their institutional power over the churches of the South is still going strong."⁸⁴

Asian theologians from both Catholic and Protestant churches have been calling for a rediscovery of Asian Christian identity. To achieve this, the churches in Asia must shed their Western trappings. There is an obvious gap between the "theological understanding of identity and the ecclesiastical-institutional reality of our churches." This poses an obstacle to Asian ecumenism.⁸⁵ Perhaps a more appropriate approach to ecumenical endeavour in Asia lies in the various branches of Christianity coming together, putting aside their doctrinal differences, and making a concerted effort to deal with the problems related to poverty, justice, peace and ecological issues. Christian churches also need to unite in a major push to preach the gospel in the face of aggressive secularism.

⁸⁴ K.M. George, "Ecumenism in Asia: Some Theological Consideration" in *Windows into Ecumenism: Essays in Honour of Ahn Jae Woong* (Hong Kong: Christian Conference of Asia, 2005), 123.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 124.

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Wider Ecumenism

更廣闊的合一

**The Asian Ecumenical Movement in
Historical Perspective:
with Special Reference to its Contribution to
Ecumenism**

從歷史角度看亞洲基督徒合一運動及其貢獻

Kyo Seong AHN

[ABSTRACT] On the occasion of the Diamond Jubilee in 2017, especially significant in Asian culture, of the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA), which was established in Prapat, Indonesia in 1957, it may be the proper way of celebrating the historical moment to review the history of the Asian ecumenical movement, highlighting its contribution to ecumenism. Admittedly, like any other movements, the Asian ecumenical movement has merits and demerits, and yet it has some special features to contribute to the development of ecumenism in many ways. Firstly, it initiated the regional ecumenical movement which soon became the *trend du jour*, displacing the existing two-layered (international-national) structure of the ecumenical movement. Secondly, it paved the way

for cutting-edge ecumenical theologies which reflected the reality of Asian peoples including various types of theology of peoples. Thirdly, it opened new land for the innovative ways of theologizing such as 'contextualization', whose mastermind, Shoki Coe, was a famous Asian ecumenist, and became fertile fields for producing many other indigenous and ingenious theologians and ecumenical workers. Fourthly, it fleshed out the challenges of new theologies in the Asian society, resulting in the evolution of strategy from Urban Industrial Mission (UIM) to Urban Rural Mission (URM), etc. Lastly, it built up the close relationship between Asian churches, which previously clang to mother churches rather than sister churches, giving birth to the partnership in both ecumenical relation and ecumenical mission. In short, facing the diverse challenges of the Asian realities such as imperialism, post-colonialism and the Cold War, and neo-liberalism, the Asian ecumenical movement continued to make history, and the rest is history.

【摘要】 亞洲基督教議會（CCA）已於 2017 年慶祝鑽禧。與任何其他運動一樣，亞洲基督徒合一運動有其優缺點，也有促進合一發展的特殊貢獻。首先，它成為區域性的潮流，展現基督徒合一運動的兩層（國際——國家）結構。其次，它為反映亞洲人民現實的最新合一神學鋪路，包括各種人類神學。第三，它開闢了創新的神學國度：「情境化」，由著名亞洲合一主義者 Shoki Coe 推動，並培養許多其他土著和具智慧的神學家和合一工作者。第四，充實了亞洲新神學的挑戰，在策略上，造成城市工業團（UIM）到城鄉團（URM）等的演變。最後，建立了亞洲教會之間的密切關係，以前亞洲教會比較靠近母教會多於姊妹教會，現在彼此間在合一關係和合一使命中產生了夥伴關係。面對亞洲現實的各種挑戰：如帝國主義、後殖民主義和冷戰，以及新自由主義，亞洲基督徒合一運動繼續創造歷史。

I. Introduction

On the occasion of the Diamond Jubilee in 2017, especially significant in Asian culture, of the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA), which was established in Prapat, Indonesia in 1957, it may be the proper way of celebrating the historical moment to review the history of the Asian ecumenical movement, highlighting its contribution to ecumenism.¹ Admittedly, like any other movements, the Asian ecumenical movement has merits and demerits, and yet it has some special features to contribute to the development of ecumenism in many ways. Firstly, it initiated the regional ecumenical movement which soon became the *trend du jour*, displacing the existing two-layered (international-national) structure of the ecumenical movement. Secondly, it paved the way for cutting-edge ecumenical theologies which reflected the reality of Asian peoples including various types of theology of peoples. Thirdly, it opened new land for the innovative ways of theologizing such as 'contextualization', whose mastermind, Shoki Coe, was a famous Asian ecumenist, and became fertile fields for producing many other indigenous and ingenious theologians and ecumenical workers. Fourthly, it fleshed out the challenges of new theologies in the Asian

¹ For the history of the Asian ecumenical movement, see among others the following books. Hans-Ruedi Weber, *Asia and the Ecumenical Movement, 1895-1961* (London: SCM, 1966); Ninan Koshy, *A History of the Ecumenical Movement in Asia, I* (Hong Kong: CCA, 2004); ed., *A History of the Ecumenical Movement in Asia, II* (Hong Kong: CCA, 2004); Toshimasa Yamamoto, *Ajia-ekyumenikaru undoshi [The History of the Asian Ecumenical Movement]* (Tokyo: Shinkyō Publishing Co., 2007) (in Japanese); Kim Hao Yap, *From Prapat to Colombo: History of the Christian Conference of Asia (1957-1995)* (Hong Kong: CCA, 1995). The CCA has had a checkered history: after many twists and turns, the project to establish the Far Eastern Office of the International Missionary Council was fulfilled by forming the Eastern Asia Christian Conference (EACC) in Bangkok, Thailand in 1949, which evolved into a full-fledged organization, the East Asia Christian Conference (EACC, namesake in abbreviation) in Prapat, Indonesia in 1957, and then transformed into the CCA in Singapore in 1973.

society, resulting in the evolution of strategy from Urban Industrial Mission (UIM) to Urban Rural Mission (URM), etc. Lastly, it built up the close relationship between Asian churches, which previously clang to mother churches rather than sister churches, giving birth to the partnership in both ecumenical relation and ecumenical mission. In short, facing the diverse challenges of the Asian realities such as imperialism, post-colonialism and the Cold War, and neo-liberalism, the Asian ecumenical movement continued to make history, and the rest is history.

This study aims to put the Asian ecumenical movement centering on the CCA in perspective to clarify its characteristics and its contribution to the world ecumenical movement. To do this, it divides the history of the Asian ecumenical movement into three periods according to the evolution of the concept of ecumenism: ‘ecumenism in missions’ in the first half of the twentieth century, ‘ecumenism in Mission’ in the second half of the twentieth century, and ‘ecumenism in ecumenisms’ since the turn of the century.

II. Ecumenism in missions

As well-known, the ecumenical movement “has resulted from the missionary enterprise”², particularly the Western Protestant missionary movement, in the 19th and the early twentieth centuries, or the so-called ‘Great Century’ in K. S. Latourette’s term, which speaks eloquently the close relationship between the early ecumenical movement and the traditional missionary movement. In short, the context of the traditional missionary movement, the characteristic of which is epitomized as ‘missions’, predisposed the birth and development of the ecumenical movement, including that in Asia. Although the Asian Christians at the time were often seen as

² William Richey Hogg, *Ecumenical Foundations: A History of the International Missionary Council and Its Nineteenth Century Background* (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1952), 1.

children or helpers rather than coworkers of expatriate missionaries, they at least won recognition in the missionary milieu. It is in this context that among the three mainstreams of the ecumenical movement such as Faith and Order (F&O), Life and Work (L&W) and International Missionary Council (IMC), the Asians could participate and have a voice in the IMC, while the visible presence of non-Western delegates in the F&O and L&W was modest to nonexistent in the first half of the last century.

As a whole, the ecumenical movement in that period can be summarized as ecumenism in missions, since its main interest was laid on the agenda of missions and its pivotal relationship was missions-church relationship in the so-called mission field. During these years, one witnesses the evolution of the missions-church relationship as it grew from a mother-daughter one to a sister-sister one. The relational change was detected in the modification of terminology in the IMC conference in Jerusalem in 1928, when the conference dealt with "the Relation between the Younger and the Older Churches".³ In that historical meeting, Asian delegates, including Asian women, became more active in having a voice, showing their will to share leadership.⁴ It must be remembered, however, that although the non-Western churches gradually began to see the missionaries' home church as a sister church, they in general still showed interest in their new sister church (their old mother

³ The International Missionary Council, *Volume III. The Relation between the Younger and the Older Churches, The Jerusalem Meeting of the International Missionary Council, March 24-April 8, 1928* (New York: International Missionary Council, 1928).

⁴ Helen Kim (Hwal-ran Kim, in Korean), a Methodist woman educator, who participated in the Jerusalem conference as one of the Korean delegates, made impressive speeches a couple of times at the conference, dealing with a number of critical issues at the time such as race, gender, etc. For the list of the delegates, especially Asian women, see The International Missionary Council, *Volume VIII. Addresses on General Subjects, The Jerusalem Meeting of the International Missionary Council, March 24-April 8, 1928* (New York: International Missionary Council, 1928), 159-170.

church), the Western churches, rather than their siblings, the Asian churches, which had already been there as their neighbors. In many cases, the Asian churches were more familiar with the Western churches than the sister churches in the same continent. In short, the Asian churches at the time seemed strange to each other, and not surprisingly the mutual relationship between them was underdeveloped. This underdevelopment in ecumenical relations among the Asian churches conveyed the message that the ecumenical movement itself needed to be deepened and widened to be an authentic and balanced one, overcoming many hindrances on the way to unity. It is also worth remembering, however, that it was at the IMC conference in Tambaram, India, in 1938, ten years after the Jerusalem conference, that the issue of the establishment of the Asian ecumenical body as a regional one was for the first time raised, although that was handled in earnest only after the end of the Second World War, which ushered in the period of post-colonialism.

III. Ecumenism in Mission

Although we cannot deal with the establishment of the Asian ecumenical body, particularly the CCA in the mid-twentieth century in details here,⁵ it is necessary to remember two lessons from the controversy on it mainly between Geneva and Southeast Asia: first, the development of ecumenism was itself an ecumenical issue since the formation of the Eastern Asia Christian Conference (EACC), the precedent of the CCA, was realized through a long-running feud among ecumenists due to different perspectives of ecumenism; and second, the experiment of the Asian ecumenical movement giving birth to the Asian ecumenical body, a regional ecumenical body, the first of its kind, proved successful in that the pattern of the regional

⁵ Kyo Seong Ahn, "The Asian Context and the Ecumenical Movement of the Korean Church", *Korea Presbyterian Journal of Theology* 45/3 (2013): 37-62, especially 47-51.

movement was reproduced widely both in religious and secular sectors. The rise of the Asian ecumenical body displaced the existing two-layered pattern of the ecumenical movement (international-national) by the innovative three-layered one (international-regional-national).

The church in the aftermath of the end of the Second World War found itself in a totally changed context, that is, the end of colonialism and the arrival of decolonization. The new circumstances required the transformation of the understanding of church and mission. It is in this historical background that the church attempted to revolutionize the concept of the nature and ministry of the church, which led to the emergence of a new missiological understanding, Mission.⁶ Mission written large and in singular is a more comprehensive and ecumenical missiological concept, which emphasizes the followings: first, partnership in mission, especially between the Western and the non-Western churches; second, the initiative of a local church in mission; third, mission by a local church where it is (mission in six continents and mission from everywhere to everywhere); and last, mission to flesh out the Kingdom of God in the world or *Missio Dei* (mission of God) beyond evangelization. In short, with the evolution from missions (a traditional type of mission) to Mission (a new type of mission), mission became the core of the nature and ministry of the church rather than a merely marginal and appendicular work of the church. In a sense, it can be said that in the new missiological context the words 'church' and 'mission' in effect became interchangeable.

⁶ For the contrast between missions and Mission, see "The People of God Among All God's Peoples: Frontiers in Christian Mission: Report from a Theological Roundtable Sponsored by the Christian Conference of Asia and the Council for World Mission", in *The People of God Among All God's Peoples*, edited by Philip L. Wickeri (Hong Kong: CCA; London: CWM, 2000), 9-57, esp. 43-47.

The expansion of the concept of mission posed two fundamental questions, one of which is related to the legacy of traditional mission and the other to the future of new mission: the former is whether the new type of mission will continuously pay enough attention to evangelization, which was the matter of stand and fall for the evangelicals, who were comprised of major force in the traditional mission; the latter is how the church will be effective in selection and concentration when implementing the vastly expanded new mission and what is the relationship between church and society if the gamut of works comes to be overlapped. As a result, the former triggered the mistrust and concern of the evangelicals, who finally decided to establish their own ecumenical body to customize their missionary agenda focusing on evangelization such as the Lausanne Movement; and the latter continued to experiment the new concept of mission to the extent that nowadays even the evangelicals began to use the word 'mission of God' in their own way. The question is what was and did the newly emerging Asian ecumenical movement, particularly the CCA, in the period under consideration. And was the regional ecumenical movement and its arm, the CCA, necessary and worthwhile?

1. Mission in Asia by the Asian church: a missiological question

First of all, the Asian ecumenical movement began to do mission by developing the relationship between Asian churches and by initiating mission work as a way of partnership, that is, mission in Asia by the Asian churches. This kind of mission resulted in two byproducts, perhaps unexpectedly: first, one needs to put ecumenical relations before ecumenical mission, and thus mission is to be understood as something that could and should not be pursued through conflict and competition; and second, any Asian churches can participate in mission if they will, since Mission or new mission

is available based on cooperation and common resources rather than on power and experience. In other words, even weak and young Asian churches can participate in mission by receiving mission workers from other Asian churches, since according to the new missiological concept mission was initiated with the inviting of the receiving church, not with the commissioning of the sending church; and thus receiving is important as much as or more than sending.⁷ Furthermore, although it was in general inhospitable to Christianity, Asia proved relatively fertile to ecumenism, which gave birth to numerous union churches such as the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP), the United Church of Christ in Japan (UCCJ), the Church of Christ in Thailand (CCT), the Uniting Church in Australia (UCA) and the Church of South India (CSI), etc. Those united and uniting churches were very conducive to the development of new mission by enhancing ecumenism. Indeed, now mission was gradually regarded as neither 'mine' nor 'yours', but 'ours' or common ownership.

However, this was a new experience and was carried out through trial and error. For instance, two Asian mission coworkers, both of whom were commissioned on the invitation of the CCT, bequeathed very different legacies. The Rev. Dr. Chan-young Choi from the Presbyterian Church of Korea (PCK) was in the first instance shocked at the new ecumenical atmosphere and finally opted for a more evangelical ministry working for the United Bible Societies. Meanwhile the Rev. Dr. Kosuke Koyama from the UCCJ rose to prominence in Asian indigenous and ecumenical theology, mainly by reflecting his mission experience and giving a voice to the Asian people who did not adequately have. Perhaps this kind of vicarious indigenous theology (people's cultural theology by an

⁷ Lourdino A Yuzon, ed., *Called to Send and to Receive* (Singapore: Christian Conference of Asia, 1981).

expatriate mission coworker, not by nationals) was the beginning of more genuine home-spun theology or the hybridization of Asian theologies.

2. What is the identity of the Asian church? A historical question

As the Asian church began to take initiative in church and mission, was raised the following question: what is the identity of the Asian church? Perhaps the best way to answer this question begins with the historical study of its identity. In fact, Christianity as a historical religion *par excellence* thinks highly of history from the very beginning, which can be confirmed by the fact that historical books hold much of both the Old and the New Testaments and that church historians endeavored to write the history of Christianity from the Early Church.

It is significant that the World Council of Churches (WCC) started a cutting-edge project of new historiography from an ecumenical perspective since the 1980s.⁸ This project stimulated the birth of the history of the Asian churches. In the curriculum of the classical schooling-based theological seminary system, church history was in effect nothing but the history of the Western church, and the Asian seminarians were more conversed with the history of the Western church than their own, not to mention that of neighboring churches. In short, the Asian church in general suffered from the impoverishment of church history.

⁸ Lukas Vischer, ed., *Church History in an Ecumenical Perspective: Papers and Reports of an International Ecumenical Consultation held in Basle October 12-17, 1981*. Bern: Evangelische Arbeitsstelle Oekumene Schweiz, 1982; ed., *Towards a History of the Church in the Third World: Papers and Report of a Consultation on The Issue of Periodisation, convened by the Working Commission on Church History of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians, July 17-21, 1983*. Geneva, Bern: Evangelische Arbeitsstelle Oekumene Schweiz, 1985; Ogbu U. Kalu, ed., *African Church Historiography: An Ecumenical Perspective: Papers presented at a Workshop on African Church History, held at Nairobi, August 3-8, 1986*. Bern: Evangelische Arbeitsstelle Oekumene Schweiz, 1988.

In fact, the issue began to be improved through diverse tracks relating to the history of Christianity in Asia. On the one hand, indigenous church historians made strenuous efforts to write their own history and those piled-up histories enabled to write a more comprehensive history of Christianity in Asia or the Asian church history. For instance, a book on the history of Christianity in Asia was published in the 1970s, with articles written by Asian church historians.⁹ On the other hand, expatriate ecumenical specialists, especially from the churches in New Zealand and Australia, which joined the Asian ecumenical movement in the 1940s, helped in great measure the construction (or reconstruction) of the ecclesiastical history in Asia. For example, together with his wife, Rita, who worked for the project to develop libraries, John England devoted himself to the advancement of the history of Christianity in Asia throughout his lifetime since he had joined the project as a young scholar.¹⁰ Now his collection is housed in the Hewitson Library in the Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership, in Dunedin, New Zealand, waiting for scholars' touch. Besides, scholars such as the late S. H. Moffett, once a missionary to China and Korea, and emeritus dean of the Presbyterian College and Theological Seminary (now Presbyterian University and Theological Seminary) in Korea and emeritus professor of missions and ecumenics of the Princeton Theological Seminary in the United States, dared to walk into the uncharted territory of Asian church history. Quite recently, with the rise of the discourse of World Christianity, the mastermind of which is Andrew F. Wells and which found its home at many of the prestigious universities and colleges, scholars began to take it for granted to write a world church history taking notice whether church

⁹ T. K. Thomas, ed., *Christianity in Asia: North-East Asia* (Singapore: CCA, 1979).

¹⁰ R. M. England & J. C. England, *Ministering Asian Faith and Wisdom: A Manual for Theological Librarians in Asia* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers; Delhi: ISPCK, 2001).

history in different continents was dealt with in balance, and one even witnesses the phenomenon of the boom of the history of Asian Christianity. It is in this context that the genuine ecumenical history requires the more advanced Asian church history and vice versa, which enables mutual enrichment in history. In a similar vein, over the last decades numerous historical societies were established in different Asian countries to encourage the writing of the history of Christianity and churches in Asia; for instance, a jointed seminar on “The Inter-religious Conflict and Peaceful Co-existence in Asia” was co-hosted by the Historical Society of Asian Christianity (HSAC) in Korea, the Japanese Historical Society of Asian Christianity (JHSAC) and the CCA in Chiang Mai, Thailand, in 2014.

3. What is Asian theology and how one can construct it: a theological question

The Asian ecumenical movement was also the movement of churches and Christian organizations in Asia, and thus it raised the question: what is the thought and practice of the Asian church? To begin with, with the rise of the Asian ecumenical movement, major cities in Asia struggled to overtake Geneva, Tuebingen, Cambridge and New York to become the new, although modest, forges to mold their own theologies.¹¹ One characteristic of Asian theology is that since Asia suffered from rapid and radical social change, such change fundamentally influenced theologies emerging from the Asian context. One can easily detect such inclinations through the survey of the themes of Asian theologies ranging from theology of revolution, to theology of people including *Minjung* theology, to Homeland theology, and to theology of migration and diaspora.

¹¹ John C. England et al., eds., *Asian Christian Theologies: A Research Guide to Authors, Movements, Sources, Vols. I-III* (Delhi: ISPCK; Quezon City: Claretian Publishers; Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2002, 2003, 2004).

Meanwhile one needs to pay attention to another characteristic of Asian theology, particularly theology of people. Different from South America, Asia was under the influence of the Cold War until recently and anti-communism was widespread in many Asian countries to the extent that complicity with communism was fatal and thus theologians were forced to criticize capitalist societies without openly resorting to the socialist (or communist) framework of criticism. For instance, *Minjung* theology from South Korea, a stalwart anti-communist country, made use of history and culture as new resources of critical tools.

However, it is worth noting that the issue of people in Asia is ethnicity as well as class and stratification. In this context, one needs to warn that Asian theologians have largely been neglectful of the Fourth World in their theological construction. The term "the Fourth World" was coined to reveal the embarrassing condition of the Native Americans, an under-represented or silenced ethnic group without their own nationality (not ethnicity) in the First World.¹² What differs between the Third and the Fourth World is that both are the disadvantaged politically and socially, but the former at least has its own national government to speak out their concerns, while the latter has none. The problem is that the Fourth World in the Third World is much more devastated than in the First World, and that Asia is teemed with countless Fourth World groups. It is true that over the last century, the Asian ecumenical movement centering on the CCA made efforts to deal with the issue of various minority groups, especially indigenous people.¹³ However, it is still necessary to

¹² Gordon Brotherston, *Book of the Fourth World: Reading the Native Americans through Their Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 4.

¹³ For example, Ron O'Grady, ed., *Third World Tourism: Report of a Workshop on Tourism, held in Manila, Philippines, September 12-25, 1980* (Singapore: Christian Conference of Asia, 1980); Christian Conference of Asia, *The Global Challenge: Report of the WCC/CCA Asian Refugee Meeting, December 1-5, 1987* (Hong Kong: Christian Conference of Asia, 1989).

approach the issue more rigorously from the political viewpoint, and to pose a pregnant question whether now is the time for the Asian ecumenical movement to innovate the three-layered structure (international-regional-national) into the four-layered one with an additional subnational level (international – regional – national - subnational), as it did two into three in the mid-twentieth century.

One of the most significant contributions of the Asian ecumenical movement, particularly Asian ecumenical theology, to ecumenism is that it not only gave birth to numerous theologies, but also to a new paradigm of theology, namely, contextualization. The idea of contextualization conceived by Shoki Coe, originally planned for the Theological Education Fund (TEF) project to foster Asian theological education, proved a timely and worldwide-effective response to the question of new theological construction.¹⁴ In short, the concept of contextualization showcased how a local issue can find greater significance at the global level.

4. The Asian society and the Asian church: a socio-political question

The ministry of the Asian ecumenical movement including the CCA can be summarized as its engagement with tumultuous Asian societies. Asian countries in general were forced to accomplish the agenda of modernization within a relatively short span of time, and that under various types of pressure such as breakaway from colonial vestiges and nation-state building. Thus, it is no wonder that the vogue word to explain the situation of the Asian countries in the post-liberation period was ‘revolution’. Whether it was a war, a bloody revolution or a drastic reform what those nations had to pay to stand up, the cost of them was remarkable. It was in this context

¹⁴ Jonah Chang and Ching-Fen Hsiao, *Shoki Coe: An Ecumenical Life in Context* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2012).

that the Asian ecumenical movement acted as a beacon of industrial mission, which led to the birth of the Urban Industrial Mission (UIM) and then the Urban Rural Mission (URM). Why the former evolved into the latter explains clearly the agony of the Asian countries, which suffered both from the migration of labor from rural to urban areas and the resultant rapid urbanization and corresponding rural decline.¹⁵ Mainly due to the agenda of compressed development, difficulties such as rural collapse, labor problems, and urban social problems including the urban poor all came together. In short, the issues of industrialization and democratization met each other at the core. Furthermore, according to different historical backgrounds, some Asian countries also faced racial conflict, ideological confrontation, and/or national partition. It was against this backdrop that emerged an ecumenical umbrella theological concept to tackle overall socio-political problems, the 'Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation' (JPIC), which grew out of the 'Just, Participatory, and Sustainable Society'; and the topic of JPIC was consecutively dealt with in historical meetings, all of which were held in South Korea, the hotbed of national and regional conflicts.¹⁶

Moreover, the problems which confronted the Asian church and the Asian society were pressing and overwhelming to the extent that they occasioned the 'status confessionis' (confessional status; a make or break issue). Not surprisingly, the history of the Asian church was full of such confessions.¹⁷ Given that cutting-edge Asian theologies arose from the response to Asian social reality, it is no exaggeration

¹⁵ Interestingly, for quite a long time the majority of the staff of the UIM and URM, CCA, was peopled with the South Koreans who came from the country which is most famous for compressed development.

¹⁶ Those meetings were as follows: the 22nd General Assembly of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC, now the World Communion of Reformed Churches, WCRC) in Seoul, in 1989; the first JPIC World Conference of the WCC in Seoul, in 1990, and the 10th General Assembly of the WCC in Busan, in 2013.

¹⁷ For instance, see the following: United Church of Christ in the Philippines, *UCCP Statements and Resolutions (1948-1990)* (Quezon City: Education and Nurture Desk, United Church of Christ in the Philippines, 1990).

to say that theology, confession, and mission were inseparable in the Asian context. In reviewing the theme of the Asia Mission Conference of the CCA in Yangon, Myanmar, in 2017, “Journeying Together: Prophetic Witness to the Truth and Light in Asia”, Wesley Ariarajah maintained that different from theology and liturgy, mission has not been fully Asianized.¹⁸ However, if one chooses ‘Mission’ rather than ‘missions’ for what mission indicates, one may reach a different conclusion.

It is also necessary to mention a couple of aspects which need to be emphasized in relation to the ministry of Asian churches. On the one hand, the Asian church was the minority church in most of the Asian countries, and yet it gradually became the majority church in some nations. At the same time, not a few Asian countries became affluent, while a great portion of Asian nations remains poor. Furthermore, some Asian churches showed strong interest in initiating world mission as new non-Western mission force. Such new status caused some Asian churches to have different understandings of identity, theology and mission, which required a new ‘modus vivendi’: to develop the sophisticated relationship between church and state (even seeking the status of a quasi-state church), to meet the demand of ‘theology of the affluent’ as well as ‘theology of the poor’ (for example, the rise of Asian theology of prosperity), and to see mission from the missionary’s point of view rather than that of the ‘missionized’ (including the repetition of Western missions’ malaise such as cultural and economic imperialism). On the other hand, history tells us that ecumenical solidarity with the world church, particularly the Asian church, ensured the implementation and success of ecumenical ministries such as democratization and mission focusing on the marginalized in

¹⁸ Wesley Ariarajah, [Response to] “Journeying Together: Prophetic Witness to the Truth and Light in Asia” (Unpublished manuscript, [2017]).

Asia, while by and large the same cannot be said of emerging Asian missions or the so-called world mission by Asian churches. The Asian churches and missions participating in missions at least need to relearn the fact that the ecumenical movement emerged from the missionary movement and that in the aftermath of the end of the Second World War the Asian church began mission as a way of ecumenical mission.¹⁹ Now, considering contemporary rapprochement between missions and Mission, the question is how one makes the most of the new entente for synergic effect in mission.

IV. Ecumenism in ecumenisms: the plurality of ecumenism

Since the turn of the century, the ecumenical movement including the Asian ecumenical movement has been urgently required to transform itself from a family business to a business in partnership with the society. This signals the arrival of the plurality of ecumenism, which ranges from Christian ecumenism, to wider ecumenism, and to Oikumene ecumenism, together with grass-roots ecumenism.

1. Christian Ecumenism: current ecumenism

The CCA is the most representative ecumenical body in Asia. However, different from the WCC and the National Council of Churches (NCC) in different nations which are the 'council of churches', the CCA is the 'Christian conference'. The terms chosen for the title of the CCA is meaningful: first, the word 'Christian', not 'churches', enables the CCA to include both churches, other Christian organizations and councils as members, while the WCC

¹⁹ There also continued to be experiments of ecumenical mission in a new way. Bright (Myeong Seok) Lee, *Trilateral Ecumenical Partnership: Korea, Germany and Ghana*, translated by Enoch Lee (Seoul: Yeongdeungpo Presbytery, Presbyterian Church of Korea, [2013]).

and NCC permit churches to be full members, with others being associate members; and second, the word ‘conference’, not ‘council’, allows the CCA to have more flexibility as a loosely knit structure.

However, one of the characteristics of the Asian ecumenical movement is cooperation with other Christian communions, particularly the Catholics. For instance, the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences (FABC) has been a faithful co-pilgrim on the road to unity, both in thought and practice. The entente between catholic and protestant is significant in that those communions are the two representative ones in Asia, particularly in Asian countries such as the Philippines and Korea where Christianity secured its status of a major religion. However, one also finds an interesting phenomenon that in many cases Asian churches find an ideological line more difficult to cross than denominational one.

One also needs to take heed to another characteristic of the Asian ecumenical movement: cooperation and synergic effect among ecumenical efforts. For instance, the Alternative Globalization Addressing People and Earth (AGAPE) process which was initiated in the WCC General Assembly in Harare in 1998, and then blossomed in Porto Alegre in 2006, came to have greater significance in the regional ecumenical movement in Asia and Pacific, which suffer most from economic globalization.²⁰

In addition, it must be noted that the resuming of an active role of China, once one of the major laboratories of ecumenism in Asia, is pregnant to the future of the Asian ecumenical movement. Besides, significant is the episode of M. M. Thomas who visited the Chinese church in 1983 as a member of the CCA delegation and met his “old

²⁰ Justice, Peace and Creation Team, World Council of Churches, *Alternative Globalization Addressing Peoples and Earth (AGAPE): A Background Document* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2005); CCA, PCC & WCC, *Poverty, Wealth and Ecology in Asia and the Pacific: Ecumenical Perspectives* (Chiang Mai: CCA; Suva: PCC; Geneva, WCC, 2010).

friends".²¹ They were the young ecumenists whom Thomas had met at different ecumenical meetings such as the World's Student Christian Federation in Kandy, Sri Lanka, 1948, the YWCA leader's conference in Mussouri, India in 1952, and the Indian NCC Triennial in Allahabad in 1956; and they now became the leaders of the Chinese church.²² This indicates that the future of ecumenism cannot come without the future generation of ecumenism. Thus, ecumenism must be expanded not only horizontally (or geographically) but also vertically (or generationally).

2. Wider ecumenism: interfaith ecumenism

With the awareness that human beings live in one and the same ecosystem, the earth, ecumenism began to take on a new significance: it moved forward from an 'endo'-movement to an 'exo'-movement. Among new partners with which the ecumenical movement was to cooperate, most important were religions and the society. To begin with, the neologism 'wider ecumenism' has been widely used to indicate the ecumenical endeavor to build up the relationship with other religions. Although controversy over the objective and method of such relationship has not been settled yet, one can summarize the rapport into two mainstreams: interfaith dialogue and interfaith solidarity. In fact, the issue of interreligious co-work has already been dealt with since the first half of the last century. The difference is that while in the early twentieth century the common foe was secularism, now it is the total annihilation of humankind threatened by nuclear weapons and ecological disaster.

²¹ Christian Conference of Asia, "Asian Christian Leaders in China: Impressions and Reflections of a Visit to China, June 1-14, 1983" (Pamphlet; Singapore: Christian Conference of Asia, 1983), 34.

²² Ibid., 34-36. Their names were Wen-zao Han, Wen-han Kiang, Susan [surname not identified], K. H. Ting, Fu-san Zhao, Cora Deng, and Shou-bao Li.

When reviewing the themes of the General Assembly of the CCA, one can divide them broadly into three groups: 'witness' from the 1950s to the 1960s; 'liberation' from the 1970s to the 1990s; and 'life' from the 2000s to present.²³ The change of the themes eloquently speaks in what the Asian ecumenical movement has had a great interest.

3. Oikumene ecumenism: public ecumenism or ecumenism and public theology

It is well-known that the word 'ecumenical' is derived from 'oikumene', which originally means the habitable world, and the meaning has been stretched to be an ecclesiastical term indicating the unity of the churches. This lexical history points to the fact that the ecumenical movement should be a movement from, with, and to the world as much as an ecclesiastical movement. As mentioned above, the church and the society were not far from each other in the meanings of the 'ecumenical', and thus the relationship of the ecumenical movement with the society was an essential one, neither secondary nor peripheral.

Since the end of the last century, there has been some doubts about the role and place of the church in the church-state or church-society relationship. Paradoxically, the church began to be

²³ See the CCA history for the themes of the Assemblies: The Common Evangelistic Task of the Churches in East Asia (Prapat, Sumatra [Indonesia], 1957); Witnessing Together (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 1959); The Christian Community within the Human Community (Bangkok, Thailand, 1964); In Christ All Things Hold Together (Bangkok, Thailand, 1968); Christian Action in the Asian Struggle (Singapore, Malaysia [sic], 1973); Jesus Christ in Asian Suffering and Hope (Penang, Malaysia, 1977); Living in Christ with People (Bangalore, India, 1981); Jesus Christ Sets Free to Serve (Seoul, South Korea, 1985); Christ Our Peace: Building a Just Society (Manila, Philippines, 1990); Hope in God in a Changing Asia (Colombo, Sri Lanka, 1995); Time for Fullness of Life for All (Tomohon, Indonesia, 2000); Building Communities of Peace for All (Chiang Mai, Thailand, 2005); Called to Prophecy, Reconcile and Heal (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 2010); Living Together in the Household of God (Jakarta, Indonesia). <http://cca.org.hk/home/cca-history>, accessed Feb.24, 2018. N.B. Singapore gained independence in 1965.

eclipsed by civil society groups in the leadership in socio-political issues. In the second half of the twentieth century, the church was an important or the only dissent to protest against the government in many Asian countries, and the ecumenical movement played a role of organizer to gather people to protest. However, the success of the democratization in Asian societies, mainly thanks to the ecumenical movement, resulted in the mushrooming of burgeoning civil society groups, which outgrew and even isolated the church. It is in this context that the church began to bring forth public theology, and in a similar vein the ecumenical movement is obliged to develop corresponding "public ecumenism" (my coinage) to be continuously of relevance to the world.²⁴ Public ecumenism requires the church to take on a new stance in socio-political issue: to be a part, not the leader, of the society working with other civil society groups in pursuit of common good, providing its unique ideas and legacies. On the part of the church, this will be a totally new experience, but perhaps will be the only option available for it. It is worth mentioning in passing that in some Asian countries such as Korea, the church failed to appreciate the significance of the changed context and attempted to have a strong influence on the society, and yet the society tended to interpret it as a special interest group's abusing the power.

4. Grass-roots ecumenism: glocal ecumenism

Whether successful or not, the ecumenical movement including the Asian ecumenical movement appears to have been inclined toward elitism rather than mass movement. Admittedly, the ecumenical movement has challenged the church and the world to be an inclusive society by insisting the balance of representation: West

²⁴ Ariarajah also raised the question of public theology in relation to the future of the Asian church. Wesley Ariarajah, [Response to] "Journeying Together: Prophetic Witness to the Truth and Light in Asia".

and non-West, clergy and laity, man and woman, and old and young. However, it is difficult to say confidently that the ecumenical movement succeeded in local ecumenism and grass-roots ecumenism. In the era of globalization or glocalization, the ecumenical movement should attend to locality and popularity to move beyond the winter of ecumenism, to which the Asian ecumenical movement is no exception.

V. Conclusion

The landscape, particularly the ecclesiastical landscape, of Asia is kaleidoscopic. Nowadays, the face of Asia becomes much more diverse, ideologically, ethnically, and economically, than in the early twentieth century, when Asian church leaders began to appear on the international stage. Such diversity points out numerous problems and matching opportunities in Asia.

By highlighting the importance of region, the Asian ecumenical movement became a forerunner of regionalism, on the one hand, and could detect and respond to their own problems in a very concrete way, on the other. Thus, emergent Asian theologies arisen from real life were diametrically different from the Western ones which were often censured as being created by armchair theologians shut up in an ivory tower. However, theology, confession, and mission were inseparable in the Asian context.

Furthermore, the Asian ecumenical movement through its own network and the support of the world ecumenical movement helped the Asian church to grow, especially in theology. It carried out various projects to develop library, history, and even theological framework, which all combined to provide infrastructure in the Asian church. The infrastructure enabled the improvement of theological studies in Asia, which in turn challenged and enriched the theological circles at the global level. At the same time, ever-accumulated

histories by Asian church historians enabled us to have a more comprehensive history of Christianity in Asia and the world.

The CCA, the favorite child of the Asian ecumenical movement, celebrated its Diamond Jubilee in 2017, and the centennial of the IMC conference in Jerusalem in 1928, where Asian delegates for the first time comprised the considerable amounts of participators, is coming up. Being authentic must come before doing authentic. To render authenticity requires genuine selfhood, and thus it is in this context that one needs to apply the three-self principle to the ecumenical body, as has been applied to the church. It is because an ecumenical body is vulnerable to the problem of dependency as much as the church. In other words, like mission in Asia by the Asian church, like ecumenism in Asia by the Asian church. As Robert Browning sang in his poem entitled 'The Last Ride Together', "The petty done, the undone vast", the Asian ecumenical movement centering on the CCA needs to go extra miles to reach the goal: bring forth the Kingdom of God in Asia here and now, and forever more.

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**The Organizational Solidarity of the Christian
Community in India, both with the Orthodox
Churches and Western Christianity
(Churches of Reformation), in a path way to
Ecumenical union**

**印度基督教的組織團結，東正教和
西方基督教走向合一之道**

Aswin FERNANDIS

[ABSTRACT] The Church in India has had a long tradition of ecumenism and also stands out as front-runner in the ecumenical journey. Christianity came to India in an ecumenical form - in terms of One Church, socially conscious, open to all faiths and persuasions and affirming the unity of God's creation.

According to tradition, St. Thomas, one of the disciples of Jesus, came to India in 52 A.D. and initiated a church. It was truly ecumenical in the sense that it was not a denominational church and it had a very open and friendly relationship with the predominantly Hindu society. In feudal central Kerala, the society at that time was dominated by upper castes and hence the early church was very much upper caste in nature. However St. Thomas's ministry was not

confined to upper castes alone. It transcended the barriers of caste as is visible in his ministry in Tamil Nadu (south east of India). So it was ecumenical in essence and in practice.

I approach the Topic in three steps. Firstly, I would briefly present the history of Christianity in India, its political social status which gave a way for spreading Christian faith among the high caste Hindus, who did not change their caste practices even after conversion to Christianity and how the social structure changed after the arrival of Western Christianity.

Next, I would briefly discuss about the role of Orthodox Church in India along with Western Christianity, especially the Churches of Reformation that laid the foundations of the expressions of wider Christian Communalism.

Thirdly, I would like to focus on the Ecumenical dialogue happening in India in the Asian Context, which creates a dialectic space to understand what they have in common and only then weigh the significance of their differences. Presently, the wholeness of the life of the Church and salvation is diverted more towards the social/political status.

To conclude, I would like to speak on how cultural assimilation is one aspect that must become an important part of how Christian churches can express its belief structure in the language of the local culture, taking into consideration the context of Asia. It has been this dichotomy introduced between the gospel and a culture that has led many to view Christianity as a “foreign religion” and a threat to local stability and harmony.

[摘要] 印度教會有著悠久的基督教傳統，並且在基督徒合一的旅程中脫穎而出。基督教以一種普世的形式來到印度——就一個教會而言，具有社會意識，對所有信仰和信念開放，並肯定上帝創造的統一。

本文分三部分。首先，簡介印度基督教的歷史，它在政治社會上的地位，它為在高等種姓印度教徒中傳播基督教信仰提供了一種方式，他們即使在皈依基督教之後也沒有改變他們的種姓習俗，而隨著西方基督教的到來，社會結構也作出了改變。

第二部分簡要討論東正教在印度的角色，它聯同西方基督教，尤其是新教，為更廣闊的基督教奠定了基礎。

第三部分集中討論印度在亞洲環境中的基督教對話，這種對話創造了一個辯證空間，可以理解它們的共同點，然後權衡它們之間的差異。目前，教會生活的全部性和救贖更多地轉向社會和政治。

Introduction

There are certainly challenges involved in ecumenism. The article here analyses a few contextual problems involved in ecumenical relationships. Christianity came to India in an ecumenical form - in terms of One Church, socially conscious, open to all faiths and persuasions and affirming the unity of God's creation. It was truly ecumenical in the sense that it was not a denominational church and it had a very open and friendly relationship with the predominantly Hindu society. Focus has been given to the particular tradition. In order to look through the contextual issues it is significant that one has to present the perspectives of the subject in the particular tradition.

The three major ecclesiastical traditions found established in India over the centuries, beginning from the first to the twentieth, are Syrian Church, Roman Catholic Church, and various Protestant Churches. And in reference to evangelization of India through the centuries: "It is generally recognized that evangelism came to India in three waves: Apostolic, Catholic and Protestant. During the first century apostolic evangelism through St. Thomas resulted in many high caste conversions, mainly in Kerala. The Catholic wave of evangelism resulted in the conversion of the many castes, especially of the lower ones. In the Protestant wave of evangelism, especially during the colonial days, most of the converts came from the lowest classes like the harijans and from the tribals of North - East India."

Even the secular historians in India acknowledge that Christianity is one of the ancient religions of India. So an Indian Church, even though it was not an autonomous one- as it received its bishops from the Church of the East and used Syriac as its ecclesiastical language, had been in existence since the earliest days of Christianity when most of the European countries were still pagan. Though the early Indian Church was rather inactive in its evangelistic efforts to measure by today's standards, no doubt, it had made a good impact upon the non-Christian environment because the Indian Christians of those days were accepted by the Hindus as equivalent to one of their higher castes." The early Indian Christians had started a theological expression of Indianization even at these earliest stages of Christianity. That Christian community could make a sense of Christian presence felt in a predominantly non-Christian world, so much so that this small Christian community could survive through the centuries till the arrival of western Christianity towards the close of the fifteenth century.

History of Christianity in India

Indian society which is multicultural, multilingual and multireligious bringing about a melting pot or a cultural mosaic has formed itself as a unit by taking elements from diverse entities and also made its contribution for the emergence of several cultural fabrics in the world. The Syrian Christians who trace their origin to the first century A.D. constitute one such community which has played an important role in the process of nation building.¹

Kerala - a beautiful land caped in greenery, situated to the west of the captivating Western Ghats at the southern tip of the Indian sub-continent. Long lines of palm-fringed, lush green paddy fields, beautiful mountains with rivers streaming down from them, placid lakes and backwaters. This land that epitomes the splendor of nature was renowned for its spices even before the time of Christ. This brought merchants from across the seven seas, leading to the region becoming a meeting point for different religions. Christianity and Islam reached Kerala in their nascent stages and ran deep roots, even as the prevalence of Buddhism and Jainism was already strong.

This, centuries later, still is the land of churches, mosques and temples, where calls to prayer resonate five times every day from mosques, where the festivals of the Christian community spread a festive mood and where the 'Gayathri' mantra from temples invigorate the mind. Kerala, the valley of Western Ghats, is known to foreign traders as the Malabar Coast. This beautiful land surrounded by mountains became the birthplace of the Malankara church, one of the first Christian churches. It is believed that St. Thomas, one of the twelve disciples of Jesus Christ, is the founder of Malankara church.

¹ Lazar, Dr Joseph K. *Syrian Christians and Nation Building, A case study of Kerala*. IRISH, Tellicherry, 2012, 8.

St. Thomas reached India at the decree of Christ after his resurrection. When Christ commanded his disciples to spread his word across the world, they took lots to decide their destined lands and it fell to St. Thomas's destiny to scour the pagan lands of India. At first he was reluctant to embark upon the journey to India due to the distance and unfamiliar language. But Christ appeared and persuaded him. It is believed that St. Thomas set out to India on the ship of a merchant named Laban. Laban was on a mission to find an architect to build a palace for an Indian king, Gondoforos. Jesus appeared before Laban and told him that he had a slave to sell and that the slave was an excellent architect. It was St. Thomas whom he referred to. In his 20 year tenure in Kerala, he established seven churches and a chapel popularly known Arappalli. ²

The one who questioned Jesus' resurrection when first told of it and later when Christ appeared before him proclaimed "My Lord and my God", St. Thomas, is the epitome of faith. Many ancient families of Kerala became staunch believers of Christ, under the influence of this great man. Those who became believers under the influence of St. Thomas later united to form a Church and were known as the Malankara Church as St. Thomas had started his gospel work from Malankara. Some historians are of the opinion that the name Malankara was given to the church as it was the church of a land surrounded by 'mala' which means 'mountain'. ³

After his work in Kerala he moved to the eastern coastal regions of India and from there to China. Later he returned to India and continued preaching the gospel. On 18 December AD 72 he was stabbed to death at Chinnamala in Mylapore near Chennai by hostile

² Lazar, Dr Joseph K. *Syrian Christians and Nation Building, A case study of Kerala*. IRISH, Tellicherry, 2012, 32.

³ Thomas, Meledath Kurian. *The Way of St. Thomas: a brief history of Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church*, MOC Publications, Kottayam, 2012, 16-17.

Hindu Brahmins. The small hillock where he was killed is now known as St. Thomas Mount and a shrine has been built there. It was with a life full of sufferings and sacrifices and finally through martyrdom that the apostle laid the foundation for Christianity in Kerala. The growth and development of the first Christian church was centered on the seven churches established by St. Thomas. After the death of the Apostle the church was led by the priests whom he had directly ordained. The followers were internally referred as Nazranis. They were proud of their Christian Origins from St. Thomas, the Apostle.⁴ Socially they were well placed in the Brahmin centered Jyathy-Caste System. They were treated in the privileged caste of Vysya, the trader, under the law of Kuladharmā. They were allied with the Church of the East, otherwise referred as the Persian Church. It is generally presumed that they were accustomed to the sacraments of the Church of the East but making it more fitting into the concept of sacredness that they have imbibed from the native cultures. The arrival of the Portuguese and allegiance with them initially founded to be fruitful by the Nazranis but shortly they realized the danger which resulted in open resistance with the Roman Catholic missionaries and the Portuguese. The Nazranis drew out their own identity as *the way and lineage of St. Thomas. The way and lineage of St. Thomas*, this can be considered as the symbol of the indigenous Christianity in India.⁵

The divisions that took place in the Kerala church are not much doctrinal, but they are political and cultural issues. The coming of the Portuguese and later of the English, and along with them the arrival of the western missions were occasions of divisions in the Kerala church. We have assumed different cultures from the missionaries

⁴ Thomas, Meledath Kurian. *The Way of St. Thomas: a brief history of Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church*, MOC Publications, Kottayam, 2012, 21.

⁵ Thomas, Meledath Kurian. *The Way of St. Thomas: a brief history of Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church*, MOC Publications, Kottayam, 2012, 18-19.

and allowed them to play a decisive role in the church. Due to this, the Kerala church is divided into Syrians and Non-Syrians or Romo Syrians, Malankara Rite, Cananites, Latins, C.S.I., etc.

The nineteen hundred years of evangelization in India have produced the following: (I) Syrian (Eastern Rite): Chaldean Syrian Church, Jacobite Church, Malabar Independent Syrian Church, Mar Thomas Syrian Church and St. Thomas Evangelical Church of India; (2) Roman Catholic Church: Roman Catholic (Latin Rite), Syro Malabar Catholic, and Syro- Malankara; and (3) more than 80 Protestant Churches. All these churches have their own evangelistic programmes and missionary projects. But in spite of the co-operative efforts of all Christian churches and agencies, the evangelistic task remains the same and it is more challenging today.⁶

The failures of evangelization are again due to some practical hindrances from within, first the Hindu concept of Santana dharma and their view of an equality of all religions do not require them to become Christians - because Hinduism is as good as Christianity itself. Secondly, for Hindus conversion is regarded as a social and civil event. They understand religion in terms of samaja dharma and so by the time a convert takes baptism he ceases to be a member of the Hindu community and becomes a member of the Christian community. So baptism is a social hindrance. Thirdly, there are a few legal hindrances too, such as that the Hindu legal privileges will be applicable to converts to other religions; the Hindu Laws concerning caste system, joint family, inheritance make the converts to other religions as outcaste people. Fourthly, in a democratic country number does matter a lot. A Hindu who is converted to another religion may weaken the Hindu strength in the realm of politics.

⁶ K. V. Mammen, *Randayiram Varsham Pinnitta Malankara Sabha*, (Mal.), Kottayam, 1992, 112.

Fifthly, the Hindus very often understand conversion in terms of conversion by coercion and proselytization. So conversion is legally forbidden in at least two of the Indian states. And sixthly, a few hindrances with special reference to evangelistic work amongst the Islamic faith may be mentioned here, for example, a common Judaeo-Christian heritage, the Trinitarian concept of Christian theology, and the age-old conflicts of crusades.

Ecumenism in Orthodox Perspectives

During the early days, the Ecumenical Movement was understood by its leaders as a movement of the churches and Christians for the unity not only of the church but of the whole creation, a movement for peace, justice and the harmony of the whole creation. It tries to break down the walls of division and separation. Ecumenism is an effort to manifest one's concern about people, about their social, economic and cultural life, about their environment, about their physical and spiritual well-being. Churches interested in ecumenical movement and ecumenism in India must think in terms of unity of vision and plurality of action.

The first and foremost aim of the ecumenical movement has been to bring Christians of all traditions together. The ideological thrust of this move is that God is the creator of this universe and all the people. Ecumenism must cross ecclesiastical boundaries and start thinking about the well-being of all the people, people of all faiths and ideologies. This, in essence, would be the wider meaning of ecumenism.

The great scandal of the Church is its divisions. One must also note that it is difficult to bring the leaderships of these 'churches' together for a dialogue and understanding of its essential unity,

because the allegiance and often the permission to be sought for it, are from outside. The Indian churches are more related to their missionary parent churches in other countries than to other churches within our own country.

The word, concept and movement - 'ecumenism' is not anything new to the Christian churches or in the secular discussions. It is an established understanding that the very concept, and so is the word, too derived from the Greek words 'oikoumenei' and 'oikos', which literally means 'the inhabited world' or 'house' respectively. It refers to the "the whole of the inhabited world".⁷

In Orthodox perspective 'ecumenism' never understood as pseudo homogeneity where every ecclesial entity is brought together under one umbrella. In this unity there is a danger involved of the annihilation of the weaker or of the un-assumed. Here possibly the feebler one will lose its identity in getting forcefully amalgamated to the stronger. Whereas 'ecumenism' is the realm where every single identities, no matter, whether it is weaker or stronger, will be acknowledged for its existence.

Expressions of Unity

It is clear that 'ecumenism' means unity. Paulose Mar Gregorios highlights three aspects for unity to find its expressions. Those three aspects are: a) Basic unity in faith and tradition b) unity in mutual love and care and c) unity expressed through Eucharistic fellowship between national and regional churches.⁸

⁷ M. A. Brown, *et.al.*, "Ecumenical Movement", in *New Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. 5, Second Edition*, Edited by Berard L. Marthaler, *et.al* (Washington, D.C: The Catholic University of America, 2003), 71.

⁸ Paulos Mar Gregorios, "Ecumenism- An Orthodox Perspective" in *On Ecumenism*, edited by Jacob Kurian (Delhi: ISPCK, 2006), 202.

Unity in faith obviously means the faith the different traditional strands share as it is pronounced in the Nicene-Constantinople Creed as the "oneness of commitment to Father, Son Incarnate and Holy Spirit". This also means the unity in the one apostolic faith of the early Church. The second aspect 'unity in love' should not be understood in a measurable external criteria but it means that we care for each other and that we pray and work for the mutual welfare. And again, the Eucharistic union does not imply the unity with a pyramidal hierarchy but it is the sharing of the one apostolic faith as stated earlier. One cannot consider this unity in any sense of pretention or through any diplomatically coined agreements. As Thomas FitzGerald explains, "the reconciliation of Christians and the restoration of the visible unity of the divided churches cannot come about through a disregard for the truth of the Apostolic Faith in all its richness and fullness. True Christian unity cannot be founded upon falsehood on a cosmetic agreement, which pretends that there is agreement on essential issue."⁹

Dialogue in Perspectives

The Churches under the umbrella of ecumenical organizations and bilaterally engage in dialogues. Almost all the Christian churches have gone a long way with dialogues and dialogical theology for the time has acquired a matured position as well. Like any other branches of theology naturally dialogue for its purpose and meanings has diverse perspectives too. Dialogue, according to Paulos Mar Gregorios, is not mere conversations across the table, but it is, "a process in which people seek to transcend the boundaries of their own limited understanding of reality in order to become more open to the truth through listening to, and conversing with one's dialogue

⁹ Thomas FitzGerald, "How to Understand Christian Unity (Ecumenism) In relation to Orthodox Identity" in *Orthodox Handbook on Ecumenism*, edited by Pantelis Kalaitzidis, *et.al.*, (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2014), 15.

partner.”¹⁰ Thus dialogues are not supposed to mean to impose our ideas on others but it is the occasion of our mutual learning.

The basis for all the dialogical principles is the shared faith of all the Christian churches. As Paulos Mar Gregorios rightly put this across as, “we ought to be grateful that all the Christians do believe in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and in the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. But this is only what makes ecumenism possible.”¹¹

Doctrinal Bases for the Ecumenical Relations

It is quite clear that the shared faith for unity should be the belief in Holy Trinity and the acknowledgement of the truth of the incarnation of the Word of God. This certainly serves as the doctrinal foundation for the ecumenical relations. Further to this, elaborations are needed. The recent Orthodox perspectives developed in the ecumenical theology explore more into the authority of the methodology based on the writings of the early Christian Teachers of faith. Daniel Buda, a recent Orthodox ecumenist brings clarity to this ecumenical methodology; for his findings are based on the dialogical attempts of the early Christian Fathers, their struggles for unity and their refutations against any kind of isolations.¹² This is a completely different perspective of ecumenical theology. Many a times, the ecclesiastical histories focus on the divisions proposed by the early Church Fathers but here we see a different reading of the Church Fathers, which is in the perspectives of reconciliation.

¹⁰ Paulos Mar Gregorios, *Religion and Dialogue* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2010), 171.

¹¹ Paulos Mar Gregorios, “Some Basic Principles of Ecumenism”, in *On Ecumenism*, edited by Jacob Kurian (Delhi: ISPCK, 2006), 17.

¹² Daniel Buda, “Foundations for Ecumenism in Patristic Theology”, in *Orthodox Handbook on Ecumenism*, edited by Pantelis Kalaitzidis, *et.al.*, (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2014), 69-76.

This perspective of reconciliation which is to be employed in the reading of the early Christian Fathers is clearly explained by Nicholas Sagovsky as, "...to understand the 'life-world' of the early Christian communities, it was necessary to look not only at the Hellenistic background suggested by the use of the very word *koinonia*, but also at the Jewish tradition in which Jesus and the early Christians were formed, which was a tradition of covenant."¹³ Thus the Patristic interpretations are not based on their Hellenistic backgrounds but their bases on the Hebrew Scriptures too have played a role. This reconciliatory perspective should work as the Patristic basis for ecumenism and dialogue.

Contextual Problems in Ecumenical Relations

It is quite humane that for any good works there will be coexistence of unavoidable evils. The reasons for the hindrances in ecumenical movements might be diverse. It might be worth exploring a few aspects of prime significances.

Proselytizing against the Spirit of Ecumenical Relations

One of the vehement stumbling blocks of the past was the interests of particular churches in proselytizing. In fact, it appears that the sharpness of it has got diminished in the recent years. But in the general religious spheres the concept for its dynamism is getting revisited. This has been made clear in one of the recent sociological readings of the religions, where it has been stated that, "...the church's traditional posture is one in which evangelism, and

¹³ Nicholas Sagovsky, *Ecumenism, Christian Origins and the Practice of Communion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 198.

proselytizing is seen as at least one central component of the mission of the church.”¹⁴

Overemphasizing of the Particular Identities

It is significant that one has to maintain the strength of the particular identities. All the same, sometimes, the emphasis given to the identities can become counter-productive. This may sometimes slowly lead to confessionalism. If the people in leadership are holding onto the identity beyond what would be natural, it will end up in indoctrination; which will make a generation blind. This could even result in a false activism, which cannot be creative. This aspect has been elaborately subjected to studies by Roger Trig, who confirms this wrong way of promoting activism.¹⁵ Animosity and intolerances will be the outcome of it. There will not be initiatives for mutual learnings.

Uncontrollable Influences of Social Media

One may probably think on what way social media can become a challenge for the ecumenical endeavors. This is an age of social media. It goes without saying that social media could be used for constructive and positive aspects. It can be hugely destructive as well. The freedom and possibilities of interpreting an event or concept has now become handy for anybody. As if we understand in the postmodern philosophy there are no particular centers in the present day. Every single point can become a vibrant centre point. This has now been proved by the interpretative potential of the social media. And so itself, a wrong hand handling this would only give

¹⁴ Elmer J. Thiessen, *The Ethics of Evangelism* (Milton Keynes: Authentic Publishers, 2014), 30.

¹⁵ Roger Trigg, *Religion in Public Life: Must Faith Be Privatized?* (Oxford: Oxford University press, 2007), 98-112.

erroneous and detrimental interpretations. Elaborate studies have been carried out in this area to bring out the damage that the wrong exercises of social media can make in the society. Actions, campaigns and events can be wrongly interpreted. The responsible persons in the Church will not have any good control on any of these and a wrong interpretation can give detrimental results.

Selected Issues in the Particular Contexts of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church

Contexts and backgrounds of diverse traditions cannot be the same. And so itself, the issues in particular traditions too will be different.

The Question of 'Eucharistic Hospitality'

In general ecumenical dialogues and approaches a coined ecumenical friendly phrase exists called, 'Eucharistic Hospitality'. By this, two Churches in dialogue, in case of celebrating the Holy Eucharist together, as a matter of hospitality and courtesy, by applying the principle of economy, should offer Holy Communion to the other. This is considered to be doctrinally and practically unacceptable in the Orthodox traditions. Catholic Church even though, in principle, does not agree with this concept, has a rather lenient approach. According to Cardinal His Eminence Walter Kasper:

“...The question of Eucharistic hospitality has arisen in some of the dialogues, doubtless in response to serious pastoral concerns. However, Catholic reluctance on this matter itself expresses concerns about a common doctrinal understanding of the Eucharist as sacrament of faith, and about the inner connection between Eucharistic

communion and ecclesial communion agreement on these unresolved questions is achieved will the issues of Eucharistic hospitality and Eucharistic sharing be capable of solution; this may indeed be an incentive to continue and intensify our dialogues.”¹⁶

Here the Cardinal takes a position that this kind of hospitality can be a starting point for the future effective and doctrinal collaborations. Eucharistic Communion, according to the Orthodox Tradition, is something that ought to be achieved in the culmination of the Dialogues. To that level of *koinonia* that the churches are expected to converge. Here offering of the communion as part of hospitality will be completely unacceptable. This can only be addressed through prolonged dialogues. There are no shortcuts about this. This can be understood as a conservative approach. But in dialogical principles, the Orthodox churches would like to see their sister churches taking this in the good spirit of respect. Say for instance, if one of our friends would have difficulty in freely offering something because of their own highly personal reasons, it is again only a matter of courtesy that in the common encounter that aspect is to be respected. Whereas if we are to interpret this as conservatism it is the spirit of dialogue that would get damaged.

Local and Hierarchical Ecumenism

The lack of local ecumenism is one of the prevalent issues in the Orthodox churches. It is true that in the communities a strong ‘dialogue of life’ exist. This is especially visible in a community where there exists a coexistence of diverse religious and denominational presence. When a person or family in the neighborhood is in need people would not naturally think of their

¹⁶ Walter Kasper, *Harvesting the Fruits: Aspects of Christian Faith in Ecumenical Dialogue* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing PLC, 2009), 192-193.

caste, creed, denomination or religion. This phenomenon is what is referred to above as 'dialogue of life'. This kind of naturally strong bond is not seems to be existing when it comes to the formal ecumenical relations in the local level. These good effects of dialogue of life and the consciously separating of the relations in the local ecumenical bodies have been discussed by Michael Kinnamon.¹⁷ It is quite true that in the hierarchical strands, cordial, formal, diplomatic and effective relations are possible and it exist too. When it comes to the local parishes, the hierarchy does not seem to be that enthusiastic in offering their support. There are people who would critically approach in finding the reason for this as; it is the insecurity of the clergy lot that they will lose their flocks. Again, a counter argument is that a pastor who offers meaningful pastoral services to the flock will only have the confidence in promoting the local ecumenism. As a good pastor's flock will not leave him or her.

Factional Feuds

As a matter of self-criticism, it is unquestionable truth that the Orthodox Church in India has caught up in the complexity of factional feud. Several decades have been passed now the Church is carrying on with this unresolved issue. Here one could see longstanding issues of the question of identity and definition of relations with one of its sister Churches. The Church has sought a 'mission of help' from one of the sister Oriental Orthodox Churches. But this mission of help has cost the Church its autocephaly. It is natural that there will be different interpretations of this situation. In any case, it is an established fact that this feud is drastically resulting

¹⁷ Michael Kinnamon, *Can a Renewal Movement Be Renewed?: Questions for the Future of Ecumenism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2014), 38.

in the spraining of the Christian witness. In fact, this internal and factional dispute has destructively started affecting the ecumenical witness of the Church. Many of the Christian churches, if not all, have now started viewing these two factions as two different churches. Only effective and strategic plans in great Christian spirit can resolve this issue. The common public and the own members, especially through the unruly communications through the social media has made worsen the situation.

Ecumenism as a new road to the reunion

The world is moving towards a “global village.” The rapid growth in the field of transportation and communication has accelerated this process. At the very same time, we can see signs of division and alienation. The increasing gap between the haves and have-nots, corruption in every field of life, etc., contribute much to this separation. It is in such a situation that the church has to seriously consider and redefine her role in such a society. It is here that the church has to stand as the example of unity. Therefore, she has to come up for the common weal of the whole mankind through active ecumenical activities. Her role is not to divide humanity into many groups, but to unite it into one and thus to lead the human kind into the love of God.

In the Indian context, the Church cannot close her eyes to this most important mission. India is a land of different religions. Evidently, the disunity among Christians is a big scandal in the eyes of the non-Christians. Due to this very fact, our Christian witnessing loses authenticity. Whenever the non-Christians look at us, they see always mutually fighting groups. Through our actions, we become antiwitnesses of what we preach. In order to realize the unity of churches, all churches should have the willingness to work for it. The

"Tanqebbar Manifest", published at the end of the dialogue between the South Indian Church and the Anglican Church, explains a very relevant matter regarding the ecumenical activities. "... but the unfortunate disunity and division among us make us incapable and incompetent to fulfill this task. To a great extent, we are not responsible for this disunity; rather it is imposed on us from outside. But we do not like to continue in this situation."¹⁸ Seeing that this disunity is improper and detrimental to the church, Christ's body, all should try to change this pathetic situation. As the Kerala churches originated from the same root, it is possible to strengthen their communion. Even though there are differences in the teachings, areas of co-operation can be found out and implemented.

The Orthodox Churches and the Unity of Churches

Malankara Orthodox Church always had the concept that there should be a wider unity of churches with mutual understanding, mutual dialogues for unity, thus to reach full communion. But it had its own limitations. With this aim in mind, the Malankara Orthodox Church took the initiative to form a meeting place of unity of the oriental orthodox churches. The Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church had its dialogue, but have not yet reached the communion of celebrating the Holy Eucharist together. The Orthodox Church does not have sacramental communion with the Protestant churches. But both of them enter into dialogues in order to find out the areas of consensus and co-operation. The Malankara Orthodox churches have the opinion that there should be perfect unity and common Christian witnessing. According to them, "Our faith must be appealing to today's man. We have to reintroduce the Christian faith considering

¹⁸ Cf. Al-Deen Noor, Hana S., and John Allen Hendricks. *Social Media: Usage and Impact*, Lexington Books, 2011, 27-45.

the problems faced by modern man".¹⁹ For this, the Orthodox Church sees the unity of churches as an essential step to be taken. Therefore, it exhorts its faithful to pray that the scandal of division in the one Church of Christ be removed and the perfect unity of churches be attained in the time and manner Christ wishes, and thereby the whole world may believe in Christ".

Today, the orthodox churches are in good relationship with other St. Thomas Christians of Kerala. They participate actively in the Unity Octave prayers and special welfare activities. They also take interest in sending candidates for priestly training in the Catholic seminaries. The meeting of the Catholicos with the Pope in 1983 helped a lot to intensify the relationship between the two churches.²⁰

Some Positive Elements for Asian Ecumenical Activities

Theologically, historically and culturally, the issues before our churches are not always the same as those facing the churches in the west. It will be foolish to see the European problem against our situations, or to accept their solutions as our solutions. The discussions in Uppsala or in Vatican II can be helpful to us. But when we come to specific issues, it is a matter we have to work out primarily in Asian context in the light of our history, culture and mission. The way to Christian unity is to work out an ecclesiology specifically for the church in Asia. We cannot give any blueprint for Christian unity in Asia but we can raise some questions to find out a way. Some of these questions are:

¹⁹ Chediath Geevarghese, *Keralathile Kristiya Sabhakal*, Kerala, Malayalam. 2010, 210

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 212.

1. The rediscovery of the unity of history,
2. An analysis of the causes of divisions,
3. Understanding of unity in relation to the mission of the church,
4. Certain trends in the ecumenical discussions on the unity of the church those are relevant to us.

Asia with its ancient cultures, heritage, diversity and richness - the cradle of a majority of religions in the world - seems to have lost its soul, as modernity rejects the traditional, as old customs give way to the new and as ancient philosophies recede to the background and technological advances take over. The Asian turmoil is manifested by poverty, the market economy, globalization, authoritarian regimes and hegemony of nations over others which further give rise to the continuing violation of human rights, the rise of religious fundamentalism and other forms of oppression with the minorities, women and children as primary victims, not to mention the environment.

Ecumenism and the ecumenical movement in Asia, which according to some is facing a crisis. The movement is an especially important one in Asia, where Christians are a minority in most countries, underscoring the need to work together if Christianity is to have an impact on the continent as a whole. The missionary movement, which converted oppressed and marginalized groups in Asia to Christianity, made an impact on the Asian ecumenical movement in two ways: first, it brought inherited denominational identities to Asia that affected the ecumenical spirit of the churches, and second, it ironically nurtured cooperation and unity among these same churches.

Fostering unity

It is often said that doctrines divide; praxis unites. This is most true of these movements, which forged inter-church unity more by joint cooperation and concrete involvement than by trying to resolve doctrinal differences. To be able to understand the unique Asian ecumenical contribution, we need to recall the challenging role played by the Asian Christian churches, especially through some of its outstanding representatives, at the global level right from the beginning of the 20th Century.

For example, at the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910, Bishop V.S. Azariah of Dornakal posed a challenge to the Western missionary approach and forcefully underlined the imperative need to indigenize Christianity. The Tambaram Mission Conference of 1938 could be called the Waterloo of Western conservative mission theology.²¹

Here the Asian participants, irrespective of the denominations they belonged to, posed a decisive challenge to Western Christianity, this time, questioning its negative attitudes towards religions other than Christianity, especially the views held by Hendrik Kraemer at the conference. It paved the way to what is known today as “wider ecumenism”, meaning the dialogue and cooperation of the churches with the various religious traditions.

The right to hope pointing to the deeper reasons for the crisis. Pope Francis says: “We know that things can change. Humanity still has the ability to work together in building our common home”²² Sharing such signs of hope is not only a matter of mutual

²¹ *National Council of Church Review*, Vol. CX VII No.5, May 1997, Delhi (*Towards Wider Ecumenism* by Satish Gyan), 321.

²² Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, *Caring for Our Common Home: An Ecumenical and Interreligious Concern*, January 2016, 3.

psychological and spiritual encouragement. To nurture hope is a fundamental ethical principle in any human relation. It is not a matter of being purely optimistic, or even unrealistic or ignoring risks and problems. It is rather a matter of identifying those realities that are authentic signs of hope. To fail in sustaining one another's hope in any way, or even to destroy the hope of the other, is to take the meaning out of their work or lives. Who has the right to do that? All human beings have a right to hope. Faith in God, who desires fullness of life for all of humanity, is a way to relate to the world as it is with the conviction and the commitment that something more and better is possible than what we can observe immediately. This is one contribution to hope. Therefore we also need to renew a theology of hope. A relevant question in the critique of religion is: are religions and religious leaders conveying hope for all? The human rights to food, clean water and air, health services and more are already limited or violated by climate change for many people in the world. Who has the right to take away the hope of a future where the next generations can enjoy life in its abundance on this planet? Moral perspectives in public debate are often framed in terms of what has gone wrong, who ought to be held responsible, defining the bad or even evil acts to be condemned, pointing out the injustices in places of power and certain structures, and identifying the catalysts of violence and conflicts. However, moral perspectives in public debate can and should do more to point to what is good, naming the better alternatives, and showing what responsible and sustainable actions are possible.

We believe that we have the potential to do what is just for the poor, those who contribute the least to emissions yet suffer the most. We believe that we have this responsibility from God, the creator. But God has also given us the capacity to change. So we have hope.

We have reasons to hope. We have the right to hope. Therefore, I also say, as a person of faith, praise God.’

Conclusion

All human beings have a right to hope. Faith in God, who desires fullness of life for all of humanity, is a way to relate to the world as it is with the conviction and the commitment that something more and better is possible than what we can observe immediately. This is one contribution to hope. Therefore we also need to renew a theology of hope.

The Ecumenical Movement of the twentieth century is a significant phenomenon in the history of Christianity. Though the search for the lost Christian unity was never lacking in the church, it took a systematic and organized form only in the contemporary Ecumenical Movement. The concern for the unity of the church means the commitment to the wholeness of the church. Thus, today, the churches happily try to focus their attention on the areas of co-operation. It is with this hope that the churches today engage actively in ecumenical activities. We may say that the Indian church, if it earnestly desires, can fulfill its hopes for unity and solidarity. The existing ecumenical landscape has traditionally focused on “broadening” and “deepening” the conversations. In the changing landscape new approaches will be required to enable reception to become a reality.

It is clear that the new landscape will be focused by “Building Bridges” that lead to engaging with churches and Christians who have been outside the current circle. As well as “Fostering Cooperation” in more open and flexible networks, the new landscape brings challenges that can only be embraced by openness and

adaptation to the opportunities that arise. The new landscape will be enriched by conversations and cooperation in global, regional and national settings where they embrace sister organizations that are traditional, Evangelical and Pentecostal in composition.

Ecumenism to the core mean is always aim at a gathering of the scattered people of God.

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- National Council of Church Review*, Vol. CX VII No.5, May 1997, Delhi.

**From Internal Christian towards
Multireligious Ecumenical Arrangements in
Indonesia**

**從基督徒內部走向多元宗教合一：
印度尼西亞**

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[ABSTRACT] The various Protestant churches were continuations of missionary societies at the end of colonial period in Indonesia in 1945. The cooperation between foreign missionaries was moved to a Council of (regional) Protestant Churches. There were some spectacular ecumenical results around 1970: 1) a joined translation of the Bible was accepted, 2) ecumenical Christmas celebrations became popular and even grandiose events in all major towns of the country; 3) exchange of seminary professors between denominations began; 4) there were serious consultations between leaders of churches as to the challenge of stronger and less tolerant groups of Muslims and their influence on government measures (like the 1978 ban on new foreign missionaries and economic subsidies; the 1982 fatwa against Muslim participation in Christmas festivities and many more like the introduction of *sharia* rulings for Muslims

against the public Pancasila Ideology and its pluralistic ethics). Also after 1970, the New Order government became heavily involved in the social role of religion. Its programme for inter-religious harmony in fact eclipsed the idea of ecumenical rapprochement between Christian Churches.

【摘要】 1945 年印度尼西亞殖民時期結束時，各種新教教會是傳教會的延續。外國傳教士之間的合作被轉移到（地區）新教教會理事會。1970 年左右有可觀的成果：1）聖經的聯合翻譯被接受；2）普世聖誕節慶祝活動在主要城鎮變得流行甚至是宏大的事件；3）教派之間的神學院教授開始交流；4）教會領袖之間就強大和不寬容的穆斯林群體的挑戰及其對政府措施的影響進行了認真的磋商。同樣在 1970 年之後，新秩序政府開始大量參與宗教的社會角色。事實上，它的宗教間和諧計劃超越了基督教會之間基督教和解的觀念。

Andreas Yewangoe (born 1945) is a prominent theologian and church leader in Indonesia. He wrote a dissertation on *Theologia Crucis in Asia* (1987). He was teaching theology, but also fulfilled leading positions in ecumenical bodies, especially for the (only Protestant) Council of Churches in Indonesia, between 2004-2009. He served also a period (2006-2012) as member of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches. In 2012 he wrote about an astonishing meeting in Crete, where the question was debated whether the Lutheran Church of Jerusalem could become a WCC member. The proposal was opposed by the Orthodox Church of Jerusalem which claimed jurisdiction for the whole of Jerusalem since a long time and therefore rejected recognition of another denomination in the region. The result was that the membership of

the Lutherans of Jerusalem was rejected. Yewangoe was deeply disappointed and wrote a comment with the title "Ecumenical Movement: a dead end?" where he regretted the emphasis on institutional aspects in the WCC and other ecumenical bodies. Nevertheless he had also soothing remarks and his last sentence was: "The core mission is service. If the church returns to the mission of this ministry, the ecumenical movement will not be deadlocked."¹

In 1997 the Kanisius publishing house of the Jesuits of Yogyakarta circulated a book about the 16 documents of Vatican II. All authors were Catholics with the exception of three. Two Muslims wrote about inter-religious relations (besides one Catholic), while the Protestant Dr. Gerrit Singgih was the single one to write about the ecumenical issues. Singgih is an Old Testament scholar and writes often about contextual theology.² But here he first gives a general remark about the great difference in ecumenical approaches in Europe and the United States compared to the Asian situation of a country like Indonesia. This is followed by a description of the ecumenical situation of the place where he wrote part of his text: the monastery of Taizé in France, a truly ecumenical heaven where the tricky ecclesiastical rules "are sometimes forgotten and people can experience the unity of the Church in its full glory". But then he turns his focus to the situation in the majority-Protestant (Reformed) province of Minahasa in Indonesia. Here the ecumenical gentlemen's agreement was followed that no other denominations should establish congregations besides the GMIM, *Gereja Masehi Injili Minahasa*, the Evangelic Christian Church of Minahasa. So, a group

¹ Andreas Yewangoe, 'Ecumenical movement: A Dead End?', in: Huub Lems (ed), *The Changing Landscape of Ecumenism. Reflections from Indonesia and Europe*, (Wuppertal: Eukumindo, 2013), 171-173.

² E. Gerrit Singgih, "Tantangan dan Perkembangan Gerakan Oikumene di Indonesia", in: Marcel Beding and others, *Gereja Indonesia Pasca-Vatikan II*, Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 1997:167-182. Quote from p. 169.

of Batak faithful became a Batak-speaking congregation of GMIM. After some time, however, this congregation seceded from GMIM to become member of the Lutheran GBHK, the Batak Church of North Sumatra, the largest Protestant Church in the whole of Indonesia and also the one who has most congregations outside its own ethnic territory, because it considers itself as a non-territorial Church. While attending services in Taizé, Singgih realized that in his homeland the ecumenical situation is sometimes far from ideal.

The 1940s and 1960s: the Drastic Changes in Protestant-Catholic Relations, also in Indonesia

In the colonial period, until 1942, there was a ban on 'double mission' in Indonesia. No rivalry between Protestants and Catholics was allowed in the Dutch East Indies and also not between Protestant denominations. In this way the majority of the native population in the island of Flores turned Catholic while in the islands of West Timor and Ambon Reformed Calvinism became dominant among Christians. The result was in the case of Protestant Christianity not only a division according to European denominations but at the same time to ethnic diversity in the various islands of Indonesia: there is a Lutheran Batak Church in Sumatra, a strictly orthodox Reformed in West Java and among the Toraja of Sulawesi, against a lighter version of Reformed Protestantism in East Java. Besides denominational identities there are similarly strong ethnic labels in the huge country with its great variety of population.

In the late 1930s and 1940s the foreign missions were transformed into independent local churches. In the first two decades after Independence, 1945-1965, the Christians did their utmost effort to show that they were not a colonial creation, notwithstanding their origin from European missionary societies. They wanted to be

known as truly nationalist Indonesian Christians and this was successful: the Christian schools and hospitals could continue to prosper. A recent movie about the first Catholic native Indonesian bishop Soegijapranata (archbishop of Semarang 1940-1963) was given the title: *Soegija, 100% Catholic, 100% Indonesian*. Indonesia has in 2018 a population of 265 million. The Protestant are with some 6.5% of the population larger than the 3% Catholics, but minorities compared to the 87% Muslims.

The change towards ecumenical openness grew in the 1960s through the debates at the Second Vatican Council and under the influence of the World Council of Churches. In 1955 the Conference of Indonesian Catholic Bishops still had decided that a Catholic translation of the full text of the Bible should be continued, notwithstanding the fact that the Protestants had already since long a full Indonesian translation. This decision of the bishops was revoked in a meeting of October 1968, where it was decided that the work should not be continued and Catholics should use the Protestant translation. The Franciscan Friar Dr. Cletus Groenen had for years worked on parts of the Old Testament and his Protestant colleagues were astonished to see that he himself had proposed that his work was now stopped in favour of this ecumenical process. In fact the first formal ecumenical event should be dated four years earlier. In 1950 the Protestant Churches had founded an Indonesian Council of (Protestant) Churches. It held its Fifth Assembly in Jakarta in May 1964. At this event for the first time two Catholic priests came as official observers. It was not a delegation at the highest level, but a promising start.

Since the mid 1960s the usual animosities and strong language between the denominations have stopped, but ecumenical relations never were given the highest priority for Indonesian churches. There is a yearly letter of Protestant and Catholic Church leaders at

Christmas. The ecumenical Christmas celebrations are the most visible aspect of these friendly relations. But there is not much work done for more common institutional activities.

As mentioned above, the actual beginning of official contacts between the two Christian communities had been at the Fifth Assembly of the Council of Churches in Jakarta, 3-13 May 1964. The Presidency of the Conference of Catholic Bishops replied an invitation for this event with the sending of a low level delegation of two priests. This mirrored the impact of better relations as promoted by the second Vatican Council. Also in 1964 a Committee for Ecumenical relations (*Panitia Ekumene*) was erected within the Conference of Catholic Bishops, but in 1975 its name was changed into Committee for Relations with (other) Religions and Spiritual Movements.³ In a document 99 pages of 1985 with the broad title of “The Catholic Community in the Pancasila Society” the bishops talk about ‘religious harmony’ (*kerukunan*) only in the context of ‘other religions’ while the internal harmony among Christians is not mentioned.⁴ There is in Indonesia a quite particular status for the great religions. The state has built some kind of a ‘national ecumenical facility’, it is even a bureaucracy, a Ministry of Religion, to support and manage all (six) recognized religions. This facility is not concentrated on the individual denominations or churches, but on the major religions as such. We will give first attention to this special development here.

³ *Panorama MAWI 1925-1977*, A Document of the MAWI Secretariat.

⁴ MAWI, *Umat Katolik Indonesia dalam Masyarakat Pancasila*, 1985:31-2.

Not a secular nor an Islamic state: the Pancasila ideology as the format and standard of the social role of religions in Indonesia

From 1 March 1945 the Japanese administration in Indonesia supported a Committee for the Study of Activities Leading towards Indonesian Independence. There were two Protestant Christians, no Catholics in this body of 62 (later 68) members. The majority opposed the idea of 15 members of Muslim organizations to label the independent Republic as a Muslim State. The leading politician, and later the first President, Sukarno, came with the idea to accept a 'five-pillar ideology' or *Pancasila*, where besides Belief in the One Supreme Deity, other basic ideas would be those of nationalism, humanitarianism, democracy and social justice. In the first proposal the 'religious paragraph' was placed last, but in the preamble to the constitution as presented the day after the declaration of independence, on 18 August 1945, it was placed as the first pillar. Sukarno gave the following justification: 'Not only should the people of Indonesia have belief in God, but every Indonesian should believe in his own particular God. The Christian should worship God according to the teachings of Jesus Christ; Muslims according to the teachings of the prophet Muhammad; Buddhists should discharge their religious rites according to their own books. But let us all have belief in God.'⁵

The idea of this political position of monotheistic religions in Indonesia was strengthened by the foundation of a Ministry of Religion(s) in January 1946. Although it served specially the 87% of Muslims in the country, it had from the beginning also sections for Catholics and (Protestant) Christians (where the word *Kristen* in

⁵ Karel Steenbrink, *Catholics in Independent Indonesia, 1945-2010*, (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 5-6.

Indonesian is mostly used for Protestants only). In 1958 a section for (Balinese) Hinduism was opened. A problem in the acceptance of Hinduism was that the four informal criteria for 'religion': monotheism, Holy Scripture, a prophet, and international acceptance, were not clear in the case of Hinduism. In 1967 Buddhism became included in the Hindu-Buddhist section, while in 1980 a special section for Buddhism was opened. A department for Confucianism was only opened in 2006. The formal reason for this delay was that it was considered a 'local Chinese belief' and not an international religion. The real cause for the hesitation to put Confucianism on the list was that it was supposed to be connected to ethnic Chinese citizens who were suspected of being Communist.⁶ Traditional or tribal religions only could be accepted in the structure of this ministry when combined with an international religion. In this way the Kaharingan as the (modern construct) of the Dayak tribal religion in Kalimantan became formally defined as *Agama Hindu-Kaharingan* or Kaharingan-Hinduism. Only on 7 November 2017 the Supreme Court of Indonesia concluded that spiritual belief systems should be accepted on the same level as the six officially recognized religions for identity cards, passports and also religious marriage ceremonies.

In a spirit of optimism one could consider the Indonesian Ministry of Religion as a promoter of the 'greater ecumenism', against the proper and conventional Christian ecumenical movement, its network and institutions taken as a branch of 'smaller ecumenism'. We must, however, bring some nuance to this statement. The various religions of Indonesia have given somewhat different reactions to the opportunities created by the ministry. It has been until recently a blind alley for all those outside the circle of the small number of

⁶ Karel Steenbrink, 'Buddhism in Muslim Indonesia', *Studia Islamika*, Vol 20/1 (2013)1-34.

finally six recognized religions. Atheists, adherents of Javanese mystical movements, of older and more recent 'new religions', of tribal religions, they all became outlaws. In order to take part in the state administration (for legal marriage, but also for administrative affairs like a car or motorbike insurance, passports, identity cards, driver licences) Indonesian citizens were until the Supreme Court decision of November 2017, mentioned above, obliged to fill in one of the official religious options. Like the gender option (male or female) and place of birth, also the religious option between six possibilities is often necessary. For the majority religion of the 87% Muslims of the country, the ministry filled the gap of the organization of their religion. The ministry has a service for religious education, with about 15% of the national education, from primary school to secondary and academic education in a mixed secular-religious *madrrasah* system for Muslims. For all six major religions it has hired teachers of religions from kindergarten up to university. It organizes the *shari'a* courts for Muslim marriage, divorce and inheritance. It has the monopoly on the organization of the hajj pilgrimage for yearly about 200,000 faithful. Different from most Muslim majority countries, it does not organize the mosque building or the nomination of mosque officials. On the whole, the ministry has functioned as a modernizing and even liberal body for doctrine and practice of Islam in the modern state. For Hinduism the ministry has been the basis for the reformulation of Balinese Hinduism in a more monotheistic style and it has given jobs to religious functionaries outside the caste of Brahmins. Buddhists and Christians generally found the ministry not really necessary, but some groups have become more active here than others. Evangelical Christians usually want to register their Bible Schools and training for ministers at the Ministry of Religion, while mainstream or classical Protestants and Roman Catholics tried to evade the control

of this ministry by calling their theological education a philosophical school and seek accreditation with the Ministry of Education.

Inter-religious harmony, mostly seen as prevention of religious conflicts, has been a top priority of the ministry. The Indonesian government took in 1980 the initiative to establish a Body for Inter-religious Harmony (*Wadah Musyawarah Antarumat Beragama*), where the MUI, *Majelis Ulama Indonesia* or Council of Indonesian Muslim Clerics represents the Muslims. MUI was established in 1975 at the initiative of the government. Its members represent not their individual position, but the larger, national organizations of Muslims of various traditions. The DGI (later PGI), Council or now Communion of Indonesian Churches stands for the Protestants. The Conference of Indonesian Bishops represents the Catholics. Parisada Hindu Dharma became since 1959 the representative of the Balinese Hindus. It was not the initiative of temple priests, but of bureaucratic and political leaders like the governor of the province of Bali, Ida Bagus Mantri, and the chairman of the provincial parliament Colonel I Gusti Putu Raka.⁷ The Walubi as the Buddhist Council was formally established on 8 May 1979 at the initiative of Minister of Religion Alamsjah (minister 1978-1983) in order to 'bring the various Buddhist organizations together and to facilitate the communication between the Buddhists with the government and with other faith communities'.⁸

The *Wadah* had to tackle a great problem in early 1981. The MUI had issued a *fatwa*, prohibiting Muslims to be active in

⁷ I Gusti Ngurah Bagus, 'The Parisada Hindu Dharma Indonesia in a Society in Transformation', in: Martin Ramstedt (ed.), *Hinduism in Modern Indonesia* (London & New York: Routledge Curzon, 2004) 84-92.

⁸ This formula has been taken from the semi-official biographies of the ministers of religion, Azyumardi Azra & Saiful Umam (eds), *Menteri-menteri Agama RI*, (Jakarta: INIS, 1998) 341. Karel Steenbrink, 'Buddhism in Muslim Indonesia', *Studia Islamika* 20(2013) no 1:1-34. Already on 1 October 1979 Alamsyah inaugurated the *Badan Musyawarah Ummat Beragama*, on 30 June 1980 renamed *Wadah* ...

Christmas celebrations and even to express 'Merry Christmas' to Christian fellow citizens. For the Suharto government, making much work of Pancasila as the national philosophy of the nation, this was a challenge. The head of the MUI had to resign and President Suharto ordered his cabinet ministers to be presented among 100,000 (by far majority Christian) people in the national stadium Senayan in Jakarta for the yearly ecumenical Christmas celebration, broadcasted by national television. The Muslim President himself lit the first candle light in the giant Christmas tree.⁹ This was not only by quite a few orthodox Muslims seen as an effort to make Pancasila as some kind of 'civil religion'. In this period a law was accepted in parliament which asked that the Pancasila should be formulated as the 'sole foundation' for all civil organizations. In 1984 the Council of (Protestant) Churches formulated in its new constitution, article 3 that "The Communion of Indonesian Churches has its foundation in Jesus Christ, Lord and Saviour, in agreement with God's Word in the bible." But it was immediately followed by the statement that the Communion of Churches joined in the effort to conserve the 'Pancasila as the only foundation in state and society'. Only two years later, November 1986, the Catholics Bishops stated in the new statutes for their Conference that "the Pancasila is acceptable as the basis for the Conference in its social, national life."¹⁰

In the 1980s there was a big support of the government, through its Ministry of Religions for inter-religious meetings. There were ample funds for these activities. Nearly 1000 official reports of local, regional and national meetings of the religions, were printed as booklets. Venues for these meetings were very often in the best local hotels, with all kind of modern facilities. In a somewhat cynic way

⁹ Karel Steenbrink, 'Muslim-Christian relations in the *Pancasila* State of Indonesia', *The Muslim World*, 88 (1998) 320-352, here p. 331.

¹⁰ Aritonang (ed) 2008: 214 and 787.

the Jesuit priest Adolf Heuken wrote about activities in his town, Jakarta, in his Catholic Encyclopaedia, “Herewith a nice tour started along the beautiful carpets in the cool airconditioned convention halls of the great hotels of the capital.”¹¹

This politically inspired ‘great ecumenical effort’ had its ups and downs. Between 1983-1993 another Minister of Religion, Munawir Sjadzali gave more attention to inner Muslim affairs, especially the *shari'a* courts. His successor again more stimulated the interreligious harmony, because of the tense political situation preceding the fall of Suharto in 1998. In the turbulent decade after the fall of Suharto there were quite a few incidents of inter-religious violence between Muslims and Christians. In 2006 a joint decree by the Ministers of Religion and the Interior regulated the *Role of the heads of local government in the protection of inter-religious harmony and the building of houses of worship*. In all 33 provinces and 405 districts a FKUB, *Forum Kerukunan Umat Beragama* or Forum for the Harmony of the Faithful should be established. They should hold meetings of religious leaders, discussing any problem in their region. They had a special task for the permit to erect new houses of worship, where it was stipulated that mosques, churches and other houses of worship should be built in regions where they had a solid group of faithful. In the case of small Protestant churches it had turned out difficult to build churches in sections of bigger towns where the majority was Muslim. The FKUB had a slow start, although it was (like the *Wadah* of the 1980s) sponsored with government funds, but in some regions it developed into a vivid centre for interreligious understanding. A quite striking example is the Indonesian Province of Papua where in early 2018 Muslim, Buddhist, Protestant and Catholic religious leaders within FKUB

¹¹ Adolf Heuken SJ, *Ensiklopedia Gereja*, Jakarta, 2006, vol 9:100.

decided to observe a fasting period of 30 hours (Thursday noon until sunset the next Friday), as preparation for a peaceful election of local administrators. We may consider this as an Assisi style of fasting and praying together for social and religious harmony.

The classical ecumenical dreams, encountering painful frustrations

Ecumenical initiatives were already in progress before the 1960s. In fact, several processes were happening since the declaration of independence in 1945. Most Protestant Christians were members of churches or missionary communities that were still under European supervision. The process towards independent churches was accelerated and this resulted in 21 Protestant churches establishing a Council of Churches in May 1950. The purpose of this council was the growth towards one church for all of Indonesia. It turned out that an organizational unity was impossible. Instead, in 2008 the Communion of Churches counted 88 member churches. The increase was for a greater part the result of schisms among the member churches and only partly because of denominations who sought membership. Besides, since 1950 many new churches of Pentecostal and Evangelical character were created in Indonesia. Quite many of these have become members of two bodies, the PGLII, (*Pesekutuan Gereja-gereja dan Lembaga-lembaga Injili Indonesia* or Communion of Indonesian Evangelical Churches and Institutions) with 91 churches and further 103 Evangelical institutions that do not use the name of 'church', and the PGPI (*Persekutuan Gereja-gereja Pentakosta di Indonesia* or Communion of Pentecostal Churches in Indonesia) with an unknown number of churches.¹²

¹² Andreas Yewangoe, 'Ecumenical Movement in Indonesia, a Map of the Recent

The many meetings of the mainline churches in the Council/Communion of Churches talking about a road towards unity are in strong contrast with the increase of so many more churches during the last 70 years. The great dream of one big Protestant Church of Indonesia seemed to become more and more difficult. In 1984 the name *Dewan Gereja* (Council of Churches) was changed into *Persekutuan Gereja* or Communion of Churches. This was justified by the idea that ‘the unity of the Church, or the One Church in Indonesia, essentially existed already according to the essence of the Church’. The ‘old concept of interdenominational ecumenism’ with its emphasis on organisation, liturgy and confession, was left in favour of unity at the local level and unity in action.¹³ This change of name was accompanied by ‘Five Documents of Church Unity’, accepted in this 1984 assembly of Ambon. For some it was a ‘second choice’, necessary since the first option, that of organizational and administrative union, could not be realized, but others saw this more in line with the reality of the legitimate variety within the Christian Church.

In the period 1965-1975 there was a kind of ecumenical passion among some Catholic and Protestant theologians especially in East Indonesia, where some districts have a Christian majority. The most striking example of this was the January 1974 Ecumenical Declaration of three major churches in the Southeastern Islands, the Catholics of Flores, the Protestant Timor Church and the Protestant Church of Sumba. This is a truly optimistic document, written in the quasi-liturgical style of this kind of documents on the international

Situation, 2008’, in Lems (ed), 2013, 25-40. Here is still another list of 151 churches that are registered as ‘independent churches’ with the Christian Director General in the Department of Religion.

¹³ Jan Aritonang, ‘The ecumenical movement in Indonesia with special attention to the national council of churches’, in Jan Aritonang and Karel Steenbrink (eds), *A History of Christianity in Indonesia*, Leiden: Brill, 2008, 823-864, here 836.

level.¹⁴ Cooperation between the three churches is planned in socio/economic programmes, research, theological education, the common translation of the Apostolic Creed, prayers like Our Father, a common ecumenical training centre, joint programmes and presentation in the media, prevention of proselytism. At the time of writing the General Assembly of the World Council of Churches was still planned for Jakarta July/August 1975. This was later moved to Nairobi after an Anglican priest was killed in Jakarta in July 1974.

The Christmas celebrations in the great national Senayan Stadium of Jakarta were the most visible presentation of the unity of the Christians. They were often attended by the national President, who usually illuminates the first candle or electric light of the Christmas tree, something which is considered as a more or less ceremonial or even liturgical act, although the President always has been a Muslim. Many cabinet ministers also are present at this national event, notwithstanding the *fatwa* of the Majelis Ulama of 1981 that Muslims are not allowed to participate in Christmas celebrations. Also in smaller cities and towns these ecumenical celebrations of Christmas are the most visible common manifestations of the Christian denominations. But in other fields cooperation has remained modest. Student chaplaincy or the work of army chaplains has remained the responsibility for either Catholics or Protestants. The national and local government takes here all Protestants as one 'religion' without making distinction between denominations. In social and economic development projects the religious factor has become less and less dominant and many Christian NGOs have included also Muslim staff. While preparing for this article a Protestant minister, former missionary among the Karo Batak people of Sumatra, commented on the celebration of the

¹⁴ For the Indonesian text of this document see Steenbrink 2015: 554-557. An English translation is available through <https://independent.academia.edu/KSteenbrink>.

Karo Batak Church, “I was angry that the Catholic bishop or his representative was not invited to participate in the 1990 centennial of the Karo mission/church (or maybe he declined?) - people came from overseas and from many parts of Indonesia - why not Medan diocese?” There was some cooperation between theological academies, but mostly restricted to Catholic Professors of Philosophy and Anthropology for Protestant schools who sent biblical scholar to the Catholic institutes.

Three prominent ‘international’ ecumenical theologians from Indonesia

If we compare Indonesia to India, we see some similarities, some differences too. Indonesia has 9.5% in Christians which makes it with a population of 265 million up to 25.18 million Christians. India has 2.3% Christians and so it counts some 24 million Christians, according to the census of 2011. Notwithstanding a nearly similar Christian population, the Indonesians had not really leading positions in bodies like the World Council of Churches. No Stanley Samartha, no M.M. Thomas and similar personalities. Still, the contacts with the ecumenical institutions were a good supplement to the quite restricted channels of communication with the European missionary organizations. We want to give here three examples of people whose life in part was dominated by these ecumenical contacts with world Christianity.

The first to be mentioned is Marianne Katoppo. She was born in 1943 as the tenth child of a prominent Protestant in the island of Sulawesi who later became a minister in the failed State of East Indonesia and consequently a high official in Jakarta. Marianne was a bright girl, good in European languages and she was in 1960 invited to Lausanne for a European Ecumenical Youth Assembly.

The older theologians at the conference stressed the differences between Lutherans and Reformed Christians and forbade them to have a common celebration of the Lord's Supper. Her age-group found the debate 'absurd and ridiculous'.¹⁵ As a member of the programme 'Youth Caravan' she went to Egypt, Ethiopia and finally Nigeria. After finishing her BA in theology in Jakarta she stayed for 1 1/2 year in Japan, then for a year in South Korea until she worked in London with the British Bible Society until mid 1969. Love brought her then to Sweden, where she stayed four years until she returned in 1973 to Jakarta and finished her Masters in theology in 1977 with a thesis on the low position of women in the Minahasan Church. After a short period of ministry in Jakarta she came to Bossey for the post-graduate course in 1978. Here she wrote the successful book *Compassionate and free, an Asian woman's theology*, on the position of women in Protestant churches worldwide (published in 1980 by Orbis Books). In the 1970s she had already published five novels with some quite sensitive social issues like homosexuality and arranged marriages. The stories of the novels refer often to the international ecumenical circuit and issues like the 'theology of the Death of God'. She served several parishes after 1980, but called herself an 'independent theologian'. She was not really embedded in the local churches of Indonesia. Not all theologians are like Saint Paul who was able to travel again and again and held authority in his congregations. In 1994 she once complained that she did too little in the Indonesian churches. She was active in international ecumenical circles during a decade while still young, without a position in her own church. When she returned to live more or less permanently in Indonesia since the early 1980s

¹⁵ For references here see Karel Steenbrink, 'Ecumenical Adventures of Marianne Katoppo', in: Leny Lagerwerf e.a. (eds), *Changing Partnership of Missionary and Ecumenical Movements. Essays in Honour of Marc Spindler*, Leiden/Utrecht 1995, 212-225.

she had a restricted network in her own tradition. She died somewhat frustrated in 2007. As an internal migrant from Minahasa to Jakarta she had already made herself loose from her original church. The broad and numerous international ecumenical connections had made her position in her homeland not easy, just the opposite.

The second personality to be discussed here is Yosep P. Widyatmadja, born in 1944 in North Java in a Mennonite family of (partly) Chinese offspring. As a teenager he was baptised in the ethnic Chinese GKI-church in Semarang. He studied theology at the inter-denominational Duta Wacana School of Theology in Yogyakarta and he became interested in Urban Rural Mission as developed in ecumenical circles. In 1973 a Dutch Reformed development organization paid his study of this subject in Singapore, Manila, Kuala Lumpur and Hong Kong. With foreign funds he could develop projects of Urban Rural Mission in Surakarta, but then in 1975 his own church did not want to ordain him to become a minister, because he worked full time for an interdenominational foundation in this field. Only in 1986 after more than a decade working in social and religious fields, and after some training abroad, especially twice six months in the United States, a local congregation wanted to have him ordained as a minister with special mission for deprived people. Widyatmadja could serve his foundation in Surakarta for 25 years, between 1974-1999 thanks to the funds that flew 'abundantly' from Western countries and gave him the nickname of *pendeta dolar* or 'minister dollar'. Between 1999-2007 he served the Christian Conference of Asia as executive secretary for Urban Rural Mission. Apparently Widyatmadja could work in a more stable position than Katoppo, due to his home base that he did not leave too long during his study and work. It is also clear here that ecumenical work in social projects is easier or at least with less internal church problems

than the writing of critical theological issues raised by Marianne Katoppo.

As one counterpart of the international and ecumenical Protestants, I want to mention here Thomas Michel, born 1941 in Canada, who became a diocesan priest in St. Louis. At the Second Vatican Council bishop Soegijapranata of Semarang asked his colleague of St. Louis for a priest to teach English literature at the Sanata Dharma Teacher Training School in Yogyakarta. Thomas Michel came, and became a Jesuit of the Indonesian province in 1971. After this he studied Arabic and Islam, wrote a Ph.D. Dissertation in Chicago with Fazlur Rahman and then became specialist for interreligious relations, not only in Indonesia. During several periods he was attached to the FABC in Bangkok, the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, and also with the Jesuits in Rome and the Vatican Secretariat for non-Christians.¹⁶

Internal Protestant Ecumenical versus Dialogue Circles and Centres

There is no real great and intense 'ecumenical movement in Indonesia'. The idea is most often restricted to the activities around the formal council or communion of (Protestant) churches, PGI, and to EUKUMINDO, the association of European partners that supports Indonesian Churches who want to meet as equal partners with the emphasis on exchange of information and on cooperation with the ideal of reciprocity.¹⁷ Theological faculties and seminaries have sometimes exchange of professors, but activities for this purpose

¹⁶ See also here Thomas Michel, *A Christian View on Islam. Essays on Dialogue* (Edited by Irfan A. Omar), Maryknoll/New York: Orbis 2010.

¹⁷ For this process of equality and mutual exchange see the introduction by Henk Venema in Huub Lems (ed.) 2013:7-8 ('Ecumenism as a context for and a vehicle to mission').

among the common faithful are very few. This is different from the broader perspective of a harmony and dialogue among religions in general, with much emphasis on Christian-Muslim Relations. In this respect there are many more initiatives. The best known movement here is the inter-religious forum DIAN/Interfidei ('Dialog Antar-Iman') established in Yogyakarta in October 1991. Its first director was Th. Sumartana, after his untimely death in 2002 succeeded by Elga Sarapung. DIAN/Interfidei is strongly supported by the royal family of the Sultanate of Yogyakarta and by various Muslim and Christian sponsors in Jakarta and the whole nation of Indonesia as well as abroad. It organizes consultations, training and cooperation between many local organizations in the field of human rights (especially for religious and spiritual as well as ethnic minorities), ecology, women's rights. A second place to be mentioned here is located in Jakarta. Here one of the best known civil movements in this field is MADIA, *Masyarakat Dialog antar-Agama* or 'Community for Inter-religious Dialogue', established in 1995 in a time of increasing tension between some Muslim groups and the Christian minority in Java. This was still before the attacks in 1996 on churches in East Java (Surabaya, Situbondo) and West Java (Tasikmalaya, Garut). MADIA is more academic, bringing together staff and students of the UIN, State Islamic University of Jakarta, the Driyarkara (Jesuit) School of Theology and the Protestant School of Theology. Third we turn to the eastern islands. As a reaction on violent conflicts between Christians and Muslims in Ambon and Poso (island of Sulawesi) between 1999 and 2002, a group of women in the Moluccas concluded that violent interreligious conflicts were nearly always started and inflated by men, mostly even young men. Therefore they started the inter-religious movement of *Ibu Peduli* or concerned women. With non-violent means they tried to influence their children and society as a whole that youngsters should take no pride in violent

actions, that they were not brave or champion-like if they would behave like warriors. The movement of the Moluccas quickly also spread to other parts of Indonesia.

Centres, organizations and movements like the three described here are to be listed by hundreds with both Christian and Muslim initiators. But ecumenical ideals in the traditional meaning of Catholics and Protestants only together never found such broad support. The idea of 'ecumenism' remained restricted to the inner circle of Christian church leaders and never developed to become a popular movement. Indonesia is here not an exception, but probably part of the global development. Anyway, something like a *Societas Oecumenica*, a broad network of specialists in ecumenical studies, as found in Europe, never developed in Asia, as far as I know and, as already indicated above, in Indonesia it was only in the decade 1965-1975 with some more fervour an issue among church leadership. Maybe the ideal of a visible and organizational church unity was unrealistic and the lack of results, but also the lack of urgency (related to the absence of conflicts or real problems in this respect), has not intensified the energy of people for the movement as such.

A personal conclusion about the 'greater ecumenical harmony' in Indonesia

The Ecumenical Movement had various roots and has known various faces. Its beginning is often seen to have taken place at the World Missionary Conference of 1910 in Edinburgh. In 1910 John Mott proposed for the WMC as major motto the title of his 1901 book: *The Evangelization of the World in this Generation*. However, already at that time it was considered as somewhat too aggressive. From the WMC the International Missionary Council was born. Two

other ecumenical organizations blossomed since the 1920s: Life and Work concentrating on socio-economic problems and Faith and Order on doctrinal matters. The latter two merged in 1948 in the World Council of Churches. In Delhi, at the 1961 WCC Assembly, the International Missionary Conference joined the WCC. One may finally question whether this development should be understood as an effort towards centralization of many activities of local churches. If there was any temptation to grow into a new giant bureaucracy, it has been curbed by the decrease in European churches and the lack of funds accompanying this process. Or should we say the lack of enthusiasm for too big church-institutions? There is a Conference of Churches in Asia, which was organizing an Asia Ecumenical Youth Assembly during the conference, where this contribution was first presented: 6-13 April 2018 in the Indonesian town of Manado.¹⁸ But, while the CCA repeatedly uses the word 'ecumenical', it has found no real equivalent in common discourse of Indonesian Christians and the general public.

Related to Indonesia, we should think about the terminology of the prominent Indonesian Muslim and Minister of Religion (period 1978-1983), Alamsjah Perwiranegara, who stated that religious harmony should be fostered 1) between various streams within one major religion; 2) between various religions, and finally also 3) between religions and the government. Alamsjah was thinking first about the Muslim community in his country. As to the first issue, he realized that since the first decades of the 20th century two big Muslim organizations, the reformist Muhammadiyah versus the

¹⁸ The strong position of the central government of Indonesia in religious affairs can be seen in a report of 18 Jan 2018 in local news sources of North Sulawesi/Minahasa, *Sulutlink*: 'North Sulawesi has again been entrusted by the national government, in this case the Department of Religion, to organise an international event, in this case the Asia Easter Celebration and the Asian Ecumenical Youth Assembly.' See: <https://sulutlink.com/april-2018-sulut-tuan-rumah-paskah-dan-pertemuan-pemuda-se-asia/>, accessed 18 February 2018.

traditionalist Nahdlatul Ulama had split the *ummah*. But since the early 1980s a new factor had become important: Salafist Muslims from Saudi-Arabia and the Gulf States seeking to spread of their ultra-orthodox doctrines. However, within already divided Christianity the small groups of Pentecostals and Evangelical Christians also have grown fast. In this sense there has grown an understanding, maybe even sometimes a coalition between nationalist Muslims who defend the concept of 'Islam Nusantara' (some kind of 'motherland Indonesia' Islam) side by side with Christians who like to formulate inculturated, or contextual interpretations of their religion. As to the second issue, the relation between the great religions, we see that at the periods of inter-religious conflicts and violence, the lines are not exactly between the religions, but mostly only between hardline groups or even individuals, both on Christian and on the Muslim side, who want to disturb the relative harmony between the religions. On both side we see that the majority does not join the violent sections and many of them only are victims of the aggressive actions by their co-religionists. Finally, as to the government: it wants that religions cooperate in development and here we can see that most faith-based NGOs active in development are interreligious rather than only bound to one religion.

If we compare the Indonesian situation to other Asian countries, we must conclude first that it is much different from countries with a strong Communist past and present: in China and Vietnam the pressure and control by the government is much more prohibitive than in Indonesia. Basically, Christianity is, like all religions considered as a positive, even necessary aspect for people and society. Compared to Malaysia, Indonesia also has the favourite position, that Islam is not the only or major religion acknowledged by the state. Although in percentage Christians are a 10% minority,

they have in many respects the same rights as the vast majority of Muslims.

Great changes have taken place during the last century as to the internal relations among Christian churches, as well as towards other religions. Religious diversity is with some exceptions accepted as a permanent reality for public life. The management of this diversity is done in national councils of churches, but for many social affairs also by permanent bodies and arrangements founded by the Indonesian government, where the Christians participate in the realization of the social values as formulated in the Pancasila state philosophy of belief in the Supreme Divinity, promotion of a just and civilised humanity, the unity of Indonesia, democracy, social justice for all.

In 2002, as an act of gratitude because the inter-religious wars in the neighbouring province of the Moluccas had not reached the Minahasa, a former governor, a Protestant, started the building of an exceptional place of pilgrimage. It was named *Gunung Kasih* or the Mountain of Love. Some 40 km from Manado, amidst a stunning nature reserve, a steep hill with many volcanic sulphur sources, a way of the cross with fourteen stations was built. On top a plateau was decorated with a common room for all visitors and a row of five places of worship: from left to right a Catholic Church, a Buddhist and a Hindu shrine, a mosque and a Protestant church. Standing next to each other as a monumental act of grace to God that interreligious harmony was kept in this province and not disturbed through militant groups as elsewhere in the region.¹⁹ This place was also visited during the Asia Ecumenical Youth Assembly in April 2018. During this event not only Protestant speakers will give their speeches, but the Muslim President of Indonesia, also give his view on national

¹⁹ See <https://relindonesia.blogspot.nl/> blog of 19 September 2009 for pictures of this place.

and international issues and the role religion can play here. The Catholic bishop of Manado attended also part of this meeting. This is quite a development in comparison with the audience present in 1910 in Edinburgh at the first World Missionary Conference. Religious diversity repeatedly has caused problems, but the churches have developed a much more open and tolerant attitude than was possible for them a century ago. In Indonesia this has been supported by state institutions. For harmonious relations Indonesian churches and other religions have created a situation that in general is very open for religious institutions and initiatives and has quite generous regulations for minorities. The internal Christian relations are embedded in a much broader circle of inter-religious facilities, guarantees and networks, that sometimes may be seen as limiting conditions or even as problematic, but in general work in line with their ultimate goals.

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**Asian Agency, Protestant Traditions, and
Ecumenical Movements in Asia, 1910 to 2010,
with special reference to
Malaysia and Singapore**

**亞洲組織、新教傳統和亞洲基督徒合一運動
(1910 - 2010) —— 馬來西亞和新加坡**

John ROXBOROUGH

[ABSTRACT] Ecumenism in Asia has involved movements concerned with repairing the damage of Christian divisions and facilitating a commitment to Christian mission in contexts marked by strong religious cultures, conflict, poverty, and inequality. The divisions to be addressed include those between Western and Eastern traditions, as well as those within the Western Christian tradition exported to Asia as part of colonialism and Christian mission.

As well as being sources of ongoing fragmentation, Protestant traditions deriving from the rupture in the Western church at the time of the Reformation have been sources of attempts at repairs in those relationships, and contributors to the formulation of an understanding of Christian mission appropriate to Asian contexts.

The story is one of both international movements and local agency, and its history has raised questions about securing trust, the

development of appropriate structures and governance, and the navigation of sensitive political contexts.

Reflection on these issues and their historical roots in this article relates particularly to Malaysia and Singapore, but also connects to the wider Asian experience of both the Reformation and the Ecumenical Movement.

【摘要】 亞洲的基督徒合一運動涉及修補基督徒分裂，並在強烈的宗教文化、衝突、貧窮和不平等的背景下促進對基督徒使命的承諾。要解決的，除了是西方和東方傳統之間的分歧，還有那些通過殖民主義出口的西方基督教傳統自身之間的分歧。

雖然是分裂的根源，在宗教改革時期西方教會分裂所產生的新教傳統，同時也是修復這些關係的源泉，並為理解一個適合亞洲的基督徒使命作出貢獻。

既是國際運動，又涉及本地組織，整個運動的歷史提出了關於信任、發展適當架構和管治，以及遊走在敏感的政治環境中等問題。

本文以馬來西亞和新加坡的情況作反思，但也廣泛地論及亞洲在改革和合一運動上的經驗。

1. Introduction¹

Ecumenism can be considered as a cultural phenomenon manifest in individuals and organizations, and in relation to representative institutions who identify with the term and intentionally work to expand the common life and mission of

¹ In preparing this article I would like to acknowledge the librarian and staff of the Presbyterian Research Centre, Knox College, Dunedin, New Zealand and the use of the resources of the Rita Mayne England Collection. See <https://presbyterianresearchcentrenz.com/home/hewitson-library/special-collections/th-e-rita-mayne-england-collection/>. Accessed 27 March 2018.

churches and "mend their fragmentations."² In Asia, organizations of ecumenical significance, which may or may not have explicit ecumenical sympathies, include bible societies, faith missions, interest groups such as those concerned with Asian hymnody,³ and international funding agencies.⁴ Church historians⁵ and theologians⁶ have an important role when they seek to contribute to understanding by being fair and objective rather than defensive, as do secular ethnographers and commentators who see religion as an interesting part of culture and life rather than as a category of activity to be resented or politicised. Also important for ecumenical understanding are the libraries of theological schools and their networks.⁷ Peer review processes for the accreditation of theological education engage representatives of different traditions as examiners of institutions outside their own traditions. There are churches which see bringing the parts of the body of Christ together as part of their identity,⁸ and in Malaysia Mar Thoma and Syrian Orthodox

² Yeow Choo Lak and Henry S. Wilson, eds., *Being Reformed Christians in Asia Today* (Singapore: ATESEA, 1994), 1.

³ I-to Loh and Michael Nai-Chiu Poon, *In Search for Asian Sounds and Symbols in Worship* (Singapore: Trinity Theological College, 2012).

⁴ For example, the Theological Education Fund of the World Council of Churches, and the Foundation for Theological Education in South East Asia. Michael Nai-Chiu Poon, "The Association for Theological Education in South East Asia, 1959-2002: A Pilgrimage in Theological Education," in *Supporting Asian Christianity's Transition from Mission to Church : A History of the Foundation for Theological Education in South East Asia*, ed. Samuel Pearson (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 363-402.

⁵ Including those networked through the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT) and the Church History Association of India (CHAI).

⁶ John C. England and Archie C. C. Lee, *Doing Theology with Asian Resources : Ten Years in the Formation of Living Theology in Asia* (Auckland: Pace Publishing for the Programme for Theology & Cultures in Asia, 1993). <http://ptcaweb.blogspot.co.nz/> Accessed 28 February 2018.

⁷ Forum of Asian Theological Libraries (ForATL). <http://www.foratl.org/> Accessed 28 February 2018.

⁸ The CSI and CNI have been important witnesses, even if unions have not proceeded further. The Uniting Church of Australia was one of those influenced by the CSI and CNI. It has sustained a commitment to ecumenism as part of its identity. Interview with Kerry Enright, 4 January 2018. See also William W. Emilsen and Susan E. Emilsen, *Marking Twenty Years: The Uniting Church in Australia 1977-1997* (Sydney: United Theological College, 1997).

churches have been conspicuous by their active support of ecumenical ventures.

Each of these manifestations of an “ecumenical spirit” has both theological and social-contextual dimensions, and in Asia concern for mission in context has usually been more important than confessional identity. In Malaysia and Singapore, as in many parts of Asia, religion is not a theoretical construct but the way of life of family, neighbours and friends. The context in which one seeks to worship is often one of urgency, survival, opportunity, dislocation, migration, and conflict. Yet changes in structures and traditions take time. In India the ecumenical success story of church union was a labour of faith begun by local leaders decades before independence. The development of Asia-wide ecumenical instruments and the consideration of union in Malaya and Singapore during the 1950s and 60s took place in an era when there were other priorities which could not be avoided. Sixty years later what Christian unity and mission requires has further shifted in the light of the assumptions and needs of a post-colonial, post-modern, and pluralistic world.

West Malaysia and Singapore have both a shared and a distinct ecumenical history which presents commonalities and contrasts, particularly in the period since the separation of Singapore from Malaysia in 1965. The Malayan Christian Council (MCC) was founded in Singapore in 1948. In 1967 it became the Council of Churches of Malaysia and Singapore (CCMS), then splitting in the mid-1970s to become separate councils in each country, the National Council of Churches of Singapore (NCCS) and the Council of Churches Malaysia (CCM).

From 1983 to 1990 while I was teaching at Seminari Theology Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur I sought to collate archival and oral information on the story of ecumenism in Malaysia and Singapore as

part of a number of projects re-centring Malaysian church history on Malaysia itself.⁹ *A common voice : a history of the ecumenical movement in Malaysia* was published by the CCM in 1991.¹⁰ There is a need to update this history, though there are some observations in my more recent *History of Christianity in Malaysia*, where the focus is on Christianity as a Malaysian religion.¹¹

In Singapore support for the national council faltered with the departure of Western leadership until it was reborn with an evangelical focus and with social concerns more in keeping with those of Singapore society.¹² The Council of Churches of Malaysia (CCM) has a stronger sense of continuous history not only from its own formation in 1976, but through the CCMS to the founding of the MCC in 1948 and the earlier steps which led to that point. It has continued successfully as a representative body of mainstream churches and has cordial relationships with the National Evangelical Christian Fellowship (NECF) and the Roman Catholic Church. Together these three bodies constitute the Christian Federation of Malaysia (1985). There are also a Sabah Council of Churches (SCC) and an Association of Churches in Sarawak (ACS). In Singapore the NCCS has relationships with the Catholic church, but there is no separate organization to represent what might be called the "old" ecumenism.

⁹ The re-centring was not only in relation to the Western focus of older sources, but also in relation to Singapore where much Christian work in the region was headquartered.

¹⁰ John Roxborough, *A Common Voice : A History of the Ecumenical Movement in Malaysia*, Ecumenism in Malaysia Series (Petaling Jaya, Malaysia: Council of Churches of Malaysia, 1991).

¹¹ *A History of Christianity in Malaysia* (Singapore: Genesis Books, 2014), 63-65, 81-83, 118f.

¹² Thomas Harvey, "Ecumenical Engagement Resurrected: The Demise and Rebirth of the National Council of Churches, Singapore," *Transformation* 26, no. 4 (2009), 258-268. Also published in *Trinity Theological Journal* 14 (2006), 48-70.

In 1969 George Lindbeck reflected on reasons for the weak uptake of ecumenism in West Malaysia and Singapore.¹³ The timing of church union negotiations could hardly have been worse. The Emergency was a living memory. In May 1969, though no doubt after he wrote, there were race riots and fatalities in Kuala Lumpur. Churches had other things on their minds and there was little grass-roots support. The evangelicalism common across the major denominations and other churches, “in one way, the closest thing to be found to indigenous Protestantism,” provided the level of inter-church cooperation that people actually wanted.

This is supported by Simon Chan’s later observation that primal spirituality is an important element in Asian evangelicalism and Pentecostalism,¹⁴ and the influence of parachurch groups “has resulted in a new form of ecumenism where denominational loyalties are transcended and traditional divisions between mainline and non-mainline no longer apply.” Yet, “pragmatic rather than theological considerations usually underlie these ecumenical impulses, such as the need to cooperate in evangelism and to deal collectively with civil authorities.”¹⁵

In 2009 Thomas Harvey took the analysis of Lindbeck further, exploring how earlier ecumenical failures proved not to be the end of the Singapore story and shifted the focus from church union to the NCCS.¹⁶ In the 1990s the Singapore government and the churches identified areas where engagement served both their interests, including over issues of land for churches, and moral concerns where

¹³ George A Lindbeck, “The Present Ecumenical and Church Situation in West Malaysia and Singapore,” *South East Asia Journal of Theology* 11 (1969), 72-80.

¹⁴ Simon Chan, “Evangelical Theology in Asian Contexts,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Evangelical Theology*, ed. Timothy Larsen and Daniel J. Treier (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 228.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 227.

¹⁶ Harvey, 258-268.

the voice of the churches was recognised as an important constituency. The leadership of the council of churches also shifted towards trusted local leaders who reflected the conservative and charismatic theology pervasive in the churches in Singapore generally.

A synthesis of the wider story of ecumenism in Asia through to the 3rd Assembly of the WCC in New Delhi in 1961 was provided by Hans Ruedi Weber based on detailed research in the archives of the World Council of Churches and the International Missionary Council.¹⁷ Further analysis was provided in 2004 by Ninan Koshy, *A History of the Ecumenical Movement in Asia*.¹⁸ In 2010 Norman Thomas highlighted the interplay of concerns for mission and unity globally, including in relation to Asia.¹⁹ Published in 2013 for the 10th assembly of the World Council of Churches in Busan, South Korea, the 82 chapters of the *Asian Handbook for Theological Education and Ecumenism*,²⁰ provide a substantial enrichment of the story. It is significant that its strategic locus is theological education and that it draws widely on both evangelical and mainline perspectives.

A History of the Ecumenical Movement in Asia highlights the roles of the World Student Christian Federation, the YMCAs and the Christian Conference of Asia in the reformulation of Christian mission in Asia in the post-colonial era. It indicates how inter-related these groups were, and their role as seed-beds for successive

¹⁷ Hans Ruedi Weber, *Asia and the Ecumenical Movement, 1895-1961* (London: SCM, 1966).

¹⁸ Ninan Koshy, *A History of the Ecumenical Movement in Asia*, 2 vols. (Hong Kong: World Student Christian Federation Asia-Pacific Region; Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs; Christian Conference of Asia, 2004).

¹⁹ Norman E. Thomas, *Missions and Unity: Lessons from History, 1792-2010*, American Society of Missiology Series (Eugene, Or.: Cascade Books, 2010).

²⁰ Hope S. Antone et al., eds., *Asian Handbook for Theological Education and Ecumenism* (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2013).

generations of national leadership. Their transfer of leadership into local hands was in advance of the churches and they provided opportunities in frameworks other than those limited by traditional church structures and clerical roles. The success of these organizations in youth development, tertiary education, and Asian representative ecumenism, set the centre of gravity of Asian Christian identity firmly within Asia itself. Within the Roman Catholic churches in Asia, the reception of Vatican II and the formation of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Councils²¹ provides a narrative with parallels and points of interconnection.

Despite church unions in some countries, the major story is the localization of Christian identity and mission in Asia, contributing to a sense of its contribution to the global transition away from Western dominance. Norman Thomas's survey also pays attention to the role of Asian leadership in challenging Western confessional priorities in favour of contextual and mission interests.²² The amount of diplomatic resolve needed on the part of emerging Asian ecumenical leaders in the debates leading to the formation of what became the CCA was considerable. The WCC and IMC leadership feared a rival body, and Asian leaders were determined not to be a branch office of Geneva, whilst being fully aware that at that stage there was no alternative to being dependent on the WCC and the IMC for funding.²³

The *Asian Handbook for Theological Education and Ecumenism* also goes some way towards explaining how past the initial success of union schemes and the broad Protestant theological

²¹ Thomas C. Fox, *Pentecost in Asia : A New Way of Being Church* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002). <http://www.fabc.org/> Accessed 24 February 2018. Peter C. Phan, *The Asian Synod : Texts and Commentaries* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002).

²² Thomas, 125-127.

²³ Yap, Kim Hao, *From Prapat to Colombo: History of the Christian Conference of Asia (1957-1995)* (Hong Kong: Christian Conference of Asia, 1995), 4-16.

groupings of the Asia Theological Association (ATA)²⁴ and the Association for Theological Education in Southeast Asia (ATESEA),²⁵ mission and context have in the long run prevailed as the dominant concerns of Asian ecumenism.²⁶

Related to this is how the sharing of resources in the development of church leadership through theological education has, generation after generation, brought future parish ministers and heads of churches into long-lasting personal relationships and friendships. The formation of church leadership in this way parallels what the YMCA / YWCA and WSCF (and later student movements) did for lay (and some clerical) leadership. The place of church leaders in ecumenical bodies coming from both these ordained and lay streams has been crucial.²⁷

It is also significant that the very process of teaching students from different churches together raises challenging questions for theological educators seeking to bring together the life of the actual churches around them and the commonalities and divergences of the Christian tradition. It is no accident that of the authors noted above, Lindbeck, Harvey and Chan, have all been lecturers in theology at Trinity Theological College in Singapore, and my own reflections derive from my teaching and experience at Seminari Theology Malaysia. Other key writers to be noted below, particularly Thu En Yu (Sabah Theological Seminary) and Michael Poon (Trinity Theological College), are also theological educators. But this is a

²⁴ Founded in 1970. <http://www.ataasia.com/>. Accessed 28 February 2018.

²⁵ Founded in Singapore as the Association of Theological Schools in South East Asia (ATSSEA) in 1957. <http://atasea.net/about/history/>. Accessed 28 February 2018.

²⁶ Hermen Shastri, "Widening Christian Unity as a Challenge for Ecumenism in Asia," in *Asian Handbook for Theological Education and Ecumenism*, ed. Hope S. Antone, et al. (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2013), 161-174.

²⁷ Compared to New Zealand, where the national council marginalised church leadership, failed to generate a lay constituency for its vision, and eventually collapsed altogether. Michael Wallace, "Churches Together in God's Mission - Aotearoa New Zealand," *ibid.*, 447. Interview with Kerry Enright, 4 January 2018.

sociological as well as a theological story, and the analysis of the Singaporean sociologist and member of parliament, Daniel P S Goh, is also important.²⁸

2. Christian Traditions and the Reformation

The arrival of different Christian churches in what is today Malaysia and Singapore is associated with Portuguese Catholicism in Melaka from 1511,²⁹ an era of Protestantism in Melaka under the Dutch from 1642 and the English from 1814, and Anglicanism and French Catholicism in Penang after 1786.³⁰ Anglicans, Armenians, Catholics, Presbyterians and Open Brethren established themselves in Singapore early in its history. American Methodism arrived in Singapore in 1885 and extended to Kuala Lumpur, Sitiawan, and Sibu in Sarawak. Following the Treaty of Pangkor in 1874, Anglicans, Catholics, Methodists, Presbyterians and Lutherans migrating from India and China became increasingly significant. Christianity among Iban and other tribal groups in Sarawak and Sabah grew through Anglican, Catholic, and evangelical missions. English Anglican and Scottish Presbyterian churches in Penang, Perak, Kuala Lumpur and Singapore grew until after independence when they have transitioned to local churches, some continuing an active ministry to new generations of expatriates, European and Asian. Today the significance of Sarawak and Sabah for indigenous Christianity in Malaysia cannot be overstated.³¹ Indigenous

²⁸ Daniel P. S. Goh, "State and Social Christianity in Post-Colonial Singapore," *Sojourn: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia* 25, no. 1 (2010), 54-89.

²⁹ Maureen K. C. Chew, *The Journey of the Catholic Church in Malaysia, 1511-1996* (Kuala Lumpur: Catholic Research Centre, 2000).

³⁰ Robert Hunt, Lee Kam Hing, and John Roxborough, eds., *Christianity in Malaysia: A Denominational History* (Petaling Jaya, Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia: Pelanduk Publications, 1992). This book covers only West Malaysia, and the omission of the word "West" in the title was a mistake.

³¹ Daniel K. C. Ho, "The Church in Malaysia," in *Church in Asia Today: Challenges*

Christianity in Singapore is Chinese, with some Tamil. In both countries Peranakan descendants of Chinese migrants and local Malays, and Eurasians of Portuguese, Dutch and Asian ancestry from as far back as the 16th century are also important groups.

In the period up until Independence and beyond, Singapore was the dominant centre for most churches in their relationships with each other and their own administration. The groundwork of ecumenical cooperation took place there, from meetings of the Continuation Committee of the Edinburgh 1910 World Missionary Conference in 1912, to the discussions in the Changi POW camp among expatriate detainees during the War leading to the formation of Trinity Theological College and the Council of Churches in 1948. The Overseas Missionary Fellowship has had its international headquarters in Singapore since 1951, as did the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) from 1974 until it was expelled in 1987. Malaysia has often hosted international ecumenical and other Christian gatherings.

At the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther's posting of his 95 theses, it is fair to ask what connections these churches have with the Reformation.

Of course, Lutherans have the most direct connection. The LCMS (Lutheran Church of Malaysia and Singapore) was largely Chinese and supported by conservative North American Lutherans. The ELCM (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Malaysia) was Evangelical in the European sense, largely Indian, and supported by the more ecumenically minded Swedish Lutheran Church. The Lutherans in Sabah were Chinese who had migrated to Sabah and

and Opportunities, ed. Saphir Athyal (Singapore: Asia Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, 1996), 257-287.

received some support from the Basel Mission.³² The Malaysian theologian, Sivin Kit, has drawn attention to the relevance of Luther to dialogue in a Muslim-majority context.³³ Lutheran assumptions about church and state and evolving cooperation may also help understanding of story of the Negri Sembilan Agro-Industrial Training interfaith project in the 1970s and 80s.³⁴

Anglicans may be aware that they were part of a church that had broken away from Rome in the 16th century, but for migrant Indians and Chinese, and the Iban tribespeople in Sarawak being Anglican was about being Christian in a way that made sense to them, not about identifying with British colonialism or English religious history. Apart from Anglican missionaries with the Overseas Missionary Fellowship in Perak, Church Missionary Society missionaries in Sabah and on the staff of Trinity Theological College in Singapore, and a few locals who trained in Moore College, Sydney, most Anglican leadership prior to the charismatic era was high church in its sympathies, did not like the word protestant, and played down their connection with the Reformation.

Methodists arrived as a mission of the Episcopal Methodist Church in the United States and had little connection with British Methodism. They were highly organized and successful particularly

³² Julius Paul, "The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Malaysia and Singapore," in *Christianity in Malaysia: A Denominational History*, ed. Robert Hunt, Lee Kam Hing, and John Roxborough (Petaling Jaya: Pelanduk, 1992), 199-219. Thu En Yu, "The Church's Ministry of Nation Building and National Integration in Malaysia," *Studies in World Christianity* 8, no. 2 (2002), 244-263; "Churches Together in God's Mission - Malaysia," in *Asian Handbook for Theological Education and Ecumenism*, ed. Hope S. Antone, et al. (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2013), 559-564.

³³ Sivin Kit, "Christian Participation and Creative Resistance: Reflecting on Luther's Two-Fold Governance in Muslim-Majority Malaysia," *Dialog* 56, no. 3 (2017), 260-271.

³⁴ John Roxborough and Göran Wiking, "Disconnected Visions and Mission Beyond Their Means? The Negeri Sembilan Agro-Industrial Training Project, 1972 to 1987," *Asia Journal of Theology* 31, no. 1 (2017), 21-40.

through their wide network of schools.³⁵ They became leading partners in ecumenical cooperation, including in the founding of both Trinity Theological College and Seminari Theoloji Malaysia. Their theological heritage, although generally evangelical, was Arminian not Calvinist, and as a denomination that had grown out of 18th century Anglicanism not 16th century Catholicism, as well as having been mediated by their missionary experience on the American frontier, their sense of identification with Luther, Calvin and the Reformation in Europe was somewhat muted.

Presbyterians came to Malaysia and Singapore with Scottish and Chinese migrants who were only integrated together after independence. The name Presbyterian is linked to the Reformation in Scotland, but in Chinese simply meant "Church of the Elders." Chinese Presbyterians had a strong sense of linkage to China and to Congregationalist and English Presbyterian missions. They were also influenced by separatist and anti-ecumenical teaching. Expatriate leaders and missionaries might value a Reformation heritage and its concerns for religious freedom. A sense of God's sovereignty and the doctrine of predestination also helped cope with crises such as the "loss" of China with the Communist revolution.³⁶ In any case, with few exceptions, the priorities and interests of ministers were usually pastoral rather than theological.³⁷

Asian interest in Calvinism has been growing,³⁸ but outside of the influence of Dutch Reformed missionaries, Calvin has often been

³⁵ Robert Hunt, "Have You Not Seen a Vain Vision? The Marginalization of the Methodist Church in Malaysian Society," *Asia Journal of Theology* 5, no. 2 (1991), 410-428; Hwa Yung and Robert Hunt, "The Methodist Church," in *Christianity in Malaysia: A Denominational History*, ed. Robert Hunt, Lee Kam Hing, and John Roxborough (Petaling Jaya: Pelanduk, 1992), 142-198.

³⁶ Conversation with George Hood, August 1989. David Paton, *Christian Missions and the Judgment of God* (London: SCM Press, 1953).

³⁷ Lak and Wilson, 20-22.

³⁸ Jonathan Seitz, "Calvin in Missionary Memory and Chinese Protestant Identity," in *Sober, Strict, and Scriptural: Collective Memories of John Calvin, 1800-2000*, ed.

a vague symbol rather than a pointer to theological identity much beyond a commitment to the idea of the priesthood of all believers and the importance of elders in church governance.³⁹ Even for Presbyterian missionaries in the 19th century Calvin was seen more as an exemplar of Christian commitment than as a source of theological insight.

One notable exception was Timothy Tow, leader of the Bible Presbyterian Church and the Far Eastern Bible College, whose separatist teaching divided Presbyterians and made ecumenical involvement difficult for decades. Yet in 1993 Tow could say that he was “Happy to lecture on John Calvin” - but he also said that he was “happier to tell about John Sung.”⁴⁰ The story of Presbyterianism in Malaysia was one of a church already indigenous in China becoming rooted in another country in a different cultural context.⁴¹ Recently Presbyterians in both Singapore and Malaysia have taken the step of referencing the Westminster Confession among their documents in an effort to give more substance to their theological identity.

Other Reformed emphases have been mediated through confessional bodies and influential personalities. Published in 1969,⁴² Karl Barth’s “letter to Asia” giving encouragement to be Asian rather

Johan de Niet, Herman Paul, and Bart Willems (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2009). Andrew Brown, [interview with Rev May N. J. Tan, Presbyterian Church of Singapore] “Chinese Calvinism Flourishes” *The Guardian Opinion*, 27 May 2009. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/andrewbrown/2009/may/27/china-calvin-christianity>. Accessed 26 March 2018.

³⁹ M. P. Kody, “The Reformed Self-Understanding in the Gereja Presbyterian Malaysi,” in *Being Reformed Christians in Asia Today*, ed. Yeow Choo Lak and Henry S. Wilson (Singapore: ATESEA, 1994), 28-38.

⁴⁰ Michael Nai-Chiu Poon, “Interpreting John Sung’s Legacy in Southeast Asia,” *Trinity Theological Journal* 21 (2013): 144.

⁴¹ Tee Heng Peng, “From China to Malaysia: A Study of the Growth, Development and Rooting of the Presbyterian Church in Malaysia in Malaysia from 1946 to 1975,” (South East Asia Graduate School of Theology, 2016).

⁴² Karl Barth, “No Boring Theology! A Letter from Karl Barth,” *South East Asia Journal of Theology* 11 (1969). See also Daniel D. Lee, *Double Particularity: Karl Barth, Contextuality, and Asian American Theology*, Emerging Scholars (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017), xiii.

than Barthian, helped some theologians find their own voice whilst connecting with his theological vision.⁴³ Lutheranism has contributed to some productive dialogues, notably with Roman Catholics over justification by faith, and the shared events commemorating the Reformation in 2017, have been remarkable. Calvinism and Methodism (despite their oppositional attitudes to predestination) have contributed to an evangelicalism which has a felt sense of "being one in Christ," regardless of organization. Their ethical concerns have been particularly important for mission – as they had been in the original homelands (Calvinism never lacked a mission to society, but until the 19th century it lacked the means and the vision for extending it to other places). Ethical seriousness is important, but mixed with cultural and political diversity, the invocation of the will of God can exacerbate divisions. When both Presbyterianism and Methodism have a history of difficulty accommodating minority views, (though American Methodism has been more pragmatic), agreement easily relies on alignment with values popular in wider society, whatever the theological rationale. Simon Chan has noted that Asian evangelicals are interested in holistic mission, but not in some of the key Western social issues. For instance, "principalities and powers" are spiritual realities not simply social and political structures.⁴⁴ The concern of the Singapore government for morality and religious harmony allows space for Christian exploration of some ethical issues, but those touching issues of politics, justice and economics have to be treated with caution.

⁴³ David Thang Moe, "Karl Barth against Religion, Not Religions: Constructing His Dialectical Theology of Divine Revelation and Human Religion in Asia," *Asia Journal of Theology* 31, no. 1 (2017).

<http://www.faith-theology.com/2010/05/on-korean-theology-and-karl-barths.html>. Accessed 28 February 2018.

⁴⁴ Chan, 229.

3. Singapore and Malaysia

As noted, church cooperation took on new urgency after World War II.⁴⁵ The Malayan Christian Council was founded in Singapore in 1948 with a vision for “the Christian good of its peoples”⁴⁶ to be worked out in common action and cooperation. In what ways were the experiences of Singapore and Malaysia similar and different, and what significance might this have?

Thu En Yu has outlined the political and religious context in which churches in Malaysia sought to find their way before and after independence for Malaya in 1957, followed by Sabah and Sarawak who joined with Singapore and Malaya to form Malaysia in 1963. What is now Malaysia dates from 1965 following the expulsion of Singapore. Yu blames British colonial era policies for poor communal race relationships which in turn affected relationships between churches and with the majority religions of East and West Malaysia.⁴⁷ Churches lacked commitment to other communal groups and were not prepared for the needs of a pluralistic society. Independence brought a dramatic shift of political power from British to Malay, from a tacit sympathy for Christianity to recognition of the special status of Islam, and from the wide use of English to Malay as the national language.

It is difficult to argue with this. British colonial policy, and the desire to meet its own needs even at the expense of others, led to

⁴⁵ Roxborough, *A Common Voice : A History of the Ecumenical Movement in Malaysia*, 13-21.

⁴⁶ John Fleming, the first secretary of the CCM, was quoting the Scottish Evangelical Thomas Chalmers (1780-1847), reflecting Chalmers’ view of the mission of the church and the way in which denominations should work together expressed at the formation of the Evangelical Alliance in 1946.

⁴⁷ Yu, “Churches Together in God’s Mission - Malaysia.”

reckless levels of migration and the neglect of Malay social development, including failure to support and develop agriculture, to the point that profits from tin and rubber were needed to import rice that used to be grown locally. The racial dynamics of the War, and the Malayan Union scheme of 1946 which threatened to make Malays a numerical minority, alienated Malays further. Racial issues could be quiescent yet suddenly erupt. Churches had real issues with security and found it difficult to rise above concern for their own communal groups. Indians and Chinese were properly worried about what would happen to them after Independence. Malays were rightly concerned for their own place in their country which had been invaded and ruled by peoples whose religions and way of life were in some respects deeply offensive. Some Christian leaders, expatriate like Bishop Baines of Singapore and local, like the Methodist educationalist Ho Seng Ong, recognised this, but their sentiments were not publicised or widely shared.

Today Bishop Yu's deep concern is for the churches' role in reconciliation, and the role of ecumenical and inter-religious bodies such as the Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism and Sikhism (MCCBCHS) in this. It is striking how much in recent years this has become a theme which other writers, including some evangelicals, have taken up.⁴⁸ The development of Christian ecumenical structures, the CCM, the NECF and the CFM (1986) involving both together with the Roman Catholic Church have thus been important for the nation, not only for the churches themselves.

The issues Yu identified in Malaysia were not absent in Singapore, but there are differences muted by policies of a carefully

⁴⁸ Peter Rowan, *Proclaiming the Peacemaker : The Malaysian Church as an Agent of Reconciliation in a Multicultural Society* (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2012).

managed nationalism, a secular state, and legislation in support of religious harmony. The seemingly level playing field of Singapore meritocracy has led to economic developments which many admire, but it has also enhanced Chinese dominance relative to other communities. A secular state appears to provide for the even-handedness in religious provision which ecumenical bodies in Malaysia have to advocate for.

Michael Poon's survey article⁴⁹ sees Singapore as a case study for testing a particular vision of what mission in Asia should be and the roles that ecumenical bodies should take. He frames his analysis in response to a comment made in 1982, at a meeting of the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) by the Australian Methodist Harvey Perkins. Perkins expressed the view that the CCA's role was to be an agent of change in the churches, building up "a group of people ... willing to probe the frontiers of the Christian enterprise."

The implication this carried of infiltration was easily seen as another form of the paternalism and colonialism it was seeking to replace.⁵⁰ Poon's purpose in highlighting Perkins' comments was to "chart the strategic role Singapore has played in working out this ideal, and how... in fact [it] radically challenges this model of engagement."⁵¹

Poon notes that in their early period, the CCM made some valued contributions in the era marked by the Malayan Emergency and moves towards independence. It also did much of its work in Malaysia where it had some success developing local committees

⁴⁹ Michael Poon, "Churches Together in God's Mission - Singapore," in *Asian Handbook for Theological Education and Ecumenism*, ed. Hope S Antone, et al. (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2013); 593-598.

⁵⁰ It is a hazard that expatriates who see themselves as prophetic easily appear patronizing. See also http://www.canberracityuca.org.au/Harvey_Perkins_Tribute.pdf. Accessed 26 February 2018.

⁵¹ Poon, 593.

and involving national and regional leadership. The CCA's most notable success was reconnecting with China and Indochina after the Vietnam War and following the Cultural Revolution.⁵² It is also part of our story that areas of failure for both the CCM and the CCA were in Singapore. The Singapore Industrial Mission or "Jurong Experiment" from 1966 to 1972 (when it was closed down by the government) was impressively organized, but its confrontational style embarrassed local churches and alienated the government. Over time the location of the CCA in Singapore became untenable.⁵³ The CCA was asserting Asian agency, but its support of issues of decolonization and indigenization in terms of what might be called liberal Asian theological frameworks proved problematic in the Singapore context. In the long run its advocacy of Asian contextualisation and the validity of social concern was influential, particularly in Malaysia, but at the time it was a factor in Malaysian heads of churches deciding to set up their own theological seminary in Kuala Lumpur.⁵⁴

In 1969 George Lindbeck had noted that the CCA (then the East Asia Christian Conference) was perceived as foreign even when it was addressing issues of "anti-colonialism, indigenization and nation-building."⁵⁵ More than an Asian voice was needed, and what may have been necessary and appropriate in one Asian context, was not necessarily appreciated in another.

Following the CCA expulsion in 1987, it was important to challenge, as the CCA and others outside the country did, the rationale given by the Singapore government and its views on the

⁵² Ibid., 595.

⁵³ Goh, 59-62.

⁵⁴ John Roxborough, "Protestant Theological Education, Indigenisation, and Contextualisation in Singapore and Malaysia, 1948-1979," *New Zealand Journal of Asian Studies* 18, no. 2 (2016), 71-83.

⁵⁵ Lindbeck, 78.

proper role of churches in society. However there was also a trap in believing these were the only issues. There were matters of style and tone which should not be ignored. Their expulsion related to the wider suppression of activist Christian activity in Singapore, particularly from some Roman Catholics, a war of words with the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, which was also expelled, and perhaps even more importantly, a determination to prevent anything like the role that the churches had had in the Philippines in overthrowing the Marcos regime in 1986. It was no accident that this coincided with a similar government operation in Malaysia, Operation Lalang, which detained political figures, social activists, and people involved with Malay Christianity. The initial responses of the CCA and the WCC did not seem to show awareness about concerns that the government, and some otherwise sympathetic to the theology of CCA, might reasonably have.⁵⁶ Yet over time things did change. In the years since 1987, based in Hong Kong and now Thailand, the CCA has shifted the tone of its statements and worked to build contacts with other groups including Evangelicals and Roman Catholics.⁵⁷ Like the WCC it has become in my view more measured about many of the world's problems it may reasonably claim to know something about solving.

Poon notes that the CCA approach did not prevail in Singapore and alternative theologies and protocols of constructive engagement between church and state have evolved. This is consistent with the article by Thomas Harvey, that a liberal theological agenda crippled the effectiveness of ecumenical institutions until the NCCS found itself when it reflected the evangelical and charismatic theology of Singapore churches. Other analyses, including the sociologist Daniel P.S. Goh, also identify the theological issue as central to these

⁵⁶ Koshy, Vol. 1, 263-266.

⁵⁷ Shastri, 165-166.

transitions. In 1977 Alan Heron, a New Zealand Presbyterian lecturing at Trinity Theological College, also used the evangelical liberal divide as his critical framework for understanding the trajectories of church development in West Malaysia and Singapore.⁵⁸

Poon also notes the influence of the ministry of John Sung in providing a common experience across Chinese churches of different denominations. Sung's ministry from 1935 to 1940 left a complex imprint on Chinese spirituality. Many later saw it as preparation for the years of suffering which followed. It also encouraged Chinese Christian groups to assert their autonomy and increased their sense of distance from Western denominations, including ecumenical bodies. His memory of North American liberalism was part of his testimony and a factor in the way Chinese speaking congregations were influenced by the American Fundamentalist Carl McIntire and his anti-ecumenical separatist campaigns, including through the ministry of Timothy Tow.⁵⁹

One has to be careful with the terms liberal and evangelical, and for much of the post-war period they were not always pejorative designations.⁶⁰ The first generation of CCM leadership had more evangelical sympathies than they were given credit for. It was only in the 1960s and 1970s that those with a more liberal theology were a significant presence among missionaries and theological educators. Only a smaller group again might be fairly linked to the social

⁵⁸ Goh and Harvey vindicate the work of Heron whose doctoral thesis was rejected by the University of Otago primarily on the grounds that the evangelical-liberal theological divide was an inadequate critical framework. Like Harvey and many others, I have found Heron's careful documentation invaluable. Alan Craig Heron, "A History of the Protestant Christian Churches in West Malaysia and Singapore," (Dunedin 1977).

⁵⁹ Poon, "Interpreting John Sung's Legacy in Southeast Asia."

⁶⁰ Siga Arles, "Relations between Ecumenicals and Evangelicals in Asia," in *Asian Handbook for Theological Education and Ecumenism*, ed. Hope S. Antone, et al. (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2013), 94-106.

agenda with which the CCA became associated and the way it was expressed.

The charismatic movement is another factor. Its predominance in Singaporean Christianity by the end of the twentieth century gave a coherence to the churches of Singapore which in turn gave fresh relevance to the NCCS.⁶¹ It also contributed to accommodation to government policies and values of material prosperity, marketing, and managerial competence. The ability to work within government frameworks and values became to be seen as a gift which Singapore churches and institutions could also offer churches in other countries with similar political environments.⁶²

If the CCA in the years up until 1987 represented a counter-cultural critique of Asian society, which in Singapore did not take local churches with it, the temptation now being faced runs in the other direction. Poon considers that Christianity in Singapore has become “socially respectable and politically correct.” Like others he notes the importance of the LoveSingapore movement in which churches organize to pray together for the nation in intense, personal and dramatic ways. Bringing together more churches and pastors than the older ecumenical movements ever did, it also reinvigorated the NCCS. Perhaps ironically it has succeeded in stimulating and sustaining Christian commitment to society when previously pietism was associated with disinterest. Both its achievements and its weaknesses are important.⁶³ Issues may be not only its embrace of

⁶¹ Thomas Harvey, *ibid.* James Y K Wong, “Singapore,” in *Church in Asia Today*, ed. Saphir Athyal (Singapore: Asia Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, 1998), 288-311.

⁶² Michael Nai-Chiu Poon, ed. *Pilgrims and Citizens: Christian Social Engagement in East Asia Today* (Adelaide: ATF Press, 2006).

⁶³ May Ling Tan-Chow, *Pentecostal Theology for the Twenty-First Century : Engaging with Multi-Faith Singapore*, Ashgate New Critical Thinking in Religion, Theology, and Biblical Studies (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007). An extract is published as chapter 14 in Michael Nai-Chiu Poon and John Roxborough, eds., *Handbook of Popular Spiritual Movements in Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia* (Singapore: Trinity Theological College, 2015), 211-27. See also the review by Simon Chan,

national mores in ways which may or may not "probe acceptable limits with the authorities,"⁶⁴ but in the narrowing of its ecclesial range to the like-minded. This of course is an issue in ecumenically movements generally, whatever their dominant theology. Harvey contrasts Singapore with collapsing ecumenical bodies in the West (he gives the example of North America),⁶⁵ but it is not its theology which makes the difference, so much as its acceptability to its constituency. Movements of any theology or ideology are more likely to be successful when their dominant ethos reflects that of their constituencies. All theological traditions face the challenge of being able to earn respect in situations of diversity.

Facing the same sequence of issues as the ecumenical movement in Singapore as a whole, but retaining a broader theological base, Trinity Theological College successfully managed the challenge of shifting its primary support base from international churches and funding agencies to the Singapore churches by a focus on a core biblical and theological curriculum and by developing strong personal links with the leaders and pastors of local churches. Its teaching staff transitioned from expatriate to Asian to Singaporeans willing to pay close attention to the concerns of Singaporean churches. As a result, it became in due course well supported. It describes itself as a "union" seminary rather than an ecumenical one, and its acceptance of contextualisation as a dominant motif has been cautious, despite that being a major concern of the first generations of expatriate Western teachers and its historic funding bodies. Here too there is a contrast with Malaysia, where the

<http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showpdf.php?id=13966>. Accessed 27 February 2018. Matthew Matthews, "Accommodating Relationships. The Church and State in Singapore," in *Christianity and the State in Asia : Complicity and Conflict*, ed. Julius Bautista and Francis Khek Gee Lim (London: Routledge, 2009), 184-200.

⁶⁴ Poon, 597.

⁶⁵ Harvey, 258.

attitude towards contextualisation was more explicit and positive among national staff. Timing was a factor in this.⁶⁶

Church union negotiations were begun in 1951 in Singapore and fizzled out by 1962.⁶⁷ The issues were insoluble in the time frame and it was hard for local leaders to get a sense of why it mattered when there were so many more important things to deal with. Nationalism did not demand it, because Christians in West Malaysia and Singapore came from groups less identified with a struggle for independence. Nationalism and independence were largely Malay issues. In the 1950s expatriate Presbyterian missionaries and ministers were anxious to assert the validity of their ministry in the face of its rejection by Anglicans and were strongly opposed to re-ordination. But to other Presbyterians it made no sense to argue about whether someone from another church should lay hands on you and pray for you before you could share in ministry together. Local Christians were glad of all the prayer they could get.

Most of the MCC activity took place in Malaysia where it brought recognised benefits. Local church leadership included a greater proportion of English speaking Indian and Chinese who had experience of ecumenical cooperation and its value in the face of the issues that the country was dealing with, including in the aftermath of the race riots of 13 May 1969. Indian church leaders had awareness of ecumenism in India, were more orientated to the use of English, and had been active in local CCM committees. This infrastructure had already built up relationships when the time came to take over the MCC as it relocated from a joint body in Singapore to Malaysia. From the beginning leadership and initiative was

⁶⁶ Roxborough, "Protestant Theological Education," 79.

⁶⁷ Roxborough, *A Common Voice: A History of the Ecumenical Movement in Malaysia*, 26-29.

Malaysian, and it was this leadership which also brought about the founding of Seminari Theoloji Malaysia in 1979.

In the 1980s the NECF developed the trust of independent evangelical groups as it proved itself responsive to the practical issues facing Malaysian churches. When the time came to create a body which represented practically all Christian churches and groups in the country, the NECF, the CCM and the Roman Catholic Church implemented the Christian Federation of Malaysia and retained their existing roles. This was extremely important and contrasts with Singapore where, as noted, there is no group representing the old ecumenism.

It may have helped Malaysia that colonial era institutions and church headquarters and their expatriates were largely based in Singapore. Although the task of rebuilding infrastructures in Malaysia was expensive and time-consuming, it had the effect that what was being done was what Malaysian churches and leaders wanted done. The decades after 1965 for churches were partly about implementing an independence from Singapore not just from Britain. The fact that it was left to Malaysian leaders to create the institutions they wanted gave a sense of ownership which enhanced their viability and gave them more scope for managing diversity while being able to present a common voice to the nation. It was also important that the CCM did not try to be the one ecumenical organization representing the entire spectrum. By working with the NECF and Roman Catholics in the CFM, the CCM helped facilitate a set of ecumenical structures which together could be representative of practically the entire Christian community. Perhaps paradoxically, by accepting the existence of the major theological groupings of churches, it also reduced the sense of polarity between them, and also helped ensure the ongoing viability of mainstream ecumenism.

4. Conclusion

Despite their differences of theology, style, and in due course of physical location, the CCA, the MCC and the NCCS can each of them be seen as being about Asian agency and Christian mission in context. One significant contribution to the wider Christian world arising out of this context has been the promulgation of the idea that multiple religious belonging is a fact of life to be accepted.⁶⁸ Kan Sang Tan is an evangelical who has the credibility to be able to assert that it is possible to belong to more than one source of identity and meaning and yet be loyal to Christ without being relativist or agnostic. This allows for mission to return to language of witness and reconciliation rather than evangelisation, and for different understandings of the oneness of John 17 to be explored.

But there is also something here which goes back to the Reformation: the translation of the scriptures into the language of the people. Theories of language and issues of hermeneutics are fundamental to our understanding, including our beliefs about organization, faith, and purpose. Asian religions, including Christianity, insist that we cannot limit meaning to what is material. This is consistent with what is perhaps the greatest contribution of Martin Luther and the Reformers who came after, including the reformers of the Roman Catholic Church meeting in the Vatican II Council: the insistence that the Word of God and the Worship of God must be in the language of the people. What ecumenism in Asia, and Asians in ecumenism, have emphasised, is that however contested, this must also be true of the theology, the mission and the governance of the church.

⁶⁸ Kang-San Tan, "Dual Belonging: A Missiological Critique and Appreciation from an Asian Evangelical Perspective," *Mission Studies* 27 (2010), 24-38; "Can Christians Belong to More Than One Religious Tradition," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 34, no. 3 (2010), 250-264.

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Ancestor Remembrance and its Implications on Ecumenism in the Chinese-speaking World

祭祖在華人社會的合一啟示

Simon K.M. WONG SJ

[ABSTRACT] This article aims at arguing against the statement that ancestor “worship” is idol worship. To begin with, I will argue that the term ancestor “worship” is a mistranslation. The correct one should be ancestor remembrance. A historical review of the Chinese Rites Controversy, which racked the Catholic Church in the Qing Dynasty is conducted. In 1939, the Church judged that ancestor “worship”, used to be idol worship but gradually lost its religious significance, has been transformed into a cultural event. Consequently, the Catholic Church allows the Chinese faithful to participate in liturgy of ancestor remembrance. Karl Rahner’s theology of symbol is used as the critical framework for a dogmatic and liturgical examination of ancestor remembrance. Idol worship believes in the real presence of their gods in the idols, hence, an idol is in itself a real symbol. On the contrary, the spirits of our ancestors are not present in the liturgy of ancestor remembrance, which, therefore, is but a secondary symbol, culturally and historically conditioned, to express our filial respect to our ancestors. Our ancestors are not gods but members of the Church in heaven. The Church on earth and in heaven constitute one Church in the mystical body of Christ. I will conclude that ancestor remembrance is but a cultural and liturgical expression of our filial piety, which is in full

harmony with the teachings of the scripture and *magisterium* of the Catholic Church.

【摘要】 本文旨在反對祖先「崇拜」是偶像崇拜的說法。首先，作者論證祖先「崇拜」這個詞是一個誤譯。正確的說法應該是對祖先的紀念。文章對中國清代天主教會的禮儀之爭進行了歷史回顧。1939年，教會認為祖先「崇拜」（曾經被認為是偶像崇拜）已失去宗教意義，並轉化為文化事件。因此，天主教會允許中國信徒參加祖先紀念儀式。作者引用卡爾·拉納的符號神學，作為檢視祖先紀念的教條和禮儀的框架。偶像崇拜相信他們的神在偶像中的真實存在，因此，偶像本身就是一個真正象徵。然而，祖先的靈魂並不存在於祖先紀念儀式中，因此，它只是在文化和歷史條件上的次要象徵，表達我們對祖先的孝敬。我們的祖先不是神，而是天堂教會的成員。地上和天上的教會構成了基督神秘身體中的一個教會。結論是，對祖先的懷念是我們孝道的文化，它與天主教會的經文和教會的教義完全一致。

Foreword

This essay aims at arguing for the statement: ancestor remembrance in the Chinese-speaking Catholic Church is not idol worship. To begin with, I will argue that the statement “ancestor worship” is but a mistranslation. The Chinese term *ji* (祭), which has multiple meanings, and translated by missionaries whose native language was not Chinese, was mistranslated as “worship”. To the Western Christian world, especially Protestantism, ancestor “worship” is undoubtedly idol worship. Based on a misconception as a result of mistranslation, many Protestants strongly criticize the Catholic Church for practicing “ancestor worship”. In the absence of meaningful dialogue, and further reinforced by negative historical

experiences, the misunderstanding continues to well up. This essay aims at unfolding the root of the misunderstanding regarding the issue of ancestor remembrance, with a view to facilitate ecumenical dialogue in promoting Christian unity.

Karl Rahner's (1904-1984) theology of symbol will be used as the epistemological ground for subsequent discussion.

1. Rahner's theology of symbol

Rahner theorizes that there are two kinds of symbols: the primary and the secondary. The primary symbol is also a real symbol. The national flag, for example, is a symbol signifying a reality existing outside of itself, namely, the nation. If the national flag is destroyed, the nation remains intact. It is, therefore, obvious that the nation is not in the flag. Rahner calls this a secondary symbol.¹

The human body is an example of a primary symbol. The body signifies the person but the person is in the body. In the normal historical context, there is no such thing as a person having an independent existence of her/his body. If the body is destroyed, the person too. Rahner calls this a primary or real symbol.²

After establishing the epistemological ground for discussion, the following is an etymological examination of the Chinese term *ji* (祭).

¹ Karl Rahner, trans. Kevin Smyth, "The Theology of Symbol", *Theological Investigations vol. IV*, (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1966), 221-244; 黃克鏞, 谷寒松編, 〈528 象徵〉, 《神學辭典》, (台北: 光啟出版社, 1996), 732-733 頁。 [Joseph H.P. Wong, "528 Symbol", *Theological Dictionary* (Taipei: Kuangchi Press, 1996), 732-733.]

² Rahner, "The Theology of Symbol", *Theological Investigations vol. IV*, 245-252.

2. An etymological examination of the Chinese term *jì* (祭)

The term *jì* (祭) carries at least three meanings:

- 1) *jì sì* (祭祀): worshipping gods and spirits
- 2) *jì diào* (祭弔): remembering and paying respect to the deceased
- 3) *fǎ shù* (法術): the black arts; white magic³

It is commonsense that we can never translate multiple meanings of a term. In choosing one of its meanings *jì sì* (祭祀), the Western missionaries kicked off a heated debate which finally led to the lamented misconception that ancestor remembrance is “idol worship”!

The meaning of ancestor remembrance in the Analects

We can trace the meaning of ancestor remembrance to chapter one *Xué ér* (學而) of the *Analects* (*Lúnyǔ* 論語), the records of dialogue between Master Confucius and his disciples, written between 540 and 400 B.C. *Zēng zǐ* (曾子), a disciple of Confucius, said: “*Shèn zhōng zhuī yuǎn, mín dé guī hòu yǐ*” (慎終追遠，民德歸厚矣)。 *Zhōng* (終) means parents’ death. *Yuǎn* (遠) means ancestors. The whole phrase means: Prudently handle the funeral of your parents with mourning respect and proper liturgy, and pay respect to ancestors at the liturgy of ancestor remembrance. This will improve the moral standard of the society and culture.⁴ It is obvious

³ 國語辭典教育部重編修訂本[Chinese Dictionary, revised by the Ministry of Education, Republic of China]網頁:

<http://dict.revised.moe.edu.tw/cgi-bin/cbdict/gswweb.cgi?ccd=ffYVY8&o=e0&sec=sec1&op=v&view=17-1>

⁴ 謝冰瑩等編譯，《新譯四書讀本》，五版，(台北：三民書局，2002) (民 91)，71 頁。

[Xiè Bīng Yíng, et al. ed., *A Commentary on the Four Books*, 5th ed. (Taipei: Sān

from Zēng zǐ's saying that ancestor remembrance carries only cultural not religious connotations. The *Analects* have been regarded as the standard of Chinese morality and culture for the past 25 centuries. According to the Chinese intellectual tradition at least, we can conclude that ancestor remembrance is only a cultural phenomenon and carries no religious nuance.

Ancestor worship as a core element of folk religions

Born and bred in Hong Kong, a place with Chinese culture as the core, however, my personal experiences of ancestor remembrance differ significantly from the idea of the *Analects*. Ever since I was a small boy, I have been hearing my mother praying to our ancestors during the Chinese New Year and at other festivals. From what my mother was praying, it was very obvious that she saw ancestors as transcendent spirits who were able to bless and protect her family. This is no single incident but is a core element in folk religions in the Chinese-speaking world. I can testify from my personal experience that ancestor remembrance carries religious connotations.

To conclude, there exist two traditions in Chinese culture regarding ancestor remembrance. First, the intellectual tradition sees ancestor remembrance as a cultural and moral event. Second, the folk religions, fully embracing the intellectual tradition on the one hand, have infused religious meanings into ancestor remembrance and transformed it into ancestor worship.

Mín, 2002), 71]
Chinese Dictionary, revised by the Ministry of Education, Republic of China at:
[http://dict.revised.moe.edu.tw/cgi-bin/cbdic/gswweb.cgi?ccd=fFyVY8&o=e0&sec=sec1
&op=v&view=17](http://dict.revised.moe.edu.tw/cgi-bin/cbdic/gswweb.cgi?ccd=fFyVY8&o=e0&sec=sec1&op=v&view=17)

3. The Chinese Rites Controversy

The debate in the late Míng Dynasty (明朝 1368-1644)

The pre-eminent Jesuit missionary Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) arrived in Macau, China in 1582. After much endeavor, he was finally able to reside in Beijing to begin his missionary work in 1601. When confronted with the issue of ancestor "worship", he argued that in Chinese culture, there exists a long tradition of filial piety, manifested in ancestor remembrance. Traced back to its origin, ancestor remembrance was but a liturgy to express profound filial piety. Among the intellectuals, at least, ancestor remembrance carries no religious or superstitious nuance. Nevertheless, he admitted that superstitious elements could be found in ancestor remembrance among the grass-roots. With proper cultivation, he believed, the liturgy could be "purified" to its original form. Other missionaries of his time, especially his successor Nicholas Longobardi (龍華民: 1559–1654), held an antagonistic view which sparked a debate on the issue. By and large, the debate is confined to the missionary circle in the late Míng Dynasty.⁵

The Chinese Rites Controversy in the Qīng Dynasty (清朝 1644-1912)

In 1644, the Míng Dynasty came to an end. Missionaries were allowed to work in the new Manchurian Empire. Shortly afterwards, the Chinese rites to Confucius (*jì kǒng* 祭孔) and to ancestors (*jì zǔ* 祭祖) became a heated debate among missionaries during the reign of Emperor Kāngxī (康熙皇帝).

⁵ 穆啟蒙,《中國天主教史》,侯景文譯,(台北:光啟出版社,1971),52-53頁。
[Joseph Motte, trans. Joseph Tarc Hou, *History of the Catholic Church in China* (Taipei: Kuangchi, Cultural Group, 1971), 52-53.]

As discussed before, there are two traditions in China regarding ancestor remembrance: the intellectual as well as the folk tradition. The Jesuits, who followed Matteo Ricci's line of thinking, understood *jì zǔ* as a cultural event for the Chinese people to express their filial piety, and *jì kǒng* as reverence towards Confucius. Their opponents, namely the Dominicans and Franciscans, insisted that the liturgies were but idol worship. They testified that the Chinese people believed in the real presence of their ancestors' spirits in the liturgies. It is not too difficult to see why the two parties held antagonistic views on the same issue. The Jesuits, by and large, worked among intellectuals who upheld the intellectual tradition. The Franciscans and Dominicans came into contact with the ordinary people who upheld the folk tradition. In short, they were both right and both wrong in the same way, taking the part as the whole.

Pope Benedict XIV's final decision

The debate on the Chinese Rites flared up in China among the missionaries. The Holy Office launched an extensive investigation which led to the decree of 1704 followed by the Nanjing Decree of the papal legate Carlo Maillard de Tournon (鐸羅) in 1707. The 1704 decree, though allowing the name of an ancestor inscribed on a memorial tablet, prohibited using the characters *líng wèi* (靈位), which literally means "a place for the (ancestor's) spirit". It also prohibited any offerings before the memorial tablet or the tomb or taking part in the rites to Confucius, so as to rule out any possibility of idol worship. The 1704 decree served as the foundation stone for Pope Clement XI's decree in 1715 (*Ex illa die*) and Pope Benedict

XIV's in 1742 (*Ex quo singulari*), which banned the Chinese Rites and prohibited further debate.⁶

A Copernican revolution in 1939

The Manchurian Empire (Qīng Dynasty) was overturned and the Republic of China was founded in 1912. A seemingly "minor" incident happening in the Jesuit Sophia University in Tokyo triggered a Copernican revolution regarding the Chinese Rites Controversy. On 5 May 1932, a few Catholic students studying at Sophia University objected to bowing before the Shinto Shrine. Finally, with a view to preserving the integrity of the Japanese Empire, the Japanese government declared that the Shinto Shrine rites were civil and social rather than religious. The Catholic Church in Japan, with this government declaration, allowed the faithful to take part in the Shinto rites.⁷ This incident, however, compelled the Catholic Church to re-examine the Chinese Rites Controversy. Rome finally came to the knowledge that, through the advancement of science and education, the religious meaning behind the rites to Confucius and ancestors has been fully watered-down. At the same time, the Chinese government also declared that the public rites to Confucius practiced in government organizations were civil and social rather than religious. On 8 December 1939, the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith decreed that the rites to Confucius were to express profound respect to Confucius, the great Master, and the rites to ancestors were people's expression of deep

⁶ D.E. Mungello, 'An Introduction to the Chinese Rites Controversy', *The Chinese Rites Controversy: Its History and Meaning* (San Francisco: The Ricci Institute; Sankt Augustin: Institut Monumenta Serica, 1994), 4; Joseph Motte, *A History of the Catholic Church in China*, 88-92.

⁷ 鄒保祿,〈中國禮儀之爭始末〉,《神學論集》,79(1989)86-87。[Paul Zou, *The Chinese Rites Controversy*, *Collectanea Theologica Universitatis Fujen*, 79(1989)86-87.]

filial piety. Both were civil and social rather than religious. This put an end to the extremely painful contention of the Chinese Rites Controversy in China.

From this historical review of the Chinese Rites Controversy, we can see that the Catholic Church is extremely careful and prudent in dealing with the religious implications behind the rites to Confucius and ancestors, and has forbidden any trace of idol worship in the rites. To accuse the Catholic Church of practicing idol worship in the rites to ancestors is to overlook the whole history of the Chinese Rites Controversy and many other similar cases in different cultures.

4. A dogmatic examination of ancestor remembrance

From the above discussion, we can see that the Catholic Church in China has undergone an extremely painful history of contention regarding the rites to Confucius and ancestors. It is also evident that the Catholic Church was extremely careful and prudent in settling the Controversy. It seems now expedient for me to provide a dogmatic explanation to the Church's decision in 1939.

What is an idol?

Regarding the accusation of ancestor remembrance as "idol worship", we have to ask a fundamental question: what is an idol? Rahner's theology of symbol sheds much light in the search of an answer. Followers of folk religions see the real presence of their god in the idol they are worshipping. In other words, the idol is the god and vice versa. It will be great insult to followers of folk religions if they are told their idol is merely an object, not a god. Since the real

presence of the god is the key element constituting an idol, according to Rahner's theology of symbol, an idol is a primary (real) symbol.

Rahner theorizes that the secondary symbol signifies a reality outside of itself. The Chinese rites to ancestors are obviously secondary symbols: they point to our ancestors. We believe that some of them are in heaven. Nevertheless, their spirits are not present in the rites. The church has made it crystal clear that the rites to ancestors are merely expressions of filial piety. As stated clearly in the 1704 decree, the real presence of ancestors' spirits in the rites or in the memorial tablet is out of the question. And offerings to spirits of ancestors are strictly prohibited. Both the Church on earth and the Church in heaven constitute the same body of Christ. The rites to ancestors are to call to mind our ancestors' love for us so that we can respond with a grateful heart. Meanwhile, they also remind us that because of God's grace, some of our ancestors are able to enjoy eternal happiness in heaven. Ancestor remembrance, as a secondary symbol, is by no means idol worship. On the contrary, if we believe in the real presence of our ancestors' spirits in the rites, it is idol worship.

The two traditions

As previously discussed, there are two traditions regarding the rites to ancestors: the intellectual and the folk tradition. The intellectual tradition sees ancestor remembrance as cultural and social rather than religious. The folk tradition, believing in the real presence of ancestors' spirits in the rites, is undoubtedly religious, hence, idol worship. The Catholic Church has obviously rejected the folk but accepted the intellectual tradition, evident in the various rulings and decrees related to the Chinese Rites Controversy.

Communion of saints in the mystical body of Christ

Since both the Churches on earth and in heaven belong to the same mystical body of Christ, the two Churches are but one, enjoying full communion in Christ. In the Holy Eucharist, there is prayer for our ancestors who are now in heaven enjoying eternal happiness. Though we pray for ancestors in the Eucharist, we do not believe in their real presence, as they are now in heaven. The prayer for ancestors is only a secondary symbol. This is critically important, as the Catholic Church is extremely careful about the orthodoxy of faith. There is no compromise in matters of faith. We have to secure the purity of faith as not to mingle with folk religions, which believe in the real presence of ancestors in the rites.

5 A liturgical examination of ancestor remembrance

The Catholic Church in Taiwan is the pioneer in reviving the rites to ancestors. It is largely due to the fact that the Nationalist Party (the *Kuomintang* 國民黨) endeavored to revive traditional Chinese culture. Echoing the government's endeavor, the Catholic Church in Taiwan began with a theological investigation as well as liturgical reformation regarding ancestor remembrance. This endeavor has borne much fruit in the past decades.

Nowadays, both the Catholic Church in Taiwan and in Hong Kong have a formal liturgy for ancestor remembrance which is based on several theological criteria. First, ancestors are not gods. There is no real presence of ancestors' spirits in the liturgy of remembrance. Second, we have adopted some traditional practices, such as using flowers, incense, fruit, etc. in the liturgy. But the Church has made it crystal clear that they are not "offerings" to our ancestors, but presents to express our respect, thanksgiving and love. We bring with

us some presents when visiting a friend. We also bring with us a bundle of flowers or other things when we visit the tomb of our deceased family member. The same logic applies to the rites to ancestors. All material things we use in ancestor remembrance are but secondary symbols signifying our love and fond memories of our ancestors. It is critically important not to take presents as "offerings" to ancestors, as this is superstitious and hence heretical.⁸

6 Implications of ancestor remembrance in ecumenism in the Chinese-speaking World

An outlook for meaningful dialogue

Protestantism is consciously careful regarding matters of faith. This serious attitude towards faith, nevertheless, is to be highly appreciated. In this regard, the Catholic Church and our Protestant brothers are entirely at one.

In the Chinese-speaking world, in order to eradicate all traces of superstition and idol worship, Protestantism condemns all forms of ancestor "worship". As discussed above, adopting the folk religious tradition, which believes in the real presence of ancestors' spirits in the liturgy, is undoubtedly idol worship. However, the Catholic Church has unreservedly rejected the folk religious tradition and adopted the intellectual tradition, taking the rites to ancestors as secondary symbols. The real presence of ancestors' spirits in the liturgy is absolutely out of the question. This opens a common

⁸ 錢玲珠,〈天上人間—天主教會看「祭祖」及相關問題〉,〈新北市:輔仁聖博敏神學院禮儀研究中心,2002〉。[Teresa Chien, *Between Heaven and Earth: a Catholic View on Ancestor Remembrance and Related Issues*, (New Taipei City: Research Centre for Liturgy, Fu Jen Faculty of Theology of St. Robert Bellarmine, 2002)]: http://theology.catholic.org.tw/public/liyi/topics_ancestor.html.

ground for dialogue between Protestantism and Catholicism. The Task Force for Theological Exchange⁹ recently held a public talk on the issue of ancestor remembrance. My view on ancestor remembrance was fully accepted by my dialogue partner, a Protestant pastor. He even considered the possibility of Protestants and Catholics joining hands to co-organize an occasion of ancestor remembrance. This is but one example of how dialogue can promote mutual understanding and contribute to further opportunities of co-operation between Protestantism and Catholicism. This dialogue in ancestor remembrance, therefore, serves as the stepping stone for further dialogue in contentious theological issues.

Karl Rahner's theology of Symbol in ecumenical dialogue

Rahner's theology of symbol, in one way or another, serves as the common epistemological foundation for meaningful dialogue between Catholicism and Protestantism in contentious theological issues, such as the use of icons and statues, the place of Our Lady in the Church, the Sacraments, the real presence of the risen Christ in the Holy Eucharist, and so on. Take the icons and statues as examples. The Catholic Church teaches that all icons and statues are but secondary symbols. Consequently, the statue of Christ points to Christ but His real presence in the statue is out of the question. The same logic applies to all other icons and statues in the Catholic Church. To take icons and statues as "idols" is to take the secondary symbol as real. Consequently, the accusation that icons and statues in

⁹ The Task Force for Theological Exchange is a coordinating body working under the cooperation of the Diocesan Ecumenical Commission, Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong and the Hong Kong Christian Council aiming at promoting Christian unity through theological exchange. Every year, the Task Force organizes about four public talks/conferences to facilitate dialogue between the Catholic Church in Hong Kong and member Churches of the Hong Kong Christian Council. The public talk on ancestor remembrance was held on 17 January 2018 at the auditorium of the Catholic Diocesan Centre, 16 Caine Road, Hong Kong.

the Catholic Church is "idol worship" is resting on little ground. In this regard, the Catholic Church will not tolerate any ambiguity in her teachings and actions.

If both Catholicism and Protestantism share the same good will in ecumenical dialogue in promoting Christian unity, Rahner's theology of symbol is, perhaps, the common epistemological key worthy of consideration.

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**Is Ecumenism a Feature of
Taiwanese Christianity?
Methodology in view of a Preliminary
Assessment**

基督徒合一是否台灣基督教的特徵嗎？

初步評估方法論

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[ABSTRACT] Ecumenism – as an epistemic and practical tradition in the West - refers to the process of bringing together Christians of different denominations, confessional and theological backgrounds in view of a more intense, vivid, rationalized and visible unity of the Church or Body of Christ.

Looking through the ecumenical lens, Christians constitute a complex minority within the Taiwanese people. Because of historical links, groups or ecclesial communities stemming from mainline churches of the West naturally encounter ecumenical challenges similar to those faced in traditional churches. Taiwanese ecumenical awareness however needs also to account for the yearning and search for ecumenical unity among evangelical and charismatic groups, Pentecostal movements, as well as the autochthonous free churches whose growth is rather steady compared to the offshoots of mainline

churches. Now, can ecumenism be said a feature of Taiwanese Christianity?

Since the task evoked here requires ample time and energy, my intention in this initial stage will consist in defining the method for a preliminary assessment of the question.

【摘要】 合一——作為西方認識論和實踐的傳統——是指匯集不同宗派、教派和神學背景的基督徒，探討一個更強烈、具體、合理化和可見的教會或耶穌基督的統一。

從合一的角度看，基督徒在台灣人民中屬於一個複雜的少數民族。由於歷史的關係，源於西方主流教會的台灣教會團體自然會面對西方傳統教會在面對合一上的挑戰。台灣人對合一的意識，還需考慮福音派、靈恩派、五旬節運動和本土自由教會之間對合一的盼望和追求，相對於主流教會的分支，他們在穩步成長。那麼，我們可以說，合一是台灣基督宗教的一個特徵嗎？

Introduction

While Christianity is a relatively modern phenomenon in the Taiwanese culture, still it appears as a multifaceted reality, whose impact affects society in incommensurable ways. Although it is a minority religion, still in its expressions and sensitivities, Taiwanese Christianity is highly denominational, with each denomination defining and being defined by its history and the strategies it chooses to secure its continuity. Instances of cooperation and collaboration between and across denominations and churches, as well as among people belonging to several churches and denominations, can also be found. Yet, despite all those manifestations, there is still a long way to ascertain the extent to which ecumenism is part of Taiwanese

Christianity. Vested with the recesses of my immersion in both the academic and ecumenical environment of Taiwan,¹ I consider my contribution not so much in providing final answers, but mostly in pondering on the question and the methodological considerations to address it.

Signs of an Ecumenical Christianity

In this complex and compelling context, the paths of ecumenism have been running for some time and are already rich in experiences and choices for the future, obviously in the midst of problems and impasses that stimulate further commitment and creativity.

Historically, the adhesion of Presbyterians of Taiwan to the WCC dates back to 1956. In 1991 the National Council of Churches of Taiwan (NCCT) was established, to which also the Regional Episcopal Conference of the Catholic Church of the island took part, the only case in the world together with Australia. NCCT strives to foster ecumenism through the activities of its desks catering to common concerns (ecumenical unity, women, aborigines, environment). For the last years, beside the periodical meetings of representatives of church members and accredited organizations, a

¹The perceptions and comments on Taiwanese Christians come from my involvement with the National Council of Churches of Taiwan. I have been joining activities of the organization since 2006. Since 2011, I have been participating in the core-group of the organization in virtue of my position as executive secretary of the Commission for Ecumenism and Christian unity within the Regional Bishops' Conference of Taiwan. Beside involvement in NCCT, I have been also teaching courses related to interactions between churches and denominations and dialogue among and across denominations. These courses ponder on questions on the proliferation and diversity of denominations, the nature and goals of ecumenical movement, the meaning and challenge of Christian unity, etc. Moreover, besides theoretical thinking, students are required to visit churches, and local congregations. All these have provided insights for the sharing in this article.

yearly ecumenical sports fest and the prayer for the week of Christian unity are the main activities of the organization.

Another sign of ecumenism is the choice for Taiwanese Christian universities and colleges (3 Catholic and 8 of other denominations) to join the ACUCA (Association of Christian Universities and Colleges in Asia). Moreover, in the field of pastoral and academic formation, there are exchanges among theological schools. They welcome and form members of other denominations and strive to create opportunities for exchange and interaction. For instance, though meant for Catholics, the Faculty of Theology of Fu Jen also forms orthodox, Episcopalian, Lutheran and Presbyterian students. Moreover, thanks to an initiative of Fr Luis Gutheinz, for over thirty years, the institution has maintained a close and friendly relation with its counterpart, the Theological College of the Presbyterians founded over a hundred years. The two institutions alternatively visit each other. The visits include moments of prayer, study, play and sharing, all geared to deepen mutual knowledge and appreciations.

The Taizé Prayer is another engine fostering ecumenism in Taiwan. It gathers Christians of different denominations who come to pray following the style of the Taizé community. Compared to other initiatives of the National Council of Churches, this movement is being referred to as an ecumenism from bellow, or a grassroots ecumenism.

The joint action for the translation of the Bible into Chinese is another example of that collaboration. The initiative officially brought Catholic and Protestant experts to work together for what was to be the first Chinese ecumenical bible, the equivalent of the

French TOB.² It aimed at overcoming obstacles posed by the various Chinese translations of Scripture. Starting from the gospels, the new translation set a prior agreement on two points. It was accepted by the Catholic side to translate the name of God with Shang Di (Protestant translation) leaving aside the Catholic translation Tian Zhu. It was accepted by the Protestant side to translate the Holy Spirit with Sheng Shen (Catholic translation) leaving aside the Protestant translation Sheng Ling. Obviously, the reception of the work was met with resistance on both sides, certainly not only on a literary and theological basis, but also, perhaps, for the fear of losing, with the specificity of the names, the signs of their particular identity. Beyond the objective difficulties, it is up to the hierarchies to approve the translations for official use, and an ecumenical translation of the biblical texts should have been seen as very promising step ahead. Though the efforts have not achieved the expected results, it still gave possibility to foster ecumenical friendships among the experts who were involved in the project.

There are many other attempts of ecumenical collaboration which could be seen as ambiguous, leading to wonder whether they can offer a solid ground to qualify Taiwanese Christianity as ecumenical. While exposed to challenges emanating from the same context, because of denominationalism, Christians fail to have a common stand on many burning issues - social, ethical, ministerial, etc. The failure weakens the ability to speak to society with one voice and to offer in it a strong testimony to the message of Christ. But above all, one of the deepest challenges facing ecumenism is the vagueness of the expectations denominations hold regarding the ecumenical movement. This factor affects the type and intensity of

² For further information regarding the efforts and results of the joint action for the translation of the Bible into Chinese, see Archie C.C. Lee, "Ecumenical Venture and Chinese Bible" *Lumen* Vol. 4, No. 1 (Jan., 2016), 66-68.

their commitment and reminds the necessity for an adequate methodology capable of fostering a contextual ecumenism which does not only facilitate a systematic analysis and assessment of the field, but can also unveil themes and areas that need more attention. Because of history and faith traditions and convictions, the challenges of Taiwanese Christians are in many ways analogical and the ecumenical path could eventually enrich the approaches of churches and denominations.

A Relatively Young and Denominational Christianity

The earliest contact of Christianity with Taiwan goes back to the end of the 16th Century when a ship carrying a group of Jesuits missionaries wrecked on the Island in 1582. As Taiwan or Formosa was not their original plan, they left as soon as it was possible. However in 1626, a group of Spanish Dominicans landed on the Island with the intention of gaining it to Christ. Protestant missionaries who entered Taiwan during the Dutch colonial rule (1624-1662), had similar intention. This first wave of evangelization, by Catholic and Protestant missionaries dwindled, leaving no traces, after General Koxinga, a Chinese Ming Loyalist, regained the Island from the Dutch. The second wave of evangelization started in the midst of the 19th Century. For the Catholic side, the protagonists were Spanish Dominicans accompanied by five of their Chinese lay assistants who arrived in Gaoxiong in 1859. Finding no trace of the previous work, they had to establish first contacts and find a *modus vivendi* in an environment which did not show any sympathy to Christianity. The Protestant second adventure followed six years later. The protagonists were two Presbyterian missionaries. In 1865, Dr James Laidlaw Maxwell of the Presbyterian Church of England initiated the mission in Tainan, in the Southern part of the Island,

while Georges Leslie Mackay of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Canada started the Tamshui mission in the Northern part of the Island in 1871. The seed of Christianity that expanded on the Island was borne from the diversity found in the two denominations. More faces of Christianity were to be added with time. The True Jesus Church, one of the first Pentecostal denominations founded in China, records to have expanded its mission to Taiwan in 1926.³ The same year a group of Taiwanese youth converted to the Holiness Church (聖教會) in Japan and returned to establish a Taiwanese branch, marking hence the beginning of the Taiwan Holiness Church (台灣聖教會).

As for the other denominations and churches present on the Island, their arrival is in between the wake of the retreat of the Nationalist troops of the KMT and the expulsion of foreign missionaries from China. In a span of less than a decade, Taiwanese came to know and hear about other different churches and denominations: Baptist, Methodist, Episcopalian, Lutheran, and so forth. These were coming from vast territories of China that had accommodated larger and more diversified groups of missionaries who, though belonging to the same denomination, manifested particularities because of allegiances to founding and sending mission countries, theological formation, efforts of adaptation, language, etc. While in China, those particularities might not have been apparent because of distances; that could no longer hold in the cities and villages of Taiwan. The influx of particularities gave the impression of a multiplication of denominations and churches. In the case of the Catholic Church for instance, the Catholicism Dominican missionaries had propagated thus far was expanded and diversified with the arrival of other congregations which strove to express their

³ "The History of the True Jesus Church", accessed Feb 17, 2018. <http://www.tjc.org/church/history.shtml>.

respective charisms and missionary approaches. Among Protestants, the situation was similar even though in some cases, liturgical language, which could have led to a segregation within a denomination, became instead a sign of common identity.

The influx of Catholic and Protestant missionaries in Taiwan, not only intensified the denominational character of Taiwanese Christianity, it also exposed all denominations to face similar problems in terms of insertion and adaptation to the new environment. Moreover, the similarities in the strategies of churches and denominations are obvious. They have concentrated in the fields of education, health care and social relief programs. Christian churches in Taiwan formulated their responses to the need of the gospel and the people by creating universities, colleges, formation centers, technical institutes, formation outlets, middle and high schools, vocational schools, kindergartens. They also built hospitals and provided health centers in remote areas. Moreover, they organized relief programs, managed social structures such as orphanages, home for elderly, centers for recuperation. All these institutions are denominational and they are considered as a concrete incarnation of the Christian message; they are institutions standing as witness for the Christian spirit and as tools for an implicit and indirect preaching of the Gospel message.

Looking at the nature of Taiwanese Christianity from a historical perspective, denominationalism emerges as a factor linked to the history of evangelization of the Island. From the middle of the 17 Century on, Taiwanese have been encountering and identifying Jesus as Christ. The encounters have been mediated by foreign and local missionaries looking forward to recruit new members for their respective denominations. Consequently, it naturally goes that the Christianity introduced to Taiwan has been highly denominational. Knowledge and immersion in one's denomination prime over the

interest for knowing the Christians as a whole body. In this situation, Christian identity might primarily be associated with the sense of belonging to a denomination and denominational identity might conceal and even compromise the Christian identity. Risks of enclosure and sectarianism are present from the moment a denomination fails to identify the Christic experience taking place in other communities and shaping the followers in the likeness of Christ. In fact, Christian identity derives not primarily from the belonging to a given denomination but by the identification with the spirit of Jesus who shapes the follower in his image and likeness.

In the light of the above considerations, Christians constitute a tiny, small, diversified and yet important religious minority. They are known for their respected and highly qualified service in social, educational and health sectors, which in many ways are expressions of the witness they want to bear to their faith.

A recent study by the Christian Research Center in 2014 evaluates the Christian population of Taiwan at 5.86%. All denominations included, Taiwanese Christians amount to 1307842 believers. They worship in 4101 identifiable churches or congregations. The majority of these congregations clusters around 57 well-established denominations. Some are independent communities and others operate as freelance charismatic groups.⁴ Overall, there are notable nuances in the expression of faith resulting from the perspectives of the denominations and personal

⁴ For details, see the "2013 Report of the Chinese Christian Evangelical Association" prepared by the Christian Research Center of Taizhong in 2014. The work is recommendable for its complete coverage and meticulous approach. It provides information for 4065 out of 4101 Christian places of prayer; that is 99.15% of coverage. It is not a mere compilation of data obtained from denominations for it provides a confrontation and analysis of these data in light of other existing sources of information. For instance, it made use of available governmental information and sought to reach out individually to each of the denominations and their places of prayer. "台灣基督徒達 130 萬相當於一個彰化縣人口!" Accessed Oct 13, 2014. <http://taiwanbible.com/web/news/news.jsp?ID=103129>.

appropriation of faith. The Christic experience of Taiwanese does not merely make of them 'Christians' in general; they are Christians in the steps of an X or Y denominational tradition. They are Christians in the tradition of the Roman Catholics, the Presbyterians, the Methodists, the Lutherans, the Anglicans, Born Again, True Jesus Church, Jesus the Light, the Church (召會), etc.

Taiwanese Christian denominations answer their call to identify Jesus as the Christ in freedom and creativity, striving to maintain their identity and autonomy vis-à-vis the others. However, they are all also faced with a common basic challenge; the one emanating from the generalized assessment of Christianity as still a foreign religion, implying that there might be a dichotomy between being a Taiwanese and being a Christian. How do Taiwanese Christians solve the apparent dichotomy? How do they address the riddles of professing Christianity and being Taiwanese in the fast-changing society of Taiwan? What are the particularities of the experience of Jesus as Christ in Taiwan? Which are the challenges the Taiwanese context pose to the reception and identification with the Christian ideals? Which added meanings the Christian experience brings to the self-hood of Taiwanese Christians? Finally, how do those challenges constitute an ingredient for a potential quest for Christian unity among Taiwanese Christians?

Speaking of the history of evangelization of Taiwan, Allen J. Swanson offers a framework capable of mirroring a process familiar to each church or denomination. He speaks of stages in the evangelical work. The first is the breaking up of the ground (16th Century to the 1945); the second, planting of the Word (1945-1955); the third, harvest time (1955-1960); the fourth, conservation and storage (1960-1965); and the last and perennial one is the "back doors' church phenomenon (starting from the 70s on)" and alluding to baptized Christians who by lack of interest and motivation are no

longer in touch with the congregation.⁵ It is not an exaggeration to state that each congregation and church denomination in Taiwan can see itself reflected in this pattern.

Initial Denominational Gathering

Admitting that Taiwanese Christianity is highly denominational, what can be said regarding the relations existing between the denominations? The history of Christianity in Taiwan unveils that there has always been here and there signs and occasions of cooperation and collaboration among and across denominations and churches.

The creation of the National Council of Churches of Taiwan stands as the first visible sign to gather under a Christian organization. The merit goes to the Presbyterians who, already in 1949, had started considering joining their missions in the Southern and Northern synods under one headquarter; this would have not only overcome parochialism, but also bridged and conserved the legacies of James Laidlaw Maxwell, the Presbyterian missionary from England who evangelized the south (Tainan) with that of George Leslie Mackay whose evangelizing work was located in the northern part of the Island. This choice helped them move and speak with one voice. In fact, they were the first Christian organization from Taiwan to apply for membership of the World Council of Churches in 1957. In 1963, other denominations followed in their steps to create the Ecumenical Cooperative Committee of Taiwan, and which in 1966 became the Consultative Committee of Taiwan. The atmosphere was conducive to the discussions towards the

⁵ Allen J. Swanson, *The Church in Taiwan: Profile 1980* (South Pasadena - California: William Carey Library, 1981), 26-27.

creation of the National Council of Churches of Taiwan (NCCT), which eventually became the first ecumenical organization on the Island. Beside the Presbyterians, other churches and denominations involved in those sharings included Anglicans, Methodists, Lutherans, True Jesus Church (真耶穌教會).⁶ Those days seemed to reflect a certain ecumenical openness and receptivity to all. For instance, one could note the presence of all major denominations, Catholics included, at the conference the True Jesus Church organized in Taizhong in 1963 (台中真耶穌教會會議).⁷ The celebration of the centennial of evangelization of Taiwan in 1965 reflected also that openness. Though the event was closely connected to the history of the Presbyterians, they wanted it to be an important moment for all Christians regardless of the denominations. The theme was inclusive; it emphasized that "all was God's grace" and "that all glory belonged to God." With this in mind, the centennial was to recognize the contribution of all missionaries - regardless of their denominations - to the evangelization of the Island. It was also a moment to reflect together on some prospects for Christianity in Taiwan. In fact, this was also the context leading to the promotion of the Ecumenical Cooperation Committee into a consultation committee of the World Council of Churches. Accordingly, twenty-two different denominations and church organizations submitted to the idea.⁸ The organization was to work as a platform

⁶ See Chin Ke Pa (曾慶豹), "Yue se he ta de xiong di men: hu jiao fan gong, dang guo ji du tu yu tai wan wan ji yao pai de xing cheng" (約瑟和他的兄弟們: 護教反共, 黨國基督徒與台灣基要派的形成), 171.

⁷ Chin Ke Pa, 172.

⁸ These included the Episcopal Church of Taiwan (台灣聖公會), The Methodist Church in the Republic of China (中華基督教衛理公會), Taiwan Lutheran Church (基督教台灣信義會), Chinese Baptist Convention (基督教浸信會台灣省聯會), Taiwan Holiness Church (台灣聖教會), Mennonite Church (門諾會), Xing Dao Church (行道會), Seventh-Day Adventist Church Taiwan Conference (安息日會), Christian and Missionary Alliance (宣道會), Chinese Mandarin Church (國語禮拜堂), Victory Church (凱歌堂), Presbyterian Church of Taiwan (台灣基督長老教會), Taiwan Christian Net Work (台灣福音聯誼會), Bible Society (聖經公會), Far

fostering cooperation among and across denominations in addressing questions of common interest.⁹ How long and determined were the members to foster those ideals? Right in the sixties, the resolve to work out of a consensus was tested twice. It was the case with the common position regarding the World Council of Churches and its mission. Presbyterians were already members and their drive to foster ecumenism was very much in line with the purpose of that ecumenical body. But when, because of insidious political calculations, the KMT ordered them to quit the organization, none of the denominations took side. Instead, there were some even opposing the organization and stipulating that cooperating with the WCC was heretic.¹⁰ The leaving of WCC, according to Liu YuHong (劉裕宏), "was caused by the ideology of the KMT government and the political intervention of ICC. It resulted in the failure of the unity movement of Taiwanese local churches and the only General Assembly Meeting to fail to convene as a protest to the government in the history of PCT. It also resulted in the decisive turn in PCT's attitude toward political-religious relationship."¹¹

The second testing moment was related to the Common Prayer organized in 1966 and to which the Presbyterians invited the Catholic Church. Most denominations disapproved that invitation. What originally was meant to be an occasion to foster ecumenism

Eastern Council of Christian Churches (CHURCHES 遠東歸主協會) China Sunday School Association (中國主日協會), Young Men's Christian Association (中華基督教青年會), China Young Women's Christian Association (中華基督教女青年會), China Pacific Mission Society (中國平信徒傳道會), Taiwan Christian Audio Visual Association (台灣基督教視聽聯合會), Tunghai University (東海大學), Overseas Radio & Television Inc. (救世傳播協會)。see Chin Ke Pa, 172-173.

⁹ see "Jiao hui he yi xing: zheng gao zhu nei xiong di jie mei men" (《教會合一性：正告主內兄弟姐妹們》), 1965, see Chin Ken Pa, 176.

¹⁰ For further details on the outcome of the Presbyterians' intention to join the WCC, See Chin Ke Pa, 171-213.

¹¹ Liu Yuhong 劉裕宏 "Historical Investigation into the Process of The Presbyterian Church in Taiwan's Joining, Leaving, and Rejoining of The World Council of Churches", M.A.Thesis, Taiwan Theological College and Seminary, 2016.

escalated into a diatribe against the Catholic Church. An accusing finger was pointed at the Presbyterians, for having tendered the invitation, and the other mainline denominations who had agreed sit together with heretics, the Catholic Church. The most virulent voices affirmed that “collaborating with the ‘heretic’ Catholic Church equaled to ‘betraying Jesus’”¹² and set their periodicals into a diatribe aimed at exposing the heresies they thought exist in the Catholic Church.¹³ Moreover, the resolve to defend “orthodoxy” against a pernicious spread of Catholic heresy occasioned the greatest interdenominational meeting among Taiwanese Christians. The meeting gathered thirty tree denominations and aimed at defining a common stand regarding an ecumenical common prayer involving Catholics. To be effective, they designed a drafting committee of four people,¹⁴ who produced a document enlisting ten capital errors of the Catholic Church.¹⁵ The errors alluded to doctrinal pronouncements and teachings such as the papal infallibility, immaculate conceptions, papal primacy, clerical celibacy, good work. In a nutshell, they were pending questions emanating from Vatican I and Church tradition that eventually would be valuable topics for an ecumenical explanation between Catholics and other denominations.

Fifty years later, it is still difficult to assess the impact of these two incidents on the ecumenical journey of Taiwan. On the one hand,

¹² Chin Ke Pa, 184.

¹³ Newspapers and periodicals engaged in that diatribe included: *Tianqiao xinwen* 《天橋新聞》, *Fuyinbao* 《福音報》 and *China Christian Mission Monthly* 《中國信徒月刊》 See Chin Ke Pa, 184.

¹⁴ According to Chin Ken Pa's research, the drafting committee was made of four people, namely Kou Shiyuan 寇世遠, Lu Qiwo 盧祺沃, Wu Yong 吳勇 and Yu Ruliang 俞汝良. See Chin Ken Pa, 183.

¹⁵ The document was called *Gao Tong Dao Shu* 告同道書. To ensure its circulation, they printed fifty thousand copies distributed to the various denominations. Moreover, it was posted in all major Christian newspapers and periodicals, including *Fuyinbao* 《福音報》 and *China Christian Mission Monthly* 《中國信徒月刊》. See Chin Ke Pa, 184.

it proved that when determined, denominations could gather together for a cause and that they had the potential to create a platform prompting Christian interactions. On the other hand, it shed doubt on the motivations of that platform. If ecumenism had been a clear goal, the attitude of members towards the World Council of Churches and the manner of addressing the so-called errors of the Catholic Church would have been different. In fact, to the present, exception made of the annual prayer for leaders, I have no record of other cross denominational gatherings bringing as many Christian denominations together as it was in the 60s. Moreover, some of the protagonists for orthodoxy in the 60s parted ways with the group.¹⁶ Unlike the Roman Catholic Church, they did not appear on the list of the members of the National Council of Churches of Taiwan, the ecumenical body founded in 1991¹⁷ in replacement of the Ecumenical Cooperative Committee of Taiwan formed in 1966. Nonetheless the shadows and scars of the occurrences of the 60s can still be perceived within the organization. As Liu YuHong mentioned,

¹⁶ A major reason could be that they realized, in the process, that the ecumenical agenda stood against their theology. Ni Tuosheng 倪柝聲 never wanted to provide a denominational appellation to his communities. He referred to them as the 'ecclesia' - an implicit claim that it was the Church towards which those in search of salvation, Jesus, were to turn to. In that logic, followed also by his successor, Li Chang Shou 李常受, joining the ecumenical movement was an absurdity because it was to give credit to realities which were not supposed to exist. For more explanation on the theology of the Difang Jiaohui 地方教會 and its implications for ecumenism, see Shao Zunlan(邵遵瀾), "Ni shi fei zong pai jiao de zai si" (倪氏非宗派教的再思) in "Ling shi ji de zhui xun: Cong sheng jing, li shi, shen xue kan ni tuo sheng de si xiang" (靈實際的追尋: 從聖經、歷史、神學看倪柝聲的思想) edited by liao yuan wei, lu pei yuan, xu hong du (廖元威、呂沛淵、許宏度), Zhong hua fu yin shen xue yuan chu ban she (中華福音神學院出版社) 2003), 220-221.

¹⁷ The actual church members and organizations of NCCT include the *Presbyterian Church in Taiwan*, Taiwan Episcopal Church, Methodist Church in the Republic of China, Taiwan Lutheran Church, Chinese Regional Bishops Conference (Roman Catholic Church), Greek Orthodox Church, Bible Society in Taiwan, Christian Audio Visual Association Republic of China, Mackay Memorial Hospital, Taiwan Christian Service, The Garden of Hope Foundation, World Vision, Young Women's Christian Association of Taiwan, and Young Men's Christian Association of Taiwan. Unlike many other places, the Roman Catholic Church is a member of the National Council of Churches.

they helped PCT determine its attitude toward political-religious relationship.¹⁸ They could also account to the reserved attitude among NCCT's members especially regarding keeping the doors open up for other denominations, and discussing theological questions involving other members. In all these cases, in the name of mutual respect, the attitude observed is rather minimalistic and cold attitude towards theological discussions involving other members. To the present, there is no organization capable of offering a full coverage of the ecumenical activities and initiatives taking place on the Island. Church related media and publications are predominantly concerned with matters circumscribed to their own organizations. Perhaps it is a matter of choice, or a lack of interest in the other or a fear of misunderstanding. Nonetheless, examples of cooperation among and across denominations exist. Yet, their relation to the ecumenical movement remains hard to determine. For instance, in the area of theological formation, there are denominations sending their future pastors in theologies run by other denominations. While organizational and financial constraints might justify the choice, still it reflects a sense of trust with regard to the forming institution. And in accepting forming future leaders of other denominations and churches, the host institutions take on themselves the responsibility involving a commitment to one's denominational identity and respect of alterity of the others. An Anglican minister or a Presbyterian pastor enrolled in the theological program run by Catholics, or vice-versa, does something more than just gather or collect academic credits. David Lai, Bishop of the Anglican Church of Taiwan, referring the unvoiced sign of ecumenism occurring in these formative institutions, jokingly said that he sends introvert candidates to Protestant theological schools, whereas the lively ones are sent to

¹⁸ Liu Yuhong, "Historical Investigation into the Process of The Presbyterian Church in Taiwan's Joining, Leaving, and Rejoining of The World Council of Churches" M.A. Thesis, Taiwan Theological College and Seminary, 2016.

the Catholics. In this way, he says, the formative character of the institution helps the candidate gain balance.

Besides the above examples, there are many other instances leading to question the clarity of intentions and expectations of denominations participating in ecumenical movement and ask whether Taiwan might not be living the vagueness of current ecumenical situation that Cardinal Kurt Koch has been denouncing.¹⁹ Because of its closeness and long dated interaction, the Presbyterians' view on ecumenism has followed and developed along the line of the World Council of Churches. Catholics, following the steps of Vatican II and its sequent development emphasize visible unity, while the emphasis of other denominations is not easily discernible. One might wonder whether Thomas Rausch's assessment of modern ecumenical movement was also referring to them when he stated that "the goal of reconciliation and full communion continues to elude us."²⁰

Another shadowy corner is the extent to which international ecumenical movements are inspirational to the local churches and denominations. What is at stake here is not only the level of collaboration but also the receptivity of choices and orientation of corporate ecumenical bodies. To what extent for instance decisions of the WCC are received and implemented within the Presbyterian

¹⁹ "The basic problem in the current ecumenical situation" according to Card. Kurt Koch is the fact that the objective of the ecumenical movement over time has become vaguer. "Accordingly, the vagueness comes from the fact that "several churches and ecclesial communities emerging from reformation more and more dissociate themselves from the original objective of the visible unity in faith, in sacraments and ministries in favor of a call for a mutual recognition of the different realities as churches and thus as part of the one Church of Jesus Christ." See Kurt Koch, "The Pentecostal Churches as Partners of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity?" in *Evangelicals and Pentecostals Churches, Charismatics: New Religious Movements as a Challenge for the Catholic Church*, edited by Johannes Muller, and Karl Gabriel (Quezon City: Claretians Communication Foundation, 2015), 350.

²⁰ Thomas P. Rausch, "The Present State of Ecumenism" *Perspectiva Teologia*, vol. 49 (Jan, 2017) , 89.

Churches of Taiwan for instance? Likewise, how are directives of the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity mirrored in the local Catholic communities of Taiwan, those of Lutheran World Federation received and implemented in the Lutheran communities? Does the commitment of the local church mirror the enthusiasm of the Council? Perhaps the notion of collegiality needs to be fostered further to be able to make such an assessment. Not always the dynamism and enthusiasm of international bodies matches the priority of the local community. And if the problem exists within the same denomination, ideas and documents from cross denominational bodies are even more difficult to be received. The reception of the Chinese ecumenical bible is one example. The translators worked hard to produce a common version of the four gospels, just to realize that their efforts could not but have a consultative value, dissipating the hope for a common ecumenical Chinese Bible. Other recent examples are related to documents emanating from the World Council of Churches. *The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*. Signed in 1999, the document was the fruit of an extensive ecumenical dialogue involving Catholics and the Lutheran World Federation. It clarified long dated theological and exegetical misunderstanding especially between the Catholic Church and churches emerging from the reformed traditions. One would expect a document of this kind to attract vivid attention, ignite studies and discussion among concerned denominations and churches. The attendance to the two conferences our respective offices (the Commission for Promoting Christian unity of the Bishops' Conference of Taiwan in 2014 and the other one organized with the help of the Department of Religious Studies of Fu Jen Catholic University) did not reflect that importance. With some degree the same can be said of the work of the commission for the commemoration of the 500th Anniversary of the Lutheran Reform. *From Conflict to Communion*, was primarily a resource manual

fostering an ecumenical celebration and commemoration of the event. Again, one would have expected more gatherings and ecumenical initiatives related to this event. This is not denying the value of individual churches, and theological institutions which chose to celebrate and commemorate in their own way. My remark is regarding the missed opportunity for ecumenism. Perhaps this is confirming the gap of interest and concerns between local and global ecumenical movements. In the end, I would be interested in the practical interpretations the local ecumenical movement is making of the Lund Principle, which urges particular churches at every level to "act together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel them to act separately."²¹

The introductory message of Bp Thomas, President of the Commission for Promoting Christian Unity of Chinese Regional Conference of Bishops, to Pope Francis, during the visit of the Delegation of the NCCT to Rome on December 2017, summarizes the complex situation of Taiwan. He states as follows: "Holy Father, we have started harvesting the work of ecumenism initiated in our local church. The brothers and sisters present here are from different denominations. Having shared fifty years of journey together, we are aware of the achievements, the difficulties encountered and questions still pending and which are still preventing us from achieving full communion. Holy Father, there are other denominations in Taiwan not represented here, because they are not yet awakened to the spirit of ecumenism. It is our hope that the blessings and inspiration from this visit will ignite our dynamism for a more creative commitment and common search for a more visible Christian unity in our locality."²²

²¹ <http://www.cam.org.au/eic/images/stories/pdf/cr-Victoria.pdf>.

²² Bp Thomas Chung An Zhu, "Message to His Holiness Pope Francis" at the Occasion of the Visit of the Delegation of the National Council of Churches to

Fostering a Contextual Ecumenical Christianity

Despite the many examples and reflections made regarding the engagement of denominations and churches of Taiwan, it remains difficult to provide a definite, systematic and comprehensive assessment of the ecumenical movement in Taiwan. To counter the lacunae of the evaluation above, a future assessment will need to define a fitting theological method. As the question is dealing with a concrete situation, that method will need to be contextualized, taking into account the specificities of the Taiwanese situation. It will need to name the common trends, expectations within the ecumenical movement of Taiwan and the efforts each denomination and church makes to concretize them. It will equally identify the challenges, highlighting the way they are being addressed as a common concern. This is important because not all challenges are felt with the same intensity among denominations and churches. It is hence important to foster an analysis of layers of perceptions and sensitivities within the movement as an obligatory step to the "unity in reconciled diversity"²³ which ecumenical documents have been fostering now.

A contextualized method is fit for an ecumenical thinking for it can identify the commonalities found across all the denominations and churches. These are common denominators - identified in terms of option, aspiration, challenges - rooted and related to the double fact of being Taiwanese and Christians. Ecumenism from this perspective can't be reduced to its traditional definition, as a reality pertaining indiscriminately to the entire inhabited world,²⁴ but as

Rome on December 7, 2017.

²³ *The Apostolicity of the Church: Study Document of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic Commission on Unity* (Ap C) 44, *From Conflict to Communion* # 210.

²⁴ Ecumenism is presently known as the movement and activities aimed at promoting unity among the followers of Jesus Christ. Oikoumene, the Greek root of the word,

local efforts of different Christian denominations and churches to witness together to the fact that they are Christians.

In defining ecumenism in the area of contextual theology, I would apply to it the insights of David Tracy. Tracy defined theology as a public discourse carried with historical consciousness;²⁵ a discourse addressing and involving three different kinds of audiences (publics), namely, the church, the academia, and the wide range of society.

In the ecumenical context of Taiwan, the notion of church needs to be considered in a dynamic way since denominations naturally believe that they incarnate the church component. As in the model of the 60s, the meeting will offer venues where denominations share their respective views of the Church, clarify claims whose interpretation angers others and might offend the goal of ecumenism, namely the notion of a visible unity in reconciled diversity.²⁶

A discourse involving the academia, theological research and reflection must be extended to themes related to ecumenism. In that way, a further assessment will be able to delineate the academic attention given to the field by evaluating the formative programs - courses, researchers, publications, and symposia. The discourse will build on the existing work carried on within particular institutions, churches or denominations and expand to an inter-churches, inter-denominational, inter-institutional level. For instance, thus far, an answer to the felt need for a localized Christianity has borne different types of inculturated theologies, each easily identified with

however, referred to the inhabited world and to the universe. No allusion was made to unity. The gap between the original connotation and the Christian appropriation of the term should trigger a reflection." See Batairwa Kubuya Paulin, "Catholic Ecumenical Engagement and Scripture" *Lumen* Vol. 4, No. 1 (Jan 2016), 78.

²⁵ David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism*. (New York: Crossroads, 1981), 3-46.

²⁶ *From Conflict to Communion* # 210.

a specific school. “Shen xue ben wei hua”(神學本位化), “Ben tu shen xue”(本土神學), “Ben se hua”(本色化), “Chu jing hua”(處境化) are theological venues discussing issues of Christian identity. An ecumenical discourse with the academia will need to bridge the different schools of thoughts that have produced those works and reflect together on how these are analogical Christian responses to a felt problem.

Identity is another question of concern for many people living in Taiwan, Christians included. Identity is a foundational issue for any society and a predicament for healthy interactions at individual as well as societal levels. Clear identity bears self-confidence and predisposes for respectful and mutually enriching relationships. In the context of Taiwan, a reflection on the issue of identity, which built on the Christian experience can be very enriching, for it widens the epistemic horizons beyond the boundaries of theological framework,²⁷ provides a transformed epistemic arena beyond the political and ethic framework used to address the question. For Taiwanese Christians, the need for self-identification has other parameters. The effect of being Christians endows them with the Christic experience; an experience occurring in time and space but also transcending them. It is both a universal and particularized experience; it identifies and integrates at the same time as it particularizes. The Christic experience is naturally complex, for it holds together in a harmonious way diverse kind of opposites without creating dichotomies. Taiwanese Christians are a minority connected to the entire universe. Theirs is a dichotomous identity which binds them to remain always receptive at home and open to the global. Were they to choose enclosure to the local, they will

²⁷ The theological framework treated questions pertaining to identity in terms of inculturation, contextualization; a jargon only familiar to a Christian audience.

suffer from self-segregation, cutting ties with their outer and global connections, they will suffer from sectarianism.

As for the last audience entailed in Tracy's framework, society in general is the last interlocutor ecumenical discourse needs to address. In other words, the ecumenical discourse of the Taiwanese Christians in general must address society in its concreteness. Issues at stake are about the identity concern of Taiwanese Christians and their role and place in the Taiwanese society. The discourse must rethink and re-conceptualize the problem of self-identification, illustrating that being a Christian does not imply cultural alienation rather a rooting in society with a different dynamism. Culturally speaking, there is no contradiction between being Taiwanese and being Christian. Moreover, for this to occur, a discourse involving the general public will require a closer awareness and analysis of the actual context wherein Taiwanese Christians are to live their calling. From the perspective of ecumenical cartography, it is only part of the other side of the hemisphere, where the center of gravity of Christianity is shifting.²⁸ From the perspective of faith, it is, to use the description of *Asia News*, "a secularized society in which the faith appears to be poorly rooted."²⁹ And for the overall, socio-economic perspective, there are voices denouncing the ambiguous outcome of the economic prosperity and fast modernization of the Island and the new challenges they raise to Christianity.

²⁸ See Konrad Raiser, "The Ecumenical Movement in the 21st Century - Challenges and Opportunities" in *The Ecumenical Movement in the 21st Century - Challenges and Opportunities*, (Hong Kong: 2004), 10.

²⁹ "At 150th anniversary of evangelization, the Church of Taiwan starts over from mission of the laity," accessed Feb 17, 2009.
<http://www.asianews.it/news-en/At-150th-anniversary-of-evangelization,-the-Church-of-Taiwan-starts-over-from-mission-of-the-laity-14507.html>.

In Georges P. Hunt's assessment, "Taiwan has become a very prosperous country in recent years, one of the world leaders in export. All of this prosperity does not help the Taiwanese to be more receptive to the gospel. The people have become more interested in taking care of their physical needs and striving for worldly comfort instead of dealing with spiritual aspects of their lives"³⁰ Likewise, Wright Doyle has a similar observation in his pathetic description of modern Taiwanese society and the impact of modernity to the work of the Church. He sees Taiwan as a society that "crumbles under the weight of urbanization, modernization, and the corrosive effects of media-generated hedonism and moral relativism. Old values have been shredded in a post-modern, fast-paced world of dizzying change, and millions are paying the price in poor health, depression, and broken families. Most are gripped with anxiety and fear about the future, as China's clout in every domain advances with ominous and apparently inexorable progress.

Not a few Christians in Taiwan believe that believers there will soon face challenges from which they have hitherto been spared. Freedom and prosperity have robbed the church of that toughness and concentration upon God and eternal life which their counterparts of an earlier generation in China evinced in the long years of persecution before the present period of relative religious freedom. No one knows what the future holds for Protestant Christianity in Taiwan."³¹

³⁰ Georges H. Hunt, "A Study of the Effectiveness of Evangelistic Techniques with Chinese Christians: with Applications to the Field Mission of Taiwan" M.A Thesis in Church Growth and Cross-Cultural Studies - Graduate School of Religion of Liberty University, (1987), 12-14.

³¹ Dr. G. Wright Doyle "Christianity in Taiwan."
<http://www.globalchinacenter.org/analysis/christianity-in-china/christianity-in-taiwan.php>.

The outcome of the crisis is reflected in the figures and problems Fr. King enlisted as social issues in need of immediate pastoral attention in Taiwan. Accordingly: "Taiwanese society is afflicted by the same problems that are found in many other parts of the world: abortion, the rise in divorce, the spread of gambling." The birth rate in the country is now at the same level as that of Japan, considered the laggard of Asia: from 25.65% in 1971, it has now fallen to below 9%. To these figures are added the global economic crisis, corruption, fighting among the political class, all elements that produce widespread distress among the population. The family is experiencing a profound crisis. Religion, including traditional religion, is the object of less and less interest, especially among the young people."³²

Conclusion

What it takes to affirm whether Taiwanese Christians are ecumenical goes beyond a list of activities and of organizations bringing churches and denominations together. What is needed is a well thought methodology that ponders on the united commitment of those touched by the Christic experience to stand together and corroborate the ecumenical dimension of the faith and grace they have received. Future assessment of the ecumenical movement in Taiwan requires inscribing ecumenism on the agenda of the local contextualized theology. The insertion enables a communal pondering on the Christian phenomenon as lived in different churches and denomination and its implication for the common witness that Christians are to carry on in the general society.

³² "At 150th anniversary of evangelization, the Church of Taiwan starts over from mission of the laity," accessed Feb 17, 2009.
<http://www.asianews.it/news-en/At-150th-anniversary-of-evangelization,-the-Church-of-Taiwan-starts-over-from-mission-of-the-laity-14507.html>.

Ecumenical thinking can facilitate a broader understanding of the founding faith experience inherent to being a Christian and which is also the basis for Christian ecumenism. The belief in Jesus as Christ has been working as an undertow unceasingly stirring waves crossing through the confines of time and space. Being a Christian amounts to an encounter with Jesus as a Christ. In that experience, believers acquire a new perspective, which enables them to see and engage reality from an angle wider than that of their respective cultures and traditions. Once immersed in that perspective, time and space as well as other referential concepts for self-identification are endowed with extended meanings. The experience of Jesus as Christ provides a form of identity and extends in the meantime the confines by which believers know the world and interact with its dwellers.

However, as waves and undertow are related, so it is with the experience of Jesus as Christ. As the undertow, the experience of Jesus as Christ is the common and foundational denominator among Christian believers. As waves, encounters with Jesus occur in specific contexts which shape the perception and articulation of the Christian faith. Each experience of Jesus as Christ is hence unique, for it carries within itself (cultural, epochal, geographical) marks of the context wherein it evolved. Christian identity is the byproduct of the specific reception and appropriation of the common experience of Jesus as Christ. The process integrates at the same time as it reshapes. According to Matt Steffon, the foundation for Christian identity, which is also the foundation for Christian ecumenism, is “inner sameness and continuity” through the focus on Jesus Christ as the way of salvation.” For not matter what is said about Christianity, it “remains safe to say that Christian identity begins and ends with a

reference to Jesus in relation to God's truth and a way of salvation."³³

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Ecumenical Trace and Future in the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in Japan

日本在宗教改革 500 週年的 合一追尋與未來

Arata MIYAMOTO

[ABSTRACT] For Lutherans, 2017 is a significant year: the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. The Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church (JELC) has committed to historical events of this year. Although there are many events and conferences related to the commemoration, it is clear for JELC to make a basic principle to do commemorate Reformation 500. JELC decided not to do for self-celebration and take into consideration that the time of reformation was the time of division. The commemoration is an opportunity for reconciliation with others.

I would do presentation about several events between Lutherans and Catholics in Japan. One of them is the commemoration that JELC and Catholic Bishops' Conference of Japan co-organize for Reformation 500 at Urakami Cathedral in Nagasaki, the southern island of Japan on Nov 23, 2017. We are aimed at offering our commemorating prayer of Reformation 500 toward reconciliation. However, our prayer is also directed forward beyond reconciliation within two churches. Lutherans and Catholics came to decide Urakami cathedral as the gathering place of the commemoration. The

Urakami of Nagasaki, one of oldest and biggest Catholic community in Japan, is also “ground zero” of NAGASAKI atomic bomb in August 9th, 1945. Standing on the place together for prayer means that we move forward from our own reconciliation to working together for making peace. Through the report occurring in Reformation 500 of Japan, I would contend about the future and issues of the ecumenical movement in Asia.

【摘要】 對路德教會來說，2017 年是重要的一年：宗教改革 500 週年。日本福音派路德教會（JELC）致力為當年的歷史事件搞活動。雖然有很多紀念活動和會議，但 JELC 決定不把活動囿於自身的團體，而是考慮到宗教改革時亦是分裂的時間，紀念活動是與他人和解的機會。

文章闡述路德教會和日本天主教徒之間的事。其中之一是 2017 年 11 月由 JELC 和日本天主教主教會議在長崎 Urakami 大教堂合辦的改革 500 年紀念，並為和解祈禱。事實上，禱告更超越了兩個教會的和解。Urakami 大教堂是日本天主教最大和最古老的一個教堂，是 1945 年 8 月 9 日受原子彈嚴重毀壞的地方。站在這個地方祈禱，可見從和解向前邁進一大步：共同努力實現和平。通過日本宗教改革 500 年的報告，作者討論到亞洲基督徒合一運動的未來和問題。

I. The arrival point of the ecumenical movement in the 500th anniversary of the reformation

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and the Roman Catholic Church jointly had the Common Prayer toward repentant and reconciliation in the name of Jesus Christ, led by Bishop Munib Younan, president of the Lutheran World Federation, and Pope Francis at the Lutheran Cathedral of Lund, in Sweden on Oct. 31st

2016. It points to the arrival point that both churches have continued the ecumenical dialogue for the past fifty years. They have already come to the theological arrival point of the ecumenical dialogue in the Joint Declaration of the Doctrine of Justification in 1999. This time, from the doctrinal document to the more active and practical document, they moved forward: *From Conflict to Communion*, in 2013. On the basis of the document, they held the Common Prayer in the commemoration of reconciliation. In this memorial opportunity, they also declared for the five ecumenical imperatives that had already appeared in *From Conflict to Communion*. The declaration led both churches from the doctrinal dialogue through the ceremonial unity to the practical direction of the churches toward common mission. They brought the ecumenical commemoration of the Reformation into the Declaration of Intent by the Lutheran World Service and the Caritas international, in which both international organizations started common projects for human aids such as refugee and immigrants supports. Both churches are called to the commitment to common witness and service in the world.

The Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church (hereafter the JELC) planned to work for the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in the context of Japan. This article presents what the JELC has done the anniversary in accordance with the global ecumenical movement and think about the future of ecumenical movement.

1. Enthusiasm and Conflict in the 400th anniversary of the Reformation

In the history of ecumenical movement, it is remarkable that the Protestants came to Edinburgh, Scotland, for the International Missionary Conference in 1910. It was an ecumenical conference to promote the cooperation of global mission among Protestants. However, the Western world came to be entangled with the chaos of the World War I soon after the enthusiastic gathering of the IMC.

During the same period, the society in Japan was in the high period of the democratic movement; *Taisho* democracy. People were engaged in the social reformations toward a democratic society. Protestants in Japan came to the 400th anniversary of the Reformation in the social background of the democratic movement and made opportunities of connecting the heritage of the Reformation with struggle for freedom and egalitarianism in terms of modern ideals. Timothy McKenzie researches the resources of those days and summarizes the feature of the 400th anniversary as Protestants enthusiasm and conflict for Roman Catholics.¹ A half of century had already passed after Protestant missionaries fully started their missions in Japan, when the government changed the foreign policy from closing to opening the country to the world. Japanese Christian leaders of the first generation made colorful of the 400th anniversary of the Reformation in the whole country. According to the texts of those days, some of Protestant leaders appealed to the freedom of conscience and liberty of education in the connection with the Reformation teaching, and others celebrated the Reformation as the origin of the progress and development of human society for the past four hundred years.² Within the Protestants camp, it seems to be ambitious that they planned the anniversary gathering beyond denominations and actually gathered, prayed and learned from the heritage of the Reformation, and also carried messages about freedom, equality, and conscience to the society in the midst of democratic movement. The atmosphere is enthusiastically intellectual, evangelical, and ecumenical. However, behind the enthusiasm of Protestant ecumenism, the anniversary was presupposed to place the Roman Catholics out of Protestant sights. It was limited within Protestant understanding of the Reformation. On

¹ Timothy McKenzie, "The 400th Anniversary of the Reformation in 1917 Japan" in *Study on Luther*(2014), 127-177.

² *Ibid.*, 154.

the other hand, McKenzie also researches the documents that the Roman Catholics made in terms of the 400th anniversary of the Reformation. The tone is cold and severe. They mentioned the Reformation as "Deformation." The anniversary also appeared as the negative sign of the division of Christian churches. Thus, in the 400th anniversary, the original partners, the Protestants and the Roman Catholics, had no chance to make mutual understands to each other. It was a hundred years that passed since those days. Both churches come to the joint text of *From Conflict to Communion*. The JELC tried to take into consideration the progress of ecumenical movement for the past century.

2. The JELC's Project for the 500th anniversary of the Reformation

The Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church is the largest church among Lutherans in Japan in which there are one hundred twenty congregations. The JELC are also engaged in various social institutions like social welfares, education, nursery school and kindergarten, and so on. Those facilities are historically and administratively related to Lutheran missions. The JELC and these Lutheran social institutions form *the Lutheran Mission Association* as the community of mission in Japan.³ Therefore, from the beginning of Lutheran missions in Japan, the missiological context is manifold and plural. And also, as well as missions in other areas of Asia, we are always challenged by ongoing issues of the society. In this sense, our mission is always ecumenical in nature. Because the

³ R.B.Peery, a first missionary to Japan sent by the United Synod of the South, a predecessor of the Lutheran Church in America, came to Japan in 1892. Lutheran church had a first worship in the city of Saga. It was a historical year of the JELC. Now, there are approximately one hundred and twenty congregations nationwide. As many as the number of the congregations is, there are Lutheran social facilities. While many of them are independent legally and administratively, their articles of associations and mission policy are rooted in Christian idea, and keep mission relationship with the JELC as *the Lutheran Mission Association*.

population of Christians is approximately one percent of Japanese population, our mission is practiced with religious others. For example, the congregation that I served until this spring administers a preschool since 1950s. Approximately one hundred kids and their parents come to the church facility as a preschool and twenty teachers including a fulltime and part-time job works for them. Staff meeting starts with worship every morning and they pray with kids. However, the proportion of Christians in the kindergarten is largely not different from the portion in the whole population of Christians in the society.

The JELC forms congregations in this setting, and commits itself to mission and social service. It is necessary to deepen questions about *what our neighbors are in our mission* and *what our mission is in relation with our neighbors*. It is a contextual question that Asian Christians has tackled for long time. The richness of theology and mission, which have been formed in the West, is good at helping us think about the former question without losing Christian identity: what mission is. However, it is also risky that theology and mission decide what our neighbors are. Just as Kosuke Koyama proposed “neighbor-ology”, we are also require to learn what theology and mission are from our own neighbors without losing Christian relevancy for our living context. These led the JELC to commemorate the 500th anniversary of Reformation. The main question of the planning is with whom we share the grace of the commemoration.

3. To Neighbors

Preceding from the project of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, the JELC called for the logo design in public. The elected logo puts the cross in the center of the design. It symbolizes the heart of our community of mission. The three pairs of hands

under the cross that are gradually from being opened to being joined together are designed to signify a repeating movement between invitations and prays on behalf of God's grace. Open hands seek for gratitude and peace and moves forward to the hands of prayer. The hands of prayer are opened to invite others. The five colors of hands mean the varieties of the world that make us remind the history of the grace of God. Again, the logo puts forward the missional question, "with whom we celebrate the anniversary?" It leads to what the JELC does in the anniversary.

The JELC's proposal of the project was note in May of 2015. The two basic principles to manage the project are:

1. The project is not intended to plan a transient event of celebration.
2. The project is not intended to present a Christian retrospective display from the museum of Christian history.

Although the principles are written in the negative sentences, the intention is positive. It moves toward to share our heritage with others and find the grace of God through the anniversary. It reflects on a simple setting of Japanese Lutherans. Lutherans are double minority. Lutherans exists with other religious people in a secular society as religious minority. Further, they also live with other Christians from Roman Catholics throughout other Protestant denominations to evangelical-pentecostal groups as Christian minority. Therefore, reflecting on Lutheran identity in Japanese context, at least, the JELC takes into considerations three kinds of otherness: other Christians, other religious people and other non-religious people. In the project of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, the JELC comes to challenge this otherness. Therefore, the project is not just celebration within a small community, but is directed to commemorate and make testimony of the grace of God

from the perspective of the Reformation. It is a missional mind rather than just celebrating. This is a new perspective that appears in this period.

The direction of the JELC's project is based on Japanese context of Lutherans, and therefore, different from the context of global community of Lutherans. However, in spite of differences of context, the principle and ideal is shared with global level of the 500th anniversary of Reformation. The Lutheran World Federation planned the project of anniversary in terms of three principles: ongoing, global and ecumenical. LWF takes time to do the anniversary to celebrate with others beyond Lutheran community and thus develops dialogue and mutual understanding into unity and reconciliation.

II. Programs of the project in the JELC

I survey some programs that the JELC carried in the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. The JELC comprehensively understands composed by evangelizing (*kerygma*), education (*didacke*) and service (*diakonia*). The JELC are accustomed with the way of thinking that three components are developed into three parts of mission. The church organization has divisions and committees correspondent with these components. However, it is noteworthy that the church comprehensively implemented the project by concentrating the comprehensive understanding of mission. Even if each program has own tendency to spot one of three divisions of evangelizing, education and service, it keeps other aspects integrated into the project. From the point of view, the programs were planned in crossing departments of evangelizing, education and service. It comes to the reality of mission in theology. Thus, following programs could be sorted out as one of three features of the

comprehensive of mission, but actually, any program can be considered to be integrated into the mission of the commemoration this time.

1. Carrying Message to Message

Reformation Banner

The Reformation Banner had been displayed in front of buildings of the congregations and Lutheran institutions. According to calculation, by displaying them in all Lutheran congregations and social institutions, 8000 people per day see this banner with information. It seems to be commercial campaign, but really responsive to sustainable issues in Japanese Lutherans. In general, Japanese students learn about two Christian priests in the standard text books of domestic or world history. The one person is a Jesuit priest, Francisco Xavier, who is a first missionary to come to Japan in 16th century. Another is Martin Luther as the character of the Reformation. Therefore, it is not difficult to hear one of them, if you ask for someone to know well known Christians in history. Japanese knows the name of Martin Luther and the Reformation movement as a historical event. However, unfortunately and curiously, it is not necessary that they identify Lutherans in Japan with the historical event of Reformation and Martin Luther. One reason is related to the translation and pronunciation of Luther and Lutheran Church. The pronunciation and spells of "Luther" in Japanese language has showed complex transitions in modern national education. In some periods, Luther is spelled and pronounced as *rūtel*, but in other periods, as *rūtā*. It is a unique issue in relation with Japanese language beyond the capability of the church. Currently, *Lutheran* of the Lutheran Church is spelled out as *rūtel*, but *Luther* of Martin Luther as *rūtā*. Thus, many people cannot linguistically think Lutheran Church in connection with Luther-Reformation. This is a

background of the banner project. The banner functions as connecting “Luther” of the historical feature of the Reformation with “Luther” of Lutheran Church through the design.

Eighth Foldings Pamphlet

This project is also directed to those around Lutherans in line with banner project. Reflecting on the context that the majority knows the history of the Reformation and Martin Luther but not about Lutherans, the JELC makes the pamphlet for connecting both. The eighth folding pamphlet is an old but new medium remarked in this digital mediating society. This is a just printed pamphlet as an outlook, but this paper-based pamphlet is a communicating tool. Reading pages one by one in order, readers gets to the information from Luther five hundred years ago through a contemporary connection of Luther and the Reformation into neighboring Lutherans around them one after the other. Unfolding the first page, you find the information about Martin Luther and his story around the Reformation. Opening out the third page, you find the topic in connection with general information of Luther and Lutheran legacy connected with your ordinary life such as music, bible, media, education, human aids and social welfare. More spreading out it at next page, you find your local Lutheran churches and institutions spread in the whole country. Then, folding the pamphlet into the final page, the message of Lutheran group in Japan is written with the well-known words of Lutherans among Japanese: “even if I knew that tomorrow the world would go to pieces, I would still plant my apple tree.” This project is also aimed for Lutherans to work for neighbors hands by hands. It is a unique form of mission in Japan.

Publication on Book

This is a third project that the JELC makes tools to share the grace of the Reformation with neighbors. The book is beautifully

illustrated and summarizes all about Luther into small pages, but according to the director of the project, it is a most difficult project. There are many publications about Luther for the past hundred years. Some are theological, others are Christian books for believers. Still others are intellectual books that are provided for intellectual people. This book is not categorized into anyone. As mentioned, the majority of Japanese is not Christian, but has so many points of contact through Lutheran social institutions. Taking up the kindergarten for which I took responsibility, the church member's is around a hundred laypersons, and a hundred kids and their family members are so many in the community. While it is still important for us to engage in evangelizing as outreach, we cannot regard them mere as non-Christians in an old-fashioned way of mission. Actually, for sixty years, they are our friends, good partners for nurturing and educating kids, and cooperators for the administrations of the kindergarten. They have worship, praise and pray for the Lord together. Their relationship with local Lutherans is similar to "who fear God" in chapter tenth of Act in the New Testaments. Many of them are not necessarily concerned about Luther and the Reformation intellectually, academically nor theologically, but the line between Luther and those who fear God is connected with the fact that both of them live in the world and have their own living worries and struggles by reason of life and death. The book is not intended to enlighten people from the top of mountain, but to carry Luther and his wisdom to their lives. The missiology in the background of the book is not that which considers them as candidates for something, rather our neighbors who live next to us in the world created by God. This model of mission take it consideration that mission should be dialogical, respectful and mutual understanding. We need learning together, mutual understanding and concern, and compassion beyond religious belongings. What the book finds out in Luther is a new image of

Luther. The image depicted here is not the religious hero nor professor, but Luther who lived in the midst of this worldliness. He was troubled by family matter, struggled with economic-political matter, had so many illness. Luther was married, had children, ate and slept with them. Through the ordinary life, his happiness turned into sorrow. He loved caring for kids, and lost his lovers. Then, he came to face his own death. In a word, it was Luther as a human being. However, his life is outstanding in that he sought for the grace of God, received for the word of God, and trusted in Jesus Christ as being with him. These are the parts that the book tried to bring to those who live in the world different from fifteenth century Wittenberg. In this sense, the pretty book is ambitious.

Through these programs, the JELC comes to a question, who is our neighbor next to us. What kinds of neighbors are they? Many of them that the JELC directed the project to them are very near to the church through Christian institutions and movements. They are neighbors but far away from the perspective of accustomed mission-mind. What the project challenges us is how we have perspective to see the neighbors in terms of mission. It is a historical and sociological issue but at the same time, a theological and missiological question. In the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, what the JELC is challenged is actually what the JELC has done for neighbors for our 120 years mission history. There is something to be considered before evangelizing and outreaching or giving something and educating for others, so that we find a pathway to share gospel with others from a new perspective of mission. It is similar to the story of Peter and Gentiles, Cornelius in Act 10th. While Peter was called to visit Cornelius, God challenges Peter could not see Gentiles out of nothing other than his conventional eyes. Although Peter led Cornelius to be baptized, it was Peter who was transformed by God throughout mission to the Gentiles.

2. Serving to Each Other: Reminding Being Peacemaker

Stephen Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder depict the appearing three currents of theology of mission in the latter of the twenty century.⁴ One is a Trinitarian theology rooted in Karl Barth and Karl Hartenstein. This theology is developed into *Missio Dei*. The other one is found in the theology of the kingdom of God. We find the current in the social movement and social welfare to promote the kingdom of God. The final one is the Christocentric theology of mission, in which mission depends on the finality of Jesus Christ as the Savior. Bevans and Schroeder contends that through these three currents of theology of mission, mission as "prophetic dialogue" will come to us in the twenty first century. The mission as prophetic dialogue is a new current in accordance with the contexts of global Christianity, but the features of mission is resonant with Christian traditions through the history of Christianity. The mission to which the church is called is composed by 1) witness and proclamation, 2) liturgy, prayer and contemplation, 3) commitment to justice, peace and the integrity of creation, 4) the practice of interreligious dialogue, 5) efforts of inculturation, and 6) the ministry of reconciliation.⁵ Including these six in the context of mission, the mission is not directed to the one that Christians one-sidedly provides something with others, rather standing on the awareness that mission is dialogical in terms of God's mission.

First, mission based on *Missio Dei* stands on *sola gratia*. What the church received comes from God as gift. That is why the mission is theological in agent of God, and the church keep

⁴ Stephen Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004).

⁵ *Ibid.*, 351.

self-understanding of being called and sent by God. Mission with dialogical feature is not to provide a prescriptive way of mission, but good at depicting experiential traces of mission one by one. Especially being surrounded by the diversity of cultures, religions and societies in Asia, the prophetic dialogue helps us develop the future of mission. It can be considered such as dialogue with poor, with other religious and with other cultures in this context of the diversity of Asia. Already we come to know so many of witness to contribute to the mission in dialogue with others. In addition, we come to realize that real locals in Asia are also characterized as post secularization age through the revolution of technology. When the JELC tries to carry out the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in the context of Japan, these others in dialogue is not avoidable. It is asked, with whom we share the anniversary as a message of gospel and how? From the perspective of the mission, the JELC chooses the topic of the anniversary as “peace and reconciliation” to seek for a deep understanding of our own roots in the Reformation and a mission here and now. It urged the JELC to make a contact with the Roman Catholics and had a meeting place in Nagasaki of Japan on November 23rd in 2017.

3. Common Prayer in Nagasaki

The JELC and the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Japan held a joint ecumenical commemoration of the Reformation on 23rd November 2017 at Urakami Cathedral, in Nagasaki, Japan. The JELC decided not to hold the anniversary in the form of celebration held by Lutherans for Lutherans like private parties. From the beginning of the plan of the anniversary, the JELC takes into consideration the anniversary with others. The one of others in the context of the Reformation is the Roman Catholics. The Roman

Catholics in Japan started the mission in the 16th century, and through passing the long period of persecution and ban of Christianity, takes a forty percent of Christian population in Japan. There have been volunteering gathering from prayer to secular activities for social service. The JELC and the Catholic Church in Japan have also the ecumenical committee for theological dialogue. In the line of the dialogue, the JELC, the Catholic Church and the Anglican Church have already held the common prayer in the commemoration of the Joint Declaration of the Doctrine of Justification in Tokyo 2004. This is the fruit of the theological dialogue in the local Christianity of Japan between both churches. However, there is another thread to come to the ecumenical commemoration of the common prayer in 2017.

Lutherans is placed in the double minority in Japan. Within Christian community, Lutherans in Japan is a minor denomination. However, the Christian community in Japan itself is a religious minority in Japan. It does not mean that Christians lives in a small community in the society. Once they take actions in the society, they live in ecumenical and inter-religious setting. For example, when the Great East Japan Earthquake and the accident of FUKUSHI nuclear power plant in 2011 happened, so many religious institutions and secular groups cooperated in the project of human aid and reconstruction from the disaster. A series of actions are called the coming of post-secularization in religious sociology. They serve to each other in the face to the unprecedented disaster beyond any religious boundaries. In the case of Christian communities, they have been long history to cooperate with other denominations, other religious and secular groups for specific actions such as the peace movement, social justice, and human aid, and so on. Dialogical partner is not limited into theological and ecclesiological domains. Rather, Christian communities are engaged in social activities with

others. Focusing on peace and reconciliation as the subject of common prayer, the JELC and the Catholic Church take the context of grass roots into considerations seriously. Thus, the common prayer is aimed to look forward for common mission rather than look to each other.

They choose the place of the common prayer in Urakami Cathedral of Nagasaki to realize the motif of peace and reconciliation this time. Nagasaki is the well-known city placed in the south area of Japan in which the largest number of Catholic community exist from 16th century. Urakami Cathedral is one of the oldest churches. However, Urakami also has another historical site to remember the realization of peace. The city is also the ground zero of atomic bomb on 9th August 1945. In this place, the pastors in JELC and the priests in the Roman Catholic led the common prayer in the Urakami Cathedral.

Speaking about dialogue in the sense of mission, the perspective of dialogue is plural. Understanding the prophetic dialogue, it is helpful to lead the dimensions of dialogue introduced by missiologist: the dialogue of the head, the dialogue of the heart and the dialogue of the hands. The dialogue of the head primarily focused on “a discussion of ideas and beliefs.”⁶ The JELC and the Roman Catholic Church have kept a theological dialogue in the contour with communication between both. The dialogue of the heart is aimed at exchanging experiences in other religious community. That is why it includes a wide range of activities like prayer, worship, and religious rituals. Then, those who take dialogue learn and involve to the spiritual practices expressing joy, hope, sorrow, gratitude, anger, and love. Facing the common practice in the level of

⁶ Craig L. Nesson, “The Cross as Foundation for the Ministry of Reconciliation: Ending Violence in Our Endangered Globe,” *Currents in Theology and Mission*, vol.40, no. 2 (2013), 100.

grassroots, not only Lutherans and other Christians, but also even other religious and non religious people learn to each other the spiritual dimensions of life to each other. Especially, facing the great disaster like the Great East Japan Earthquake, many proposed the dimension of this dialogue in reports. Finally, the dialogue of hands is to use hands rather than mouth. It is aimed to work for human well-being, peace and justice. The JELC is certainly a church, but its mission is practiced not only by the church but also by the Lutheran group of mission such as related social institutions and grassroots movements for social wellbeing, justice and peace.

III. Prospect for ecumenism

1. Missional Image as Being with Others

The 400th anniversary of the Reformation in Japan was full of the Protestant enthusiasm and the inadequate contact and understanding between the Protestants and the Roman Catholics. A hundred years changed the ecumenical pictures in Japan, as well as the global ecumenism did so. Urakami Cathedral in Nagasaki of the Roman Catholic becomes the place that two churches that had been divided five hundred years ago met for the commemoration of the Reformation. There, Lutherans and Catholics led common prayer for repentant and reconciliation. They came to pray together in the memory of being peacemakers. Reflecting on "blessed are the peacemakers" (Mat.5:9), the perspective of "common prayer" goes beyond "peace" among two communities.

They come to realize that peace is not realized without others. Other religious leaders and other secular people who work together for peacemaking are present there. The leaders of both churches could not hold the prayer if they have hegemonical mind over others

and conquering mind over others. Unfortunately, Christianity cannot say that such a mind is not totally alien to itself. In that sense, peace and reconciliation is a deep spiritual practice including self-criticism. We come to an age that Christian mission and theology think about Christian peace in relation with this worldly peace with others more than ever. One reason is the setting of Christian community as global community since the previous century in the consequence of modern mission. The other reason that no peace is without others is our condition around peace. In that point, it is worth listening to Ronald Stone. He mentions the contemporary concern for peace is very biblical and universal, but also comes to a new situation different from that in the past: “Confronted as we are, however, with the question of whether or not humanity will survive, the meaning of peacemaking for our time involves the salvation of humanity as a species.”⁷ Standing on Urakami, the ground zero of NAGASAKI, or the FUKUSHIMA, it becomes real. Stone continues to say that “Peacemaking and the promotion of peace may go on in the family, school, business, church, and government, but theologically speaking, peacemaking today means the existential, activist work in society to prevent the destruction of the human species.”

Again in this context, the JELC, probably other Christian communities too, must repeatedly ask itself that with whom peace be shared. From the perspective of this complex perspective of peace in global age, we cannot realize the peace without others. We cannot realize peace without considerations of other human actions like education, social welfare, and political stability, and economical and ecological justice, and so on. The mission mind for dialogue, mission as “prophetic dialogue,” is imperative in this sense. Peace and

⁷ Ronald H. Stone, the article of “Peace/Peacemaking” in Donald W. Musser and Joseph L. Price eds, *New & Enlarged Handbook of Christian Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003), 368.

reconciliation are religious but secular, public but private, and theological but sociological matters. Thus, we need as mission to promote mutual understanding and cooperative mind for peacemaking in the specific context without betraying our own tradition of "blessed are the peacemakers."

A Catholic theologian, Robert J. Schreiter, has already proposed a new understanding of catholicity.⁸ It promotes the transformation of theological-missional mind apart from the perspective of modern values on spatial expansion and quantitative growth. The new catholicity focuses on the network and communication between dots of churches. A common question among churches is not how a church spatially and quantitatively enlarges its own effect and power, but how a church connects itself with other churches and other domains in dialogue with them. The image of the catholicity is similar to the Internet web. We are not concern for how the platform is large or small. The platform functions as connecting the one with others. We stop to ask what is exchanged through the web of Christian mission. Who does join the network and for what? This is the issue of mission, but at the same time, beyond the missions of the church. In the anniversary of the Reformation, the JELC found out a sign. It is small but incredible sign of time through praying, gathering and working together.

2. Ecumenical Mapping for the Future

In the commemoration of Lund, 2016, LWF and the Catholic Church have common prayer and declared the five ecumenical imperatives, and in the final section of the common prayer, another

⁸ Robert J. Schreiter, *The New Catholicity: Theology between the Global and the Local* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1997).

significant event happened. It is the Declaration of Intent signed by the Lutheran World Service and Caritas Internationals. The fifth of the ecumenical imperatives is especially considered there. It says that “Catholics and Lutherans should witness together to the mercy of God in proclamation and service to the world.” In response to the imperative, the two organizations to work for human aid move forward to the next stage of their actions. Analogically speaking, the theological dialogue between both churches for the past fifty years is corresponding to the dialogue of head, and the common prayer to the dialogue of heart. The Declaration of Intent signifies to the intention of both churches in the level of the dialogue of hands. This is the direction to the future of both churches. This direction is significant for local Christian churches and institutions to reflect on the common prayer and the Declaration of Intent, because it suggests the strategical principle of mission. Although the common prayer is certainly the event that specific churches planned and hold, the significant is also witnessed for the future of mission. They could find ways to work for peace and reconciliation by using their own gifts and talents. The commemoration is ongoing. Theologically speaking, it is ongoing eschatologically: already but not yet.

The JELC also celebrated the anniversary of the Reformation with the Roman Catholics with the commemoration of peace and reconciliation. It was done *already*, but what the JELC will do is *not yet* attained at the next stage. It is an opened to the future. The JELC as a double minority of the society and Christian community in Japan seeks for a pathway to practice the dialogues of head, heart and hands with others toward the eschatological goal of peace. For the end, the church has to make platforms for dialogues to promote in global and local levels.

3. Crisis of Love for Neighbors

When the former LWF President, Bishop Munib Younan, who was one of the hosts of the common prayer in Lund, came to Japan last year, he spoke to the major newspaper of Japan about the crisis of loving neighbors. It is interesting to find a simple fact that Younan succeeds in speaking to secular and other religious people about the common issue in and out of Japan: "crisis of love for neighbors." In the interviews, bishop Younan left important insights by telling the crisis of loving for neighbors. He says that any peace movement is local. He loves local people and works for local peace with people in Palestine. In the reality of the local context, he finds neighbors to promote dialogue with patient and mutual understanding. In his context of peace movement, dialogue is imperative face to face.

He also mentions that the dialogue by face to face is challenging and crisis of one's own life. He says that loving neighbors is not emotional. It is to acknowledge the diversity of alien neighbors and pain by loving neighbors. Thus, he is a grass-roots messenger and at the same time, the messenger of Christian perspective for peacemaking. In other words, his local context is not merely local but also global. Local mission is in the midst of mission and communion of the world. Theologically speaking, his peace movement is God's mission: *Missio Dei*. Institution is also important to "seek for realistic solution, not utopian solution in the devastating division among neighbors." We are engaged in local missions, but we need a sensitive to serving global mission here and there. In the case of Lutherans, probably as well as other denominations, we are good at forming global networking theologically and institutionally. It does not mean for me to suggest making another organizations or institution necessarily. Rather, what the local church is necessary is a kind of networking to share issues and struggles, and grace and hope,

in the name of mission. This prospect helps us depict the future of Asian mission.

Bishop Younan visited Japan to receive the peace prize from Buddhist peace foundation by the reason of his religious approach to peacemaking in Palestine. His message sounds universal and simple even in the local context of Japan. He succeeds in sharing common issue between his local context in Palestine and Japanese context alien to Christian ethos by speaking the well-known biblical vocabulary of loving neighbors. It is also noteworthy considering his interview in the ecumenical context of Asian mission. Our crisis around peace in Asia is human catastrophe possible by human actions. It is how the JELC and Roman Catholics gathered in Nagasaki for the common prayer. Even if a specific church engages in a specific mission in local context, the significance of this is connected with the global reality of peace.

Christian Women Reformers in India: Strategies of Transformation

印度基督教女性改革者： 轉型策略

Moumita BISWAS

Introduction

There is a long tradition of Reformation in the history of Christianity in India where different social and religious reformation movements took place responding to contextual realities. At different junctures of history many Indian Christian women played crucial role to transform society to build just inclusive communities. In fact the ever changing topography of social and geopolitical realities, reformation movement whether social or religious takes place in contextual grounding. In this article an attempt is made to share stories and strategies of transformation by three Indian Christian women reformers at different junctures of history. Despite their vulnerabilities these three women exhibited prophetic courage and wisdom to reform society. Through different strategies of transformation they made efforts to purge society of complex

religious rituals, norms, cultural practices, superstitious beliefs, patriarchal ideologies, inhuman practice, religious sanctions and laws that oppress girls, women and widows in order to build just inclusive communities. The three Indian women are:

- **Pandita Ramabai**, who pioneered female education in India, paving way for women, girls and widows' emancipation from social and religious oppression in the 19th century.

- **Shanti Solomon**, who gave expression to women's spirituality reflected in action to promote justice, peace, healing and reconciliation in the world ripped apart by hatred, violence and vengeance in the 20th century. The ripple effects of her work continues till today.

- **Mary Roy**, who challenged her own family members, church, community and discriminatory 'Personal Laws' prevalent in India depriving Christian women equality in matters of inheritance and paved ways for new laws.

【摘要】 在印度的基督教歷史中有一個悠久的宗教改革傳統，當中不同的社會和宗教改革運動都是對社會現實的回應。在歷史的不同時期，許多印度基督徒女性在改造社會以建立包容性的社區方面發揮了至關重要的作用。本文從不同的歷史時期闡述三位印度基督徒女性改革者的轉變故事和策略。儘管她們處於弱勢，但她們表現出改革社會的先知勇氣和智慧。通過不同的轉型戰略，努力清除社會中複雜的宗教儀式、規範、文化習俗、迷信信仰、父權意識形態、不人道行為、宗教制裁以及壓迫女孩、婦女和寡婦的法律，以建立公正的包容性社區。這三名印度婦女是：

- **Pandita Ramabai**，印度女性教育的先驅，在 19 世紀為女孩、婦女和寡婦從社會和宗教壓迫中解放鋪路。

• **Shanti Solomon**，表達了女性的靈性，在 20 世紀充滿仇恨、暴力和復仇的世界中，提倡正義、和平、治愈與和解。她工作的漣漪效應一直持續到今天。

• **Mary Roy** 挑戰她自己的家庭成員、教會、社區和歧視性的「個人法」，這些都在印度流行，剝奪了基督徒女性在繼承問題上的平等，Mary 的行動為新法律鋪平了道路。

The contributions of Shanti Solomon is widely acknowledged by Asian and global ecumenical movement as she worked within the church, with Christian women and was involved with prayer movement. Pandita Ramabai is recognized as Christian social reformer. Mary Roy is globally recognized as a woman activist and reformer in the history of feminist movement in India. However she does not adequately find space in Indian Church history. This is because many Indian churches still think that women's activism and feminism is part of secular movement and not agenda of the church or ecumenical movement. However her struggle for justice was an eye opener for Indian churches to rethink of its mission strategies and introspect how to be a true 'ekklesia' or body of Christ that does not exclude women but promotes equality and gender justice.

Historically and traditionally ecumenism is understood as 'unity' among the churches and 'Christian unity'. But in order to understand Indian ecumenism especially from Asian feminist perspective, ecumenism needs to be re-thought and placed within the wider search for the unity of humankind. In fact the word 'ecumenical' comes from the Greek word '*oikumene*', which meant, '*the whole*

inhabited earth'.¹ Therefore ecumenism or modern ecumenical movement is not merely confined to internal developments and relationship within the on-going church.

Ecumenism calls for healing schisms, divisions and the brokenness of the world or society, pursuing justice and peace in midst of violence to weave culture of peace and standing in solidarity with those who are poor, oppressed, marginalized made vulnerable by the powerful economic, social, and political forces of our day for the welfare of the 'whole inhabited earth'. Renowned South Asian ecumenist Dr S. Wesley Ariarajah states that our affirmation that God creates all life, preserves it, and seeks to bring it to its fulfilment demands that we collaborate with God and with all who are seeking to build up the values of God's Rule in a fragmented world. Wider ecumenism is part of this process.²

Mary Tanner, former President for Europe of the World Council of Churches (WCC) and moderator of 'Faith and Order' Commission of WCC states that in today's context the ecumenical community is focused on an ecumenism of action, on travelling together on a pilgrimage of justice and peace. Violence women faced are exposed in starkest ways.³ Feminist perspective of Asian ecumenism today calls for ecumenism of action, a pilgrimage of justice, peace, healing and reconciliation. Christian women's voices, stories of challenges and their efforts of reforming and transforming society to build just inclusive community are new opportunities to Asian ecumenical movement and through the ecumenical movement to the churches.

¹ S. Wesley Ariarajah, "Wider Ecumenism", *Current Dialogue*, Issue 47. (June 2006), accessed November 28, 2018.

<http://wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/interreligious/cd47-15.html>.

² Ibid.

³ Mary Tanner, "Opportunities and Challenges Women Offered and Still offer to the Churches and the Ecumenical Movement". *Monastero di Bose*, accessed on November 28 2018, <https://www.monasterodibose.it>.

According to Mary Tanner, churches need to listen attentively to the challenges women raise and the opportunities for renewal, for wholeness and holiness to which they point.⁴ This notion of wider ecumenism and nexus between women's activism and Indian ecumenism is still evolving.

Centuries after centuries the culture of violence on women, girls and children exists in India and is increasing at alarming rate. In the present context gender based violence has become pandemic in India. The culture of violence on women and girls in India is not merely a national crisis but also poses challenges to Indian Churches and the Asian ecumenical movement that reflect ecumenism in action to promote gender justice. According to Swami Vivekananda, "*It is impossible to think about the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. It is impossible for a bird to fly on only one wing.*"⁵

This article provides scope to draw insights from strategies of the three women reformers and contextualize it in promoting gender justice and building just inclusive communities of peace. However it is important to briefly highlight the status of women in India in different centuries to understand the strategies of transformation used by women to respond to needs of their time.

Status of Women in India

According to R. Kalaiyarasi the status of women in India has been subject to many great changes over the past few millennia.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Lata Singh, "Reflection of Swami Vivekananda's Views on Women Education in Current Scenario." IOSR Journal of Economics and Finance, Volume 5, Issue 5. (Sep.-Oct. 2014), 40.

From a largely unknown status in ancient times through the low points of the medieval period, to the promotion of women's rights by reformers in the modern time, the history of women in India has been eventful. The status of women in India has been traced by dividing into historical phases 'Ancient society,' 'Medieval society,' and 'Modern society'.⁶

Ancient Society

The status of women in ancient society can be divided in two periods (a) 'Early Vedic' and (b) 'Later Vedic' period.

Early Vedic Period: Historical studies and the scriptures indicate that Indian woman enjoyed a comparatively high status during the early Vedic period (2000 B.C. to 1000 B.C). According to Puja Mondol, the status of women was fairly high and they enjoyed equal status with men. They were not secluded from men and freely participated in public life. They attended great assemblies and state occasions.⁷ Women in the early Vedic era excelled in the sphere of education and allowed to enter into the *Gurukulas* along with boys. There are also instances of female Rishis, such as Ghosa, Kakhivati, Surya Poulomi, Urvashi etc. During the *Rig Vedic* period women studied the Vedas and composed hymns. The *Rig Veda* contains about one thousand hymns, of which about ten are accredited to Maitreyi, the woman seer. Other women who composed Vedic hymns were Ghosha, Lopamudra, and Gargi who were regarded as the prophetess of the Vedic period. Child marriage and polygamy was unknown. *Gandharva 'Vivaha'* or love marriage and remarriage of widows were allowed. There are a number of references to the

⁶ R. Kalaiyarasi, "Status of Women in India." *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, Volume 20, Issue 2, Ver. III (Feb. 2015): 51-55, <http://www.iosjournals.org>.

⁷ Puja Mondol, "Women: Essay on Position of Women in India," *Your Article Library*, accessed February 24, 2018. <http://www.yourarticlelibrary.com>.

custom of '*Niyoga*' where a brother of the deceased husband could remarry the widow.⁸

Later Vedic Period : The position enjoyed by women in early Vedic period deteriorated in later Vedic period (Puranic or Smriti periods). Puja Mondol opines that the imposition of Brahmanical rules and code of conduct, rigid restrictions imposed by caste system and joint family system were the main reasons for lowering of status in this period.⁹ Nitisha opines that most probably, the woman's status deteriorated due to the introduction of non-Aryan wife. The non-Aryan wives did not have any knowledge of Vedic rituals they lost many privileges which they enjoyed in the earlier period¹⁰. Child marriages and polygamy came into existence. Some of the '*Dharamsastras*' mentioned about the prohibition of '*Niyoga*' and widow remarriage. Widows were required to spend a life of penance and austerity as their life was regarded as a curse. '*Sati*'¹¹ was being practised. In this period, women were regarded just as a means of satisfying the physical desires of men.

Indian scriptures during this period were filled with paradoxical statements about women. In many places women were regarded as Goddesses and other places through religious sanctions they were undermined and their status was no better than slaves and chattels. The *Smriti* writers preached that the wife should look upon her

⁸ "Status of Women in Vedic Period." *Women in India*, March 13, 2014. <http://studyofindianwomen.blogspot.in/2014/03/status-of-widow-in-vedic-period.html>.

⁹ Mondol, "Women: Essay on Position of Women in India." *Your Article Library*.

¹⁰ Nithisha, "Status of Women in Vedic Period." *Your Article Library*.

¹¹ Sati is an obsolete funeral custom where a widow immolates herself on her husband's pyre or takes her own life in another fashion shortly after her husband's death. In fact most of the times women and child widows were forced to sacrifice their life on husband's pyre. Mention of the practice can be dated back to the 3rd century BC, while evidence of practice by widows of kings only appears beginning between the 5th and 9th centuries CE. The practice is considered to have originated within the warrior aristocracy in India, gradually gaining in popularity from the 10th century AD and spreading to other groups from the 12th through 18th century CE. The practice was particularly prevalent among some Hindu communities.

husband as God. Mondol reveals to us that in the ‘*Mahabharata*’ epic it was also mentioned that there was no creature more sinful than man, and woman is the root of all ills.¹²

Status of Indian Women in Medieval Society

The medieval period was known as dark ages for women in India as their position totally deteriorated. Practise of *sati* among some communities, child marriages were common during this period. In some parts of India, the ‘*Devadasi*’¹³ system or temple prostitution was introduced where women are sexually exploited as temple slaves. Medieval India saw many foreign conquests, which resulted in the decline in women’s status.¹⁴ It is during this period the system of ‘*Purdah*’ was introduced by Muslim communities later rigidly followed by Hindus to protect their women as invasion increased. Under the ‘*Purdah*’ system, not only were women required to live in a secluded apartment in the house but also they had to dress in apparel which completely covered their body excepting the eyes. The practice of ‘*purdah*’ became so rigid that women were forbidden even to visit the holy shrines and had no opportunity for education.¹⁵ ‘*Jauhar*’¹⁶ was also introduced by Rajput Hindu community. In both the systems, liberty of woman was curtailed and restrictions were imposed by community. Life for women became burdensome and they lived in fear. The women lost their entity in the 18th century and till the beginning of the 19th

¹² Mondol, “Women: Essay on Position of Women in India.” *Your Article Library*.

¹³ ‘Devdasi system’ or ‘Temple Prostitution’ still continues today in India and has religious sanction.

¹⁴ Asmita Singh, “Medieval India: Women’s Dark Age.” *We Women*, accessed February 25, 2018. <https://wewomen.wordpress.com>.

¹⁵ *Ibid*.

¹⁶ ‘Jauhar’ was the Hindu custom of mass self-immolation by women in parts of the Indian subcontinent, to avoid capture, enslavement and rape by any foreign invaders, when facing certain defeat during a war.

century women were totally and forcefully made to yield to male superiority, physically and intellectually.

Status of Women in Modern India

Status of Indian Women began to change radically during the modern period. Historically the period after 1750 A.D is known as the modern period. The status of Indian women during this period can be divided into two stages:

Status of women during the British rule in India

After the fall of the Mughal Empire at the decisive Battle of Plassey (1757 A.D) the British people established their complete political supremacy over the Indian people. During the British rule, a number of changes were made in the economic and social structures of Indian society. Though the quality of life of women during this period remained more or less the same, some substantial progress was achieved in eliminating inequalities between men and women in education, employment, social right. In the 19th century and early period of 20th century, during the Indian renaissance, social reformers became aware of the social, political and religious cultural degradation of Indian society and became conscious of individual freedom. The social reformers struggled for the improvement of status of woman in Indian society. Peary Charan Sarkar first started girl's school in 1847 at Calcutta. Under this period only with the help of Governor Bentinck, Raja Ram Mohan Roy had succeeded to abolish *sati* system from India. This period witnessed many legislative enactments being enforced by legislation for protection and promotion of woman like Act of Sati (abolish) 1829, The Hindu Widow Remarriage Act, 1856, The Child Marriage Restrain Act of 1929 etc.

In 1880s, the 'Zenana Missions' of the Baptist Missionary and the Church of England *Zenana* Missionary society in India played a

crucial role in not only engaging in medical mission for women but had expanded their ministry, opening schools to provide education for girls, including the principles of the Christian faith. The ‘*Zenana*’ Bible and Medical Mission, was involved in recruiting female doctors, both by persuading female doctors in Europe to come to India and by encouraging Indian women to study medicine in their pursuit of conversion. ‘*Zenana*’ mission helped break down the male bias against colonial medicine in India to some extent. Women’s participation in the workforce as well as in other activities increased during this period but majority of women still grappled under scourges of patriarchal violence.

The status of women in post independent India

The status of Indian women has radically changed since independence. Both the structural and cultural changes provided equality of opportunities to women in education, employment and political participation. With the help of these changes, exploitation of women, to a great extent was reduced. The constitution of India has greatly enhanced the status of Indian women. The Government of Independent India undertook a number of legislative measures to safeguard the interests of women. For example The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961, The Equal Remuneration Act 1976, The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act 2012, Domestic Violence Act 2005, etc. However despite of the benevolent laws, India still is the fourth dangerous country in the world for women to live in and girl child to survive. Various forms of violence are still perpetuated on women and girls. The culture of rape and sexual violence has increased in India. The ‘Times of India’ reports that, there is one rape in every 20 minutes in India.¹⁷ In the

¹⁷“One Rape in every 20 Minutes.” *Times of India*, accessed August 25, 2013. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/delhi/One-rape-every-20-minutes-in-22040599>.

post-modern era of neocolonization women faces other forms of violence, continue to face harassment, discrimination and abuse within home and workplace. Girl child is still regarded as burden and female infanticide and foeticide is common practice despite the fact government of India prevents sex determination before birth. The greatest problem is the mindset of people has not changed much and there is a culture of silence on gender-based violence.

Pandita Ramabai: The Pioneer of Female Education in India

In an era where Indian women were considered 'lower than pigs' and 'thought to have no mind of their own',¹⁸ a Christian woman Reformer and activist named Pandita Ramabai ushered a new chapter in history of women's education in India and Indian church history. Ramabai was one of the early pioneers in the field of woman's education and rebelliously championed women, widows and girl child rights in the 19th century. She was regarded as the forerunner of modern Indian feminism.

Background and Experiences that Moulded Ramabai to Social Reformer

Ramabai's family background, experiences as a woman and her losses and pain moulded her to be a woman reformer. She was born in an Asharam in Gangamal forest run by her father Anant Shastri Dongre, a Chitpavan Brahmin on 23rd April 1858. Her father, though member of Hindu orthodoxy was a reformist in his own household. Breaking the tradition he taught his child bride Laxmi 'Slokas' in

¹⁸ Yoel Charan, "Pandita Ramabai is the Indian Woman of the Millennium", All About God Net, accessed November 29, 2018. <http://www.allaboutgod.net/profiles/blogs/pandita-ramabai-is-the-indian>.

Sanskrit. This enraged the Brahmins in his community and being ostracised he was forced to move in forest where he opened his ashram. Struck by poverty Anant Shastri Dongre travelled with his family in different parts of the subcontinent as pilgrims and teacher-studying and reciting sacred texts in public and talking about female education. Hence, by the age of fifteen Ramabai was well travelled and fluent in various languages like Marathi, Hindi, Kanarese, and Bengali and was also a learned Sanskrit scholar.¹⁹ In a time where child marriages especially of daughters was common practice defying the social norm her father left her unmarried till age of sixteen years. At age of sixteen years she became an orphan when her parents and sister were killed during famine in 1877. After her parents death she and her brother travelled throughout India lecturing on female education and social reform. When she arrived to Calcutta seeking job in Calcutta University by that time she was already a famed lecturer. Because of her high academic stature she was awarded the tile ‘Pandita’ and ‘Sarasvati’.²⁰ Unfortunately her brother died and Ramabai married his brother’s friend Bipen Behan Das Medhavi, a Shudra by caste. During her time marriage of Brahmin woman to low caste man was totally forbidden and was regarded as crime. In Manusmriti it is mentioned in “*Utman sevmansto.....*” – 8/365. “*In case a man from a lower caste enjoys sex with a woman from a higher caste, the person in question is to be awarded the death sentence.*”²¹

¹⁹“Ramabai:India’s First Feminist”, *Madras Courier*, accessed February 28, 2018. <http://madrascourier.com/biography/pandita-ramabai-indias-first-feminist>.

²⁰ Aisha Khan, "Overlooked No More: Pandita Ramabai, Indian Scholar, Feminist and Educator", *The New York Times*, (14 November 2018), accessed November 28, 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/14/obituaries>.

²¹ Hirday N. Patwari, “The Status of Women as Depicted by M8anu in the Manusmriti.” *Nirmukta*, accessed February 28, 2018. <http://nirmukta.com/2011/08/27/the-status-of-women>.

Along with her husband she studied western ideas and philosophy. Ramabai was also influenced by the reformist group 'Brahmo Samaj', which sought to integrate the teachings and insights of different religions. Ramabai began to read a Bengali Gospel of Luke given to her husband by a Baptist missionary while they were living in Assam. Unfortunately her husband died a year after her marriage and she was left alone with an infant baby girl Monorama whom she gave birth. As written in 'Madras Courier' the collection of all these losses and pain seemed to have shaken her faith but her experience of widow gave her a purpose of life. She became a wounded healer. Ramabai dedicated her life for emancipation of widows, child brides, high caste Hindu women and vulnerable women.

In 1883 she converted to Christianity during her visit to England for higher studies and was severely criticised by the Hindus. It was seen as an act of betrayal to her religion. However, she was very critical about colonial patriarchal Christianity and she chose to be non-denominational Christian.²² Her encounter with Christianity and the Anglican Church, within the imperial, Orientalist and patriarchal framework, was problematic. But Ramabai found her new religion to be a source of spiritual sustenance.²³ Ramabai realized the importance of international church networking to promote women's education in India. Ramabai was deeply influenced by the work of the Anglican nuns or sisters who dedicated their lives serving the marginalized. She worked closely and had the support of an Anglican Order of Sisters who worked in Poona, the Community of St Mary the Virgin. The High Anglican sisters' support realized Ramabai's

²² Madras Courier.

²³ Meera Kosambi, "Multiple Contestations: Pandita Ramabai's educational and missionary activities in late nineteenth-century India and abroad", *Women's History Review*, Volume 7, No. 2 (1998): 193, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf>.

independence, refusing to accept anything on the authority of the Anglican Church which is patriarchal.²⁴

Plight of Widows During Ramabai's Time

Meera Kosambi reveals to us during Ramabai's time, widowhood was constructed as punishment for sins in previous lives and bore stigma of inauspiciousness and a widow became as household drudge, expected to live with meagre food and subjected to various forms of exploitation and even sexual abuse.²⁵ Ramabai realized that western education and laws passed during the British Empire to prevent violence on women alone cannot emancipate Indian women and widows. She realized there is need for change in mindset and women themselves and they should learn to break barriers for their own emancipation. Ramabai realized emancipated women and widows in India need protection of women and an egalitarian system of education which is free from patriarchy. In order to achieve her mission to promote female education, on the invitation of Bombay Presidency, she travelled to Poona and took up the cause of women's education.²⁶

Arya Mahila Samaj

The '*Arya Mahila Samaj*' was started on November 30, 1882 by Pandita Ramabai with the aim of empowering and educating each woman to live a life of dignity. '*Arya Mahila Samaj*' aimed to improve women's literacy and health by abolishing child marriage, enforced widowhood and '*purdah*' system. According to Geraldine Hancock Forbes, Ramabai wanted the *Arya Mahila Samaj* network to provide support to newly

²⁴ Ronald S. Ward, "The Story of Ramabai- Founder of Mukti Mission", *Knox Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia*, accessed on November 29, 2018. <http://www.knoxpcea.org.au/index.php>.

²⁵ Meera Kosambi. *Pandita Ramabai: Life and Landmark Writings* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 5.

²⁶ Ibid.

educated women through weekly lectures at home where women could meet as friends. She predicted, they would begin to define the role of educated women and gain self-confidence. And even as women and housewives, they can influence in public sphere taking responsibilities to help during emergencies like flood, famine, plagues etc.²⁷ Ramabai's '*Arya Mahila Samaj*' had rippling effects and influence on women throughout India. Similarly, in 1886, Swarnakumari Debi (1856–1932), Rabindranath Tagore's sister, started '*Sakhi Samiti*' (Women's Friendship League) to spread knowledge among women and widows. In 1900 in Bombay, Parsi women founded the '*Stri Zarathoshti Mandal*' (Parsi Women's Organization).²⁸

Medical Education for Women

Ramabai also emphasized and engaged in advocacy for the need for women to be educated as doctors to cater to Indian women. Those days there was strict restriction on women due to '*Purdah system*'. Society would not allow women to be treated by male doctors. The British Commission on Education sought her opinion regarding the need of female doctors and teachers. Ramabai responded that the country needed more female doctors and teachers to remove the stigma women face daily in terms of health care and education.²⁹

Sharada Sadan

On 11 March 1889 Ramabai established '*Sharada Sadan*' also popularly known as 'House of Wisdom,' a home for learning, a residential school for upper caste widows. The objective of empowering women and girls in this school was along with education, there was vocational training

²⁷ Geraldine Hancock Forbes, *Women in Modern India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 1999), 66.

²⁸"History Feminist Association in India." *All India Deprived Community Support Centre*, accessed March 1, 2018.

<http://www.indiancommunities.org/2016/11/09/history-feminist-associations-of-india>.

²⁹ Kosambi, 183.

and providing alternative shelter. According to Kosambi, through this venture Ramabai sought to liberate women and ‘despised widows’ from narrow domesticity and oppressive homes to the public sphere as educated, useful and income earning members of society. This was a paradigm shift in history of reformation in India. The principle of religious freedom and neutrality was strictly followed in the Sadan. Though Ramabai herself converted into Christianity but her agenda was not religious conversion. However, when she prayed with her daughter she left her doors open and slowly other girls started joining her.³⁰ According to Ramabai:

“People must not only hear about the kingdom of God, but must see it in actual operation, on a small scale perhaps and in imperfect form, but a real demonstration nevertheless.”³¹

Mukti Mission

Another ground breaking contribution of Ramabai was establishment of ‘*Mukti Mission*’ (Mission of Liberation). During the closing of 19th century India was grappling with two natural disasters, famine and plague. Girls, women and widows being most vulnerable in India society were most affected.³² This led to the establishment and phenomenal growth of ‘*Mukti Mission*’ in Kedgaon in an hundred acre plot. By mid-1900, there were 2500 residents housed in the ‘*Mukti Sadan*’, ‘*Krupa Sadan*’ (home of grace for the disgraced women), ‘*Priti Sadan*’ (home of love for the aged and infirm), ‘*Sadanand Sadan*’ (home for boys) and ‘*Bartimi Sadan*’ (home for the blind). Her ministry in ‘*Mukti mission*’ also catered to the differently abled. Her own daughter Monorama studied Braille in England and was teaching Braille to the blind.

³⁰ Kosambi, 180.

³¹“Pandita Ramabai Founder of Mukti Mission.” *Jeevan Marg*, accessed March 1, 2018. <http://www.jeevanmarg.com/testimonies/pandita-ramabai-founder-of-mukti-mission>.

³² Kosambi, 185.

Minnie Abraham, an American missionary with the Woman's 'Foreign Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church' was greatly influenced by Ramabai's passionate work in the emancipation of women.³³ In 1898 Abraham left the Methodist post to work with Ramabai at the (non-denominational) Mukti mission in Kedgaon. Abrams was an advocate of Wesleyan holiness theology, viewed baptism in the 'Holy Spirit' as a separate work of grace occurring after conversion and designed to sanctify and empower believers for evangelism. Ramabai also heard of the Welsh revival which began in late 1904. Revival encompassed a wide spectrum of Christians, from Anglicans, Baptists, Lutherans, Methodists, and Presbyterians, to members of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, London Missionary Society, and the Young Men's and Women's Christian Associations.³⁴ Ramabai and Minnie Abraham joined with others in praying for the restoration of apostolic power. Ramabai longed to see revival among the helpless women in India. So she started prayer circles. Shortly after revival began at 'Mukti Mission' in 1905, Abraham began taking "praying bands" of young women with her to hold services at mission stations. Village evangelism spreading the gospel and 'Good News' became a part of ministry also of 'Mukti' but Ramabai retained Mukti Mission as non-denominational.

Ramabai died in 1923 suffering from bronchitis.³⁵ The Missionary Alliance took charge of Mukti Mission after her death in 1923 till 1970. After 1970 Mukti Mission came under Inter-Denominational Board of

³³ Minnie Abrahams, *School of Theology - History of Missiology*, accessed November 27, 2018. <http://www.bu.edu/missiology/missionary-biography/a-c/abrams-minnie>.

³⁴ Gary B. McGee, "Baptism of the Holy Ghost and Fire! The Revival Legacy of Minnie F. Abrams", *Assemblies of God Enrichment Journal*, accessed November 28, 2018. http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/199803/080_baptism_fire.cfm.

³⁵ "Mukti Mission," accessed March 1, 2018. http://www.mukti-mission.org/mukti/About_Mukti.htm.

Management.³⁶ The ‘Pandita Ramabai ‘Mukti Mission’ in Kedgaon is still very active today, providing housing, education, vocational training, and medical services, for many needy groups including widows, orphans, and the blind. ‘Mukti Mission’ has spread different parts of country and even in Australia.

Shanti Solomon: The Midwife of Peace, Healing and Reconciliation

Shanti Solomon from Church of North India was a renowned women ecumenist of the 20th century who initiated women’s global ecumenical prayer movement - ‘Fellowship of Least Coin Movement’. Mrs Solomon’s vision of ‘transforming practices’ and ‘collective transformation’ united Christian women from the Protestant and Orthodox traditions in Asia and different countries in world to reflect their prayer in action to weave peace, justice, healing and reconciliation. FLC movement altered the ecumenical history in understanding women’s contributions of promoting peace and justice in the world. Even today FLC creates ripples to bring about transformation in the world. This movement was born out of midwifery of Shanti Solomon during a time when the world was still grappling due to the aftermath of violence caused by World War II especially to women and children.

Family Background of Shanti Solomon

Shanti’s father hailed from an ordinary Hindu *Baniya* (business) caste family in Uttarpradesh state in Northern part of India. She was born on 10 June 1920 in Baduan, Uttarpradesh.³⁷ As a child Shanti witnessed

³⁶ Gary B. McGee, “Baptism of the Holy Ghost and Fire! The Revival Legacy of Minnie F. Abrams”.

³⁷ Isaac John Newton, “Shanti Solomon Memorabilia.” *Voice of Christian Ministries India*, accessed March 1, 2018. <http://www.voiceofchristiansministries.org/fnote.html>.

the murder of her own father at the age of six by his relatives as they were angered due to his conversion to Christianity. This escalated the family dispute over property. Despite their poverty and various adversities Shanti's widowed mother though did not have opportunity of education was able to provide Shanti a secured and happy childhood and never neglected the education of her daughters. Shanti was educated in Christian schools and colleges run by Christian missionaries. As a young adult before her marriage she pursued the career as teacher in A.P Mission School in Dehradun. Her marriage was fixed to Ruben Solomon who was fifteen years older than her and got married in 1950 and became a widow in 1960.³⁸

Birth of Fellowship of Least Coin Movement

A life transforming experience happened in Shanti's life in 1956 that resulted birth of the FLC movement. Being actively involved in women's ministry in her own church she was invited by Ms Margaret Shannon of the Presbyterian Church USA in 1956 to be a member of ecumenical women's team comprising of seven women leaders who were visiting from various parts of the world for women to women pilgrimage of peace. The main purpose of this visit as an act of solidarity was to spread the message of love, peace, healing, reconciliation and hope in midst of violence experienced by some Asian countries like Japan, the Philippines and Korea affected and devastated by the World War II. This ecumenical team of women through this pilgrimage of peace visit was also seeking methodologies of promoting advocacy and creating global awareness regarding the need to heal pain, bitterness, hatred and importance of reconciliation to build a culture of peace. Women, girls and children are the worst victims of any war. Women and girls from Asian countries like Korea, Philippines were forced

³⁸ Shanti Solomon, *A Legend and A Legacy: An Autobiography* (New Delhi: ISPCK, 1997), 11.

into sexual slavery. Korean women were taken by the Imperial Japanese Army as sex-slaves and ‘comfort women’ in occupied territories before and during World War II. According to Erin Blakemore the end of World War II did not end military brothels in Japan. In 2007, *Associated Press* reporters discovered that the United States authorities allowed ‘comfort stations’ to operate well past the end of the war and that tens of thousands of women in the brothels had sex with American men³⁹.

When Shanti applied for a visa in Korean embassy in Manila to visit Korea she was denied visa. This was due to strained diplomatic relationship between South Korea and India. As her friends left for Korea, Shanti was introspecting in the context of pain, hatred, misery how Christian women could heal wounded relationships, individuals, communities and nation. She shared in her autobiography that,

*“War, bombing and violence were far too big matters for individuals to deal with and yet I had to admit that it was from individuals that war started (James 4:1-2). Greed in the human heart led to human selfishnessIn a way greed led to violence...if people want to live in peace they would learn to live without greed and selfishness.”*⁴⁰

She realized that peace in the interpersonal level will surely help to promote peace and justice in the international level. She believed that forgiveness was essential ingredient for making peace. However, in the context of violence, hurt and resentment it is not easy to pray or forgive, hence divine grace is needed to gather strength to forgive. According to her resentment causes hatred and hatred causes violence. In her autobiography she cites a quote;

³⁹Erlin Blakemore, “The Brutal History of Japan’s Comfort Women.” *History Stories*, assessed February 18, 2018.

<https://www.history.com/news/comfort-women-japan-military-brothels-korea>.

⁴⁰ Solomon, *A Legend and A Legacy: An Autobiography*, 32.

*"Forgiveness is not the case of 'Holy Amnesia' that wipes away the past. Instead it is an experience of healing that drains out the poison from the wound."*⁴¹

Mrs Solomon realized healing and reconciliation will facilitate the process of forgiving and prayer is important ingredient to achieve that. She believed that a global praxis oriented prayer movement of peace, healing can create a culture of forgiving one another in midst of violence, animosity and culture of hatred created by war. Such movement of prayer can start ripples of reconciliation that spreads out in the world in widening circles and can bring peace and justice in the world.⁴²

The issue that irked Shanti's mind was: How can women play crucial role in peace building and their contributions can impact global peace movements? She realized that Asian and rural women weave peace through their daily dialogue of life but their contributions are confined within the periphery of home, community and at the most local. Her concern was how Christian women's spirituality of justice and peace can be implemented into action to heal brokenness where all women from different denominations can contribute irrespective of their caste, creed, nationality and economic status. She felt asking women to pray for peace, justice, healing, reconciliation is not enough and there is need for practical action of peace.⁴³

Mrs Solomon realized the importance of 'praxis dimension' of prayer and the necessity to build up a peace fund where women can contribute to support peace, healing reconciliation initiatives in the world. Mrs Solomon was inspired by the Biblical story of the power of 'widow's mite' and its value in God's eyes. She thought every

⁴¹ Ibid., 32.

⁴² Ibid., 31- 32.

⁴³ Ibid., 32.

time a woman prays, whether rich or poor, she can set aside the least coin of her currency to support peace, justice, healing, reconciliation initiatives. Her vision was connectedness and 'collective transformation' arise from women praying for peace and reconciliation and setting aside the least coin of their country as a symbol of that prayer. She believed as prayers and coins gathered from around the world, they become a sign of oneness in a common quest for peace, justice and reconciliation. It would be a spiritual practice which unites one another in fellowship of love and peace.⁴⁴ However, according to her this act of putting the least coin every time a woman prays was not merely a fund raising event which may lead to competition later.

When the team returned from Korea, Mrs Solomon suggested that prayer could transcend every national boundaries. She inspired the Christian women of Asia and Presbyterian women leaders in this team the necessity to combine their efforts and resources and launch a project of justice, peace and reconciliation on an international basis. Her friends encouraged her to start the 'Fellowship of the Least Coin Movement.'

FLC became a world-wide ecumenical movement of prayer for peace, justice and reconciliation. Through this movement Christian women around the world seek fellowship with each other and are reminded to live a reconciled and forgiving life with others. In 1958, at the first Assembly of the Asian Church Women's Conference (ACWC) held in Hong Kong, the ACWC agreed to launch the Fellowship of the Least Coin. At the second Assembly in Thailand in 1962, the Assembly voted to make the promotion of the FLC a basic outreach programme of the ACWC. The East Asia Christian Conference (EACC), now known as the Christian Conference of

⁴⁴"Fellowship of Least Coin," *Presbyterian Women*. Accessed March 1, 2018. https://www.presbyterianwomen.org/what_we_do/nurture-faith/fellowship-least-coin.

Asia (CCA) administered the FLC fund from 1958-1970 and now administered by World Council of Churches.⁴⁵ Women's national groups collect the coins and send them to the central FLC Fund. FLC's international committee awards grants from these 'least coins', funding special projects of evangelism, service, ecumenical solidarity, awareness-building among women, and relief throughout the world.

All India Council of Christian Women (AICCW)

Mrs Solomon also played a crucial role ushering women's ecumenical movement in India by uniting Indian Christian women from different Protestant and Orthodox traditions through her efforts in establishing 'All India Council of Christian Women'- the women's wing of National Council of Churches in India (NCCI). AICCW was established in 1974. The reason why Mrs Solomon felt the necessity to form AICCW was not merely to unite church women but also to promote them in decision making process of the church. She felt that though women are the backbone of Indian churches and actively involved in lay and women's ministry in the 1970's, however their leadership roles, capabilities or contributions are not adequately recognized by churches. She felt women from the member churches of NCCI should have a forum where they can decide and actively contribute in various ministries of the church. AICCW also aimed in strengthening networking among women of different denominations to promote women's ordination, theological studies, justice - peace ministries and not merely confined to women's and children's ministry. AICCW had representatives from different women fellowship who were elected as the Executive Committee members in the Quadrennial Assembly of AICCW which was held every five years. In the course of time AICCW also had

⁴⁵“What is Fellowship of Least Coin.” *Australian Church Inc*, accessed March 1, 2018. <https://www.acw.org.au>.

close networking relationship with women of the Catholic Church: the 'Commission on Women' of the 'Catholic Bishops Conference in India' (Though Catholic women are not part of AICCW) and there were many issue based cooperation with the Catholic women.

Asian Church Women's Conference:

Mrs Solomon also played crucial role in strengthening Asian church women's networking while serving as the Executive Secretary of Asian Church Women's Conference. Shirin Samuel in her tribute to Shanti Solomon wrote;

*"Most of her life she lived as a widow that too in a culture of India where widows are despised and considered ill fated. She faces the life of her challenge as fortitude. She provides us with an example to live with faith living God and not to accept defeat but cling to God to overcome all difficulties. She is like a wide ocean with treasures but she lets the treasures to be used for survival of others"*⁴⁶

Mary Roy: The Rebel and the Prophetess of Courageous Resistance

The Decade 1975-1985 witnessed Indian women's groups as well as individual women reformers challenging unjust laws and obscurantist forces. Mary Roy, a Syrian Christian, renowned educationist and activist was one of them. Mary Roy began a tireless crusade for Christian women so that they enjoy equal property rights. According to Indira Nair discrimination against women in the matter of inheritance has been an issue because of the continuance of the religion based personal laws in

⁴⁶ Solomon, *Legend of Legacy: An Autobiography*, 58-59.

India despite the guarantee of equal status under Article 14 of the India Constitution. She states that the Indian Constitution while guaranteeing 'Right to Equality' deliberately ignored and safely pushed it to the Directive Principles under Art 44.⁴⁷ Vinay Reddy points out that, there are different personal laws for different religious communities in India. There is one inheritance rule for Hindus, another for Christians and yet another for Muslims. This results in depriving Indian women Constitutional protection of 'Equality of Status.'⁴⁸ It is during this decade two Muslim women Shenaz Sheik and Mrs A.M Syed filed petitions in Supreme Court demanding reforms in Muslim Personal laws. Similarly Syrian Orthodox woman Mary Roy demanded amendments in Syrian Christian Personal Law that was blatantly discriminatory in matters of inheritance. Through her struggle for justice she not only challenged Christian Personal law, but also the Indian Church. Not only did she create ripples in Nation regarding Christian women's legal rights but her struggle created awareness among Christians women and Christian communities in India regarding 'right based approach' as an integral part of Christian Mission.

Context for Mary Roy's Struggle

Mary Roy's struggle goes back to 1965 when as a single mother along with her two small children, returned to her father's home after a divorce with her Bengali alcoholic husband. She was asked to leave her Ooty home by her brother shortly after their father's death. Mary Roy had broken the cardinal rule by marrying outside of her religion and, after divorcing her husband and returning to her home village with two young children, it became clear they were not wanted there. Her daughter Arundhati Roy shared about her mother's plight, "She

⁴⁷ Indira Nair, "Discrimination against women." *Central Law Quarterly*, Vol. IX: 11, 208, (1996): 50.

⁴⁸ Vinay Reddy, "Women and Succession Laws in India: A Critical Analysis." *Indian Socio Legal Journal* Vol. 26, issue No.192, (2000):19-28.

was very ill all the time, she had asthma, she didn't have anywhere to go so she was living in my grandmother's house and everybody used to tell us you have no right to be here."⁴⁹

Discriminatory Laws

The brothers' action was rooted in two laws (a) the Travancore Christian Succession Act 1916 and (b) Cochin Succession Act 1921 - which restricted a Keralite Syrian Christian daughter's property rights. The Syrian Christian Community followed the provision of the Travancore Succession Act of 1916 and Cochin Succession Act of 1921. As per the 'Travancore Act' and 'Cochin Act' daughters were eligible for one quarter of son's share of Rs 5000, which ever was less if the father died intestate.

Prophetic Resistance

The young mother went to court and, after a 21-year battle, got the Supreme Court to strike down the two laws in 1986 in what has come to be known as the "Mary Roy case" in Indian legal history. The conservative and powerful sections, including the Church, came out vociferously against the verdict, saying that it would wreak havoc in the community by splitting families over property as daughters would drag their brothers to court. A legislation passed in the state Assembly to circumvent the Supreme Court judgment failed to receive President's assent. The Opponents' argument was that all the women in Christian families used to receive a handsome amount as dowry which was equal to the sons' share. But the total prohibition of dowry in the 1980s had weakened the women's position.⁵⁰ K.T.

⁴⁹ Arundahti Roy, "My Mother Broke Me and Made Me." *Style Celebrity News*, Sunday 11 March 2018. <https://www.independent.ie/style/celebrity/celebrity-news>.

⁵⁰ M.G Radhakrishnan, "Kerala: Sister Mary Gets her Land." *India Today*, assessed October 30, 2010. <https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/nation/story/20101108>.

Thomas, a former Supreme Court judge and one of the few to have stood by Mary Roy throughout said that;

"It was sad that the religion which swore by Jesus, the greatest upholder of gender equality and even the rights of a prostitute, openly came against its women's rights to equality" ⁵¹

The lower court at first rejected her plea. However the Supreme Court verdict brought all Christians in the country under Indian Succession Act which gives equal property rights to sons and daughters enabling thousands of Keralite Christian women to regain their share of property denied to them.⁵² Roy won a historic struggle which ensured the 'Right to Equality' enshrined in the Indian Constitution. After winning the case, Roy donated the property for charity. According to Mary Roy:

*"My battle was not for a piece of property alone but to ensure that women in this country enjoy the rights guaranteed by the Constitution."*⁵³

Journey of Promoting Gender Justice Continues

Roy has not really given up hope for a more gender-equal future and she feels education is the way forward. As an educationist she established the Pallikoodam School (formerly Corpus Christi High School) in the suburb of Kottayam town in the state of Kerala. According to her: "My girl students will not take their families to court. They won't have to. Nor will they need their dowries. Because they have been made to realise that education will set them free," she says with confidence. "Boys will not be the alcoholic, wife-beating,

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² John Mary, "Mother of big case to donate hard-won inheritance." *The Telegraph*, October 6, 2010. <https://www.telegraphindia.com/1101026/jsp/frontpage/story>.

⁵³ Ibid.

dowry-expecting men that we hear of. But they have to gear up and find their footing fast.”⁵⁴

Even at the age of 80, Roy joined the ‘Aam Aadmi Party’ (AAP). Roy claims that she wants to see the alternative in politics bringing changes.⁵⁵ According to Shwetha E. George, Roy's zeal to bring in change has not ebbed. She is going to the Supreme Court again to file the ‘Justice’ and ‘Human Rights’ for citizens living in the Periphery of Garbage Dumps’ petition which has taken precedence over everything else in her life for the last few years.⁵⁶

Space in Indian Church History

Mary Roy’s prophetic resistance and success can be regarded as a landmark not only in Indian history but also in the history of feminist movement in Asia. Though her contributions are recognized by the secular world, but her contributions could not find space in Indian Church history. This is mainly because even today traditional Indian patriarchal church does not have much space for women’s activism. According to Fr Jerry Kurian from Jacobite Syrian Church:

“The church still has a chance to redeem itself by first of all accepting what Mary Roy, a Syrian Christian herself has done for the emancipation and equal rights of women. She should be honored for this fight and struggle that she has undertaken. Her fight and case should not be seen as anti-church but as a struggle for the church and its constituency of women... It’s time the church should

⁵⁴ Shwetha. E. George, “Revisiting the Rebel: Her Name is Mary Roy.” *Boloji*, assessed November 8, 2010.

<http://www.boloji.com/articles/10146/revisiting-the-rebel-her-name-is-mary-roy>.

⁵⁵Shahina K.K, “Mary Roy Style of Activism.” *Open Magazine*. February 1, 2014. <http://www.openthemagazine.com/shorts/smallworld/the-mary-roy-style-of-activism>.

⁵⁶ Shwetha. E. George, “Revisiting the Rebel: Her Name is Mary Roy,” *Boloji*.

find itself at the cross roads looking at itself on what it means by equality, justice and peace."⁵⁷

Today women's ecumenical movement in India and Asia draws insights from Mary Roy's struggle for justice in their quest to promote gender justice and build culture of peace. Women are part of 'ecclesia' which is 'Body of Christ'. Causing wound to any part of the 'Body of Christ' in the form of any sort of violence on women or their exclusion needs to be addressed by churches and ecumenical movement to build culture of peace so that all can have 'life in its fullness'. The World Council of Churches 'Decade to Overcome Violence'⁵⁸ emphasized the need of churches and ecumenical movement to focus, respond and work towards prevention and overcoming any forms of violence including violence within the home and the family, violence within the church, violence within legal systems. Today women's ecumenical movement in India and Asia through ecumenical bodies like National Council of Churches, Christian Conference of Asia in partnership with member churches are promoting in different forms of advocacy to end any forms of violence and even discrimination of women within home, church, society and challenging any forms of discriminatory laws that violates women's rights. Mary Roy's prophetic resistance is a sign of hope and inspiration to many.

Mary Roy's prophetic struggle reminds us of the daughters of Zelophehad, Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milkah and Tirzah in Numbers 27 who had the courage to stand before Moses, Eleazar the priest, the leaders and the whole assembly at the entrance to the tent and claim for their rights to their father's property. The daughters of

⁵⁷Jerry Kurian, *The Priest and the World as He Sees It* (Blog), accessed February 20, 2018. <http://jerryachensworld.blogspot.in>.

⁵⁸ 'The Basic Framework For the Decade to Overcome Violence', World Council of Churches, assessed November 21, 2018. <https://www.oikoumene.org/basic-framework-for-the-decade-to-overcome-violence>.

Zelophehad had dauntless courage to claim their rights to inheritance during a time when women had no rights to inherit property. Similar courage was shown by Mary Roy.

Strategies of Transformation

The three Indian women Pandita Ramabai, Shanti Solomon and Mary Roy made unique contributions in transforming or reforming society. They had unique strategies to overcome their own vulnerability and transform or reform society. All of them experienced different scourges of gender based violence - yet they were not passive recipients. They used their painful experiences as a catharsis for social change. They could transcend beyond the Indian traditional understanding of pain and suffering as punishment due to '*karma*' or traditional Christian understanding suffering as God's training to be faithful inevitable for salvation. Nor did they accept it as their fate despite their vulnerabilities. Such power has its roots in their resilience and praxis oriented spirituality of justice. The three women reformers used the strategy of transforming pain into power through power of resilience. In their attempts to build a just, inclusive society, their strategies of transformation are very relevant for the Asian global ecumenical movement even today if moulded and contextualized to end the culture of gender based violence and to heal brokenness and schism.

Ramabai's Strategy of Empowerment and Transformation through Female Education:

In order to reform society and emancipate widows, girls and high caste Hindu women from oppression, Ramabai used the strategy of empowerment and awareness through female education. Ramabai is recognized as one woman wave of Indian feminism.

- **Education based on Gender Parity :** Ramabai realized in a context of violence women during her times could transform pain into power by retaliating against the male hegemony in Hindu society. Education during her time was traditionally religious and was monopolised by men of the Brahmin community until the advent of English or western education. Though western egalitarian ideas had impact on Ramabai but she was against the cultural hegemony of the colonizers. Ramabai realized that western education system in India was not secular but caste and gender neutral and was egalitarian but such western education was entirely a male project. Meera Kosambi mentions that in its patriarchal parameters, reforms were strictly circumscribed by the existing normative boundaries and geared towards making wives better for English educated men demanding companionate marriages and more enlightened mothers for the future generation which would restore India to its former glory and political autonomy. Ramabai realized during her time emancipation of women was essentially investment in the society – that is male progress rather than a step towards gender equality.⁵⁹ Hence Ramabai's strategy was to educate Hindu women, widows and girls to read, write and interpret Hindu scripture stripping it from its Brahmanical patriarchal tarnish. Ramabai attempted to combine her new Christian ideals with her old Indian culture and used this mix to promote change in India.

- **Strategy of Empowering Women to be Self Reliant :** Women's self-reliance was a part of her educational agenda. She trained women with skills of entrepreneurship through vocational trainings along with academic studies. She believed self-reliance will not only give them self-confidence and self-esteem but remove fear, equipping them to resist oppression.

⁵⁹ Meera Kosambi. *Pandita Ramabai: Life and Landmark Writings* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 155.

- **Strategy of Mentoring and Accompaniment :** Ramabai realized the importance of mentorship and nurturing women to be leaders and self-confident people to be liberated from oppression. ‘*Arya Mahila Samaj*’ founded by her, aimed in mentoring women.

- **Right Based Approach:** Ramabai’s mission endeavours to emancipate women through education was based on ‘Right Based Approach’. She championed the rights to life and dignity of women, girls and exploited widows during an era where promoting such rights were revolutionary.

- **Non-Denominational Approach of Mission:** Though Ramabai used the strategy to networking with missionaries from different denominations to empower and emancipate women through education but she maintained a non-denominational approach. This approach enabled her not to be dictated by mission strategies and ideologies of a particular denomination. It was very relevant in a multi pluralistic and Hindu dominated Indian context as her mission was also to liberate High caste Hindu women and widows.

Shanti Solomon’s Strategy of ‘Transforming Practices’ of Justice Peace, Healing and Reconciliation

Shanti Solomon used the strategy of ‘Transforming Practices’ and ‘Collective Transformation’ to promote justice, peace, healing and reconciliation to build culture of peace. Shanti initiated the Fellowship of the Least Coin Movement which is based on the principle of ‘transforming practices’ and each time woman prays for justice, peace and reconciliation, she sets aside one “least coin” of her currency as a tangible token toward her prayer being answered. Kristen Zimmerman and Julie Quiroz states that:

“Transformative practice includes the intention-full ways we cultivate and shape a way of life and live our

values; ways that are connected to the past and looking forward to where we need to go." ⁶⁰

Zimmerman and Quiroz further mentions such transforming practise is rooted in power of love and focuses on practice, the day-by-day, step-by-step action, that individuals or groups take on to intentionally learn and shift. In transformative movement building, practice helps people to change themselves in order to change groups, systems and culture. 'Transforming Practice' enables people to make personal, collective, and structural changes simultaneously. It is a crucial part of an overall commitment and approach to social transformation.⁶¹ Such transforming practices also pave way for 'collective action' and 'collective transformation' helps in the process of healing and reconciliation.

FLC the ecumenical prayer movement has united women from than 100 countries in world. The fund raised through this prayer movement is managed by International Committee of Fellowship of Least Coin (ICFLC) through the help of World Council of Churches. Through the funds raised ICFLC has been able to wipe tears and support justice and peace initiatives of women in many parts of the world. In India FLC is promoted by 'All India Council of Christian Women' – Women's wing of 'National Council of Churches in India' in partnership with women's fellowship of member churches within the Protestant and Orthodox tradition. The women's fellowship have their own FLC convener who promotes this prayer movement. In 2016 FLC initiated by Shanti celebrated 60th anniversary. Rev Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, General Secretary of World Council of Churches in his statement on 60th anniversary of FLC mentions that that FLC have paved the way where

⁶⁰ Kristen Zimmerman and Julie Quiroz, *Love with Power: Practising Transformation for Social Justice, Movement* (USA: Strategy Center, 2016), 52.

⁶¹ Ibid.

“We can celebrate the gifts, visit the wounds and commit responsibly to transformation toward a world-wide culture of gender justice and peace with no sexual and gender-based violence.”⁶²

Mary Roy’s Strategy of ‘Hopeful Resilience’ and ‘Prophetic Resistance’

Mary Roy used the strategy of ‘Hopeful Resilience’ and ‘Prophetic Resistance’ to challenge unjust practices and unjust laws to transform society in midst of acute adversity. Roy was extremely vulnerable being a single mother with two small children after her divorce. She was threatened to be ousted by her own brother from her father’s home. In such a hostile situation ‘Hopeful Resilience’ was Roy’s ‘safety valve’ which enabled her to resist violence. According to Johan Degennar,

“Hope is a creative expectation of a future in which justice prevails and which precisely through the disposition of hope, one commits oneself to bringing about.”⁶³

Hope is deeply connected with one’s ability to cope with difficulties and love within - and into - communities of faith in ways that are life giving and resilient. According to Froma Walsh, resilience involves the whole person, including emotional and relational well-being. It involves struggling, experiencing both suffering and courage and effectively working through difficulties both internally and interpersonally.⁶⁴ ‘Prophetic Resistance’ is

⁶² Olav Fykse Tveit, “WCC shares Greetings on 60th Anniversary of Fellowship of Least Coin.” *World Council of Churches*, accessed on February 28, 2018. <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/press-centre/news/wcc-shares-greetings-to-fellowship-of-the-least-coin-on-60th-anniversary>.

⁶³ Johan Degennar, “Creative Expectation,” *Book of Hope* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1991), 4.

⁶⁴ Froma Walsh, *Strengthening Family Resilience* (New York: Guilford Press, 2006), 4.

Biblical and the first step towards subverting and transforming oppressive systems and affirming dignity and right to life in its fullness. Prophetic resistance leads to conflict which is inevitable. In order to seek justice and peace when Roy challenged unjust laws this not only aggravated the conflict with her brother but also with the church and Syrian Christian Community in Kerala. However as Martin Luther King Junior rightly points out, "*True peace is not merely the absence of tension: it is the presence of justice.*"⁶⁵

This strategy of 'Hopeful Resilience' and 'Prophetic Resistance' and activism mode to seek justice was an eye opener for Indian churches. The 'Right Based' approach of mission has been adopted by some mainline protestant churches in India like Church of North India (CNI) and Church of South India (CSI). The Social wing Church of North India, 'Synodical Board of Social Service' (CNISBSS) has been using this strategy to empower communities especially grassroots communities to voice the injustices done towards them and change existing scenarios of inequality. The mission theme of CNISBSS from 2005 to 2015 was '*Building Communities of Hope and Resistance*' and strategic action plan and mission focus was based on the theme. CNISBSS working through Diocesan Board of Social Service (DBSS) in grassroots communities.⁶⁶ The CSI is working through the Social wing 'SEVA' and has been empowering communities to promote gender justice even of their legal rights in context violation of human rights and Women's Rights.

⁶⁵ Martin Luther Junior Quotes." Good Reads, accessed March 2, 2018. <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/202045>.

⁶⁶ Annual Report (April 2008- March 2009), *Church of North India Synodical Board of Social Service*, accessed on November 28, 2018. http://cnisbss.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Annual_Rport_2008_09.compressed.pdf.

Conclusion

When society plagued with darkness, corruption and unjust practises, reformation takes place to bring about transformation. Reformers make unique contributions to transform society, church, communities or nation. In midst of adversities and challenges through their contributions and prophetic acts they sow seeds of justice and peace. The three Indian women reformers Pandita Ramabai, Shanti Solomon and Mary Roy made unique contributions at different juncture of history to end gender based violence and transform society despite their vulnerabilities of being a woman in Indian society. Ramabai aimed to emancipate women, widows, and girls through her strategy of pioneering female education during a time where India women were grappling for survival and exclusion. Shanti the midwife of justice, peace, healing and reconciliation changed the course of Indian and global church history and ecumenical movement by ushering an ecumenical prayer movement and founding All India Council of Christian Women. Mary Roy challenged unjust laws that discriminated women and used the strategy of 'Hopeful Resilience' and 'Prophetic Resistance' to promote Christian women's human rights to inherit property which resulted in change of 'Personal Laws' in India. All of them made impact of Asian ecumenical movement in their attempt to remove darkness of patriarchal culture which has tarnished society. It is their spirituality of justice which helped them remove darkness in search of light, truth and peace.

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Public Theology

公共神學

**Post-colonialism, Ideological Divide and
Emergent Civil Society:
Current Challenges for Ecumenical
Movement in Asia**

後殖民主義，意識形態分歧和

新興公民社會：

當前亞洲基督徒合一運動面臨的挑戰

Yang-en CHENG

[ABSTRACT] In this article I will first review and evaluate briefly the influence and impact of the Ecumenical Movement in Asia during the past 70 years, including her salient achievements (e.g. common witness, social and political engagement) and shortcomings (institutionalized structure, centralization, lack of persuasion among younger generation).

Then I will discuss three aspects of the current challenges for ecumenical movement in Asia: first, the continuing engagement with and handling of the complex colonial past, especially with the development of de-colonizing attempts in South Asia and South-East Asia and post-colonial approaches in East Asia; second, the critical

test of the ideological divide (e.g. Anti-Communism and Cold-War milieu, nationalism and ethnic tensions, globalized market economy and ecological crisis... etc.) which not only hampered the pursuit and witness of ecclesiastical unity but even attested to the fact that ecumenical movement can sometimes result in harsh conflicts and divisions; lastly, in face of the emerging civil society, how is ecumenical movement preparing to react to the rising of civil power and is it possible for the political engagement of the ecumenical movement take the form of making common cause with other civil groups and movements, with the realization that the church is one amongst several social actors and religious bodies?

[摘要]本文先回顧過去 70 年亞洲基督徒合一運動的影響，包括突出的成就（例如共同見證、社會和政治參與）和缺憾（制度化的結構、集中化、對年輕一代缺乏說服力）。

目前亞洲合一運動面臨三方面的挑戰：第一，對複雜的殖民歷史持續鬥爭，尤其是南亞、東南亞去殖民化的發展，和東亞的後殖民方式；第二，意識形態分歧的批判性考驗（如反共和冷戰環境，民族主義和種族緊張關係，全球化市場經濟和生態危機……）這不僅妨礙了對教會團結的追求和見證，而且證明了合一運動有時會導致嚴峻的衝突和分裂；最後，面對新興的民間社會，合一運動怎樣回應民間力量的上升，又，合一運動的政治投入，可以與其他民間團體和運動找到共識嗎，藉此體現教會是不同社會角色和宗教團體的一份子？

New Ecumenical Scenario in the 21st Century:

When commenting on the ecumenical movement in the 21st century, Konrad Raiser, former General Secretary of WCC, contends that its basic shape reflects the "historical predicament" of the

previous era, namely resulting from “the effort of the historic churches in Europe and North America to respond to the impact of social and economic modernization, of colonialism and of the emergence of an international consciousness.”¹ Despite the fact that ecumenical movement has grown and expanded considerably, he argues, the center of gravity of world Christianity as well as the ecumenical movement has moved towards the south and the end of cold war had created a new situation marked by the mounting impact of globalization and the related economic and ecological encroachment of the hegemonic “empire.”²

With the committed and continual foci on Christian unity, on mission and evangelism, and on Christian service and responsibility for justice and peace, the present-day ecumenical movement faced the new realities and challenges of “*koinonia*” or “communion” becoming the new guiding concept to focus the search for unity, of “religious plurality with a tendency of turning into inter-religious conflict,” and of building just and sustainable communities in response to globalization and overcoming the culture of violence.³ As a general proposal Konrad Raiser advocates a move “from an orientation towards institutional ecumenism towards an ecumenism of the people” and the development of “new forms of interaction between global and the local dimensions of human community.”⁴ This resonates with C. S. Song’s notion of reconstructing ecumenism

¹ Konrad Raiser, “The Ecumenical Movement in the 21st Century—Challenges and Opportunities,” in *The Ecumenical Movement in the 21st Century—Challenges and Opportunities: Collected Essays of the Ecumenical Conference Celebrating the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Hong Kong Christian Council* (Hong Kong: HKCC, 2005), 9.

² Raiser, “The Ecumenical Movement in the 21st Century,” 10-12.

³ Raiser, “The Ecumenical Movement in the 21st Century,” 13-18. Konrad Raiser, *The Challenge of Transformation: An Ecumenical Journey* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2018), 173-200.

⁴ Raiser, “The Ecumenical Movement in the 21st Century,” 18-20.

as being of the Spirit, of God's rule, of understanding, and of compassion.⁵

Thus we see in the current ecumenical movement an element of continuity as well as elements of discontinuity and new challenges. This is rightly so in the global context and in Asia. In the following I will discuss three aspects of the current challenges for ecumenical movement in Asia, namely post-colonial critique, ideological divide and the emergent civil society.

The Colonial Past and the Post-Colonial Critique:

Peter C. Phan argues that "One of the bitter ironies of Asian Christianity is that though born in (South-West) Asia, it returned to its birthplace as a foreign religion, or worse, the religion of its colonizers, and is still being widely regarded as such by many Asians."⁶ C. S. Song, in his address at the inauguration of the Program for Theology and Cultures in Asia (PTCA) in 1987, called passionately for a new "theological movement" to "change the ways we (Asian theologians) have been doing theology for many decades, to reclaim our own Asian-ness of our theological tasks, and to be able to carry on our theological responsibility with our fellow Asians."⁷

Indeed, the continuing engagement with and handling of the complex colonial past is of paramount importance. Stephen Neill in

⁵ C. S. Song, "Ecumenism in a Polarized and Polarizing World—Reconstruction in the 21st Century," in *The Ecumenical Movement in the 21st Century—Challenges and Opportunities*, 30-48.

⁶ Peter C. Phan, "Introduction: Asian Christianity/Christianities," *Christianities in Asia*, edited by Peter C. Phan (Chichester, West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), p. 2. However, he also argues that such perception "belies the ancient roots of Christianity in Asia." *Ibid.*, 2-3.

⁷ C. S. Song, "Freedom of Christian Theology for Asian Cultures – Celebrating the Inauguration of the Programme for Theology and Cultures in Asia," in *Asia Journal of Theology*, 3:1 (1989), 87.

his *A History of Christian Missions* named the period between 1858-1914 as “The Heyday of Colonialism”⁸ and pointed to five events which took place at the opening of the period (1858-63) as indicators of the colonial character of the Christian missions: first, the acceptance by the British people of the colonial rule of India by Queen Victoria; second, the ending of war between European powers and China in 1858 with a series of so-called “unequal” treaties which guaranteed toleration of Christianity and protection for missionaries and Chinese Christians; third, the trans-Atlantic Second Evangelical Awakening which triggered the overseas mission movements of the western Christian world; fourth, after an American squadron forcibly anchored in Tokyo Bay under Commodore Matthew C. Perry in 1853, the first western missionary arrived at Japan in 1858; fifth, David Livingstone published his *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa* which prompted the passion of mission to Africa.⁹

In fact, during this period, whether viewing from colonial or post-colonial perspectives, we can identify in the missionary movement “a distinctively modern Christian project for ‘enlightening’ the globe by means of a highly organized investment, and transfer from West to East and North to South, of funds, personnel, literature, and institutions” and this prompts historians and anthropologists to depict the missionary movement as “one of the earliest forces of ‘globalization,’ creating networks and new media of communication no less powerful than those established by the global market and information technology revolution of the late twentieth century.”¹⁰ In other words, as David J. Bosch puts it, “the

⁸ Stephen Neill, *A History of Christian Missions*, Revised for the Second Edition by Owen Chadwick (London: Penguin Books, 1987, First Edition, 1964), 273-334.

⁹ Neill, *A History of Christian Missions*, 274-276.

¹⁰ *Christian Missions and the Enlightenment*, edited by Brian Stanley (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001), 1.

contemporary crisis of confidence in the validity of Christian mission has its roots in the collapse of the Enlightenment inheritance and the emergence of a postmodern worldview.¹¹

Interestingly, as Brian Stanley points out, "Evangelical Christianity, for long regarded by historians as an enthusiastic, heartwarming, and experiential reaction against the aridity and skepticism of the Age of Reason, has in recent years been increasingly interpreted as a movement whose origins and contours owe an immense debt to the philosophical and cultural patterns of the Enlightenment."¹² As Bosch and other mission scholars had confidently affirmed: "the entire modern missionary enterprise is, to a very real extent, a child of the Enlightenment."¹³

Under such a new *Zeitgeist*, there emerged among the western missionaries two entirely divergent mindset and perspectives towards the local culture. On the one hand, we observe in the European Enlightenment of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries new conceptions of individual freedom, human capacity, communal ethics and social progress. It also enabled the Europeans to acquire new understanding of non-European cultures and religions and be convinced that God had given every human being "an innate moral sense" and that "it was possible to be a virtuous non-Christian or even a virtuous atheist."¹⁴ In short, such conviction allows them to accentuate a universal value system and an open-minded attitude towards other religions and cultures.

¹¹ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, N.Y., 1991), 2-7, 349-67.

¹² *Christian Missions and the Enlightenment*, edited by Brian Stanley, 2.

¹³ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 274; *Christian Missions and the Enlightenment*, edited by Brian Stanley, 3-4.

¹⁴ Stewart J. Brown, "The European Enlightenment, Religion and Moral Values," *Theology and The Church*, Vol. 42, No. 1 (Tainan: Tainan Theological College and Seminary, 2017), 86-101.

However, during the period between 1790 and 1830, especially with the kindling of religious awakenings, a vibrant, heart-felt form of Christianity emerged as a major force in Europe and North America and there surfaced “an intense Christian faith that emphasized the awesome power of God, human sin, divine judgment, the atonement, the conversion experience, the workings of providence in history and the eternal value of each individual” and, as a consequence, the cosmopolitanism and universalism of the Enlightenment were replaced by “notions of religious nationalism, and of particular nations chosen for special purposes” and “beliefs that some Western nations had a special providential calling to carry the Christian gospel to all peoples, to end slavery and the slave trade across the globe to spread commerce to bring the benefits of Western civilization and to expand empires.”¹⁵ This is a kind of “self-sanctifying” mentality. Here the expansion of the British Empire in the world had formed an intricate and yet intense relationship with the British Protestant overseas missions in Asia.¹⁶

Correspondingly, we discern that the following convictions still existed in the mindset of most of the western missionaries: first, an almost universal belief that non-Western peoples were “heathens,” lost in the degradation of sin and in need of salvation through the gospel of Christ; second, a parallel tendency to dismiss other religious systems either as “heathen idolatry” or as at best superstitions and not religions at all; third, a belief in the manifest superiority and liberating potential of Western “civilization,” in both its intellectual and its technological aspects; fourth, an unshakable confidence in the regenerative capacity of rational knowledge, always provided this was linked to Christian proclamation; fifth, an

¹⁵ Stewart J. Brown, “Christian Awakening in Revolutionary Europe, 1790-1830,” *Theology and The Church*, Vol. 42, No. 1, 119-134.

¹⁶ Stewart J. Brown, “Providential Empire? Early Nineteenth-Century British Overseas Missions in Asia,” *Theology and The Church*, Vol. 42, No. 1, 135-150.

assumption that the Christian message was addressed principally to individuals, calling them to undergo a conscious and identifiable inner experience of personal "conversion" to Christ.¹⁷

Let me take the missionary experiences in Taiwan as an example. When the medical missionaries arrived in Taiwan in late nineteenth century, they discovered that, with the rapid progress of western medicine, especially the breakthrough in the areas of human anatomy and surgical skills, the spread of Christian gospel would be coupled with the introduction of modern medicine and scientific worldview. The medical missionaries such as James Laidlaw Maxwell (1836-1921) were gradually convinced that Christian civilization, in addition to the proclamation of the gospel, would heal physical pains, reduce suffering and promote wellbeing in the human society. It is in part a manifestation and realization of philanthropic spirit.¹⁸ In contrast, non-medical missionaries such as George Leslie Mackay (1844-1901) and Thomas Barclay (1849-1935) were concerned more with the enlightening of the mind, conversations on science and religion, and the development of a "theology of creation" based on arguments from design and evidence.¹⁹ It is indeed an "enlightened mission" which the English and Canadian Presbyterian missionaries had brought to Taiwan.²⁰ However, it is also undeniable that, with the exception of few individual missionaries who had strong respect and identification with the local people and culture, most of the missionaries still carried with them senses of superiority

¹⁷ *Christian Missions and the Enlightenment*, edited by Brian Stanley, 8.

¹⁸ Maurie Sween, "James Laidlaw Maxwell's Theology of Medical Mission," *Taiwan Journal of Theology*, Vol. 27 (Taipei: Taiwan Theological Seminary, 2005), 207-220.

¹⁹ Yang-en Cheng, "The Influence of the Scottish Enlightenment on Early Taiwan Christianity: The Modernizing Educational Ideas of G. L. Mackay," in *Taiwan Historica*, Vol. 63, No. 4 (2012), 137-164.

²⁰ Douglas Sloan, *The Scottish Enlightenment and the American College Ideal* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1971); Henry F. May, *The Enlightenment in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976).

and paternalism, and a strong prejudice towards the non-western society and culture.

With respect to the Asian context, Sri Lankan theologian Aloysius Pieris points to the three common denominators in the Asian reality in the 1980s: overwhelming poverty, a shared history of colonialism and of post-colonial colonialism, and the multifaceted religiousness.²¹ Three decades later, the analysis of Pieris continues to resonate with the nuanced development of the “de-colonizing” attempts in South Asia and South-East Asia and “post-colonial” approaches in East Asia.²²

Ideological Confrontation and its Threat to the Ecumenical Movement:²³

In Asia, the emergent ecumenical movement were often contested or even threatened by ideological confrontations, especially when forcibly drawn into the antagonism between

²¹ Aloysius Pieris, S.J., “Towards an Asian Theology of Liberation: Some Religio-Cultural Guidelines,” in *Asia’s Struggle for Full Humanity*, edited by Virginia Fabella (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1980), 75-79. For him, the most salient religio-cultural dimensions of the Asian contexts are the “linguistic heterogeneity” and the “integration of cosmic and metacosmic Asian religiousness” which goes beyond the Western division of philosophy and religion. Aloysius Pieris, S.J., *An Asian Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1988), 69-86.

²² Yang-en Cheng, “What New Song Shall We Sing?”—A Review of the Theory and Practice of Asian Theologies from a Taiwanese Perspective,” in *Contextualizing Christianity in Taiwan*, 322-323. For the theological education in Asia, the “Critical Asian Principle” continues to serve as guideline for the South-East Asia Graduate School of Theology (SEAGST) and the current ATESEA Theological Union (ATU).

²³ A more detailed account of this piece of history can be found in Chen Nan-Jou, *The Social and Political Ethics of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan* (Taipei: Yung-wang, 1999, reprint); *Taiwan A New and Independent Country: Biblical and Theological Reflections on A Declaration on Human Rights of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan*, edited by Lyim Hong-Tiong (Taipei: Faith and Order Committee of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, 2007); Yang-en Cheng, “Presbyterian Church in Taiwan and Democratic Development in Taiwan,” in *Contextualizing Christianity in Taiwan: Collected Writings on the History of Christianity in Taiwan* (Tainan: Jin-Kong, 2005), 221-258.

capitalist and socialist systems or dominant anti-Communist rule under the Cold-War frameworks. What is most saddening is the fact that ecumenical efforts striving for church unity may often result in confrontations or even schisms. In the following I will refer to the vexing experience of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan between 1960s and 1980s as a prominent example.

Right after the Second World War, in the midst of the new social and ecclesiastical context, the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (PCT) was formally founded, resulting from the remarkable union of the North and South Synods in 1951. Immediately PCT joined the World Presbyterian Alliance and the World Council of Churches and became an active member of the world ecumenical community.²⁴ This young indigenous church, learning to become ecumenical-minded, was deeply influenced and shaped by the principle of "contextualization" coined by Shoki Coe, the Taiwanese theologian, and began her full-fledged ecumenical journey.²⁵ She soon encountered tremendous challenges, including issues of mission and contextualization, ethnic tension and national identity, globalization and economic justice, spiritual renewal and charismatic movements, as well as participating in the process of democratization and political transformation.²⁶

Following the cruel 228 Incident in 1947 and the "white terror" rule in the 1950s,²⁷ Taiwan was forced to serve as the refuge of the

²⁴ MacMillan, *Then Till Now in Formosa* (Taipei: English and Canadian Presbyterian Missions in Formosa, 1953), 93-95.

²⁵ Jonah Chang, *Shoki Coe: An Ecumenical Life in Context* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2012), pp. 73-134; *Proceedings of the International Conference on Shoki Coe's Spiritual Legacy*, edited by Wang Chaowen (Tainan: Tainan Theological College and Seminary, 2015).

²⁶ Cheng, "What New Song Shall We Sing?"—A Review of the Theory and Practice of Asian Theologies from a Taiwanese Perspective," 301-368.

²⁷ After W. W. II, Taiwan was forced to "return to China" on the basis of the Cairo Declaration (1943). On Oct. 25, 1945 a representative body from the Nationalist regime, headed by Chen Yi, arrived in Taiwan. Even though guilelessly welcomed by

Republic of China (ROC) and the military base for the nationalist regime's illusory policy of the "restoration of China." Kosuke Koyama, the famous Japanese theologian, had the following say about the mentality of the ruling party and its political leaders in Taiwan:

The fundamental policy of the Chiang Kai-shek government since 1949 has been liberation of the mainland. This is more than a national policy and ideology, it is a creed which every person in the island is required to recite liturgically at all occasions. This strange unrealistic creed is the official political 'religion' of the Chiang Kai-shek island.²⁸

As a result, the Nationalist regime (KMT), embracing the anti-Communist ideology and instigated and bolstered by Carl McIntyre of the ICCC, put tremendous pressure on PCT to withdraw from WCC membership. With the tacit understanding of ecumenical leadership, PCT was forced to leave WCC in 1970.²⁹ This tension triggered efforts from western missionaries for democratic development in Taiwan. More than 30 missionaries, many of Reformed affiliations, were politically involved and either deported

Taiwanese people in this initial stage of the take-over, corrupt administration combined with extreme economic inflation, along with the "conqueror" mentality of the Chinese occupation troops led to an autonomous, island-wide uprising on February 28, 1947. What the Taiwanese people naively hoped for were simply peaceful negotiations and ensuing political reforms. Although the demonstration and petition was unarmed and peaceful, one week later approximately 20,000 Taiwanese, mostly intellectuals and elite, were brutally massacred by the Chinese troops sent by Chiang Kai-Shek. On this event and its traumatic impact, see *An Introduction to the 2-28 Tragedy in Taiwan: For World Citizens*, edited by Tsung-yi Lin (Taipei: Taiwan Renaissance Foundation Press, 1998).

²⁸ He adds, "Everyone, including perhaps Chiang Kai-shek himself, knows well of the impossibility of such an enterprise... Yet the nation must propagate the illusion and on the basis of that illusion survive, justify and unify its existence." Kosuke Koyama, *Waterbuffalo Theology* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1974), pp. 17-18. In a sense the "free China" image of Taiwan crafted by the Nationalist regime was gradually challenged by critics as "neither free nor China."

²⁹ Cheng, "Presbyterian Church and Democratic Development in Taiwan," 241-244.

or denied re-entry to Taiwan in late 1960s and 1970s, including Mike Thornberry and Judith Thomas (United Methodist Church, on loan to Taiwan Theological Seminary),³⁰ Daniel Beeby and Boris Anderson (United Reformed Church), Wendell Karsen and Rowland van Es (Reformed Church in America), Donald J. Wilson and David Gelzer (Presbyterian Church USA), just to name a few.³¹

Since 1970s democratic development and the political future of Taiwan became a paramount concern, as well as a divisive issue, for the Taiwanese churches at large. In 1971 the People's Republic of China (PROC) was admitted to the United Nations and the membership of the Republic of China was concluded. Heretofore Taiwan has experienced the most critical phenomena of diplomatic setback and "international isolationism." On the World Human Rights Day of Dec. 10, 1979, the "Kao Hsiong Incident" signaled the dawning of a new era in the history of the Taiwanese democratic movements.³²

During these critical years the PCT issued three public statements entitled: "A Public Statement on Our National Fate" (1971),³³ "Our Appeal" (1975), and "A Declaration of Human

³⁰ Milo L. Thornberry, *Fireproof Moth: A Missionary in Taiwan's White Terror* (Lemoine, PA: Sunbury Press, 2011).

³¹ *Gratitude and Retrospect: Historical Review of International Friends' Struggle for Democracy and Human Rights in Taiwan*, Vols. I & II (Taipei: Foundation for Democracy in Taiwan, 2003); *A Borrowed Voice: Taiwan Human Rights through International Networks, 1960-1980*, written and edited by Linda Gail Arrigo and Lynn Miles (Taipei: Social Empowerment Alliance, 2008).

³² Marc J. Cohen, *Taiwan At the Crossroads: Human Rights, Political Development and Social Change on the Beautiful Island* (Washington, D.C.: Asia Resource Center, 1988), 190-215.

³³ It is interesting to note that this first statement was in fact a joint effort by the then Ecumenical Cooperative Committee of Taiwan (ECCT, the forerunner of NCCT) organized by the mainstream churches in Taiwan. The drafting group consisted of Rev. Chow Lien-hwa (周聯華) of the Baptist Church, Bishop T. Otto Nall (羅愛徒) of the Methodist Church, Bishop Chang Chi-Tang (張齊堂) of the Lutheran Church, and Rev. Dan Beeby (彌迪理) of the Presbyterian Church, with Rev. C. M. Kao (高俊明) of PCT as convener.

Rights” (1977). Through these prophetic statements the PCT called for social and political reforms, proclaimed the right of Taiwanese people to self-determination, and expressed hope for a “new and independent country.”³⁴ In short, the underpinning theological conviction of these statements can be summarized as follows: Jesus Christ is the Lord of history and the entire humankind; human rights are bestowed by God; the identifying of Taiwan as “homeland”; people’s right to political participation and self-determination; the pursuit of a “new and independent country” and the realization of the ideal of God’s Kingdom.³⁵

As a result, the PCT was severely persecuted and suppressed by the Nationalist regime, with Rev. C. M. Kao, the former General Secretary, imprisoned for more than four years. But she did not give in to political pressures. Her concern for the future of Taiwan has remained deeply connected with the renewal of the corporate spirituality of the people, and is an indispensable way of expressing the genuine meaning of Christian faith, namely to restore and affirm the Taiwanese people’s identity and dignity, as an integral part of the salvific mission of God.³⁶

What intrigued us most are the extremely polarized reactions of the ecumenical and the local churches. On the one hand, the three main ecumenical organizations (WCC, WARC, CCA) and more than thirty partner churches all over the world sent representatives or official letters to support PCT,³⁷ whereas other Christian churches in

³⁴ Chen Nan-Jou, *The Social and Political Ethics of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan; Reformed Witness Today: A Collection of Confessions and Statements of Faith Issued by Reformed Churches*, edited by Lukas Vischer (Bern: Evangelische Arbeitsstelle Oekumene Schweiz, 1982), 95-108.

³⁵ Yang-en Cheng, “Presbyterian Church and Democratic Development in Taiwan,” 250-252.

³⁶ See Shoki Coe, *Recollections and Reflections*, edited by Boris Anderson (N.Y.: The Rev. Dr. Shoki Coe’s Memorial Fund, 1993); *Self-Determination: The Case for Taiwan*, edited by C. S. Song (Tainan: Taiwan Church Press, 1988); Chen Nan-Jou, *A Theology of Identifying* (Taipei, Yung-wang, 2003).

³⁷ *The Road of the Cross: The Memoir of Rev. C. M. Kao*, interviewed and

Taiwan, both mainstream denominations and independent churches, did not share these same convictions, and were ready to bring criticisms and charges against the PCT. The grounds for their negative reactions were evidently less theological in nature. Rather, they stemmed largely from ideological and ethnic differences in the Taiwanese context.³⁸ In a recent study Ken Pa Chin also critically analyzed the intermingling of religious faith and anti-Communist ideology among the so-called "party-state Christians" in Taiwan and its impact on the local inter-church relations.³⁹

It is thus worth noting that, since the late-1970s, these two "camps" (PCT and non-PCT) often divided and split in their pro-ecumenical or anti-ecumenical rhetoric. To this day, debates evolving around "whether Christians should engage in social and political actions" or conflicting political ideologies and contrasting attitudes towards the former Nationalist regime and its China-oriented policy, to a certain degree still alienate Christian churches from each other.⁴⁰ Ironically, in 1995, when a delegation from The Presbyterian Church (USA), a long-term partner of PCT, visited Taiwan and held a bilateral conference with NCCT, the leaders from the mainstream churches in Taiwan, including Lutheran, Anglican, Methodist and Catholic churches, were asked about their views on PCT's involvement in the process of democratization of Taiwan during the 1970s and 1980s, all of them

Transcribed by Hu Huei-leng (Taipei: SPwind, 2001), 228-266, 277-288.

³⁸ Yang-en Cheng, "Building a Harmonious Society in Taiwan – An Analysis from the Ideological Perspective," in *Taiwan Journal of Theology*, Vol. 18 (Taipei: Taiwan Theological Seminary, 1996), 121-130.

³⁹ Chin Ken Pa, *Joseph and His Brothers: Apologetic Anti-Communism, Party-State Christians and the Formation of Taiwan Fundamentalists* (Tainan: Taiwan Church Press, 2016). In this captivating study, the fate of PCT, like Joseph being betrayed and sold by his brothers, and that of Rev. Chow Lien-hwa were symbolically linked and revealed in a most poignant way. *Ibid.*, 303-323.

⁴⁰ Yang-en Cheng, "The Ethnic Relations in Taiwan from Religious and Ideological Perspectives," in *History and Faith: A Christian Perspective on Taiwan and the World*, (Tainan: Jin-Kong, 1999), 50-51.

expressed their appreciation and gratitude for the sacrifice and suffering of PCT and some even conveyed their apology and regrets for their silence or acts of condemnation at the time.

Indeed, during the last four decades, PCT continued to bravely embrace ecumenical ethos and joined hands with democratic movement in Taiwan. This struggle and self-understanding is ingeniously reflected in the section on ecclesiology in her *Confession of Faith* issued in 1985: “We believe that the Church is the fellowship of God's people, called to proclaim the salvation of Jesus Christ and to be ambassador of reconciliation. It is both ecumenical and rooted in this land, identifying with all its inhabitants, and through love and suffering becoming the sign of hope.”⁴¹

The Emergence of Civil Society and the Inspiration of Public Theology:

Within the first two decades of the third millennium, the pursuit of civil power and the establishment of a robust civil society has become a compelling reality in Korean, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Malaysia, this will unquestionably pose new challenges for the ecumenical movement in Asia. In face of the emergent civil society, how is ecumenical movement preparing to react to the rising of civil power and is it possible for the political engagement of the ecumenical movement to make common cause with other civil groups and movements, with the realization that the church is one amongst several social actors and religious bodies?

For the last thirty some years, public theology, with impressive pursuits and accounts, has become a new theological movement and

⁴¹ *Reformed Witness Today*, 108.

brings compelling inspiration to the global Christianity. Facing the challenging world situation today, David Ford, in an updated version of David Tracy's three audiences, speaks of theology's "ecology of responsibility": how should theology be true to itself and engage with its audiences of the church, the academy and the public domain?⁴²

Regarding the domains and main issues of public theology, we can roughly render the "public spheres" theory of Jürgen Habermas (namely the so-called four spheres of government, business associations, voluntary associations, and media) or the "sphere sovereignty" theory of Abraham Kuyper as a framework of reference.⁴³ Also, modern scholars also point out the importance of "localization" and the need to engage in cross-fertilizing dialogues between local and global contexts. Currently the prominent studies on local cases can be found in countries such as United Kingdom, United States, Australia, and South Africa.⁴⁴

Clive Pearson, the Aotearoa New Zealand theologian, points us to three directions where public theology can be engaged:⁴⁵

1. The need for a balanced responsibility among the three areas or audiences. In fact, the audience most likely to be

⁴² David Ford, *Theology: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 18-20; David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 3-46.

⁴³ Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. by Thomas Burger (Cambridge, MA.: The MIT Press, 1989).

⁴⁴ William F. Storrar, "Where the Local and the Global Meet: Duncan Forrester's Glocal Public Theology and Scottish Political Context," in *Public Theology for the 21st Century*, edited by William F. Storrar and Andrew R. Morton (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2004), 405-30; John de Gruchy, "From Political to Public Theologies: The Role of Theology in Public Life in South Africa," in *Public Theology for the 21st Century*, 45-62; Clive Pearson, "The Quest for a Glocal Public Theology," *International Journal of Public Theology*, 1:2 (2007).

⁴⁵ Clive Pearson, "Questing for the Public Christ," unpublished article, 2008.

ignored by both the academy and the community of faith is “the public.”

2. The capacity to address occasional public issues for the sake of the public or common good for a civil society, or for what both David Ford and Michael Welker call “human flourishing.”⁴⁶

3. The need to draw the “wisdom” and “riches” of the Christian tradition into the public conversation in order to contribute to the well-being of society.” This is a theological function in addition to ethical, pastoral, or missiological ones, each of which has their own public reference.⁴⁷

How should the Asian churches respond to the stimulus and challenge of public theology? The experience of the historical past shows that the ecology or cultural climate of the churches in Asian is habitually alien or resistant to the “public consciousness” that was proposed by the ecumenical movement or social theologies. In fact, the marginalization or privatization of faith among the Asian Christians has become a common phenomenon, resulting in negligence of “structural evils” such as ethnic prejudices, gender inequality, social and economic injustice, falsified historical accounts, and disregard for marginalized or minority groups.

Since the 1990s, there is a pressing call among ecumenical movement for “strengthening civil society as a space for furthering reciprocity, solidarity, dialogue, the capacity for the non-violent resolution of conflicts and reinforcing processes of sharing” and, as a result, the building up and shaping of the space of civil society, both

⁴⁶ Michael Welker, “Who is Jesus Christ For Us Today?” *Harvard Theological Review*, 95.2 (2002), 133.

⁴⁷ Michael J. and Kenneth R. Himes, *The Fullness of Faith: the Public Significance of Theology* (Mahwah, N.Y.: Paulist Press, 1993).

locally and globally, has become "the most important 'political' vocation of the ecumenical community."⁴⁸ This is also expressed in the focus on building "just and sustainable communities" as a response to the biblical call to justice, peace, and integrity of creation and reflected in the emphasis on "common citizenship" in inter-religious dialogue as the basis for cooperation between people of different and sometimes conflicting faith traditions.⁴⁹

In fact, the espousal of ecumenical programs or mission projects such as *Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation* (JPIC) has become a shared conviction and inherent ethos in the western world, to a large extent the outcome of the long-term Christian commitment and engagement in the public sphere and larger society.⁵⁰ However, it was evidently not the case in the so-called "third world" or the Global South. As the civil power and public consciousness are presently on the rise in Asia, it is the duty and opportunity for the ecumenical movement to work together with civil groups for the building of a humane community and "the household of God" ("oikoumene").⁵¹

Let me go back to the case of Taiwan. After the lifting of Martial Law and the beginning of the end of dictatorial rule in 1987, the formation of civil society in Taiwan was never truly and well underway. In the midst of political reform and social and economic transformations, politics and economics continued to assume command, with the government and big corporations continually manipulating the power and resources and the so-called "third sector" constantly compressed and pushed to the corner. The NPOs, NGOs, and grass-root and advocacy groups were largely

⁴⁸ Raiser, *The Challenge of Transformation: An Ecumenical Journey*, 206.

⁴⁹ Raiser, *The Challenge of Transformation: An Ecumenical Journey*, 206-207.

⁵⁰ Raiser, *The Challenge of Transformation: An Ecumenical Journey*, 113-124.

⁵¹ Konrad Raiser, *Ecumenism in Transition: A Paradigm Shift in the Ecumenical Movement?* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1991).

marginalized and not able to facilitate social change or transformation.⁵² This is most unfortunate since, as Robert Wuthnow convincingly argues, only the faith community that is willing to face and respond positively to the current social issues at hand will be able to exert considerable influence in the existing situation.⁵³

As to the Asian mindset of privatization of faith and the long estrangement of public awareness, Reinhold Niebuhr reminds us: “the roots of religious imagination are much more in the intensities of consciousness and conscience and sense of guilt than they are in all our social experiences.”⁵⁴ Citing Martin Buber, the Jewish philosopher, that “all prophetic faith rests upon the assumption that the God whom I meet in my conscience is the creator of the whole world” and Karl Jaspers, the German philosopher, that “there is a source and end of meaning which transcends all our particular meanings,” Niebuhr argues that Christian faith allows human beings to own a sense of “transcendence”: “Man lives in nature, yet transcends nature, and builds history in his communities, and then he transcends these communities of history and has his own conscience, whereby he can judge the historical situation.”⁵⁵ On the other hand, he also points out that the conscience of our individual religious life will not render us disillusioned with history or society or negligent of our social or historical responsibilities, but rather continue to prompt our sensibility towards society by raising prophetic voices against

⁵² Yang-en Cheng, “The Emergence of Public Theology and Its Relevance to the Taiwanese Context,” *Taiwan Journal of Theology*, Vol. 37 (Taipei: Taiwan Theological Seminary, 2013), 71-98.

⁵³ Robert Wuthnow, *Christianity in the 21st Century: Reflections on the Challenges Ahead* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

⁵⁴ Reinhold Niebuhr, “The Burden of Conscience,” in *Justice and Mercy*, edited by Ursula M. Niebuhr (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1974), 110.

⁵⁵ Niebuhr, “The Burden of Conscience,” 106-107.

social injustice, corruption of power, political tyranny, and violation of human rights.⁵⁶

As Konrad Raiser aptly puts it, "During long part of the history of the Christian community religion has been experienced as a factor of division, of conflict and even oppression. The separation between church and state, between religion and politics was meant to transform this situation. The subsequent privatization of religion, its complete removal from the public sphere, has created new problems and can no longer serve as a satisfactory response to the contemporary challenges."⁵⁷ We must hope and trust that, with the assistance of public theology, the ecumenical movement in Asia will be transformed and enriched in a fresh and significant way!

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⁵⁶ Niebuhr, "The Burden of Conscience," 110-111.

⁵⁷ Raiser, "The Ecumenical Movement in the 21st Century," 21.

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**Speaking the Truth in the Midst of
Divisiveness: The Merdeka Day and Malaysia
Day Statements of the Christian Federation of
Malaysia (CFM)**

**分裂中的真相：馬來西亞基督教聯合會的
獨立日和馬來西亞日聲明**

Sivin KIT

[ABSTRACT] The aim of this article is to examine how a Christian ecumenical organization CFM articulates a social critique and offer a theological vision that has ecumenical, intercultural, and implications. The main questions that this essay seeks to address are:

- How and why has the CFM spoken up through public statements for not only the Christian community (it represents) but also the wider Malaysian society?

- In what way, reflection on the CFM public statements offer insights to further develop a public theological vision that may shape the role of the Christian leadership in the public sphere?

【摘要】 本文的目的是研究馬來西亞的基督徒合一組織 CFM 如何闡明社會批判，並提供具有普世、跨文化和含義的神學觀點。本文試圖解決的主要問題是：

CFM 如何以及為什麼通過公開聲明不僅為其代表的基督教社區，而且為更廣泛的馬來西亞社會發表言論？

對 CFM 公開聲明的反思，怎樣能提供進一步發展公共神學願景的見解，從而影響基督教領導在公共領域的作用？

Scripture tells us that, in the as yet unredeemed world in which the Church also exists, the State has by divine appointment the task of providing for justice and peace... The Church acknowledges the benefit of this divine appointment in gratitude and reverence before him. It calls to mind the Kingdom of God, God's commandment and righteousness, and thereby the responsibility both of rulers and of the ruled. It trusts and obeys the power of the Word by which God upholds all things. ~ *The Barmen Declaration 1934*

Our Lord Jesus Christ called us to “love our neighbour as ourselves,” a call to us to renounce a selfish and self-oriented lifestyle. Communities and countries are built up when people band together and live as one. Our faith teaches us that the suppressive use of might is not right. ~ *Christian Federation of Malaysia Merdeka and Malaysia Day Statement 2017*¹

¹ “Let us unite to care deeply for all our communities”, Merdeka Day and Malaysia Day Statement, Christian Federation of Malaysia, 28 August 2017.

Introduction

In John 17:21, Jesus prayed that the disciples may be one just as he and the father are one. The prayer of Jesus for the unity of the church has been a central inspiration for the contemporary ecumenical movement.² However, it is important to note that earlier in John 17:14, Jesus clearly states that those whom he has prayed for "are not of the world" and yet are "sent into the world"; and therefore, the answer to the prayer of Christian unity is embodied by the Church in what the Barmen Declaration calls "the as yet unredeemed world".

The Barmen Declaration has been a significant 20th Century document addressing the situation of Christians facing the Nazi ideological state and its subsequent horrors. The declaration has inspired various approaches to public theology enabling Christians to reconsider the subservient attitude of Christians in the wake of unimaginable evil unleashed in contemporary history in their respective contexts. It draws our attention to "the responsibility of both rulers and the ruled" in the excerpt above. However, for a Malaysian one might ask: to what extent Christians in a minority context in Asia would resonate or differ from the Church in the majority Christian west such as Germany.

The Christian Federation of Malaysia (CFM) is an ecumenical body constituted in 1985 that consists of three national Christian bodies: the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Malaysia, the Council of Churches of Malaysia (CCM) and the National Evangelical

² See "What Is the World Council of Churches?" - World Council of Churches, July 11, 2016, accessed April 04, 2018, <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/about-us>.

Christian Fellowship (NECF).³ It seeks to represent the Christian voice in a Muslim majority context particularly in a time of Malaysian history. While outsiders and insiders of Malaysia must avoid uncritically claiming its historical trajectory as analogous to the German situation in world war two, there might be lessons to draw from an arguably different context: a situation where citizens are confronted with power dynamics of the state that deeply affect the social cohesion of the nation as well as the religious freedom of the Christian minority. Similar to the authors of the Barmen Declaration, the Malaysian church leadership has attempted to speak out to confront “the suppressive use of might [that] is not right”.

In the article, I will first present in brief the main socio-historical conditions that have constrained as well as inspired the CFM to respond particularly using the Merdeka Day (translated as ‘Independence Day’) and Malaysia Day statements. Second, I will return to the approach of public theology used to analyze and interpret the main themes of the document. I have limited myself to the period of 2010-2017 because of how the statements address the numerous key socio-political developments to illuminate significant themes for further reflection. Third, the statements would be analyzed based on the main themes with relevant commentary and concerns highlighted. This analysis includes reflection on the criticism that the CFM’s public discourse lacks coherence and consistency as well as may actually show an anemic political imagination.⁴ Finally, I will close with some remarks for the practice of doing theology inspired by Luther’s notion of ‘tentatio’ that I

³ "About Us," Christian Federation of Malaysia (CFM), accessed April 04, 2018, <http://www.cfmmsia.org/About-CFM>.

⁴ Alwyn Lau, "Intimating the Unconscious: A Psychoanalytical Refraction of Christian Theo-Political Activism in Malaysia," *Critical Research on Religion* 2, no. 3 (2014): 284-86.

consider to resonate with the actual contribution of CFM in a divisive and contentious socio-political environment.⁵

A Progressive or Regressive Malaysia?

Malaysia has an international reputation as a modern, multicultural, moderate, and progressive Muslim majority country.⁶ After gaining independence from Britain in 1957, later, in 1963, Malaya together with Sabah and Sarawak from the Borneo Island formed the nation of Malaysia. Currently, the Federation of Malaysia is organized around a constitutional monarchy, parliamentary democracy and independent judiciary.⁷ While Islam is the religion of the Federation, other non-Muslim religions can be practiced freely in 'peace and harmony' within some restrictions stated in the Federal Constitution.⁸

By 2011, the ethnically diverse 28 million populated Malaysia had a 60% Muslim-majority and a 40% non-Muslim minority of different religious persuasions. Religious minorities are identified with Buddhism (19.2%), Christianity (9.1%), Hinduism (6.3%), Confucianism, Taoism, other traditional Chinese religions (2.6%), other or unknown (1.5%), and none (0.8%).⁹ Malaysians are arguably more religious than secular in their outlook on life similar

⁵ M. Luther, *Luther's Works: Career of the Reformer. Vol. 34* (Fortress Press, 1960), 285-87.

⁶ Ben Fajzullin, "Malaysia: "Progressive Style of Islam Is Practical", "<https://en.qantara.de/content/malaysia-progressive-style-of-islam-is-practical>."

⁷ However, some scholars have noted the independence and lack of confidence in the Malaysian judiciary since 1988, see B.T. Khoo, "The Malaysian Judiciary since Independence," *Law, Capitalism and Power in Asia: The Rule of Law and Legal Institutions* (1999); M.A. Wu, "The Malaysian Judiciary: Erosion of Confidence," *Australian Journal of Asian Law* 1, no. 2 (1999).

⁸ "Religion of the Federation", Article 3, *Federal Constitution of Malaysia* (Malaysia: 2010), 20; "Freedom of Religion", Article 11, *Federal Constitution of Malaysia* (Malaysia: 2010), 25-26.

⁹ Statistics.gov.my, "Population Distribution And Basic Demographic Characteristic Report 2010 (Updated: 05/08/2011)," 2014, accessed July 3, 2014. http://www.statistics.gov.my/portal/index.php?option=com_content&id=1215.

to other South East Asian countries. According to the World Values Survey 2006, 96% of Malaysians said religion is important but 35.6% stated trust in people of other religions.¹⁰ While overall religiosity is high in Malaysian society and there is lack of wide spread social conflict, this does not necessarily translate into indicators of proactive interreligious relations. Compared to some other Muslim majority countries for example in the Middle East, Malaysia shows no signs of widespread religious violence; in fact, Overall, the immediate impression has been that Malaysia practices a moderate form of Islam that is perceived to be more tolerant and open.¹¹

Observers often attribute the success of this interethnic and interreligious harmony to the Malaysian government's ability to balance various sociopolitical and economic interests of both the Muslim majority and non-Muslim minority citizens; others highlight Malaysian society's ability to celebrate its religious and cultural diversity as it nurtures the national identity of its citizenry.¹² Interestingly, 94.9% percent of Malaysians say they are proud of their nationality; therefore, this suggests that while religion is an important identity marker, nationality as a shared identity marker cannot be ignored.¹³

¹⁰ See World Values Survey Wave 5 2005-2009 (Malaysia 2006) and World Values Survey Wave 6 2010 - 2014 (Malaysia 2011), accessed July 1, 2014. <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/wvs.jsp>.

¹¹ See Eduard J. Bomhoff & Mary Gu, 2008. "Malaysia's Muslims – the First World Values Survey," *NUBS Malaysia Campus Research Paper Series 2008-10*, Nottingham University Business School Malaysia Campus; P.G. Riddell, "Islamization, Civil Society and Religious Minorities in Malaysia," *Islam in Southeast Asia: Political, Social and Strategic Challenges for the 21st Century*, ed. KS Nathan and Mohammad Hashim Kamali (2005): 162-90.

¹² R. Korff, "Globalisation and Communal Identities in the Plural Society of Malaysia," *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography* 22, no. 3.

¹³ See World Values Survey Wave 5 2005-2009 (Malaysia 2006) and World Values Survey Wave 6 2010 - 2014 (Malaysia 2011), accessed July 1, 2014. <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/wvs.jsp>.

Nonetheless, the picture of a progressive, peaceful, and harmonious Malaysia is confronted by a growing unease on the development of Islam (especially in relation to politics) in Malaysia that have affected the non-Muslim minority. In terms of interreligious relations, there appears to be a regression or an instability in the trends in religious restrictions and social relations between people of different faiths. According to the 2015 Pew Forum Report highlighting trends in religious restrictions and hostilities, Malaysia scored low for the social hostility index and was placed in the category of 'moderate'; while there was an increase from 2007 to 2012, there was a decrease in 2013.¹⁴ Yet Malaysia has also reported a steady increase of government restrictions since 2007; it remains under the category of 'very high', and compared to other countries Malaysia is ranked number 7 just below Saudi Arabia and above Myanmar in 2013.¹⁵ Qualitatively, both non-Muslims and Muslims have expressed their concerns around issues of religious tolerance and its related concern religious freedom rigorously in the public sphere.

In 2007, on behalf of non-Muslims, the Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism, and Taoism highlighted instances that demonstrates Malaysia's national "unity is threatened by continued infringements of religious freedom".¹⁶ In their note of protest, the council, who represents non-Muslim minority concerns, cites numerous cases to support their claim that

¹⁴ Pew Research Center, Feb. 26, 2015, "Latest Trends in Religious Restrictions and Hostilities", 59.

¹⁵ Pew Research Center, Feb. 26, 2015, "Latest Trends in Religious Restrictions and Hostilities", 9 & 59. Malaysia was ranked below way below Saudi Arabia and was below Myanmar in the 2012 report. For more see: <http://www.pewforum.org/2015/02/26/religious-hostilities/>

¹⁶ Note of Protest by the Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism, and Taoism (MCCBCHST), 2007.

often religious intolerance is due to unclear policies or questions that have arisen in the process of judicial reviews over specific cases. For Christians, from 2007 till 2014 the issue commonly referred to as the ‘Allah’ controversy (in which the government banned the use of the word ‘Allah’ in Christian publications) has also brought to national and international scrutiny questions around religious tolerance in Malaysia specifically for the Christian minority.¹⁷ For the Christian community, this use of the word ‘Allah’ in the Malaysian national language, Malay, was an important fundamental right in terms of the freedom to practice one’s religion within the framework of the federal constitution where Islam is acknowledged as the religion of the federation while other religions can be practiced in peace and harmony in a multi-religious and yet Muslim majority context such as Malaysia.¹⁸

An important feature of Malaysian Islam is that ethnic Malays are Muslims by birth which is the only ethnoreligious identity stated in the Malaysia federal constitution; the other non-Muslim minorities do not have this identification in the constitution even though the majority of Buddhist would be ethnically Chinese, and the Hindus would be majority Indian. Christians have a mixture of all the ethnic groups particularly in Sabah and Sarawak where the majority of the Christians are from the indigenous tribal communities whom also have a special position in socio-economic affirmative action policies in the nation.¹⁹ The majority and minority dynamics both ethnically

¹⁷ For a brief historical background, please see Sivin Kit, “Reimagining Solidarity—The ‘Allah’ Controversy, Public Discourse and Interreligious Relations” in *Interactive Pluralism in Asia Religious Life and Public Space (LWF Studies)*, ed. Simone Sinn & Tong Wong-Sze, (Lutheran World Federation, 2016), 161-178.

¹⁸ For a review of the whole controversy, see Sivin Kit, “Reimagining Solidarity – the ‘Allah’ Controversy” in S. Sinn and T.W. Sze, *Interactive Pluralism in Asia: Religious Life and Public Space* (Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2016), 161-78.

¹⁹ See G.D. Bouma, R. Ling, and D. Pratt, *Religious Diversity in Southeast Asia and the Pacific: National Case Studies* (Springer Netherlands, 2009); D. Sofjan, *Religion, Public Policy and Social Transformation in Southeast Asia : Managing Religious Diversity* (Globethics.net, 2016).

and religiously complicate the extent to which social cohesion can be achieved. Furthermore, in recent years, a series of religious controversies have turned the public spotlight on the debate over political and religious authority and the extent in which citizens should obey or resist governing authorities. The role of religious communities – and for the purpose of this article the Christian community takes on an immediate urgency.

Besides attention to religious freedom and interreligious relations, the wider socio-political development of Malaysia provides a wider framework to understand Christian responses to social progressive or regressive change in the nation. Two general elections provide an insight into the political climate in which the CFM statements were published. The 12th General elections of 2008 marked a significant shift in the political consciousness of Christians in particular and the wider non-Muslim community. On March 8, 2008, Malaysia conducted its 12th General Elections. After the final results were calculated, it was reported that the Barisan Nasional (BN) had lost for the first time two third majorities and lost 4 states and not regaining Kelantan in the last general elections. The results of the elections seem to suggest the sense of discontent among the voters to the ruling government, as the popular vote for the coalition Barisan Nasional led government fell from 63% in 2004 to 51.2%.²⁰ In the midst of religious controversies even after the 12th general election right into the year 2010 onwards, there was also the wider demand for free and fair elections and the push for mature democratic development in the country. There was evidence that religious communities in general were supportive to improve the democratic process with visible participation of clergy – Muslim, Christian and

²⁰ A. Rashid Moten, "2004 and 2008 General Elections in Malaysia: Towards a Multicultural, Bi-Party Political System?," *Asian Journal of Political Science* 17, no. 2 (2009).

Buddhist – in public rallies for free and fair election in 2007 and subsequent rallies.²¹ In other words, if previously it was not surprising to observe visible Muslim participation in the democratic process, now non-Muslim religious communities too have been more vocal and visible through either public statements or public participation.²²

Second, the 13th General Election of Malaysia held on 5 May 2013 was labeled as potentially the ‘dirtiest’ election in the history of Malaysia, although for some it was the best possible chance for a change of government.²³ While the CFM early in 12 July 2012 sent out a pastoral communique to ‘Vote Wisely’, there were a number of unprecedented statements and an open letter that addressed the public and politicians. For example, during the campaign, it was reported that the ‘Allah’ controversy was used as part of an anti-Christian campaign in one constituency; a picture of a campaign board went viral on the internet, in particular Facebook that appeared to incite fear of Christian influence in the country.²⁴ The CFM issued a statement against “the despicable anti-Christian message on election campaign billboards”. In particular, the CFM understood the message in these billboards as attempts to pit “one community”

²¹ The Official Website for the BERSIH (‘The Coalition for Clean and Fair Elections’) is <https://www.bersih.org/> (accessed 3 July 2014). See F.A. Noor, "After the Bersih 2.0 Rally: Impact and Implications," (2011); B. Welsh, "People Power in Malaysia: Bersih Rally and Its Aftermath," (2011).

²² J. Woo and S.I. Tan, *The Bible and the Ballot: Reflections on Christian Political Engagement in Malaysia Today* (Graceworks, 2011).

²³ Ambiga Sreenevasan, “Will elections in Malaysia be free or fair?”, *Al-Jazeera*, May 4, 2013, accessed July 3 2014. <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2013/04/201342982454925143.html>.

²⁴ Deborah Chong, “Christians protest ‘Allah house’ billboards, want EC action”, *the Malaysian Insider*, May 1 2013, accessed July 3, 2014. <http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/allahs-house-billboards-make-christians-see-red-ec-called-to-act>.

(Muslim) against Christians by spreading fear through scare tactics using the issue of "Allah" to breed divisiveness in the electorate.²⁵

Third, soon after the 2008 12th General Elections, Najib Razak replaced Abdullah Badawi as the Prime Minister of Malaysia and introduced the concept of *1Malaysia* as an inclusive approach to governance to distinguish his own premiership from his predecessors.²⁶ According to Najib Razak, the 1Malaysia concept was meant to reinforce national unity "irrespective of race or religious belief" in concert with "real improvements on the ground."²⁷ However, Farish Noor sees hindrances to national unity because "the nature of Malaysia's communal politics also means that anyone who aspires to power has traditionally had to appeal to all the different communities and pander to their private, short-term and at times exclusive demands". In his view, this has resulted in two distinctive lobby groups, one Muslim and the other non-Muslim.²⁸ Later, Noor's commented on the impasse of interreligious dialogue and points out the "need to look at the expansion of the NGO community and in particular the rise of these new communitarian NGOs."²⁹ Political Scientist Joseph Chinyong Liow however

²⁵ Christian Federation of Malaysia (CFM) press statement, "CFM Abhors and Protests the Despicable Anti-Christian Message on Election Campaign Billboards", 1 May 2013.

²⁶ See J. Chin, "Malaysia: The Rise of Najib and 1Malaysia," *Southeast Asian Affairs* 2010, no. 1 (2010); M.A.M Sani et al., "Malaysia in Transition: A Comparative Analysis of Asian Values, Islam Hadhari and 1Malaysia," *Journal of Politics and Law* 2, no. 3 (2009).

²⁷ "1Malaysia Initiatives", *1Malaysia*, accessed July 27, 2014, <http://www.1malaysia.com.my/en/my-record/1-malaysia/>. See R. Camilleri, "Religious Pluralism in Malaysia: The Journey of Three Prime Ministers," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 24, no. 2 (2013).

²⁸ Farish Noor, "Political concessions in a complex country" the Malaysian Bar Council Website, January 24, 2010, accessed November 19, 2018, http://www.malaysianbar.org.my/members_opinions_and_comments/political_concessions_in_a_complex_country_farish_a_noor_.html.

²⁹ Farish A Noor, 29 January 2010 (12:44 p.m.) comment on KShanmuga, "The politics of dialogue" The Nut Graph, January 29, 2010, accessed November 19, 2018, <http://www.thenutgraph.com/the-politics-of-dialogue/>.

maintains the core issue still is Malay-Muslim hegemony, and therefore understands religious controversies such as the ‘Allah’ controversy as one of the effects of this ‘organizing principle’:

... far more at stake than sensitivities or proprietary rights to terminology. Indeed, *the controversy touches on the fundamental organising principle of Malaysian politics and society — Malay ethno-religious primacy — which has begun to erode over the years.* As Najib and his advisors labour over the question of national unity, the “Allah” controversy and the church-burning incidents reveal the obstacles he faces and just how far away the country is from reaching his goal.³⁰

Therefore, the overall assessment of the government led responses to religious controversies have not injected confidence not only among the non-Muslim minorities but also observed by academics studying Malaysian politics. Furthermore, at the time of writing, the leadership of Prime Minister Najib Razak has been plagued with allegations of financial scandal as well as the tabling and passing of controversial bills and laws that critics label as undemocratic and regressive.³¹ Malaysia remains a divided nation.

³⁰ Joseph Chinyong Liow, "No God But God," *Foreign Affairs*, February 12, 2010, accessed November 19, 2018.

<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/malaysia/2010-02-10/no-god-god>.

³¹ See Rachel Yeap, "Parliament Passes Redelienation Of Electoral Boundaries With 129-80 Vote" *Pocket News*, March 28, 2018, accessed April 4, 2018.

<https://www.pocketnews.com.my/2018/03/28/parliament-passes-redelienation-of-electoral-boundaries-with-129-80-vote/> and "Dewan Negara Passes Anti-Fake News Bill 2018 | Malay Mail," *Malaysia | Malay Mail*, April 03, 2018, , accessed November 19, 2018,

<http://www.themalaymailonline.com/malaysia/article/dewan-negara-passes-anti-fake-news-bill-2018>.

Public Theology in a Malaysian Key: The Christian Federation of Malaysia and the Merdeka Day and Malaysia Day Statements

Early in the 1990s, Malaysian theologians have sought to engage in doing theology contextually. For example, Ng Kam Weng and Hwa Yung have raised the importance of a public theological vision or a social vision not only for Malaysia but also Asia.³² The contributions of S. Batumalai and Albert Walters have addressed Christian-Muslims relations and have sketched some possible ways forward.³³ Overall, there has been a consistent call for Malaysian churches in nation building.³⁴ These earlier efforts and recent developments resonate with the growing attention in recent years of the field of public theology. Norwegian theologian Kjetil Fretheim suggests that the practice of public theology particularly *in times of crises* provide an insight into particular circumstances and for the purpose of this article I would also add offers a comparative bridge for mutual learning. In his analysis of Kairos Statements of both South Africa and Palestine, he shows how they have churches at critical times articulate a public theology that is not only shaped by

³² N.K. Weng, *Doing Responsive Theology in a Developing Nation* (Pastaka SUFES, 1994); *Bridge-Building in a Pluralistic Society: A Christian Contribution* (Pustaka SUFES, 1994); Y. Hwa, *Mangoes or Bananas?: The Quest for an Authentic Asian Christian Theology* (Regnum International, 1997).

³³ A.S. Walters, *We Believe in One God?: Reflections on the Trinity in the Malaysian Context* (ISPCK, 2002); S. Batumalai, *Islamic Resurgence & Islamization in Malaysia: A Malaysian Christian Response : The Re-Awakening of Islam in Relationship to Other Religions in Malaysia* (S. Batumalai, 1996); Albert Sundararaj Walters, "Issues in Christian-Muslim Relations: A Malaysian Christian Perspective," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 18, no. 1 (2007).

³⁴ An earlier contribution, Goh Keat-Peng, "Church and State in Malaysia," *Transformation* 6, no. 3 (1989). For recent contributions, see Andrew Sia, "Christians & Politics," Features | The Star Online, September 18, 2010, , accessed April 04, 2018, <https://www.thestar.com.my/lifestyle/features/2010/09/19/christians--politics/> and O Yeoh, "The Political Awakening of Christian Malaysians: An Interview with Sivin Kit. Malaysiakini," <https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/205243> , and Hwa Yung, "Christians and Nation Building" <http://www.methodistchurch.org.my/newsmaster.cfm?&menuid=6&action=view&retrievid=434>.

the context, but arguably may have also shaped the context that informs the interruptive and imaginative dimensions of doing theology in crisis.³⁵

The main focus of public theology and the criteria for its effectiveness is mainly to present its arguments in the public sphere for communicative action.³⁶ However, there are Asian contributions that also raise critical questions to what extent that this approach needs to also go beyond the church.³⁷ This concern is not new as in earlier liberation theologies, the concern for non-religious specific needs and concerns is also highlighted such as the option of the poor and priority of praxis in doing theology. For purposes of the Malaysian statements, these two theological approaches would be complementary in informing the analysis as well as interpretation of the documents. To some extent, I suggest that a closer look at the CFM statements enables this possibility of not only gaining an insight into Malaysian Christian life and mission, it also offers a bridge for further ecumenical, intercultural and interreligious engagement to enhance our approach in doing public theology.

Within the sociohistorical context described earlier and a theological framework introduced above, we narrow our focus to the CFM which was birthed out of a response to Islamization.³⁸ The CFM was formally constituted in 1985 with the origins actually in 1979 1st National Christian conference in the capital Kuala Lumpur

³⁵ K. Fretheim, *Interruption and Imagination: Public Theology in Times of Crisis* (Pickwick Publications, 2016).

³⁶ S. Kim, *Theology in the Public Sphere: Public Theology as a Catalyst for Open Debate* (Presbyterian Publishing Corporation, 2011).

³⁷ D.P. Niles, *Is God Christian?: Christian Identity in Public Theology: An Asian Contribution* (Fortress Press, 2017).

³⁸ Chong Eu Choong, "The Christian Response to Islamization" in B. Platzdasch and J. Saravanamuttu, *Religious Diversity in Muslim-Majority States in Southeast Asia: Areas of Toleration and Conflict* (Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2014), 295-99. The term 'Islamization' used here is associated with the normative historical (political) project of infusing Islamic norms and values in culture and political structures.

entitled "Working together for Christ".³⁹ The leadership of the chairman is rotated for a two-year term from the component bodies: the founding Roman Catholic, Ecumenical, and Evangelical component bodies while the various bodies would have their respective representatives in the CFM council.⁴⁰ The aim of the CFM is stated in the following:

- To bring together all Christians who accept the authority of the Holy Bible and who subscribe to the cardinal doctrines of Christianity as set forth in the Apostles' Creed;
- To reinforce and extend, wherever possible, through dialogue and consultation, the areas of common agreement among the various Christian groups in Malaysia;
- To look after the interests of the Christian community as a whole with particular reference to religious freedom and rights as enshrined in the Federal Constitution;
- To represent the Christian community in Malaysia on all matters that affect or are of interest to it;
- To consult and work with the Government and non-governmental (religious and secular) bodies at all administrative levels, on all matters of common interest and concern.⁴¹

The CFM works closely with an interfaith organization: the Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhish, and Taoism (MCCBCHST) in order to address wider issues affecting the non-Muslim minorities in Malaysia.⁴² Throughout its journey, the CFM has sought to also balance the

³⁹ CFM 30th Anniversary Magazine, 27 April 2015, 18.

⁴⁰ CFM 30th Anniversary Magazine, 27 April 2015, 21-24.

⁴¹ "About Us," Christian Federation of Malaysia (CFM), accessed April 04, 2018, <http://www.cfmmasia.org/About-CFM>.

⁴² <https://harmonymalaysia.wordpress.com/>.

reactive tendency of its work – especially in relation to issues around Islamization and religious freedom. It has organized numerous conferences that address issues of national concern affecting all Christians. The themes of the conferences well summarizes the pressing concerns for Christians in Malaysia such as “The Way Forward towards a Caring Society, towards a Just Society, towards a Moral Society (1995), “National Integration and Unity – the Church’s Response (2005), “Navigating through the Storms” (2009) just to name a few. The production of the Merdeka (translated as ‘independence’) and the Malaysia Statements by the Christian Federation of Malaysia has aimed to use the occasion as a means to articulate the concerns and aspirations of Christians to the wider public.

In recent years especially during the period the Merdeka Day and Malaysia Day statements, there appears to be a development from its original stated purpose of religious freedom (which is stated in the last three aims) towards a role that has involved some level of advocacy; additionally, in recent years the CFM has found itself to addressing issues beyond minority concerns only related to Christian interests towards more intentionally identifying with general shared concerns of fellow citizens about the national identity and nation building.⁴³ Indeed, the yearly statements from 2010-2017 examined in this essay is a part that offers a snapshot of how the CFM expresses its pastoral and prophetic voice in the Malaysian context. This is because the audience of the statements unlike a pastoral letter has two audiences: First the Christian, and then the wider society. Another dimension is that it is also addressing the governing authorities while also considering the wider citizenry. Thus, while

⁴³ J. Liow, *Religion and Nationalism in Southeast Asia* (Cambridge University Press, 2016); Platzdasch and Saravanamuttu, *Religious Diversity in Muslim-Majority States in Southeast Asia: Areas of Toleration and Conflict*.

the statements tend to more general in nature, the specificity of issues also suggests that CFM wishes to make their view heard to those in the corridors of power as well as the citizens on the street. The other important aspect of reading the statements is that they are normative statements which to some extent provide some continuity of theological vision throughout the years. There are other statements that seem to interrupt this flow especially when they are addressing pressing issues. These are more specific and targeted to call for specific response.⁴⁴

One of the challenges for the Malaysian Christian voice has been their inability to be heard. This can be understood in two ways. First, the media conditions for the public sphere in Malaysia is severely restrictive where there is limited freedom of expression in the country. This is in spite of the opening up of the media space since the 1988 Mahathir Cyberjaya initiative Multimedia super corridor.⁴⁵ Second, more significantly, there appears to be the turning of a deaf ear towards the complaints of the church leaders in closed door situations. In the context of the 'Allah' Controversy, Bishop Ng Moon Hing speaking on behalf of the CFM commented how they were compelled to bring concerns into the public sphere in order to gain attention.⁴⁶ Therefore, to some extent, with media conditions are not necessarily favorable and the governing authorities who send mixed signals, the CFM and other Christian voices nonetheless press on using whatever available means to makes their concerns known through press releases and public statements in online news portals.

⁴⁴ For other statements, declarations, and press statements from 2016-2018, see <http://www.cfmmmsia.org/cfm-statements-2016>

⁴⁵ "New Year Message", Christian Federation of Malaysia, 2012.

⁴⁶ "New Year Message", Christian Federation of Malaysia, 2012.

The Struggle to Speak Pastorally and Prophetically in the Public Sphere

Overall the CFM Merdeka Day and Malaysia Day statements fluctuate in its pastoral and prophetic tone. This is understandable due to the occasions that have given rise to the statements. However, it may also suggest that the CFM statements point to an internal tension between offering an interruptive critical discourse and a theological imagination that models a distinctive Christian perspective that differs from normal civil society statements within a human rights framework. For example, in 2011, the CFM statement displayed a substantive elaboration of the key social issues and included a call to ‘reject all extremism’.⁴⁷ Yet in 2012, the statement appears to be rather tame in comparison with minimal critique; while the focus on the future and on children was noteworthy, there was little called attention to specifics apart from the consistent complaint about ‘strident narrowmindedness’ of people in power.

One explanation of the varied tone of the statements could also be attributed to the fact that the CFM does issue other specific press statements on pressing issues that have arisen in the public sphere; therefore the Merdeka Day and Malaysia Day statements in particular do not necessarily aim for comprehensiveness. In the following, I will highlight the main themes that emerge from these statements to show what are the key priorities of the CFM as well as how they seek to articulate them in the public sphere.

Defending Religious Freedom

The consistent theme of CFM statements have been in line with its founding aims of safeguarding ‘religious freedom and rights’ of

⁴⁷“Invest in the Future”, *Merdeka Day and Malaysia Day Statement*, Christian Federation of Malaysia, 2012; “Walk the Talk”, *Merdeka Day and Malaysia Day Statement*, Christian Federation of Malaysia, 2011.

the Christian community. The issue of Religious Freedom is paramount. Consistently, in all its statements, the CFM highlights the need for its own religious practices to be safe guarded. In 2010, it draws attention to the Malaysian Federal Constitution as "the sole foundational document that symbolizes our collective hopes and dreams for our beloved secular Malaysia".⁴⁸ Sentences such as this is a direct response to the calls to present Malaysia as an Islamic State (a country with Islamic laws supreme above the current secular status quo).⁴⁹ The statement also draws attention to the National Philosophy called the *Rukun Negara* that was birthed out of the ethnic conflicts of May 13, 1969. In 2013, concerns over the Malaysian legal system are mentioned again, and this is where the discourse of Human Rights is also expressed in the same breath next to the uplifting of human dignity. This particular year was important partly because of the closely contested 13th general elections of 2013 that was marred by much debate over the role of religion – particularly Islam -- in the public sphere much to the dismay of the church leaders. Therefore, not only the CFM had to principally reassert its position on the Federal Constitution, it also was responding to ongoing pressures to reinterpret the fundamental meaning of the constitutional foundations of the nation.

During the course of debates and controversies over religion during the period of 2010-2017, the Prime Minister's department did set up a National Unity Consultative Council in 2013 soon after the 13th general election as "an effort of national reconciliation to reduce racial polarization and building united Malaysia nation", but according to critics it too seemed ineffective in resolving the conflicts or controversies involving Muslim and non-Muslim

⁴⁸ "KPI for Government: Doing Good, Punishing Wrong-Doers, *Merdeka Day and Malaysia Day Statement*, Christian Federation of Malaysia, 2010.

⁴⁹ See A. Harding, *The Constitution of Malaysia: A Contextual Analysis* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2012).

concerns as well as wider issues affecting national unity.⁵⁰ This ineffectiveness might partially be because in the religious controversies, the federal government or institutions associated with the government are often perceived as the initiator of the controversies; for instance, the Apostasy controversy of Lina Joy was due to the National Registration Department's refusal to remove 'Muslim' from her identity card.⁵¹ Besides this high profile case of Lina Joy that ended with her losing the legal battle, in recent years, there have also been other legal cases testing the impartiality of the Malaysian courts, for example, new cases from the indigenous Christians in Sarawak have drawn attention back to questions of religious freedom and legal jurisdiction.⁵²

A reoccurring theme that is further heightened as the statements come to 2017 is the increasing government restrictiveness that the ruling governing authorities have over the Christian communities accentuating an overall climate where there is a Malay-Muslim hegemony that Christians and other non-Muslims are confronted with. This is why the CFM continues to note serious concerns over 'the independence of the judiciary' and the 'continued erosion of the secular character of the Constitution and the Federation'.⁵³

⁵⁰ See "10 Things to Know about the NUCC's Harmony Bills," Poskod Malaysia, September 15, 2014, accessed November 19, 2018.

<https://poskod.my/cheat-sheets/national-unity-consultative-council/> and Melissa Chi, "Council behind National Harmony Bills Clueless about Planned New Law", Malay Mail, August 10, 2015, accessed April 4, 2018.

<http://www.themalaymailonline.com/malaysia/article/council-behind-national-harmony-bills-clueless-about-planned-new-law>.

⁵¹ T. Kortteinen, "Islamic Resurgence and the Ethnicization of the Malaysian State: The Case of Lina Joy," *SOJOURN: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia* 23, no. 2 (2008).

⁵² "Sarawak Christian Group Disappointed with Apostasy Ruling," Free Malaysia Today, March 05, 2018, accessed April 4, 2018.

<http://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2018/03/05/sarawak-christian-group-disappointed-with-apostasy-ruling/>.

⁵³ "Let us Unite to Care Deeply for all our communities", *Merdeka Day and Malaysia Day Statement*, Christian Federation of Malaysia, 2017.

Addressing Harmful Political, Legal, Economic and Social Developments

Although, one is tempted to be dismissive of the political use (or abuse) of religion in the public sphere as irrational, the issue of political actors and the political atmosphere of Malaysia is concern that the CFM has increasingly confronted. In the course of rebuking incendiary speech and behavior by politicians, the Malaysian Christian leadership – that have maintained that they are non-partisan – have been accused on partisanship aligning itself with the political opposition.⁵⁴ While offering the positive pastoral call to nation building is the constant feature of the Merdeka Day and Malaysia Day statements, increasingly the CFM statements have become more explicit in naming the perceived negative and harmful political climate of Malaysia. Earlier attention on hate speech and religious extremism in 2010 and 2012 were more general in nature.⁵⁵ However, there have also been stronger remarks on 'evil people' that seek damage and destroy pass unity of the nation; these actors and to some extent the governing authorities are alluded to as not using their positions of influence to speak against hate speech. In 2013, the CFM called peace-loving Malaysians "to reject those who are racists and religious chauvinists in both their speech and actions ... [and] to actively resist all who use race and religion to drum up fear and hatred against others for political mileage and advantage."⁵⁶ In the

⁵⁴ See "Academic Challenges Bishop's Claim Church Is Non-partisan," Free Malaysia Today, September 21, 2017, accessed April 4, 2018, <http://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2017/09/21/academic-challenges-bishops-claim-church-is-non-partisan> and "CFM: Church Will Always Remain Non-partisan | Malay Mail," Malaysia | Malay Mail, December 25, 2017, accessed April 4, 2018, <http://www.themalaymailonline.com/malaysia/article/cfm-church-will-always-remain-apolitical>.

⁵⁵ *Merdeka Day and Malaysia Day Statement*, Christian Federation of Malaysia, 2010 and *Merdeka Day and Malaysia Day Statement*, Christian Federation of Malaysia, 2012.

⁵⁶ "A Nation for All", *Merdeka Day and Malaysia Day Statement*, Christian

2014 statement that was clearly emphasizing the positive theme of hope, it expressed continual frustration of the downhill spiral of interfaith and interethnic harmonious relations. The severe language below sheds light on the deep concern from the Christian leadership:

We are also witnessing an escalation in ethnic and religious extremism, where *unchecked sectarian forces of hatred and bigotry*, often fuelled by misinformation and misinterpretation, lies and inflammatory speeches, are ripping apart the social fabric of our nation that had been built on the principles of moderation and multi-culturalism. We believe that all Malaysians truly have cause for concern.⁵⁷

In 2016, the CFM named explicitly a range of actions in the public sphere by the government authorities and also politicians associated with the ruling coalition that have disrupted the peaceful coexistence between citizens of different ethnicities and religions:

Further deterioration of racial polarization through *deliberate actions of segregation, hateful speeches and intimidation calls*; discriminative application of anti-sedition and anti-hate speech laws; wrongful usage of investigations where the complainants are intimidated instead, and freedom of travel is curtailed; anti-corruption laws are being selectively applied; and a new potentially repressive law has come into force.⁵⁸

Federation of Malaysia, 2013.

⁵⁷ "We Must Continue to Hope", *Merdeka Day and Malaysia Day Statement*, Christian Federation of Malaysia, 2014 [emphasis added].

⁵⁸ "Celebrating Unity through our Diversity", *Merdeka Day and Malaysia Day Statement*, Christian Federation of Malaysia, 2016. [emphasis added]

Additionally, the CFM statements raise the awareness of economic concerns that overlaps with the alarming political climate and the legal regression. In 2010, although the CFM welcomed "the policy of inclusive development" that included the indigenous people of both west and east Malaysia as well as "the urban poor, the marginalized, and the powerless", the statement also noted "evil people in this country that do not seek the common good and well-being of all Malaysians"; furthermore, the statement called the government to "frustrate the efforts of all such groups" particularly even if they are "elements within the administration of the ruling coalition itself."⁵⁹ Later statements in 2016 highlighted the need for "meaningful sharing [and] partnership towards sustainable economic, social, cultural and political growth and development ..."⁶⁰ These statements are critical because of the affirmative action policies in the Malaysian context but also further accentuated by the economic growth of Malaysia since the 1980s. The weakening of the democratic institutions as well as later questionable economic policies in the past as well as new policies that emerged in 2016.⁶¹

As Muslims and non-Muslims voice their hopes for religious harmony in the public sphere; they often face hindrances to realize these ideals highlighted above; and thus resulting in some cases their decision to resort to the courts for resolutions. Critics or skeptics argue that even with the formation of the interreligious consultative body such as MCCBCHST, the efforts towards interreligious harmony with Muslims have been uphill due to the lack of Muslim

⁵⁹ *Merdeka Day and Malaysia Day Statement*, Christian Federation of Malaysia, 2010.

⁶⁰ *Merdeka Day and Malaysia Day Statement*, Christian Federation of Malaysia, 2016.

⁶¹ "A Prayer for Truth and Justice", *Merdeka Day and Malaysia Day Statement*, Christian Federation of Malaysia, 2015; *Merdeka Day and Malaysia Day Statement*, Christian Federation of Malaysia, 2016; *Merdeka Day and Malaysia Day Statement*, Christian Federation of Malaysia, 2017.

participation or in some cases outright opposition.⁶² Furthermore, in 2017, the abduction of Pastor Raymond Koh has raised a deep cause for concern among Malaysians.⁶³ Religious leaders rightly have expressed concern over the safety and security of religious communities;⁶⁴ there are also key Muslim voices that have also expressed their concern.⁶⁵ The institutions including the police have caused the Christian leadership to tread carefully in raising awareness on the overall security of the nation. Therefore, the overall developments in various spheres have not been encouraging for the maintenance of the peace and harmony among the religiously diverse population.

Confronting the Abuse of Power

An implied allusion to abuse and misuse of political power was already present even in the statements of 2010 right through to 2014. Furthermore, other supplementary statements also reinforce the frustration of the CFM in their engagement with the government in closed doors. However, for the Merdeka Day and Malaysia Day Statements, in 2015, the strongest statement issued by the CFM was where the Prime Minister was highlighted in the wake of alleged financial impropriety as well as the unsettled political climate with enforcement agencies that appear to prey on the weak, and

⁶² K Shanmuga, "The Politics of Dialogue" The Nut Graph, accessed April 04, 2018, <http://www.thenutgraph.com/the-politics-of-dialogue/>.

⁶³ "Malaysia: More Questions than Answers in Kidnapping of Pastor Raymond Koh." Asian Correspondent. March 06, 2017. Accessed April 04, 2018. <https://asiancorrespondent.com/2017/03/malaysia-questions-answers-kidnapping-pastor-raymond-koh/#DfQXZqv5zA78jM20.99>.

⁶⁴ Christian Federation of Malaysia Statement "People of faith should be free from threats of violence and intimidation", 17 February 2017.

⁶⁵ "Mujahid Sanggup Berunding Dengan Penculik Pastor Koh." Free Malaysia Today. March 06, 2017, accessed April 04, 2018. <http://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/bahasa/2017/03/06/mujahid-sanggup-berunding-dengan-penculik-pastor-raymond/>.

economically marginalized.⁶⁶ The opening paragraph reads as follows:

As we approach Merdeka Day and Malaysia Day this year, our nation finds itself in the midst of a political maelstrom the likes of which has never been seen before in this country. *An embattled Prime Minister seeks to maintain his hold on power in the face of serious allegations of corruption and financial impropriety.* Ministers and senior civil servants are sacked or transferred. One enforcement agency confronts another. Each new day brings with it fresh revelations, rumours and anecdotes, challenging credibility and credulity. *Our nation is in crisis.*⁶⁷

The above statement clearly shows that CFM is no longer merely speaking on behalf of the Christian community and interests but now has ventured to speak openly, explicitly, and courageously about what has been named as "The world's biggest financial scandal".⁶⁸ The question of poor governance's has also been an important theme where policies enacted have not been beneficial to the Orang Asli (indigenous people in Malaysia), but now a financial scandal that has drawn international attention further raises alarm on the total state of governance in Malaysia.⁶⁹ In the 2017 Statement, the CFM highlights the following:

⁶⁶ *Merdeka Day and Malaysia Day Statement*, Christian Federation of Malaysia, 2015.

⁶⁷ *Merdeka Day and Malaysia Day Statement*, Christian Federation of Malaysia, 2015 [emphasis added].

⁶⁸ See, "Financial Times Malaysia: The 1MDB Money Trail," Financial Times, accessed April 04, 2018.

<https://www.ft.com/content/0981b2c8-cfe3-11e5-92a1-c5e23ef99c77>; Shamim Adam and Laurence Arnold, "A Guide to the Worldwide Probes of Malaysia's 1MDB Fund," Bloomberg.com, March 07, 2018, accessed April 04, 2018, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-03-07/malaysia-s-1mdb-fund-spawns-worldwide-probes-quicktake>.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

... the political pitting of one religion against another (making the Christian community the proverbial bogeyman), the accountability of political leaders, the perceived selective prosecution of incidences of corruption, the government's withdrawal of a provision banning the unilateral conversion of children, the general elections which are to take place by next year or the escalating financial burden of the average Malaysian especially of those from the lower income bracket whose basic livelihood has been adversely impacted.⁷⁰

Therefore, in the context of speaking on Jesus' call to "love our neighbor as ourselves", when the CFM states "our faith teaches us that the suppressive use of might is not right" it has shifted from a pastoral tone to a prophetic one where arguably the Christian leadership now is articulating a public discourse that is both interruptive of disruptive abuse of power that have created conditions that are unfavorable for decent living as well as neighborly coexistence.⁷¹

Struggle between Resistance and Reconciliation

Traditionally, during election seasons, the main call to action of the CFM has been through the 'vote wisely' campaign in concert with the Merdeka Day and Malaysia Day Statements encouraging Christian participation in the democratic process. However, critics have questioned the lack of specificity in the call to action. Alwyn Lau, for example, claims that the CFM statements are incoherent and displays an anemic political imagination that arguably weakens a potential for greater mobilization of the Christian community. He faults the CFM for not showing consistency by publicly calling the

⁷⁰ *Merdeka Day and Malaysia Day Statement*, Christian Federation of Malaysia, 2017.

⁷¹ *Merdeka Day and Malaysia Day Statement*, Christian Federation of Malaysia, 2017.

Christian minority to exercise their vote against the ruling coalition after the CFM public criticisms of the ruling government. Yet other Christian voices have alluded to the CFM overall approach in the public sphere may be too confrontational.⁷² A number of Muslim critics have accused the church of being partisan even for the "Vote Wisely" campaigns.⁷³ There have been even accusations of those self-identified as evangelicals that they are part of Christian Zionism and dominion theology movements (speculatively funded or influenced by Christians from the United States).⁷⁴ Lau rightly shows that the CFM approach is not necessarily revolutionary; however, he appears to reduce his assessment of the CFM on the lack of an explicit 'command' to its members to vote against the ruling coalition. Perhaps, he had not fully taken into account the internal and external conditions that may constrain the CFM that does not easily enable it to convey a revolutionary rhetoric in public.⁷⁵ Critical interventions of Christians in Malaysia may include other forms of expression that are not necessarily explicitly political such as voting (albeit it is very important); yet other more creative modes of *participation* and even *resistance* have been proposed in the area of interreligious relations and civic engagement may offer a more holistic perspective.⁷⁶

⁷² For example, see Lee Min Choon, *Return to the Golden Land* (Petaling Jaya, Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia: Self-published, 2017).

⁷³ "Academic Challenges Bishop's Claim Church Is Non-partisan," Free Malaysia Today, September 21, 2017, accessed November 11, 2018. <http://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2017/09/21/academic-challenges-bishops-claim-church-is-non-partisan/>.

⁷⁴ See Iain Buchanan, *Sang Nila Utama And The Lion Of Judah*, 2nd ed., (Citizens International, 2015) that suggest an overreaching generalized conclusion in terms of causal relations between strands of US Christianity and Malaysian Christianity.

⁷⁵ Lau, "Intimating the Unconscious: A Psychoanalytical Refraction of Christian Theo-Political Activism in Malaysia."

⁷⁶ Sivín Kit, "Christian Participation and Creative Resistance: Reflecting on Luther's Two-Fold Governance in Muslim-Majority Malaysia," *Dialog* 56, no. 3 (2017).

In his brief reflective snapshot of Christianity in Malaysia for 1989-2013, Roxborough highlights *prayer* and *belonging* as key themes illuminating how the spiritual resources of the Christian community have been brought to bear to face the challenges Christians face. Where the challenges would arise has been the tension between prayer and action.⁷⁷ The theme of belonging is rightly put since in recent years particularly after the 12th general elections in 2008 and the 13th general elections in 2013, The church have positioned itself clearly as a contributor to nation building which is foundational to the CFM Merdeka Day and Malaysia Day statements. And the formation of the national identity is important to the churches' self-identity. This is clear from its commitment to the use of the national language Bahasa Malaysia (or Melayu) in its liturgy, Christian education, and theological education.⁷⁸ The expressions of prayer and belonging of the Christian community through the CFM statements can be understood as part of longer term efforts that integrate prayer, a sense of belonging, and the call to action.

Admittedly, one may question the extent that the Merdeka Day and Malaysia Day statements lack prophetic rigor and often stops short of a definite courageous call towards specific actions that would demand greater sacrifice on the Christian minority. Nonetheless, the nature of public theology in Malaysia may require further discernment as to what extent it is the role of an organization like CFM who's stated aims originally did not involve a specific focus on advocacy to expand its terms of reference more explicitly.

⁷⁷ J. Roxborough, *A History of Christianity in Malaysia* (Genesis Books, 2014).

⁷⁸ See Kuching Declaration, Christian Federation of Malaysia, 2008. Besides Sabah Theological Seminary that uses the national language Bahasa Malaysia and various Bible colleges in East Malaysia, the Malaysia Theological Seminary in West Malaysia has also launched its Bahasa Malaysia program for Theological education by Extension in 2013, and its Bachelor of theology programme in 2018.

The limitation of CFM's public discourse may reflect an ongoing tension to negotiate how a public theology may be articulate in concert with the call to a social ethics that would not only provide pastoral guidance for the Christian community but also offer a model of prophetic witness that would energize the Christian minority in politically, culturally, and religiously volatile environment. Furthermore, Peter Rowan rightly points out that there is a gap between what is professed by Malaysian Christians with what is actually practiced when it comes to Christian engagement in society.⁷⁹ This appears to be an immediate hindrance that the CFM aims to overcome partially through the Merdeka Day and Malaysia Day Statements in concert with its other specific statements responding to various issues. In other words, there may still be internal divisions that require further attention before the Christian community can truly become *agents of reconciliation* in a society that is under constant pressure of political actors to divide and rule over the citizenry.

Attending to the Gap between Public Articulation and Actual Engagement

It is important to note that the public statements of the CFM represent a visible articulation of positions and concerns informed by much ongoing activity and specific actions that does not necessary receive much media and public attention. The CFM acts primarily as a consultative body where specific programmes and collective action is carried out by its component bodies: The Roman Catholic Church, the Council of Churches of Malaysia, and the National Evangelical Christian Fellowship. Nonetheless, there are actual engagements of CFM that include deliberations with federal government agencies on

⁷⁹ See P. Rowan, *Proclaiming the Peacemaker: The Malaysian Church as an Agent of Reconciliation in a Multicultural Society* (Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2013).

matters related to policy matters such as resolving visa approvals for foreign-language Christian workers to serve in churches with foreign congregations, clarifications on government-service tax with officials due to its possible impact on church institutions, providing input for the religion module for the National service.⁸⁰ Additionally, The CFM also works with the Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism, and Taoism especially when issues arise affecting the religious freedom and interreligious harmony of the nation cannot be addressed only within a narrow Christian perspective.⁸¹

Such deliberations and interventions inform the public statements for the Merdeka and Malaysia Day Statements highlighted in this article and also other specific issue-based statements usually in protest of unjust actions or policies by the government. For example, in 2014, when copies of the Malay Language Bible was seized by state Islamic religious department officers, besides voicing their protest, the CFM and relevant bodies such as the Bible Society of Malaysia actively engaged various parties from politicians to the government bureaucracy which resulted in the successful release of the Bibles.⁸² However, not all interventions are related to short-term controversies. There have been less confrontational ongoing activities where longer-term solutions

⁸⁰ Interview with Elder Tan Kong Beng, Executive Secretary of the Christian Federation of Malaysia, 7 November 2018.

⁸¹ Chong Eu Choong, "The Christian Response to State-led Islamization in Malaysia" in Bernhard Platzdasch and Johan Saravanamuttu, *Religious Diversity in Muslim-majority States in Southeast Asia: Areas of Toleration and Conflict* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2014), 299-300.

⁸² See "Selangor trying to 'wash its hands' over seized Bibles issue, says CFM" The Star Online, October 18, 2015, accessed November 26, 2018, <https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2014/04/04/cfm-says-sgor-wash-hand-bible-issue/> and Akil Yunus, "Jais Returns Seized Bibles," The Star Online, October 14, 2015, accessed November 26, 2018, <https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2014/11/14/bibles-returned-to-christian-community-azmin-ali-jais/>.

have the potential to develop. For example, in the context of a key government initiative in 2016 to address the growing unease regarding interreligious relations, both Rev Dr Hermen Shastri, the General Secretary of the Council of Churches of Malaysia took on the role of the deputy chairman and Elder Tan Kong Beng, the executive secretary of the CFM also served as a committee member of the Committee to Promote Understanding and Harmony among Religious Adherents which has conducted monthly or bi-monthly meetings for religious leaders from both Muslim and non-Muslim communities to be able to bring up their concerns before each other such as unilateral conversions and the use of religious terminology that affect religious harmony.⁸³ Although the progress has been slow because the complexities of the Malaysian scenario which still requires the involvement of Muslim authorities such as Muftis from various states, the establishment of such a committee nonetheless is still considered as a long awaited and overdue achievement for Malaysia to not neglect or even ignore non-Muslim voices. At the very least, non-Muslims have a platform where they "sit at the table" with their Muslim counterparts in a respectful manner to address any grievances or complaints from respective religious communities.⁸⁴

Overall, the primary function that CFM remains as an important platform for consultation among the representatives of the Christian component bodies, but admittedly initiative to conduct specific

⁸³ Interview Rev Dr Hermen Shastri, General Secretary of the Council of Churches of Malaysia, 2 November 2018. See also, Abas, Azura. "Najib: Inter-religious Committees Necessary towards Achieving Harmony and Peace." *Nst.com.my*. February 24, 2016, accessed November 11, 2018. <https://www.nst.com.my/news/2016/02/129307/najib-inter-religious-committees-necessary-towards-achieving-harmony-and-peace> and "Putrajaya Unveils 32 New Members of Religious Harmony Panel." *The Edge Markets*. February 24, 2016, accessed November 11, 2018. <http://www.theedgemarkets.com/article/putrajaya-unveils-32-new-members-religious-harmony-panel>.

⁸⁴ Interview Rev Dr Hermen Shastri, General Secretary of the Council of Churches of Malaysia, 2 November 2018.

programmes entrusted to be carried out through the respective component bodies has shown uneven results due to differing emphasis of each component body.⁸⁵ Christian ecumenism and public engagement in Malaysia continues to be driven thus far often in reaction with external pressures and controversies; the question remains to what extent there is a stronger commitment and motivation in ecumenical relations that is built on theological convictions beyond immediate practical considerations?⁸⁶ Thus, while the CFM has been faithful to its founding principles and does not operate from an armchair distance to the actual needs of grass-root Christians, there remains a distance between the public articulation of the CFM positions with grass-root initiated solutions (although new efforts are emerging in the last 10 years).⁸⁷ The achievements of the CFM may be rightly viewed as able to bring Christians to face common obstacles, the public statements is one significant way to articulate a common Christian voice and present a call action. But there still appears to be insufficient collective will and commitment from church leaders towards forging a more intentional, theologically robust, and the socially pro-active posture in support of a more impactful Christian witness in a multi-religious context.⁸⁸ As CFM speaks out in the Malaysian public sphere often characterized by divisiveness, it is also challenged to reflect back on the forces and inadequacies that hinder the Malaysian Christian community from greater unity of action and reflection in expressing their common Christian witness in a multi-religious Muslim majority context.

⁸⁵ Interview with Elder Tan Kong Beng, Executive Secretary of the Christian Federation of Malaysia, 7 November 2018.

⁸⁶ Interview Rev Dr Hermen Shastri, General Secretary of the Council of Churches of Malaysia, 2 November 2018.

⁸⁷ Interview with Elder Tan Kong Beng, Executive Secretary of the Christian Federation of Malaysia, 7 November 2018.

⁸⁸ Interview Rev Dr Hermen Shastri, General Secretary of the Council of Churches of Malaysia, 2 November 2018.

Concluding Remarks

This article has merely sketched and provided an overview of the main trajectory that CFM has traveled in through an examination of its yearly public statements that is aligned to Malaysians commemoration of independence and its formation – both which are central to the articulation of the meaning of being a Malaysian. The public discourse of the CFM demonstrates a voice that conveys both a pastoral and a prophetic tone that has sought to defend religious freedom, address harmful socio-political, legal, and even economic developments, and to some extent confronted the abuse of power by governing authorities under severely restrictive conditions. However, as the CFM articulates the concerns of the Malaysian Christian leadership within a backdrop of contestant socio-political and religious controversy, the appearance of incoherence and caution draws attention to acknowledge the inner tensions and outer limitations that may constrain the production of public statements. Nonetheless, arising from a Christian minority in a Muslim-majority context, the CFM Merdeka Day and Malaysia Day statements are not the last word on any given issue but rather attempts at offering initial words of public theologizing articulating concerns affecting Christians and the wider Malaysian society to be vocalized in the public sphere. There is still more room to improve on closing the gap between the public articulation of the Christian voice with actual engagement on the ground with various political and social actors.

Arguably, it may be too early to claim the extent that the CFM public discourse is a reflection of 'political anemia' of Malaysian Christians.⁸⁹ Neither can we claim that the statements have or can become an inspirational call towards concerted action, nor are the

⁸⁹ Lau, "Intimating the Unconscious: A Psychoanalytical Refraction of Christian Theo-Political Activism in Malaysia," 284.

statements in the same theological league as the Barmen Declaration. Rather, I would offer a more modest claim that the CFM Statements at the very least offer us a glimpse of what doing theology in the middle of testing and trial looks like. Such public theologizing is not from the armchair contemplative or therapeutic posture but rather it is in the midst of ongoing experience of affliction (or even attacks). The CFM statements are products of those who continually engaged in immersing oneself in the practice of the third rule of Luther's way of doing theology after *Oratio* (prayer) and *Meditatio* (meditation):

there is the *tentatio*, testing (*Anfechtung*). This is the touchstone. It teaches you not only to know and understand but also to experience how right, how true, how sweet, how lovely, how mighty, how comforting God's word is: it is wisdom supreme.⁹⁰

And this is how the Malaysian ecumenical community has demonstrated doing theology in a minority context. Perhaps, the experience of gaining wisdom through such public theologizing would also offer a bridge to representatives and leaders in the Muslim-majority to pursue a national solidarity not bound by the respective self-interests of each community. Above all, as Malaysian Christians gain courage to publicly speaking the truth in the midst of divisiveness they might also has to self-critically address forces of divisiveness within its own community that hinders the Christian witness in Malaysia. In the near future, as an answer to the prayer of Jesus in John 17, Malaysian Christianity would need to further intensify its development of a truly transformative theological vision and witness that transcends ethnoreligious centric interests that addresses its own pressing concerns but is also relevant to other Asian contexts and beyond.

⁹⁰ Luther, *Luther's Works: Career of the Reformer*. Vol. 34, 286-87.

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Community, Solidarity, and Subsistence
A reflection on the ecumenical movement in
the Philippines

社區、團結、存活

菲律賓基督徒合一運動的反思

Lizette Pearl TAPIA-RAQUEL

[ABSTRACT] In the Philippine context, reports and reflections on the ecumenical movement are about stories on the lives and struggles of the common people. From experience, there are three elements to listening to and telling stories: trust, truth, time. When people share their stories of suffering and pain, triumphs and trials, life and death, they entrust us with their very lives. And this trust must be held sacred. In encountering and engaging them where they are, we see, smell, taste, hear and touch the truth ourselves. These are truths that are undeniable because we experience them ourselves when we dare to go where the people are crying out for life. And these truths are from the perspectives of the most vulnerable. Finally, they must be timely. The ecumenical movement must move with the times, immerse itself in current struggles, seek to be relevant and responsive to issues of life and death today. This article seeks to reflect on the commitment of those in the ecumenical journey in the

Philippines to listen to and share the stories of the suffering Filipino people. It also presents theological perspectives on what it means to be a participant in the ecumenical movement which is about being committed to communities, practicing radical solidarity and living in subsistence.

[摘要] 在菲律賓的背景下，基督徒合一運動的思考是關於普通人的生活 and 掙扎的故事。根據經驗，聽取和講述故事有三個要素：信任、真理、及時。當人分享他們的痛苦、勝利和考驗，生與死的故事時，他們將生命託付給我們，這種信任必須保持神聖。在與他們相遇到時，我們自己看到、聞到、品嚐、聽到和觸摸到真相，這是無可否認的真理，因為我們膽敢前去人們為生命而叫喊的地方，我們親身體驗到這些真理，而這些真理是來自最弱勢群體的觀點。最後，他們必須來得及時。基督徒合一運動必須與時俱進，沉浸在當前的掙扎中，尋找與今天生死攸關的事並做出回應。本文是一班在菲律賓基督教合一旅程中承諾傾聽和分享當地受苦人民故事的人的反思。文章從神學觀點指出，成為基督徒合一運動的一份子，就要致力於社區，實踐激進的團結和基本的存活。

From Culture to Community

In November 2013, Typhoon Haiyan or Yolanda made a landfall in the Philippines. It is the strongest landfalling cyclone on record with maximum sustained winds of 285 km/hr. equivalent of Category 5, with storm surges up to 17 feet.¹ It destroyed life and property especially in Samar and Leyte, leaving over 6,000 dead. Unofficial reports say that there were over 15,000 dead but the

¹ "Typhoon Haiyan." *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 5 May 2018, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Typhoon_Haiyan.

government had stopped counting after the body bags ran out.² The cost of damage was estimated to be over USD 2 billion. It left 1.9 million homeless and over 6 million displaced. Tacloban, one of the most devastated areas, was described as a ‘war zone.’³ Over three years after the disaster, the survivors of Typhoon Haiyan continue to demand for rehabilitation and support. The Aquino Government was criticized strongly for their response and the United Nations itself described the efforts as ‘inadequate.’ Benigno “Noynoy” Aquino, then president, never visited Tacloban until the end of his term and the people continue to express anger and disgust for his government’s apathy. In January 2015, Pope Francis held a mass in Tacloban in an act of solidarity with the survivors of Typhoon Haiyan. Over 200,000 people were present.⁴

Tacloban received help from the governments of other countries as well as international agencies but these were still insufficient. However, there were more communities which were equally in need but did not receive anything from the government or from any agency. It was to such a community that we were asked to do ‘mission.’ In March 2014, over a year after Typhoon Haiyan, my husband Norman, and I visited Maalan, Maayon, in the Province of Capiz. It was a three-hour flight from Manila, half-a-day of travel on land in a car, and about an hour of an uphill climb on a motorcycle. There were some steep areas on the unpaved roads and we walked on foot until we could ride the motorcycle again. Before we visited

² Suerte Felipe, Cecile. “Yolanda Death Toll as High as 15,000, Priest Says.” *Philstar.com*, The Philippine Star, 5 Jan. 2015, www.philstar.com/headlines/2015/01/05/1409522/yolanda-death-toll-high-15000-priest-says.

³ Times, The Manila. “Super Typhoon ‘Yolanda’ Defines Aquino Presidency.” *The Manila Times Online*, The Manila Times, 15 Nov. 2013, www.manilatimes.net/super-typhoon-yolanda-defines-aquino-presidency/53296/.

⁴ AFP. “Pope Flees Philippine Storm, Cuts Short Typhoon Mercy Trip.” *Daily Mail Online*, Associated Newspapers, 17 Jan. 2015. www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/afp/article-2913974/Pope-set-emotional-day-Philippine-typhoon-survivors.html.

Maalan, we imagined that hunger would be evident and the land would be barren. We thought we brought with us the wisdom of rebuilding their homes. We imagined that people would sound desperate and be consumed with hopelessness. Instead, the community in Maalan, Maayon, had fields planted with rice and corn. Though they were heavily in debt for the seeds and fertilizers which were necessary for farming, they had planted despite the challenges and would soon reap the fruits from the land. We learned from the people that concrete and steel structures were broken down like crackers and wire during the typhoon as we saw the wasted remnants of these, while bamboo slats for walls and floors withstood the winds and the heavy rains even of Typhoon Yolanda. They had rebuilt their homes and lives with the limited resources they had. Still, we were welcomed by a community which lamented their cruel fate, understood the injustice and oppression they continued to experience, but celebrated how they have survived and continue to live on despite these. I felt their sense of community but the poverty was still evident. Many of their makeshift houses were built with scrap tarpaulin and wood. These were like ovens in the middle of the day and can not give shelter when it rains. The children, too, were sick and malnourished. The farmers were heavily in debt and they paid a ten percent monthly interest on their loans. The women and men are strong but there is very little they can do without support and opportunities. Most of them were caught up in a cycle of debt and slavery. This meant they no longer enjoy the fruits of their labor. Whatever they earn for their work or from the crops were not to be given them and were to be paid immediately to their debts. It was heartbreaking!

One would think all these sufferings would make a selfish and bitter people, but they sent us home with squash and gourd from their gardens. One of the men carried them on his back and accompanied

us on the dusty and rugged road back. The entire community watched us as we walked away and repeated again and again, "Come back!", "Please don't forget us." As we walked down, I thought this must have been how people responded to Jesus in Galilee. Like the people of Maalan, Maayon, the communities where Jesus preached, healed and forgave, felt deep gratitude for the compassion and presence of the Christ. I remembered one of the first things they said to us, "You are the first ones to come and show concern for us. We thought nobody would ever come."

In many of my journeys, whenever I return home, I feel I can never truly go back. There is always a part of me that remains where I have been: with the families who welcomed us into their homes and fed us, with the women who told their stories in languages foreign to us but whose laughter and tears conveyed what words could not, in the quiet acceptance of the men who quickly prepared chicken soup for us to express their hospitality and in the eyes of children who remind us that they are no different from our own. That was our experience at Maalan, Maayon. In one day, I felt differently about who I am, the people I encountered, and what matters in this journey called life.

For me, this is what the ecumenical movement is all about. It is about going where people are crying out for life.

This journey to and with the people of Maalan, Maayon, began when we were asked by our friends in the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP),⁵ the most concrete and powerful

⁵ The National Council of Churches in the Philippines is an ecumenical fellowship of non-Roman Catholic denominations in the Philippines working for unity in faith and order. Since its establishment in 1963, it has sought to bring together the churches towards opportunities for common prophetic witness and service by responding to the relevant issues affecting people's lives. It takes the side of the suffering and the most vulnerable as has been modelled by Jesus Christ. It has ten member churches: Apostolic Catholic Church, Convention of Philippine Baptist

embodiment of the ecumenical spirit in my country, to visit the remote community. My husband was serving then as the lead person in the Outreach Ministry of our church, Central United Methodist Church, which had designated a fund for responding to people affected by disasters. So, we used our own money for the air and land travel and saw the devastation in their community with our own eyes. NCCP has always sought to bring the churches closer to the people, especially those who were suffering, and at that moment, we represented an ecumenical effort to reach out to the community. We had wanted to send them money so some of them could rebuild their homes immediately. We knew that we would not be able to help everyone but at least could help some. However, we were told by the people at NCCP that we were not just constructing stronger houses but are committed to sustaining the community. It was explained to us that if we only chose some recipients and ignored the needs of others, we would actually be destroying the community. That is, their community spirit.

People Surge,⁶ the alliance of organizations of people who have survived Typhoon Haiyan in Eastern-Visayas, Philippines, and ACT Alliance,⁷ a coalition of more than 140 churches and church-related

Churches, Episcopal Church in the Philippines, Iglesia Evangelica Metodista En Las Islas Filipinas, Iglesia Filipina Independiente, Iglesia Unida Ecumenical, Lutheran Church in the Philippines, the Salvation Army, the United Church of Christ in the Philippines, and the United Methodist Church.

⁶ People Surge was created to campaign and advocate for accountability, human rights, climate and social justice from the Philippine Government and big businesses. The people who are part of it, most of whom are survivors of climate disasters, who have concluded that there is an interconnection between disaster, environment, climate, politics and society.

⁷ ACT Alliance is a coalition of more than 140 churches and church-related organisations working together in over 100 countries to create positive and sustainable change in the lives of poor and marginalised people regardless of their religion, politics, gender, sexual orientation, race or nationality in keeping with the highest international codes and standards. ACT Alliance is supported by 25,000 staff from member organisations and mobilises about \$1.5 billion for its work each year in three targeted areas: humanitarian aid, development, and advocacy.

organizations, whose members are associated with the World Council of Churches and the Lutheran World Federation, along with the NCCP, entered into a partnership to genuinely respond to the communities devastated by Typhoon Haiyan. In many parts of the world, big businesses and governments have made the survivors of climate disasters even more vulnerable in their desire for profit and political gain. Act Alliance and the NCCP, which are ecumenical endeavors, have sought to genuinely uplift the life and dignity of the suffering people.

Today, the ecumenical movement must move towards and journey with people crying out for life. But churches' and missionaries' perspectives and rhetoric alongside colonialists on 'manifest destiny,' 'white man's burden' and 'benevolent assimilation' have not been about the poor but about the white man's 'destiny,' 'burden,' and 'benevolence.' Local churches which continue to be colonized in practice and perspectives are not any different. They are just as dominating, oppressive, and destructive to local communities.

Going back to the community of Maalan, Maayon, I had introduced myself as a pastor and a teacher. I shared that I taught about women in the Bible and female, pre-colonial native priestesses called *babaylans* to empower women and to promote gender justice. Then I asked them, "Is there a *babaylan* here?" Several women pointed to a woman not older than me. She was affirmed by her community as a spiritual leader of the community and she herself proclaimed, "I am a *babaylan*." In conservative church circles, the *babaylan* is a pagan priestess. For more critical learners of history, the *babaylan* embodied indigenous spirituality and was a community leader who was also a healer, the offerer of rituals to connect the community with the divine and the facilitator of peace and growth among the people. However, I learned that she was not only a

babaylan, but was a devout Roman Catholic and a teacher of catechism in the local parish as well. For her and her community, there was no separation or conflict between the old spirituality and the acquired religion. At another time, I was giving a lecture entitled, *Babaylan and Feminisms*, to a group of Baptist pastors at Filamer Christian University in Roxas City, Philippines. After my lecture, which validated the contributions of *babaylans* in history and their life-affirming practices, several pastors expressed appreciation for this new understanding. Even if they have been pastors for decades, they continued to go to the *babaylans* in their communities for their sicknesses but had often felt guilty of unfaithfulness to God and to Jesus Christ. The lecture I had given them was liberating.

Our native spirituality which nurtured communities before the colonizers came has been demonized and rejected in a nation that is more than 86 percent Roman Catholic, about 2 percent Protestant, and with 6 percent attending national cults today. While some communities practice some kind of dual religion, a mixture of old beliefs and a devotion to the Christian God, the missionary agenda and the conversion of the natives was not a 'holy conversion' but a 'holy confrontation,' as described by Carolyn Brewer.⁸ My unpublished Master of Divinity thesis entitled, "The Church's Violence Against Women Under Spanish Colonial History and its Continuing Impact Today," is a study of how the Spanish mission to the Philippine Islands destroyed the spirit, identity, and community of the natives, particularly the females. Before the missionaries came, the goddesses in Philippine myths, female warriors in war epics, roles in family and society, the *babaylan*, sexuality and law, and the language exhibited women's value and equality with the men,

⁸ Carolyn Brewer. *Holy Confrontation: Religion, Gender and Sexuality in the Philippines, 1521-1685* (Manila: Institute of Women's Studies, St. Scholastica's College), 2001.

whether as siblings or as spouses. The Spanish priest's perspectives, symbols, rituals, and theologies re-shaped the natives' consciousness, relationships and culture. In the Spanish chronicles, the native's religious and sexual practices were demonized and perceived as abuses. They were forced to denounce their native spirituality, their cultural, economic and political systems, and their identity as a people. Today, centuries after the first Spanish missionary expedition to the Philippines, we are a subjugated people with women being labeled as either virgins or whores, idealized as mothers, sacrificed in the name of God and religion in churches where male supremacy is a primary ideology.⁹ The Spaniards came with the sword and the cross. The Americans came with the Bible and the gun. The acceptance of these Christian symbols were not without a cost. The new religion eliminated our native alphabet, the *alibata* or *baybayin*; buried our myths and stories; demonized our cultural leaders and bastardized our cultures. In fact, the very name of our nation exhibits our colonization as a people. The Philippines or Filipinas¹⁰ was given to the islands of Leyte and Samar in honor of King Philip II of Spain. Later, *Las Islas Filipinas* or the Philippine Islands applied to the entire archipelago. In the changing of our nation's name, our cultural identity was likewise diminished and destroyed.

George Tinker defines 'cultural genocide,' as "the effective destruction of a people by systematically destroying, eroding, or undermining the integrity of the culture and system of values that defines a people and gives them life."¹¹ Jose Rizal's novels: *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo*, first published in 1886 and 1891, respectively, exposed the abuses, hypocrisy, violence and cultural

⁹ Lizette Pearl G. Tapia-Raquel, "The Church's Violence Against Women in Spanish Colonial History and its Continuing Impact Today" (M. Div. thesis, Union Theological Seminary, Philippines, 2005).

¹⁰ The name was given by Spanish explorer Ruy Lopez de Villalobos.

¹¹ George E. Tinker, *Missionary Conquest* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press) 6.

genocide of the Spanish missionaries against the natives of the Philippine Islands. Rizal belonged to the Propaganda Movement which was seeking to find representation to the Spanish Cortes, the legislative body composed of Congress and Senate in Spain. The movement was not for the separation of the Philippines from Spain. Nevertheless, Rizal was executed for rebellion on December 30, 1896.

Tinker lists four vehicles through which cultural genocide is accomplished: political, economic, religious and social aspects.¹² Politically, the Spanish government replaced the leadership of the tribal elders and issued the 'cedula,'¹³ a residence tax certificate and an identification card which the Filipino native had to possess at all times or the non-bearer could be arrested and incarcerated by the Spanish Guardia Civil. They also created Spanish settlements which segregated the Westerners from the natives and further divided the natives into social classes. Economically, the Spanish settlements also forced the natives to leave their lands and for farming and fishing communities whose livelihood was connected to the land, the natives became impoverished and utterly dependent on the economic system of the Spaniards. Religiously, the native religion and the priestesses were demonized, placing the Filipino women at the bottom of the hierarchy, branding those who did not want to convert as pagans or whores if they were women, and institutionalized gender violence through their all-male hierarchy and patriarchal ideology. Socially, the *babaylan*, as cultural leader, the *datu*, as political leader and the *panday*, as the economic leader were all disempowered as the Spanish hierarchy established its absolute power and authority over the islands. The cultural genocide was

¹² Tinker, *Missionary Conquest*, 6-8.

¹³ The Katipunan, the revolutionary movement against Spain which was launched in August 1896, had for its first symbolic act of resistance the tearing of the *cedulas*.

thorough and potent, not just under Spain but also under the United States. Until 1985 when I was in the University, we were required to take 12 units or four courses on the Spanish Language. Throughout the decade, whether in universities, elementary schools or seminaries, the ongoing debate on the medium of language for teaching had been bitter. Then it was Spanish. For about a century now, we have been measured by our grasp of the English language. Over 400 years later since the first missionaries and colonizers came, the Filipino people continues to be enslaved and subjected to cultural genocide. This time by Filipinos themselves who no longer value Philippine culture.

Reflecting on the future of theology for my context, I must consider the following questions:

First, how can a church be responsive and relevant in a context where Christianity is already the dominant religion? Second, for whom will the church construct and live out this proposed theological and ecumenical task?

The process of constructing local theologies demands a conscious *listening to culture*. It is committed to breaking the domination of local cultures by outsiders and to creating a theology of incarnation with the belief that Christ is already present in the local context even as Christ is being proclaimed there. Schreiter summarized the challenges and possibilities of listening to culture. First, in listening to the Christ in a culture, one must look at the concepts of 'creation,' 'redemption,' and 'community' in the local context. Second, a foreigner must allow himself or herself to be informed by the culture without measuring and analyzing it according to his or her own foreign culture. Third, the native members of a community must take the lead in the process and must be willing to critically describe their culture while allowing outsiders

to share their insights about their native culture. Fourth, a semantic analysis must progress to pragmatics in pursuit of constructing a local theology.¹⁴

I think doing theology in the Philippines must go beyond culture and cultural identity. In a society that is characterized by foreign domination, the rule of the elite, and mass poverty, there is a need to take seriously the issues of social class, power dynamics, justice and common good. Thus, I would adopt Schreiter's *listening to culture*, but instead of using 'culture' I would use 'community' and in place of the 'foreigner' I will use 'church.' Then the inquiry would be: First, how does a community look at the concepts of 'creation,' 'redemption,' 'salvation,' and 'peace?' Second, what must be the attitude and perspective of the church or someone who is not from the community to be informed and listen to the voices and cries of the people in the community? Third, are the members of the community able to analyze their social, political and economic situation to critically engage in conversation with those outside of their community like the church? Fourth, are the leaders or articulators in the community able to arouse, organize, and mobilize the members of the community and the church through their narratives, challenges and calls? A fifth question would be, is the church able to articulate and respond to the experiences and struggles of the community? Constructing a local theology in the Philippine context today demands 'listening to community,' and by community, I mean the most vulnerable communities: the urban poor, the laborers working in the country and those forced to migrate, the displaced farmers and fisherfolk, the indigenous peoples whose leaders are being killed for resisting mining and mono-crop plantations. It is

¹⁴ Robert J. Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies*, (New York: Orbis Books, 1985) 40-42.

with the Filipino communities in mind that I submit what I think about the future of theology and the ecumenical movement.

Not Development But Solidarity

In Mindanao today, over 500,000 hectares of land are covered by mining concessions. Over 700,000 hectares are covered by banana, pineapple, oil palm, rubber and other plantations. These lands are ancestral lands of the Lumads which are now militarized. Over fifty percent of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) are now deployed to Mindanao to secure the interests of investors. Furthermore, over 20 indigenous paramilitary groups called *Alamara*, *Magahat*, *Bagani Force*, among others, have been unleashed by the AFP and are sowing terror and division in Lumad communities. The Lumads claim that they are the targets because of their resistance to the plunder of their lands. Over 40,000 of them have already been forced to flee their own ancestral lands due to militarization. Their livelihood has been disrupted and their communities, schools, clinics and farms have been destroyed. Out of the 71 indigenous leaders killed under the former president, Benigno Simeon Aquino, 56 are Lumads. The primary agenda undergirding the disruption and destruction of communities and lives was and still is – development.

Descartes, the father of Enlightenment, introduced the principle of radical doubt where all knowledge must be based on rational thought. But after the two World Wars, it was conceded that reason does not secure progress and peace. On the contrary, it resulted in reductionism which stunted human development; reduced the earth and human beings into objects causing the enslavement of peoples, the degradation of the environment and plunder of the earth; and widened the gap between the rich and the poor because of greed. The problem was not about backwardness and underdevelopment.

Peoples and countries are poor because of the West's abuse of power causing dependency and not liberation.¹⁵ The mission agenda and the missionaries, intentionally or unintentionally, are complicit in this as a critical study of history will reveal.

If development has not and cannot fulfill the reign of God or peace for all of Creation and humanity, what can? The 1982 Mission and Evangelism document of the World Council of Churches reads, "There is no evangelism without solidarity; there is no Christian solidarity that does not involve sharing the knowledge of the kingdom which is God's promise to the poor of the earth. There is here a double credibility test: A proclamation that does not hold forth the promises of the justice of the kingdom to the poor of the earth is a caricature of the Gospel; but Christian participation in the struggles for justice which does not point towards the promises of the kingdom also makes a caricature of a Christian understanding of justice."¹⁶

What does solidarity mean? The Old Testament's most profound exhibition of solidarity is in the Exodus Narrative:

⁷ Then the LORD said, "I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings,⁸ and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the country of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites.⁹ The cry of the Israelites has now come to me; I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress them."¹⁰ So

¹⁵ David Bosch, *Transforming Mission* (New York: Orbis Books) 300-311.

¹⁶ Mission and Evangelism Document of the World Council of Churches, paragraph 34.

come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.”¹¹ But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?”¹² He said, “I will be with you; and this shall be the sign for you that it is I who sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God on this mountain.”¹⁷

God’s solidarity with the Hebrew people is five-fold: First, “I have observed...,” means that God turns towards the oppressed. Despite the goodness in the world, God sets God’s sights on the suffering and sees them. For the church today, ‘to observe’ means to take an interest in the suffering peoples of the world. It may not be readily evident as the world is wide, but it is a commitment to know what is happening in the world because it is in the world that the Kingdom of God will come. Second, “I have heard their cry...” means God does not only speak but listens, especially to the cries of the suffering. For the church today, to listen means to hear without having absolute answers and wanting to prescribe solutions but to genuinely and critically understand what is being said and what is not being said, understanding why it is being said and not being said. Third, “I know their sufferings...” is revealing of God’s understanding of the pain, humiliation and brokenness of the people. It is not merely about knowledge of a situation but an empathic connection. For the church, this means we must allow ourselves to share in their suffering to be able to cry, hope and struggle with them. Four, “I have come down...” reveals the selflessness of God. God does not have to remain on a throne, be transcendent and omniscient. In coming down, God abandons the place of power to be truly present where the suffering people are. For the church, it means

¹⁷ Ex. 3: 7-12, New Revised Standard Version.

divesting ourselves of power, authority and primacy, and allowing ourselves to be immersed in situations where people are experiencing injustice and oppression. It is about being vulnerable with the vulnerable, knowing suffering with the suffering. Fifth, God says, "I will be with you..." and I think this means that God journeys with the people in pursuit of liberation. More than that, it is about taking sides because to journey with the oppressed means to journey against the oppressor. God's solidarity with the Hebrews defines the very nature of God. God is not neutral. God chooses to be in solidarity with the slaves, those who need God the most.

Jesus himself chose to be in solidarity with the poor and suffering. In the incarnation of the Son, the Trinity throws itself open, in solidarity where the Father of the Son becomes the Father to all of humanity. Through the brotherhood of the Son, humanity enters into a covenant with the Trinity where they are invited to live 'in God' and 'God in them.' I think a theological understanding that places Jesus as a 'brother' makes Jesus present in our families, communities and struggles for justice and peace. Jesus leads the way and we are invited to follow to respond to the political realities of our time. To follow Christ is not to be in glory, but to participate in his mission and fate, even unto death.¹⁸ In Moltmann's *Theology of Mystical Experience*, he defines the process by which we experience God. First, by meditation as knowing, then with contemplation as self-awareness, then mysticism which is coming into fellowship with God towards a public discipleship, and finally, until martyrdom where in our experience with God, we experience persecution and self-sacrifice. Thus, to follow 'the only begotten son' and 'the first-born of many brethren' is to be in covenant not just with the Trinity but to be in solidarity with the suffering humanity or those

¹⁸ Jurgen Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ* (London: SCM Press, 1990).

who Moltmann described as ‘crucified people.’ Nevertheless, our brotherhood with Christ is also to share in the liberation of humanity and the whole of creation.

But Jesus’s solidarity is not just covenantal. It is political. In the incarnation of the Son, God enters that chaotic space of “the Other.” But not just any ‘other,’ but the suffering, oppressed and political other. Jesus was born in a family of refugees, amongst a people who were a colony, and in “the Kingdom of Rome.” From the Song of Mary in Luke 1, his birth was a moment when there were hungry people who needed to be filled with good things, and where the mighty must be pulled down from their thrones. He preached on “the Kingdom of God” as a counter discourse to the Kingdom of Rome, was called ‘the Son of God’ at a time when the emperor was believed to be ‘the son of God.’ He was later killed by the empire by crucifixion which was a punishment meted to those who were believed to be enemies of the empire. He could have been born amongst the Romans and could have transformed the world from a more privileged position, but he was not. Jesus as the ‘icon,’ ‘image,’ and ‘reflection of God,’ was placed in a political context that required a political response. Thus, to follow ‘the only begotten son’ and ‘the first-born of many brethren’ is to engage in the political realities of our time.

Thus, Jesus’s solidarity with the suffering communities and peoples is two-fold: covenantal and political. Jesus solidarity is not just individual but corporate, not just contemplative but active, not just communal but cosmological, not just divine but human in its expressions. But another characteristic must be added to the first two and that is ‘radical’ and by this I mean ‘counter-history.’ In a world where power and authority are given respect and honor, Jesus says, “But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, even as the

Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."¹⁹ In communities where families demand loyalty and primacy, Jesus says, "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple."²⁰ Finally, human beings are constructed to have a desire to be accepted, to belong and to be loved. But Jesus says, "Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man!"²¹ Jesus's radical demand to serve others and not ourselves, to serve others and not our families, to seek to serve the 'Son of Man' even when we are hated, rejected and demonized, is imperative towards liberation and genuine peace. It is only through radicality can one begin to challenge and change long held beliefs, practices, and relationships. To begin with, God becoming human is the most radical of all. It is the most radical expression of solidarity.

The Ecumenical Bishops Forum (EBF)/Philippine Ecumenical Peace Platform (PEPP) is the largest ecumenical peace movement of Church leaders in the Philippines. It is composed of Church leaders from five-member federations: the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines, the National Council of Churches in the Philippines, the Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches, the Ecumenical Bishops Forum and the Association of Major Religious Superiors Men and Women in the Philippines. Through the years, they have expressed solidarity with the poor and oppressed as their most sacred task, seeking to become true prophets in these critical times by providing pastoral guidance, statements and analysis on issues affecting the lives of the people, particularly on issues of human

¹⁹ Matthew 20: 26-28.

²⁰ Luke 14: 26.

²¹ Luke 6: 22.

rights, and peace and justice issues. The EBF and the PEPP has been the most radical in their solidarity work: joining protest rallies of peoples' movements, conducting investigations and interviews in remote areas where people have been harassed and killed due to the abuse of state forces, accompanying and advocating for persons and peoples whose family members or community members have been killed due to the 'War on Drugs' of the government and those held as political prisoners. As such, they themselves become targets. One example is the case of Bishop Carlos Morales of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente who was falsely accused of possessing illegal firearms and a grenade after taking in as passenger in his vehicle one of the National Democratic Front of the Philippine's consultants, Rommel Salinas. The NDFP is the revolutionary united front organization of the Filipino people seeking national liberation and pursuing the democratic rights of the people. Bishop Morales was illegally arrested in May 2017. He was released only recently. Another example is the killing of Fr. Marcelino Paez, a 72 year-old Roman Catholic priest, who was shot by motorcycle-riding men just a few hours after he helped facilitate the release of a political prisoner by the name of Rommel Tucay, a peasant organizer who had been charged of illegal possession of firearms after being abducted and tortured by a joint military and police team in Nueva Ecija. There are prophets among us and they are not just in the Church but amongst the people.

The ecumenical movement in the Philippines has rejected the development agenda of the government as that which will transform the society and economy of the Philippines. Development has only perpetuated the marginalization of the masses: laborers, farmers, indigenous people and others. Thus, the ecumenical movement in the Philippines, like the EBF/PEPP, has chosen radical solidarity with the poorest and the most oppressed. They have become a threat to

those who have power and might but are a source of hope to those who need God the most.

Not Prosperity but Subsistence

The Lumad Peoples have been branded communist and rebels and it is under the guise of the development that the military and the state impose laws, empower the state forces and turn a deaf ear to their cries for justice and human rights. In 2011, Father Fausto Tentorio an Italian priest and a member of the Pontificio Instituto Missioni Estere (PIME or Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions), was killed in North Cotabato in the island of Mindanao. He is the third priest to be murdered in Mindanao. A staunch anti-mining advocate, he has been in solidarity with Lumad and Muslim communities for a long time. He had built and sustained Day-Care Centers and alternative schools for the Lumads for years. It has been said that if it were not for him and his companions in the advocacy, the Lumad People would have been displaced permanently and robbed of their land. It is the priests solidarity work in the church, alongside the international community and the organized peoples that has given hope, courage and joy to the Lumad peoples. The other two priests, Father Tullio Favali and Father Salvatore Carzedda, did similar work. Today, Father Peter Geremia from the same mission continues the solidarity work in North Cotabato. It is a continuation of God's work with the slaves in Exodus and Jesus's commitment to the poor in his time. Their solidarity work, when measured by the world standards for development which is characterized by infrastructure and physical facilities, will not satisfy those who have power, knowledge and authority. But for the people of North Cotabato and Mindanao, their solidarity has enabled them to defend

their land, preserve their culture, educate the next generation and pursue their goals as a community independently.

The Lumad communities do not measure life according to prosperity but according to peace. They have one principle for life, and it is not dependent on development or oriented towards prosperity. It is 'subsistence' and its pursuit is peace or shalom. Fisherfolk, farmers and many indigenous peoples' communities have always lived at the subsistence level. They harvest, gather and obtain only what is necessary for living for themselves and for their communities. The idea of hoarding is alien to them. The concept of 'profit' is opposed to their communal living which shares resources, whether it is water from the river, a harvest of grain or fruits, the meat of a captured monitor lizard or boar. The idea of being richer or poorer than anyone is unthinkable. Even the hiring of laborers is something they do not practice. Everything is shared, especially labor. In their vulnerability, there is a need for community. And because resources are not unlimited, they must live at the subsistence level, so that the generations that come after them can still share in the fruits of the earth.

There is a popular story about missionaries doing mission in communities. It is said that while they were coming down from a community, they came upon a guava tree which had so much fruit. They each took a piece to taste. Finding it delicious and sweet, they opened their bags and took as much fruit that they can carry. A member of the community came by and took one and ate it. As he was about to leave, one missionary said, "Take more! It's good. Maybe you can even sell some of it to the people in town." He replied, "We only take what we need, Father. Somebody among us might come by and might be feeling hungry. If we take more than we need, someone will go hungry and we do not want that to be

experienced by anyone." The priest suddenly felt the heaviness of his bag which he had filled with the fruit.

In Mark 10, a rich, young man asks Jesus what he must do to inherit eternal life. The text reads, "Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, "You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me." When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions."²² After all the rich, young man had done to inherit eternal life, he was still found lacking. Jesus's command to sell what he owned and give to the poor as essential for him to truly follow Christ was a shock to the rich, young man. His lack was to be filled and made abundant in his dispossession and subsistence. Jesus demanded radical generosity. More importantly, Jesus demanded radical solidarity.

Today, in the Philippines, there are 5.5 million child laborers, aged 5-17, working in hazardous environments. One out of five children are working to put food on the table. 43 percent of jobs in the economy or 16.2 million out of 37.8 million workers, are contractual employees which means that they are paid low, have no job security and have no benefits. For example, 9 out of 10 workers at SM Malls are contractual. Six thousand hectares of sugar land or what is known to be Hacienda Luisita remains with the Cojuangcos, the family of the president, even after the Supreme Court has decided in favor of the peasant farmers. Perhaps we must call it 'radical generosity.' Rev. Dr. Everett Mendoza says, a Filipino theologian says, "Nothing less than a radical transfer of wealth and power can change the situation. The Christian faith claims that God though rich became poor in Christ that the poor might become rich. The world's richest must become poor so that the poor of the world may live."

²² Mk. 10: 21-22, New Revised Standard Version.

Finally, I wish to deconstruct a popular Old Testament narrative which, to me, validates greed. Genesis 41: 55 reads, “When all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread. Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, “Go to Joseph....Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold to the Egyptians ...all the world came to Joseph in Egypt to buy grain, because the famine became severe in all the world.” In the text, it is evident that Joseph has control and monopoly over the supply of grain. When the Egyptians cried in their hunger, Joseph sold rice to them. He SOLD rice to them. How many could afford to buy Joseph’s grain and how many died of hunger because they could not afford Joseph’s grain? But what is also explicit in the text is that Joseph was selling to both the Egyptians and the non-Egyptians. There was no mercy even for the people of Egypt. Joseph and the Pharaoh were making a profit even as communities and peoples were dying of hunger. Genesis 41: 49 reads, “Joseph had stored grain in such abundance, like the sand of the sea - that he stopped measuring it: it was beyond measure.” He and Pharaoh had the power and resources to feed peoples and nations and yet they chose not to. Fueled by greed and profit, the powerful men sacrificed peoples and nations. Is it not incredible that more than half of the world’s population experiences hunger on a daily basis and communities engage in wars over basic resources such as water, food and land even as producers harvest bumper crops and oil companies earn billions of dollars? Is it not incredible that the Philippines has a great number of some of the grandest and most expensive malls in Asia while hundreds of thousands of families live in houses made of trash or are forced to live in the streets? Is it not incredible that there is so much evidence of affluence and profit as much as there is evidence of human suffering and deprivation? This is how our economic system works today. Narratives in the Bible and our histories exhibit humanity and even the church’s capacity and propensity to do both good and evil. Solidarity and subsistence are

theological and missiological imperatives today that the Church must take on.

A Litany of Resistance against Greed

For every student who is educated in a premier university where he or she is made to believe that financial success is more important than the common good, there are hundreds of un-schooled children who labor as early as five years old just to put food on the table.

For every corporation that earns billions in profit in a global community, there are villages and homes where men, women and children toil day and night, in fear and in inhumane working conditions for slave wages.

For every government that exhibits power to ensure the interests of capitalists and foreign investors, there is a mother searching for an abducted daughter or son, children whose father or mother is murdered to be silenced and to instill fear, and an entire community that flees to escape militarization.

For every mining company that extracts minerals and wealth from the earth to sustain our wasteful consumption, there are indigenous peoples and farming communities who lose their homes, their clean water, their land to till, and witness how their paradise becomes a wasteland.

For every woman who indulges in luxuries and vanities to fulfill the image the powerful have created, there are a hundred women who struggle with blood, sweat and tears to birth a new world where women are truly whole.

For every human being who remains silent in the suffering of their fellow human beings, a woman will die in childbirth, a child

will stop going to school even before he learns to read, and a father will feel helpless in the face of his children's hunger.

Thus, subsistence as a theological principle is not just for poor communities seeking survival. It is more so for those who have much, and especially for those whose lives has been driven by the need to possess and have more. We cannot serve both God and mammon. Until we are able to divest ourselves of our wealth, of our need to have more than others have, of our desire to have more and more, we cannot live out the ecumenical spirit. Ultimately, the ecumenical spirit is not just intended for church unity, but unity in service to those who need God the most.

約稿

為鞏固中國與國際間在研究香港、中國及海外華人團體這方面的學術工作，雙語性質的「天主教研究學報」將接受以中文或英文的投稿，並附以相對語文的摘要。間中或包括書評及有關本中心活動的簡訊。本刊只以電子方式每年出版一次。我們鼓勵讀者及作者以本刊作互動討論的平台，並歡迎對本刊批評及提出建議。

「天主教研究學報」以同儕匿名審稿方式選稿以維持特定的學術水準。本刊的性質可大體屬於人文科，以科學方法研究天主教與中國及華人社團，同時著重文本及考察的研究。本刊歡迎個別投稿及建議期刊專題。本刊下期專題為「中國天主教教會史學：歷史資源和方法論」。

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