

Suhas Pereira

# The Challenges of Vatican II for an Authentic Indian Catholic Church

Wahrnehmende Theologie  
Studien zur Erfahrung und religiösen Lebenswelt

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Suhas Pereira

## Abbreviations

AA	<i>Apostolicam Actuositatem</i>
Acts	Acts of the Apostles
AD	<i>Anno Domini</i>
AG	<i>Ad Gentes</i>
BBC	British Broadcasting Channel
BJP	<i>Bharatiya Janta Party</i> : Indian People's Party
CBCI	Catholic Bishops' Conference of India
CCC	Catechism of the Catholic Church
CIC	<i>Codex Iuris Canonici</i>
Col	Letter to the Colossians
Dan	Book of Daniel
Deut	Book of Deuteronomy
DEV	<i>Dominum et Vivificantem</i>
DH	<i>Dignitatis Humanae</i>
DP	Dialogue and Proclamation
EG	<i>Evangelii Gaudium</i>
EN	<i>Evangelii Nuntiandi</i>
Eph	Letter to the Ephesians
ES	<i>Ecclesiam Suam</i>
Ex	Book of Exodus
Ezek	Book of Ezekiel
Gal	Letter to the Galatians
Gen	Book of Genesis
GS	<i>Gaudium es Spes</i>
Heb	Letter to the Hebrews
Hos	Book of Hosea
I Cor	First Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians
I Jn	First Letter of St. John
I Pet	First Letter of St. Peter
I Tim	First Letter to Timothy
II Cor	Second Letter to the Corinthians
II Thess	Second Letter to the Thessalonians
Is	Book of Isaiah
Jer	Book of Jeremiah
Jn	Gospel according to John
LG	Lumen Gentium
Lk	Gospel according to Luke
LS	<i>Laudato Si</i>
Mk	Gospel according to Mark
Mt	Gospel according to Matthew
NA	<i>Nostra Aetate</i>
NCCI	National Council of Churches in India
NCRB	National Crime Records Bureau

NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
Ps	Book of Psalms
Rev	Book of Revelation
RH	<i>Redemptor Hominis</i>
RM	<i>Redemptoris Missio</i>
Rom	Letter to the Romans
RSS	<i>Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh</i> : National Volunteer Organization
SC	<i>Sacrosanctum Concilium</i>
UR	<i>Unitatis Redintegratio</i>
UUS	<i>Ut Unum Sint</i>
WCC	World Council of Churches

## Foreword

The Second Vatican Council postulates a local implementation of the decrees at the level of the various regions of the Church. From a systematic perspective, it is thereby a contextual ecclesiology, which places the basic theological data in the social, cultural and religious context of the respective regions and countries. This is a novel approach in ecclesiology, in so far as scholastic theology is generally only based on normative and essentialist terminology. In the post-conciliar period, various special assemblies of the Synod of the Bishops dedicated to the ecclesiastical situations in the different continents have been held (e.g. 1991/2003 Europe, 1994 Africa, 1997 America, 1998 Asia, 1998, Oceania, 2010 Middle East). The Church's process of self-discovery faced with the main trends in modern societies (globalisation, secularisation, individualisation) can be described from a systematic perspective as a process of an ecclesiology in the making '*Ekklesiologie im Werden*' (P. Mannes Dominikus Koster OP).

In the present work, the author, an Indian Capuchin, investigates post-conciliar ecclesiology in India. This issue is of importance for a contextual ecclesiology in light of the fact that India is considered a polytheistic and tolerant country.

For the Christians, or more specifically the Catholic Church, the question arises as to how a contextual ecclesiology is to be conceived in the context of the modern Indian state and community given the current societal and political situation. The author has a threefold starting point for his systematic outline. Firstly, the starting point of an 'identity as an Indian Catholic', secondly, the premises of a (post-)conciliar ecclesiology and thirdly, the author assumes a Franciscan-influenced spirituality. Using a method which is both analytical and critical, he attempts on the one hand to trace the process of a local Church in the Indian context, and on the other to find theological impulses for this process of a 'Church in the making'. Bearing this goal in mind, the work is divided into four main sections: a) The event '*Vatikanum II*', b) the fundamental ecclesiological idea of this council, c) the characteristics of this type of contextual ecclesiology and d) the challenges posed by the council for the Church in India.

The first chapter provides a short historically and systematically conceived history of the council in the life of the Church; in the second chapter the conciliar documents which are relevant for this topic are presented, and their theological as well as ecclesiological basis and implications are reviewed in the third chapter. The final chapter draws up a short outline of a contextual view of the Church, whereby the author pays particular attention to three challenges:



- A prophetic Church
- Church life in the Indian context
- A dialogical Church

The work is an outstanding example of a dialogue within systematic theology which can and must be conducted between the individual local Churches, here in Europe, and there in Asia. This dissertation contributes to the description of the fundamental reorientation of the Catholic Church in the 20th and 21st century and, based on that, the resulting consequences for the Church in India. The work impresses with the following structure: it shows the resulting potential for and the necessity of spiritual practice, social activity and interreligious dialogue arising from the current cultural and societal situation on the one hand and from the theological premises of the council on the other. Using careful argumentation, the author of the study has succeeded in connecting both areas and thereby presenting a short theological outline of ecclesiology in the Indian context.

Lucerne, February 2019

Wolfgang W. Müller

## Introduction

India is known and noted for its attitude of tolerance. The attitude of tolerance is like a jewel in the Crown of India. The Indian society is a witness to different cultures and civilizations and religions living together under one banner – Indians. Shashi Tharoor, a famous Indian writer and politician, describes the unity and diversity in India as follows: “India is a *thali*, a selection of sumptuous dishes in different bowls. Each tastes different, and does not necessarily mix with the next, but they belong together on the same plate, and they complement each other in making the meal a satisfying repast.”<sup>1</sup> Yes, India, has been an example of the greatest democracy to the world – a democracy which is defined by its religious and cultural diversity and tolerance. However, in the recent years, this attitude of tolerance is waning. Religions other than of Indian origin are seen as undesirable, foreign. In the context of Christianity and especially the Catholic Church, this attitude is very apparent when one hears that Christianity is a missionary religion, a religion of the West. In spite of the long good work that Christianity in general and the Catholic Church in particular has done and is doing, it is still not accepted as a part of the Indian society and culture by many Indians. The Christian Church is seen as a foreign part attached by force to India’s body.

While all the negative things that one hears today in the news and reads in the newspapers and in other media sources about the Catholic Church in India may not be all true, one cannot deny that there has to be some grain of truth in the way Indians look at the Church. It pains to hear being called an anti-national, a foreigner in one’s own country. Such a situation of identity crisis brings me to question: Is the Church really foreign? Is the Church doing the work in order to convert people to Christianity or to Christ? Has the Church forgotten that it belongs to Christ, whose work and mission it should carry out in the Indian society, and not the so-called agenda of West (Rome) as many Indians call it? Has the Catholic Church in India failed to prove its authenticity as the Church that springs from the Indian soil, from the Indian context? What can the Church do to become truly Indian? How can the Church improve the way it functions and lives in the Indian society? This reflection was one of the three inspirations which led me to write the doctoral thesis on this theme. This thesis is an attempt to affirm my identity as an *Indian Catholic* belonging to the Indian Catholic Church, in the face of all the allegations that the Church faces at the hands of fellow Indians.

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<sup>1</sup> Shashi Tharoor, *The Elephant, the Tiger, and the Cell Phone: Reflections on India in the Twenty-first Century*, New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2007, p. 62.

A second inspiration for the selection of the theme comes from the Second Vatican Council which brought in a renewed vision of the Church of Christ. The Council wanted the Church to become the Church of the soil, Church of the land, wherever it existed. Hence, the questions which I have while writing this thesis are: How can the Catholic Church in India embody in itself the ecclesiological vision of the Second Vatican Council? How can the Catholic Church in India adapt itself to this new ecclesiological vision? What are the options and suggestions, and what are the ways which the Council keeps before the Indian Catholic Church? How can the Indian Catholic Church actualize the decisions of the Council and realise the Council's vision in its own way of living and working in India? How can the Catholic Church in India become an authentic Indian Catholic Church? In my thesis, I have tried to answer these questions and to develop an ecclesiology for India.

A third inspiration for the selection of this theme comes naturally from my own life as a Capuchin, a follower of St. Francis of Assisi. St. Francis is known for the spiritual renewal he brought in the Church of his times. The Crucifix in the dilapidated Church of St. Damiano spoke to him: Francis, go and build my Church. This command was meant to be much deeper than its superficial meaning, as Francis gradually realised and tried to fulfil it. Pope Benedict says, "At that moment St Francis was called to repair the small church, but the ruinous state of the building was a symbol of the dramatic and disquieting situation of the Church herself. At that time the Church had a superficial faith which did not shape or transform life, a scarcely zealous clergy, and a chilling of love. It was an interior destruction of the Church which also brought a decomposition of unity, with the birth of heretical movements. Yet, there at the centre of the Church in ruins was the Crucified Lord, and he spoke: he called for renewal, he called Francis to the manual labour of repairing the small Church of St Damian, the symbol of a much deeper call to renew Christ's own Church, with her radicality of faith and her loving enthusiasm for Christ."<sup>2</sup> St. Francis felt obliged and called to the mission of renewing and restoring the Church of his time, because of his belongingness to and love for the Church of Christ who was his only example and model. Being a member of the Indian Catholic Church, which is a part of the universal Church of Christ, and being a spiritual son of St. Francis of Assisi, who showed great love and obedience toward the Church, I see it as an obligation and a privilege to be a part of the renewal programme which St. Francis undertook centuries ago, continuing even today. This thesis is an attempt to make a theological as well as practical contribution to the theological discussions in the Indian context, which focus on

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<sup>2</sup> Pope Benedict, "General Audience, Paul VI Audience Hall, Wednesday, 27 January 2010", [http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/audiences/2010/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_aud\\_20100127.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/audiences/2010/documents/hf_ben-xvi_aud_20100127.html), 02.05.2018.

exploring the different ways and possibilities to make the Catholic Church in India an authentic Indian Church. It is an attempt to study how the renewal programme suggested by the Second Vatican Council can be very significant for the Indian context.

The method used in my research is an analytical-critical-suggestive method, namely, analyse the Catholic Church's attempt to become Indian Church, critically evaluate it and find out new possibilities and present them by way of suggestions. However, it is more of an academic work, which is based on the different books and articles related to the theme in the past years after the Vatican Council II and on my personal reflections, than a field-work. I must confess that my study in this field is very limited and may not give a very detailed idea of the attempts on the part of the Catholic Church in India to become an Indian Church. If one is to go into all the details, then one can write on every chapter in this thesis more than one doctoral dissertation.

The theme of my thesis is: *The Challenges of Vatican II for an Authentic Indian Catholic Church*. It is important to note that my research does not focus on all the documents of the Council. For my study, I have concentrated on those documents which have been of great importance for the Catholic Church in India: *Lumen Gentium*, *Gaudium et Spes*, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, *Dignitatis Humanae*, *Nostra Aetate*, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (Dialogue, Ecumenism, Inculturation, Freedom of Religion, Justice, Peace, Ecology, Society, etc.) etc. The thesis has four chapters:

Chapter I: The Second Vatican Council – An Ecumenical Council

Chapter II: The Ecclesiological Thought of Vatican II

Chapter III: The Characteristics of the Vatican II Ecclesiology

Chapter IV: The Challenges of Vatican II for the Indian Catholic Church

The first chapter deals with the significance of the Councils in the life of the universal Church. It gives an idea about the different types of Councils and their significant role in the life and history of the Catholic Church. From the general introduction to the Councils, I come to the Second Vatican Council as the twenty-first and one of the most important Councils of the Church marking a turning point in the history of the Church. I have tried to deal sufficiently, although not maybe very elaborately, with the history of the Council (preparation, event of the Council, etc.). Since the dissertation refers to the influence of the Council on the Indian Catholic church, I have also included a small section on the participation of the Indian Catholic Church in the Second Vatican Council.

The second chapter deals with the ecclesiological thought of the Council. Here the object of my study is the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church in the Modern World – *Lumen Gentium* (Ch 1 & 2). The document is concerned with present-

ing Christ as the centre of the Church and the Church as the medium through which the light of Christ shines in the world. Basing itself on the patristic theology and the Bible, the document speaks of the Church as a Mystery, a Sacrament, Mystical Body of Christ, Holy People of God, and avoids elaborate reflections on the institutional aspect of the Church. In a strong contrast to the earlier councils which emphasised the institutional aspect of the Church, the Council wanted to re-discover the spiritual dimension of the Church and show that both the dimensions of the Church, namely institutional and spiritual, are important.

The third chapter deals along with *Lumen Gentium* as well as with other documents, namely, *Gaudium et Spes*, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, *Nostra Aetate*, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, *Dignitatis Humane* and *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. With the help of these documents, I have tried to present the characteristics of the ecclesiological thought of the Council. 1) The Church that the Council presents is a human Church, a Church which stands in solidarity with mankind and engages itself for the common well-being. 2) The Church which the Council presents is one which works for the establishment of peace in the world. 3) The Church, which the Council's ecclesiological thought manifests, is a Church which wants to enter into a dialogue with other Christian churches in order to restore and re-establish the lost unity through mutuality. The Church has a mission to bring the Gospel message of peace, love, justice and solidarity to the world. In this mission, the Church not only needs to include the other Churches, but also other religions. For the Christian churches and the other religions have an important role to play in the salvific plan of God for the world. In this chapter, I have also tried to present the ecclesiological thought of Pope Francis. The important aim of the Council was renewal. The different documents of the Church speak of the new way of being the Church in today's world. Pope Francis, too, speaks of reform and renewal in the Church as the chief concern of his pontificate. The ecclesiological thought of Pope Francis is very close to that of the Council. His words and actions point out clearly his intention of continuing the reforms and the renewal programme of the Council. Hence, the last section in this chapter deals with his ecclesiological thought. A new and renewed Church, according to Pope Francis, is a poor Church for the poor, a listening Church and a merciful Church. His thoughts clearly reflect the mind of the Council as regards the Church's way of being in the world today.

The fourth and the last chapter deals with the actual challenges which the Council sets before the Catholic Church in India. The Council calls the Church in India to a renewed self-reflection, analysis and renewal. The Council challenges the Catholic Church in India to become an authentic Indian Catholic Church. This is, naturally, a huge task which requires a new self-understanding and a renewed vision of mission on the part of the Church in India. However, this self-understanding and renewed vision of mission must spring forth from the Indian

context, which is characterized by threefold realities, namely, poverty, religious pluralism and cultural diversity. There are three important challenges which the Council has for the Indian Catholic Church. The Catholic Church in India is called: 1) to be a prophetic Church, a Church that is on the side of the poor, the neglected and the women, 2) to be an inculturated Church, a Church which is totally Indian, and 3) to be a dialoguing Church, a Church which is open and sees dialogue not only with the other Christian churches and other religions, but also with nature as an imperative and as an important part of the mission it has received from Christ. When the Catholic Church in India accepts these challenges and develops its praxis in the light of the Council's teaching, it will be able to overcome these challenges and develop an ecclesiology for Indian context.

To conclude, it is important that the way the Church in India lives and functions, suits the Indian context, or else the Church with all its missionary enterprise and all the good works will only be known as an NGO. It will be only a misfit on Indian soil. The Indian Church needs to understand rightly what Pope John Paul has written in his post-synodal apostolic exhortation to the Church in Asia – *Ecclesia in Asia*: “the Church lives and fulfils her mission in the actual circumstances of time and place. A critical awareness of the diverse and complex realities of Asia is essential if the People of God on the continent are to respond to God’s will for them . . . .”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Pope John Paul, “*Ecclesia in Asia: Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation of the Holy Father John Paul II to the Bishops, Priests and Deacons, Men and Women in the Consecrated Life and all the Lay Faithful on Jesus Christ the Saviour and His Mission of Love and Service in Asia*: “... That they may have Life and have it abundantly” (Jn 10, 10)”, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_06111999\\_ecclesia-in-asia.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_06111999_ecclesia-in-asia.html), 30.04.2018.



# **Chapter I SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL – AN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL**

## **1 The term “Council”**

In general, the term “council” can be defined as a group of people coming together to discuss, deliberate and decide. The Oxford Dictionary defines the word “council” as “an advisory, deliberative or administrative body of people, formally constituted and meeting regularly”.<sup>1</sup> The Cambridge Dictionary defines a council as “a group of people elected or chosen to make decisions or give advice on a particular subject, to represent a particular group of people, or to run a particular organization”.<sup>2</sup> A council is a decision-making body. The examples of a council could be: European Council, Human Rights Council, United Nations Security Council, City Council, etc.

## **2 Councils in the life of the Church**

Councils have played an important role in the life and history of Christianity. The celebration of the councils is a central theme throughout the whole of Christian history.<sup>3</sup> Councils were instrumental in shaping the character of the Church since its very beginning.<sup>4</sup> In the ecclesiastical sense, a council is a gathering of bishops and other ecclesial authorities for the purpose of discussing and making decisions in matters pertaining to doctrine and life of the Church.<sup>5</sup> The councils in the early Church were convoked for many reasons, and these councils had rather a many-fold function, namely to safeguard the doctrine of the Church, to promote the ways and means for the smooth governing of the Church, to find solutions to the arising controversies and questions, etc.<sup>6</sup> Council in the Church is thus, “a formal meeting of bishops and the representatives of several Churches convened for the

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<sup>1</sup> “Council”, [www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/council](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/council), 26.04.2016.

<sup>2</sup> “Council”, <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/council>, 26.04.2016.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Giuseppe Alberigo, Geschichte der Konzilien von Nicaenum bis zum Vatikanum II, Wiesbaden: Fourier Verlag, 1998, S. 13.*

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Jon Nilson, “Council”, *Christianity: The Complete Guide*, John Bowden (Ed.), London: Continuum, 2005, p. 287.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. J. G. Fu, “Konzil”, *Schweizer Lexikon in 6 Banden, Kollektivegesellschaft Mengis+Ziehr, Horw/Luzern (Hrsg.), Band IV, Luzern: Verlag Schweizer Lexikon, 1992, S. 75.*

<sup>6</sup> Cf. William Staunton, *An Ecclesiastical Dictionary: containing definitions of terms, and explanations and illustrations of subjects pertaining to the history, ritual, discipline, worship, ceremonies, and usages of the Christian Church: with brief notices of ancient and modern sects,*



purpose of regulating doctrine or discipline”.<sup>7</sup> In general, the function of a council in the Church is to make decisions regarding the life and activity of the Church. The bishops in particular are the members or the participants of a council.

## **2.1 Types of Councils:**

Councils are of two types- 1) Particular councils 2) General or Universal councils.

### **2.1.1 Particular Councils:**

Particular councils are also known by names like synod, assembly, conferences, conventions, etc., and operate at the national, local, regional or congregational levels. Such particular councils embody the Church in their representative members and are convened to deal with issues of major importance.<sup>8</sup> The Canon Law of the Catholic Church speaks of different types of particular councils, which are as follows:

#### *2.1.1.1 Conference of Bishops*

A Conference of Bishops as a permanent institution is a group of bishops of the same nation or certain territory who jointly exercise certain pastoral functions for the Christian faithful of their territory in order to promote the greater good of the humanity (Cf. 447).

#### *2.1.1.2 Plenary Council*

A plenary council is a council for all the particular Churches of the same conference of bishops, to be celebrated, whenever deemed necessary, with the approval of the Holy See (Cf. CIC. 439, 1). In short, a plenary council is convoked by the conference of bishops.

#### *2.1.1.3 Provincial Council*

A provincial council is a council for the different churches of the same ecclesiastical province, celebrated whenever a majority of the diocesan bishops of the province consider it necessary. A provincial council is convoked by the metropolitan bishop with the approval of the Holy See and with the consent of a majority of the suffragan bishops (Cf. CIC 440 & 442).

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and biographical sketches of the early fathers and writers of the Church, New York: General Protestant Episcopal Sunday School Union & Church Book Society, 1861, p. 220.

<sup>7</sup> E. A. Livingstone (Ed.), “Council”, The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, New York: Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 422.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Jon Nilson, *Council*.

#### 2.1.1.4 Diocesan Synod

A diocesan synod is a group of selected priests and other members of the Christian faithful of a particular church who offer assistance to the diocesan bishop in promoting the good of the diocesan community (Cf. CIC 460).

### 2.1.2 General or Universal Councils

Unlike the particular councils, the members (mostly bishops) of which represent a part of the Church or a particular church, in an ecumenical or universal council, the entire college of bishops of the universal Church gather together to solemnly exercise their authority over the universal Church in its fullness and to decide in the matters pertaining to the life in the Church.<sup>9</sup> Thus, an ecumenical council is a gathering of all the bishops of the world as opposed to particular councils. These councils were convened in order to root out the heresies, foster unity and bring about reforms in the Church. In the matters of faith, a council was concerned with confessing or re-establishing the unanimity about the truth, rather than finding the truth.<sup>10</sup> The Canon Law of the Catholic Church states that it is the pope alone who, as the supreme authority in the Church, can convoke an ecumenical council, preside over it in person or through a representative, decide the issues to be treated at the council, transfer, suspend or dissolve a council and solemnly approve its decrees (Cf. CIC 338–341).

## 2.2 History of the Councils of the Church

Councils have had their significant role to play throughout the history of Christianity. Councils were an occasion for the Church to review, repair and revitalize her life and doctrine. Usually, the origin of the Church's tradition of convoking the councils is traced back to the era of the apostles. In the book of Acts, one reads about the gathering of the apostles in Jerusalem ca AD 52 (Acts 15), which is also known as the apostles' council. This assembly of the apostles in Jerusalem was clearly a special and extraordinary event which cannot be compared to the councils because it was not a gathering of the representatives of the entire Church. Yet, this assembly of the apostles is of great significance because it discussed an important doctrinal issue, namely, that the gentile converts were not bound to follow all

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. Hermann Josef Sieben, "Ökumenische Konzilien", *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, Walter Kasper (Hrsg.), Band VII, Freiburg im Breisgau: Verlag Herder, 1998, S. 1029.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Michael Fiedrowicz, *Theologie der Kirchenväter: Grundlagen frühchristlicher Glaubensreflexion*, Freiburg im Breisgau: Verlag Herder, 2007, S. 291.

the prescriptions of the Old Testament.<sup>11</sup> Joseph Fitzmyer in his commentary on the Acts of the Apostles considers the meeting of the apostles ‘a sort of Council’ because of the doctrinal significance of the issue that is discussed for the future of the Church. He sees this meeting as an inspiration for the convocation of the official councils in the later times.<sup>12</sup> Not all the scholars accept the apostles’ council in Jerusalem as the basis or origin for the Church’s practice of convoking councils. H. Jedin opines that the synods held in the East (e.g. Asia Minor) since the end of the second century had no connection to the apostles’ council; rather, these synods were the result of practical necessity, namely, to tackle and overcome the emerging problems and conflicts with mutual cooperation and help.<sup>13</sup> John McGuckin, too, does not see any relation between the apostles’ council and the Church’s practice of convoking councils. He bases his opinion on the patristic writings where there is no reference to the apostles’ council as a paradigm in Conciliarism until the fifth century and concludes, that the practice of councils is related instead to the Hellenistic city-governance process.<sup>14</sup> According to Klaus Schatz, the conciliar tradition begins with the regional synods (*Regionalsynoden*) of the third century convoked in order to treat and tackle the complicated questions or problems which could not be solved by every individual bishop.<sup>15</sup> Thus, in the next two centuries, there were a number of synods and councils convoked, wherein the bishops of different territories assembled together to discuss the theological, disciplinary or practical matters and to resolve the conflicts which threatened the unity of the Church. In the letters of Cyprian of Carthage, we have the most exhaustive information about the early conciliar gatherings which followed the procedures of the sessions of the Roman Senate as their model.<sup>16</sup>

Traditionally, only seven councils are considered as ecumenical or the councils of the Universal Church by both Eastern and the Western Church. Interest-

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Jon Nilson, *Council*, p. 287 & F. Dvornik, “History of General (Ecumenical) Councils”, The New Catholic Encyclopedia, Berard L. Marthaler & others (Eds.), Vol. IV, edition. II, USA: The Catholic University of America, 2003, p. 299.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. “J. A. Fitzmyer, The Acts of the Apostles. A New translation with Introduction and Commentary (The Anchor Bible 31), New York 1998, 543 cited in: Justin Taylor, “The ‘Council’ of Jerusalem in Acts 15”, Synod and Synodality. Theology, History, Canon Law and Ecumenism in new contact-International Colloquium Bruges 2003, Alberto Melloni, Silvia Scatena (Eds.), Münster: LIT Verlag, 2005, pp. 107–108.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. H. Jedin, “Konzil”, *Handbuch Theologischer Grundbegriffe*, Heinrich Fries(Hrsg.), Band I- Adam bis Kult, München: Kösel Verlag, 1962, S. 851.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. John A. McGuckin, “Ecumenical Councils”, The Cambridge Dictionary of Christian Theology, Ian A. McFarland, David A. S. Fergusson, Karen Kilby & Iain R. Torrance (Eds.), UK: Cambridge University Press, 2011, p. 118.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Klaus Schatz, *Allgemeine Konzilien-Brennpunkt der Kirchengeschichte*, Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1997, S. 21.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. F. Dvornik, *History of General (Ecumenical) Councils.*, p. 299.

ingly, all seven councils were convoked by the emperor and took place in the East. These councils are the following:

1. Nicaea I: The first Council of Nicaea was convened by emperor Constantine-20th May to 19th June, AD 325, with the aim to unite the Church by resolving the conflicts created by the doctrine of Arianism.<sup>17</sup>
2. Constantinople I: The First Council of Constantinople convoked by emperor Theodosius I in the year 381 made a dogmatic pronouncement that the Holy Spirit is fully God. It reaffirmed the teaching of the council of Nicaea and issued a creed which is known as Nicene Creed.<sup>18</sup>
3. Ephesus: The council of Ephesus was convoked by emperor Theodosius in the year 431. This council condemned Nestorius who held that there were two separate persons in the incarnate Christ and confirmed the title for Mary as *Theotokos* – mother of God.<sup>19</sup>
4. Chalcedon: Emperor Marcian convened the Council of Chalcedon in the year 451 which dealt with Monophysitism, a doctrine which claimed that Jesus Christ had only one single nature.<sup>20</sup>
5. Constantinople II: The Second Council of Constantinople was convened by emperor Justinian in the year 553 to resolve the controversy of the so-called *Three Chapters* which supported the view of Nestorius.<sup>21</sup>
6. Constantinople III: The Third Council of Constantinople was convoked by emperor Constantine IV in the year 681 in order to deal with Monothelitism, which held that there was only one will in Christ. The Council affirmed that there were two wills in Christ.<sup>22</sup>
7. Nicaea II: The Second Council of Nicaea was convened by empress Irene in the year 787 in order to end the iconoclastic controversy which rejected the use of images in the Churches. The council approved the use and veneration of the icons, thereby ending iconoclasm.<sup>23</sup>

The Roman Catholic Church, however, holds further fourteen more councils as having ecumenical character and authority. This acceptance of further fourteen

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<sup>17</sup> \* Arianism is a doctrine by Arius, who denied the divinity of Jesus and taught that the son was created by God the Father as an instrument for the purpose of the creation of the world. Hence, God the Son was subordinate to God the Father. See also, *Josef Wohlmuth (Hrsg.), Dekrete der Ökumenischen Konzilien, Band I – Konzilien des Ersten Jahrtausends: Vom Konzil von Nizäa (325) bis zum Vierten Konzil von Konstantinopel (869/70), Paderborn. München. Wien. Zürich: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1998, S. 1–19.* Henceforth cited as *Dekrete der Ökumenischen Konzilien*.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., pp. 20–35; Cf. Jon Nilson, *Council*, p. 288.

<sup>19</sup> *Dekrete der Ökumenischen Konzilien*, pp. 37–74.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., pp. 75–103.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., pp. 105–122.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., pp. 123–130.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., pp. 131–156.

councils as ecumenical poses a question, namely, if we hold on to the criteria in the current law of the Church for a council to be an ecumenical council, namely, the convocation, presiding over, suspension, approval of decrees, etc., through the Holy See, then not all the earlier councils can be considered or called ecumenical because they fail to fulfil the conditions prescribed by the law of the Church (CIC 338–341). How can, then, the Roman Catholic Church include even those councils in the list of ecumenical councils? As an answer to this question the following can be said:<sup>24</sup> A council at any given time is Church's self-reflection or a council reflects Church's self-understanding which can unfold itself or undergo change with the changing times. The earlier self-reflection or self-understanding of the Church is not binding on the Church which today's councils embody. However, if the Church today finds the faith-reflection of the earlier councils helpful and edifying for the present times, then the Church can still accept such councils as ecumenical councils, even though they do not fulfil all the conditions of the law for their legitimacy. In the changing criteria for the convocation of a council from the beginning until now is a sign of the transition, not only in ecclesiology and the ecclesial structures and reality, but also with regard to the relationship of the Church to the world.<sup>25</sup>

Thus, in addition to the earlier mentioned seven ecumenical councils, there are fourteen more ecumenical councils which are accepted as such by the Roman Catholic Church:

8. Constantinople IV: Emperor Basil I convened the Fourth Council of Constantinople in the year 869 to deal with Photian schism.<sup>26</sup> It is the first council recognized as having ecumenical authority only by the Church in the West.
9. Lateran I: This was the first council held in Rome in the year 1123 under Pope Callistus II.<sup>27</sup>
10. Lateran II: The second Lateran Council was convened by Pope Innocent II in the year 1139.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Cf. Karl Rahner, Herbert Vorgrimler, "Kleines Theologisches Wörterbuch", Karl Rahner: Sämtliche Werke-Enzyklopädische Theologie, Karl-Rahner-Stiftung (Hrsg.), Band 17/1, Freiburg im Breisgau: Verlag Herder, 2002, S. 675–677.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Klaus Schatz, *Allgemeine Konzilien-Brennpunkt der Kirchengeschichte*, p. 15.

<sup>26</sup> Photian Schism was the result of the tension between East and West regarding the authority of the pope.

<sup>27</sup> Josef Wohlmuth (Hrsg.), *Dekrete der Ökumenischen Konzilien, Band II – Konzilien des Mittelalters: Vom Ersten Laterankonzil (1123) bis zum Fünften Laterankonzil (1512–1517)*, Paderborn. München. Wien. Zürich: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2000, S. 187–194. Henceforth cited as *Dekrete der Ökumenischen Konzilien, II*.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., pp. 195–203.

11. Lateran III: This council convened by Pope Alexander III in the year 1179 restricted the right of election of a pope to the College of Cardinals with a two-thirds majority.<sup>29</sup>
12. Lateran IV: The fourth Lateran Council convened by Pope Innocent III in the year 1215 marks the culmination of papal power.<sup>30</sup>
13. Lyons I: The First Council of Lyons was convened by Pope Innocent IV in the year 1245 to deal with what the pope called as the five wounds.<sup>31</sup>
14. Lyons II: The Second Council of Lyons was convened by Pope Gregory X in the year 1274 in order to bring about the reform in the Church and to achieve the reunion with the Eastern Church.<sup>32</sup>
15. Vienne: The council was convened by Pope Clement V, the first of Avignon popes, in the year 1311.<sup>33</sup>
16. Constance: The Council of Constance was convened by Pope John XXIII, one of the three popes in office in 1414 to end the so-called Western Schism<sup>34</sup>, to bring about reform in the Church and to condemn the heretics. This council also issued a decree *Haec Sancta*, according to which a general council is superior to the pope.<sup>35</sup>
17. Basel: The Council of Basel was convened by Pope Martin V in 1431 to continue the work of the council of Constance. The council ended in Lausanne in 1449.<sup>36</sup>
18. Lateran V: The fifth Lateran Council was convoked by Pope Julius II in 1512 and was aimed mainly at disciplinary decrees.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., pp. 205–225.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., pp. 227–271.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Agostino Paravicini Bagliani, “Die Römische Kirche von Innozenz III. bis Gregor X.”, *Die Geschichte des Christentums. Religion Politik Kultur-Machtfülle des Papstums (1054–1274)*, Odilo Engels (Hrsg.), Freiburg im Breisgau: Verlag Herder, 1994, S. 590–591: At the inauguration ceremony of the First Council of Lyons, Pope Innocent IV in his speech about the five wounds or sorrows of the pope, spoke of five reasons for the convocation of the council: 1) Bad conduct of the clergy and faithful 2) the desperate plight of the Holy Land due to the insolence of the Saracens 3) The Great East-West Schism 4) the cruelties from the Tatars 5) The persecution of the Church by emperor Frederick.

<sup>32</sup> *Dekrete der Ökumenischen Konzilien, II*, pp. 303–331.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., pp. 333–401.

<sup>34</sup> Western Schism in the history of the Catholic Church is a period from 1378 to 1417, in which there were three rival popes residing in Rome, Avignon and Pisa respectively. Each pope had his own followers, college of Cardinals and his own way of administration. Each of these popes claimed to be the true successor of Peter and thereby tried to excommunicate the other two. It was at the Council of Constance (1414) that the Schism ended with the election of the new Pope Martin V in November 1417.

<sup>35</sup> *Dekrete der Ökumenischen Konzilien, II*, pp. 403–451.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., pp. 452–591.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., pp. 593–655.

19. Trent: The Council of Trent was convened by Pope Paul III in 1545 in order to treat mainly the challenge of the Protestant Reformation. It is one of the most important councils in the history of the Roman Catholic Church as it did a great work in reforming both dogma and discipline and shaped and influenced the life of the Roman Catholic Church until the Second Vatican Council.<sup>38</sup>
20. Vatican I: The First Vatican Council was convened by Pope Pius IX in 1869 to discuss the matters of faith and morals. It also issued a decree on the doctrine of infallibility.<sup>39</sup>
21. Vatican II: The Second Vatican Council was convened by Pope John XXIII in the year 1962 and was continued and brought to its end by Pope Paul VI. The documents produced by the Council influenced and changed the life of the Church to a great extent.

Of the twenty-one councils, the first four councils (Nicaea, Constantinople I, Ephesus and Chalcedon) are recognized as normative for all the Churches confessing Nicene and Apostles' Creed, and the decrees of these four councils also form the basis and inspiration for the ecumenical relations. Leaving aside the Roman Catholic viewpoint about the ecumenical councils and their validity, the twenty one councils also could be divided into three types:<sup>40</sup>

1. The first type of councils are the councils convened by the emperors in the first millennium. These councils belong to an epoch of the *Oekumene* (world) which had Constantinople in the centre. These councils were highly influenced by the emperors who convoked and supported these councils in different ways.
2. The second type of councils are the councils of the medieval period in the Western Church. These were primarily the gatherings of the Church in the West. These councils can be further divided into two, namely, the councils attended by bishops, abbots, heads of the universities and worldly princess which dealt even with political questions; and the reform councils which understand themselves as general gatherings of the Church but not as the consultative body of the pope. These gatherings not only don't consider themselves as mere gatherings of the particular churches, but they also see themselves as the highest instance of the cooperatively comprehended universal Church.

<sup>38</sup> Josef Wohlmuth (Hrsg.), *Dekrete der Ökumenischen Konzilien, Band III – Konzilien der Neuzeit: Konzil von Trient (1545–15663) Erstes Vatikanisches Konzil (1869/70), Zweites Vatikanisches Konzil (1962–1965)*, Paderborn. München. Wien. Zürich: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2002, S. 657–799. Henceforth, cited as *Dekrete der Ökumenischen Konzilien, III*.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 801–816.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Birgitta Kleinschwärzer-Meister, "Konzilien", *Taschenlexikon Religion und Theologie*, (Hrsg.) Friedrich Wilhelm & Friederike Nüssel, Band. II, Aflg. 5, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008, S. 676. & Cf. Klaus Schatz, *Allgemeine Konzilien-Brennpunkt der Kirchengeschichte*, pp. 17–20.

3. The third type of councils are the councils of the Catholic Church in the modern age, which are no more the gatherings of the Christianity in the West, but only of the Catholic Church.

### 2.3 Theory of Conciliarism

Conciliarism is a theory which upholds the general council of bishops as the highest authority in the Church and not the pope. The ecumenical council as the representation of the universal Church is the highest instance of the Church, which cannot err or is infallible, possesses the supreme authority in the Church and is above the pope who too is bound to abide by and accept the decisions of such a council.<sup>41</sup> The word ‘Conciliarism’ points to a complex of medieval ideas that grew up in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries and found wide acceptance at the time of the Western Schism (1378–1417). The origin of this theory is traced to the Canonists (Church Law experts) of the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries who were worried about the different abuses infecting the Church at that time, namely, Simony, political misuse of the Church sanctions for worldly authorities, division of the Church through the rival popes, etc. Thus, the canonists were compelled to think of a possibility to depose a pope. The canonists were worried about the erring nature of popes even as the supreme authority in the Church and about the power and governance of the Church falling into evil hands or into the hands of heretic popes, which could throw the entire Church into confusion and chaos. The canonists felt the need for establishing norms, which could limit the powers, even of the pope. In their search for a solution, they looked to the past general councils for help. Thus, it became an obligatory practice for the pope to abide by the canons or decrees of the councils in matters pertaining to faith and the general situation of the Church and if a pope did not yield to the council, he would be deposed.<sup>42</sup>

The most radical and extreme thought on conciliarism in the Middle Ages is credited to Marsilius of Padua and William of Ockham, according to whom a council that represented both laity as well as clergy is the highest authority in matters of faith; however, Marsilius denied the divine origin of the papal authority and Ockham was sceptical about the ability of a general council to represent the Church.<sup>43</sup>

In the early 15<sup>th</sup> century, there were serious attempts to assert the dominant role of the general councils in the Church governance and to uphold the theory

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Marianne Strzysch & Joachim Weiß (Hrsg.), “Konziliarismus”, *Meyers Grosses Taschen Lexikon in 24 Bänden, Band. XII, Auflg. 6, Mannheim: B.I.Taschenbuchverlag, 1998, S. 104*; H. Jedin, *Konzil*, p. 853.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. B. Tierney, “History of Conciliarism”, *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Berard L. Marthaler & others (Eds.), Vol. IV, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, USA: The Catholic University of America, 2003, p. 54.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 54 & 56



of conciliarism. The theory gained all the more significance due to the Western Schism. The existence of three popes claiming simultaneously to be successors of the apostle Peter led to the decrees of the Council of Constance on the superiority of the council over the pope. The Council of Constance (1414–1418) succeeded in putting an end to the schism. The council enacted two important decrees. The first decree, *Sacrosancta/Haec Sancta*, declared the superiority of the ecumenical council over the pope in matters of faith and unity of the Church and ordained that everyone, even the pope, was bound to obey the council's decrees.<sup>44</sup> The second decree, *Frequens*, speaks about the frequent celebration of the general councils in the future, to ensure the good governance of the Church.<sup>45</sup>

The significance of the conciliar theory, however, faded gradually with the fifth Lateran Council forbidding conciliarism. It was at the First Vatican Council that the conciliar theory was totally condemned and papal infallibility was asserted, according to which the pope is, as the supreme head of the Church, the highest authority and not the general councils. According to the doctrine of infallibility, when the pope as the supreme head of the Roman Catholic Church, in communion with the universal Catholic Church, speaks *ex cathedra* and teaches in the matters pertaining to faith and morals, his teachings are guided by the Holy

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<sup>44</sup> In the name of the holy and undivided Trinity, Father and Son and holy Spirit. Amen. This holy synod of Constance, which is a general council, for the eradication of the present schism and for bringing unity and reform to God's church in head and members, legitimately assembled in the holy Spirit to the praise of almighty God, ordains, defines, decrees, discerns and declares as follows, in order that this union and reform of God's church may be obtained the more easily, securely, fruitfully and freely. First it declares that, legitimately assembled in the Holy Spirit, constituting a general council and representing the catholic church militant, it has power immediately from Christ; and that everyone of whatever state or dignity, even papal, is bound to obey it in those matters which pertain to the faith, the eradication of the said schism and the general reform of the said church of God in head and members. Next, it declares that anyone of whatever condition, state or dignity, even papal, who contumaciously refuses to obey the past or future mandates, statutes, ordinances or precepts of this sacred council or of any other legitimately assembled general council, regarding the aforesaid things or matters pertaining to them, shall be subjected to well-deserved penance, unless he repents, and shall be duly punished, even by having recourse, if necessary, to other supports of the law. "Council of Constance 1414–18", <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Councils/ecum.com>, 03.05.2016.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid: The frequent holding of general councils is a pre-eminent means of cultivating the Lord's patrimony. It roots out the briars, thorns and thistles of heresies, errors and schisms, corrects deviations, reforms what is deformed and produces a richly fertile crop for the Lord's vineyard. Neglect of councils, on the other hand, spreads and fosters the aforesaid evils. This conclusion is brought before our eyes by the memory of the past times and reflection on the present situation. For this reason we establish, enact, decree and ordain, by a perpetual edict, that general councils shall be held henceforth in the following way. The First shall follow in five years immediately after the end of this council, the Second in seven years immediately after the end of the next council, and thereafter they are to be held every ten years for ever.

Spirit and thus are free from error and have a binding force.<sup>46</sup> The Second Vatican Council asserts the permanent unity between the pope as the head and the members of the episcopal body. The episcopal body exercises its authority *only when* in hierarchical communion with the Supreme Pontiff. Thus, the ecumenical councils, although are milestones in the history of the development of the Church's teaching about her nature, are not absolutely necessary because the decisions of the councils are ultimately valid only through the approval of the Pope as the supreme teaching authority in the Church.<sup>47</sup>

In conclusion, the conciliar theory, although no more accepted by the Roman Catholic Church today, cannot be termed or viewed as totally contrary to the Church. Perhaps in the situations and circumstances of the time in which it developed this type of thinking was the only option to bring the Church out of its miserable situation. It was "an example of emergency legislation, promulgated to handle an extraordinarily difficult case".<sup>48</sup> It was clearly an emergency measure or the only way out for an exceptional problem. In L. M. Örsy's opinion, it would be wrong to label all the theologians who embraced the conciliar theory in any of its historical forms, as heretics. The reason they developed and embraced such a theory, which was unacceptable to the Catholic faith, was their concern for the Church in seeking solution to the problems of their age.<sup>49</sup> Anthony Black concludes his critical evaluation of the theory of conciliarism with the following positive observation:

From the conciliar period we may conclude that far-reaching reform and structural re-orientation were impossible in the late-medieval church without a major external shock, both because of the ingrained conventions of papalism and because of the nationalization of ecclesiastical control. Looking beyond the confines of this particular period in European history, we may say that the conciliarists were right in asserting that the principle of absolute monarchy was incompatible with the gospel. But they also had this advantage

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<sup>46</sup> Cf. Dyon B. Daugherty, *Church History: Five Approaches to Global Discipline*, New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2012, p. 65.: This doctrine is misunderstood by many who feel, this doctrine makes the pope infallible or this doctrine only means that the pope is without sin and cannot do mistakes. The doctrine of infallibility has actually nothing to do with the personal morality of the pope. The doctrine only means that when the pope speaks officially on matters of faith, his teachings are completely reliable and can be accepted, as if they were from God.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. E. Schneider, "Konzil", *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, Michael Buchberger u.a. (Hrsg.), Band VI, Auflg. 2, Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1934, S. 186.

<sup>48</sup> Gerhard B. Winkler, *A Concise History of the Catholic Church: In Usus Scholarum*, Achen: Patrimonium-Verlag, 2013, p. 145.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. L. M. Örsy, "Conciliarism (Theological aspect)", *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Berard L. Marthaler & others (Eds.), Vol. IV, edition. II, USA: The Catholic University of America, 2003, p. 58.

over Protestantism that their ecclesiology embodied and made room for the postulate of ecclesial unity.<sup>50</sup>

## 2.4 Theology of the Ecumenical Councils

The theology of ecumenical councils is found in the teaching of the Church on the subject and in the reflection of the theologians. The teaching of the Church on the ecumenical councils is found in the third chapter of the Vatican Council II's dogmatic constitution on the Church, *Lumen gentium*. The Second Vatican Council reaffirms the past teaching on the councils and at the same time adds newness to it. The constitution defines the ecumenical council as the forum where the supreme and universal power possessed by the college of bishops over the whole Church is exercised in a solemn way (LG 22). It is the sole right of the Pope alone as the head of the Church and the head of the college of bishops to convoke an ecumenical council, to preside over it and to confirm it, and there can be no ecumenical council which is not confirmed or at least accepted as ecumenical by the Pope as the successor of Peter. In an ecumenical council, the head (Pope) and the members (the bishops as representatives of the entire Church) unite themselves to build up the body of Christ through the assistance and guidance of the Holy Spirit.<sup>51</sup> The bishops participate and act in an ecumenical council not only as the successors of the apostles and the members of the apostolic succession but also as the witnesses of the faith of the clergy and the people of God in their respective dioceses.<sup>52</sup> The final approval of the head, through which the acts of a council become acts of the entire body, is required by divine law.<sup>53</sup>

The power of an ecumenical council is supernatural in character and its origin is in the mandate of Christ to the apostles to sanctify, to teach and to govern the people of God. The mandate of Christ is handed over further to the college of bishops, as the successor of the apostles and to the Pope, who, like the apostle Peter, is the chief shepherd of the flock of Christ. The Holy Spirit, whom the Lord promised and sent from heaven, is the continual source of the power that resides in the college of bishops with the Supreme Pontiff as its head. This power is not similar to the understanding of power in civil terms, yet the supernatural power

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<sup>50</sup> Anthony Black, *Church, State and Community: Historical and Comparative Perspectives*, Great Britain: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2003, p. 224.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. H. Jedin, *Konzil*, p. 855.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 856.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. L. M. Örsy, "Theology of General (Ecumenical) Councils", *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Berard L. Marthaler & others (Eds.), Vol. IV, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, USA: The Catholic University of America, 2003, p. 303.

manifests itself in and through the natural legal framework (decrees, constitutions, etc.), which reflects the divine-human character of the Church.<sup>54</sup>

In Hans Küng's opinion, the ecumenical councils are not absolutely necessary, since there is no clear mention in the Bible, either from Jesus or from the apostles.<sup>55</sup> Hence, the Church can exist even without the ecumenical councils. Ecumenical councils according to Küng have to do with the ecclesiastical law, and not with the dogma or theology, and yet he does not deny the possibility of constructing a theology of ecumenical councils, provided that the ecclesiology is the starting point for it.<sup>56</sup> According to Küng, the Church is an ecumenical council convoked by God, and the ecumenical councils convoked by the Church are a representation of this ecumenical council by divine convocation.<sup>57</sup> The ecumenical councils are only but a real representation and embodiment of the Church. The Church, as the council of believers in Christ by divine convocation, is embodied and realised anew in the proclamation of the Word, celebration of sacraments, the profession of one faith, practice of all uniting love and in the expectation of the Lord's second-coming, and the most intensive form of this embodiment is the celebration of the Holy Eucharist.<sup>58</sup> As the representation of the Church, an ecumenical council has the special guidance and assistance of the Holy Spirit, and it is this special assistance of the Spirit of God, which gives an ecumenical council its ecumenical authority.<sup>59</sup>

In Karl Rahner's opinion, the ecumenical councils are expressions of the structures of the Church.<sup>60</sup> The councils of the Church are nothing but the ordinary Church in its extraordinary form. Although the canon law speaks of a council as the highest authority in the Church (of course, when all the conditions of the law are fulfilled), the bishops gathered for the council do not exercise a new form of authority; rather, through their collegial practice, the bishops exercise the authority which has always been existing otherwise, and

is bestowed unto them through their consecration.<sup>61</sup> Rahner, too, denies the absolute necessity of an ecumenical council in the Church. Since what the bishops along with the Pope as the supreme head do in the council (collegial exercise of

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<sup>54</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 304.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Hans Küng, *Strukturen der Kirche*, Auflg. 2, Freiburg im Breisgau: Verlag Herder KG, 1963, S. 25.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Mark E. Powell, *Papal Infallibility: A Protestant Evaluation of an Ecumenical Issue*, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009, p. 175.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Hans Küng, *Strukturen der Kirche*, S. 25.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> Cf. *Ibid.* P. 35

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Karl Rahner, "Zur Theologie des Konzils", *Karl Rahner: Sämtliche Werke, Karl-Rahner-Stiftung Hrsg.*, Band 21/1, Freiburg im Breisgau: Verlag Herder, 2002, S. 12.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

their divine authority) can be and is also done outside the council, Rahner leaves it to the Pope's discretion to convoke a council or not.<sup>62</sup> But in both cases, the subject possessing this authority and exercising it, is one and the same, namely, the bishops under Pope as the supreme head.<sup>63</sup>

### 3 The Second Vatican Council

The Second Vatican Council, the twenty-first and the latest in the history of the ecumenical councils of the Catholic Church, was a major event and a turning point in the life of the Catholic Church. On 25<sup>th</sup> January 1959, the last day of the Christian unity octave, three months after his election as the supreme head and pastor of the Roman Catholic Church, Pope John XXIII took the Church and the world by surprise by announcing his decision to convoke a new ecumenical council. The Pontiff's decision was really surprising because earlier councils were convoked mostly when heresies threatened the Church's unity and faith. The announcement posed a twofold question: Should the First Vatican Council, which abruptly ended, be reopened? And, is any further council really necessary, since the Church upheld the papal primacy and papal infallibility?<sup>64</sup>

However, Pope John XXIII had totally different reasons for the new Council. The principal aim was *Aggiornamento* or Updating or Renewal. The Pope intended to bring renewal in the way the Church lived, taught and practiced the Catholic faith. He wanted the Church to recognize and read the signs of the times and put into order its life, in such a way, that it suits best to the modern world. It was high time for the Catholic Church to open itself up in order to let in the fresh air of change and renewal in its life. In short, the Catholic Church needed to open itself up to the guiding and prompting of the Holy Spirit and experience a new Pentecost. Thus, there were two major goals of the Council:<sup>65</sup> Dialogue with the modern world for the renewal of the Church; working tirelessly towards Christian unity. The renewal of the Catholic Church was to be instrumental in the unity of the entire Church. The Second Vatican Council was a pastoral council, which wanted to reach out to the modern world and share with it the good news of God's love and mercy. The Council was to bring the Church closer to the world. That is why Pope John XXIII said, "I want to throw open the windows of the Church, so that we can see out and the people can see in".<sup>66</sup> At the same time the Council

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. *Dekrete der Ökumenischen Konzilien, III, S. 817.*

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Michael Pennock, *This is Our Church: A History of Catholicism*, Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 2007, p. 221.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 220.

was to be ecumenical in the sense that it was to be “the Council of service not only for the spiritual good and joy of the Christian people but also an invitation to the separated communities to seek again that unity”<sup>67</sup>, for which the believers hoped and prayed. According to Yves Congar, the Second Vatican Council was ecumenical because “it represented the Church and its ideas or rather made the Church universally present by the breadth of its realization”.<sup>68</sup>

The Pope also had to face opposition in implementing his decision of convoking a new council, from the cardinals who were uncomfortable with change. However, the Pope was firm and unyielding in his decision. He strongly believed and was convinced that the decision to convoke a new council was an inspiration of the Holy Spirit, who wanted to breathe newness into the Church and renew the face of the Church. Pope John XXIII solemnly inaugurated the Council on 11<sup>th</sup> October 1962. The participants numbered over 2,300 – 2,500 members including bishops, theologians, canonists and Church historians. The participants also included not only women and lay people, but also members of other Christian churches and other religions. The official language of the council was Latin.

### **3.1 The Council Popes**

The Second Vatican Council witnessed the reign of two popes, namely, Pope John XXIII who convoked the Council and began it, and Pope Paul VI who took the Council to its successful end.

#### **3.1.1 Pope John XXIII**

Pope John XXIII, baptised as Angelo Roncalli, was born on 25 November 1881 in Sotto il Monte (Bergamo). He did his priestly studies in Bergamo seminary and was ordained priest in August 1904. He served as the secretary to the bishop of Bergamo. Later he worked as the national head of the Society for the Propagation of Faith until he was appointed as the titular archbishop and then as the papal diplomat in Bulgaria, Turkey, Greece and France. There, he won the recognition of the civil authority as well as the orthodox clergy. In 1953, he was named the patriarch of Venice and was elevated to the status of cardinal.

On October 28<sup>th</sup> 1958, he was elected as the successor to Pope Pius XII. However, the election of Angelo Roncalli as Pope John XXIII was unexpected, and his bold decision to convoke a new ecumenical council was surprising, since he

<sup>67</sup> Thomas F. Stransky, “The Foundation of the Secretariat for promoting Christian Unity”, Vatican II by those who were there, Alberic Stacpoole (Ed.), London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1986, p. 64.

<sup>68</sup> Yves Congar, “A Last Look at the Council”, Vatican II by those who were there, Alberic Stacpoole (Ed.), London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1986, p. 342.

was in his late seventies (a month shy of seventy-seven), and many thought of him rather as ‘an interim or caretaker’ Pope who would not serve very long as the head of the Church due to his advanced age, let alone any venturing into the work of reform and renewal in the Church.<sup>69</sup> But, John XXIII proved all the claims false as he announced the Second Vatican Council and through it, the renewal of the life of the Catholic Church. He was a visionary Pope, who “set his sights on bringing the Church out of its medieval past and into the ecumenical mainline of Christianity”.<sup>70</sup> The ‘good Pope John’, as he was called, was a man with a sense of humour. Unlike his predecessors, he was able to win over the entire world with his warmth and kindness. He was also a deeply spiritual person who had an intimate relationship with his creator and maker.<sup>71</sup> His intimate relationship with Christ, the Good Shepherd, reflected itself even in his office as the successor of the apostle Peter, where he understood his mission to be the shepherd of the flock of Christ and undertook initiatives, which were perhaps unusual and uncommon for a Pope and yet full of apostolic zeal and enthusiasm and were action oriented.<sup>72</sup> With his announcement of reform and renewal in the Church, Pope John was considered as a Pope who took decisions of greater significance and impact; who opened a new era in which he led by example, by being ever ready to the message of the Gospel and the promptings of the Holy Spirit.<sup>73</sup> According to him, the Church needs to have a dialogue with the rapidly changing and growing world. The Church needs to surrender itself to the Holy Spirit and rely on His inspirations and promptings, in order to discover anew its place and task in the modern world. Only when the Church learns to find its social, spiritual, theological and historical place and reveals to the world its nature and place in the salvific plan of God will it be able to make the Gospel relevant and acceptable to the modern world.<sup>74</sup> Hence, the Second Vatican Council was going to be a special council, unlike the previous councils. It was the first ecumenical council in the history of the Church that did not condemn or judge, but sought “a way of expression in the world in which she lived and seemed to ignore”.<sup>75</sup> The Pope also wanted to present to the world a

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<sup>69</sup> Cf. Dyron B. Daugherty, *Church History: Five Approaches to Global Discipline*, p. 66.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Hubert Jedin “Das Zweite Vatikanische Konzil”, *Handbuch der Kirchengeschichte: Die Weltkirche im 20. Jahrhundert*, Band VII, Hubert Jedin & Konrad Repgen (Hrsg.), Freiburg im Breisgau: Verlag Herder, 1979, S. 102.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. U Penteriani, “Johannes XXIII”, *Vatikan Lexikon, Niccolò del Re* (Hrsg.), deutsche Bearbeitung Elmar Bordfeld, Augsburg: Pattloch Verlag, 1998, S. 353.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. David Seeber, “Vatikanum II”, *Handwörterbuch religiöser Gegenwartsfragen*, Ulrich Ruh u.a. (Hrsg.), Freiburg im Breisgau: Verlag Herder, 1986, S. 480.

<sup>75</sup> J. K. S. Reid, “Vatican Council II (1962–1965)”, *New 20<sup>th</sup> Century Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, J. D. Douglas (Ed.), Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991, p. 854.

motherly and merciful Church through the council. He did not wish to condemn or punish the already wounded and suffering world with sanctions; rather, he wanted to soothe the world's ailment with the remedy of mercy. He always wanted to be the good shepherd whose duty and obligation it was to work for the unity of all Christians and all people.<sup>76</sup>

Pope John XXIII died of cancer on June 3, 1963. His successor, Pope Paul VI, said about him that the grave is too small to contain the greatness and the legacy of Pope John XXIII. The contribution of Pope John XXIII to the Church and to the world at large was so great that he is remembered even today as the Good Pope. Hans Küng calls Pope John XXIII the greatest Pope of the twentieth century, who was hardly five years the supreme shepherd of the Catholic Church on earth and yet proved himself to be the true successor of the apostle Peter by his service to the Church, in the biblical sense of the word.<sup>77</sup> He was beatified by Pope John Paul II in 2002 and canonized along with Pope John Paul II by the present Pope Francis in 2014.

### 3.1.2 Pope Paul VI

Pope John XXIII was succeeded by Archbishop Giovanni Battista Montini as Pope Paul VI, on 21 June 1963. He was born on 26 September 1897 in Concesio (Brescia). He was ordained in 1920 and acquired doctorates in law and theology. In 1954, he was appointed as Archbishop of Milan.

The death of Pope John XXIII during the Council posed a question about the continuation of the Council. However, the newly elected Pope immediately announced his intention to continue the Council. On 29 September 1963 at the opening of the second session, the Pope spoke of four important tasks of the Council:<sup>78</sup> 1) Doctrinal interpretation of the nature of the Church 2) Interior renewal of the Church 3) Promotion of Christian unity 4) Dialogue with the modern world.

Under Pope Paul VI, the Council had three sessions. One of the most important milestones of his Papacy was his historical visit to the Holy Land, where he met the patriarch of Constantinople for a dialogue in an effort to reconcile the differences. Pope Paul VI was a strong advocate of peace and social justice, as is clear in his encyclical 'on the Development of Peoples (*Popularum Progressio*)'. He brought the Second Vatican Council to its solemn and successful end on December 8, 1965.

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Also see, Klaus Schatz, *Allgemeine Konzilien-Brennpunkt der Kirchengeschichte*, p. 273.

<sup>76</sup> E. Iserloh, "Das Zweite Vatikanische Konzil", *Ökumenische Geschichte, Band III – Neuzeit*, Raymond Kottje & Bernd Moeller (Hrsg.), Mainz: Matthias Grünewald Verlag, 1974, S. 325.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. Hans Küng, *Ist die Kirche noch zu retten?*, München: Piper Verlag, 2011, S. 153.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 329.



### 3.2 The Historical Context

The pre-Vatican II Church lived in a period marked by two world wars. The wars had devastated the world and stripped the human beings of their dignity. The brutal killing of millions of Jews under the Nazi rule is a proof of how deeply wounded humanity was due to cruelty and inhumanness. There were many existential thinkers during this period who sought to find a new meaning and restore the dignity of human beings. Beside the world wars, there was a rapid transformation of the world through the radical changes like the end of colonialism, rapidly growing industrialization and major advances in the means of communication. The rapid industrialization, especially in European countries like Italy and Spain, led not only to the economic and social transformation, but also the transformation of human life. The development brought in more openness, dynamism and innovative spirit.<sup>79</sup> The concept of dialogue came to the forefront through the philosophical thought of Martin Buber who spoke of the dialogue of *I-Thou* relationship, treating the other as *Thou* (person, human being) and not *It* (object).

At this particular period of the history, when the world was advancing socially, technically and scientifically, the Church still kept holding on to its traditional mindset and traditional way of thinking and kept itself separated from the world. Hence, there was a need for the Church to come out of its ghetto mentality and start engaging itself into a dialogue with the world and with humanity, to mutually discover new ways for the betterment of the world and the entire human race. The Church needed to become an active participant rather than being a passive spectator. It was in response to the unsettling and disturbing world situation that Pope John XXIII decided to convoke the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, to begin the dialogue of the Church with the modern world and modern life situations.<sup>80</sup> It was going to be an attempt on the part of the Church to address productively and positively the questions posed by the modern world.<sup>81</sup>

Another historical factor for the convocation of the Second Vatican Council was the longing of many in the Church for renewal and reform. Michael Pennock lists the renewal movements, which began earlier with the work of reform and renewal in the Church and through it, paved a way for the council.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Cf. Raymond F. Bulman, "Introduction: The historical Context", *From Trent to Vatican II – Historical and Theological Investigations*, Raymond F. Bulman & Frederick J. Parrella (Eds.), UK: Oxford University Press, 2006, pp. 7–8.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. Ann Michele Nolan, *A Privileged Moment: Dialogue in the Language of the Second Vatican Council 1962–1965*, Bern: Peter Lang, European Academic Publishers, 2006, p. 6.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. Michael Pennock, *This is Our Church: A History of Catholicism*.

- Papal teachings on social justice urged Catholics and the entire world community to apply Gospel values and standards in their political, social and economic dealings.
- The Catholic action supported the role of lay people in the proclamation of the Gospel even to the market places.
- Liturgical movements led by some scholars stressed the renewal and newness in liturgy. They also stressed that people must be able to grasp the reality of sacraments. Their efforts later made way for the renewal of the liturgy at the Second Vatican Council.
- Biblical scholars, who were inspired by the papal encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu* (1943) of Pope Pius XII, proposed critical and modern methods of scholarship, which helped Catholics to discover the richness of Scripture.
- The Church's missionary endeavours in the twentieth century stopped supporting colonial interests and started, rather, to concentrate on the welfare of the people in the mission lands. There were also attempts to promote native priestly vocations.
- There were many Catholics who were engaged in the Protestant ecumenical initiatives for the promotion of Christian unity. The Second Vatican Council, with its decree on ecumenism, and the writings of the post-conciliar popes have given further thrust to these initiatives and encouraged the Church to engage further in ecumenical activities.
- Prior to the Council there were attempts by the theologians like Karl Rahner, Hans Küng, Henry de Lubac and Yves Congar to bring a renewal in the Church's theological thought in order to make it understandable for the modern world. Their efforts bore fruits at the Council.

It is also important to consider the Indian historical context prior to Vatican II. After the Independence of India in 1947 from the rule of the British, the Indian situation began to change. The Church could not go ahead with its old strategy for the evangelization and spread of Christianity as there was resistance from the Hindu leaders. Christianity was seen as the threat not only to the Hindu religion but also to the nation itself and to its unity. Many members of the hierarchy felt the need to change the way the Church related to other religions. Christians were considered as foreigners and not as Indians. Hence, there was a need to become the Indian Church rather than being the Church in India. This called for a major and drastic transition in the Church's way of thinking, in the way the Liturgy was celebrated. There was a need to become an open Church, a friendly Church and above all, a human Church. Hence, the Second Vatican Council was an opportunity for the Indian Church to express itself and its desire to change and to become open to the promptings of the Spirit.

### 3.3 The Preparation for the Council

On 17 May 1959, shortly after Pope John XIII announced his decision to convoke the Second Vatican Council, a papal preparatory commission was set up, headed by the Secretary of State Cardinal Domenico Tardini. The important tasks of this commission were:<sup>83</sup> 1) to know the opinions of the curial officials, bishops, abbots, religious superiors, university faculties and theologians regarding the topics or issues, which needed urgent attention at the Council, 2) to prepare a rough outline of these topics, 3) to propose membership for various preparatory commissions. The process of consultation, however, seemed impaired as some of the curial officials considered the task or idea of consulting the bishops worldwide, as an insult to the curial leadership. According to them, it was the curial officials who were actively involved in the day-to-day service of the universal Church and this put them in a better position to know and decide what was good for the Church.<sup>84</sup> The actual preparation for the Council began on 5 June 1960 by the *motu proprio Superni Dei nutu*. The Pope established ten preparatory commissions and three secretariats. The Pope also headed a separate central commission, which coordinated all the work of preparation and to which all other commissions were answerable. Each commission had bishops and consultators. There were all in all 728 persons working in these commissions and secretariats, which included 48 cardinals, 215 patriarchs, archbishops and bishops, 217 prelates, 240 priests and religious and 8 lay people.<sup>85</sup> The commissions had to work on and draw up texts for the following topics to be discussed during the council:<sup>86</sup>

1. Theology (matters of faith and morals)
2. Bishops and the governance in the dioceses.
3. Discipline of clergy and laity.
4. Religious
5. Sacramental discipline
6. Sacred Liturgy of the Church
7. Priestly studies and formation
8. Eastern Churches
9. Missions of the Catholic Church
10. Lay apostolate

<sup>83</sup> Cf. Richard R. Gaillardetz, *The Church in the Making-Lumen Gentium, Christus Dominus, Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, New York: Paulist Press, 2006, p. 6.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 6–7.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. George Thomas Kurian, “Vatican II”, *Encyclopedia of Christian Civilization*, George Thomas Kurien (Ed.), UK: John Wiley & Sons, 2011, p. 2447.

<sup>86</sup> Cf. R. F. Trisco & A. Komonchak, “Vatican Council II”, *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Bernard L. Marthaler & others (Eds.), Vol. XIV, USA: The Catholic University of America, 2003, p. 407 & Cf. George Thomas Kurian, *Vatican II*, pp. 2447–2448.

In addition, there was also a secretariat each for the communications-media and for the promotion of Christian unity. The commissions prepared a total of 75 texts based on the preparatory work, and soon limited the number of texts to 22, grouping the topics under two main categories, namely, Church *ad intra* and Church *ad extra*.<sup>87</sup> Hence, 22 topics were finalized for the conciliar discussion. On December 25, 1961, with the promulgation of the Apostolic Constitution *Humanae Salutis*, the Pope convoked the Council publicly and solemnly for the year 1962 and reasserted his threefold goals for the Council, namely, the ecclesial reform, the unification of Christendom and establishment of peace in the whole world.<sup>88</sup> With the *Motu Proprio* of 2 February 1962, the solemn inauguration of the Second Vatican Council was scheduled for October 11, 1962.

### 3.4 The Proceedings at the Council

The Council began on October 11, 1962, with 2,540 voting delegates present.<sup>89</sup> The Council met in four sessions. Right from the beginning of the Council, however, there was tension and difference of opinion among the participants between “a very vocal conservative minority and a progressive majority”, due to which, the first session hardly succeeded in aiming at any positive outcome.<sup>90</sup> In his inaugural speech, Pope John reminded the Council and the entire Catholic Church to hold fast to the heritage of the sacred truth and to find out new ways to express this truth and convey it to the modern world.

#### 3.4.1 First Session

During the first session the discussions were held over different topics like, sources of revelation, mass media, unity of the Church and on the Church. The lively discussions pointed out to a Church hell-bent on reform and renewal. However, the first session ended on 8 December 1962 without having approved a single schema. With the death of Pope John XXIII, the Council came to a standstill with all other related activities. But the newly elected Pope Paul VI promised that the

<sup>87</sup> It was Cardinal Suenens (1904–1996), who proposed the idea of grouping all the texts under two categories and the proposal was accepted without any objection for an orderly scheme of texts. Cf. McPartlan, “Vatican Council II”, *The Cambridge Dictionary of Christian Theology*, Ian Alexander McFarland, David A. S. Fergusson, Karen Kilby & Iain R. Torrance (Eds.), New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011, p. 528.

<sup>88</sup> Cf. *Dekrete der Ökumenischen Konzilien*, III, S. 817.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. Giuseppe Alberigo, “Vatikanum II “, *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, Walter Kasper (Hrsg.), Band X, Freiburg im Breisgau: Verlag Herder, 2001, 562: There were also observers and many people invited for the council: 1041 Europeans, 956 Americans, 379 Africans and over 300 Asians.

<sup>90</sup> George Thomas Kurian, *Vatican II*, p. 2448.

Council would be continued and brought it to a successful end as willed by his predecessor.

### 3.4.2 Second session

The newly elected Pope Paul VI inaugurated the second session on 29 September 1963 and in his speech, he reasserted the task of the Council as the renewal of the Church and restoration of unity. Discussions were held during this session over the revised schema about the Church, collegiality of bishops, etc. The second session ended on 4 December 1963 with the promulgation of a Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy and a decree on the means of social communication.

### 3.4.3 Third Session

The third session commenced on September 14, 1964. Pope Paul opened the session with the Holy Eucharist, which he concelebrated with twenty-four Council fathers, as a conciliar expression of concrete liturgical reforms suggested in the constitution on the Sacred Liturgy.<sup>91</sup> The third session ended on 21 November 1964 on a productive note, as this session promulgated three documents: The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Decree on the Eastern Churches and the Decree on Ecumenism. The Pope also proclaimed mother Mary as the Mother of the Church.

### 3.4.4 Fourth Session

The fourth session began on 14 September 1965. At the inauguration, the Pope surprisingly announced his decision to convoke a Synod of Bishops to assist him in the service of the universal Church, and the norms for this Synod were formulated in an Apostolic Constitution (*Apostolica Sollicitudo*) on 15 September. Toward the end of the fourth session, the Council issued 11 documents, of which five texts were issued on October 15, two on November 18 and the remaining four documents were issued on December 7. The documents are as follows:

- Decree on the Pastoral Office of the Bishops
- Decree on the Renewal of the Religious Life
- Decree on the Training of the Priests
- Declaration on the Christian Education
- Declaration of the Relationship of the Church to other Religions
- Dogmatic Constitution of the Divine Revelation
- Decree on the Lay-Apostolate

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<sup>91</sup> Cf. R. F. Trisco & J. A. Komonchak, *Vatican Council II*, p. 412.

- Declaration on Religious Liberty
- Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity
- Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests
- Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World.

The end of the fourth session was marked with an important event whereby Pope Paul and the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople publicly lifted the mutual excommunications of 1054, which was again a clear sign of the ecumenical purpose of the Council. On December 8, in a ceremony in St. Peter's Square, the Pope officially concluded the Second Vatican Council.

### **3.5 The preparation and participation of the Indian Church at the Vatican II**

It was with the Second Vatican Council that the Asian Church began to make its presence felt in the universal Church. Most importantly, the Indian Church left a lasting impression on the universal Church with its participation and contribution to the universal Church at the Council. The work of Indian theologian Paul Pulikkan, titled: *Indian Church at Vatican II: A Historico-Theological Study of the Indian Participation in the Second Vatican Council*<sup>92</sup>, is an important work for the study of the Indian Church's participation in the Vatican II. The author gives us a detailed and elaborate description of the involvement of the Indian Church in the preparation and in the event of the council.

There were seven bishops from India involved in the preparation commissions. Cardinal Valerian Gracias of Mumbai (1900–1978) who was the chairman of CBCI was a member of the central preparatory committee, headed by the Pope himself. Added to them, were five Indian theologians who were also working as the consultants for the commissions. Cardinal Gracias is remembered for his timely interventions during the discussions of the central preparatory committee.<sup>93</sup> The work of the Indian Church during the preparatory phase was very limited, except in the case of the committee for the Oriental Churches which had three members from Indian Church (Oriental archbishops from Kerala), whereas there was no representation on the part of Indian Church in other committees.<sup>94</sup> During the period of preparation for the Council, there were 84 members of the Church hier-

<sup>92</sup> Paul Pulikkan, *Indian Church at Vatican II: A Historico-Theological Study of the Indian Participation in the Second Vatican Council*, Trichur: Marymatha Publications, 2001.

<sup>93</sup> The author makes mention that although Cardinal Gracias was open to the change and renewal in the Church in different ways, he was also conservative in the sense that he did not want the decentralization of the power to reach the clergy and religious, and his criticism of the proposal to restore the married deacons was not wholly an outcome of sound theological reasoning and historical evidences. Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 174.

<sup>94</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 173.

archy in India to whom the questionnaire was sent. From these, only 63 sent the responses in the form of 55 documents of wishes and proposals which dealt with the following topics:<sup>95</sup>

1. The Church
  - The Nature of the Church
  - Mariology
  - Concerning the Church Magisterium
  - Inter-ritual matters
  - Missions and evangelization
  - Canon Law and Moral Theology
2. Members of the Body of Christ
  - Concerning the office of Bishops
  - Restoration of permanent Diaconate
  - Priestly life
  - Formation of priests
  - Religious
  - Laity
3. Areas of Reform
  - Reform and decentralization of Curia
  - Liturgical Renewal
  - Use of Vernacular in Liturgy
  - Ecumenism and interreligious dialogue
4. Involvement in the World
  - Fight against cancer
  - Human rights and dignity
  - Education and Media
  - Social engagement
  - Church and the population growth
5. Concerning the event of the Council
  - Inviting the members of other churches
  - Language and place of the council

Despite the Indian bishops participating in the preparation period and later in the event of the Council, the question still remains: How much did the Indian Church really contribute to the Council? J.A.G. Gerwin van Leeuwen in his book, *Fully Indian-Authentically Christian*, recounts the Indian Church's contribution to the Council in a negative tone. In his opinion, the Indian Church presented itself to the Council as a receiver and not a giver, which only showed how the Indian Church was a slave in the hands of the Western Church and not a co-worker in

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<sup>95</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 78–115.

the Church's mission, and it was totally unaware of the richness of its Charism, spiritual resources, talents and treasures it possessed.<sup>96</sup> For many bishops, what the Western Church said was always the Gospel truth. Hence, they felt that any changes, reform and renewal in the Church must come from the West and not from Asia or India. The Indian Church saw itself subordinate to the West. All the good could come only from the West. This is why the thought and the theological initiatives of some of the great Indian theologians went unnoticed and unappreciated at the council.<sup>97</sup> Van Leeuwen makes mention of the pastoral letter sent by CBCI standing committee prior to the Council, where the Church authorities in India, in spite of being aware of the Pope's mind regarding the Council (every believer, be it lay person, priest, religious or bishop, was expected to contribute to the Council) did not encourage the people to make any contribution to the Council, thereby reducing them to passive receivers.<sup>98</sup> In short, the believers were expected only to accept and obey what came to them through the hierarchy. Added to it, there were also many conservatives in the Church's hierarchy who were opposed to any reform or renewal in the Church because they saw the reforms as a threat to the Church's credibility.

Even at the Council, the Indian bishops did not have a clear plan and strategy to convince the Council of their proposals. Their arguments and proposals, though pastoral in nature, lacked the theological basis or justification.<sup>99</sup> Further, the Indian Church failed to present rich spiritual traditions and the cultural diversity of India in the discussions on the Church and Ecumenism.<sup>100</sup> Looking at these factors, one could say that the Indian Church's contribution to the Council on the whole was very meagre and marginal.<sup>101</sup> One more reason adding to the lack of active participation of the Indian Church was the language of the Council: Latin. The questionnaire sent to the bishops worldwide was in Latin. Hence, there were hesitations in sending the responses to Rome.

It is important, however, to note that whatever contribution the Indian Church made to the Council was unique and practical in nature as the survey of their interventions shows. The Indian Bishops saw themselves as truly pastors who were concerned with the day-to-day life situations of the people and not as theologians who were perhaps concerned more with the formulation of the doctrines. They brought to the Council the issues which were very contextual and

<sup>96</sup> Cf. J.A.G. Gerwin van Leeuwen, *Fully Indian-Authentically Christian: A Study of the First Fifteen Years of the NBCLC (1967–1982)*. Bangalore – India in the Light of the Theology of its Founder D.S. Amalarapavadass, Kampen: Uitgeversmaatschappij J. H. KOK, 1990, p. 5.

<sup>97</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*

<sup>98</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> Cf. Paul Pulikkan, *Indian Church at Vatican II*, p. 575.

<sup>100</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 344.

<sup>101</sup> Cf. J.A.G. Gerwin van Leeuwen, *Fully Indian-Authentically Christian*, p. 6.



from the daily life situations. Through their interventions, the Indian bishops contributed to the formulation of many documents such as *Gaudium et Spes* (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World), *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (Constitution on the Liturgy), *Nostra Aetate* (Declaration on the Church's Relations with Non-Christian Religions), *Ad Gentes* (Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity), *Lumen Gentium* (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church in the Modern World), *Christus Dominus* (Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church) and *Dignitatis Humanae* (Declaration on Religious Liberty).<sup>102</sup> The unique contribution made by the Indian bishops was most of all in the field of Liturgy, Inculturation, Ecumenism, Interreligious Dialogue and Mission, which reflected the pastoral mind of the Indian bishops.<sup>103</sup> From the above observations, we can conclude that the Indian Church's contribution to the Council, while not so great as that of the other bishops, was still very unique and significant.

### 3.6 Significance of the Second Vatican Council

The Second Vatican Council surely marked the beginning of a new era in the life and history of the Church. It gave the Church a facelift in the modern world. The Council was God's way of beginning a new chapter in the history of the Church, and it opened, without doubt, the doors leading to newness.<sup>104</sup> It was a blessing and a gift of God both to the Church and the world because through the Council emerged a new understanding of the Church through which the Church was open and ready to embrace the modern world with all its changes and challenges and to learn from it with great optimism and enthusiasm.<sup>105</sup>

Not all the scholars sound very positive about the success of the Second Vatican Council. According to Peter Phan, although the Second Vatican Council was a universal Council for the universal Church, it was still dominated by the European prelates and much of its discussion concerned only the Western Church.<sup>106</sup> Hans Küng feels that not everything was a success at the Council. There were also some factors and events which hampered the total success of the Council.<sup>107</sup>

<sup>102</sup> Cf. Paul Pulikkan, *Indian Church at Vatican II*, p. 574.

<sup>103</sup> Cf. Peter Phan, "Reception" or "Subversion" of Vatican II by the Asian Churches? A New Way of Being Church in Asia", [http://aejt.com.au/Phan\\_Reception\\_or\\_Subversion.pdf](http://aejt.com.au/Phan_Reception_or_Subversion.pdf), 12.05.2016.

<sup>104</sup> Cf. Manfred Eder, *Kirchengeschichte – 2000 Jahre im Überblick, Ostfildern: Patmos-Verlag der Schwabenverlag*, 2008, S. 221.

<sup>105</sup> Cf. Michael Pennock, *This is Our Church: A History of Catholicism*, p. 224.

<sup>106</sup> Cf. Peter Phan, "Reception" or "Subversion" of Vatican II by the Asian Churches? A New Way of Being Church in Asia., p. 2.

<sup>107</sup> Cf. Hans Küng, *Ist die Kirche noch zu retten*, pp. 155–158 & Cf. Dyron B. Daugherty, *Church History: Five Approaches to Global Discipline*, pp. 67–68.

- The early death of Pope John XXIII during the Council made it impossible to bring 100% reform in the Church, and his successor was not very progressive (a Pope with rather curial thinking and not conciliar thinking).
- Many conservative cardinals of the Curia who supervised and controlled many of the conciliar sessions hindered the progress and reforms due to their unwillingness to change.
- The topic of infallibility remained only on the books.
- Priestly celibacy was upheld.
- The condemnation of the use of birth control means through the papal encyclical *Humanae Vitae*.

However, such criticism about the Council does not keep most of the scholars from seeing the Council as a huge success in terms of renewal and reform. Ján Gunčaga in his book recounts the success of the Second Vatican Council, which can be described in three types of changes:<sup>108</sup> Firstly, there was a change in the Church's hierarchical understanding. Church understands itself today as the People of God. All the believers are the members of this Church and all are equal in value and dignity. All are called to holiness and have responsibility to work for the mission of the Church. Secondly, there was a change in the Church's attitude and relationship towards other Christian churches and other religions. The Catholic Church became open to them and considered them as brothers and sisters – children of the one and same God – and asserted the religious freedom of every individual. Thirdly, there was a change in the Church's attitude to the world. The Church became open to the world and its problems. Added to this change, the Second Vatican Council also brought in a shift in the understanding of the Church from being an organization or an institution to being a Mystery or a sacrament.

The significance of the Second Vatican Council can be summarised through four turning points of the Council:

1. The Council's main purpose was *Aggiornamento* or renewal or updating of the Church by a continuous return to the sources in Revelation and Tradition, and by adaptation and adjustment to the changing signs of time.
2. It presented a Church that addressed not only its members, but also the entire world and every individual. Thus, the newness in the thinking and approach of the Church.
3. This newness of thinking expressed itself through the interest of the Church in the social issues and ministries in greater optimism concerning salvation (salvation is not the monopoly of the Church but is available for everyone who lives a life acceptable to God), and in new assertions about religious freedom.

<sup>108</sup> Cf. Ján Gunčaga, *The Laity as Christians by Profession (The Christianity in Secular Profession)*, transl. Darina Sedláková & Rita Carberry, Slovakia: Presov, 2000, pp. 40–41.

4. The Council brought a change in the Church's self-understanding (The Church is the People of God).

## 4 Conclusion

Ecumenical councils have played a very important role in the life of the Church. They have been an instrument for the Church to confront and resolve the issues, which were threats to the teachings of the Church. The Second Vatican Council, however, was the first ecumenical Council in the life of the Church, which had no intention to condemn or judge, but to reflect and resolve. The Council helped the Church to reflect on its life and activity in the face of the changes that were taking place in the world. The Council equipped the Church with newness and openness in order to face the modern world boldly. There is no doubt that the Council was a brainchild of Pope John XXIII, whose vision for a renewed Church was being realised by the Council. The Council opened new possibilities and ways of being a Church in the world that was marked by changes. Hence, the unique convocation of the Second Vatican Council, which was attended by 2,500 bishops from all over the world, non-Catholic observers and lay participants, was without doubt a decisive event in the history of the Church and the world in the 20th century.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Cf. Guy Bedouelle, *Die Geschichte der Kirche*, Paderborn: Bonifatius, 2000, S. 188.

## Chapter II ECCLESIOLOGY OF THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL (*LUMEN GENTIUM*)

*Lumen Gentium* (LG) is the Dogmatic Constitution of the Church in the modern world. This document was issued in November 1964 during the third session of the Council. The Latin words *Lumen Gentium*, meaning ‘light of the nations’, refer to Jesus Christ who came into the world as the light of the nations (LG 1). The document tries to explain elaborately what exactly the Church is and its nature and existence. *Lumen Gentium* is certainly one of the most important documents the councils of the Church ever produced and “in many ways, the crowning achievement of the Second Vatican Council”.<sup>1</sup> LG is like a mirror that reflects the nature and the self-understanding of the Church. It can, in fact, be seen as the synthesis of the entire Council.<sup>2</sup> When one reads the document, one can understand the nature of the Church, the source of its origin and the factors guiding the Church. The document does not define anything new as such; rather, it redefines the already existing understanding of the Church in a new light, in a way that anyone will be able to understand the Church. *Lumen Gentium* is certainly one of the most beautiful, deeply spiritual and inspiring documents the Council produced.<sup>3</sup> Through its rather pastoral and not so much through its old monarchical and clerical approach to the understanding of the Church, the document clearly shows that it is very different. *Lumen Gentium* has played a most significant role in defining the nature and mission of the Catholic Church in contemporary times and has a tremendous impact on the Catholic theology even till today.<sup>4</sup>

### 1 The History of *Lumen Gentium*

The constitution went through three drafts. It took the Council fathers three of the four sessions to discuss and bring the constitution in its final form.

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<sup>1</sup> Edward P. Hahnenberg, *A Concise Guide to the Documents of Vatican II*, Cincinnati: Franciscan Media, 2007, p. 37.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Riccardo Lombardi, *Kirche und Reich Gottes, Überstzt. Franz Schmall, Rottweil: Verlag Aktuelle Texte, 1978, S. 28.*

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Jeffrey A. Mirus, *The Documents of Vatican II: A Summary and Guide*, Manassas: Trinity Communications, 2010, p. 24.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Jayson M. Brunnel, “*Lumen Gentium* – The Church’s Explanation of Her Nature, Mission, and Structure in the World”, <http://www.hprweb.com/2015/04/lumen-gentium/>, 14.07.2016.

### 1.1 First Draft

At the first session of the Council, the preparatory commission headed by Cardinal Alfredo Ottaviani, the prefect of the Holy Office, presented a schema *De Ecclesia* on the Church. This first schema or draft was clearly based on the untreated schema on the Church at the First Vatican Council. This schema was rejected by the Council fathers as it brought back the same old ecclesiological tendencies.<sup>5</sup> This draft is comprised of eleven chapters:

Chapter 1: The Nature of the Church Militant

Chapter 2: The Members of the Church Militant and its Necessity for Salvation

Chapter 3: The Episcopate as the Highest Level of the Sacrament of Orders, Priesthood

Chapter 4: Residential Bishops

Chapter 5: The States of Evangelical Perfection

Chapter 6: The Laity

Chapter 7: The Magisterium (teaching office) of the Church

Chapter 8: Authority and Obedience in the Church

Chapter 9: The Relationship between Church and State

Chapter 10: The Necessity of Proclaiming Gospel to the Nations of the World

Chapter 11: Ecumenism

This draft gives us a clear idea that it was very much institution centred or it reflected an institutional ecclesiology. The reason for this institution-centric ecclesiology was obviously the defensive attitude of the Church (the curial cardinals'

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<sup>5</sup> Following are the different Ecclesiological tendencies from the Council of Trent up to the Second Vatican Council: "This was an era tending towards Ultramontanism, literally 'beyond the mountains', an exaggerated emphasis on the powers and prerogatives of the papacy and on the centralisation of the Church. Catholic Theology, in rising to meet the challenge of the Protestant reformers who rejected the papacy, the priesthood and the divine structure of the Church itself, emphasised the visible, institutional structures of the Church as a perfect society, a pyramid with the pope at the top, the bishops and priests below, and the laity along the base. Moreover, in the following centuries, the Enlightenment, the French revolution, the birth of democracy, the new nation- states of Europe, the rise of empirical science, and nineteenth and twentieth century developments in biblical scholarship and theology, each in their own way posed radical and wide-ranging challenges to the Catholic dogmatic Tradition. Against this 'modernity,' the Church adopted an increasingly defensive stance. The stronger, monarchical conception of the papacy found expression in the dogmatic constitution of the First Vatican Council (1870) *Pastor Aeternus*, which solemnly defined the dogma of papal infallibility. The Council had intended to articulate a more comprehensive ecclesiology than this, but its work was interrupted by the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian war. The result was arguably an unbalanced ecclesiology that undervalued the role of the bishops and the local churches. It neglected the laity whilst the spiritual nature of the Church, a mystery, the Body of Christ, was eclipsed by concerns with its authority and juridical structure. Philip Egan, "Lumen Gentium", [http://www.portsmouthdiocese.org.uk/bishop/talks\\_and\\_addresses/20131010-Lumen-Gentium.pdf](http://www.portsmouthdiocese.org.uk/bishop/talks_and_addresses/20131010-Lumen-Gentium.pdf), 19.07.2016.

unwillingness to bring in any change) against the modernity which seemed to threaten the Catholic faith. In the face of the developed philosophy and science, which threatened the Church's belief system, the defending of the institution was considered as the only and best way to defend the faith.<sup>6</sup> Hence, the First Vatican Council resorted to defending the Papal authority, thus giving the impression as if the Church did not exist without the Pope and without the structure. The first draft on the Church embodied exactly the traditional institution-centric ideas of the First Vatican Council. There was hardly any importance and emphasis laid on the spiritual and communal dimensions of the Church.<sup>7</sup> In short, every chapter of the first draft on the Church had something to do with the Church as an institution and hierarchy and thereby overlooked the spiritual character.<sup>8</sup>

Most of the bishops at the Council who were aware of the imbalance of the pre-Vatican II ecclesiology and wanted to bring in balance with their suggestions were highly disappointed with the first draft presented during the first session as it continued to portray the defensive attitude of the Church. The draft received huge criticism from theologians like Rahner and Schillebeeckx, who also influenced many bishops in their interventions.<sup>9</sup> This resulted in many of the participant bishops criticising the schema. Certainly, there were also some bishops who favoured the existing draft and praised it for its emphasis on the juridical and hierarchical aspects of the Church. However, these few voices in favour of the schema could not overwhelm the voices or bishops who rejected the schema.<sup>10</sup> Among the many bishops and cardinals who raised their voices against the schema, the role of bishop Emil Josef De Smedt (Belgium) is noteworthy. He criticised the document for its triumphalism, clericalism and institutionalism which took the

<sup>6</sup> Edward P. Hahnenberg, *A Concise Guide to the Documents of Vatican II*, pp. 37–39.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas p. Rausch, *Towards a truly Catholic Church – An Ecclesiology for the Third Millennium*, Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2005, p. 17.

<sup>8</sup> For more information on the content of the Draft, read: Richard R. Gaillardetz, *The Church in the Making-Lumen Gentium, Christus Dominus, Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, New York: Paulist Press, 2006, pp. 9–12 & Peter Hühnermann, “*Theologischer Kommentar zur Dogmatischen Konstitution über die Kirche Lumen Gentium*”, *Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzil, Peter Hühnermann & Bernd (Hrsg.), Band II, Freiburg im Breisgau: Verlag Herder, 2004, S. 294–314*.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Denis M. Doyle, “Otto Semmelroth and the advance of the Church as Sacrament at Vatican II”, [http://ecommons.udayton.edu/rel\\_fac\\_pub/56/](http://ecommons.udayton.edu/rel_fac_pub/56/), 01.08.2016. In his criticism of the draft Rahner said, that the document was missing an organic structure, a perspective, and a coherent ordering of chapters among themselves. He also found that the document needed to be more pastoral, lacked an ecumenical spirit, was insufficiently scriptural, and did not acknowledge differences in types of dogma as if specific points of deficiency in content included treating the theme of Christian unity from the perspective of the Mystical Body, too narrow a view of the Church membership, an inadequate approach to collegiality, an unclear doctrine on the various states of the faithful in the Church.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

Church nowhere close to being a ‘mystery’ or the flock of Jesus Christ the Shepherd.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, bishop Hurley, suggested a total facelift to the schema, whereas, Bishop Rupp of Monaco appealed to the Council gathering for a decentralised governance of the Church which would put an end to the ‘baroque’ age of the Church government.<sup>12</sup>

Another cardinal who played a very significant role was Cardinal Suenens, who called for a re-drafting of the present schema which would present the Church as the Church of Christ for the nations – *ecclesia Christi gentium*.<sup>13</sup> Cardinal Montini of Milan supported this view of Cardinal Suenens. Cardinal Montini, while pointing out at some of the unwanted things in the schema, emphasised the serving character of the Church rather than the hierarchical character.<sup>14</sup> In short, the Council fathers felt the need for a radically new and different vision of the Church which is based on Scripture. By the end of the first session, no unanimity was achieved regarding the schema on the Church. The Pope appointed a committee of seven members to revise the schema based on the suggestions of the first session and to bring it in accordance with the goals of the council<sup>15</sup> and after the concluding address, the first session ended without any concrete decision being made on the schema about the Church.

## 1.2 Second Draft

After the death of Pope John XXIII, Cardinal Montini of Milan was elected as the Supreme Pontiff, and he assured the Council of his intention to continue the reform intended by his predecessor. The discussion on the Church was his first priority during the second session. He formed a committee composed of some of the leading bishops and *peritis* (theologians who were bishops’ advisors).<sup>16</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 39, See also: Thomas P. Rausch, *Towards a truly Catholic Church*, p. 18 & Richard R. Gaillardetz, *The Church in the Making*, p. 13.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Andrew Chandler & Charlotte Hansen (Eds.), *Observing Vatican II: The Confidential Reports of the Archbishop of Canterbury’s Representative*, Bernard Pawley, 1961–1964, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013, p. 179.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. *Ibid.* & Cf. Thomas p. Rausch, *Towards a truly Catholic Church*, p. 18.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Andrew Chandler & Charlotte Hansen, *Observing Vatican II*, p. 181.

<sup>15</sup> The intention of Pope John XXIII was that the Curial officials do not have entirely a say in the schema, and that those who wanted a renewal, may also be heard and their views accepted. See: Andrew Chandler & Charlotte Hansen, *Observing Vatican II*, p. 183.

<sup>16</sup> The Members of the Commission from the bishops were Michael Browne, Paul Emile ‘Leger, Franz König, Pietro Parente, André Charue, Gabriel Garrone and Joseph Schröffer and the among the *periti* were M. R. Gagnebet, Andre Naud, Karl Rahner, Gérard Philips, Jean Daniélou and Yves Congar (Bali’c, Thils, Moeler, Schauf were later addition): Cf. Richard R. Gaillardetz, *The Church in the Making*, p. 13 & Peter Hühnermann, *Theologischer Kommentar zur Dogmatischen Konstitution über die Kirche Lumen Gentium*, p. 345.

During the second session, the committee presented a new and second draft<sup>17</sup> to the Council for debate and discussion. The new draft had only four chapters:

1. The mystery of the Church.
2. The hierarchical constitution of the Church and the episcopate in particular
3. The people of God and the laity in particular
4. The call to holiness in the Church.

This draft was truly different from the first one. The very first title points out to the shift from the Church's understanding of itself as a militant Church to a Church as a mystery, having a trinitarian origin. Thus, the new draft wanted to stress equally the spiritual dimension of the Church. The second chapter speaks of the authority in the Church shared by the college of bishops in communion with the Pope as its head and deals with the question of permanent diaconate. The third chapter on the people of God deals extensively with the laity in the Church and their tasks. The fourth speaks of the universal call to holiness for all the members of the Church.

Even before the draft was sent to the bishops for their consideration, there were many new suggestions about its content. Cardinal Suenens suggested in the summer meeting of the Central Commission that the third chapter (The people of God and the laity in particular) of the present draft be split into two separate chapters and the material on the people of God be formed into a separate chapter and placed immediately after the first chapter.<sup>18</sup> Many scholars consider this suggestion of cardinal Suenens as of particular significance because it pointed out to a Church moving from being a hierarchy and clergy centred to being in favour of the entire Church as the People of God.<sup>19</sup> It showed that the Church was not merely Pope, bishops, priests and religious but also the laity and without the laity or the People of God, the Church of Christ was incomplete. By baptism every believer is an equal member of the Church, and there is no differentiation between clergy and laity. The placements of the chapter on the People of God before the chapter on the hierarchy emphasises "that as faithful, as baptized believers, both the clergy and the people belong to the same community and are fundamentally equal. It suggests too that the People as a whole are responsible for the life and

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. Richard R. Gaillardetz, *The Church in the Making*, pp. 13–14. The Commission was asked to work from the existing draft. However, the commission had a variety of alternative texts at its disposal, which were composed by a number of bishops and theologians. Finally, the commission decided to follow a text composed by Belgian theologian Gérard Philips and added to it some sections from the text composed by archbishop Parente.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 16: The chapter on the people of God could not be officially placed after the first chapter (until at the third session) because of the fundamental disagreements regarding the notion of episcopal collegiality.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*



growth of the Church. Placing the hierarchy after the People, on the other hand, suggests that the hierarchy exists only for the service of the community.”<sup>20</sup>

The actual debate on the second draft began on 30 September 1963. The new draft was praised by most of the Council fathers who were in favour of it and wanted further addition to it. At the same time, there were many who were not happy with the new draft since it was more scripture-based and less juridical. One of the most contentious issues discussed during this session was the question about the collegiality. While many Council fathers stressed the episcopal college together with the Pope as being the highest authority in the Church, there were many who did not accept the very notion of episcopal collegiality, as they considered it new and non-theological. At the same time, there were those who rejected the statement that the Church was founded on Peter and the apostles. There was a small group of bishops who expressed their concern over the fact that too much importance to the collegiality will undermine and threaten the primacy of Pope.<sup>21</sup> The number of those in favour of the point on episcopal collegiality equalled those against it. In order to find a solution, the four moderators of the council conducted a straw vote on the five following points in order to build up an opinion:<sup>22</sup>

1. The episcopate was the highest level of the sacrament of orders.
2. Every legitimately consecrated bishop, in communion with the Pope and the other bishops, is a member of the whole body of bishops.
3. The whole body or college of bishops fulfils its duties and performs its functions as the successors of the apostles and that this body possesses in communion with the Roman Pontiff supreme authority in the Church.
4. This above-mentioned authority is possessed by the college of bishops in communion with the Pope by divine law.
5. The permanent diaconate could be restored if seemed opportune.

The result of this straw vote was very surprising as the votes on these five points had a remarkable consensus, namely, 98% voted in favour of the first proposition; 95% were in favour of the second proposition; 84% favoured the third proposition; 80% favoured the fourth proposition and 75% were for the fifth proposition.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Brian Gleeson, “Commemorating Lumen Gentium: A short History of a groundbreaking Charter”, [http://aejt.com.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0006/395655/AEJT\\_3.12\\_Gleeson.pdf](http://aejt.com.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/395655/AEJT_3.12_Gleeson.pdf), 20.07.2016.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Richard R. Gaillardetz, *The Church in the Making*, p. 16 & Cf. Peter Hühnermann, *Theologischer Kommentar zur Dogmatischen Konstitution über die Kirche Lumen Gentium*, pp. 347–348.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 18 & Cf. Peter Hühnermann, *Theologischer Kommentar zur Dogmatischen Konstitution über die Kirche Lumen Gentium*, p. 348.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Richard R. Gaillardetz, *The Church in the Making*, p. 18.

Another important issue taken during the second session was the role and place of the laity in the Church as the Council fathers felt the need for a positive description of the laity. Further important issue taken up during this session, which did not reach any consensus, was the inclusion of the chapter on the Blessed Virgin Mary.<sup>24</sup>

To summarise the discussion on the second draft, most of the Council fathers were not satisfied even with the second draft and called for more changes in the draft, which led to the third draft on the Church.<sup>25</sup>

### 1.3 Third Draft

On 3 July 1964, Pope Paul VI sent a new and revised draft to the Council fathers. It was comprised of eight chapters divided into fifty-five smaller sections, which would be approved individually through voting.<sup>26</sup> The eight chapters were arranged thematically to explain the relationships among themselves. The first two chapters explained the spiritual and historical dimension of the Church; the third and fourth chapters dealt with the organic structure of the Church; the fifth and sixth chapters spoke about the sanctifying mission of the Church, and the last two chapters speak about the eschatological dimension of the Church.<sup>27</sup> The eight chapters are as follows:

1. The Mystery of the Church
2. The People of God
3. The Hierarchical Constitution of the Church and the Episcopate in Particular
4. The Laity
5. The Universal Call to Holiness
6. The Religious
7. The Eschatological Nature of Our Calling and Our Union with the Heavenly Church
8. The Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church

The first chapter, with two important additions, was accepted after receiving 2,114 votes.<sup>28</sup> In comparison to other chapters, the third chapter on the hierarchical con-

<sup>24</sup> For more information: Peter Hühnermann, *Theologischer Kommentar zur Dogmatischen Konstitution über die Kirche Lumen Gentium*, pp. 348–349.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Knut Wenzel, *Das Zweite Vatikanische Konzil-eine Einführung*, Freiburg im Breisgau: Verlag Herder, 2014, S. 64: The Council fathers rejecting the first two drafts on the Church points to the fact that they wanted to do away with the practice, according to which a council took only those decisions which were already determined by the Curial commissions.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Edward P. Hahnenberg, *A Concise Guide to the Documents of Vatican II*, p. 42.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Richard R. Gaillardetz, *The Church in the Making*, p. 21.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 22: The first addition was about the mission of the Church ‘to proclaim and to spread among all peoples the Kingdom of Christ and of God and to be, on earth, the initial budding

stitution was divided into thirty-nine smaller sections and each section had separate votes.<sup>29</sup> There was a last moment footnote added in this chapter to clarify the term ‘collegiality’, with the approval of Pope Paul, in an attempt to address the concerns of the minority group at the council and to the displeasure of many members of the majority group.<sup>30</sup> Chapter four on the Laity had the least changes with the exception of some additions to distinctively explain the place of the Laity in the Church and its participation in the threefold office of Christ as Priest, King and Prophet.<sup>31</sup> The final chapter of the Constitution on the role of Mary met with criticism because of the title ‘mediatrix’. Some bishops saw this title as a hindrance to ecumenism and suggested to do away with the title altogether, whereas others suggested adding this title to the other Marian titles used for Marian piety.<sup>32</sup> The long discussions on the schema on the Church and the efforts to produce a document on the Church which is more spiritual and human and less juridical, bore fruit on the 21 November 1964, as the final version of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church in the modern world (*Lumen Gentium*) received a solemn approval of the Council fathers.<sup>33</sup> The Constitution has the following final chapters:

1. The Mystery of the Church
2. The People of God
3. The Hierarchical Constitution of the Church and the Episcopate in Particular
4. The Laity
5. The Universal Call to Holiness in the Church

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forth of that kingdom’. This statement avoids the identification of the Church with the Kingdom of God and instead places the Church at the service of the Kingdom of God (Unfortunately, the addition came too late to influence the whole *document*). The second addition was the change in Pope Pius XII’s assertion: ‘Church of Christ is (*est*) the Catholic Church’. The document prefers the use of the verb ‘subsists in’ (*subsistit in*). Thus, the document says that, the Church of Christ subsists in the Catholic Church. It opened a new way in the attitude of the Catholic Church to other Christian churches.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Peter Hühnermann, *Theologischer Kommentar zur Dogmatischen Konstitution über die Kirche Lumen Gentium*, p. 350.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Thomas P. Rausch, *Towards a truly Catholic Church*, p. 22: The footnote insisted on four points: First, the word college was not to be understood in a juridical sense as to imply a body of equals delegating their powers to a president; second, the bishops’ powers came from their episcopal consecration but the exercise of these powers had to be in communion with the head and the members of the Church; third, the Pope could exercise his power personally apart from the college, but the college could not exist without its head-the Pope; fourth, the college continues to exist only with its head and exercises its powers at intervals; See also, Richard R. Gaillardetz, *The Church in the Making*, p. 26.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Knut Wenzel, *Das Zweite Vatikanische Konzil-eine Einführung*, p. 65: There were 2, 151 Council fathers who voted in favour of the final version of the constitution and only 5 who voted against.

## 6. Religious

7. The Eschatological Nature of the Pilgrim Church and Its Union with the Heavenly Church
8. The Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, in the Mystery of Christ and the Church.

When one reads the history of the document, one also can see the development in the ecclesiological tendencies of the Catholic Church. The entire history of the document, from its preparatory stage to its final form, points out to the remarkable shifts in ecclesiology.<sup>34</sup> It speaks volumes about the need and urge felt by the Council fathers for newness in the way the Church is and is being presented to the world. Thus, *Lumen Gentium* (LG) is known also as *Magna Charta* of the second Vatican Council, giving us a totally new image of the Church which is full of depth and diversity and directing the age-old ecclesiology of the Church to a new era of the Church.<sup>35</sup>

## 2 The Ecclesiological Thought of *Lumen Gentium*

### 2.1 Church is a Mystery and a Sacrament

#### 2.1.1 The term ‘Mystery’

The term ‘Mystery’ can be defined as that which is hidden and not understood and explained by human reason. The term has its root in the Greek word *musthḗrion* (*mysterion*), connected with cult.<sup>36</sup> The root ‘mu’ refers to the closing of eyes and mouth as a reaction to or as an effect of an experience which cannot be described in rational categories.<sup>37</sup> Thus, a mystery is something secret or hidden. The word ‘mystery’ is known by different names in classical languages. However, the meaning is the same in almost all of these languages.<sup>38</sup> Almost all religions believe in having religious truths which cannot be revealed to humans and, hence, is a mystery. In this sense, a mystery in any religion points to something that is supernatural and not known to human nature; e.g. in Hinduism, the major religion

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Richard Gaillardetz, *The Church in the Making*, p. 26.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Roger Aubert & Claude Soetens, “*Resultate*”, *Die Geschichte des Christentums: Religion, Politik, Kultur, Band XIII- Kriesen und Erneuerung (1958–2000)*, Jean-Marie Mayeur (Hrsg.), Freiburg, Basel, Wien: Verlag Herder Freiburg im Breisgau, 2002, S. 73.

<sup>36</sup> The primary denotation of *musthḗrion* (*mysterion*), however, was that of a secret knowledge of the ineffable, incomprehensible, impenetrable, “divine,” a knowledge which was reserved for religious initiates.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Franz-Josef Nocke, *Sakramenten-Theologie, Ein Handbuch*, Düsseldorf: Patmos Verlag, 1997, S. 44.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Varghese Thykoottathil, *Christological Mysteries: A Contextual Study on the Liturgy of Saint James in the Syro-Malankara Church*, Kottayam: Bethany Publ., 2006, p. 376.

of India, the mystery refers to the knowledge of the divine, which is withheld from normal human beings and revealed to those who attain enlightenment through a journey within.<sup>39</sup> Thus mystery as a term is “a powerful and living concept to suggest the hidden and transcendent nature of God, godly realities and the cosmos.”<sup>40</sup> A mystery is hidden reality known only through divine intervention or divine revelation.

### 2.1.1.1 *Mystery in Biblical sense*

The term ‘mystery’ appears 45 times in the Bible.<sup>41</sup> The term was adapted by the early Christians from Hellenistic Judaism.<sup>42</sup> The biblical use of the word ‘mystery’ is different from the common English usage of the word. The Old Testament uses the word *must’hrion* (*mysterion*) as an equivalent for the Hebrew word סוד (*sôd*) which means a secret, known through divine revelation. Originally the word סוד (*sôd*) meant council or assembly and came to be known as mystery (indicating what was decided in a council).<sup>43</sup> One of the early references to the use of the word סוד (*sôd*) in a theological sense was in reference to the common belief in the heavenly council (heavenly beings) responsible for the fate of the world, which was for the pagans assembly of gods and for the Hebrews assembly of angels presided over by Yahweh (Gen. 1, 26 & Is. 40, 1).<sup>44</sup> Thus, the apocalyptic texts of Judaism are the source needed in order to grasp the biblical understanding of the mystery.<sup>45</sup> The decisions of the heavenly council were conveyed to the humans through the medium of a prophet through the visions given to him (1 King 22, 19–22; Amos 3, 7; Jer 23, 18 etc.). In the post-exilic period, there was much importance given to the heavenly secrets as the prophets were able to understand these secrets through the divine intervention and convey them to the people. It was

<sup>39</sup> Cf. “Mystery in Divinity”, Friday Review-Faith, The Hindu, <http://www.thehindu.com/feature/s/friday-review/religion/mystery-in-divinity/article4354697.ece>, 24.07.2016.

<sup>40</sup> Varghese Thykootathil, *Christological Mysteries: A Contextual Study on the Liturgy of Saint James in the Syro-Malankara Church*, p. 377.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Robert Hotz, *Sakramente im Wechselspiel Zwischen Ost und West*, Auflg. II, Basel: Verlag Fluhegg, 2008, S. 22.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Michael Theobald, “*Mysterium (Biblich-theologisch)*”, *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, Walter Kasper (Hrsg.), Band VII, Freiburg im Breisgau: Verlag Herder Freiburg im Breisgau, 1998, S. 577.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. R. E. Brown, “Mystery (In the Bible)”, *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, II. Edition, Everett Ferguson (Ed.), New York & London: Garland Publishing, 1997, p. 79: The word *must’hrion* occurs 21 times in Septuagint (LXX) and it appears only in the post-exilic books like Tobit, Judith, Daniel, Sirach and II Maccabees.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Walter Kasper, *The Catholic Church: Nature, Reality and Mission*, London, New Delhi, New York, Sydney: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015, p. 73.

during this time that the Persian word *raz*, meaning the same as the Hebrew word סוד (*sôd*), made its way into Aramaic and Hebrew languages.<sup>46</sup>

In order to understand the meaning of mystery in the biblical sense, the Prophet Daniel is the most important of all Old Testament (OT) prophets. In Daniel Ch. 2, we read how Daniel interprets King Nebuchadnezzar's dreams and speaks of the coming of the eschatological Kingdom of God through God's intervention or action. The very act of Daniel's interpretation of the dreams is an act of divine intervention or providence. It is God who reveals the meaning of the dream to Daniel, and Daniel in his turn interprets it to the king. The apocalyptic understanding of the mystery proclaimed by the Prophet Daniel expresses the eschatological hope of the people of Israel for a new society characterized by peace, justice and righteousness, which God alone brings about.<sup>47</sup> The term *rāz* or must'hrion is used eight times in the Book of Daniel, in the context of the dreams of King Nebuchadnezzar and its contents (Dan 2:18, 19, 27, 28, 29, 30, 47, & 4:6), and it denotes the vision of future happenings given by God to the humans in signs and symbols. An important idea developed during this period is, unlike the Hellenistic conception of mystery as something indescribable, ineffable, the OT mysteries are not intrinsically inexpressible or impossible to understand in their essence; rather, they can be understood when God wishes to make them known to human beings.

The New Testament (NT) uses the word mystery 28 times: 3 times in the Synoptics, 21 times in Pauline writings and 4 times in the book of Revelation.<sup>48</sup> The term 'mystery' concentrates mostly on the Christ-event. However, mystery in the NT does not mean something that is incomprehensible or beyond human capacity to understand; rather, it means something that is no more hidden, but disclosed or revealed.<sup>49</sup> The word 'mystery' or must'hrion is not used in the Gospel of John and found once in the Synoptic Gospels in the parable of the sower and its explanation, where Jesus tells his disciples: To you has been given the mystery (secrets) of the Kingdom of God but for those outside everything is in parables (Mt. 13, 10–13; Mk. 4, 10–12; Lk. 8, 9–10). God's rule (Kingdom of God), beginning in the life and ministry of Jesus, is the absolute mystery, which is revealed only to those who follow Jesus.<sup>50</sup> Jesus himself is the absolute mystery of God, and as an absolute mystery, he is unnoticed by those who are not his disciples,

<sup>46</sup> Cf. R. E. Brown, *Mystery (in the Bible)*, p. 79.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Walter Kasper, *The Catholic Church*, p. 73.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Michael Theobald, *Mysterium (Biblisch-theologisch)*, p. 578.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Morgen Creaney, "A Mystery Thriller: Paul's use of the term 'Mystery' in the New Testament", <http://online.sagepub.com/site/misc/search.xhtml>, 24.07.2016.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Franz Josef Nocke, "Allgemeine Sakramentenlehre", *Handbuch der Dogmatik*, Theodor Schneider (Hrsg.), Düsseldorf: Patmos Verlag, S. 191.

but those who follow Jesus see in him the revelation and breaking forth of God's kingdom prophesied by the prophets of the OT.<sup>51</sup>

St. Paul is the most important NT author in order to understand the biblical (NT) meaning of mystery because of his special use of the term. Paul's epistles give us an idea of his understanding of mystery. Interestingly, a careful reading of St. Paul's use of the term 'mystery' points out to the similarity between OT usage of the term and his own usage of the term. Mystery for Paul is a divine action, a realisation of the eternal plan of God through an act which begins in God, effects in the time and space and ends in God Himself as a goal.<sup>52</sup> The mystery of God is not only manifested, but it is also realised. For its manifestation and realisation, it is necessary that it is totally unknowable on the part of man and is made visible only by God.

This divine plan refers to God's saving plan for humanity from eternity, which was hidden to earlier generations, but is now revealed to the world in the fullness of time in Jesus Christ.<sup>53</sup> Jesus Christ, through his incarnation, death and resurrection, becomes the primary mystery according to Paul. He recognizes the eschatologically revealed mystery of God in the crucified Christ who is the sign of redemption for the world (I Cor 2, 1 & 2, 7<sup>54</sup>).<sup>55</sup> Christ is thus the content of mystery for Paul (Col 2,2). However, this mystery is revealed to the world only through the divine revelation or manifestation (1Cor 14, 2). Paul uses the term 'mystery' in three different ways: 1) Definitive use (describing the concept of mystery), 2) direct use (stating a mystery) and 3) indirect use (revealing a mystery).<sup>56</sup> The Pauline use of mystery finds its fullest expression in his captivity writings, where he equates mystery with Christ (Col 1, 26–27; 2, 2–3; 4, 3 & Eph 3, 4).<sup>57</sup> He connects the mystery to the community to which the Good-news of Jesus is announced (Col 1, 26; 2,2; Eph 1,9 ff; 3, 1–6).

In conclusion, we can say, that both OT and NT conceive mystery as that which can be known or revealed. A mystery is something which is comprehensible and knowable in the biblical use of the term.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Walter Kasper, *The Catholic Church*, p. 73.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Odo Casel, *Das Christliche Kultmysterium*, Regensburg: Pustet, 1932, S. 22.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Walter Kasper, *The Catholic Church*, pp. 73–74.

<sup>54</sup> In I Cor. 2, 7 Paul uses the word wisdom for mystery. Here we notice that as the Pauline thought progresses, wisdom becomes the attribute of mystery.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Michael Theobald, *Mysterium (Biblisch-theologisch)*, p. 578.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Morgen Creaney, *A Mystery Thriller: Paul's use of the term 'Mystery' in the New Testament*.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. R. E. Brown, *Mystery (in the Bible)*, p. 82.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. Ibid. Just as the OT conception of mystery its the divine plan for humanity as formulated in the heavenly council, so also mystery in the NT refers to the divine plan of salvation of the world revealed in Jesus Christ.

### 2.1.1.2 Transition from Mystery to Sacrament in the early Church

From the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, the Greek word *mysterion* (*mysterion*) and the Latin word *sacramentum*<sup>59</sup> came to be identified as one and the same.<sup>60</sup> The word has its origin in the root word *sacr* which means the sphere of the holy and religious; the verb *sacrare* refers to consecration, and the word *sacramentum* denotes the very act of consecration as well as that which is consecrated.<sup>61</sup> The early translations of the Bible use *sacramentum* and its plural *sacramenta*, in order to translate the Greek *mysterion* (*mysterion*) and its plural.<sup>62</sup> It was since Tertullian that the Greek word *mysterion* was translated as *sacramentum*.<sup>63</sup> However, the term does not refer merely to the baptism and the Eucharist but also to the divine salvific plan of God, the Kenosis of Jesus Christ, articles of Faith, rites of the Church and even to the entire Christendom.<sup>64</sup> In Tertullian's use of the word, *sacramentum* refers to that which sanctifies and that which is sanctified.<sup>65</sup>

St. Augustine in his writings uses two words as synonyms, but with slightly different connotations: *sacramentum* refers to the visible rite or symbol whereas *mysterium* refers to its hidden meaning.<sup>66</sup> His emphasis is on the visible aspect of a sign. A sign is something which points to something beyond itself. Throughout the Salvation History, God has revealed Himself to the world through different visible signs, which pointed to the divine reality in them and in this sense, these signs become sacraments.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Thomas M. Finn, "Sacraments", New Catholic Encyclopedia, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Bernard L. Marthaler & others (Eds.), vol. X, New York: Thomason Gale, 2003, p. 1011. The Latin term *Sacramentum* refers to oath taking, e.g., an oath that bound the soldier to the emperor and Roman gods. In its plural form, the term indicates a transaction by which subject and deity bind themselves to each other in a sacred commitment (it is exactly this connotation of the word, which is used by Tertullian, Cyprian and Arnobius in reference to baptism).

<sup>60</sup> Felix Just, "The Seven Sacraments", <http://catholic-resources.org/ChurchDocs/Sacraments.htm>, {kursiv24.07.16/}. The Greek word *mysterion* (something "secret" or "hidden"; used 28 times in the NT) was translated into Latin by several different words, mostly *mysterium* (19 times in the Vulgate NT: Matt 13:11; Mark 4:11; Luke 8:10; Rom 11:25; 16:25; 1 Cor 2:7; 4:1; 13:2; 14:2; 15:51; Eph 3:4; 6:19; Col 1:26; 2:2; 4:3; 2 Thess 2:7; 1 Tim 3:9; Rev 10:7; 17:5) and *sacramentum* (8 times: Eph 1:9; 3:3, 9; 5:32; Col 1:27; 1 Tim 3:16; Rev 1:20; 17:7; once also *testimonium*: 1 Cor 2:1). While all of these words can be translated to "mystery", the Latin *mysterium* often refers more to the invisible or hidden dimensions, while *sacramentum* seems to refer more to the visible or symbolic aspects of a spiritual or divine mystery.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Franz Josef Nocke, *Allgemeine Sakramentenlehre*, p. 196.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Thomas M. Finn, *Sacraments*, p. 1011.

<sup>63</sup> Walter Kasper, *The Catholic Church*, p. 78.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. Franz-Josef Nocke, *Sakramenten-Theologie, Ein Handbuch*, p. 52.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Robert Hotz, *Sakramente im Wechselspiel Zwischen Ost und West*, p. 58.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. Avery Dulles, "Mystery (In Theology)", The New Catholic Encyclopedia, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Bernard L. Marthaler & others (Eds.), vol. X, New York: Thomason Gale, 2003, p. 83.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Robert Hotz, *Sakramente im Wechselspiel Zwischen Ost und West*, p. 58.



Although in the writings of the Church fathers there are a few references to the Church as mystery or sacrament<sup>68</sup> along with the hymns praising the mystery of the Church, there is hardly any strict dogmatic interpretation of the Church found in the early Christian writings or medieval theology.<sup>69</sup> It was in the 19<sup>th</sup> century that this term was taken up by the theologians and later by the Second Vatican Council.

### 2.1.2 Church is Mystery and a Sacrament: Vatican II

The Second Vatican Council while dealing with the Church as mystery (LG 1: 5, 39, 44, 63 etc.) continues the biblical understanding of mystery (NT) as the eternal salvific plan of God revealed through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit to the world. This salvific plan is continued in the Church guided by God through His Holy Spirit and calls people to accept God's invitation to participate in His salvific plan.<sup>70</sup> In calling Church a mystery<sup>71</sup>, the Council does not say anything new as such. The term 'mystery' is clearly a biblical term as we have seen above.<sup>72</sup> By calling Church a mystery, the Council wants to show the true nature of the Church as belonging to the transcendental reality, an object of faith.<sup>73</sup> Church is a mystery: it is a divine, salvific and transcendental reality, which is more than a mere human

<sup>68</sup> Walter Kasper makes mention of the Church father Cyprian's use of the term *sacrament* for the Church. Walter Kasper, *The Catholic Church*, p. 78.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. Otto Semmelroth, "The Integral idea of the Church", *Theology Today: Renewal in Dogma*, Vol. I, Johannes Feiner, Josef Trütsch & Franz Böckle (Eds.), Transl. Peter White & Raymond H. Kelly, Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1965, p. 129.

<sup>70</sup> *Lumen Gentium* no. 2: The eternal Father, by a free and hidden plan of His own wisdom and goodness, created the whole world. His plan was to raise men to a participation of the divine life. Fallen in Adam, God the Father did not leave men to themselves, but ceaselessly offered helps to salvation, in view of Christ, the Redeemer "who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature". All the elect, before time began, the Father "foreknew and predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that he should be the firstborn among many brethren". He planned to assemble in the holy Church all those who would believe in Christ. Already from the beginning of the world the foreshadowing of the Church took place. It was prepared in a remarkable way throughout the history of the people of Israel and by means of the Old Covenant. In the present era of time the Church was constituted and, by the outpouring of the Spirit, was made manifest. At the end of time it will gloriously achieve completion, when, as is read in the Fathers, all the just, from Adam and "from Abel, the just one, to the last of the elect," will be gathered together with the Father in the universal Church.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Francis A. Sullivan, *The Church we believe in: One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic*, New York: Paulist Press, 1988, p. 8: The Council Fathers justified their use of the term 'mystery' for the Church in following way: The term 'mystery' does not refer only to something that is unknowable or indistinct, but also, as the biblical understanding shows, to a reality which is divine, transcendental, salvific and which is known or understood in a visible way.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> Cf. Robert Rweyemamu, *People of God in the Missionary Nature of the Church. A Study of Conciliar Ecclesiology Applied to the Missionary Pastoral in Africa*, Rome, 1968, p. 7.

institution, is beyond the human capacities of knowing and which is a part of divine plan of salvation, and at the same time a visible reality.<sup>74</sup> The Church as a mystery is the unity of the visible and the invisible, knowable and hidden.<sup>75</sup> As a mystery, the Church does not mean something hidden or mysterious, rather, in and through the Church shines and reflects the all-present, all-powerful and all-knowing mystery, which we call God revealed in the person of Jesus Christ.<sup>76</sup> The Church is a medium, an instrument through which the mystery of God manifests itself.

Before the Second Vatican Council, the Church was seen more as an institution and as a society (*societas perfecta*), not subordinate to any other power and not lacking anything from an institutional view-point. It had its own rules and regulations and the law givers and the rulers. Robert Bellarmine calls the Church as a society which is as palpable as the community of the Romans or the kingdom of France or the Republic of Venice.<sup>77</sup> This institutional understanding of the Church as Avery Dulles<sup>78</sup> calls it, stressed the hierarchical set up and the law of the Church. In short, the institutional character of the Church was given more importance overlooking the spiritual or divine character. As a result of too much institutionalism, the image of the Church was distorted. It lost its essence as being the Church guided by Jesus Christ through his Holy Spirit to being a Church ruled by the hierarchy. By presenting the Church as mystery, the Second Vatican Council wants to reinstate and reemphasise the divine and spiritual aspect of the Church. Church is a mystery, because it is a divine reality – a faith reality which cannot be expressed in human language but only through participation.<sup>79</sup> But the Council does not do away with the structure of the Church. As a Sacrament, both its internal as well as external aspects define the Church. The external aspects of the Church – (structure, rites and rituals – make the Church a visible community, and they express the relationship of a believer with God. If they fail to do so, then the Church becomes a dead, rather than a living reality and a contra-sign.<sup>80</sup>

<sup>74</sup> Cf. Francis A. Sullivan, *The Church we believe in*, p. 8.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. Karl Rahner & Herbert Vorgrimler, *"Kleines Konzilskompendium, Allgemeine Einleitung und 16 spezielle Einführungen zu allen Konstitutionen, Dekreten und Erklärungen des Zweiten Vatikanum"*, Karl Rahner: *Sämtliche Werke*, Karl Rahner Stiftung (Hrsg.), Band 21/2 – *Das Zweite Vatikanum: Beiträge zum Konzil und seiner Interpretation*, Freiburg im Breisgau: Verlag Herder, 2013, S. 637.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. Walter Kasper, *The Catholic Church*, p. 72.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. "De Controversiis, 2, lib. 3, cap. 3, vol. 2, (Naples 1857), p. 75 cited in: George Karukunnel, "Ecclesiological Models: Vatican II and after", <https://nelsonmcbs.wordpress.com/2012/08/02/ecclesiological-models-vatican-ii-and-after/>, 24.07.2016

<sup>78</sup> Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church*, New York: Image Books, 2014, p. 26.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. George, Karukunnel, *Ecclesiological Models: Vatican II and after*.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. Brian Gleeson, "The Church as Sacrament revisited: Sign and Source of Encounter with Christ", [http://aejt.com.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0010/395533/AEJT\\_4.7\\_Gleeson.pdf](http://aejt.com.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/395533/AEJT_4.7_Gleeson.pdf), 06.11.16.

### 2.1.2.1 Church is a mystery founded in the Holy Trinity

The Council sees the Church as originated from the Holy Trinity. The Church is an image – a reflection of the Holy Trinity. The Church is a mystery, “deriving its being from the life of the triune God”.<sup>81</sup> LG 2 speaks of the eternal salvific plan of God for the lost humanity, in and through its faith in Jesus Christ, God’s eternally begotten Son. It is the will of God to gather all people together as a holy Church – *Qahal Yahweh* (People of God) and as His children, the will which is already prefigured in the beginning of the world and will be brought to its completion at the end of time. For its biblical basis, we have two texts, namely, Col 1, 15 & Rom 8, 29. Jesus Christ is the first-born of God. He is the perfect image of God – a perfect manifestation and revelation of God. Hence, from the beginning of humanity, God invites all people to His Church to become this image – Jesus Christ. That is the end-point or goal of all human longings.<sup>82</sup>

The divine plan of salvation is revealed and carried out in and through Jesus Christ, through his incarnation, passion, death and resurrection. “To carry out the will of the Father, Christ inaugurated<sup>83</sup> the kingdom of heaven on earth and revealed his mystery to us” (LG 3). It is the Church, which makes present and visible the Kingdom of God. Hence, the Church is a mystery, making the kingdom of Christ present on earth through its visible and tangible growth with the help of God. The origin and growth of the Church are symbolized by the blood and water from the open side of the crucified Jesus (Jn 19, 34): the blood points to the origin of the Church in the death of Jesus on the cross and the water points to the growth of the Church. It speaks about the relationship between the death of Christ and the Church.<sup>84</sup> It is from Christ and the Passover that the Church derives its sacramental structure.<sup>85</sup> In the celebration of the sacrament of the Eucharist, the work of our redemption is carried out and the unity of all the believers, as one body of Christ, is both expressed and achieved. All are called to this union with Christ, who is the Light of the world, from Whom we come, through Whom we live and towards Whom we direct our lives (LG 3). Thus, it is in the Passover act of Christ – in the Paschal Mystery – that the Church has its growth, unity and dynamism, and it is

<sup>81</sup> Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, “Ecclesiology”, *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Berard L. Marthaler & others (Eds.), vol. II, New York: Gale & Catholic University of America Publ., 2003, p. 773.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. Peter Hühnermann, *Theologischer Kommentar zur Dogmatischen Konstitution über die Kirche Lumen Gentium*, p. 357.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 359: The Latin text speaks of *inauguratio* of the kingdom of God on earth in and through Jesus Christ, which points out to the fact that in the person of Jesus Christ the rule of God has been revealed and begun in the person of Jesus Christ.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> Cf. Negussie Andre Domnic, *The Fetha Nagast and its Ecclesiology: Implications in Ethiopian Catholic Church today*, Bern: Peter Lang International Academic Publishers, 2010, p. 131.

in the celebration or re-enactment of this Passover act of Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist that the Church's true essence and nature are revealed.<sup>86</sup>

The document speaks about the role of the Holy Spirit in the Church through the Pentecost event. After the work of redemption was completed by Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit was sent by the heavenly Father to carry out the continuous work of sanctification in the Church, so that the believers may be able to approach the Father through His son Jesus Christ in the one Holy Spirit (LG 5). The Holy Spirit is the life-giving and life-sustaining principle of the Church. The Holy Spirit is a unifying factor in the Church, which unites all believers in Christ as one. The Church united by the Holy Spirit does not only reflect the communion of the Holy Trinity, but this communion also becomes an important characteristic that defines the Church.<sup>87</sup> Hence, the document quoting the Church Fathers concludes that, "the Church is a people made one by the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit" (LG 4); it is "the historical participation in Trinitarian unity, the embodiment begun under the veil of the signs of salvation springing from the divine initiative".<sup>88</sup>

To conclude, the Church as a mystery has its origin in the Holy Trinity. The Church was formed by God the Father at the beginning of the creation through the eternal plan of salvation, inaugurated by God the Son through his redemptive act, and is sanctified continually by God the Holy Spirit who vivifies, sustains and unites the Church. The Church has its origin and end in God the Father, Jesus Christ the son is its life-giving founder and foundation and the Holy Spirit is the Soul of the Church, effecting in the Church the communion with God and human beings.<sup>89</sup>

### 2.1.2.2 Church as a mystery is a Sacrament

The Church as a mystery is also a sacrament. Basing itself on the biblical understanding of the word *mysterion* and its translation into Latin as *sacramentum*, which basically refers to the divine plan of salvation revealed in Jesus Christ and his Church, *Lumen Gentium* calls the Church sacrament. The document uses the word at least seven times when referring to the Church (LG 1, 9, 48, 59; SC 5, 26; UR 3).<sup>90</sup> A sacrament is a visible reality, pointing toward and making present an

<sup>86</sup> Cf. Peter Hühnermann, *Theologischer Kommentar zur Dogmatischen Konstitution über die Kirche Lumen Gentium*, p. 359.

<sup>87</sup> Cf. Walter Kasper, *The Catholic Church*, p. 76.

<sup>88</sup> Negussie Andre Domnic, *The Fetha Nagast and its Ecclesiology*, p. 132.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. Sandra Mazzolini, "The Church as Mystery, Sacrament, and People of God-A Community intended for all human beings", *Catholic Engagement with World Religions: A Comprehensive Study*, Karl Josef Becker & Ilaria Morali (Eds.), New York: Orbis Books, 2010, p. 267.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. Wolfgang Thönissen, *Ein Konzil für ein ökumenisches Zeitalter: Schlüsselthemen des*

invisible reality. The Church makes visible a reality beyond itself that is, Christ and his Kingdom. Hence, the document defines the sacramental nature of the Church, right at the beginning of the document:

“Christ is the light of the nations and consequently this Holy Synod, gathered together in the Holy Spirit, ardently, desires to bring to all humanity that light of Christ which is resplendent on the face of the Church, by proclaiming his Gospel to every creature (see Mk 16, 15). Since the Church, in Christ, is a sacrament—a sign and instrument, that is, of communion with God and of the unity of the entire human race . . . ” (LG 1)

A sacrament is a finite, visible material reality which has the capacity to make the infinite salvific will of God present in the world. The Church is a sacrament, because, in its visible structural and institutional form, it works for the realisation and fulfilment of the salvific plan of God in the world.<sup>91</sup> Thus, the Council tries to explain the essence of the Church. It shows what the Church actually is, namely, “an efficacious sign of grace: a visible, historical institution which contains and effects a hidden, divine reality”.<sup>92</sup> The Church in its visible form is not in the world for itself; rather, it is a sign and an instrument through which God’s salvific plan for the world is made present and realised. The Church exists to bring God to man and man to God in and through Christ, to bring all people into communion with Christ, and in him, into communion with the Triune God and one another.

The conception of the Church as a sacrament, which is found in the writings of the early fathers, was ignored and the teaching on the seven sacraments of the Church was emphasised, which prevailed in the Church up to II Vatican Council. Many theologians of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were not comfortable with the understanding of the Church as an institution. They wanted to bring the external and internal aspects of the Church in harmony with each other. Hence, the conception of the Church as sacrament began to gain significance after the Second World War in the writings of prominent theologians like Otto Semmelroth, Karl Rahner, Edward Schillebeeckx, Henry de Lubac, etc.<sup>93</sup>

Henry de Lubac is one of the greatest champions of this sacramental model of the Church. He stresses the importance of both visible and invisible elements in the Church. He rules out any possibility of separating the divine aspect of the Church from the human aspect and rejects a merely secular and sociological understanding of the Church as an institution.<sup>94</sup> He goes on to propose the understanding of the Church as a sacrament, which combines both the divine and hu-

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*Zweiten Vaticanums, Paderborn: Bonifatius & Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2013, S. 103–104.*

<sup>91</sup> Cf. Knut Wenzel, *Das Zweite Vatikanische Konzil—eine Einführung*, p. 65.

<sup>92</sup> Francis A. Sullivan, *The Church we believe in*, p. 10.

<sup>93</sup> Cf. Wolfgang Thönissen, *Ein Konzil für ein ökumenisches Zeitalter*, p. 104.

<sup>94</sup> Cf. Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church*, pp. 55–56.

man aspects of the Church harmoniously in itself.<sup>95</sup> In his book *Catholicism*, he presents his view on the Church as a sacrament as follows:

“If Christ is the sacrament of God, the Church is for us the sacrament of Christ; she represents him, in the full and ancient meaning of the term, she really makes him present.”<sup>96</sup>

Just as Jesus is the sacrament of God, the Church is the sacrament of Christ. Just as in Jesus we have the manifestation of the Triune God, so also in the Church we have the manifestation of the invisible Christ. The human element of the Church becomes the revelation or the manifestation of the divine element in the Church. Hence, “whoever comes into contact with the visible Church comes into contact with the resurrected Christ and through him with the Triune God”.<sup>97</sup> The Church is a sacrament because it carries forth the presence of Christ who brings forth the presence of God.<sup>98</sup> The seven sacraments of the Church, which are intrinsically social, derive their efficacy from the Church and, in turn, build up the Church and make it the sacrament of the risen Christ.<sup>99</sup> In this way, there is a fundamental connection between the seven sacraments and the Church as the sacrament of Christ.

Karl Rahner, following De Lubac, also has been a champion of the sacramental model of the Church in his writings. He calls the Church a sacrament of the saving grace of God, the continuation of the historically tangible Christ.<sup>100</sup> In order to understand his view, it is also important to understand his theology of symbol. According to Rahner, Jesus is the perfect symbol of God because in his humanity, Jesus is the perfect revelation of God and in and through the person of Jesus, God communicates Himself, His grace to humanity. “Christ is, therefore, both the fullness of humanity and the primordial sacramental Word of God, the Word which not only spoke of the love and mercy of God, but actually made them present in his person”.<sup>101</sup>

As Christ is the sacrament of God, so is the Church the sacrament of Christ in this world. The Church is the continued presence of Christ – the primordial

<sup>95</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 56.

<sup>96</sup> Henry de Lubac, *Catholicism*, trans. Lancelot C. Sheppard, London: Burns, Oats & Washbourne, 1950, p. 29.

<sup>97</sup> Moses Assah Awinongya, *The Understanding of Family in Ghana as a Challenge for a Contextual Ecclesiology*, Zürich: LIT Verlag, 2013, p. 111.

<sup>98</sup> Cf. Dennis M. Doyle, “Henri de Lubac and the Roots of Communion Ecclesiology”, <http://cdn.theologicalstudies.net/60/60.2/60.2.1.pdf>, 02.08.2016.

<sup>99</sup> Cf. Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church*, p. 56.

<sup>100</sup> Cf. Robin Ryan, “Karl Rahner’s view of the Church”, <http://www.catholicsoncall.org/ekklesia-part-vi-karl-rahners-view-church>, 03.10.2015.

<sup>101</sup> *Karl Rahner, Church and Sacraments*, p. 18 cited in: James McEvoy, “Vatican II, the Church and the Holy Spirit”, [https://www.acu.edu.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0017/1103444/Vatican\\_II\\_on\\_Church.pdf](https://www.acu.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0017/1103444/Vatican_II_on_Church.pdf), 05.09.2016.

sacrament in the world.<sup>102</sup> It symbolizes the grace of Christ present in history. The sacramental structure of the Church has its basis in Christ: “historical perceptibility in space and time, in which Christ, and the grace of Christ, are present.”<sup>103</sup> The seven sacraments of the Church make the symbolic reality of the Church concrete and real for the believers.<sup>104</sup> In this way through the sacraments, the Church attains the highest degree of actualization of what it always is: the symbol of redemptive grace for humanity in its historically visible form. As the sign and instrument of Christ’s redemptive presence, the Church’s mission in the world is to make the saving grace of God in Christ present and effective in the lives of people of all times and places.<sup>105</sup>

Another Jesuit theologian dealing with the view of the Church as a sacrament is Otto Semmelroth. In his book *Die Kirche als Ursakrament*, as the title suggests, the Church is referred to as a primary or primordial or fundamental sacrament.<sup>106</sup> This conception of the Church means two things: “first, the Church in its visible form is an image portraying the salvific work of Christ in our world today and secondly, this image not only refers to the remembrance of the viewer to the copied reality of Christ’s salvific work but, in an objective way, ‘contains’ it as the Council of Trent said of the sacraments”.<sup>107</sup> It is not only because of its institution by Christ to administer the seven sacraments that the Church is called a sacrament, but also because the Church is the living and root principle of the seven sacraments, a power founded by Christ which renders the seven sacraments efficacy and actuality.<sup>108</sup> According to Semmelroth, one who can grasp the harmonious connection between the invisible or divine and the visible or human/social in the Church can understand the sacramental structure of the Church.<sup>109</sup> The Church as a sacrament is the incarnate grace of God for the humans, which becomes visible through the Church. God comes to the world through incarnation. The Church as a sacrament is the continued incarnation of the divine. Hence, one must also take the visible structure of the Church seriously.

Belgian theologian Edward Schillebeeckx speaks of Christ as the primordial sacrament. His understanding is based on the incarnation of the Son of God. The body is the medium through which the human self comes to its expression and it is

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<sup>102</sup> Cf. Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> William A. van Roo, “The Church and the Sacraments: Proceedings of the 19th Annual Convention”, <http://ejournals.bc.edu/ojs/index.php/ctsa/article/view/2571/2208>, 04.08.2016.

<sup>104</sup> Cf. Richard Lennan, *The Ecclesiology of Karl Rahner*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995, p. 27.

<sup>105</sup> Cf. Robin Rayan, *Karl Rahner’s view of the Church*.

<sup>106</sup> Otto Semmelroth, *Die Kirche als Ursakrament*, Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Josef Knecht, 1953.

<sup>107</sup> Ronald Modras, Paul Tillich’s *The Theology of the Church—A Catholic Appraisal*, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1976, p. 196.

<sup>108</sup> Cf. Otto Semmelroth, *The Integral idea of the Church*, p. 137.

<sup>109</sup> Cf. Ibid.

true in any human encounters. Hence, body becomes the sacrament (visible sign) of the self (invisible reality). In the same way, since salvation is a personal encounter between God and man in and through the person of Christ, Christ through his incarnation becomes the Sacrament (visible sign) of God (invisible divine reality).<sup>110</sup> Through the person of Jesus is the grace of salvation bestowed and manifested to the world. Hence, “The man Jesus, as the personal visible realisation of the divine grace of redemption, is the sacrament, the primordial sacrament . . . .”<sup>111</sup> According to Schillebeeckx, Christ is the primordial or primary or the fundamental sacrament from which all other sacraments originate.<sup>112</sup> He refers to the Church as the sacrament of the risen Christ. The Church is a sign or sacrament of the divine presence in the world, grace made visible in human society.<sup>113</sup> The seven sacraments are the saving acts of Christ realised in the visible Church. In other words, this saving encounter between Christ and his people takes place in and through the Church. Hence, the Church becomes the sign or sacrament of Christ in the world.<sup>114</sup>

What is common to the above theologians in their understanding of the Church as a sacrament is the inseparable relation of the Church to Christ the primary or fundamental sacrament. One cannot understand the Church as a sacrament unless one understands Jesus in his humanity as the primordial sacrament; the understanding of the Church as a sacrament presupposes Jesus as the primordial sacrament of God.<sup>115</sup> The Church can be called and understood as a sacrament only in relation to Christ.

The Second Vatican Council gave due respect and recognition to this refined understanding of the Church as the Council Fathers unanimously accepted it in the chapter on the Church. This new understanding succeeded in establishing harmony between the visible structures of the Church and its spiritual dynamism without compromising the importance of one for another. It is important to note the careful use of the term ‘sacrament’ by the council when referring to the Church in LG 1. When the document says that ‘the Church in Christ is *like* a sacrament’, it first means that the Church is not yet another sacrament in addition to the seven

<sup>110</sup> Cf. Vera Donnelly, “The Sacramentality of Schillebeeckx’s theological Journey”, Edward-Schillebeeckx: Impetus Towards Theologies in the 21st Century, Thomas Eggenberger, Ulrich Engel & Angel F. Mendez Montoya (Eds.), Ostfildern: Matthias Grünewald Verlag, 2012, p. 89.

<sup>111</sup> Edward Schillebeeckx, “Christ the Sacrament of the encounter with God”, The Collected Works of Edward Schillebeeckx, transl. Paul Barrett & Lawrence Bright, Vol. I, London. New Delhi. New York. Sydney: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2014, p. 11.

<sup>112</sup> Cf. Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>113</sup> Cf. Vera Donnelly, *The Sacramentality of Schillebeeckx’s theological Journey*, p. 90.

<sup>114</sup> Cf. Edward Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament of the encounter with God*, p. 52.

<sup>115</sup> Cf. Kenan B. Osborn, *Christian Sacraments in a Post-modern World: A Theology for the third Millennium*, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1999, p. 9.



sacraments we have; secondly, the very statement, ‘Church in Christ is like a sacrament’ points out the fact that the Church has no sacramental significance or sacramental existence of itself apart from Christ.<sup>116</sup> The Church receives its sacramentality from Jesus Christ. He is the true mediator between God and man. In Him God revealed to the world the divine mystery – the eternal salvific plan and in His person the Kingdom of God breaks forth on the earth. The grace of salvation promised by God to humanity comes to the world in and through Jesus Christ. In the same way, the divine presence promised by Christ until the end of the world is established in and through his visible body – the Church. In this sense, Jesus Christ is the primary or primordial sacrament of God and the Church is the sacrament of Christ.<sup>117</sup> As a sacrament, the Church is a visible sign of God’s divine plan for the world and at the same time, an instrument towards the realisation of this salvific plan. It signifies in a visible and tangible form the grace of redemption brought by Christ. The Church in the world makes possible the “communion with God and the unity of the entire human race” (LG 1). Christ is the uniting factor which unites man with God and people with one another. The Church manifests in itself this twofold union brought about by Christ. Hence, it becomes a sign and an instrument of this twofold grace.<sup>118</sup> It is an inseparable entity, a beautiful combination of the divine and the human.<sup>119</sup>

The sacramental understanding of the Church is found to have certain deficiencies in the opinion of the authors like Hamer, Richard McBrien, etc.<sup>120</sup> Some thinkers are of the opinion that the sacramental understanding of the Church lacks pastoral appeal because it gives too much importance to the transcendental or spir-

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<sup>116</sup> Cf. Walter Kasper, *The Catholic Church*, p. 79.

<sup>117</sup> Francis A. Sullivan, *The Church we believe in*, pp. 9–10. The author gives us St. Augustine’s description of the origin of the Church and explains why the Church is a sacrament of Christ.: St. Augustine says: “It was from the side of Christ as he slept on the cross that there came forth wondrous sacrament which is the whole Church”. Firstly, St. Augustine sees the Church as the fruit of the passion and death, thus having its origin not in a mere act of institution, but in the redemptive work accomplished by Christ on the cross. He sees the Church as symbolized by the blood and water that flowed out from the side of Christ: no doubt because this blood and water were identified with the sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist, the most fundamental elements in the life of the Church. Finally, the reference to Christ “sleeping the sleep of death” presents Christ as the “new Adam” from whose side the Church came forth as the “new Eve”, thus suggesting that as the first Eve was drawn from Adam’s side to be his bride and “helper” (Gen 2, 18), so the Church is the bride of Christ who has a helping role to play in Christ’s ongoing work for the salvation of humanity.

<sup>118</sup> Cf. Walter Kasper, *The Catholic Church*, p. 80.

<sup>119</sup> Cf. *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (SC) 2: “For the Church is both human and divine, visible but endowed with invisible realities... present in the world yet migrant, so constituted, that in it the human is directed and subordinate to the divine, and this present world to that city yet to come... ”.

<sup>120</sup> Cf. Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church*, pp. 66–67.

itual aspect of the Church at the cost of neglecting the human side of the Church.<sup>121</sup> The sacramental understanding of the Church has also not been seen as favouring the ecumenical initiatives between Catholics and Protestants because this understanding of the term sacrament does not conform to the biblical use of the term 'sacrament'.<sup>122</sup> According to the Protestant theologians, the term 'sacrament' is strictly reserved for Jesus Christ alone, and all other sacramental actions can be called as the sacramentals rather than sacraments. With the understanding of the Church as sacrament, there comes a danger of doing away with the difference between Jesus Christ as the sacrament of God and the Church as the recipient of the salvific grace of God.<sup>123</sup> The sacramental understanding of the Church also tends to see the Church on the same level as Jesus Christ himself and stresses too much the mediation of the Church in the salvific plan of God, thereby making the Church as the new manifestation of the Sinless Christ Jesus. Hence, the sacramental understanding of the Church has not been very appealing for the ecumenical relations with the Protestant brethren.

It is important to know that the Church's understanding as a sacrament has Christological foundation and eschatological orientation.<sup>124</sup> The Council does not tend to see the Church on equal footing with Jesus Christ when it speaks of the Church as a sacrament. The very first lines of *Lumen Gentium* bear witness to this fact when the Council speaks of Christ as the light of the nations and the Church as the bearer of this light into the world (Cf. LG 1). The Church exists for the sole purpose of bringing Christ's light to the world. Understanding the Church as a sacrament does not mean that Christ and the Church are the same. Jesus Christ is and remains the original or primordial sacrament of God, as Augustine says. And the Church, through its origin from the side of Christ, as the fathers of the say, becomes a basic or primary sacrament – a sacrament of Christ.<sup>125</sup> The Council fathers clearly have in mind the difference between Christ and the Church even as the Council speaks of Christ and the Church analogically:

The one mediator, Christ, established and constantly sustains here on earth his holy Church, the community of faith, hope and charity, as a visible structure through which he communicates truth and grace to everyone. But the society equipped with hierarchical structures and the mystical body of Christ, the visible society and the spiritual community, the earthly Church and the Church endowed with heavenly riches, are not to be thought

<sup>121</sup> George Karukunnel, *Ecclesiological Models: Vatican II and after*.

<sup>122</sup> Cf. Dorothea Sattler, *Kirche(n)*, Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2013, S. 91.

<sup>123</sup> Cf. Walter Kardinal Kasper, *Die Früchte ernten-Grundlagen Christlichen Glaubens im Ökumenischen Dialog*, Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2009, S. 79.

<sup>124</sup> Todd Walatka, "Church as Sacrament: Gutiérrez and Sobrino as Interpreters of *Lumen Gentium*", *Horizons*, vol. 42, no. 1, June 2015, p. 78.

<sup>125</sup> Cf. Walter Kasper, *The Catholic Church*, p. 79.

of as two realities. On the contrary, they form one complex reality comprising of human and a divine element. For this reason the Church is compared, in no mean analogy, to the mystery of the incarnate word. As the assumed nature, inseparably united him, serves the divine Word as a living instrument of salvation, so, in somewhat similar fashion, does the social structure of the Church serve the Spirit of Christ who vivifies it, in the building up of the body (see Eph 4, 16). (LG 8)

Although compared with Christ, the Church is not identified with Christ in his incarnation. Despite all the common factors between Christ and the Church and in spite of all interrelatedness and connectedness, they still remain different from each other. The Council maintains so-called “critical distance”<sup>126</sup> between Church and Christ. This difference between Church and Christ is perceived in the following extract:

... Christ, who, “holy, innocent and undefiled” (see Heb 2, 17) knew nothing of sin (see 2 Cor 5, 21), but came only to expiate the sins of the people (see Heb 2, 17). The Church, however, clasping sinners to its bosom, at once holy and always in need of purification, follows constantly the path of penance and renewal (LG 8).

The above statement only tells that, despite being a sacrament, the Church is not Christ. Christ in his humanity was without sin and had a sinless human nature, whereas, the Church is not free from sin and temptations. The Church consists of both sinners and saints. It is not perfect; rather, it is on the way to a perfection to be accomplished in the eschatological times.<sup>127</sup> This idea becomes clear if one understands the term ‘sacrament’ clearly. The Council defines a sacrament as a sign and an instrument (LG 1). The Church is a sacrament in the sense that it is a sign, a sign which points towards Christ. There is a huge difference and distance between Christ and the Church expressed in the following way: The Church is neither Christ, nor the Kingdom of God, nor salvation, but only an instrument of Christ through which he brings salvation and redemption to all people of good will. Christ is above his Church.<sup>128</sup> Hence, as a sacrament, the Church is only a sign and an instrument of Christ. “As a sign, the Church points the faithful, by her very constitution, toward communion with God and neighbour in this life and eternal union forever in the next. As an instrument, the Church makes communion with God possible by means of the gifts given to her by Christ: her doctrine, laws,

<sup>126</sup> Richard R. Gaillardetz & Catherine E. Clifford, *Keys to the Council: Unlocking the Teaching of Vatican II*, Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2012, p. 50.

<sup>127</sup> Cf. Dorothea Sattler, *Kirche(n)*, p. 93.

<sup>128</sup> Cf. “*Die Kirche-ein Zeichen*”, *Glaube zum Leben- Die Christliche Botschaft*, Bruno Chenu u.a. (Hrsg.), Freiburg im Breisgau: Verlag Herder, 1986, S. 708.

and sacraments”.<sup>129</sup> Understood in this way, the Church as a sacrament does not mean divinization of the Church; rather, it is relativization; nor does it give rise to triumphalism but instead tries to overcome it.<sup>130</sup> If one forgets this fact, then one misunderstands the whole sacramental understanding of the Church and makes it equal to Christ.

The Council calls the Church as the universal sacrament of salvation (LG 48; AG 1; GS 45). The Council, thereby, speaks about the Catholicity of the Church of Christ. It means that the Church is in the world for all people of all races and creeds. One might ask: how can the Church be a sacrament of salvation for every person if not everyone knows Christ and his Church? The Asian context is the best example of it. There are many places where the messenger of Christ has not reached. How can the people in such places accept and experience the Church as the universal sacrament of salvation? The Council tries to clarify this question by calling the Church “a visible sign and an instrument of the reality of salvation offered by God to the human beings”.<sup>131</sup> The Church is actively involved in the work of salvation that God is accomplishing for the world and in the world. The Council conveys this vocation of the Church as the universal sacrament of salvation right at the beginning of *Lumen Gentium* when it speaks of the Church as a sacrament – a sign and instrument of communion with God and unity of the entire human race (LG 1). In other words, the Church is to become a living sign of unity with God and humanity. The unity among its members will be a perfect sign of that unity which God intends for the world. The Council further affirms the Church’s mission when it says: “Established by Christ as a communion of life, love and truth, it is taken up by Christ as the instrument for the salvation of all . . . . All those, who in faith look towards Jesus, the author of salvation and the source of unity and peace, God has gathered together and established as the church, that it may be for each and every one the visible sacrament of this saving unity” (LG 9).<sup>132</sup> It means that the followers of Christ are to give an inspiring example through a life that they live, namely: respecting human dignity, working for justice, peace and harmony and prosperity, so that the world may aspire to this way of life and may come closer to the Kingdom of God.<sup>133</sup> The Council suggests the example of

<sup>129</sup> David G. Bonagura, “The Church: The Sacrament of Salvation”, <https://www.thecatholicthing.org/2010/04/06/the-church-the-sacrament-of-salvation>, 10.10.2016.

<sup>130</sup> Cf. Walter Kasper, *The Catholic Church*, p. 80.

<sup>131</sup> George Karukunnel, *Ecclesiological Models: Vatican II and after*.

<sup>132</sup> The influence of Rahner’s theological thought is very clear in LG, which enabled a shift from the pessimistic view of salvation of a chosen few, to a very optimistic, positive, hopeful and universal view of salvation of the entire world. Cf. Richard P. McBrien, “The Church (*Lumen Gentium*)”, *Modern Catholicism: Vatican II and after*, Adrian Hastings (Ed.), New York: Oxford University Press, 1991, p. 90.

<sup>133</sup> Cf. Richard R. Gaillardetz & Catherine E. Clifford, *Keys to the Council*, p. 54.

Christ as the perfect example of genuine humanity: “Just as Christ carried out the work of redemption in poverty and oppression, so the Church is called to follow the same path if it is to communicate the fruits of salvation to humanity” (LG 8). Just as Christ is a perfect example for the Church, the Church in turn must become an example for the world. By striving to live the way of life and love and self-giving showed by Christ, the Church should permeate and infuse into the world, for the world. The Church has a responsibility to give to the world God’s message of peace and reconciliation: with God and with one another.

Regarding the salvation of those who have not known Christ and his Church, the Council assures that the Holy Spirit has His own ways, unknown to human mind, in order to offer every person the grace of salvation (see UR 22). Hence, even for such people, the Church continues to be a sacrament of salvation – a sign of the salvific activity of the Holy Spirit in their hearts.<sup>134</sup>

### 2.1.3 Metaphors of the Church

A metaphor is a figure of speech which directly equates two things, persons or realities. A word or a phrase is used to refer to another thing, although the two may not have any relation. And yet they may have hidden similarity. Since the Church is a mystery, it is impossible to define this mystery in one definition. Knowing this fact, *Lumen Gentium* does not try to give us a precise definition of the Church. Instead, it uses various metaphors and images to explain the mystery of the Church. Of course, the Church bases itself on the Bible for the metaphors. In the Old Testament God, revealed Himself to the world through symbols, and in the New Testament, Jesus made use of parables – the imageries from nature and from daily human life, to describe to the world the nature of the Kingdom of God. In the same way, the mystery of the Church is made known to us in and through various biblical metaphors and images. These images and metaphors come from human life and nature. Each of these images partially explains the nature of the Church. There are various metaphors used by *Lumen Gentium* (LG 6), which are as follows:

#### 2.1.3.1 Church is a Sheepfold

The Church is a Sheepfold, and Christ is the only and the necessary door to it (John 10, 1–10). The Church is a flock which God had in mind for ages and of which He Himself is the Shepherd (cf. Is 40, 11; Ez. 34, 11–ff). Although this flock of God is guarded and watched over by human shepherds, it is nevertheless guided and led to its pastures by Christ himself – the chief Shepherd (cf. Jn 10, 11; 1 Pet 5, 4), who is the Good Shepherd and who gave his life for his sheep (cf.

<sup>134</sup> Cf. Francis A. Sullivan, *The Church we believe in*, p. 124.

Jn 10, 11–15). This metaphor is one of the most popular of the New Testament metaphors and is found not only in all four Gospels but also in several of the New Testament writings.<sup>135</sup>

### 2.1.3.2 *Church is God's farm or field*

The Church is the field or the farm which belongs to God Himself (1 Cor 3, 9). “In this field the ancient olive tree grows whose holy roots were the Patriarchs and in which the reconciliation of Jews and Gentiles has been achieved and will continue to be achieved (see Rom 11, 13–16)” (LG 6). The Church is a choice vineyard planted by God-the heavenly farmer (cf. Mt. 21, 33–43 & Is 5, 1–ff). It is Christ, the true vine, from whom we, the branches, receive life and fruitfulness. Through the Church, we abide in Christ, apart from whom we can do nothing (cf. Jn 15, 1–5). The use of the related scriptural themes like an olive tree, vineyard and fruitful life-giving vine in the constitution is intended to fill out the cryptic, metaphorical statement of Paul in 1 Cor 3, 9: You are God's field.<sup>136</sup>

### 2.1.3.3 *Church is God's building*

The Church is also known as God's building. It is yet another metaphor for the Church used by Paul (1 Cor 3, 9). *Lumen Gentium* takes up this metaphor and, basing itself on Mt. 21, 42, Acts 4, 11, 1 Pet 2, 7 & Ps 117, 22, speaks of Jesus Christ as the stone rejected by the builders who became the cornerstone. The apostles have built the Church on this foundation from which it receives stability and cohesion. This structure of the Church is also known by various names: the house of God (1 Tim 3, 15) in which God's family dwells, the household of God in the Spirit (Eph 2, 19–22) and the dwelling-place of God among mortals (Rev 21, 3). In a special way, the Church is also called as the holy temple into which the baptised faithful are built like living stones (1 Pet 2, 5). Church is also the “holy city coming down from heaven” the “heavenly Jerusalem prepared like a bride adorned for her husband” (Rev 21, 1).

### 2.1.3.4 *Church is a stranger in a foreign land*

The Church is also called a stranger in a foreign land, pressing forward amid the persecutions of the world and the consolations of God, giving witness to the Kingdom of God and announcing the cross and the death of the Lord until he

<sup>135</sup> Cf. Lawrence B. Porter, *A Guide to the Church- Its Origin and Nature, its Mission and Ministries*, New York: St. Pauls, 2008, p. 67.

<sup>136</sup> Cf. Gerald O'Collins, *The Second Vatican Council: Message and Meaning*, Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2014, p. 190.

comes (1 Cor 11, 26). It is by the power of the risen Christ that the Church is strengthened to overcome with love and patience its sorrows and difficulties both from within and without. The Church in the world faithfully keeps manifesting the mystery of Christ, although not perfectly, until, in the end, it shall be manifested fully (LG 8).

*Lumen Gentium* also calls the Church as “mother” (Gal 4, 26) and the “spotless spouse of the spotless lamb, whom Christ loved and for whom he delivered himself up that he might sanctify her (Eph 5, 26). The Church is bound to her Spouse, Christ, through an indissoluble bond, which Christ himself constantly ‘nourishes and cherishes’. Christ fills his Church with heavenly gifts for all eternity, to make known to us the love of God and His love for us, which surpasses all knowledge and understanding (Eph 3, 19). The Church is in the world and is away from the Lord. However, the Church fixes its gaze on and is concerned about the heavenly things which will be revealed fully in the fullness of time (Col 3, 1–4).

Apart from the above images, there are three other more important metaphors of the Church: The Church is the Body of Christ, the Church is the Temple of the Holy Spirit and the Church is the People of God. These three metaphors found in the New Testament and further developed by the II Vatican Council can be called root metaphors, in the sense that they basically express and explain the Trinitarian nature of the Church.<sup>137</sup> Therefore, I would like to elaborate them further and deal with them separately.

## 2.2 Church is the Temple of the Holy Spirit

Jesus Christ before his ascension into heaven, promised to send the Holy Spirit as the Paraclete or Helper or Comforter to be with his people – the Church. This promise was fulfilled on the day of the Pentecost as the Holy Spirit descended on the believers (Acts 2, 1–13). Hence, the Pentecost event is also known as the “birth of the Church”. The resurrected Christ continues to live in His Church and guide it through his Holy Spirit. It is by the power of the Holy Spirit that the early Church lived as a community of God, one in heart and soul (Acts 4, 32). Inspired by the promptings of the Holy Spirit, the early community was committed to building the Kingdom of God on the earth. Paul calls the Church the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 3, 16; 2 Cor 6, 16; Eph 2, 21). The indwelling Spirit of God is the life-giving and vitalizing principle of the Church. The Spirit lives in the heart of everyone who believes in Jesus Christ and all who believe make one Church– the Church of Christ – the Temple or the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit.

*Lumen Gentium* includes this New Testament metaphor of the Church as the temple of the Holy Spirit in order to stress the pneumatological dimension of

<sup>137</sup> Cf. Negussie Andre Domnic, *The Fetha Nagast and its Ecclesiology*, pp. 132–133.

the Church. The Church is also the temple of the Holy Spirit, who sanctifies it continually, giving “all those who believe . . . access through Christ in one Spirit to the Father” (LG, 4). The Holy Spirit guides the Church in the way of all truth, fills her with gifts and charisms, and leads her to her final goal, the union of God with men, that “God may be all in all” (1 Cor 15:28). The Holy Spirit dwells in the Church “in the hearts of all faithful, as in a temple (1 Cor 3, 16; 6, 19) and prays and bears witness with them . . .”. It is the Holy Spirit who leads the Church to perfect union with Christ – her spouse, renews her, vivifies and unifies her, making her an instrument of salvation in the hands of God, for the entire world.<sup>138</sup> It is this relatedness to God in His Son Jesus Christ, through His Holy Spirit, which makes the believers a new community – the Church. It is God’s Spirit who is the source of the Church’s life, of her unity in diversity, and of the riches of gifts and graces given to the faithful through the Church. The Church is not a weaving of things and interests; it is rather the Temple of the Holy Spirit, the Temple in which God works, the Temple in which each believer with the gift of baptism is a living stone.<sup>139</sup>

It is through the Holy Spirit, that the divine plan of salvation is continued and accomplished in the world in and through the Church. He carries out this task in and through every believer, by imparting them the heavenly gifts and charisms. Thus, the Church as the temple or dwelling of the Holy Spirit – His creation wherein each member has a role to fulfil using the special gifts with the assistance of the Holy Spirit towards this fulfilment.<sup>140</sup> Since, the Church is the Temple of the Holy Spirit, all the believers who are the members of this Church have the task to keep the Church from becoming the den of thieves and robbers and at the same time remain open to the promptings and changes of the Holy Spirit, so that the Church may forever remain the dwelling place of God through His Holy Spirit.

## **2.3 Church is the Body of Christ**

### **2.3.1 Biblical Foundation**

The idea of the Church as the Body of Christ is not found in the Old Testament. Even in the New Testament, no evangelist mentions this image. It is Paul, who in his epistles used this imagery and called the Church as the Body of Christ. It is Paul’s most powerful metaphor for the Church.<sup>141</sup> Although Paul is making use of

<sup>138</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 146.

<sup>139</sup> Cf. Pope Francis, “The Church as the Temple of God: an abstract from his audience on 26.06.2013”, <http://www.thesacredpage.com/2013/06/pope-francis-church-as-temple-of-god.html>, 05.07.2016.

<sup>140</sup> Cf. Negussie Andre Domnic, *The Fetha Nagast and its Ecclesiology*, p. 147.

<sup>141</sup> Cf. Thomas P. Rausch, *Towards a truly Catholic Church*, p. 57.



this metaphor, the scholars are not sure about the exact origin of this metaphor. Some authors see the origin of this metaphor in the ancient theory of the state,<sup>142</sup> whereas others see the root of this metaphor in the idea of the universe as a gigantic body or in the notion of Adam as the archetype of all human beings and in the Hebrew notion of corporate personality.<sup>143</sup> In the opinion of Lawrence B. Porter, unlike the other images which have a biblical background, the image of the Church as Body of Christ seems to have a secular background, but its theological use is the result of a creative way of adaptation by St. Paul.<sup>144</sup>

Paul was aware of the problems in the community of believers which he had formed in Corinth (1 Cor 6, 1–2; 12 & 1 Cor 11, 17–22). The community of Corinth was infected by the division among its members who professed their loyalty to different charismatic leaders (1 Cor 1, 12). This division was a clear reflection and effect of the social and cultural differences in the community.<sup>145</sup> The division also affected the liturgical life of the community. In his attempt to resolve the conflicts and to do away with the division in the community of Corinth, Paul adapts the image of the Body of Christ. His use of this image has a very close relation to the sacraments of baptism and the Holy Eucharist. In fact, his use of the image of the Body of Christ is based on his understanding of baptism and the Eucharist.

The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread (1 Cor 10, 16–17)

The image of the Body of Christ indicates the unity in diversity among the believers. The believers become one body of Christ through their participation in the Holy Eucharist. Through the breaking and sharing of the one eucharistic body of Christ, the believers become or are formed into one ecclesial body of Christ.<sup>146</sup> Thus, there is an indirect shift from the eucharistic Body of Christ to the ecclesial Body of Christ. The participation in the Eucharist and the breaking of the bread by the believers unites them with the crucified and risen Christ in such a way that

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<sup>142</sup> Walter Kasper, *The Catholic Church*, p. 126: “The idea of the state refers to a body of many parts whereby the community is only alive if all parts collaborate and fulfil the tasks pertaining to them”.

<sup>143</sup> Cf. Daniel J. Harrington, *The Church according to the New Testament: What the Wisdom and Witness of Early Christianity teach us today*, New York: Rowman & Littlefield publishers, 2001, p. 65 & Cf. Lawrence B. Porter, *A Guide to the Church*, p. 87.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81.

<sup>145</sup> Cf. Thomas P. Rausch, *Towards a truly Catholic Church*, p. 58.

<sup>146</sup> Cf. Walter Kasper, *The Catholic Church*, p. 127.

the participating community of believers itself becomes the Body of Christ.<sup>147</sup> The ‘many’ become ‘one’ in Christ. It is Christ who is the source of the unity of the community of believers.

In 1 Cor 12, Paul relates the image of the Body of Christ to baptism of the believers in Christ.

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

Here Paul speaks of the divine effect of baptism which forms believers from different cultures and races into one body of Christ through the Holy Spirit. Thus, baptism in Paul’s understanding has a unifying function in the Christian community. In the same chapter he compares the Christian community (Church) to the human body (1 Cor 1, 14–31). The human body consists of different and many members or parts. No body part is inferior to another or less important than the other. All body parts are equally important in order that they function smoothly as one human body. In the same way, the different and many members in the Christian community with their varying gifts are necessary and function together in unity as one ‘Body of Christ’ (1 Cor 12, 27 & Rom 12, 4–5).

In the letter to the Colossians and Ephesians, Paul further develops this metaphor of the Body of Christ by shifting his focus from the particular Church (of Corinth) to the universal Church. He applies the image of the Body of Christ to the universal Church. Christ is the head of the body – the Church (Col 1, 18; 2, 19 & Eph 5, 23). Christ becomes the source of the Church’s growth (Col 2, 19; Eph 4, 16) and nourishes it and loves it as a husband loves his wife (Eph 5, 25). Christ is, thus, the one who guides and directs his Church. He is the origin of the Church. Hence, he has the primacy in all things. He is the Lord of the Church. “The Lordship of Christ, total subjection of the Church to Christ, the need for a living union through faith, hope and charity with Christ and the indispensable role which each member plays”<sup>148</sup>, are emphasised by this image of the Body of Christ. Hence, when one encounters the Church or the Community of believers, one encounters Christ himself, because he lives in his body – the Church. The Church is the visible or earthly body of the heavenly Christ.<sup>149</sup> Christ and his Church are

<sup>147</sup> Cf. Siegfried Wiedenhofer, *Das Katholische Kirchenverständnis: Ein Lehrbuch der Ekklesiologie*, Graz, Wien, Köln: Verlag Styria, 1992, S. 90.

<sup>148</sup> Jude Chikodi Ike, *The Church as Locus of Man’s Encounter with God: A Study of Theology of Otto Semmelroth and its implications for the Church in Africa*, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2011, p. 135

<sup>149</sup> Cf. Siegfried Wiedenhofer, *Das Katholische Kirchenverständnis*, p. 90.

intrinsically united and related to each other. It is this union and relation which Paul tries to bring out through his use of the image of the Body of Christ.

### 2.3.2 Historical Development

Following St. Paul, the fathers of the Church speak of the Church as the Body of Christ, but in different ways. For Cyprian, the Church as the Body of Christ is a womb from which those who want to attain salvation must not be separated. By separation from the womb, he means separation from the bishop, who as the head of the body, represents Christ, the head of the Church.<sup>150</sup> When the members of Christ's Church separate themselves from the bishop and are no more loyal to him, the Body of Christ is wounded.

Augustine's use of the image of the Body of Christ lays particular stress on "the mystical and invisible communion that binds together all who are enlivened by the grace of Christ".<sup>151</sup> He uses this metaphor in relation to the sinful members of the of the Body – the Church who by going astray from the Church not only hurt the Church as the Body of Christ in its social form, but also Christ himself who identifies himself with the Church.<sup>152</sup> Since Christ and his Church – the head – and the members are one body, the sufferings of the Church are also the sufferings of Christ, who through his incarnation is united to the humanity and has become the head of the new humanity through his work of redemption.<sup>153</sup> In this way for Augustine, Christ, the head, together with his body, the Church, forms the 'whole Christ'.<sup>154</sup> Augustine's understanding of the Church as the Body of Christ is deeply rooted in his understanding of the sacrament of the Eucharist – the sacrament of unity, where the earthly Jesus is present, together with the total Christ – the head and the members as one Body.<sup>155</sup> The ecclesiology of Augustine and many other fathers of the Church was eucharistic ecclesiology, based on the sacrament of the Eucharist. After a long period, which saw and accepted the Church more in its institutional character, the Church was seen as the Mystical Body of Christ in the middle of the 19th century.<sup>156</sup>

It was Johan Adam Möhler and his associates in the Tübingen School who, through their pneumatological and christological understanding of the Church, re-

<sup>150</sup> Cf. Jürgen Werbick, *Kirche: Ein Ekklesiologischer Entwurf für Studium und Praxis*, Freiburg im Breisgau: Verlag Herder, 1994, S. 286.

<sup>151</sup> Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church*, p. 43.

<sup>152</sup> Cf. Jürgen Werbick, *Kirche: Ein Ekklesiologischer Entwurf für Studium und Praxis*, p. 288.

<sup>153</sup> Cf. Walter Kasper, *The Catholic Church*, p. 128 & Jürgen Werbick, *Kirche: Ein Ekklesiologischer Entwurf für Studium und Praxis*, p. 288.

<sup>154</sup> Cf. Richard Gaillardetz & Catherin E. Clifford, *Keys to the Council*, p. 70.

<sup>155</sup> Cf. Walter Kasper, *The Catholic Church*, p. 129.

<sup>156</sup> Cf. Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church*, p. 44.

vived the Catholic Ecclesiology (Church as Body of Christ and People of God).<sup>157</sup> Möhler proposed the idea of the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ. As a Mystical Body, the Church is a deep spiritual reality, a supernatural organism, vivified and invigorated by the Holy Spirit as the principle underlying the life and the being of the Church.<sup>158</sup> Thus, the Holy Spirit is the centre of life of Christians who are part of the Church. Möhler goes beyond and sees the Church as a living organism under the guidance and animation of the Holy Spirit rather than as a mere static social and historical entity.<sup>159</sup>

The image was further taken up in the First Vatican Council (1869–1870). However, the understanding of the Church as the Mystical Body did not find much acceptance from the Council fathers for two main reasons: Firstly, the term was too abstract and did not correctly and accurately define the nature of the Church, and secondly, calling the Church the Mystical Body of Christ is as good as seeing the Church as the extension of Christ, which means any criticism of the Church would be the criticism of its founder Christ as well.<sup>160</sup> Hence, the Council fathers did not show much interest for this understanding of the Church.

The understanding of the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ was revived and found wide acceptance in the Catholic Church with the encyclical *Mystici Corporis*, by Pope Pius XII in 1943. The Encyclical came at a time when the European countries were at war with each other in the second world war, reminding them of their belongingness to the body of Christ – the Church. The Pope speaks of the metaphor of the Mystical Body of Christ as the noblest, sublime and divine expression which springs from and is, as it were, the fair flowering of the repeated teaching of the Sacred Scriptures and the holy Fathers (no. 13).<sup>161</sup> However, the Pope also warns against misinterpretation.<sup>162</sup> According to him, the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ refers not only to the inner visible reality of the Church, but also to the social corporeality of the Church. Thus, the Pope wanted to harmonize the Mystical Body concept with the social concept of Bellarmine.<sup>163</sup> The encyclical speaks of those exercising sacred powers as the first and the chief members of the Body of Christ and the laity is seen doing the assisting work (no. 17).

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., p. 42.

<sup>158</sup> Cf. George Karukunnel, *Ecclesiological Models: Vatican II and after*. & Cf. Moses Asaah Awinongya, *The Understanding of Family in Ghana as a Challenge for a Contextual Ecclesiology*, p. 105.

<sup>159</sup> Cf. Ibid., p. 106.

<sup>160</sup> Cf. Ibid.

<sup>161</sup> Pope Pius, “*Mystici Corporis Christi* – Encyclical of Pope Pius XII on the Mystical Body of Christ, June 29th, 1943”, [https://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-xii\\_enc\\_29061943\\_mystici-corporis-christi.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_29061943_mystici-corporis-christi.html), 06.11.16.

<sup>162</sup> Cf. Walter Kasper, *The Catholic Church*, p. 130.

<sup>163</sup> Cf. Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church*, p. 44.

### 2.3.3 The Second Vatican Council

The Second Vatican Council continued and accepted Pope Pius XII's understanding of the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ (LG 7). The Council uses the language of the body more than sixty times to refer to the Church.<sup>164</sup> It is Christ who through his Holy Spirit has formed his Mystical Body the Church – the believers from all over the world. Through the sacraments Christ's life is communicated to this body. Through baptism, the believers are formed in the likeness of Christ and through their participation in the eucharistic bread, the believers are in communion with Christ and with one another. Seen in this way, the Church is not only like the Body of Christ, but rather, it is or becomes the Body of Christ through the salvific activity of the crucified, risen Christ, who fills the Church with the presence of his Spirit and entrusts the Church with the ministry of reconciliation.<sup>165</sup>

Referring to Paul (1 Cor 12, 12), the Council compares the relationship between Christ and the Church to the relationship between the human body and its members. In the structure of Christ's Mystical Body – the Church – there is a diversity in members and functions. The different members perform different functions in the Church through the different and varied gifts bestowed upon them by the Holy Spirit. The unity and love among the different members is the work of the Holy Spirit through whom the members are interconnected to each other. Consequently, if one member suffers, all suffer together, and if one member is honoured, all rejoice together (1 Cor 12, 26).

The head of the body – the Church – is Christ himself, who is the image of the invisible God and in whom all things were created. All members should be moulded in His likeness. Christ has shared with us his Spirit – the principle of life, one and the same in the head and in the body, so that body unifies with life. It is the Spirit who gives life, unity and motion to the body (cf LG 7). Article 7 of *Lumen Gentium* closes with a reference to Paul's Letter to the Ephesians, where the great mystery of the Church's relationship to Christ is described as the relationship between a husband and a wife. "Christ loves the Church as his bride, having become the model of a man loving his wife as his body" (Eph 4, 16). The Church must submit itself to Christ as the Head.

The Council does not intend to only focus on either the spiritual dimension or the structural dimension of the Church, as we have seen earlier in the sacramental view of the Church. It is very clear in the following text:

<sup>164</sup> Cf. William Henn, "Christ the head of the Church", Jesus Lord and Saviour, *Studia Missionalia*, Rome: EPUG, 2003, p. 188.

<sup>165</sup> Cf. Kurt Koch, *Die Kirche Gottes: Gemeinschaft im Geheimnis des Glaubens*, Augsburg: Sankt Ulrich Verlag, 2007, S. 33.

The one Mediator, Christ, established and constantly sustains here on earth his holy Church, the community of faith, hope and charity, as a visible structure through which he communicates grace and truth to everyone. But, the society equipped with hierarchical structures and the mystical body of Christ, the visible society and the spiritual community, the earthly Church and the Church endowed with heavenly riches, are not to be thought of as two realities. On the contrary, they form one complex reality comprising a human and a divine element. (LG 8)

Here the Council states clearly that the visible hierarchical Church is not something distinct from the Mystical Body of Christ as already discussed, but rather they are one and the same thing. It is from the risen Christ and his Spirit that the Church derives its mystical aspect.<sup>166</sup> The visible social structure of the Church is here the human element, in analogy with Christ's human nature, and this structure is vivified by the Spirit of Christ, building up the Body, much as the Word dwelling in the assumed human nature made the latter an agent of salvation (LG 8). The Church as the Body of Christ is the manifestation of the divine reality which is both visible and hidden in and through the Church. The hierarchical society and the Mystical Body are two expressions of the one and the same Church whose head is Christ. The hierarchical structure serves the Holy Spirit who through his active presence, animates, guides and builds up the Body of Christ.<sup>167</sup>

It is interesting to note that although Vatican II integrated the theology of the Mystical Body of Christ contained in the *Mystici Corporis* in its teaching, it nevertheless went a step ahead and made some further developments in this understanding. Richard Gaillardetz speaks of four important changes in the understanding of the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ by the Vatican Council II: Firstly, the Council considers the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ as one metaphor among others, used to understand the nature of the Church. Secondly, the Council considers the Church as the Mystical Body not only in terms of its visible institutional structures, but also in terms of the spiritual communion made possible by the people from every nation and race, animated by the Holy Spirit. Thirdly, unlike *Mystici Corporis*, the Council does not explain who the members of the Body of Christ are; rather, it speaks of the degrees of the incorporation into the Body of Christ. Finally, The Council also reaffirms the vital relationship between the Eucharistic Body of Christ and Christ's Body the Church.<sup>168</sup> The Church as the Mystical Body of Christ shares a mystical bond of communion with Christ that unites all who participate in the Holy Eucharist.<sup>169</sup>

<sup>166</sup> Cf. Richard Gaillardetz & Catherin E. Clifford, *Keys to the Council*, p. 71.

<sup>167</sup> Cf. George Karukunnel, *Ecclesiological Models: Vatican II and after*.

<sup>168</sup> Cf. Richard Gaillardetz, *The Church in the Making*, p. 45.

<sup>169</sup> Cf. Richard Gaillardetz & Catherin E. Clifford, *Keys to the Council*, p. 72.

In conclusion, the theology of the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ brings out the intimate relation between Christ and His Church in its visible and invisible aspects. In the opinion of Brian Mullady, the metaphor of the Mystical Body is the greatest of all the metaphors of the Church because it “emphasizes the primacy of Christ as the head of creation and the Church, the conformity of the members with the head, the increase of the body under the influence of Christ in heaven, the activity of the Spirit who is sent into the Church by the head, and the fullness of the Church received by the Head.”<sup>170</sup> It helps us to see the Church not primarily as a social hierarchical structure, but rather, as a communion of people, united to Christ through his Spirit.

## 2.4 Church is the People of God

The metaphor of the Church as the People of God is yet another important and comprehensive metaphor used by the Second Vatican Council in its understanding of the nature of the Church. However, this understanding is not new. In the Bible, we have the basis for this metaphor. The Second Vatican Council rediscovered and redefined this theological understanding of the Church as God’s own people.

### 2.4.1 The People of God in the Biblical context

#### 2.4.1.1 *The Old Testament*

The Old Testament uses the Hebrew word ‘*qahal Yahweh*’, in order to signify the People of God. The Hebrew word *qahal* means ‘coming together’ or ‘a gathering’. God’s plan of salvation had also a people included, or a nation – people who belong to God, whom He chooses as His own little flock. Hence, *qahal Yahweh* is not a group of people who of their own initiative form themselves as God’s people; rather, they are the people called and gathered together by Yahweh, as His own.<sup>171</sup> The Church is, therefore, people called by God. The root of the Church as People of God is traced right to the beginning of the Bible in the book of Genesis. God calls Abraham and promises to make of him a great nation, which will be the blessing for the entire world (cf. Gen 12, 1–3). This passage is a clear sign, an indication, that the call of Abraham is not aimed at Abraham himself or his tribe, but it has a universal meaning and significance for the entire world (Gen 18, 18; 22, 18; 26, 4; 28, 14).<sup>172</sup> The chosen people of God get a symbolic definition in Genesis chapter 32 in the story of Jacob, whom God gives a new name: Israel (Gen 32, 28) and whose twelve sons become ancestors of the twelve tribes of

<sup>170</sup> Brian Mullady, “The Church: People of God, Body of Christ, Temple of the Holy Spirit”, <http://www.secondspring.co.uk/articles/mullady.htm>, 06.11.2016.

<sup>171</sup> Cf. Jürgen Werbick, *Kirche: Ein Ekklesiologischer Entwurf für Studium und Praxis*, p. 45.

<sup>172</sup> Cf. Walter Kasper, *The Catholic Church*, p. 120.

Israel (Gen 35, 23–26).<sup>173</sup> God loves His people, protects His people and cares for His flock. The Exodus story gives us an idea of what God's chosen people mean to him. In fact, the Exodus story can be seen as the root metaphor for establishing Israel as God's People.<sup>174</sup> God's choice of Israel as his chosen race is summed up neatly and succinctly in Deuteronomy 7:6: "the Lord your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on earth to be his people, his treasured possession." Because Israel is chosen and set apart by God, it becomes a Holy People.<sup>175</sup> God chooses Israel to be His own people, not because the people of Israel were great in numbers or achievements but simply, 'because the Lord loves *them* (you)' (Deut 7:8). Since God loves His people – His chosen flock, He guards it like the apple of His eye and like the eagle that protects its nest and watches over its young ones (cf. Deut. 32, 10ff). According to His promise, God rescues His people from Egypt and on the way to the promised land, He seals a covenant with His people, making them His own: "I am your God and you are my people" (Ex 6, 7).

The gathering on Mount Sinai, which gives us a theological foundation for Israel as People of God is a pre-figuration of the *qahal Yahweh* – People of God.<sup>176</sup> The Sinai event is a story of God's covenant with His people. God promised to be with His people and love them with an everlasting love and protect them. The people had to obey the commandments God gave them, and they would have life in its abundance (cf. Ex 24, 3–8). Observing God's laws meant life, whereas the non-observance and infidelity to God meant disaster and doom. In and through the covenant sealed between God and Israel, Israel became one united nation or People of God. "Together they became the covenant people of God, together they shared in his love and cared for them."<sup>177</sup>

However, the history of God's People is also the history of infidelity to God. It is a history "of repeated failures and betrayals, backsliding and loss of faith – in short, it is a story of broken communion, a story of sin."<sup>178</sup> The People of Israel disobeyed the commandments of God and went astray from God countless times. They broke the covenant with God and the relationship with Him (Hos 1, 9). In spite of their unfaithfulness, God always remains faithful. In His mercy and love for His people, He will restore the disrupted relationship with His people by renewing His covenant with them (Hos 11, 8). There is a gradual shift from the

<sup>173</sup> Cf. Thomas P. Rausch, *Towards a truly Catholic Church*, p. 49.

<sup>174</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*

<sup>175</sup> Cf. *Notker Füglistner*, "Strukturen der alttestamentlichen Ekklesiologie", *Das Heilsgeschehen in der Gemeinde*, Johannes Feiner & Magnus Löhrer (Hrsg.), Einsiedeln, Zürich, Köln: Benziger Verlag, 1972, S. 68.

<sup>176</sup> Cf. Jürgen Werbick, *Kirche: Ein Ekklesiologischer Entwurf für Studium und Praxis*, p. 45.

<sup>177</sup> Brian Gleeson, "The Church as the People of God: The People in Communion", [http://aejt.com.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0010/395515/AEJT\\_5.13\\_Gleeson.pdf](http://aejt.com.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/395515/AEJT_5.13_Gleeson.pdf), 20.06.2016.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*



present with the focus on the future relationship between God and Israel. Two prophecies state this promise with force:

The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt – a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people (Jer 31, 31–33).

I will give them one heart and put a new spirit within them; I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, so that they may follow my statutes and keep my ordinances and obey them. Then they shall be my people, and I will be their God (Ezek 11, 19–20).

God will re-establish His relationship with Israel, as a new people who will obey God and is faithful to Him at all times so that Israel will find in Him its true peace and happiness. The story of the People of God in the Old Testament is the story of the “loving election by God, his mercy, his guidance and immutable faithfulness.”<sup>179</sup> It is important to understand that *qahal Yahweh* cannot be God’s people if it is not gathered by God. It is always God who gathers His people like a Shepherd gathering his flock.<sup>180</sup>

#### 2.4.1.2 *The New Testament*

The history of the People of God in the Old Testament was a preparation for and a passage leading to the new People of God formed in and through the new covenant in Christ. The prophecies of prophets Jeremiah (Jer 31, 31–33) and Ezekiel (Ezek 11, 19–29) about the new covenant are fulfilled in the New Testament through the new covenant and the formation of a new People of God. In the New Testament it is the Church, who is the People of God (Acts 15, 14; 18, 10; Rom 9, 25ff; 2 Cor 6, 16 etc.). But the New Testament word for *qahal* is *ecclesia* meaning Church (Acts 20, 28; 1 Cor 1, 2; 10, 32; 11, 22; 15, 9; Gal 1, 13; 1 Tim 3, 5). Although in the Hellenistic use the word, *ecclesia* refers to the voluntary gathering or an assembly of the people for a political or social purpose, the New Testament’s use of the term *ecclesia* is totally different in the sense that it is a community called out of people and formed in Jesus Christ through baptism.<sup>181</sup> The Church is a gathering of the

<sup>179</sup> Walter Kasper, *The Catholic Church*, p. 121.

<sup>180</sup> Cf. Gerhard Lohfink, *Braucht Gott die Kirche? Zur Theologie des Volkes Gottes*, Aufl. 3, Freiburg: Verlag Herder, 1998, S. 72.

<sup>181</sup> For more information on the term *ecclesia* read: Walter Kasper, *The Catholic Church*, pp. 90–92 & Jürgen Werbick, *Kirche: Ein Ekklesiologischer Entwurf für Studium und Praxis*, p. 46.

people of God, and it is God who calls forth and gathers this people for Himself. Thus, the Church as a religious gathering is different from the political gathering in the sense that unlike the political gathering in which important decisions were taken, the gathering of the People of God heard and accepted the decisions and will of God for it and showed its compliance to the will of God.<sup>182</sup>

The early community did not consider itself in the beginning as the new People of God, but rather, as the true and faithful people of God; and because of its acceptance of Jesus Christ through whom this community had a new relationship with God, the community saw in itself the Old Testament promises being fulfilled and realised.<sup>183</sup> The New Testament community of believers saw itself as the continuation of the People of God in the Old Testament.<sup>184</sup> The New Testament clearly testifies to it. For example, the believers in the New Testament did not immediately reject either the law (cf. Mt 5, 17–19) or the temple worship (cf. Mt 5, 23); in fact, they continued to gather themselves in the temple (cf. Acts 2, 46) and took part in the temple services (cf. Acts 3, 1). Thus, the New Testament Church community saw itself as a gathering or a community gathered around Christ, the new Moses as the fulfilment of the new covenant. The early Christian Church saw itself as the renewed true Israel.<sup>185</sup> The early Christian community is the People of God in the sense that it is the Body of Christ and is being formed through the sacramental Eucharistic Body.<sup>186</sup> The members of this renewed Israel in the New Testament are firstly, those descendants of Jacob who believed in the Messiah (Matthew 10:6; 15:24; Acts 2:36–41; 21:20, etc.), and secondly, those who joined Israel through spiritual circumcision and the keeping of the new “law” (Romans 2:28–29; 13:10; 1 Timothy 1:5). In this sense, the Church as the new Israel is the new family of God gathered in Jesus Christ, based not on traditional bonds of kinship, clan and patriarchy, but on obedience to the will of God (cf. Mk 3, 33–35).<sup>187</sup> This new Israel is not a static community of believers; rather, it is becoming and developing. It gathers itself again and again, particularly in the Holy Eucharist. The *ecclesia* is continuously on the way to growth, fulfilment and realisation. In this sense, the Church as the People of God means two things: first, the Church as the People of God is a part of the last and definite phase of God’s plan of salvation, and second, the Church as the People of God is a pilgrim people.<sup>188</sup>

<sup>182</sup> Cf. Kurt Koch, *Die Kirche Gottes: Gemeinschaft im Geheimnis des Glaubens*, pp. 31–32.

<sup>183</sup> Cf. Leonardo Boff, *Und die Kirche ist Volk geworden: Ekklesiogenese*, Düsseldorf: Patmos Verlag, 1990 S. 59–60.

<sup>184</sup> It is clearly evident in the Pauline Epistles, in the first letter of Peter and in the letter to the Hebrews.

<sup>185</sup> Thomas p. Rausch, *Towards a truly Catholic Church*, p. 54.

<sup>186</sup> Cf. Kurt Koch, *Die Kirche Gottes: Gemeinschaft im Geheimnis des Glaubens*, p. 32.

<sup>187</sup> Cf. Negussie Andre Domnic, The Fetha Nagast and its Ecclesiology, p. 136.

<sup>188</sup> Cf. Otto Semmelroth, “Die Kirche, das neue Gottesvolk”, *De Ecclesia: Beiträge zur Konstitution ‘Über die Kirche’ des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils, Band I*, G. Barauna (Hrsg.), Freiburg,

The identification of the Church with Israel is explicit in the first letter of St. Peter:

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. (1 Pet 2, 9–10)

The Letter was written largely to the Gentile Christians<sup>189</sup> in Asia Minor as a baptismal admonition, addressing them as the People of God. The letter speaks of the followers of Christ as the 'chosen race' and 'holy nation'. The membership of this chosen race or holy nation is not based on race or colour or territory, but on the profession of faith in Jesus Christ through baptism. Hence, the new People of God is a people gathered through its faith in Christ. The Church as the continuation of the Old Testament People of God is made up of both Jews and Gentiles alike. As the new and renewed people of God, the Church has a christological basis. It is the baptism in the name of Christ and the faith-filled commitment to Christ that makes the believers the People of God – the Church or the new *ecclesia*. The members of this Church are not distinguished by their colour, race and familial backgrounds rather their membership is characterized by their faith in Christ. "This new People of God is bonded together by the sacrifice of the life of Jesus, and by the fruit of that sacrifice, the gift of his Spirit dwelling in their hearts, and re-creating, directing, activating and motivating them from within."<sup>190</sup>

## 2.4.2 Church is the People of God: Vatican II

Vatican II's understanding of the Church as the People of God<sup>191</sup>, which replaced the old institutional and hierarchical understanding of the Church, can be de-

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Basel, Wien: Verlag Herder, 1966, S. 367–368.

<sup>189</sup> Brian Gleeson, *The Church as the People of God: A People in Communion*.: The impact of this passage will be greater if we remember that its author was writing to a group of predominantly Gentile Christians (see 1:18; 2:10) in northern Asia Minor (see 1:1), probably in the 80s of the first century. They were feeling that they were like 'aliens and exiles' (2:11), cut off from the surrounding society, alienated from their pagan neighbours and even despised and ostracized by them. Knowing their feelings of hurt and discouragement, the author offers these isolated Gentile Christians affirmation, assurance and encouragement, and a sense of pride in belonging to God's people, the Church. He tells them that just as the enslaved tribes of Israel were brought out of Egypt and transformed into God's people, so have they been changed into God's people through their conversion to Christ and their incorporation into him by their baptism.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>191</sup> Cf. Leonardo Boff, *Und die Kirche ist Volk geworden: Ekklesiogenese*, p. 63.: The Vatican II wanted to do away with the idea of the believers divided into two categories. Hence, after presenting the Church as mystery and sacrament, the council wanted to coin a term for the

scribed as the most important development of the Council.<sup>192</sup> Chapter two of *Lumen Gentium* is devoted to the treatment of the Church as the Holy People of God. Through this chapter, the Council wants to stress the continuity between the Old Testament and the New Testament to understand and see the Church as part of the salvific plan of God for the world. In LG, we have this understanding of the Church as the People of God expressed in a summary form: “Already prefigured at the beginning of the world, this Church was prepared in marvellous fashion in the history of the people of Israel and in the ancient alliance” (no. 2). Chapter 2 treats this theme in an elaborate manner.

Chapter 2 begins by placing the Church in the context of salvation history. The theme of the divine election is an important theme occurring in this chapter. The council says:

For those who believe in Christ, who are reborn, not from a corruptible but from an incorruptible seed, through the word of the living God (1 Pet 1, 23), not from flesh, but from water and the Holy Spirit (Jn 3, 5–6), are finally established as “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his possession . . . who in times past were not a people, but now are the people of God” (1 Pet 2, 9–10). LG 9

The Church is God’s people not because of its self-merit, but because God wills it to be such. The Church as the People of God is the consequence of the free initiative of God.<sup>193</sup> It is God who has chosen and gathered the Church around Himself as His own people dear to Him. The chapter also speaks of the communal nature of God’s calling. God does not wish to call men and women and save them as individuals without any relationship or connection among them; rather, He wants to form them as one people who will acknowledge Him and serve him in holiness (cf. LG 9). By calling the Church as the People of God the Council also wants to give an idea about God’s ultimate goal of uniting all people – all men and women as His own.<sup>194</sup> God’s gift of salvation to human beings comes through a particular community, which He calls into existence as His instrument of salvation.<sup>195</sup> It is through this community that God extends His love, mercy and fellowship to the world. Church is therefore the universal dynamic of God’s saving work in the world, the presence of His unifying power, extending to all

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Church which would contain all the believers in it, without any distinction. So the Council chose the term *People of God*.

<sup>192</sup> Cf. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical & Global Perspectives*, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2002, p. 28.

<sup>193</sup> Cf. Richard Gaillardetz, *The Church in the Making*, p. 47.

<sup>194</sup> Cf. Morris Pelzel, *Ecclesiology: The Church as Communion and Mission* (Catholic Basics: A Pastoral Ministry Series), Chicago: Loyola Press, 2002, p. 32.

<sup>195</sup> Cf. Brian Gleeson, *The Church as the People of God: A People in Communion*.

and drawing them into the single unity of a people – a nation.<sup>196</sup> The chapter on the People of God intends to present neither a theology of the laity nor the theology of the clergy but rather, a theology of the whole Christian faithful, a theology of the members of the Body of Christ who are not defined by superiority or inferiority in relation to each other, but by the equality of status and dignity they enjoy through their call to a common discipleship through baptism.<sup>197</sup> Among the People of God there is no superior or inferior, no lord or servant, but all are equal because God who calls them and gathers them as His flock, makes them equal. By the term ‘Church as the People of God’, is meant the entire community of believers, the entire Church always and everywhere as the People of God and not only one particular caste or class of believers or only one particular office within the Church.<sup>198</sup> Hence, there is no privatisation of the Church to which all believers belong through their calling. This is also the reason, why the Council fathers decided to place the chapter on the People of God before the chapter on the hierarchy of the Church. This is also a Copernican revolution by the Council fathers who saw the People of God and its salvation as the goal of the salvific plan of God, and the hierarchical structure of the Church as a mere instrument to achieve this goal.<sup>199</sup>

The People of God in the Old Testament is the prefiguration of the new community of believers, the new People of God – the Church, which is formed and established by Christ, the Word made flesh. The origin of the Church as the new People of God is summed up in a single sentence in *Lumen Gentium*: “(Christ) called a people together made up of Jews and Gentiles which would be one, not according to the flesh, but in the Spirit, and it would be the new people of God” (LG 9). It is in and through Christ that the Church becomes the new People of God. Christ calls both the Jews and Gentiles to become His chosen flock, so that through the Holy Spirit, they may grow in unity and become one People of God.<sup>200</sup> Christ Himself is the head of this new people – the ‘messianic people’. This new People of God is a Spirit-filled community, “a fellowship of life, charity and truth”. This messianic people has the responsibility and the duty to spread the Kingdom of God, preached and planted by Christ on this earth and to bring all people to the knowledge of God as the Father. Hence, the Church as the little flock of God is ‘a

<sup>196</sup> Cf. Siegfried Wiedenhofer, “A Holy People”, <http://www.theway.org.uk/back/32Wiendenhofer.pdf>, 06.11.2016.

<sup>197</sup> Cf. Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>198</sup> Cf. Hans Küng, *Die Kirche, Auflg. 3, Freiburg im breisgau: Verlag Herder KG, 1967, S. 151–152.*

<sup>199</sup> Cf. Peter Hühnermann, *Theologischer Kommentar zur Dogmatischen Konstitution über die Kirche Lumen Gentium*, p. 372.

<sup>200</sup> Cf. Ibid., pp. 372–373.

most certain seed of unity, hope and salvation' for the entire world – a bearer of God's message and light of salvation (LG 9).

Chapter 2 of *Lumen Gentium* further characterizes the common identity of the People of God through their participation in the threefold office of Christ as a priest, king and prophet.<sup>201</sup> Every baptised believer as the member of the People of God has the responsibility to contribute in his/her own way and to work towards the preaching of the Kingdom of God and towards the growth in unity with God and with one another.<sup>202</sup> Through the baptism and the anointing of the Holy Spirit, the believers participate in the priestly office of Christ and are called to make of their Christian life and activity a holy and living sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. The document wants to make clear that since all believers through their baptism are incorporated into the Body of Christ as the People of God, every believer, whether clergy or laity, is a participant in Christ's priestly, kingly and prophetic function. Thus the basic structure of the new People of God can be explained as a community of the baptised who form a kingdom of Priests to God, and the ministerial priesthood at the service of the priestly people, comes in the second place.<sup>203</sup>

Although the Council emphasises and affirms the common priesthood of all believers, it nevertheless, makes a careful distinction between the common priesthood and the ministerial priesthood.<sup>204</sup> Although interrelated, the common priesthood and the ministerial priesthood as the Council teaches "differ essentially and not only in degree". The priesthood of the faithful (which includes all of the faithful – both laity and clergy) consists of those spiritual sacrifices in life that go along with being a disciple of Jesus Christ, whereas the ministerial priesthood exists within and in order to guide, direct and serve this priesthood of all believers.<sup>205</sup>

<sup>201</sup> Cf. Ibid., p. 375: LG 10 quotes 1Pet 2, 4–10, Acts 2, 42–47, Rom 12, 1 & Rev 1, 6; 5, 9ff which speak about the priestly office and the priestly duties or activities of the People of God. The Council wants to take us to the tradition of the New Testament community and the early Church which referred solely to Christ and his People as Priest.

<sup>202</sup> Cf. Margrit Eckholt, "Neue Spuren der Volk-Gottes-Ekklesiologie: Die Kirche als " Sakrament der Völker " Die Tür ist geöffnet: Das Zweite Vatikanische Konzil-Leseanleitungen aus Frauenperspektive, Theologische Kommission des KDFB (Hrsg.), Münster: Aschendorf Verlag, S. 57.

<sup>203</sup> Cf. Marc Cardinal Ouellet, "Communio: The Key to Vatican II's Ecclesiology", <https://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:iQDPLaZ5K5UJ:https://www.xt3.com/library/download.php3Fid3D13383+&cd=1&hl=de&ct=clnk&gl=ch>, 16.08.2016.

<sup>204</sup> Cf. Edward P. Hahnenberg, A Concise Guide to the Documents of Vatican II, p. 44 & Cf. Peter Hühnermann, *Theologischer Kommentar zur Dogmatischen Konstitution über die Kirche Lumen Gentium*: The biblical image of the priesthood of all the believers had become a taboo for the Catholic Church since the reformation period, which seemed to undermine the ministerial priesthood by proclaiming the common priesthood of all believers. This issue gained again importance in the period before the Vatican II and then came to be discussed carefully in the Vatican II.

<sup>205</sup> Cf. Edward P. Hahnenberg, A Concise Guide to the Documents of Vatican II, p. 45.

The Holy People of God participate in the prophetic office of Christ by being a living witness of Christ in this world, especially by a life of faith, love and praise of God (cf. Heb 13, 15). But their responsibility as the People of God is more than that. All the members of the Church must share in the supernatural discernment in the matters of faith by receiving the Word of God.<sup>206</sup> It means that the insights and the testimony of the faithful also have an important place and role to play in matters regarding faith.

*Lumen Gentium* also speaks of the universal character or dimension of the new People of God. All people – the entire humanity is called to this Catholic unity of the new People of God, which prefigures and promotes the universal peace (no. 13). There are different ways in which all people are related to this People of God. Hence one can say that the People of God chosen and loved by God is formed by the entire redeemed humanity who is open to God's grace through a life of righteousness, so that it reaches its final realisation in the eschatological Kingdom of God.<sup>207</sup> Finally the Church as the new people of God is a pilgrim people – the wandering flock of God. Just as the People of Israel as the People of God wandered for years through the exile in search of the promised land, so also the Church – the new People of God live as pilgrim people in the world, continuously in search of the heavenly abode – the heavenly city Jerusalem.

The image of the Church as the People of God is for me the most important image to portray the Church of Christ, which consists not only of the baptised members but also of all other people who may not be in direct contact with the Church. This understanding helps in improving and fostering both ecumenical and interreligious relations as well. According to this understanding of the Church, all members are equal. The basic difference exists because of the varied gifts and charisms of the Holy Spirit. But all the members of the People of God work together for a common cause: building up of the Kingdom of God. Such an understanding of the Church as the People of God, firstly, rediscovers the historical and personal character of the Church and the particularity and the universal salvific significance attached to this community, and secondly, emphasises and highlights the unity (communion among the members) and equality of the Church.<sup>208</sup>

## 2.5 Church is a Communion – *Communio* understanding of the Church

The understanding of the Church as a communion (*communio*) can be seen as an outcome of the efforts of the council fathers to define the nature of the Church.

<sup>206</sup> Richard Gaillardetz, *The Church in the Making*, p. 49.

<sup>207</sup> Cf. Karl Rahner, "Volk Gottes", *Sacramentum Mundi, Band IV, Freiburg: Verlag Herder, 1969, S. 1196–1200*.

<sup>208</sup> Cf. Siegfried Wiedenhofer, "Ekklesiologie", *Handbuch der Dogmatik, Band II, Theodor Schneider(Hrsg.), Düsseldorf: Patmos Verlag, 1992, S. 93–94*.

Since the extraordinary Synod of 1985, twenty years after the II Vatican Council was concluded, the idea of communion has been dominating the interpretation of the Council's ecclesiology.<sup>209</sup> However, communion ecclesiology can be seen as the continuation of the Vatican II ecclesiology. Although there is in the Council documents no systematic treatment of this understanding in a separate chapter, communion understanding of the Church as the community in the Holy Spirit is certainly the most decisive idea of the Council.<sup>210</sup> In the final report of the extraordinary Synod of 1985, the bishops called *communio* as 'the central and fundamental idea' which underlies all the Council documents.<sup>211</sup> Just as the People of God image highlights the theological dimension and Mystical Body image highlights the Christological dimension of the Church, the communion understanding of the Church highlights the pneumatological and charismatic dimension of the Church.<sup>212</sup> Different documents of the Council reflect the understanding of the Church as Communion, although not in an expressed manner.<sup>213</sup> *Communio* is the essential nature of the life of the Church.<sup>214</sup> The extraordinary Synod of Bishops in 1985 took up this idea as the most preferable understanding of the Church.<sup>215</sup> The letter from the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith *Communione et ecclesiae* (some aspects of the Church understood as communion-1992) expressly speaks about *communio* understanding of the Church.<sup>216</sup>

<sup>209</sup> Cf. Marc Cardinal Ouellet, *Communio: The Key to Vatican II's Ecclesiology*.

<sup>210</sup> Cf. PoSchenker, "Das Kirchenverständnis des II. Vatikanischen Konzils (1962–1965): Aufbruch in eine neue Zeit", <https://poschenker.wordpress.com/2015/05/05/das-kirchenverstandnis-des-ii-vatikanischen-konzils-1962-1965-aufbruch-in-eine-neue-zeit/>, 23.11.2016.

<sup>211</sup> Cf. Walter Kasper, *Zukunft aus der Kraft des Konzils: Die außerordentliche Bischofssynode '85. Die Dokumenta mit einem Kommentar von Walter Kasper, Freiburg im Breisgau: Verlag Herder, 1986, S. 33.*

<sup>212</sup> Cf. Walter Kasper, "Volk Gottes-Leib Christi-Communio im Heiligen Geist: Zur Ekklesiologie im Ausgang vom Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzil", <https://www.communio.de/inhalte.php?jahrgang=2012&ausgabe=3&artikel=4>, 23.11.2016.

<sup>213</sup> Cf. LG 4, 8, 13–15, 18, 21, 24–25; *Dei Verbum* (DV) 10; *Gaudium et spes* (GS) 32; *Unitatis redintegratio* (UR) 2–4, 14–15, 17–19, 22. Also see, Marc Cardinal Ouellet, *Communio: The Key to Vatican II's Ecclesiology*.

<sup>214</sup> Cf. Thomas P. Rausch, *Towards a truly Catholic Church*, p. 70.

<sup>215</sup> Cf. Bernd Jochen Hilberath, "Communio-Ecclesiology: The Challenge of an ambivalent concept", *The Catholic Church and Modernity in Europe*, (ed.) Pancratius Cornelis Beentjes, Zürich: LIT Verlag, 2009, p. 103: One of the reasons for the acceptance of *communio* model as the most preferred model could be that, the term *communio* reflects the basic intention of *Lumen Gentium* and the concern of the most of the bishops to speak first and fundamentally of what is common to all the members in the Church, and their special call to a special mission, before treating the special tasks, vocations, charismata and offices.

<sup>216</sup> Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, "Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on some Aspects of the Church understood as Communion—from Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith", [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_28051992\\_communione-et-ecclesiae\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_28051992_communione-et-ecclesiae_en.html), 28.11.2016.



The origin of *communio* is found in the New Testament. The New Testament uses 19 times the Greek word *koinonia* (means sharing or participation) which refers to *communio*.<sup>217</sup> The Word *koinonia* is used in the New Testament in three different ways or three different dimensions: soteriological, sacramental and ecclesiological.<sup>218</sup> In the Acts of the Apostles, the word *communio* or *koinonia* is used to describe the early Christian community of Jerusalem (Acts 2, 42). In 1 Cor 1, 9 Paul uses the word *koinonia* in Genitive case in Christological sense: “God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord”. Jesus Christ as the founder and provider of this fellowship brings this *communio* into being.<sup>219</sup> In 2 Cor 13, 13, Paul speaks of the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. *Koinonia* here does not indicate primarily the communion of the Church, rather, the communion or fellowship with Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.<sup>220</sup> Another importance reference to the *communio* is in the first letter of John, speaking of the fellowship with the Father and the Son and the fellowship with one-another (1 Jn 1, 3). In this chapter we have all the essential elements for a correct Christian understanding of *communio*.<sup>221</sup> Biblical references do not mostly refer to the relationships or the fellowship of Christians with one another. Rather, the biblical notion of *communio* or *koinonia* speaks of the relationship with God. It “denotes reciprocity with God, with Christ, with the Spirit: in particular, that special *communion* which God founds with human beings through the Word and through the Lord’s Supper. It is not primarily a matter of human care for one another, of solidarity, or of the mutual security which comes from a community of kindred spirits, but rather of reciprocity with God.”<sup>222</sup>

If the Church is to be understood as *communio* or *koinonia*, it is to be understood in terms of who God is. God is fellowship, communion, as the biblical references indicate. Hence, the Church is also to be understood as a fellowship or communion. The Council places its communion ecclesiology in the context of the trinitarian communion (LG 4). Although not using the term *communion* expressly, the Council speaks of Church as “People of God” and “Mystical Body of Christ” and “Temple of the Holy Spirit” as we have already seen. The fundamental idea

<sup>217</sup> Cf. Thomas P. Rausch, *Towards a Truly Catholic Church*, p. 70.

<sup>218</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 70–72.

<sup>219</sup> Cf. Karl Kertelge, “*Koinonia und Einheit der Kirche nach dem Neuen Testament*”, *Communio Sanctorum: Einheit der Christen-Einheit der Kirche – Festschrift für Bischof Paul Werner Scheele*, Hrsg. Josef Schreiner & Klaus Wittstadt, Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1988, S. 55.

<sup>220</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>221</sup> Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, “The Ecclesiology of Vatican II-Conference of Cardinal Ratzinger at the opening of the Pastoral Congress of the Diocese of Aversa (Italy) 15 September 2001”, <https://www.ewtn.com/library/CURIA/CDFECCV2.HTM>, 28.11.2016.

<sup>222</sup> Peter Neuner, “The Church as *Koinonia*: A Central Theme of Vatican II”, <https://www.theway.org.uk/back/30Neuner.pdf>, 10.04.2018.

of the *communio* ecclesiology is: “The Church is an instrumental sign of union with God, made possible through Christ and in the Holy Spirit. Because of this union with God through communion with Christ, the baptised are also able to experience communion with one another.”<sup>223</sup> In other words, the Council intended to describe the mystery of the Church as communion – communion in God and communion in the Church by using three important aspects of the mystery of the Church, namely, the *hierarchical communion* expressed in the Council’s teaching on collegiality (LG 21), *the communion of the local churches* in which and out of which the one Church of Christ exists (LG 23), and *the communion of the faithful* throughout the world-Church, formed by all the baptised Christ’s faithful (LG 13; UR 2; AA 18). The idea of communion ecclesiology, existing in the Council’s documents and developed after the Council, has been a very important key to understanding the nature of the Church, which has its origin in the Holy Trinity. The *communio* ecclesiology speaks of the Church both in terms of structural and spiritual communion. However, this idea of the Church as communion needs to be accepted fully into the life of the Church and its effects and fruits are yet to be seen in the way the Church lives and functions. “Despite Vatican II’s deliberate desire to balance out a juridical image of the Church with ones that highlight the Church as mystery, a juridical emphasis still lingers, with priority de facto given to a church seen primarily as a hierarchical communion.”<sup>224</sup>

### 3 Conclusion

*Lumen Gentium* is one of the most important and most impressive documents the Church has ever produced. What makes the document very impressive is its way of describing the nature of the Church in its external and internal form. One of the milestones achieved by the Council through this document is the balance between the visible and invisible, spiritual and institutional aspects of the Church. For example, when the document says that the Church is a sacrament, it goes on to explain how this mystery of the Church is manifest in the visible institutional Church; when the document speaks of the Church as the Body of Christ, it speaks of how the visible Church – the community of believers actually makes the Mystical Body of Christ; and when the document speaks of the Church as the Holy People of God, it emphasises the equality of all believers through their common calling, simultaneously, emphasizing the need for a structure or hierarchy to guide

<sup>223</sup> William Madges (Ed.), Vatican II: Forty Years later, *The Annual Publication of the College Theology Society* 2005, Vol 51, Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2006, p. xv.

<sup>224</sup> Ormond Rush, “Ecclesial Conversion after Vatican II: Renewing the Face of the Church” to Reflect “the Genuine Face of God”, 50 Years On: Probing the Riches of Vatican II, David G. Schultenover (Ed.), Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2015, p. 173.

and serve the People of God. Hence, the Council understands the Church as a communion, which includes not only the members of the Catholic Church but also all the baptised believers belonging to different churches and the non-baptised members who worship God in different and varied ways, as the Spirit inspires them. Together the entire humanity forms one Church – one communion as willed by God. It is the Spirit of God who plays an important role in uniting all the People into one community striving towards peace and justice

## Chapter III THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SECOND VATICAN ECCLESIOLOGY

In this chapter, I will present the characteristic features of the ecclesiological thought of Second Vatican Council. Here, I will focus my attention particularly on *Gaudium et Spes*, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, *Dignitatis Humanae* and *Nostra Aetate*. I will try to analyse the historical context and the content of the documents in order to show how the II Vatican Council brought the newness in the life and attitude of the Catholic Church towards the world, towards other churches and towards other religions. Regarding the themes like ecumenism and dialogue with religions, there is an effort, also, to trace the Catholic Church's position and role after the Vatican II up to the modern times. The purpose is not to deal with the post-conciliar questions, hindrances and problems in the ecumenical and interreligious initiatives of the Church, but to trace in general the further post-conciliar development of the ecclesiological thought of Vatican II, as required by the theme of the thesis.

### 1 A Human Church (*Gaudium et Spes*)

*Gaudium et Spes* (GS) is the Pastoral Constitution of the Second Vatican Council on the Church in the modern world. Pope John XXIII wanted to convene a Council which was rather pastoral and not dogmatic or doctrinal in its essence and nature, a Council which dealt with genuine concerns of the humanity. This aim was achieved with the promulgation of *Gaudium et Spes*. The Constitution was promulgated by Pope Paul VI on December 7, 1965, the day on which the Council ended. The Latin title *Gaudium et Spes* means joys and hopes. As the title suggests, the Constitution presents a Church, which is actively involved in the world, participating in the joys and sorrows of the humanity and is committed to bring joy and hope to the humanity, of a better world and a better and new humanity. The document brought to expression the pastoral concerns of the Council. GS is without doubt another most important outcome of the deliberations of the Council.<sup>1</sup> It can be considered as an act of divine providence, rather than a de-

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Robert J. Schreiter, "Gaudium et Spes: The Church in the World", <http://www.newtheologyreview.org/index.php/ntr/article/download/70/270>, 29.11.2016: It is interesting to note that GS was not a part of the original schemata for documents of the Council; rather, it was the result of the deliberations on the Council floor.

liberate design that the constitution came into being through the Council.<sup>2</sup> In the opinion of Karl Rahner, *Gaudium et Spes* is the actual fruit of the Council and the beginning of a beginning.<sup>3</sup>

*Gaudium et Spes* stands along *Lumen Gentium* as one of the pillars of the Second Vatican Council.<sup>4</sup> It was no doubt the crowning achievement of the Council. The document “arose out of the folding together of various documents the Council was preparing and giving those documents a more solid theological foundation than had been found in earlier Catholic social teaching”.<sup>5</sup> The significance of this constitution can be described in following four points: 1) It realised the original vision of Pope John XXIII. 2) It brought in a newness in the Church’s outlook towards the world. 3) Through its contents the document brought about a new way of theologizing. 4) The document became a blueprint for the Church which began to consider itself as a part of the world and not apart from it.<sup>6</sup>

### 1.1 History of *Gaudium et Spes*

Interestingly, *Gaudium et Spes* was not planned by the Council from the beginning. It was Cardinal Leo Suenens of Belgium who felt that the Church must not just be concerned with its internal matters and its nature, but rather it must also address the world and its concerns. Thus, in his intervention towards the closing of the first session of the Council on 4 December 1962, Cardinal Suenens made a proposal that the Council considers the Church not only in its inner life (*ad intra*) but also in its relation with the world (*ad extra*).<sup>7</sup> The Church is to be considered both in its theological and practical, internal and external aspects. The proposal of Cardinal Suenens won support from some of the well-known Council fathers. In this way, the seed for *Gaudium et Spes* was sown. The document was conceived. However, the birth of the document was not an easy one but marked with severe labour pains. This document devoted to the Church’s relationship to the world has a long and tortuous history.<sup>8</sup>

*Gaudium et Spes* is not only the longest conciliar text but also the most debated and most radically changed text, which underwent four times a complete

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Glen Argan, “*Gaudium et Spes* reflected the Spirit of post-war Europe”, <http://www.wcr.ab.ca/Vatican-II/entryid/6058>, 29.11.2016.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Willy Knecht/Ulm, “*Gaudium et Spes*, Protokoll eines Vortrags von Prof. Dr. H. J. Sander”, <http://www.pro-konzil.de/gaudium-et-spes>, 29.11.2016.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Edward P. Hahnenberg, *A Concise Guide to the Documents of Vatican II*, p. 56.

<sup>5</sup> Glen Argan, *Gaudium et Spes* reflected the Spirit of post-war Europe.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Robert J. Schreiter, *Gaudium et Spes: The Church in the World*.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Edward P. Hahnenberg, *A Concise Guide to the Documents of Vatican II*, pp. 56–58; Thomas P. Rausch, *Towards a truly Catholic Church*, p. 34; Richard E. Gaillardetz & Catherine E. Clifford, *Keys to the Council*, pp. 89–90.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 90.

re-writing before its promulgation.<sup>9</sup> In January 1963, the proposal was added by the coordinating commission to the list of texts to be dealt in the Council. The document in its initial form came to be known as Schema 17 since it was last on the list of texts.<sup>10</sup> After July 1963, after the texts were rearranged, the text came to be known as Schema 13. On 20 October 1964, the Schema 13 was introduced at the third session. The schema was drafted by a sub-commission under its head Bishop Guano<sup>11</sup>, with the help of Bernard Häring. It presented a Church which was not closed in itself but was actively participating in the human life and concerns. When Bishop Guano introduced the schema to the Council fathers, most of them responded very positively to it, although there were also many suggestions.

The most elaborate and important discussion of the schema took place during the fourth session of the Council in September 1965, with a revised schema. Although most of the Council fathers sounded positive about the schema, there were also critical voices which questioned the existing excessively optimistic tone of the schema, questioned whether or not it should be identified as a Pastoral Constitution and stressed on the “Church in the world”.<sup>12</sup> After a long debate and final revisions, the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World was approved and promulgated on 7 December 1965. The document is divided into two parts. The first part lays out theological and pastoral perspectives and principles of the Church in the world and the second part addresses five areas of what it calls “special urgency.”

### **Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World**

Preface

Introduction: The Condition of Humanity in the World Today

Part One: The Church and the Human Vocation

Chapter One: The Dignity of the Human Person

Chapter Two: The Human Community

Chapter Three: Humanity’s Activity in the Universe

Chapter Four: Role of the Church in the Modern World

Part Two: Some More Urgent Problems

Chapter One: The Dignity of Marriage and Family

Chapter Two: Proper Development of Culture

<sup>9</sup> Bishop Philip Egan, “Gaudium et Spes: The Church in the Modern World”, <http://www.portsmouthdiocese.org.uk/bishop/docs/BoP-20160425-Gaudium-et-Spes.pdf>, 30.11.2016.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Charles Moeller, “History of the Constitution”, Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, Herbert Vorgrimler (Ed.), Vol. V, New York: Herder & Herder, 1969, p. 56: It was Guano who suggested that the schema be called as a Pastoral Constitution.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Thomas P. Rausch, Towards a truly Catholic Church, p. 34.

Chapter Three: Economic and Social Life

Chapter Four: The Political Community

Chapter Five: Fostering of Peace and Establishment of a Community of Nations

Conclusion: Role of Individual Christians and Local Churches

The focus of the entire document is on the general human welfare and the establishment of a world order in which every being is in a peaceful dialogue and relationship with the other. The Church sees this task as a missionary mandate received from God and tries its best to work in cooperation with all the people of good will. The entire document could be summarised in five points:<sup>13</sup>

1. The Church works to establish a world order which recognizes and promotes the human life, dignity and freedom.
2. The Church is called to engage itself in establishing justice and peace for the betterment of all.
3. The Church is present in the activities of the international community.
4. The Church being a universal religious community does not identify itself with any political, economic or social systems of the world.
5. The Church carries out its task of establishing peace and justice according to the law of God.

## 1.2 Human Church of *Gaudium et Spes*

*Gaudium et Spes* presents to us a Church that is human. By this claim I do not refer to the Church's origin. A human Church is a Church that is very human at heart, a Church which is on the side of the human beings, a Church which participates in the human life and activity. GS presents a Church that is ready to plunge into human life. It is a Church which identifies itself with the human beings in the world. In the suffering humanity, the Church sees her own children. The document focuses on "the Church as actor – the Church, who is Christ, fulfilling his mission under the guidance of the Holy Spirit".<sup>14</sup> GS speaks of a Church which rejoices with those who rejoice and weeps with those who weep. Particularly appealing are the opening words of the document:

The joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the people of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted, are the joys and hopes the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well. Nothing that is genuinely human fails to find an echo in their hearts. . . . That is why they cherish a feeling of deep solidarity with the human race and its history. (GS 1)

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Thomas Rosica, "Gaudium et Spes at 50: The Church must also smell like the world it penetrates", <https://zenit.org/articles/gaudium-et-spes-at-50/>, 09.12.2016.

<sup>14</sup> Michael Lawler, Todd A. Salzmänn & Eileen Burke-Sullivan, *The Church in the Modern World: Gaudium et Spes Then and Now*, Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2014, p. 48.

Through this document, the Church addresses not only its own members and all the believers in Christ but also to the entire humanity (GS 2). Living in a world that is subject to changes every moment, man has concerns about his future, his life and his destiny. Being a part of this greater humanity and the world, the Church feels the need to address the concerns of humanity by engaging itself into a dialogue with humanity and the world. The Church wants to enter directly into the human condition in a very personal way and get into the situation of people to empathize and show solidarity with them.<sup>15</sup> It hopes to save humanity and renew human society through its continuous and renewed efforts. Hence, the emphasis is on human beings – on human individuals in their totality (GS 2). Human beings in their human dignity are the starting point or a key to a dialogue of the Church with the world. In short, GS encourages a new humanism marked by a greater sense of responsibility towards the world, which is God's gift to the humanity, and human beings are called to transform the world, with the grace of God and by their loving service.<sup>16</sup>

### 1.2.1 General Human Condition in the World

By way of introduction, the Council takes stock of the condition of humanity in the world today. The Church considers it to be its duty to read the signs of the times<sup>17</sup> and interpret them in the light of the Gospel so as to order its life and activity accordingly. The Council sees the world as marked by continuous change in all its dimensions. Humanity finds itself today in a new phase of history, marked by profound and rapid changes extending to the whole world. It is entering a new phase of history marked by cultural and social transformation. Humanity is entering a world order that is no longer static, but dynamic. The changes happen at such a pace that human beings can scarcely keep up with it.<sup>18</sup> These changes have repercussions on human life in its different dimensions, namely, physical, spiritual, social, economic, political, etc. The document interestingly does not present either only a positive view of the world or only a negative view; rather, it recognizes the paradoxes in the world today.

The document points to the abundance of wealth, resources and the economic well-being in the present world. At the same time, it also points to the huge num-

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Norman Tanner, *The Church and the World: Gaudium et Spes*, Inter Mirificia, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2005, p. 40.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Michael Paul Gallagher, "Reaching out to the World: Gaudium et Spes", <https://www.catholicireland.net/reaching-out-to-the-world-gaudium-et-spes/>, 29.11.2016.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 41: The word 'signs' is here used largely in an empirical sense to describe the present situation of the world, following its use by Pope John XXIII in his encyclical *Pacem in Terris* (1963), and not in more biblical or theological sense of the word which indicates God's impending judgement or intervention in the world.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*



ber of people who are suffering from want. A huge proportion of the world's total population today suffers from a lack of basic necessities, is illiterate and feels insecure in life. Although the world today is becoming more and more aware of the need to share, it chooses to remain selfish and concentrated on material gains. Humanity continues to suffer in spite of the tremendous economic growth that the world may have achieved today. People today have a stronger and intense sense of freedom than ever. However, this has also given rise to the new forms of social and psychological slavery (GS 4). "In such circumstances, the world of today is showing both its strength and its weakness, the capacity to produce the best and the worst as it faces the road leading to freedom or to slavery, advance or retreat, fellowship or hatred."<sup>19</sup> Industrialization and urbanization is not only a boon but also a bane for the world as witnessed today.

Today's human being is suffering from moral and spiritual degradation. The emphasis today is more on the material welfare. Man's spiritual needs are being neglected and forgotten because the world today believes in mere material prosperity and welfare. There is an intense and painstaking search for "a better material world, without a parallel spiritual advancement" (GS 4). With scientific advancement, people are finding it difficult to believe in God. Science seems to be becoming the God of the world. With the immense development in science and the new kind of humanism, the world rejects God as incompatible (GS 7). There is also a growing tension between different religions over a claim of superiority. The new and advanced thinking pattern does not support the traditional institutions, laws and modes of thought and emotions. There is no harmony between the past and the constantly changing present. The world today is also forgetting a value-based life. All that brings material happiness seems to be of value to the world.

The change in the world is finding its echo in different ways in both the public and private life. Man is affected socially, economically, spiritually and politically. He is restless and struggles for a happy and satisfactory survival in the world. He is caught up in profound transformations and deep shifts leading to an imbalance in the world.<sup>20</sup> In a world marked by change and confusion, man feels the need for the establishment of a social, political and economic order in the world which will serve humanity. At the same time, there is also a craving to know the true meaning of life as a human being, a craving for a more mature and personal exercise of freedom (GS 6) and for new social relationships (GS 8). Hence, there is a growing emphasis on human dignity and worth (GS 9). The Council says that the growing division in the world between good and evil is the sign of internal

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 42.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Edward P. Hahnenberg, *A Concise Guide to the Documents of Vatican II*, p. 61.

division in the human beings (GS 10). There are some deeper questions, which a man faces, namely, what is the true meaning of being human? What is the meaning of suffering, evil and death, which continues to rule the world in spite of the tremendous advancement and progress in the world? What happens to life after death? Human beings today find themselves caught up with these questions.

### 1.2.2 Church's answer to the problems (Role in the world)

Man is in search of the ultimate meaning of life. The Council proclaims confidently that Christ is the true meaning of human life and "the answer to the human questions". The Church believes that "Christ who died and was raised for the sake of all, can show people the way and strengthen them through the Spirit so that they may become worthy of their destiny" (GS 10). Thus, Christ is the key, the centre and the purpose of the whole human history. For this reason, the Church wants to enter into dialogue with the world in assessing and tackling the important problems which the world and the humanity are facing today.

#### 1.2.2.1 Church and the world are mutually related

In chapter four, the document speaks about the mutual relationship between the Church and the world. With many references from *Lumen Gentium*, GS tries to offer a concise ecclesiology which highlights and propagates the image of the Church as leaven in the world.<sup>21</sup> Having tried to describe the mystery of the Church in *Lumen Gentium*, the Council now went ahead to describe the engagement of the Church in the modern world in the light of this mystery. According to the Council, through its contribution, the Church helps the world to become more human. Being in the world, the Church shares the same earthly lot and journey with the entire humanity and is equally affected by the changes taking place in the world. However, the Church has an important mission or mandate: "to become the leaven, the soul of human society in its renewal by Christ and transformation into the family of God" (GS 40). The document refers to the Church as the heavenly city face-to-face with the earthly city.<sup>22</sup> Through its salvific mission, the Church communicates the divine life to humanity, thereby enhancing human dignity, reinforcing the social structure and giving deeper meaning to man's everyday task (GS 40). The Church seeks to work in cooperation with all people towards the es-

<sup>21</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 63.

<sup>22</sup> This notion of an earthly and the heavenly city is taken from St. Augustine's *City of God*, where the two cities are described as "co-mingled" and "entangled together" in the present life. See, Augustinus, "Gottesstadt", *Bibliothek der Kirchenväter: Eine Auswahl Patristischer Werke in Deutscher Übersetzung, Band II, Buch XI, Kap. I*, O. Bardenhewer u.a.(Hrsg.), Kempten & München: Verlag der Jos Kösselschen Buchhandlung, 1914, S. 142–143.

tablishment of the Kingdom of God. The individuals and the world at large could be of great help with their talents and activity in the Church's salvific activity.

Contemporary men and women are working towards developing their personality and discovering and affirming their rights. The Church accompanies them in this process and manifests to them the mystery of God who is their final destiny, so that the humanity may come to the knowledge and truth of its own existence (GS 41). The Church is aware and believes that God is the only answer to the humanity's questions regarding itself and the world. And this answer is revealed in Jesus Christ through his incarnation as man. The Church calls on men and women to follow the example of Christ, the perfect human being, in order to help them become more human and contributes to the humanization of history.<sup>23</sup> The Church continues to respect and uphold human dignity despite the fluctuating fashions. It receives its mandate to safeguard and uphold human dignity and freedom from the Gospel which Christ has entrusted to it and which announces and proclaims the freedom of the children of God and rejects all forms of bondage and oppression (GS 41). The divine order does not deprive the creation and the humanity of their autonomy but completes it and brings it to perfection.

The document makes it very clear that the Church is not a political party. It does not have a mission in political, social or economic order, nor is it committed to one particular culture or society. Rather, its mission is religious and universal in nature (GS 42). This mission helps the Church to build up the society. It calls all the people to put aside all conflicts and differences and work towards the common good and contribute towards building one human family. It reminds the world that the external social unity is the result of the unity of hearts and minds, which comes through the union with God. The Church truly recognizes and appreciates the truth, goodness and justice found in the world and works in order to help and foster the institutions, which stand for these values (GS 42).

#### *1.2.2.2 Stress on Human Dignity*

Human dignity is an important issue dealt with in GS. Emphasis on human dignity is one of the central principles proposed by the Council in GS. Pope John Paul considered GS as the "Magna Charta of human dignity".<sup>24</sup> According to him, the Catholic Church's call to promotion of human dignity is the most important voice of our times.<sup>25</sup> GS considers it as the duty of all the Catholics and of all the

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Thomas P. Rausch, *Towards a truly Catholic Church*, p. 39.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Danielle M. Peters, *Ecce Educatrix Tua: The Role of the Blessed Virgin Mary for a Pedagogy of Holiness in the Thought of John Paul II and Father Joseph Kentenich*, Maryland: University Press, 2010, p. 34.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. K. Wojtyła, "On the Dignity of the human person: a talk broadcast in Polish over Vatican Radio on October 19<sup>th</sup>, 1964", K. Wojtyła – *Person and Community: Selected Essays*, transl.

people in the world as well to work towards the protection and promotion of the human dignity and the inviolable rights of every human person.<sup>26</sup> Human dignity cannot be defined or explained as something which is given by a society to a person. A person's human dignity has its origin in God's very act of creating human beings in His own image and likeness. Being created in the image and likeness of God, human beings are endowed with a feature which no other being has, namely, human dignity. Jacques Maritain wrote, "The deepest layer of the human person's dignity consists in its property of resembling God – not in a general way, but in a proper way. It is the image of God."<sup>27</sup> The Church is concerned with the promotion of human dignity, which reflects the creation of human beings by God in His own likeness and their redemption by Christ.<sup>28</sup> Since all human beings are created in God's image, with the same nature, origin and destiny and are redeemed by Christ, and they all have the same inherent dignity and calling which gives them equal rights and dignity.<sup>29</sup> Hence, equal respect for all.

The Council calls for respect towards human dignity also in the sphere of economic and social life:

In the sphere of economics and social life, too the dignity and vocation of the human person as well as the welfare of society as a whole have to be respected and fostered; for people are the source, the focus and aim of all economic and social life (GS 63).

In this connection, the pastoral letter issued by the US bishops in 1986 says, "Every perspective on economic life that is human, moral, and Christian must be shaped by three questions: What does the economy do *for* people? What does it do *to* people? And how do people *participate* in it?"<sup>30</sup> On one hand, there is a lot of advancement in the sphere of economics, and on the other hand, the economic prosperity is dominating and controlling the lives of most of the people and nations. This has given rise to growing social and economic inequality and

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Theresa Sandok, *Catholic Thought from Lublin*, Vol. IV, N. Woznick (Ed.), New York: Peter Lang, 1993, p. 179.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Alan Schreck, "Gaudium et Spes: A Challenge for our time-Commentary: Second Vatican Council Symposium", <http://www.ncregister.com/site/article/gaudium-et-spes-a-challenge-for-our-time>, 03.03.2017.

<sup>27</sup> Jacques Maritain, *The Person and the Common Good*, transl. John J. Fitzgerald, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1985, p. 42.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. David Hollenbach "Commentary on Gaudium et Spes (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World)", *Modern Catholic and Social Teaching: Commentaries and Interpretations*, Kenneth R. Himes (Ed.), Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2005, p. 266.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Rolando B. Arjonillo, *Conjugal Love and the Ends of Marriage: A Study of Dietrich von Hildebrand and Herbert Doms in the light of the Pastoral Constitution Gaudium et Spes*, Bern: Peter Lang, 1998, p. 262.

<sup>30</sup> United States Catholic Bishops, "Economic Justice for all: Pastoral Letter on Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy (1986)", [http://www.usccb.org/upload/economic\\_justice\\_for\\_all.pdf](http://www.usccb.org/upload/economic_justice_for_all.pdf), 16.03.2017.

the situation of the poor is becoming worse. Hence, the Council suggests that the economic progress be directed and organized in a 'reasonable and human' way (GS 63). Respect for the rights of the workers (GS 68) and equal distribution of earthly goods (GS 69) are important in order to achieve harmony in social, economic and political spheres. This is possible when people come together and organize themselves in order to work for the betterment of one and all in the society and in the world. Human beings are not created as solitary beings, but as beings in relationship with others. This relationship among human beings helps them to live and develop their gifts (GS 12). Although created in God's image and likeness and set at the top of the entire creation as its crown, mankind is destroyed by sin. Sin divides mankind and destroys its unity. Human beings are divided interiorly, due to which, the entire human life both individual and social becomes a struggle between good and evil, between light and darkness (GS 13). However, in human beings – the image and likeness of God, marred by sin, is redeemed and restored by Christ. This redemption through Christ "grants dignity to the person that can be recognized in human intellect, conscience and freedom".<sup>31</sup>

### *1.2.2.3 Christ: The Prototype*

The Church presents Christ as the perfect example for the humanity. Christ is the answer proposed by the Council to the problems of the humanity. The Church believes that one can understand the mystery of human nature in its deeper form, only by trying to understand and accept the mystery of the incarnation.

Christ the new Adam, in the very revelation of the mystery of the Father and of his love, fully reveals humanity to itself and brings to light its very high calling (GS 22).

Christ is, thus, the perfect human being. He is the new Adam in whom the true human nature is revealed to the world. In the words of Pope John Paul II, human dignity "finds its full confirmation in the very fact of revelation, for this fact signifies the establishment of contact between God and the human being."<sup>32</sup> The very fact that God chose to become a human being and not any other being, shows the dignity and the status of the human beings.

The Church believes that Christ who became himself a human being and experienced the human life and death and rose again as the Lord of life can show people the way to achieve their ultimate destiny (GS 10). He has redeemed humanity and restored its lost nature through his redemptive act. It is in Christ that the 'key, centre and the purpose of the whole human history' is to be found. Christ, thus, is the culmination of Church's dialogue with the world that is faced with

<sup>31</sup> Edward P. Hahnenberg, *A Concise Guide to the Documents of Vatican II*, p. 61.

<sup>32</sup> K. Wojtyła, *On the Dignity of the human person*, p. 179.

the question of the meaning of the human existence and Christ reveals the true meaning of being human.<sup>33</sup>

### 1.3 Ecclesial Reflections on Marriage and Family<sup>34</sup>

In part two of *Gaudium et Spes*, the Church draws our attention to some more urgent problems of our times. One of the most important spheres of life which needs very urgent attention today is marriage and family life. Hence, in articles 47–52, the document deals with marriage and family life.

#### 1.3.1 Marriage and Family in the Modern World<sup>35</sup>

The Church understands the importance of the institution of the marriage for human life and welfare. In fact, the well-being and welfare of every individual as well as of a society is closely bound up or depends upon the healthy marriage and family life (GS 47). Hence, the Church calls on the world to value and respect the institution of marriage, and the family which comes into being through marriage. The Church also welcomes and appreciates the efforts of all people of good will who try to promote marriage and family life – the institutions of love.

At the same time, GS takes stalk of the situation of these two most important institutions. Not everywhere is the dignity of the institution of marriage recognized and respected. The practices like polygamy, divorce, free love and all other similar tendencies are destroying the essence of marriage. Married love suffers dishonour due to selfishness, ego, hedonism and unlawful contraceptive practices and other alternative lifestyles. The institution of marriage is also affected socially, economically, politically and psychologically. There are serious concerns raised by the problem of population expansion. In short, the traditional nuclear family is under tremendous stress and is disappearing from the face of the earth. Yet, the Church knows that the institution of marriage and family determines the future of the individuals and the society. Hence, the Council took up the issue of marriage

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Edward P. Hahnenberg, *A Concise Guide to the Documents of Vatican II*, p. 62.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Richard Gaillardetz & Catherine E. Clifford, *Keys to the Council*, p. 106.: As the document GS was on its way to achieve its final form for promulgation, some of the council fathers called for asserting the dogmatic teaching on the marriage and family, while other council fathers spoke of pastoral and practical approach to this topic in the light of the changing times. However, as it was almost decided at one point of time to drop the entire draft on marriage and family, it was the lay participants of the council who forcefully advocated the for the need to address this topic. Hence, there is a chapter on the marriage and family in GS.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Edward P. Hahnenberg, *A Concise Guide to the Documents of Vatican II*, p. 64.: This Chapter was one of the most fiercely debated chapters of GS. It dealt with issues of new urgency in the early 1960s, as the traditional institution of marriage was faced with dangers disintegration in the West.

and family in order to clarify some points in the Catholic doctrine of marriage and to shed light on its sacred value and supreme importance in the world.

### 1.3.2 The Dignity of Marriage and Family<sup>36</sup>

The Catholic Church holds the institution of marriage and family in high esteem and respect. In the opinion of Walter Kasper, “there is no area of human life on which most people are so dependent for personal happiness and fulfilment as that of love between man and woman, a love that is made lasting in marriage and family life.”<sup>37</sup> The second Vatican Council realizing the importance of love between man and woman in marriage for the betterment of the individuals and society takes up the issue of marriage and family in the modern world. The teaching of II Vatican on marriage “marked a watershed in the Church’s understanding of marriage.”<sup>38</sup>

The Council describes the marriage as an “intimate partnership of life and love, established by God and endowed by Him with its own proper laws” (GS 48). God Himself is the author of the institution of marriage. This partnership (in marriage) is rooted in the contract<sup>39</sup> or covenant of its partners that is in their irrevocable personal consent. In contrast to the earlier teaching on marriage, which was rather juridical and legislative in nature, the Second Vatican Council lays emphasis on covenant, partnership and personal relationship in marriage.<sup>40</sup> The Council brought certain vibrancy and novelty in the way Church understands marriage and family. Marriage is understood as a sacred bond, the mutual self-giving and self-surrender for mutual growth and the bringing forth of new life. Marriage is an act – a concrete expression in and by which love is offered and accepted, love is united and out of this love springs forth new life.<sup>41</sup> In its divine origin, love in marriage is a response to the God of love. Since marriage has a divine origin, it is endowed with various values and purposes: to foster the personal development

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Glen Argan, “Council elevated Catholic teaching on family: Vatican II after 50 years”, <http://www.wcr.ab.ca/Vatican-II/entryid/6289>, 07.03.2017.: By highlighting the dignity of marriage and family, the Council refuted the notion that the only way to live the Christian vocation or calling was by becoming priest or nun.

<sup>37</sup> Walter Kasper, *Theology of Marriage*, New York: Abington, 1980, p. 1.

<sup>38</sup> John P. Beal, “Marriage (cc. 1055–1165)”, *New Commentary on the Code of Canon Law*, John P. Beal, James E. Coriden & Thomas J. Green (Eds.), New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2000, p. 1239.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Christopher Butler, *The Theology of Vatican II*, London: Darton, Longman & Tod, 1981, pp. 192–193.: Although Flannery has translated the Latin word *foedus* as ‘contract’, in the opinion of Butler, the proper English translation of Latin *foedus* is ‘Covenant’. He claims that marriage understood as mere contract between two people, can appear to be totally without heart and will lose its spiritual value, whereas, the word ‘covenant’ has biblical roots and it signifies personal agreement and is founded, not on law but on mutual trust.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Richard Gaillardetz & Catherine E. Clifford, *Keys to the Council*, p. 106.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 106–107.

and eternal destiny of every member of the family; to provide stability, dignity, peace and prosperity to the family and to the entire human society; to contribute towards the promotion and continuation of the human race. Thus, the Council presents marriage as “a unique sacrament that signifies the union of love of God and of neighbour.”<sup>42</sup>

The Council speaks of marital love as springing forth from the divine love and modelled on the union of Christ with His Church. Christ abides with the couples in marriage, and he loves them as he loves his bride the Church, so that through his grace and in their self-giving they may love each other with enduring fidelity. In this connection Walter Kasper says:

The love and faithfulness existing between Christ and his Church is not simply an image or example of marriage, nor is the self-giving of man and wife in marriage an image and likeness of Christ’s giving of himself to the Church. The love that exists between man and wife is rather a sign that makes the reality present, in other words, an epiphany of the love and faithfulness of God that was given once and for all time in Jesus Christ and is made present in the Church.<sup>43</sup>

Authentic married love is the reflection of the Trinitarian love and is directed and enriched by the redemptive power of Christ and the salvific action of the Church through which the spouses are led to God and are strengthened in their love for each other and their responsibilities (GS 48). True married love embraces the good of the whole person (GS 49). GS further states that, married love – a combination of both human and divine, “leads the partners to a free and mutual self-giving, experienced in tenderness and action and permeating their entire lives.” The Council speaks of marital act as a way of expressing married love and calls it as truly noble and honourable and states that the truly human performance of this act fosters the self-giving it signifies and enriches the spouses in joy and gratitude. The intimate love of marriage is expressed and perfected through sexual intercourse. Thus, the value of conjugal love is central to the Council’s treatment of marriage.

### 1.3.3 The fruitfulness and goal of marriage

In the traditional Catholic teaching, marriage was defined in terms of its ‘ends’ or ‘goals’.<sup>44</sup> The procreation of the children was considered the “primary end” of marriage and the well-being of the spouses was the “secondary end” of mar-

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 107.

<sup>43</sup> Walter Kasper, *Theology of Marriage*, p. 14.

<sup>44</sup> St. Augustine speaks of three goods of marriage, on account of which a marriage can be called good: 1) Offspring, 2) Fidelity, and 3) Sacrament. Among these three, offspring is referred to as the primary good or primary goal of marriage. “Augustine, *A Treatise on the Grace of Christ, and on Original Sin*, translated in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, 213, 251, cited in: John Witte Jr., “The Goods and Goals of Marriage”, <http://scholarship.law.nd.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1000&context=irishlaw>, 09.04.2017.



riage. However, the Council wisely and deliberately refused to use this clear-cut distinction and instead spoke of love and fruitfulness as the two ends of marriage, without subordinating one to the other.<sup>45</sup> The document begins its reflection on the fruitfulness and goal of marriage in the following words:

Marriage and married love are by nature ordered to the procreation and education of the children. Indeed children are the supreme gift of marriage and greatly contribute to the well-being of the parents themselves... Without intending to underestimate the other ends of marriage it must be said that true married love and the family life which flows from it have this end in view: that the spouses would cooperate generously with the love of the Creator and Saviour, who through them will in due time increase and enrich his family (GS 50).

We see here a clear shift from the traditional legalistic view of marriage as contract to a more personal and biblical view of marriage as a covenant.<sup>46</sup> Unlike the legalistic definition of marriage which considered marital act as directed solely toward procreation, the Council sought to define the conjugal act as an expression in which the couple sought to perfect its mutual fidelity and self-giving. The Council reminds the married couples of their mission “to transmit human life and to educate their children” and by way of this mission, married people cooperate with the love of God and interpret it in their lives. The Council emphasises the fact that a healthy family life with children is the outcome of conjugal love and not vice versa. Marriage was not instituted only to serve the purpose of procreation of children; marriage as a covenant was instituted all the more in order that the love between the spouses may flower, grow and mature. The fidelity and indissolubility of marriage depends on the love between married persons. So, the Council says:

Marriage was not instituted solely for the procreation of children: its nature as an indissoluble covenant between two people and the good of the children demand that the mutual love of the partners be properly expressed, that it should grow and mature. Even in cases where despite the intense desire of the spouses there are no children, marriage still retains its character of being a whole manner and communion of life and preserves its value and indissolubility (GS 50)

It is not only the conjugal act, but all the activities that are proper to married life (of which the conjugal act is one), which simultaneously promote all the ends or goods that are proper to married life. In this context, we can understand what Pope John Paul II says: “fecundity is the fruit and sign of conjugal love, the living testimony of the reciprocal self-giving of the spouses.”<sup>47</sup> The Council stresses the

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Edward P. Hahnenberg, *A Concise Guide to the Documents of Vatican II*, p. 65.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> John Paul II, “*Familiaris Consortio: Apostolic Exhortation on the Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World*”, *Apostolic Exhortations*, Trivendrum: Carmel International Publishing House, 2005, p. 1106.

fact that conjugal love is the culmination and essence of all the activities that are proper to a marriage. Hence, the reflection on marriage in this document is important and new because “it treats the marital act in the context of married love with an emphasis on the good of the person and mutual self-giving.”<sup>48</sup>

The Council was aware of the fact that certain situations in modern life prevent married people from living their married life in harmony and building up a family with children. In such instances, the practice of faithful conjugal love would be difficult and this would lead to broken marriages and families in which the children’s well-being suffers the most. The Council, with an intention to balance the situation, leaves the decision-making (for a marital act) to the conscience of the married couples.<sup>49</sup> It again emphasises the value of life. Human beings are entrusted with the noble mission of safeguarding and protecting life right from the first instances of life. Hence, the Council condemns abortions and infanticide as methods to avoid having children and recommends married people practice the virtue of married chastity. The Council does not directly discuss the issue of birth control<sup>50</sup>, but it nevertheless prohibits married couples from using those methods which are disapproved by the Church’s teaching authority (GS 51).

### **1.3.4 Fostering Marriage and Family**

The Council stresses the importance of the nuclear family: father, mother and children. The family is a “school of human enrichment – a fertile ground for setting up the foundation for a healthy society. In order that a family comes to its full flowering as a cradle of the future society, it needs care and concern, love and affection, coordination and cooperation on the part of the married couples in their commitment to form a healthy family. The Council goes on to highlight the importance of both parents in the bringing up of the children without in any way demeaning the legitimate social progress of women (GS 52). The Council emphasises all-round development of the children so that they will be able to pursue their vocation which will benefit the society. A healthy family will give rise to healthy children, who in their turn will become responsible for a healthy and well-developed society. This is possible only within the institution of marriage.

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<sup>48</sup> Perry J. Cahal, *The Mystery of Marriage: The Theology of the Body and the Sacrament*, Chicago: Hillenbrand Books, 2016, p. 265.

<sup>49</sup> Edward p. Hahnenberg, *A Concise Guide to the Documents of Vatican II*, p. 65.: The Council “offered a balanced treatment that affirmed both the moral rights of couples to decide on the number of children to have and the obligation to make such a decision in the light of objective moral criteria.”

<sup>50</sup> Christopher, Butler, *The Theology of Vatican II*, p. 195. See also Norman Tanner, *The Church and the World*, p. 52.

Hence, the Church calls on the world to respect and promote the institution of family through marriage.

Just as GS speaks of family as “a school of human enrichment”, LG calls family as a “domestic Church” (LG 11). Family is a domestic Church in which the parents are the first preachers of faith for their children by word and example and they foster and nurture the vocation in their children. The formation of the strong future members of the universal Church takes place in the family. Walter Kasper says, “in its function, married and family life are not, however, simply a development of the essential being of the Church. They in fact make an active contribution to the building up of the Church.”<sup>51</sup> In other words, marriage and family life are “a participation in the Church’s own reality as an effective sign of God’s grace in the world.”<sup>52</sup> “In her struggle to relive the sacrificial love of Christ, the family becomes a saved community and by communicating that love further, it also becomes a saving community.”<sup>53</sup> Without family, there can be no Church. It is the family which helps in the building up and growth of the Church. Hence, the Council teaches that they have to be helped by doctors, psychologists, priests and various organizations, especially the family associations, so that through the help and guidance received from them, the young married people may be strengthened and prepared for the family social and apostolic life.

The theology of the marriage presented in GS is very simple to understand. The Council fathers used a language that was less technical and juridical, in order to present a deep and broader vision of marriage. The purpose was that it might be understood by all.

#### 1.4 The Laity in the Church

The Council fathers were aware that the Church of Christ is not defined only by the hierarchy, namely, the Pope, bishops, clergy and religious, etc., but also by the lay faithful. It’s the lay faithful who are the important members of the Church and on whom the future of the Church and the Church of the future depends. Hence, the Council developed a theology with a positive outlook towards the laity in the Church.

The word ‘laity’ comes from Greek ‘la’os’ (*laos*), meaning ‘People of God’ or ‘chosen People’ in contrast to all other people around them.<sup>54</sup> The early Christian writings adopted this meaning and added to it other complementary terms, such

<sup>51</sup> Walter, Kasper, *Theology of Marriage*, p. 38.

<sup>52</sup> Richard Gaillardetz & Catherine E. Clifford, *Keys to the Council*, p. 109.

<sup>53</sup> Ngah Andrew Kusu-Solii, *The Relationship between Mariology and Ecclesiology in the Theological Thinking of John Paul II*, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2012, p. 159.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Leonard Doohan, “Lay People and the Church”, <http://www.theway.org.uk/Back/32Doohan.pdf>, 20.03.2017. Also Cf. Walter Kasper, *The Catholic Church*, p. 204.

as, 'the elect', 'the holy ones', 'disciples', and 'brothers and sisters'.<sup>55</sup> The term, however, was also used in a negative way initially, which influenced the Church's understanding of laity to a great extent. The term is found first in the first letter of Clement of Rome and is used to signify people who are neither priests nor Levites.<sup>56</sup> He differentiates the lay people from the bishops, priests and, deacons. Later, with Tertullian and others, there developed an understanding, similar to the profane usage of the term, which distinguished between office-bearers and plebs who were the normal people.<sup>57</sup> Due to their life in the world and engagement in the worldly life, the lay people were considered as profane,<sup>58</sup> whereas the clergy were considered sacred owing to their engagement in the spiritual affairs. This distinction continued in the Church for a long time. The lay people were looked upon as lower class in relation to the clergy and religious. The clergy and the religious were responsible and in charge of the spiritual goods, and the lay people were in charge of the world and temporal goods.<sup>59</sup> Such distinction between the clergy and the laity was seen even in the celebration of the liturgy, wherein the lay people had hardly any liturgical role to fulfil unlike today. The sole task of the laity was only to obey what came down to them from the hierarchy. Laity had no participation in the life of the Church which was totally controlled and directed by the clergy. Thus, the subordination of the laity became the part of the life of the Church and was upheld in the teachings of different popes and councils up to early 19<sup>th</sup> Century.<sup>60</sup> In other words, the clergy and religious came to be considered as people of God and the lay people as the worldly people. Schillebeeckx has summed it up nicely: "It was in this way that the disparaging attitude toward Christians in the world came about and that the original biblical antithesis between church and world gradually changed into an antithesis between clergy and Chris-

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Leonard Doohan, Lay People and the Church.

<sup>56</sup> Klemens, "Erster Brief des Klemens an die Korinther, Kap. 40", *Bibliothek der Kirchenväter: Eine Auswahl Patristischer Werke in Deutscher Übersetzung*, O. Bardenhewer u.a. (Hrsg.), Kempten & München: Verlag der Jos Kösselschen Buchhandlung, 1918, S. 52.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Walter Kasper, The Catholic Church, p. 204.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. Leonard Doohan, Lay People and the Church.: The image of the laity presented as profane or as second-class citizens was the result of three important factors: The influence of Neo-Platonism, growth of Monasticism and the development of the clerical dimension of the Church. Due to these factors, the laity were considered as second-class citizens because of its engagement in the world.

<sup>59</sup> For more information read, Jürgen Werbick, "Laie", *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, Walter Kasper u.a.(Hrsg.), Band VI, Freiburg. Basel. Wien. Rom: Herder, 1997, S. 590–592.

<sup>60</sup> For more information on the history of the Church's attitude towards laity, read: Peter Chidi Okuma, The Vatican II: The Laity and today's Challenges, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2011, pp. 28–34.

tian lay people who remained 'in the world'."<sup>61</sup> The Church was thus understood only in terms of hierarchy.

A change in this situation was brought about by the advent of the movements, which tried to emphasise the positive role of the laity in the mission and the life of the Church. For example, Frederic Ozanam (1813–1853) founded the St. Vincent de Paul Society in order to guide the young Christians into the practice of charity. Adolph Kolping (1813–1865) founded a movement of young workers, called *Associations of Comrades (Gesellenvereine)* for the purpose of witnessing by the laity.<sup>62</sup> Another important movement was the *Young Christian Workers* movement, the credit for which is given to Joseph Cardijn (1882–1967). This movement helped the Christians to live their baptismal vocation in the context of their work place.<sup>63</sup> Some of the popes of this era felt the need for shedding more light on the laity: Pope Pius X (1903–1914), Pope Pius XI (1922–1939). According to them, the work of the Kingdom of God was not the work of the priests alone but the duty of both priests and the laity alike. Hence, the participation of the laity in the Church was considered necessary.<sup>64</sup> All these above-mentioned persons and movements called for a new way to look at the laity and gave an important impetus to the development of a theology of the laity, which was developed at the Vatican II. Noted theologians like Yves Congar and Marie-Dominique Chenu played an important role in bringing the role of the laity in a strong light with very convincing and influential theologies of laity.<sup>65</sup>

However, the Vatican II Council did not speak anything new; it, rather, placed the laity in the context of the doctrine of the common priesthood of the baptized and proposed a new outlook towards the laity – a positive outlook.<sup>66</sup> The purpose was to do away with the negativity developed towards the laity in the past and to determine new the role and the place of the laity in the Church.<sup>67</sup> In the opinion of Doohan, there are three important developments of the Vatican II, which helped in the positive affirmation and valuing of the laity at the Vatican II Council: One is communion ecclesiology (LG 31, 1) (reinforced by the synod of 1985) in which

<sup>61</sup> Edward Schillebeeckx, *Mission of the Church*, New York: Seabury, 1973, p. 119.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Peter Chidi Okuma, *The Vatican II: The Laity and today's Challenges*, pp. 39–41.

<sup>63</sup> This movement was characterized by a threefold process of communal reflection: see, judge and act, namely, the Christians were to be aware of the social, economic and political situation, judge it with the help of the Gospel and the Gospel reflection would lead them to a proper action. Cf. Richard Gaillardetz & Catherine E. Clifford, *Keys to the Council*, p. 96 & Peter Chidi Okuma, *The Vatican II: The Laity and today's Challenges*, pp. 45–46.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Richard Gaillardetz & Catherine E. Clifford, *Keys to the Council*, p. 96.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. Walter Kasper, *The Catholic Church*, p. 207.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Guido Bausenhardt, "Apostolicam Actuositatem", *Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzil*, Peter Hühnemann & Bernd Jochen Hilberath (Hrsg.), Band IV, Freiburg im Breisgau: Verlag Herder, 2005, S. 11.

every individual member of the Church has a role in the mission of the Church; the other two developments are linked to the Council's affirmation of the universal call to holiness (GS 40, 3) and the declaration on the autonomy of the earthly realities.<sup>68</sup> At the Second Vatican Council, the Church redefined its nature as the mystery and the People of God. The understanding of the Church as the People of God gave the laity a prominent place in the mission of the Church. Secondly, the Council also looked at the world more positively and sought to get into a dialogue with the world, for which the laity was an apt medium. At the Council, the Church became aware, that "it can reach out to the world with the message of Gospel in a unique and meaningful way through the laity."<sup>69</sup> The teaching of the Second Vatican Council concerning the laity was an enormous and lasting achievement, "the most enduring gift of Vatican II."<sup>70</sup>

#### 1.4.1 Laity according to *Lumen Gentium*

*Lumen Gentium* in its chapter four deals with laity. Having described the nature of the Church, LG tries to develop a theology of the laity: Basing itself on the Scriptures, the document describes the Church as the People of God (Ch. 2) and emphasises that it's not just the clergy and religious only, but the entire Church, including lay people (all the baptised faithful), that are called to holiness (Ch. 6) through their participation in the priestly, kingly and prophetic mission of Christ, although in different ways (LG 10). The Council noted that everything that has been said of the People of God is addressed equally to laity, religious and clergy. Hence, there is no distinction to be made as regards the place and value of every individual member of the Church.

LG defines the term *laity* as applicable to all the faithful (except those in holy orders and those who belong to a religious state approved by the Church) who by baptism are incorporated into Christ, are constituted the People of God, who have been made sharers in their own way in the priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ and play their part in carrying out the mission of the whole Christian people in the Church and in the world (LG 31).<sup>71</sup> Thus, the laity has a right and

<sup>68</sup> Cf. Leonard Doohan, *Lay People and the Church*.

<sup>69</sup> Frederick J. Parrella, "The Laity in the Church- Seminar Paper", <https://ejournals.bc.edu/ojs/index.php/ctsa/article/viewFile/2993/2607>, 21.03.2017.

<sup>70</sup> John Carville, "Role of the Laity most enduring gift of Vatican II", <http://clarionherald.info/clarion/index.php/year-of-renewal-the-mass/1827-role-of-the-laity-most-enduring-gift-of-vatican-ii>, 25.03.2017.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. John Saward, "Theology of the Laity", <http://www.christendom-awake.org/pages/jsaward/laity1.htm>, 28.03.2017.: This definition has two aspects: positive (A lay person through his Baptism is incorporated into Christ, is a part of the People of God, who has been made sharer in his own way in the priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ) and negative (the lay person is neither cleric nor religious). The negative aspect points out to the richness of the unity in

responsibility to be actively involved in the Church's apostolate. The mission of the Church is not the sole responsibility of the clergy alone; rather, it calls for a collaborative effort on the part of both clergy and the laity.<sup>72</sup> In search of a positive and constructive theology of the laity, LG emphasises the secular character of the laity:

To be secular is the special characteristic of the laity. Although people in holy Orders may sometimes be engaged in secular activities, or even practice a secular profession, yet by reason of their particular vocation they are principally and expressly ordained to the sacred ministry, while religious bear outstanding and striking witness, that the world cannot be transfigured and offered to God without the spirit of the beatitudes. It is the special vocation of the laity to seek the kingdom of God by engaging in the temporal affairs and directing them to God's will. They live in the world, in each and every one of the world's occupations and callings and in the ordinary circumstances of social and family life which, as it were, form the context of their existence. There they are called by God to contribute to the sanctification of the world from within, like leaven, in the spirit to the Gospel, by fulfilling their own particular duties. Thus, especially by the witness of their life, resplendent in faith, hope and charity they manifest Christ to others (LG 31).<sup>73</sup>

The role of laity in the world and the Church is noted with specific attention by the Council as the part of God's salvific plan for the world. The engagement of the laity in the temporal order is not an option, but an appointment given by God, who desires all people to come to salvation. In this sense, the secular character of the laity does not just speak of the sociological aspect and dimension of the lay people, but also the theological aspect and dimension.<sup>74</sup> Pope John Paul II, explaining the secular character of the laity, says that the lay people are the ones who live in the world but do not belong to the world; they live their daily chores of life, fulfil their familial and social and human obligations and duties in the world. The world becomes the place and means for them to fulfil their divine vocation.<sup>75</sup> Their vocation is to bring the world closer to God. Their secular character describes firstly, their place in the Church and the world as the Church in the heart of the world, and

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diversity with which the Church is endowed, and it is within this richness that the lay people stand. See also: Frederick J. Parrella, *The Laity in the Church- Seminar Paper*.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. Bernard P. Prusak, *The Church Unfinished: Ecclesiology through the Centuries*, New York: Paulist Press, 2004, p. 293.

<sup>73</sup> Edward Hahnenberg, *A Concise Guide to the Documents of Vatican II*, p. 49: The Council's emphasis on the secular quality of the laity "was not meant to create a rigid division between the Laity in the world and the Clergy in the Church".

<sup>74</sup> Cf. A. A. Hagstrom, "Theology of Laity", *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Berard M. Marthaler & others (Eds.), Vol. VIII, Detroit: Gale, 2003, p. 291.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. Pope John Paul, "*Christifideles Laici*: Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World", *Apostolic Exhortations*, Kerala: Carmel International Publishing House, 2005, pp. 862–863. Henceforth cited as *Christifideles Laici*.

secondly, their mission to bring the world into the heart of the Church.<sup>76</sup> It is also the way in which the laity fully realise their true place and role in the Church.<sup>77</sup> The Council speaks of the variety of functions and the unity in dignity, which is bestowed on the People of God through their baptism, which is their rebirth in Christ. The laity and hierarchy may have different functions in the Church, yet they all enjoy the same dignity in the Church by reason of their baptism. The laity too belong fully to the Church through their baptism and their participation in the mission of Christ. Hence, “this sacramental foundation of the place and mission of the laity means that the Council could no longer regard lay people as commissaries and the extended arm of the clergy”<sup>78</sup> as was considered before the Vatican II. Rather, through their baptism the lay people had the same status of being the members of the Church, on an equal par with the clergy and the religious. The chosen People of God is one: one Lord, one faith, one baptism (Eph. 4, 5). Through their one baptism in Christ, they receive common filial grace, the same vocation to perfection, one salvation, one hope and undivided charity (LG 32). The common filial dignity and common goal of all faithful is expressed, although the paths they take toward this destiny and goal may be varying.

By reason of the baptism, confirmation and the Eucharist the laity are entrusted with the apostolate, which is also their sharing in the saving mission of the Church: they are endowed with a special vocation to make the Church present and fruitful in those places and circumstances where it is only through them that the Church becomes the salt and light of the earth (LG 33). In this way every lay person, in virtue of the very gifts bestowed upon him, is at the same time a witness and a living instrument of the mission of the Church herself “according to the measure of Christ’s gift” (Eph.4, 7). The mission of the laity is the affirmation of the charisms, which the Spirit of God has bestowed on the faithful and the recognition of varied ways in which God’s Holy Spirit is at work in the Church today.<sup>79</sup> Hence, “every opportunity should be given to them to share zealously in the salvific work of the Church according to their ability and the needs of the times.” The laity participate in the priestly function of Christ (LG 34). “All their works, prayers and apostolic initiatives, including family, married life, work and relaxation may become spiritual sacrifices, offered in their celebration of the Eucharist, thereby, consecrating the world to God.”<sup>80</sup> Lay people are called to par-

<sup>76</sup> Cf. A. A. Hagstrom, *Theology of Laity*, p. 292.

<sup>77</sup> Carl E. Olson, “The Role of the Laity: An Examination of Vatican II and *Christifideles Laici*”, [http://www.ignatiusinsight.com/features2006/colson\\_rolelaity1\\_oct06.asp](http://www.ignatiusinsight.com/features2006/colson_rolelaity1_oct06.asp), 26.03.2017.

<sup>78</sup> Walter Kasper, *The Catholic Church*, p. 208.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. Johnson Mudavassery, *The Role and Function of Charism in the Theology of Yves Congar*, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2016, p. 216.

<sup>80</sup> Bernard P. Prusak, *The Church Unfinished: Ecclesiology through the Centuries*, pp. 293–294.



ticipate in the prophetic function of Christ by being the living witnesses of Christ in the society. Hence, their state of life in the world, sanctified by the sacrament of matrimony has a special value in Christ's prophetic office and the Christian families are one of the places where the work of witnesses is to be carried out (LG 35). All Christians are called to be the medium through which the world will understand the presence and activity of God in the world. The best place to be the living testimony of Christ is in their own homes, their street and local community and place of work. Since family is a domestic Church, the lay people are called to be the first teachers of faith to their children. Their prophetic mission is "a penetration of the Gospel into the way they live, which primarily starts in the family."<sup>81</sup> Lay people also participate in Christ's kingly mission, in his mission of spreading "the kingdom of truth and life, the kingdom of holiness and grace, the kingdom of justice, love and peace" (LG 36). Their kingly mission comprises of a spiritual combat in which lay people seek to reign victorious over the kingdom of sin in them and in the whole world.<sup>82</sup> Yves Congar says, "The Christian is king because he triumphs over sin, controls the enticements of the flesh, and rules body and soul".<sup>83</sup> As the followers of Christ, "we are not to turn away from the world, but rather by our human labour we cooperate with Christ in bringing the whole of creation to perfection."<sup>84</sup> Through their service to the world, and with the help of God's grace and the Holy Spirit, the lay people try to convert an unjust world into a just one, an immoral one into a moral, an unethical society in an ethical one and an inhuman world into a more life-friendly human world. Their aim is to order the entire world and the creation to its salvific end. It is also the task of the ministerial priesthood to cater to the spiritual needs of the lay people in their mission. At the same time, they are to promote the dignity and the mission of the lay faithful (LG 36). The laity in turn has an obligation to obey the pastors just as Christ was obedient unto death.

*Lumen Gentium* concludes its chapter on the laity by calling lay people to become the soul of the world and to animate the world with the values which Christ their Lord and Master has taught them through by his own life example.

<sup>81</sup> Collins Andrew Adutwum, "The Mission of the Laity as Priest, Prophet and King", [http://www.seatofwisdomjournal.org/uploads/7.6\\_-\\_Student\\_Essay\\_-\\_The\\_Mission\\_of\\_the\\_Laity\\_-\\_C\\_Adutwum\\_-\\_final\\_-\\_20\\_Aug\\_2013.pdf](http://www.seatofwisdomjournal.org/uploads/7.6_-_Student_Essay_-_The_Mission_of_the_Laity_-_C_Adutwum_-_final_-_20_Aug_2013.pdf), 27.03.2017.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. *Christifideles Laici*, no. 14.

<sup>83</sup> Yves Congar, *Der Laie: Entwurf einer Theologie des Laientums*, Aufl. 2, Stuttgart: Schwabenverlag, 1956, S. 372.

<sup>84</sup> Collins Andrew Adutwum, *The Mission of the Laity as Priest, Prophet and King*.

### 1.4.2 *Apostolicam Actuositatem*- Vatican II Decree on the Laity

*Apostolicam Actuositatem* is the decree of the Second Vatican Council on the apostolate of the lay people, promulgated on 18 November 1965. That the Vatican II gave special attention to the laity can be said to be the work of the divine providence and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. As Pope John XXIII on the feast of the Pentecost in 1960 appointed ten preparatory commissions for the Council, there was a surprise for the whole Church, namely, the commission on the laity.<sup>85</sup> The work of the preparation for a document on the lay apostolate lasted almost five years. As the commission came together for its first meeting under the leadership of Fernando Cardinal Cento (the head of the commission) and his secretary A. Glorieux on 15 November 1960, there were three general areas it had to work on: 1) Lay apostolate – its scope, purpose, subordination to the hierarchy and its adaptation to the contemporary situation 2) The Catholic action – the notion, scope, subjection to the hierarchy, adaptation of its constitutions to the present needs, its relation to other associations 3) The communities and associations – how they can adapt their activities to the present situation in order to perform better their social and charitable functions.<sup>86</sup> The theological foundation of lay apostolate was not mentioned, because the work of the theological commission charged with the study on the Church would take care of it.<sup>87</sup>

The commission for the laity established three further sub-commissions: one was for the general notion of lay apostolate and the other two were for the questions of lay apostolate in social and charitable actions. On the whole, there took place seven plenary sessions between November 1960 and April 1965. Before the decree came to its final form, there were four schemas presented by the commission to the Council. After many deliberations, important suggestions and useful changes, the final schema of September 23, 1965 was finally approved, voted on and accepted as the decree on the lay apostolate – *Apostolicam Actuositatem* on 18 November 1965.<sup>88</sup> The decree has six chapters:

<sup>85</sup> Cf. Guido Bausenhardt, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, p. 32.

<sup>86</sup> Cf. Ibid., pp. 32–33; Cf. Peter Chidi Okuma, *The Vatican II: The Laity and today's Challenges*, p. 84.: It is interesting to note that none of the theologians who had been working on a possible theology of laity (Congar, Philips, Rahner, Balthasar, Schillebeeckx, Chenu) even before the Council, had been included in the work of the commission, nor were there any lay persons in the commission. It is with the second session of the Council that the lay persons were included in the work of the commission. Cf. Knut Wenzel, *Das Zweite Vatikanische Konzil*, p. 178.

<sup>87</sup> Joseph A. Komonchak, "The Struggle for the Council during the Preparation of Vatican II (1960–1962)", *History of Vatican II: Announcement and Preparing Vatican Council II. Towards a New Era in Catholicism*, Giuseppe Alberigo & Joseph Komonchak (Eds.), Vol. I, Leuven: Peeters, 1995, p. 178.

<sup>88</sup> Cf. Guido Bausenhardt, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, pp. 32–37 & Peter Chidi Okuma, *The Vatican II: The Laity and Today's Challenges*, pp. 84–89.

1. The Vocation of Lay People to the Apostolate
2. Objectives
3. The Various Fields of the Apostolate
4. The Different Forms of the Apostolate
5. The Order to Be Observed
6. Training for the Apostolate

#### 1.4.2.1 Lay Apostolate and its Foundations

The Council takes the laity and its activity very seriously. It values the participation of the laity in the mission of the Church as something of divine origin. Hence, through this Decree the Council wanted to “intensify the apostolic activity of the people of God”.<sup>89</sup> *Apostolicam Actuositatem* (AA)<sup>90</sup> begins with the assertion that the lay apostolate is something that derives from a lay person’s very vocation as a Christian and the Church can never be without the lay apostolate (AA 1). “The laity have true vocation, that is, they are called by God to forward the reign of God in the world and in the Church.”<sup>91</sup> Hence, “lay apostolate flows directly from the virtue of being a Christian.”<sup>92</sup> To be a Christian means to be an apostle, a missionary. *Lumen Gentium* speaks of the common priesthood of all, and AA goes a step ahead and adds to it the idea of apostolate of all.<sup>93</sup> AA defines the lay apostolate as every activity of the mystical body, directed towards the realisation of the Church’s mission and vocation to spread the Kingdom of God throughout the world to the glory of God the Father (AA 2). Lay apostolate is that which is exercised with a free will in accordance with its particular responsibilities and with the strength of the Spirit.<sup>94</sup> In the Church there is diversity of ministry to serve one mission. Like *Gaudium et Spes*, the decree on the laity is against setting the Church and world as “antagonists”.<sup>95</sup> Just as the ordained faithful perform the duties of teaching, governing and sanctifying, the lay faithful through their participation in the threefold office of Christ play their part in the mission of the

<sup>89</sup> Robert W. Oliver, “The Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*”, Vatican II: Renewal within Tradition, Matthew L. Lamb & Matthew Levering (Eds.), New York: Oxford University Press, 2008, p. 272.: “The Council’s desire to address the lay Christian faithful in a special decree was due to a conviction that “our own times require of the laity no less zeal; in fact, modern conditions demand their apostolate be broadened and intensified”.

<sup>90</sup> *Apostolicam Actuositatem* henceforth cited as AA.

<sup>91</sup> Dolores R. Leckey, *The Laity and Christian Education: Apostolicam Actuositatem and Gravisimum Educationis*, New York: Paulist Press, 2006, p. 26.

<sup>92</sup> Martin Igwe Uzoukwu, “What the Second Vatican Council meant by individual lay Apostolates”, [http://www.springtimeoffaith.org/documents/2017/1/rev\\_martin.pdf](http://www.springtimeoffaith.org/documents/2017/1/rev_martin.pdf), 30.03.2017.

<sup>93</sup> Cf. Thomas Hoebel, *Laity and Participation: A Theology of being the Church*, Bern: Peter Lang, 2006, p. 83.

<sup>94</sup> Cf. Congar, *Der Laie*, pp. 581–582.

<sup>95</sup> Dolores R. Leckey, *The Laity and Christian Education*, p. 27.

Church.<sup>96</sup> This is done through evangelization or spreading of the good news and the Christianization of the temporal order by their Gospel way of life, ordering all things to God. This vocation of the laity in the world reflects the thought of LG in no. 31, which defines the secular character of the laity.<sup>97</sup> The secular character or being in the world does not make the lay people profane and less important, nor does it give them less dignity than the priests and clergy. "The Laity share in the redemptive work of Christ, so that through them the whole world may enter into relationship with Christ."<sup>98</sup> Hence, being in the world is their vocation. In this connection, Congar says, "Every Christian is called to the apostolate in the wide sense: he has not to wait for any other vocation than his vocation to a Christian life; no other mission than that of a Christian life, lived in the concrete conditions of his profession and of the circumstances and personal contacts of his life. For us all this is not merely secular: it is an application to us of the will of God, who has given us a place in his plan of salvation."<sup>99</sup>

In no. 3 of AA we have the foundations of the lay apostolate. The right and the duty of the laity to be apostles is derived from their union with Christ the head (and not received from the hierarchy)<sup>100</sup> in baptism and through the strengthening of the Holy Spirit in the Confirmation (LG 3). The source of lay apostolate is fundamentally sacramental and not juridical or organizational. Through the celebration of the sacraments and especially in the Holy Eucharist, the lay people are bestowed and nourished with the gift of Charity and Love. The lay apostolate is lived in faith, hope and charity poured out by the Holy Spirit into the hearts of all believers. The greatest commandment of love received from Christ the Lord urges all the faithful to work for the spreading of God's kingdom. Hence, it is the divine obligation of every Christian, whether lay or clergy, to commit oneself to the mission of Christ, using the gifts they have received from the Holy Spirit.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.: "This is a key point, because it is the theological root for the flourishing of lay ministry in the post-council years."

<sup>97</sup> The idea behind this definition was "not to assert some strict definition of the Laity that distinguished them from the clergy or professed religious, but rather, to describe the typical situation of the lay person and then explore the theological significance of that situation." Richard Gailardetz & Catherine E. Clifford, *Keys to the Council*, p. 97.

<sup>98</sup> Dolores R. Leckey, *The Laity and Christian Education*, p. 26.

<sup>99</sup> Yves Congar, *Priest and Layman*, transl. P. J. Hepburne-Scott, London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1967, p. 12.

<sup>100</sup> Edward P. Hahnenberg, *A Concise Guide to the Documents of Vatican II*, p. 104.: "This is the single most important insight of the document – overturning a hierarchical view in which all Church activity trickles down through the clergy."

#### 1.4.2.2 *The Spirituality of the Lay People*

In no. 4, the decree speaks about the spirituality of the lay people. The spirituality infusing the lay vocation is Christo-centric.<sup>101</sup> According to AA no. 1, the foundation of the lay apostolate is in laity's living union with Christ who is the source of all the apostolate in the Church: "Those who abide in me and I in them, bear much fruit, for separated from me you can do nothing" (Jn 15, 5). The decree also proposes spiritual help for the laity so that the union with Christ is lived and maintained. It speaks of the participation in the liturgy (Cf. *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (SC). no. 11). Lay people are encouraged to use the spiritual help while living their life in the world. Their activity in the world, in the family and the society is to go hand-in-hand with their relationship with Christ. Their concrete life in the ordinary world with all its worries and cares is the part of God's plan for the salvation of the world, through which He helps them to grow in their relationship with Him. A lay spirituality does not give up the world as something negative and undesired; rather, it seeks to find God and adore Him in the world.<sup>102</sup> Hence, the life in the world is the most important aspect and the way toward holiness for the lay people.<sup>103</sup> Such a spiritual life requires a continuous exercise of the virtues of faith, hope and charity – the faith to see God everywhere, in everything and in everyone. Such faith gives rise to the heavenly hope of the final destiny of the Christians as children of God – the hope that this world with all its sorrows and problems will one day be transformed into a heavenly. Moved by this hope, Christians work in the world as pilgrims and use their talents and energy to spread the kingdom of God and to imbue and pervade the material world with the Holy Spirit.<sup>104</sup> The love of God which is poured into the hearts of all Christians (Romans 5, 5) moves and prompts the lay faithful to do good to everyone. This love becomes apostolic when the lay people are able to bring others to Christ.<sup>105</sup>

In conclusion, the spirituality of the Laity should take its particular character "from the circumstances of one's state in life – married and family life, celibacy, widowhood – from one's state of health and from one's professional and social activity" (AA 4). The decree ends the article 4 by pointing to the Blessed Virgin Mary as the perfect model of the apostolic spiritual life in the world. Lay people are called upon to take Mary's example in their life in the world.

<sup>101</sup> Cf. H. Richard McCord, "Apostolicam actuositatem, Decree on the Apostolate of the Lay people, November 18<sup>th</sup>, 1965", A Liturgical Companion to the Documents of the Second Vatican Council, Stephen Bevans & others (Eds.), Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 2016, p. 75.

<sup>102</sup> Cf. Edward P. Hahnenberg, A Concise Guide to the Documents of Vatican II, p. 104.

<sup>103</sup> Cf. Guido Bausenhardt, Apostolicam Actuositatem, p. 57.

<sup>104</sup> Cf. Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>105</sup> Cf. Ibid.

### *1.4.2.3 The Objectives of Lay apostolate*

The mission of the Church to bring all people to the knowledge of God and to work for the salvation of all, concerns also the renewal of the whole temporal order, in which the laity is involved. Lay people live in the world as though not of the world and through their life in the world, they try to sanctify the world. Hence, lay people are at one and the same time believers and citizens of the world, who guided by their single Christian conscience, carry out the mission of Christ entrusted to them in the temporal order as well as spiritual (AA 5). In this sense, the participation and role of the laity in the Church and Church's mission is not something that is provisional, but it is a call coming to them from God. The objective of the Lay apostolate can be further divided as: spiritual activity, secular activity and charitable activity.<sup>106</sup>

#### A. Spiritual activity

The principal means of bringing people to the salvation brought by Christ is through the ministry of the Word and sacraments, which is entrusted to the clergy. However, the lay people are called upon to assist the clergy by playing their important part namely, of "helping in the cause of truth" (AA 6). Lay people through their witness of a good and exemplary Christian life and through their practice of good works can be very effective in fulfilling their task of drawing people to God. The decree takes the role of the laity a step further and says that the lay apostolate does not consist merely in their witness of life, but also in the preaching of the good news to all the people in the world and especially to the non-believers, in order to draw them to the faith. In our times, when the world questions the existence of God and tries to manipulate the moral order and human society immensely, the lay people are called to show fidelity to the mind of the Church in defending and explaining the Christian principles and applying them correctly to contemporary problems. The lay apostolate thus begins with the witness of Christian life, from which the proclamation of the Gospel, the transformation of the temporal order and the works of charity flow.<sup>107</sup>

#### B. Secular activity

God wills that all people work in harmony in order to renew the temporal order and bring it to its perfection. The decree speaks of the renewal of the temporal order as a distinctive task of the lay people (AA 7). In the face of the increasing

<sup>106</sup> Cf. Edward p. Hahnenberg, *A Concise Guide to the Documents of Vatican II*, p. 105.

<sup>107</sup> Cf. James H. Provost, "Ecclesiastical Offices (CC. 145–196)", *The New Commentary on the Code of Canon Law: An entirely new and comprehensive commentary by Canonists from North America and Europe, with a revised English translation of the Code*, John P. Beal, James E. Coriden & Thomas J. Green (Eds.), New York: Paulist Press, 2000, p. 271.

destruction of the temporal order in various forms, the Church calls on the laity to restore the original dignity and goodness, God has implanted and imprinted on the temporal structure. "The Gospel reaches far into the aspects of the temporal order: family, culture, economics, the arts and professions, the laws of the political community, international relations—all these have intrinsic value."<sup>108</sup> The laity have a task to pervade the temporal order with the Gospel values. The world is the field of lay activity. The world has a positive role. The Council wants here to reaffirm the goodness of the world possessed through its creation by God, and its added dignity which it receives through their relation with the human person.<sup>109</sup> The laity by their work and through their life in the temporal spheres tries to restore and enhance the dignity and the value of the temporal order which is tarnished by serious errors of the people. Hence, lay apostolate is an important aspect of the Church's mission and a part of God's plan for the world. The lay apostolate is a part of the missionary mandate received from Christ, and this mandate is complete when the Church engages itself through the laity in God's mission in and for the world.<sup>110</sup> Their secular character is positive and their life and activity in the world is a necessary and great contribution to the life and mission of the Church.<sup>111</sup> Although the Church's mission in the world is the responsibility of all of its members, it is the laity that discovers in the world its particular place and competency.

### C. Charitable Activity

The decree speaks of love as the origin and the driving force of every apostolic activity. But some apostolic works are the most eloquent witnesses of this love (AA 8). The obligation to the works of love and charity comes from the greatest commandment given by Christ our Lord, who made the "love of neighbour" His personal commandment and has enriched it with a new meaning when he willed himself, along with his brothers and sisters, to be the object of this charity saying: "just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me" (Mt 25, 40)." The love for God comes to its fullest expression in the love of neighbour, when a person is able to respect another person and recognize God in his neighbour.<sup>112</sup> The liberty and the dignity of every person who needs us

<sup>108</sup> Dolores R. Leckey, *The Laity and Christian Education*, p. 28.

<sup>109</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> Cf. WCC (World Council of Churches), *The Church for Others and the Church for the World—A Quest for Structures for Missionary Congregations: Final report of the Western European working group and North American working group of the department on studies in Evangelism*, Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1968, p. 80.

<sup>111</sup> Richard Lenan (Ed.), *An Introduction to Catholic Theology*, New York: Paulist Press, 1998, p. 173.

<sup>112</sup> Cf. Knut Wenzel, *Das Zweite Vatikanische Konzil*, p. 186.

must be respected with greatest sensitivity. It is in this way, any charitable action will have a meaning and value. The decree also invites the lay people to support different works of charity and thereby make the mutual collaboration of the people of good will possible.

#### *1.4.2.4 Fields of Lay Apostolate*

The decree in chapter three mentions various fields or various realms of life in the world in which lay people are able to realise their God-given mission. The fields of the apostolate include communities in the Church, the family, youth, the social environment, national and international affairs (AA, 9).<sup>113</sup>

##### **A. Church Communities**

Without the lay activity and help the priestly mission is incomplete and less effective. Lay people are co-workers with the pastors. Comparing the laity to the co-workers of the apostle Paul (Acts 18, 18–26; Rom 16, 3), the Council speaks of them as the necessary co-workers of the pastors. Nourished and inspired by the active participation in the liturgical life of the community, lay people engage in its apostolic works (AA 10). They are to bring back those who have lost their faith and gone away from the Church, proclaim the good news especially by catechetical instruction, and through their expert assistance, they help in the effective care of the souls and in the smooth administration of the Church's goods.

The parishes are outstanding examples of community apostolate. The Council encourages the lay people to use their talents and charisms and engage themselves in the activities of the parish and to collaborate with the pastors in the work of proclamation, sanctification, direction and guidance. The readiness of the lay people to cooperate in the mission of the Church will not limit itself to the parish or diocese only; it will rather be interparochial, inter-diocesan, national and international in nature. Lay people are thus, called upon to support every missionary and apostolic initiative in the Church.

##### **B. The Family**

The next important field of lay apostolate is marriage and family. Marriage is a divinely established mystery, which is the beginning and the foundation of human society. The apostolate of married persons and families is especially important, both, for the Church and the civil society (AA 11). Christian couples are for each other, for their children and for their relatives, “co-operators of grace and witness of the faith.” The married couples are for their children and for each other

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<sup>113</sup> Cf. Thomas Hoebel, *Laity and Participation*, p. 84.: It is important to know that unlike LG 31, which limits the role of the laity to the worldly or temporal spheres, AA locates the lay apostolate in the Church as well as in the world.



“the first and the most important pastors or counsellors”.<sup>114</sup> The central aspects of the apostolate of the family are: being witnesses to the indissolubility and holiness of marriage bond; the Christian upbringing of the children and to defend the legitimate autonomy and dignity of the family. Hence, the parents and all the married people must collaborate with the people of good will in order to perfectly safeguard the institution of family and its rights and dignity in the civil legislation. A family is called by God to become the ‘primary vital cell of the society’. This mission can be realised: if the family through the mutual affection and by prayer presents itself as the domestic Church; if the family participates in the Church’s liturgical celebrations and if the family practices the virtues of love, charity and justice. It is noteworthy that the Council does not see the family as an object of the apostolic activity of the pastors in the first place, but rather, as a subject who helps the pastors in their apostolate.<sup>115</sup>

### C. The Youth

Reading the signs of the times, the Council feels certain that the youth is very important in the society. Youth of today are the pillars of tomorrow’s society. Hence, they are very important in the society. The growth of their social importance demands from them corresponding apostolic activity (AA 12). Youth are full of energy and enthusiasm which moves them to shoulder their responsibilities and affirm their place in social and cultural life. However, if accompanied by the grace of God and animated by a sense of obedience to the Church, this enthusiasm and energy can result in rich harvest. An example of such youth activities can be the World Youth Day. The Christian youth are called to become the first apostles to others of their age. In their apostolate, the youngsters also need guidance and help. Hence, the Council asks the adults to enter into friendly dialogue with the youth. In other words, the dialogue between the generations is called for, in order that mutual enrichment may take place through the sharing of experiences. The adults have the responsibility by example and occasionally by sound advice to persuade the young to take up the apostolate. The young, on their part, must show respect and confidence in the adults.

### D. Social Environment

The social environment in which the lay people live is also an important field of apostolate. In the context of their daily life and in their dealing and interaction, they meet people who are not familiar with Christ and his Gospel. “In this area lay people can conduct the apostolate of like towards like. There, the witness of life is completed by the witness of their word. It is amid the surroundings of their

<sup>114</sup> Cf. Karl Rahner & Herbert Vorgrimler, *Kleines Konzilskompendium*, p. 688.

<sup>115</sup> Cf. Guido Bausenhardt, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, p. 71.

work that they are best qualified to be of help to their brothers and sisters, in the surroundings of their profession, of their study, residence, leisure or local group” (AA 13). This mission is made possible when the laity integrates its faith with praxis and spirituality with life in the context of its life in the society. In this way, the lay people moved by the love of Christ will work to bring all closer to God through their thoughts, words and actions. The Council also stresses the importance of the apostolate in the social environment by saying that the lay people are the only medium for many people to come closer to the Gospel.

#### E. The National and International Levels

The decree calls on the lay people to engage themselves on the national and international level in the work of promoting the common good, so that through their firm faith and Christian teaching, they may help the cause of betterment of the humanity and also prepare the way for the Gospel (AA 14). The decree, hereby, points out the duty and responsibility of the lay people for the common good. Catholics are called to collaborate with the people of good will in the promotion of all that is good. Through mutual dialogue, understanding and courtesy, they are to find ways which are in line with the Gospel and will improve the social and public institutions. The decree calls the laity not only to a mission inside the Church, but also to a mission in the world: to make the world a better place by imbuing it with the Gospel values. This is possible when lay people with firm faith and Gospel convictions participate in politics in order to work for the society. As Balthazar says: “Every level of the society and all the professions must be permeated by the yeast of courageous Christians who are sure of their faith.”<sup>116</sup> Lay people are thus called to be the harbingers of change in the world through their participation in the world.

#### *1.4.2.5 Forms of Apostolate*

AA 14 speaks about two forms of lay apostolate through which lay people can carry out their apostolic mission and activity: individual apostolate and group apostolate. The individual apostolate has its source in the true Christian life (Jn 4, 11) and it is the starting point for all types of lay apostolate (AA 16).<sup>117</sup> The Coun-

<sup>116</sup> Hans Urs von Balthazar, *The Laity and the Life of the Councils: The Church's Mission in the World*, transl. Brian McNeil, C. R. V. & D. C. Schindler, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2003, p. 263.

<sup>117</sup> Cf. Matthew L. Lamb & Matthew Levering, *Vatican II: Renewal Within Tradition*, p. 275–276: Many Council Fathers felt that the early drafts of the decree gave too much importance to the organized or group apostolate while neglecting the individual aspect of the apostolate and they felt the need of laying more emphasis on the individual apostolate through which every baptised person was able to pursue his baptism call to engage in the mission of the Church. Hence, the emphasis on the individual apostolate in AA.

cil gives the individual apostolate more importance because it can be practiced everywhere by every Catholic. All are called to commit themselves to this apostolate. The individual apostolate takes the form of a life of witness in faith, hope and charity inspired by the Word of God, leading them to work for the construction, regulation and sanctification of the world and the salvation of the people. The individual apostolate is of utmost importance, especially in the areas and regions where the Church is not allowed to grow or is limited in its exercise of freedom (AA 17). In such situations, the lay people need to take up the role of the clergy as far as possible.

AA 18 speaks of the group or organized apostolate, which conforms to the human and Christian need.<sup>118</sup> Besides being efficient, the group apostolate conforms to the social nature of the human beings and the social character of the People of God as the Body of Christ.<sup>119</sup> It can be carried out in the families, parishes and dioceses, which express the communitarian character of the lay apostolate. In the Church, there is a variety of apostolic associations which are aimed towards the apostolate of the Church, though in different ways. However, these associations, which are formed and lead by the lay people, must be able to favour and promote more intimate unity between faith and life (AA 19).

The decree ends with the Council fathers proposing for the need to form and train the laity for their apostolate. Lay people need holistic formation, which includes human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral aspects. With the constant changing face of the world, the diversity in the areas of lay apostolate and for a better understanding and exercise of their mission, such formation is necessary. With such formation and training, lay people will be better organized and better equipped in the sense of knowledge and understanding. To conclude, the decree provides us with “an understanding of the lay apostolate that rests firmly on the theological foundation of the union of the baptized with Christ, the source from which all apostolic activity flows.”<sup>120</sup>

With the Second Vatican Council, the Church dramatically changed its self-understanding as the only medium of salvation and saw itself in a new light as the People of God, as the sacrament of universal salvation. The Church came closer to the world just like its Lord Jesus Christ. It felt the need to get incarnated in the world and live the human experience in order to help the world to overcome its problems, misery and suffering. The world is seen in a new view, as something positive. Since the world is seen as positive and holy because it is the creation of God and a part of His salvific plan, the role of the lay people in the world

<sup>118</sup> Cf. Knut Wenzel, *Das Zweite Vatikanische Konzil*, p. 188.

<sup>119</sup> Cf. Guido Bausenhardt, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, p. 77.

<sup>120</sup> Cf. Robert W. Oliver, The Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, p. 281.

has gained prominence. The lay mission and apostolate in the Church is not only reaffirmed but also repositioned. This is one of the major shifts in the Church's understanding of itself. It's not just the hierarchy, but also the lay people who form the Church as the People of God and both have the duty and obligation to work for the Kingdom of God. Lay people are not just members of the Church in the world, but they are the Church in the world. The lay apostolate is so important in the Church that without it, the mission of the Church is incomplete, and the apostolate of the pastors is less effective. The vision of the Second Vatican Council for the laity is well expressed in the words of John Henry Newman:

I want a laity, not arrogant, not rash in speech, not disputatious, but men who know their religion, who enter into it, who know just where they stand, who know what they hold, and what they do not, who know their creed so well, that they can give an account of it, who know so much of history that they can defend it. I want an intelligent, well-instructed laity . . . . You ought to be able to bring out what you feel and what you mean, as well as to feel and mean it.<sup>121</sup>

The theology of the laity of the Second Vatican Council announced the advent of a new age of the Church – an age in which the Church of Christ will be led, both by the clergy and the laity through the guidance of the Spirit. It foretold the time in which laity will once again be the important part of the Church through their mission and activity.

## 2 An Ecclesiology towards Peace

In chapter five of *Gaudium et Spes*, we have the Council's thought on fostering peace and establishing a community of nations in the world. The background for this chapter was the cold war between the United States and the Soviet Union which dominated almost the entire international politics and would result in nuclear annihilation.<sup>122</sup> An important impetus for the inclusion of this chapter on peace was the teaching of Pope John XXIII in his encyclical *Pacem in Terris*,<sup>123</sup>

<sup>121</sup> John Henry Newman, "Lectures on the present position of the Catholics in England", <http://newmanreader.org/works/england/lecture.html>, 05.03.2017.

<sup>122</sup> Cf. Thomas P. Rausch, *Towards a truly Catholic Church*, p. 42. See also, Collin Schnakenberg, "Proclaiming Peace in the World: The Second Vatican Council and World Peace", <https://www.oc.edu/dotAsset/82cb9053-aab6--4182-b612--6c4698d37b53.pdf>, 13.03.2017.: "Following the Second World War, a great rivalry arose between the powers of the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Europe was impacted the most by this rivalry, divided by an "Iron Curtain" spread across the continent. As the 1950s passed into the 60s, war seemed likely in Europe".

<sup>123</sup> Pope John XXIII, "Pacem in Terris: Encyclical of Pope John XXIII on establishing universal Peace in Truth, Justice, Charity and Liberty (11 April, 1963)", [http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_j-xxiii\\_enc\\_11041963\\_pacem.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_11041963_pacem.html), 13.03.2017. Hence-

published in the year 1963. The encyclical gives us an idea of Pope John's understanding of world-peace. With this encyclical, the Church's teaching on war and peace began to undergo a major transformation.<sup>124</sup> In this encyclical, the Pope "asserted the inappropriateness of war in the modern world and highlighted the conditions needed for authentic and lasting peace."<sup>125</sup> According to him, no form of war can help in restoring world order and peace. Today in the face of wars in Iraq and Syria which are directed toward the terrorists, "questions have been raised about the adequacy about the 'just war theory' in responding to the emerging forms of aggression".<sup>126</sup> No war can be justified. Instead, the Pope calls on nations to mutually solve the problems and find ways to establish peace in the world:

The stock-piles of armaments which have been built up in various countries must be reduced all round and simultaneously by the parties concerned. Nuclear weapons must be banned. A general agreement must be reached on a suitable disarmament program, with an effective system of mutual control.<sup>127</sup>

The Pope focusses his attention on the conditions, which are helpful for peace and emphasises respect for human rights, which include not only civil/ political rights, but also social/economical rights, which are integrally related.<sup>128</sup> According to him, peace can be established and achieved only if the social order established by God through the act of creation is fully respected and observed.<sup>129</sup> He appealed

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forth cited as *Pacem in Terris*.

<sup>124</sup> The Catholic Church prior to Vatican II had accepted the "just war" theory handed down by the Church Fathers like Ambrose and Augustine. In Augustin's opinion a just war could be justified in the case of an injustice through which any good person is hurt. Hence, justice needs to be restored. Cf. *Augustinus, "Gottesstadt", Bibliothek der Kirchenväter: Eine Auswahl Patristischer Werke in Deutscher Übersetzung, Band III, Buch XIX, Kap. 7, Hersgr. O. Bardenhewer u.a., Kempten& München: Verlag der Jos Kösel'schen Buchhandlung, 1914*. Restoration of justice and doing away with injustice is Augustine's justification for a war. See also, Michael Lawler, Todd A. Salzmann & Eileen Burke-Sullivan, *The Church in the Modern World: Gaudium et Spes* Then and Now, pp. 178–179: The just war theory of Augustine was further developed by Thomas Aquinas with his three conditions for a just war: 1) One who wages the war must have sovereign authority, 2) The hostility is the effect of some crime on the part of the enemy, 3) A proper and rightful intention for war, namely, for advancement of good and destruction of evil.

<sup>125</sup> John Sniegocki, "Catholic teaching on War, Peace and Non-violence since Vatican II", *Vatican II Forty Years Later*, William Madges (Ed.), Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2011, P. 226.

<sup>126</sup> Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference, "ACSJC Discussion Guide: The Church speaks on War and Peace", <http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/publications/discussion-guides/127-the-church-speaks-on-war-and-peace>, 14.03.2017.

<sup>127</sup> *Pacem in Terris*, no. 112.

<sup>128</sup> Cf. John Sniegocki, *Catholic teaching on War, Peace and Non-violence since Vatican II*, pp. 226–227.

<sup>129</sup> Cf. Michael Ndubueze Diochi, *The Quest for Integral Development in Nigeria: Its social ethical requirements*, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2006, p. 206.

for the worldwide defence and promotion of human rights as integral part of the process of peace building.<sup>130</sup> Pope John also speaks of a possibility of establishing a public authority with the consent of all nations. This public authority should function “with fairness, absolute impartiality, and with dedication to the common good of all peoples.”<sup>131</sup> Such an authority will not only be able to prevent wars, but also enact social and economic reforms for the greater equality in the world.<sup>132</sup> The insights of Pope John XXIII provided an inspiration for the Council fathers to discuss the disadvantages of any form of war and crime against humanity and to find out ways to establish peace in the world.

## 2.1 The Council on the nature of Peace

The Council recognizes the crisis marking humanity in its advance toward maturity and the cause for this crisis, namely, “the ravages of war and the threat of war” (GS 77). It is important that the entire world devotes itself to the cause of true peace and the establishment of a truly human world. However, the Council further clarifies that peace is not mere absence of war as the contemporary world understands it; peace is not a mere maintenance of a balance of power between opposing forces, nor is it an effect of despotic union. Peace is more than that because peace is “the effect of righteousness” (GS 78).<sup>133</sup> Hence, while the absence of war may be important for peace, it’s not enough to establish peace.<sup>134</sup> Peace is the fruit of right ordering of the things in the society, which is to be attained through the perfect reign of justice. Peace is the order of tranquillity and equilibrium. Peace is a gift from God, and at the same time, a task requiring constant efforts on the part of man.<sup>135</sup> Peacebuilding is a continuous process, and it cannot be achieved unless the common welfare is safeguarded and there is a willingness to share. Respect for every individual and deliberate practice of friendliness are necessary factors in order to achieve peace. Peace is thus, “the fruit of love, for love goes beyond what justice can achieve”.

<sup>130</sup> Cf. Vimal Tirimanna, *Catholic Teaching on Violence, War and Peace in our Contemporary World: A Collection of Essays*, Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2006, p. 26.

<sup>131</sup> *Pacem in Terris* no. 138.

<sup>132</sup> Cf. John Sniegocki, *Catholic teaching on War, Peace and Non-violence since Vatican II*, p. 227.

<sup>133</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc., 2012, p. 495: “Peace is not merely the absence of war, and it is not limited to maintaining a balance of powers between adversaries. Peace cannot be attained on earth without safeguarding the goods of persons, free communication among men, respect for human dignity of persons and peoples, and the assiduous practice of fraternity.”

<sup>134</sup> Cf. Michael Lawler, Todd A. Salzmann & Eileen Burke-Sullivan, *The Church in the Modern World*, p. 189.

<sup>135</sup> Cf. Edward P. Hahnenberg, *A Concise Guide to the Documents of Vatican II*, p. 67.

Peace, which is the fruit of love, symbolises the peace of Christ – the prince of peace, who reconciled all people and united them as one people. Christ alone can give us the true peace. “The Church therefore has an indispensable element to offer to the seekers of temporal peace.”<sup>136</sup> Being the followers of Christ and gifted with his Holy Spirit, Christians are invited to work for building a peace-loving world. At the same time, the Council is full of admiration for those who renounce or avoid violence to vindicate their rights, and instead have recourse to the means which are not detrimental to the rights of others and the community.<sup>137</sup> The Council also emphasises “the right to legitimate self-defence on the part of the individuals and of countries through their governments”.<sup>138</sup>

## 2.2 Council’s Proposal for War against War

Knowing the deadly and destructive effects of war on the world and on humanity, the Council wants to wage a war against war and warfare, in the sense that it wants to propose measures to avoid wars totally and build peace through mutual efforts.

### 2.2.1 The need to avoid War

The Council begins the issue of war by describing the destructive and frightful nature of war:

Even though recent wars have wrought immense material and moral havoc on the world, the devastation of battle still rages in some parts of the world. Indeed, now that every kind of weapon produced by modern science is used in war, the savagery of war threatens to lead the combatants to barbarities far surpassing those of former ages. Moreover, the complexity of the modern world and the network of relations between countries mean that covert wars can be prolonged by new, insidious and subversive methods. In many cases terrorist methods are regarded as new ways of waging war (GS 79).

The proliferation of scientific weapons has given a new form to wars and has magnified the horror and wickedness of wars immensely. The outcome and effect of such wars could only be destruction of life. The Council undertook a new

<sup>136</sup> Matthew Levering, “Pastoral Perspectives on the Church in the Modern World”, Vatican II: Renewal within Tradition, Matthew Lamb & Matthew Levering (Eds.), New York: Oxford University Press, 2008, p. 174.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.: “Without rejecting individuals’ practice of pacifism, in short, *Gaudium et Spes* cautions that human beings in justly defending the temporal good of the individuals and the community, may in certain circumstances use violence; otherwise human beings, especially the poor and the weak, would be left entirely at the mercy of the violent assaults of the oppressors, while the others stood by and refused to offer effectual assistance.”

<sup>138</sup> Norman Tanner, *The Church and the World: Gaudium et Spes*, Inter Mirificia, p. 59.

and completely fresh appraisal of war (GS 80).<sup>139</sup> Echoing the views of recent popes<sup>140</sup> on the condemnations of total warfare, the Council declared: “Every act of war directed to the indiscriminate destruction of whole cities or vast areas with their inhabitants<sup>141</sup> is a crime against God and humanity, which merits firm and unequivocal condemnation” (GS 80). For example, “even if there is a legitimate target in the midst of a civilian population, the bombing of that population for the sake of hitting that target is immoral if it causes mass-scale deaths of civilians and loss of property”.<sup>142</sup> Hence, the Council implores “everyone, especially the government leaders and military advisors, to give unceasing consideration to their immense responsibilities before God and before the whole human race” (GS 80).

Describing the abuses and the competitions brought in by arms race in weapons of mass destruction and foreseeing the impending dangers and destruction which the use of mass destruction weapons would bring, the Council declares: “the arms race is one of the greatest curses on the human race, and the harm it inflicts on the poor is more than can be endured” (GS 81). The world is called upon to resolve conflict in a manner worthy of human beings and not have resort to destructive, inhuman means. The Council calls for a total ban on war: “It is our duty to spare no effort to achieve the complete outlawing of war by international agreement” (GS 82). The entire world is called upon to set aside all hatred and animosity and to work for the establishment of world peace. Now is the time for this new beginning. Or else the world will reach a point where the only peace it will experience will be the dread peace of death.

### 2.2.2 The Establishment of the International Community

In order to solve the problem of war, the Council proposes the formation of a democratically established and universally acknowledged public authority. This

<sup>139</sup> This can be seen as an admission of the fact that the Church wants to reconsider its teaching about a just war in the face of new situations. Cf. Norman Tanner, *The Church and the World: Gaudium et Spes, Inter Mirificia*, p. 59.

<sup>140</sup> Cf. Michael Lawler, Todd A. Salzmänn & Eileen Burke-Sullivan, *The Church in the Modern World: Gaudium et Spes Then and Now*, p. 189.: Pope Pius XI supported the just war theory but narrowed down the parameters of just cause for war. Pope John XXIII spoke of solving the problems and conflicts between States amicably and mutually without recourse to any form of violence and conflict, and he spoke of war as the last resort to resolve a conflict, when all the other alternatives have failed. Pope Paul VI, “Address to the General Assembly of the United Nations Organizations, October 4<sup>th</sup>, 1965”, <http://www.christusrex.org/www1/pope/UN-1965.html>, 15.03.2017.: Pope Paul VI in his address to UN said: “No more war, war never again. It is peace, peace which must guide the destinies of peoples and nations”.

<sup>141</sup> The Council fathers certainly have here the destruction of the cities Hiroshima and Nagasaki in mind.

<sup>142</sup> Vimal Tirimanna, *Catholic Teaching on Violence, War and Peace in our Contemporary World*, p. 108.



international community must be “vested with the effective power to ensure security for all, regard for justice, and respect for law” (GS 82). The Council, thus, gives out a strong call for an international cooperation in addressing and rooting out the causes which destroy the harmony. These root causes are: economic inequality, envy, distrust, pride, desire for power, contempt for people and other selfish passions (GS 83). If all these problems are to be overcome, the international bodies which will work and cooperate with each other effectively are to be set up. Such a community of nations must also establish an order suiting to its present responsibilities, so that the universal common good may be effectively and successfully achieved (GS 84). Every human person has the right to basic necessities of life. Hence, efforts must be made to provide these basic necessities to all. The Council also praises the existing international and regional organizations for the noteworthy work they have been doing for the betterment of humanity and appreciates the spirit of true community existing between people of different cultures and religions.

The Council strongly calls for the uprooting of economic injustice in the world. Since the development of any nation depends on human and financial resources, the Council speaks of empowerment of people through education and professional training (GS 85). Rich nations are called on to help the developing and poor nations not only by way of money but also by way of expertise. And all this must be done in a spirit of selflessness because, “the establishment of an authentic economic order on a worldwide scale can come about only by abolishing profiteering, nationalistic ambitions, desire for political domination, schemes of military strategy, and intrigues for spreading and imposing ideologies” (GS 85). There should be international cooperation on economic matters in order to address the inequalities. The international community has the responsibility to coordinate and stimulate development in a fair and equal way and in all the norms of justice are to be followed (GS 86).

Describing the role of the Christians (especially Catholic faithful), the Council asks them to wholeheartedly support the international community in their venture to establish an order of peace, justice and equality (GS 88). The faithful in rich countries are invited to share their resources and wealth with those in the poor and developing countries, so that they may be true followers of Christ. The Church’s role in the international community is to contribute to the consolidation of peace and to help to strengthen the foundations of communion among people and nations by imparting knowledge of the divine and the natural law (GS 89). “Since she is able to teach the ‘end’ the Church merits a formal place within the deliberations of the community of nations, and her members should also seek to play an important

role through Catholic and ecumenical associations (GS 90)".<sup>143</sup> *Gaudium et Spes* ends its discussion on peacebuilding with the proposal to create an organization of universal Church which would work for the cause of peace, justice and equity in the world.<sup>144</sup>

The ecclesiology towards peace is presented to us by the Council in the chapter on fostering peace and establishing community of nations. The Council dreams of a Church, which promotes peace and invites the entire world to participate in its project of establishing and promoting peace. This project cannot be achieved by aiming weapons at each other, but by extending a hand that is ready for cooperation and collaboration in order to achieve peace.

### 3 An Ecclesiology towards Communion

Communion is another aspect of the Second Vatican Council's ecclesiology. The Council presents to us an image of the Church, which wants to unite rather than divide, affirm rather than assert, gather rather than scatter. The Council presents a Church which wants to unite the different churches of Christ into one universal Church of Christ and the different religions as the pathways leading to the one and same God. In other words, the Council wants to establish communion between different churches, religions and people. The Council understands it as an important part of the missionary mandate of the Church in today's world.

#### 3.1 Communion among the churches of Christ (Ecumenism)

Ecumenism refers to the dialogue between the different Christian churches where the members try to go back to the roots and discover the common factors, which would help them to identify themselves with one another and get united in order to carry out the mission of Christ through mutual collaboration. The Collins online dictionary defines ecumenism as "the belief that the different Christian Churches should be as united as possible".<sup>145</sup> Ecumenism refers basically to the restoration of the unity through the efforts to bring the scattered sheep of Christ – the different churches into one fold – one Church, the Church of Christ. It is a quest of different churches "for reconciliation and the restoration of their visible unity in faith,

<sup>143</sup> Matthew Levering, *Vatican II: Renewal within Tradition*, p. 175.

<sup>144</sup> Edward p. Hahnenberg, *A Concise Guide to the Documents of Vatican II*, p. 68: "This proposal took concrete shape after the Council in the establishment of the Vatican secretariat for Justice and Peace."

<sup>145</sup> "Ecumenism", Collins, <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/ecumenism>, 11.04.2017.

sacramental life and witness in the world.”<sup>146</sup> It is a commitment of the different churches to the unity among themselves.

The word ‘ecumenism’ is derived from the Greek word *o’ikoum’enh* (*oikoumene*), which means the whole inhabited world.<sup>147</sup> The term ecumenism, however, is a recent or modern term. The term which was in use since earlier times of the Church was ‘ecumenical’, used in a geographical sense. The New Testament, for example, uses the word in order to refer to the whole world (Mt. 24, 14) or to the Roman Empire (Luke 2, 1).<sup>148</sup> The term gradually came to be used to designate the Church in reference to its universality. For example, during the patristic period, the term gained ecclesiological significance. It was also used to describe the first seven Councils of the Church as ‘ecumenical Councils’, meaning applying to the whole world. Thus, the term was understood in ecclesiological sense as universal, generally valid and authoritative.<sup>149</sup>

From the beginning, the Church was faced with the problem of disunity caused by schisms and heresies in the Church. The question, which is the true and legitimate Church of Christ?, pulled the different Christian denominations even more apart in their attempts for self-assertion. The unity of the Church of Christ was always threatened. The Church of Christ was divided. It was in the late nineteenth century that some protestant missionaries and student circles aware of the problems of division in the Church tried to understand the term ‘ecumenical’ in a different way and to apply it in a different way to the Church.<sup>150</sup> A divided Church could not carry out the missionary command of Christ. The Church needed to be united in heart and mind in order to carry out the missionary mandate given by Christ. Thus, the term was understood as attempts to do away with divisions and work to fulfil together the mission of Christ. The contribution of protestant thinkers and leaders in this regard was noteworthy. Their contribution to the ecumenical movement in the beginning was the response “to a new and deeper awareness that the division among the churches is a counter witness to the Gospel”.<sup>151</sup> The mission of the Church in the world could not be achieved and complete if the

<sup>146</sup> Thomas E. Fitzgerald, *The Ecumenical Movement: An Introductory History*, Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2004, p. 1.

<sup>147</sup> Cf. Norman A. Hjelm, “Ecumenical Movement”, *Christianity: The Complete Guide*, ed. John Bowden, London: Continuum, 2005, p. 363. See also, M. A. Brown, E. Duff, J. T. Ford & C. V. La Fontaine (Eds.), “Ecumenical Movement”, *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, New York: Gale, 2003, p. 71.

<sup>148</sup> Cf. Norman A. Hjelm, *Ecumenical Movement*, p. 363 & Cf. Michael Root, “Ecumenism”, *The Blackwell Companion to Catholicism*, James J. Buckley, Frederick Christian Bauerschmidt & Trent Pomplun (Eds.), Malden, Oxford, Victoria: Blackwell Publishing, 2007, p. 432.

<sup>149</sup> Cf. Aloys Klein “Ökumene”, *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, Walter Kasper u.a.(Hrsg.), Freiburg, Basel, Rom, Wien: Verlag Herder, 1998, S. 1017.

<sup>150</sup> Cf. Michael Root, *Ecumenism*, p. 432.

<sup>151</sup> Richard Gaillardetz & Catherine E. Clifford, *Keys to the Council*, p. 149.

Church of Christ suffered the wounds of disunity, discord and fragmentation. It was the need of time to forget all the differences and to work together in mutual support.

In the first half of the twentieth century, the efforts towards collaboration and cooperation were intensified and led to a more comprehensive ecumenical movement.<sup>152</sup> The ecumenical movement started concentrating primarily on rooting out the confessional differences. Even the Orthodox churches supported and joined this ecumenical initiative of the Protestants by participating in the ecumenical gatherings. What made them join this venture and work was their conviction about the unity of the Church, which was willed by Christ himself. In 1910, the Edinburgh Conference was held. This conference is regarded as the birth or the beginning of the ecumenical movement. It helped the participating churches to realise the disadvantages and destruction brought by the divisions. It is here that the Anglican and Protestant churches realised that the divisions and discord were greatest obstacle to the spread of Christianity and to the service.<sup>153</sup> Unity was seen as the key to the success of Christian missions. The Edinburgh Conference paved way for three streams of ecumenical concerns: 1) The International Missionary Council was formed to facilitate effective missionary work and to do away with divisions; 2) The Life and Work Conference in Stockholm in 1925 studied the ways to apply Christian principles and teachings to international relations and to social, industrial and economic life; 3) The Faith and Order Conference in 1927 in Switzerland discussed the different matters of faith and order over which the churches were divided.<sup>154</sup> These developments brought the members of different churches into a closer contact with each other. Gradually the three above organizations came to be merged in WCC or World Council of Churches in 1948.<sup>155</sup> Since the establishment of WCC (World Council of Churches), there have been remarkable improvements in the relations between the different churches. The establishment of WCC remains as the important event in the history of the ecumenical movement.<sup>156</sup> WCC has been the effort of different member churches to

<sup>152</sup> Cf. Michael Root, *Ecumenism*, p. 432.

<sup>153</sup> Cf. Norman A. Hjelm, *Ecumenical Movement*, p. 363.

<sup>154</sup> Cf. Norman A. Hjelm, *Ecumenical Movement*, pp. 71–72 & Richard Gaillardetz & Catherine E. Clifford, *Keys to the Council*, pp. 149–150.

<sup>155</sup> “The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the scriptures, and therefore seek to fulfil together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is a community of churches on the way to visible unity in one faith and one eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and in common life in Christ. It seeks to advance towards this unity, as Jesus prayed for his followers, “so that the world may believe.” (John 17:21)”. See, World Council of Churches, <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/about-us>, 13.04.2017.

<sup>156</sup> “When the WCC came into being at the First Assembly in 1948, there were 147 member churches. At the end of 2013, the membership stood at 345 churches. Predominately Protes-

work in mutual cooperation and coordination in order to deal with the different social, political, economic issues in the world and solve them in the light of the Gospel. However, the goal of all deliberations and efforts has been to give witness to the unity of the churches. Over the past hundred years the relationship between different Christian churches has undergone immense change. The attitude of different churches toward each other has become much positive and friendly. Instead of confronting each other in aggression and enmity, there are efforts and there is willingness to meet each other in humility, openness and friendliness. The reason for this change is: “the quest for reconciliation and the visible unity of the churches has reached a point that could not have been foreseen only fifty years ago.”<sup>157</sup>

The participation of the Roman Catholic Church in the ecumenical movement was almost nothing in the beginning. While a number of Protestant churches and many Orthodox churches participated in the movement, the Catholic Church preferred to stay away from this ecumenical initiative. The ecumenical movement was seen as rather negative and suspicious. Hence, no such initiatives were encouraged or allowed by the Catholic Church. For example, to the invitation for the Faith and Order Conference in 1927 in Switzerland, Pope Pius XI replied in his letter *Mortalium animos*: “The union of Christians can only be promoted by promoting the return to the one true Church of Christ of those who are separated from it, for in the past they have unhappily left it.”<sup>158</sup> The Catholics were prohibited to participate in any ecumenical meetings, seminars or conferences.<sup>159</sup>

A gradual change and a positive attitude of the Catholic Church towards the ecumenical movement came in with Pope Pius XII who recognized the ecumenical movement as the work and inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Catholics were called to take up these initiatives, while at the same time insisting on the need to return to the true Church of Christ which is in the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>160</sup> The Pope’s affirmation of the ecumenical movement was seen in his encouragement to the

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tant and Western in its earliest years, the WCC’s profile and identity evolved during the 1960s with the influx of many Orthodox churches from the East and newly autonomous churches from formerly colonial regions in the South.” <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/about-us/wcc-history>, 13.04.2017.

<sup>157</sup> Thomas E. Fitzgerald, *The Ecumenical Movement-An Introductory History*, p. 3.

<sup>158</sup> Pope Pius XI, “*Mortalium Animos*: Encyclical of Pope Pius XI on Religious Unity”, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-xi\\_enc\\_19280106\\_mortalium-animos.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19280106_mortalium-animos.html), 13.04.2017.

<sup>159</sup> Cf. Richard Gaillardetz & Catherine E. Clifford, *Keys to the Council*, p. 150.

<sup>160</sup> Cf. Aidan Nichols, *Catholic Thought since Enlightenment: A Survey*, Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1998, p. 160.

Catholic scholars to have dialogue with the members of other Churches on the matters of faith and morals, which could also begin and end with shared prayer.<sup>161</sup>

### 3.1.1 The Second Vatican Council and Ecumenism

The true impetus to the ecumenical initiatives in the Catholic Church came with the Second Vatican Council, which declared the restoration of the unity between the different Christian churches to be the task of every member of the Church. It was Pope John XXIII whose efforts to promote Christian unity were seen bearing fruit at the Council. His openness and friendliness toward the members of the other churches and his timely support to the ecumenical relationships through encyclicals and finally the implementation of his ecumenical initiatives in and through the Second Vatican Council, which he announced at the close of the week of prayer for Christian unity, paved way for future ecumenical relations of the Catholic Church toward other churches. It was to be an ecumenical council, a way towards the unity of Christians. It was to put an end to the problem of division in the Church by proposing ways and means to work together towards the cause of unification.<sup>162</sup> The members of the different Christian churches also were invited to attend the Council. The Pope established a secretariat for the promotion of Christian unity. The ecumenical initiatives of Pope John XXIII were continued by his successor Pope Paul VI, who made the promotion of Christian unity one of the important aspects of his mission as the head of the Catholic Church. Through his extensive curial experience, he tried to perform the tough task of implementing the demanding ideals among the divided flock of Christ.<sup>163</sup> His efforts towards and his zeal for ecumenism sprang out of his conviction that “divided Christians must rediscover one another at the sources of their faith”.<sup>164</sup>

The Catholic Church’s commitment to ecumenism was brought out in and through the Council’s promulgation of the decree on ecumenism, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, on 21 November 1964. The purpose of the decree was to direct and encourage the Catholic faithful in their efforts to establish ecumenical relations with other churches. The decree certainly marked a shift in the history of the relationship of the Catholic Church with the other churches and was aimed at the

<sup>161</sup> Cf. Timothy G. McCarthy, *The Catholic Tradition: The Church in the Twentieth Century*, Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2012, p. 181.

<sup>162</sup> Cf. Heinrich Fries, “*Konfessionen und Ökumene*”, *Christlicher Glaube in moderner Gesellschaft*, Band 29, Franz Böckle u.a. (Hrsg.), Freiburg im Breisgau: Verlag Herder, 1982, S. 217.

<sup>163</sup> Cf. Paul M. Minus, *The Catholic Rediscovery of Protestantism: A History of Roman Catholic Ecumenical Pioneering*, New York: Paulist Press, 1976, p. 226.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 227.

restoration of the unity, as the title indicates.<sup>165</sup> It raised the hopes for ecumenical relationships, which were a decade ago a sheer impossibility. In its first article, which is like a preamble, the decree clearly states its principal concern as: “the restoration of unity among all Christians” (UR 1). The document itself is the result of the Catholic Church’s desire for the restoration of unity among the Christians. While recognising the desire for unity as the work of the Holy Spirit and the effect of grace, the decree argues that the impetus to unity in itself is of the very nature of the Church. As the Council began, the central preparatory commission had three draft documents with text on ecumenism, namely, 1) A document by the commission on the eastern churches ‘that they may be one’, 2) A document on the Christian unity by the secretariat for Christian unity headed by Cardinal Bea, 3) A chapter on ecumenism in *de Ecclesia* – a document on the Church, by theological commission.<sup>166</sup> Before the end of the first session, a majority of the Council fathers agreed to the proposal of combining all the three documents into one, and the new revised schema prepared by the joint commission was presented to the Council for discussion during the last days of the second session from November 18 to December 2, 1963.<sup>167</sup> This schema consisted of five chapters. The first three chapters dealt with the principles of Catholic ecumenism, practice of ecumenism and relations with the other Christian churches, whereas chapter four was devoted to Catholic-Jewish relations, and chapter five was devoted to religious liberty. The objections continued to be raised in the debate over the schema. For example, some of the conservative bishops felt that the term ‘ecumenism’ is not a proper term, since it was used by Protestants to indicate the task of establishing unity, whereas, for the Catholics, unity was already present in the Church.<sup>168</sup> The Council accepted the first three chapters for the debate and the last two chapters were separated from the schema.<sup>169</sup> The new text spoke positively about the ecumenical movement and exhibited openness to dialogue with other Christian churches for a better future for the universal Church of Christ.<sup>170</sup>

In the third session in 1964, the Council fathers were presented with the decree on ecumenism. After the examination, corrections and discussion, the decree was

<sup>165</sup> Cf. Evelyn A. Kirkley, “Unitatis Redintegratio”, An Introductory Dictionary of Theology and Religious Studies, Orlando O. Espín, James B. Nickoloff (Eds.), Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2007, p. 1431.

<sup>166</sup> Cf. Edward P. Hahnenberg, A Concise Guide to the Documents of Vatican II, p. 111 & Cf. Richard Gaillardetz & Catherine E. Clifford, Keys to the Council., p. 150.

<sup>167</sup> Cf. Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> Cf. Ibid, pp. 150–151.

<sup>169</sup> The fourth and fifth chapters of the schema: Catholic-Jewish relations and religious liberty later evolved into two separate documents of the Vatican II: *Nostra Aetate* (Declaration on Non-Christian Religions) & *Dignitatis Humanae* (Decree on Religious Liberty).

<sup>170</sup> Edward P. Hahnenberg, A Concise Guide to the Documents of Vatican II, p. 113.

approved by an overwhelming majority (2137 yes, and 11 no) and promulgated by Pope Paul VI, on 21<sup>st</sup> November 1964, the same day on which he also promulgated the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*) and the Declaration on Religious Freedom (*Dignitatis Humanae*).<sup>171</sup> The decree on ecumenism consists of twenty four articles divided in three chapters: 1) Catholic Principles of Ecumenism, 2) The Practice of Ecumenism, 3) Churches and Ecclesial Communities Separated from the Apostolic See. The outcome of the ecumenical efforts of the Second Vatican Council was already seen at the end of the Council as the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox churches signed a declaration removing or revoking the excommunications levelled against each other.<sup>172</sup>

### 3.1.1.1 Principles of Catholic Ecumenism

Christ willed that the Church may be one (Jn 17, 21). Any kind of division in the Church is contrary to the will of Christ, scandalizes the world, and damages the sacred cause of preaching the Gospel to every creature (UR 1). By stating the Catholic principles of ecumenism, the Church officially announced its participation in the ecumenical initiatives for the restoration of the unity. The Catholic principles of ecumenism have their origin or starting point in the salvific plan of God, the salvific mission of Christ and the sanctifying and unifying presence of the Holy Spirit in the world. The Church is founded in the love of God who sent His only Son Jesus Christ to unite the world and give new life to it through his act of redemption (UR 2). The Council speaks of the sacrament of the Eucharist as a sacrament, which as the centre and culmination of the life of the Church signifies and fosters the unity in the Church.<sup>173</sup> After his Ascension to his heavenly Father, Jesus Christ sent the Holy Spirit in the world, as the principle of the unity of the Church. The Holy Spirit through His presence guides and unites the entire Church in its diversity. “The unity of the church is part of God’s gift of redemption, and one’s participation in that unity is an integral part of his experience of redemption”.<sup>174</sup>

<sup>171</sup> Cf. E. I. Cassidy, “Unitatis Redintegratio: Forty Years after the Council”, cited in: Sebastian Chukwuma Anokwulu, *The Ecumenical Imperative and Formation of Ecumenical Consciousness among Pastoral Workers: A Case study of receiving the spirit of Unitatis Redintegratio in Onitsha ecclesiastical Province of Nigeria after 45 years*, USA & Canada: Trafford Publishing, 2013, p. 31.: It was not by coincidence that the three documents were promulgated on the same day. Rather, the Council Fathers wished that the study of *Unitatis Redintegratio* be accompanied by the reading of *Lumen Gentium* and *Dignitatis Humanae*.

<sup>172</sup> Cf. Edward Idris Cassidy, *Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue: Unitatis Redintegratio, Nostra Aetate*, New York: Paulist Press, 2005, pp. 8–9.

<sup>173</sup> Cf. Walter Kasper, *The Catholic Church*, p. 305.

<sup>174</sup> Paul M. Minus, *The Catholic Rediscovery of Protestantism*, p. 237.



The decree further speaks about the threefold office in the Church, which is entrusted by Christ to the twelve apostles and to the apostle Peter in a special way, on whom Christ founded his Church. There are three visible elements of the unity found in the Catholic Church: confession of one faith, common celebration of the divine worship and institutional and structural unity. The Holy Trinity is the source and exemplar of the unity of the Church. The Church is, thus, seen as eschatological, christological, eucharistic, pneumatological, ecclesiological and trinitarian in character and not just institutional and hierarchical.<sup>175</sup>

While speaking about the divisions in the one Church of Christ, the Council does not blame the other Christian churches for the divisions; rather, the decree speaks of a shared responsibility for all that has happened, and acknowledges that, “often enough – people on both sides were to blame” (UR 3). But, no Christian faithful of today can be blamed for the past divisions and separations. The Catholic Church accepts and respects all the members of the separated communities as brothers and sisters because the members of these separated communities, through their baptism in the name of Christ, “are put in some, though imperfect, communion with the Catholic Church.” Imperfect unity indicates partial unity, whereas, perfect unity or communion refers to the full communion with the Catholic Church. It is the faith in Christ and baptism in his name, which are the basic elements uniting the entire Church. However, there still exist differences between the churches, in varying degrees, caused by difference in doctrine, discipline and varied structures, which render the communion between the churches imperfect. And it is in order to render this communion perfect by overcoming the existing obstacles that the ecumenical relations between the churches are necessary. The Council’s emphasis on ecumenical relationships was the result of the realisation of the fact on the part of the Catholic Church that the divisions and rifts between the Catholic Church and the separated churches exist because of the Church’s failure to realise its own Catholicity, its universal nature.<sup>176</sup> The point for reflection here is, how could the churches be in full communion without having to compromise their own doctrines, disciplines and structures? No church would want to do away with its doctrine, discipline or structures. Accepting the different churches with all the good that they bring along can result in mutual enrichment. Hence, there is no need for any compromise on the part of the churches.

Many of the significant elements<sup>177</sup> and endowments, which together constitute and give life to the Church, can exist even outside the visible boundaries of the Catholic Church in the form of the written Word of God, the life of grace, faith, hope and charity, with the other gifts of the Holy Spirit as well as other vis-

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<sup>175</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*

<sup>176</sup> Cf. David Martin, *Vatican II: A Historic turning Point: The Dawning of a new Epoch*, Bloomington: Author House, 2011, p. 101.

ible elements. Since all these come from Christ and lead to Christ, they belong by right to the one Church of Christ. The separated churches may have defects, which does not impart to them the full communion with the Catholic Church. Yet, this does not keep God from using them as a means of salvation for their respective members. The Spirit of God uses these Churches as means of salvation. Hence, the members of other Christian churches attain salvation “not despite their Churches, but because of them.”<sup>177</sup> In spite of the salvific value of these Churches, the Catholic Church continues to possess the fullness of means of salvation. Other Christian churches “as ‘means of salvation’ are really but not totally united with the Roman Catholic Church.”<sup>179</sup> The other churches “are not blessed with that unity which Jesus Christ wished to bestow on all those whom he has given new birth into one body”, whereas, the Catholic Church possesses the fullness of unity (which in the case of the separated churches is only partial or imperfect). The true unity of the one and true Church of Christ “subsists in the Catholic Church (LG 8)”<sup>180</sup> as something she can never lose, and we hope that it will continue to increase

<sup>177</sup> The reference to the elements is also found in the texts of the non-Catholic ecumenism. For example, the Toronto statement of the World Council of Churches (1950) says: “The member Churches of the World Council recognize in other Churches elements of the true Church. They consider that this mutual recognition obliges them to enter into a serious conversation with each other in the hope that these elements of truth will lead to the recognition of the full truth and to unity based on full truth... Such elements are the preaching of the Word, the teaching of the Holy Scriptures, and the administration of the sacraments. These elements are more than pale shadows of the life of the true Church. They are a fact of real promise and provide an opportunity to strive by frank and brotherly intercourse for the realization of a fuller unity. Moreover, Christians of all ecclesiological views throughout the world, by the preaching of the Gospel, brought men and women to salvation by Christ, to newness of life in Him, and into Christian fellowship with one another... The ecumenical movement is based upon the conviction that these ‘traces’ are to be followed. The Churches should not despise them as mere elements of truth but rejoice in them as hopeful signs pointing toward real unity. For what are these elements? Not dead remnants of the past but powerful means by which God works. Questions may and must be raised about the validity and purity of teaching and sacramental life, but there can be no question that such dynamic elements of Church life justify the hope that the Churches which maintain them will be led into fuller truth. It is through the ecumenical conversation that this recognition of truth is facilitated.” – See: WCC, “The Church, the Churches and the World Council of Churches-The Ecclesiological Significance of the World Council of Churches – The Toronto Statement”, <http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/who/morges-01-e.html>, 24.04.2017.

<sup>178</sup> Edward P. Hahnenberg, *A Concise Guide to the Documents of Vatican II*, p. 115.

<sup>179</sup> John J. McDonnell, *The World Council of Churches and the Catholic Church*, Toronto Studies in Theology, Vol. XXI, New York & Toronto: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1985, p. 184.

<sup>180</sup> Francis A. Sullivan, *The Church we believe in*, p. 26.: “The Church of Christ which is said to subsist in the Catholic Church is not an ideal Church, needing to be concretely realized in this world, but is the historical Church of the New Testament: The Church that Jesus entrusted to Peter and the other apostles to be propagated and governed... this Church continues to exist, and that is till to be found in the Catholic Church, the one, namely, that is governed by the successors of Peter.”

until the end of time” (UR 4).<sup>181</sup> This does not however mean that only the non-Catholic churches have to work for the ecumenism, whereas the Catholic Church invites them to Catholic fullness and waits.<sup>182</sup> The Catholic Church continues to progress in perfection<sup>183</sup>, and at the same time, “every renewal of the Church essentially consists in an increase of fidelity to her own calling” (UR 6). Hence, the Catholic Church takes an active part in ecumenical movement. The very fact that the decree recognizes the elements of the Church of Christ present in the separated Churches, is the confirmation of the fact that the Church of Christ is present in other churches. Ecumenism is a task of all the Churches to work towards the restoration of unity, which is the Lord’s gift to His Church. This task will be fulfilled when the obstacles and hurdles on the way towards full communion are overcome and perfect unity is achieved.

The ecumenical movement in this respect refers to “initiatives and activities encouraged and organized, according to the various needs of the Church and as opportunities offer, to promote Christian unity” (UR 4). The decree makes a special mention of the importance of dialogue, collaboration in ministry and common prayer. In any ecumenical activity, one must, firstly, avoid every expression, judgement and action which do not conform to the truth about the separated brethren and so make mutual relations with them more difficult (UR 4). Secondly, there should be dialogue based on the true and exact teachings of the churches involved. Such dialogue will lead to mutual appreciation and acceptance of each other’s religious life and teachings. Thirdly, the dialogue should facilitate better cooperation and intense participation of the churches in fulfilling their duties (demanded by the Christian conscience) toward the common good of humanity. Common prayer, wherever possible and permitted, is also welcome. Finally, “all are led to examine their faithfulness to Christ’s will for the Church and, wherever necessary, undertake with vigour the task of renewal and reform” (UR 4). In this way, “once the obstacles to perfect ecclesiastical communion are overcome, all Christians will be gathered, in a common celebration of the Eucharist, into the unity of the one and only Church, which Christ bestowed on his Church from the beginning” (UR 4). This is the true goal of the ecumenical movement. The Council, thus, exhorts all the Catholic faithful “to recognize the signs of times” and engage and participate

<sup>181</sup> The change in the self-understanding of the Catholic Church from “the Church of Christ is in the Catholic Church” to “the Church of Christ subsists in the Catholic Church” at the Council, speaks about the efforts of the Catholic Church towards overcoming the exclusive identification between the Church of Christ and the Catholic Church. Cf. Angelo Maffei, *Ecumenical Dialogue*, transl. Lorelei F. Fuchs, Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2005, p. 27.

<sup>182</sup> Cf. Charles Morerod, “The Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis Redintegratio*”, *Vatican II: Renewal within Tradition*, Matthew L. Lamb & Matthew Levering (Eds.), New York: Oxford University Press, 2008, P. 317.

<sup>183</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*

actively in the work of ecumenism, and “commends this work to the bishops everywhere in the world that it may be advanced skilfully and guided wisely” (UR 4).

### 3.1.1.2 *The Practice of Ecumenism*

The second chapter of the decree speaks about the Catholic Church’s practice of ecumenism. The concern for restoring unity is the responsibility of the whole Church – faithful and clergy alike, who according to their capabilities and talents engage in ecumenism (UR 5). This common concern on the part of all Christ’s faithful manifests to some extent the existing communal bond between all Christians. This concern is expressed in the first place “by renewal in the Catholic Church in fidelity to its own calling.”<sup>184</sup> The “deficiencies in moral conduct or in Church discipline, or even in the way Church teaching has been formulated” (UR 6), have in the past been the cause of divisions in the Church. Hence, renewal and continuous reformation and revival in the Church are important and have ecumenical significance.

The decree calls for interior conversion as the first and important step towards true ecumenism. For “there can be no ecumenism worthy of the name without interior conversion” (UR 7). Interior preparation is a very important step if the churches want to heal the wounds of division.<sup>185</sup> Interior conversion leads to the newness of heart and mind, it leads one to seek and offer forgiveness. This has “the double effect of making those who undergo such conversion more open to others and closer to the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit: Those who are with God are in communion with others who are also with God.”<sup>186</sup> “This change of heart and holiness of life, along with public and private prayer for the unity of Christians, should be regarded as the soul of the whole ecumenical movement, and merits the name, ‘spiritual ecumenism’ (UR 8).”<sup>187</sup> Spiritual ecumenism does not in any way downplay the important role of theological dialogue in ecumenism. On the contrary, “it opens our eyes and our hearts to the understanding of revealed truth, and enables us to recognize it and welcome it . . . .”<sup>188</sup> It has its roots in the “Chris-

<sup>184</sup> Edward Idris Cassidy, *Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue*, p. 15.

<sup>185</sup> Cf. Otto Karrer, *Die Christliche Einheit – Gabe und Aufgabe: Begegnung-Eone Ökumenische Schriftenreihe, Band V, Luzern & Stuttgart: Rüber Verlag, 1963, S. 11.*

<sup>186</sup> Charles Morerod, *The Decree on Ecumenism, Unitatis Redintegratio*, p. 319.

<sup>187</sup> Spiritual ecumenism was developed by Abbe Paul Couturier of Lyons and Max Josef Metzger. The Vatican II took up this idea and highlighted it as the central aspect of ecumenism. Cf. Walter Kasper, *The Catholic Church*, p. 310.

<sup>188</sup> Pope John Paul II, “Spiritual Ecumenism is Soul of Ecumenical Movement: The Holy Father’s Homily on January 25, 2003 during the celebration of Vespers in the Basilica of St. Paul outside the Walls”, <https://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/view.cfm?recnum=4656>, 25.04.2017.

tian's commitment to genuine *metanoia*, a complete turning to God".<sup>189</sup> Spiritual ecumenism today has become an important accompanying principle for the ecumenical engagements of all the churches "intent on associating themselves with Christ in his prayer "that all may be one (John 17, 20)".<sup>190</sup> Spiritual ecumenism is truly the work of the Holy Spirit, for in the practice of spiritual ecumenism it is the Holy Spirit who "first addresses the individuals and churches, calling forth in them an attitude of ecumenism and, once having called it forth, sustaining this attitude within them and among them".<sup>191</sup> In this sense, the conversion or change of heart "applies not only to the individual but also to the transformation of the community . . . ".<sup>192</sup> The Holy Spirit moves us to overcome prejudices, take responsibility for the wounds on the Church of Christ and in humility and openness undertake reform and renewal in the Church.<sup>193</sup>

Regarding the question of common worship or participation in the sacraments celebrated in separated churches, the decree presents two conflicting principles: first, expressing the unity of the Church and second, sharing in the means of grace. Common worship as an expression of unity is forbidden but the grace to be obtained from it sometimes allows this practice (UR 8).<sup>194</sup> The decree leaves it to the discretion and prudent decision of the local episcopal authority as long as the decision stands in tune with the directives either of bishops' conference or the Holy See.

The decree speaks of ecumenical formation as a preparation for ecumenical relations. It is important that Catholics have a good knowledge about their separated brethren, their respective doctrines, their history, spiritual and liturgical life, religious psychology and their cultural background, so that the dialogue becomes fruitful (UR 9). This will help them not only to better understand the outlook of

<sup>189</sup> Thaddeus D. Horgan, "Twenty-five Years of Interchurch Relations: A Report", *Walking Together: Roman Catholics and Ecumenism Twenty-five Years after Vatican II*, Thaddeus D. Horgan (Ed.), Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990, p. 68.

<sup>190</sup> Frederick M. Bliss, *Catholic and Ecumenical: History and Hope-Why the Catholic Church is ecumenical and what she is doing about it*, USA: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007, p. 1.

<sup>191</sup> J. Francis Stafford, "An Ecumenical Metaphor: Mary and Elizabeth", *Walking Together: Roman Catholics and Ecumenism Twenty-five Years after Vatican II*, Thaddeus D. Horgan (Ed.), Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990, p. 114.

<sup>192</sup> Gerard Bekes & Vilmos Vajta (Eds.), "The Decree on Ecumenism-Ten Years after: Observations and Reflections of an International Colloquium on the ecumenical development between 1964 and 1974, Rome, November 19–22, 1974", *Unitatis Redintegratio 1964–1974: The Impact of the Decree on Ecumenism*, Roma: Editrice Anselmiana 1977, p. 160.

<sup>193</sup> Cf. Walter Kasper, *The Catholic Church*.

<sup>194</sup> Edward P. Hahnenberg, *A Concise Guide to the Documents of Vatican II*, p. 116.: "Held in tension here is the Church's twofold conviction that the Eucharist is both sign and cause of Church unity. As sign, common worship is generally forbidden- for the Eucharist cannot symbolize a unity that does not exist. As a cause, common worship is sometimes commended-for in worshipping together we allow God's grace to lead us toward unity."

the separated brothers and sisters, but also to present their own belief in an apt manner. The decree further makes two important statements, which are important and “central to any understanding of Catholic ecumenism”<sup>195</sup>: First, “Catholic theologians, standing fast by the teaching of the Church yet searching together with separated brothers and sisters into the divine mysteries, should do so with love for truth, with charity, and with humility” and second, “When comparing doctrines with one another, they should remember that in catholic doctrine there exists an order or ‘hierarchy’ of truths, since they vary in their relation to the foundation of Christian faith” (UR 11).<sup>196</sup> This statement was influenced by archbishop Pangrazio’s claim that there are primary truths of Christianity, which unite all the Christians, whereas the secondary truths separate them.<sup>197</sup> The churches have a common ground to justify their matters of faith and morals pertaining to the core of the Gospel or Faith.<sup>198</sup> It is more important to concentrate and value what unites the churches, than to argue and debate over what divides them.

The decree, finally, calls all the members of the different Christian churches to come together and work in collaboration and mutual support for the social, economic and religious welfare of all the people. Such a collaboration between the churches will not only help them to bear testimony to the common hope which they share, but also will make the path of unity smooth (UR 12).

### *3.1.1.3 Churches and the Ecclesial communities separated from the Roman Apostolic See*

The decree turns its attention to the relationship of the Roman Catholic Church with Eastern Churches and the churches and ecclesial communities in the West. These divisions have great historical, political, cultural and theological differences, which call for prudent ecumenical action, without minimizing the differences (UR 13).

#### **A. Eastern Churches**

The Council gives special consideration to the Eastern Churches, and the decree speaks very positively about them. It recounts various ways in which these churches are related to the Roman Catholic Church. For example, the Eastern

<sup>195</sup> Charles Morerod, *The Decree on Ecumenism, Unitatis Redintegratio*, p. 323.

<sup>196</sup> Douglas Bushman, “Understanding The Hierarchy of Truths”, [http://www.ignatiusinsight.com/features2005/dbushman\\_hiertruths\\_sept05.asp](http://www.ignatiusinsight.com/features2005/dbushman_hiertruths_sept05.asp), 25.04.2017.: Hierarchy of truths does not mean that some truths are of lesser importance than others; rather, “some truths are based on others as of a higher priority and are illumined by them”. Hence, it is important to explain the connection of these truths to the centre (Faith).

<sup>197</sup> Cf. Paul M. Minus, *The Catholic Rediscovery of Protestantism*, p. 240.

<sup>198</sup> Cf. Richard P. McBrien, “The Hierarchy of Truths”, <http://uploads.weconnect.com/mce/93ac1946cb917abc4735cdd1ee5fb7e3c6e164de/Hierarchy%20of%20Truths.pdf>, 25.04.2017.

Churches “have had a treasury from which the Church of the West has drawn largely for its liturgy, spiritual tradition and law . . . . The basic dogmas of the Christian faith concerning the Trinity and the Word of God made flesh from the Virgin Mary were defined in ecumenical councils held in the East” (UR 14). However, the divisions somehow crept in due to the lack of mutual understanding and charity, accompanied by some external causes. The Council being aware of the Catholic Church’s special bond with the Eastern Churches, urges especially those who commit themselves to the work of restoring full communion that is desired between the Eastern Churches and the Catholic Church to give special consideration to the origins and growth of these Churches (UR 14) and “to the historic links that for so many centuries characterized their relations with the Roman See”.<sup>199</sup>

The Eastern Churches possess true sacraments by the apostolic succession, Eucharist and the priesthood and are, thereby, in closest intimacy with the Roman Catholic Church. Hence, given the suitable circumstances and the approval of Church authority, some common worship with these Churches is encouraged (UR 15). The diverse customs and liturgical practices of the Eastern Churches are not a threat or obstacle to the unity of the Church; rather, they add to the beauty of the Church (UR 16). The decree considers it of utmost importance “to understand, venerate, preserve and foster the rich liturgical and spiritual heritage of the Eastern Churches in order faithfully to preserve the fullness of Christian tradition and to bring about reconciliation between eastern and western churches” (UR 15). The part of the decree on Eastern Churches ends with the Council’s invitation to the faithful to prayer, dialogue and collaboration in different activities, so that all obstacles to unity may be overcome and the Churches may become one (UR 18).

#### B. Churches of the West

The decree also makes a careful presentation of the relation with the separated churches and ecclesial communities in the West who are “bound to the Catholic Church by an especially close relationship as a result of the long span of earlier centuries when the Christian people had lived in ecclesiastical communion” (UR 19). At the same time, there are also “weighty differences”. In spite of all these differences, the Council wants to go ahead and establish ecumenical relations with these churches. The decree begins with the articulation of that which is held in common: the confession about Jesus Christ as God and Saviour, Scriptures, baptism, worship, the effort to live a Christian moral life.<sup>200</sup> However, these separated communities “lack the fullness of unity which flows from baptism” (UR 22). These churches also lack the sacrament of Holy Orders. “To the extent that this

<sup>199</sup> Edward Idris Cassidy, *Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue*, p. 16.

<sup>200</sup> Cf. Edward p. Hahnenberg, *A Concise Guide to the Documents of Vatican II*, p. 118.

visible sign of the ministerial communion is lacking”<sup>201</sup> the Council believes, that these churches “have not preserved the proper reality of the eucharistic mystery in its fullness” (UR 22). Despite these differences, there are “a number of elements of faith and sacramental life which constitute bonds of existing theological communion between the Catholic Church and the various ecclesial communities”.<sup>202</sup> The decree concludes by urging the faithful “to abstain from any frivolous or imprudent zeal, such as can cause harm to true progress toward unity” and to undertake and engage in an ecumenical activity which is “fully sincere and Catholic, that is, loyal to the truth we have received from the Apostles and the Fathers, and in harmony with the faith which the Catholic Church has always professed, and at the same time tending toward that fullness in which our Lord wants his Body to grow in the course of time” (UR 24). Being aware of the fact that the unity of the Church cannot be achieved by mere human efforts and powers and gifts, the Council places its hope “entirely in the prayer of Christ for the Church, in the love of the Father for us, and in the power of the holy Spirit” (UR 24).

### 3.1.2 Ecumenism after Vatican II

The seed of ecumenism sown by the Catholic Church with *Unitatis Redintegratio* at the Vatican II has since then germinated and turned into a plant which is surely already bearing fruits and flowers in the form of improved relationship between the Catholic Church and other churches. Since Vatican II, a lot of efforts have been gone into taking the ecumenical initiative of the Council further to the heights of success in the different parts of the world.

#### 3.1.2.1 *The Publications of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity*

Already during the Council’s discussion on *Unitatis Redintegratio*, many Council fathers asked for detailed directives and guidelines for the practical applications of the decree. Hence, the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity (SPCU) was entrusted with the responsibility for the promotion of the ecumenical spirit of the Council’s decree by providing proper directives. The SPCU published the first directory entitled *Directory for the application of the decisions of the Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican concerning ecumenical matters* in two parts. The first part of the directory was published in 1967 and the second part in the year 1970. The directory was meant to help and guide all the Catholic faithful in their ecumenical tasks. The first part of the directory (1967) contained directives, which would help the Catholic faithful in the whole world to “understand the significance of the recognition of the baptism conferred by other Christian

<sup>201</sup> Richard Gaillardetz & Catherine Ford, *Keys to the Council*, p. 157.

<sup>202</sup> Francis Sullivan, *A Church we believe in*, p. 60.



communities”.<sup>203</sup> The directory also re-emphasises the decree’s idea of spiritual ecumenism, which is to be expressed in prayer and in the celebration of the Eucharist by every faithful, even though he/she may not live among the separated brethren.<sup>204</sup> The directory further speaks about the decree’s proposition of sharing the spiritual resources and activities, which are a manifestation of the already existing unity and also a way to further strengthen this unity.<sup>205</sup> To facilitate this, there is in the directory a call to set up ecumenical commissions at the diocesan and national level respectively.<sup>206</sup>

The second part of the Ecumenical Directory, published in 1970, focuses its attention mainly on the ecumenical aspects in the training of priests in the seminaries as well as of the lay people in the Catholic universities,<sup>207</sup> so that “all should be of ecumenical mind in the Church”.<sup>208</sup> The directory also makes mention of the special formation or training in ecumenism “in the preparation for and conduct of ecumenical dialogue and for progress towards Christian unity.”<sup>209</sup>

On January 7, 1970, the Secretariat published a *Declaration on the Position of the Catholic Church on the celebration of the Eucharist in common by Christians of different Confessions*.<sup>210</sup> In the same year, the secretariat also published a document titled as: *Reflections and Suggestions concerning Ecumenical matters*, which was to serve as “a working instrument, a qualified and sure guide . . . for encouraging, developing and guiding” the ecumenical dialogue.<sup>211</sup> The document on *Ecumenical Collaboration at the Regional, National and Local levels* was published in the year 1975. It was aimed at providing guidelines to all those who are active in ecumenism at the local level.<sup>212</sup>

<sup>203</sup> Edward Idris Cassidy, *Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue*, p. 20.

<sup>204</sup> Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity (SPCK), “Directory for the application of the decisions of the Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican Concerning ecumenical matters, May 14, 1967, part I”, [https://archive.org/stream/directoryforappl00cath/directoryforappl00cath\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/directoryforappl00cath/directoryforappl00cath_djvu.txt), 27.04.2017. Henceforth cited as Ecumenical Directory.

<sup>205</sup> Cf. K. J. Thomas, *Ecumenism: A Call to Unity*, Bangalore: St. Peter’s Pontifical Institute Publications, 2007, p. 91.

<sup>206</sup> Cf. Ecumenical Directory, nos. 3–8.

<sup>207</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 71–86.

<sup>208</sup> K. J. Thomas, *Ecumenism: A Call to Unity*, p. 91.

<sup>209</sup> Cf. Ecumenical Directory, no. 87.

<sup>210</sup> SPUC (Secretariat for promoting Christian Unity), “Declaration on the Position of the Catholic Church on the celebration of the Eucharist in common by Christians of different Confessions”, <http://www.ewtn.com/library/curia/pccucom1.htm>, 27.04.2017.

<sup>211</sup> SPCU, “Reflections and Suggestions concerning Ecumenical Dialogue, 15th August 1970”, [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/chrstuni/information\\_service/pdf/information\\_service\\_12\\_en.pdf](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/information_service/pdf/information_service_12_en.pdf), 27.04.2017.

<sup>212</sup> SPCU, “Ecumenical Collaboration at the Regional, National and Local levels, 1975” [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/chrstuni/information\\_service/pdf/information\\_service\\_26\\_en.pdf](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/information_service/pdf/information_service_26_en.pdf), 27.04.2017.

The promulgation of the Revised Code of Canon Law in 1983 and the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches in 1990 brought in “a new and determining factor that naturally affected the ecumenical activity within the Catholic Church.”<sup>213</sup> On 25 March 1993, the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity published the second ecumenical directory: *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms of Ecumenism*. The new Ecumenical Directory was not only the outcome of the growth in the Catholic Church’s ecumenical commitment, it was also a response to the call of Pope John Paul II for the need to expand and advance the ecumenical activity of the Catholic Church to all the spheres of its activity.<sup>214</sup> The new Ecumenical Directory has two important characteristics: Firstly, it contains all the principles and norms issued by the Catholic Church regarding ecumenism, and secondly, it not only serves the purpose of consultation, but will also function as an instrument to provide all ecumenical information.<sup>215</sup>

### 3.1.2.2 *The Encyclical Ut Unum Sint, 1995*

Another important document on the Catholic ecumenism was the encyclical of Pope John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint* – *That all may be one* (On Commitment to Ecumenism) published on 25 May 1995. The first ever to be published by a Pope on ecumenism, the encyclical stands as the culmination of the ecumenical efforts of the Catholic Church in the twentieth century.<sup>216</sup> The Pope “stresses the urgency of taking initiatives and making new efforts to overcome the divisions of the past among Christians.”<sup>217</sup> The Pope sees the Vatican II’s call to Christian unity greatly echoing in the hearts of all the faithful even today.<sup>218</sup> The encyclical has three chapters.

The first chapter titled as “The Catholic Church’s Commitment to Ecumenism” deals with the theology of ecumenism. The encyclical reaffirms the call of Vatican II to all the faithful to work for the unity of the Church. This call to work for unity of the Church “is not just some sort of appendix, which is added to the Church’s traditional activity. Rather, ecumenism is an organic part of her life and work, and consequently must pervade all that she is and does; it must be like

<sup>213</sup> Edward Idris Cassidy, *Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue*, p. 21.

<sup>214</sup> Cf. K. J. Thomas, *Ecumenism: A Call to Unity*, p. 98.

<sup>215</sup> Cf. Edward Idris Cassidy, *Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue*, p. 22.

<sup>216</sup> Michael Root, *Ecumenism*, p. 444.

<sup>217</sup> Edward Idris Cassidy, “That they may all be One: The Imperatives and Prospects of Christian Unity”, <https://www.firstthings.com/article/1997/01/004-that-they-may-all-be-one-the-imperatives-and-prospects-of-christian-unity>, 28.04.2017.

<sup>218</sup> Cf. Pope John Paul, “Encyclical Letter *Ut Unum Sint* On Commitment to Ecumenism”, *Encyclicals*, Trivendrum: Carmel International Publishing House, 2005, p. 157. Henceforth cited as UUS.

the fruit borne by a healthy and flourishing tree which grows to its full stature.”<sup>219</sup> The Pope reasserts two important ideas of the decree on ecumenism: Firstly, God wills unity of the entire Church,<sup>220</sup> secondly, this unity that is guided by the Holy Spirit is not just a gathering of individuals, rather, it is a unity constituted by the bounds of the profession of faith, the sacraments, and hierarchical communion.<sup>221</sup> The unity of Christians “is none other than the manifestation of the grace by which God makes them share in his own communion, which is eternal.”<sup>222</sup> The basis of this communion or unity, according to John Paul II, is constituted by the elements of sanctification and truth present in them.

Since unity is the will of God, all Christians baptised in the name of Jesus Christ and formed into one Body of Christ, have the duty to work to achieve the fullness of this unity by making the “fullness of reconciliation and unity” present in the Body of Christ.<sup>223</sup> “To believe in Christ means to desire unity; to desire unity means to desire the Church; to desire the Church means to desire the communion of grace which corresponds to the Father’s plan from all eternity.”<sup>224</sup> Unless Christ’s faithful are united, they cannot fulfil the missionary mandate of Christ effectively. Division in the Church contradicts the will and plan of God and creates obstacles to the mission of proclamation of good news (UR 1). Hence, it is a serious issue, which needs a special attention. The attainment of unity among the Christians is a challenge for the Christians, but for the world “cooperation of Christians becomes a form of common Christian witness and a means of evangelization which benefits all involved”.<sup>225</sup> The Pope gratefully makes mention of the World Council of Churches, who has contributed a lot to this ecumenical collaboration for the good of the humanity.<sup>226</sup>

The second chapter, titled as “The Fruits of Dialogue”, describes the present state of the ecumenical relations. The ecumenical interests of the Catholic Church have surely made a great progress in the last thirty years after Vatican II and brought an immense change of attitudes.<sup>227</sup> The increased awareness of their belongingness to Christ has led the Christian churches to treat each other not as en-

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<sup>219</sup> UUS., no. 20.

<sup>220</sup> Cf. UUS, nos. 6–8.

<sup>221</sup> Cf. Ibid.

<sup>222</sup> Ogundipe Olumide, “A Summary on Pope John Paul II Encyclical Letter: *Ut Unum Sint*”, <https://frogundipe.wordpress.com/2016/09/08/a-summary-on-pope-john-paul-ii-encyclical-letter-ut-unum-sint/>, 28.04.2017.

<sup>223</sup> Edward Idris Cassidy, *That They May All Be One*.

<sup>224</sup> UUS., no. 9.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid., no. 40.

<sup>226</sup> Cf. Ibid., no. 43.

<sup>227</sup> Cf. Ibid., no. 41.

emies but as brothers and sisters, children of the one Father, who is in heaven.<sup>228</sup> The expression “separated brethren” is today being replaced by expressions which manifest and evoke communion between the churches “linked to the baptismal character”.<sup>229</sup> The “universal brotherhood” has been the characteristic feature and a firm conviction of all the Christians in their ecumenical endeavours to forget the past rivalry between them and to help one another in fraternal charity as the disciples of Christ.<sup>230</sup> This change of attitudes is not just expressed in words, but is “also accompanied by practical application in various forms of cooperation and solidarity in the service of humanity.”<sup>231</sup> The relationship with other Christian communities in dialogue has not only helped the Christians “to discover what God is bringing about” in them, but also to become aware “of the witness” which they bear to God and Christ.<sup>232</sup>

The Pope also speaks about the development of the relations of the Catholic Church with the ecclesial communities of East and West.<sup>233</sup> He emphasises dialogue as an important step to strengthening the relations. “The real, though imperfect communion that the Second Vatican Council found to be existing between the baptised has continued to grow and be strengthened, especially through prayer and dialogue.”<sup>234</sup> Besides the theological dialogue, the Pope also speaks of ecumenical cooperation at the social and cultural level: “to defend the human dignity, to promote peace, to apply the Gospel to social life, to bring the Christian spirit to the world of science and of the arts.”<sup>235</sup> The ecumenical cooperation even at these levels will facilitate unity, because even if the doctrinal differences between the churches remain, the already existing communion of faith will be the basis for their action.<sup>236</sup>

The third chapter of the encyclical titled, *Quanta est Nobis Via* (*How far is our journey*), begins with a question by Pope John Paul II: “How much further must we travel until that blessed day when full unity in faith will be attained and we can celebrate in peace the Holy Eucharist of the Lord?”<sup>237</sup> The unity that we have achieved so far on the basis of certain fundamental doctrinal unity regarding baptism, Eucharist, ministry and authority is partial unity and just one stage of the

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<sup>228</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, no. 42.

<sup>229</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*

<sup>230</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*

<sup>231</sup> Edward Idris Cassidy, *Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue*, p. 33.

<sup>232</sup> UUS., no. 48.

<sup>233</sup> *Ibid.*, nos. 50–69.

<sup>234</sup> Edward Idris Cassidy, *Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue*, p. 33.

<sup>235</sup> UUS., no. 74.

<sup>236</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, no. 75.

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 77.

journey towards full unity.<sup>238</sup> We need to continue the journey towards this goal, and all our efforts should be directed towards it. This ecumenical journey towards the necessary and sufficient unity willed by Christ requires patient and courageous efforts, without imposing any burden beyond that which is strictly necessary.<sup>239</sup> The Pope mentions the following areas, which are to be addressed before a true consensus of faith can be attained: 1) The relationship between Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition, 2) The Eucharist, 3) Ordination, 4) The Magisterium of the Church, 5) Blessed Virgin Mary as the Mother of God and Icon of the Church.<sup>240</sup> The Pope also affirms that it is the responsibility of the Bishop of Rome as the successor of the Apostle Peter to care for the universal Church and to lead the ecumenical task by recalling the need for full communion among the Christian communities.<sup>241</sup> The Bishop of Rome as the first servant of unity must ensure the communion of all churches.

At the end of the encyclical, the Pope calls all the Catholic faithful as well as all the Christian churches to conversion and a change of heart: “Mend your ways, encourage one another, live in harmony, and the God of love and peace will be with you . . . . The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all” (2 Cor 13, 11&13).<sup>242</sup>

### 3.1.2.3 *Ecumenism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*

The question asked by Pope John Paul II in UUS (no. 77) is a question which needs to be answered as the Catholic Church journeys in the twenty-first century. The Church tries to answer the question by undertaking initiatives which indicate development in the relations with other churches. In the years following the Vatican II and the decree *Unitatis Redintegratio*, the Catholic Church has produced a number of documents on ecumenism as we saw earlier. However, these publications were also accompanied by the practical applications or practical execution. There have been a lot of efforts to collaborate with other churches and Christian organizations which have common goals and convictions. Every year the Vatican, through its Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity, organizes an ecumenical prayer gathering attended by different heads and members of the different ecclesial communities. This is surely a sign of the longing for and the journey towards the unity willed by Christ. It's not only at the universal but also at the local level that the Catholic Church has been taking ecumenism very seriously as an important aspect of its mission and activity.

<sup>238</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, nos. 77–78.

<sup>239</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, no. 78.

<sup>240</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, no. 79.

<sup>241</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, no. 4.

<sup>242</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 103.

However, many feel that “official ecumenism seems to be stagnant, even dead in water.”<sup>243</sup> Many feel that all that the Catholic Church has done in the field of ecumenism since the Council is much of theoretical reflections and enlightenment and much less practical application of it. There are some who see ecumenism of the past years as nothing but confessionalism: “It is often said that ecumenism has been too defensive, overconcerned with the preservation of distinctive identity, unwilling to take risks for the sake of inclusiveness. Rome and the Catholic bishops are often criticised for being too intransigent.”<sup>244</sup> For some, institutional Christianity is becoming irrelevant, since its members are no more finding meaning in their membership to it and are leaving the churches.<sup>245</sup> In the words of Cardinal Maria Martini, the Church is tired and seems to be two hundred years behind the present times.<sup>246</sup>

There are new challenges and obstacles on the way to the ecumenical journey as Cardinal Kurt Koch, the prefect of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity observes. “There is a new emphasis on denominational identity at the cost of the unity.”<sup>247</sup> There are many Churches and ecclesial communities of reformation who are proposing mutual recognition of the different churches as Churches, as parts of the one Church of Christ, and are, thereby, abandoning the original goal of ecumenism, which is unity.<sup>248</sup> Another obstacle affecting Catholic ecumenical relations has to do with ethical controversies, says Cardinal Koch: “massive tensions and divergences in ecumenism have emerged in the sphere of ethics. They have become particularly visible in the Anglican World Communion and have led to the verge of a painful split and have also led to whole groupings entering the Catholic Church together with their priests and bishops. Diverging responses for example to bio-ethical and socio-ethical challenges on the one hand, and on the other to the ethical problem of homosexuality – whether in the admission of practicing homosexual to ecclesial office or in the practice of blessing homosexual partnerships – can of course also be found in other Christian churches and ecclesial communities and are in part dealt with by them internally in a quite polarizing manner. The fundamental problem underlying this phe-

<sup>243</sup> Thomas P. Rausch, “Where is Ecumenism Today”, <https://www.scd.org/sites/default/files/2017-06/Where-is-Ecumenism-Today.pdf>, 29.04.2017.

<sup>244</sup> Avery Dulles, “Ecumenism without illusions: A Catholic Perspective”, <https://www.firstthings.com/article/1990/06/ecumenism-without-illusions-a-catholic-perspective>, 20.04.2017.

<sup>245</sup> Cf. Ibid.

<sup>246</sup> Cf. John L. Allan, “Translated final interview with Martini”, <https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/translated-final-interview-martini>, 29.04.2017.

<sup>247</sup> Thomas P. Rausch, *Where is Ecumenism Today*.

<sup>248</sup> Cf. Kurt Cardinal Koch, “Developments and Challenges in Ecumenism today”, <http://www.katolsk.no/tro/tema/ekumenikk/artikler/developments-and-challenges-in-ecumenism-today>, 29.04.2017.

nomenon consists in the question whether and to what extent it is legitimate for Christian Churches to adjust their own ethical standards to the spirit of the times, or whether they must reject it.”<sup>249</sup> In Cardinal Koch’s opinion, it is a paradox that “the churches have succeeded in overcoming the denominational differences of faith or have at least guided them towards rapprochement, but have problems with each other due to ethical differences”.<sup>250</sup> At the same time, there are also problems in sacramental practices. For example, “Some Orthodox churches today rebaptize the converts from other Churches and some protestant Churches no longer see baptism as a prerequisite for participating in the Lord’s Supper. Nor is ordination always required for eucharistic celebration.”<sup>251</sup>

The challenges and obstacles in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century ecumenism point to the fact that “much more than what has already been accomplished remains to be done. We are only at the beginning of a new beginning.”<sup>252</sup> There is a need to go back to the foundations of ecumenism and renew them and strengthen them. As a help to ecumenism today, Cardinal Kasper outlines the Catholic vision of ecumenism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century in five points.<sup>253</sup>

1. Renewed clarity on theological foundations.
2. A proper understanding of the shared vision and goal of ecumenism.
3. The way of ecumenism, identical to Christian way of life.
4. The practice of spiritual ecumenism as the heart and soul of ecumenical movement.
5. Practical ecumenism through which all Christians united in heart and soul work towards the unity of humanity.

The Vatican II decree on ecumenism was instrumental in opening the Catholic Church to the other churches and to their viewpoints. This openness of the Church was manifested in its humility to take the shared responsibility for the divisions of the past, its readiness to respect and accept the other churches as members of the one united family of God and its determination to undertake together with other churches the journey towards the unity willed by Christ, by knowing each other closely, praying with each other and working hand-in-hand with each other. A due credit needs to be given to the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, which played an important role “as the bridge between the Catholic and non-Catholic

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<sup>249</sup> Ibid.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid.

<sup>251</sup> Thomas P. Rausch, *Where is Ecumenism Today*.

<sup>252</sup> Cardinal Walter Kasper, “The Ecumenical Movement in the 21st Century”, <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/commissions/jwg-rcc-wcc/the-ecumenical-movement-in-the-21st-century>, 29.04.2017.

<sup>253</sup> Cf. Ibid.

churches”.<sup>254</sup> The secretariat undertook different initiatives in order to help the mind of the Council on ecumenism reach all the Christian faithful. The work of the Council has been continued by the popes even to date.

It is important to understand the fact, that the progress in ecumenism is gradual. Hence, there is no need to get discouraged, especially in the face of different and new obstacles with which the Catholic Church is confronted. The obstacles and the slow progress are in no way a contradiction to the fact that ecumenism has borne rich fruits since Vatican II. Rather, they may be an indication: “Possibly we stand on the verge of a new ecumenical moment in which we shall have to generate new options”.<sup>255</sup> This calls for reading the decree *Unitatis Redintegratio* in the context of the changing situation of the world and of the churches and to apply it anew, so that ecumenism in the present times may become a possibility through the grace of Christ and the help of his Spirit who is the initiator of the ecumenical movement.

### 3.2 Dialogue with the Religions

Dialogue with different religious traditions of the world has been one among the most important initiatives of the Catholic Church begun with the Council. The Council, through its teaching on other religions, gave the Catholic Church a platform to establish its interreligious relationships. It was at the Second Vatican Council that the Church which so far was a closed and self-assertive entity became open and respectful towards other religions and their way of bringing their followers to the knowledge of God. More importantly, the Church recognized the fact that it is not the only religion that exists on the earth; rather, there are many other religions, that there is a plurality of religions. Hence, the Church realised that it needs to encounter other religions, meet them, with an attitude of humility, openness, friendliness and respect.

#### 3.2.1 The Phenomenon of Religious Pluralism

Religious pluralism refers to the plurality of religions which are considered as equal means or paths leading to one and the same ultimate reality or to God. It is a view which endorses the equality of all religions. It means “belonging to one’s own religion bears the same relation to the attainment of salvation as does belonging to any alien religion.”<sup>256</sup> All religions are equal. Hence, equal respect and recognition of all religions as ways of salvation. “Religious pluralism is a fact that

<sup>254</sup> Branson Schaffer, “Vatican II: The Radical Shift to Ecumenism”, <http://uca.edu/liberalarts/files/2016/01/5-Branson-Schaffer-Vatican-II.pdf>, 25.04.2017.

<sup>255</sup> Avery Dulles, *Ecumenism without illusions: A Catholic Perspective*.

<sup>256</sup> Paul Griffiths, *Problems of Religious Diversity*, USA: Blackwell Publishing, 2001, p. 142.



the different religions respond to the mystery of ultimate reality or *Sat* or *Theos* in different ways”.<sup>257</sup> Religious pluralism can be defined as a positive mental disposition or attitude in the situation of coexistence of plurality of religions within a single society that enables a specific way of responding to the situation.<sup>258</sup> Livingstone Thompson defines religious pluralism as “the situation in which there are different understandings of God, different and sometimes conflicting claims to validity, superiority, truth and ultimate significance made by religions in a given context”.<sup>259</sup> In the opinion of David Ray Griffin, the propagators of religious pluralism accept two affirmations – negative and positive:

The negative affirmation is the rejection of religious absolutism, which means rejecting the a priori assumption that their own religion is the only one that provides saving truths and values to its adherents, that it alone is divinely inspired, that it has been divinely established as the only legitimate religion, intended to replace all others. The positive affirmation, which goes beyond the negative one, is the acceptance of the idea, that there are indeed religions other than one’s own that provide saving truths and values to their adherents.<sup>260</sup>

There is a difference between religious pluralism and religious diversity. “Religious diversity is the coexistence of two or more religious communities in a specific geopolitical setting”, whereas, “Religious pluralism is a value, a cultural or religious ideology which positively welcomes the encounter of religions.”<sup>261</sup> Pluralism is “more than a de facto recognition that there are different religious traditions and the acknowledgement that the only way of peaceful coexistence is mutual tolerance”.<sup>262</sup> It is important to note, that pluralism aims at mutual understanding, but doesn’t expect the end of the efforts toward mutual understanding and tolerance to be the final goal, in which all differences will be reduced to one similarity.<sup>263</sup> Religious pluralism in its broad sense holds that no religion can claim sole authority to teach absolute truth, and so it is important that each religion is

<sup>257</sup> S. J. Samartha, *One Christ – Many Religions*, New York: Orbis Books, 1991, p. 4.

<sup>258</sup> Cf. Matthew Jayanth, “From Plurality to Pluralism: Constructing a Sociological Theory of Religious Pluralism”, *Vidyajyothi Journal of Theological Reflections*, Vol. 64, no. 11, November 2000, p. 810

<sup>259</sup> Livingstone Thompson, *A Protestant Theology of Religious Pluralism*, Bern: Peter Lang International Academic Publishers, 2009, p. 1.

<sup>260</sup> David Ray Griffin, “Religious Pluralism Generic, Identist and Deep”, *Deep Religious Pluralism*, David Ray Griffin (Ed.), Westminster: John Knox Press, 2005, p. 3.

<sup>261</sup> Jen Lindsay, “Difference between Religious Pluralism and Religious Diversity”, <http://www.stateofinformation.org/2015/08/the-difference-between-religious-diversity-and-religious-pluralism/>, 01.05.2017.

<sup>262</sup> R. Panikkar, “Indic Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism from the Perspective of Inculturation”, *Religious Pluralism: An Indian Perspective*, Kuncheria Pathil (Ed.), Delhi: ISPCK, 1991, p. 257.

<sup>263</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*

recognized and respected in order to attain harmony and peace in the world perceived to be violent and intolerant.<sup>264</sup>

Religious pluralism is real and strongly noticeable. It is surely not a new phenomenon. It has always existed. But people today are becoming more conscious and aware of it than ever. Coward notices, "The world has always had religious plurality", but since 1980s, "for the first time in recorded history we seem to be rapidly becoming a true world community. Today the West is no longer closed within itself. It can no longer regard itself as being the historical and cultural centre of the world and as having a religion that is the sole valid way of worship. The same is true for the East. Today everyone is the next-door neighbour and spiritual neighbour of everyone else."<sup>265</sup> The effects of rising religious pluralism are felt by Christianity as a whole and particularly by the Roman Catholic Church, which since its beginning, has tried to hold on to, defend and proclaim its faith in one God who has revealed Himself in and through Jesus Christ. Western countries, which once were the cradle of Christianity, seem to be on the way to become the tomb for Christianity.<sup>266</sup> A "tsunami of Secularization" sweeping over society has affected the Christian faith.<sup>267</sup> Today's society is marked "not just by religious diversity, but also by the coexistence and interaction of religious and secular beliefs and practices."<sup>268</sup> There are efforts to promote religious pluralism in order to facilitate mutual friendship, cooperation and collaboration between religions. This mutual collaboration and friendship will help them to find solutions to global problems and work for the common good of the entire humanity. The challenge of growing religious pluralism "strikes at the heart of Christian faith, touching every major area of theology, including theological method, revelation, the doctrine of God and, most obviously, Christology and Soteriology."<sup>269</sup> How can the Catholic Church deal with religious pluralism and at the same time proclaim its faith as the unique faith? How does the Church treat this phenomenon of religious pluralism and relate with other world religions? Religious pluralism is a fact, a challenge before the Catholic Church, which needs to be accepted and a proper response needs to be given by the Church.

<sup>264</sup> Cf. Jove Jim. S. Aguas "Religious Pluralism and Freedom of Religion", *Journal of Dharma*, Vol. 31, no. 1, January-March 2006, p. 70.

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid.*, p. vii.

<sup>266</sup> Franco Garelli, "Flexible Catholicism, Religion and the Church: The Italian Case", <http://www.mdpi.com/2077-1444/4/1/1/htm>, 03.05.2017.

<sup>267</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>268</sup> Pippa Norris & Ronald Inglehart, "Uneven Secularization in the United States and Western Europe", *Democracy and the New Religious Pluralism*, Thomas Banchoff (Ed.), New York: Oxford University Press, 2007, p. 31.

<sup>269</sup> Harold Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism: The Challenge to Christian Faith and Mission*, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2001, p. 14.

### 3.2.1.1 *Christian responses to Religious Pluralism*

Different Christian theologians have tried to give different responses to the question of religious pluralism.

#### A. Karl Barth's Exclusivist Response

Exclusivism refers to a viewpoint according to which only one religion is true and absolute and all other religions and faiths are relative or false. Exclusivism sees, "one's religion as the criterion by which other religions are understood and evaluated".<sup>270</sup> In the context of Christianity, it means that Christianity is the only true religion, superior to all other religions of the world and salvation comes only in and through Jesus Christ. There are two important facts that the exclusivists try to affirm: Firstly, salvation comes in and through Christ alone, whom God has sent into the world. Secondly, only those who have explicit faith in Christ will be saved.<sup>271</sup> Exclusivism does not claim that all other religions other than Christianity are imperfect in all respects, nor does it see Christianity as the right and perfect religion in all respects. But it insists, "where other religions are contradicted by the gracious self-disclosure of Christ, they must necessarily be wrong."<sup>272</sup>

In the opinion of Alan Race, "The inspiration for the exclusivist theories comes chiefly from the Protestant theologians Barth, Brunner and Krammer . . . . The most extreme form of the exclusivist theory has been stated by Karl Barth".<sup>273</sup> Barth begins assessing the human condition in the world. Looking at the confusion caused to the Christians by the sweeping floods of new ideas and pluralistic tendencies, the chaos and destruction caused by man-made catastrophes and the helplessness of man to win over it, Barth concluded: "human beings cannot figure things out by themselves. Expressed theologically, humans cannot, by their own powers, really understand the full content of the human condition and, more importantly, *they cannot really know who God is*."<sup>274</sup> Human beings are unable to overcome the reality of sin. It is only God who through Jesus Christ helps man to emerge victorious over sin. Salvation comes from God's grace in and through His son Jesus Christ to people with explicit faith in Him – faith, which comes solely

<sup>270</sup> Roy Lazar A., "Global Arena of Interreligious Dialogue", Vidyajyoti, vol 72, no. 2, February 2008, p. 133.

<sup>271</sup> Cf. Daniel Strange, "Exclusivisms: Indeed their Rock is not like our Rock", Christian Approaches to other Faiths, Alan Race & Paul M. Hedges (Eds.), London: SCM Press, 2008, p. 37.

<sup>272</sup> D. A. Carson, *The Gagging of God: Christianity confronts Pluralism*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1996, p. 27.

<sup>273</sup> Alan Race, *Christians and Religious Pluralism: Pattern in the Christians Theology of Religions*, London: SCM Press, 1983, p. 11.

<sup>274</sup> Paul F. Knitter, *No Other Name? A Critical Survey of Christian Attitudes Toward the World Religions*, Mary Knoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1985, p. 81.

from the hearing of the word of God.<sup>275</sup> Hence, Barth concluded: “Human beings cannot get their acts together by themselves. But with God they can. Yet for this to happen, human beings have to step back and let God be God.”<sup>276</sup>

In Barth’s opinion, God cannot be known except through His own self-revelation. Revelation is God’s self-manifestation. It is God who chooses to reveal Himself to the world. No one can know God without the divine intervention. It is this revelation of God in Jesus Christ, which is his starting point to speak about religion. From this standpoint, no religion is true or superior (including Christianity); it is unbelief, because religions are the effort of fallen and sinful man to know God – an act which is impossible on the part of man<sup>277</sup> Since religion is human effort to reach God through rituals, worship, beliefs, etc.; it is a human creation and not divine. Religions keep humans from acting, as they should: “stand back, trust and let God be God in Jesus Christ.”<sup>278</sup>

Although in Barth’s opinion all religions including Christianity are “unbelief, manifestation of rebellion against God”<sup>279</sup>, he still considers Christianity as true religion among all other religions because “it’s the only religion that knows it’s a false religion; and it knows, further, that despite its being false and idolatrous religion, it is saved through Jesus Christ.”<sup>280</sup> It is saved through the grace of God, which comes through faith in Jesus Christ. Christianity is superior to all religions, not because of its “structures and complex organization”, but because of the revelation in Jesus Christ on which it is centred.<sup>281</sup> Christianity can be seen as the revelation of the transcendental and unknowable God, who chooses to reveal Himself to humanity.<sup>282</sup> Despite being a human attempt to reach God and know Him, Christianity is the ‘true religion’ because it is “justified by revelation”.<sup>283</sup> And this justification is by faith only in and through Jesus Christ. Barth uses his famous analogy to explain his exclusive attitude towards other religions: Just as the sunlight falls on one part of the earth and enlightens it, while the other part remains in darkness, without really changing anything on earth, so Christ’s light falls on the world of religions; it enlightens one religion – Christianity – and

<sup>275</sup> Cf. Paul F. Knitter, *Theologies of Religions*, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2002, pp. 24–25.

<sup>276</sup> Ibid.

<sup>277</sup> Cf. Ibid., p. 25 & Alan Race, *Christians and Religious Pluralism*, p. 12.

<sup>278</sup> Paul F. Knitter, *Theologies of Religions*, p. 25.

<sup>279</sup> Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to the Theology of Religions: Biblical, Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2003, p. 176.

<sup>280</sup> Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>281</sup> Cf. Alan Race, *Christians and Religious Pluralism*, 13.

<sup>282</sup> Cf. Avery Dulles, *Was ist Offenbarung, Übersetzt von Karl heinz Mankel, Freiburg im Breisgau: Verlag Herder, S. 111.*

<sup>283</sup> David Pitman, *Twentieth Century Christian Responses to Religious Pluralism: Difference is Everything*, Farnham, Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2014, p. 26.

makes it bright and true, shedding its light in the world while the other religions remain in darkness and false – but without bringing any essential change to the true religion.<sup>284</sup> Barth's exclusivism is rooted "in a Christology that holds Jesus Christ to be the only saviour (*solo Christo*) and in a soteriology that sees salvation occurring "without works" and "only through faith" (*sola fide*)."<sup>285</sup> In other words, Barth says, that any knowledge of God has been made possible only because of Jesus Christ in whom God chose to make Himself known to humanity, and it is Jesus who is the redeemer of the world. Such exclusivism "rejects other religions as mediums of religious truth and vehicles of salvation".<sup>286</sup>

#### B. Karl Rahner's Inclusivist Response

A person who holds an inclusivist view "sees his/her God and the basic dynamics of salvation communicated to him/her operative in all religions and even in non-religious ideologies".<sup>287</sup> "A person is said to be inclusivist, if he/she thinks that even the followers of other religions are saved only by following knowingly or unknowingly the path of his/her own religion."<sup>288</sup> In the opinion of Alan Race, Christian inclusivism refers to the belief that "all non-Christian religious truth belongs ultimately to Christ and the way of discipleship which springs from him".<sup>289</sup> In other words, my religion is true religion and leads me to salvation. However, this true God is also present in your religion in ways known to Him alone, in order to lead you to salvation. In the context of Christianity's relation with other religions, this position is very important. The Catholic Church believes that salvation comes through the grace of God in Christ and is attainable for everyone who is baptised in the name of the Christ and becomes the member of the Church. The question is, what about thousands of people belonging to other faiths? They belong neither to the Church nor believe in Christ. How, then, are they saved? The Catholic position is that no one is lost. God works in mysterious ways even in other religions in order to save the people of these religions who strive to live a good life and come to the knowledge of God. This position was developed, mainly, by Karl Rahner, who is known to be the principal proponent of the inclusivist response of the Catholic Church to religious pluralism.<sup>290</sup> Paul Knitter says,

<sup>284</sup> Cf. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to the Theology of Religions*, p. 180 & Paul Knitter, *No Other Name?* p. 86.

<sup>285</sup> Paul F. Knitter, *No Other Name?* p. 87.

<sup>286</sup> David Pitman, *Twentieth Century Christian Responses to Religious Pluralism*, p. 40.

<sup>287</sup> V. F. Vineeth, "Interreligious Dialogue: Past and Present, a critical Appraisal", *Journal of Dharma*, Vol. 19, no. 1, January-March 1994, p. 45.

<sup>288</sup> Michael Amaladoss, *Making Harmony-Living in Pluralistic world*, Delhi: ISPCK, 2003, p. 135.

<sup>289</sup> Alan Race, *Christians and Religious Pluralism*, p. 38.

<sup>290</sup> David Pitman, *Twentieth Century Christian Responses to Religious Pluralism*, p. 93.

“If Vatican II is a watershed in Christian attitudes toward other religions, Karl Rahner is its chief engineer.”<sup>291</sup>

Karl Rahner begins by considering two important aspects of Christian faith: God wills the salvation of all. This salvation comes only through faith in God in Christ. These facts accepted, what about the non-Christians who existed before Christ, with Christ and who exist after Christ but do not believe in and accept Christ?<sup>292</sup> Rahner takes both the factors into consideration, namely, the necessity of Christian faith and the universal salvific will of God, and says that in some way, all people must be able to become members of the Church of Christ even if they don't want to be known as such, and that it is not simply in abstract sense, but in a concrete way.<sup>293</sup> He, thus, proposes four theses in order to prove the salvific presence of God *through* and not *despite* the non-Christian religions.

In the first thesis, Rahner claims that Christianity understands itself as the absolute and true Religion which is intended for the whole of mankind, and there are no other religions on this earth having equal value as Christianity.<sup>294</sup> This thesis forms an important basis not only for theological understanding of other religions in Christian faith but also for Christianity's understanding of itself. Rahner claims the absoluteness of Christianity. In his understanding, religion is not a relationship between man and God, which is the result of human efforts; rather, religion is an act of God Himself in the world, God's self-revelation through His self – communication to the people, the relationship which God Himself establishes with man. If this relationship of God to all people through the incarnation, death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ is fundamentally one and the same, and if Christianity is God's manifestation of this relationship to all human beings, then only Christianity can understand itself as the true and absolute religion.<sup>295</sup> Rahner further argues that Christianity has a historical beginning in Jesus Christ. Christianity, even as an absolute religion, had to come in a historical context to the people whom it is a legitimate religion. In the words of Sylvie Avakian, “Christianity had to come in a special historical context, which is to say that not all human beings could simultaneously receive the Christian message and not all had the opportunity of being confronted with the person of Jesus Christ, his death and resurrection as the only means for salvation”.<sup>296</sup> It means as long as non-Christians are not confronted with

<sup>291</sup> Paul F. Knitter, *No Other Name?* p. 125.

<sup>292</sup> Cf. Karl Rahner, “*Die Anonymen Christen*”, *Schriften zur Theologie, Band VI, Einsiedeln Zürich Köln: Benziger Verlag, 1965, S. 545–546.*

<sup>293</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 546.

<sup>294</sup> Cf. Karl Rahner, “Christianity and Non-Christian Religions”, *Theological Investigations*, transl. Karl H. Kruger, Vol. V, New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1983, p. 118.

<sup>295</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*

<sup>296</sup> Cf. Sylvie Avakian, *The ‘Other’ in Karl Rahner’s Transcendental Theology and George Khodr’s Spiritual Theology Within the Near Eastern Context*, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2012,

the Christian Gospel message, they can't know Christ and so they do not, till then, hold Christ as the only means of salvation. Rahner seems to be opining that it is not the sin or mistake on the part of the non-Christians if they have not accepted Christ as the unique and absolute saviour. Christianity has a historical starting point in space and time in Jesus of Nazareth and in the salvific event of the cross and of the empty tomb.<sup>297</sup> This is to be seen as the historical aspect of Christianity, which however, may not be accepted by the non-Christians. Thus, the first thesis can be seen as Rahner's general sociology of religions, in which he explains that the divine communication is given to all people, however, the acceptance or the response to this communication depends on the social and historical context in which one's religion exists and develops.<sup>298</sup>

The second thesis maintains that it is proper to see other religions also as vehicles of divine grace and communication until they are confronted with the Christian message:

Until the moment, when the Gospel really enters into the historical situation of an individual, a non-Christian religion (even outside the Mosaic religion) does not merely contain elements of a natural knowledge of God, elements, moreover, mixed up with human depravity which is the result of original sin and later aberrations. It contains also supernatural moments arising out of grace, which is given to men as a gratuitous gift on account of Christ. For this reason, a non-Christian religion can be recognized as a *lawful* religion (although only in different degrees) without thereby denying the error and depravity contained in it.<sup>299</sup>

Rahner sees non-Christian religions as having some positive place in the salvific plan of God. However, these non-Christian religions are legitimate in a very different degree in the sense that, "they may help the adherent individuals to have a right relationship to God and may as a result play a positive role in the general divine plan of salvation."<sup>300</sup> Rahner claims that every individual person must be able to have a genuine and saving relationship with God, otherwise we can't speak of the universal salvific will of God which includes the entire humanity.<sup>301</sup> The supernatural divine grace which constitutes an important element of Rahner's entire thought is in his opinion, present in all human beings without exception. If every human person who comes into this world is pursued by the supernatural divine grace which transforms a person, then it cannot be said that the concretely

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p. 47.

<sup>297</sup> Karl Rahner, *Christianity and Non-Christian Religions*, p. 119.

<sup>298</sup> Sylvie Avakian, *The 'Other' in Karl Rahner's Transcendental Theology and George Khodr's Spiritual Theology Within the Near Eastern Context*, p. 47.

<sup>299</sup> Karl Rahner, *Christianity and Non-Christian Religions*, p. 121.

<sup>300</sup> Sylvie Avakian, *The 'Other' in Karl Rahner's Transcendental Theology and George Khodr's Spiritual Theology Within the Near Eastern Context*, p. 80.

<sup>301</sup> Cf. Karl Rahner, *Christianity and Non-Christian Religions*, p. 128.

existing religions do not have any traces of people in some way affected by this grace.<sup>302</sup> These traces may be too difficult to distinguish, and yet they continue to be present and must be available.<sup>303</sup> Rahner concludes his second thesis saying: The concrete religions must have supernatural, grace-filled elements in them and in the practice of these religions the people of pre-Christian times were able to attain the grace of God.

The third thesis speaks about the relationship between Christianity and the other religions. In Rahner's opinion, if the Christians understand and accept the other religions as having the elements of God's divine supernatural grace, then they must accept and respect other religions. Christians are not to consider the members of other religions simply as non-Christians who are deprived of salvific grace, but rather as "Anonymous Christians".<sup>304</sup> The Christian proclamation of the Gospel does not confront a person totally forsaken by God in order to make him/her Christian; rather, it confronts an anonymous Christian and makes him/her a person who is fully conscious of his/her Christian identity in the Church.<sup>305</sup> Rahner emphasises on the absolute necessity of the Church's mission. It is wrong, in his opinion, to conclude that the Christian proclamation is unnecessary because the non-Christians are without this proclamation already anonymous Christians. Rahner emphasises becoming an explicit Christian from an anonymous Christian, firstly, because of the incarnational and social structure of grace and of Christianity and, secondly, because being the adherent of explicit Christianity offers a greater chance of salvation than being an anonymous Christian.<sup>306</sup>

In the fourth thesis, Rahner speaks about the Church's understanding of itself in the face of the other religions. If the previous theses are understood properly and accepted, then "the Church will not so much regard herself today as the exclusive community of those who have a claim to salvation but rather as the historically tangible vanguard and the historically and socially constituted explicit expression of what the Christian hopes is present as a hidden reality even outside the visible Church."<sup>307</sup>

Rahner's inclusivistic view has received criticism from a number of theologians. Hans Küng finds Rahner's theory as another way of retaining the age-old claim that salvation is found only in the Roman Catholic Church. In his opinion, forcing the people of other faiths against their will or desire to become either ac-

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<sup>302</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 130.

<sup>303</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*

<sup>304</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 131.

<sup>305</sup> Cf. Sylvie Avakian, *The 'Other' in Karl Rahner's Transcendental Theology and George Khodr's Spiritual Theology Within the Near Eastern Context*, p. 81.

<sup>306</sup> Cf. Karl Rahner, *Christianity and Non-Christian Religions*, p. 132.

<sup>307</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 133.



tive or even passive members of the Church is simply a violation of the freedom of religion. Assessing the question of religious pluralism by declaring the non-Christians as 'anonymous Christians' is like trying to cure a society suffering from a membership decline, by declaring that even the non-members are 'hidden' members, which is not possible at all.<sup>308</sup> John Hick criticises Rahner's theory in particular as being "too manifestly an ad hoc contrivance to satisfy many."<sup>309</sup> These and many other criticisms notwithstanding, we must admit that Rahner paved a new way in the understanding of non-Christian religions and their place in God's plan of salvation. At the same time through his inclusivist position, Rahner represents a new Church, which is open to other religions.

### C. John Hick's Theocentric Pluralism

Pluralism with its claim about the equal salvific value of all religions rejects the exclusivist and inclusivist positions about Christianity. John Hick is known as the champion of pluralism. Paul Knitter calls him as "the most radical, the best-known, and therefore the most controversial of the proponents of a theocentric model of Christian approaches to other religions".<sup>310</sup> Hick speaks of the need for a Copernican revolution in the theology, which will show that Christianity is not the absolute religion and the centre of all other religions.<sup>311</sup> Hick criticises Christianity's claim about Jesus as the unique saviour and the Son of God and that all will be saved only in and through Christ.

If all human beings must, in order to attain the eternal happiness for which they have been created, accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and saviour before they die, then the great majority of humanity is doomed to eternal frustration and misery.<sup>312</sup>

Hick speaks of the need to make God as the centre of a religion. He says that the Copernican revolution in theology, "must involve a shift from the dogma that Christianity is at the centre, to the thought that it is God who is at the centre and that all the religions of mankind, including our own, serve and revolve around him."<sup>313</sup> Since one God is the centre of all religions, all religions are to be seen on an equal ground. Every person has a different apprehension of the ultimate reality and these apprehensions of the followers of different religions are to be seen as the real responses to the ultimate reality.<sup>314</sup> Hick also has an objection to the Christian

<sup>308</sup> Cf. Hans Küng, *On being Christian*, transl. Edward Quinn, London: William Collins Sons & Co., 1977, p. 98.

<sup>309</sup> John Hick, *God has Many Names*, Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1980, p. 30.

<sup>310</sup> Paul Knitter, *No other Name?* p. 147.

<sup>311</sup> Cf. John Hick, *God has Many Names*, p. 36.

<sup>312</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>313</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>314</sup> Cf. Livingstone Thompson, *A Protestant Theology of Religious Pluralism*, p. 72.

doctrine of incarnation. In his opinion, seeing Christ as the unique and the only incarnation of God and the only possibility for God's revelation would lead to ignoring the majority of humanity to perdition.<sup>315</sup> He opines, that the doctrine of incarnation should be interpreted as mythological. According to Hick, nowhere in the New Testament do we have the instance of Jesus claiming Himself to be God. What makes Jesus significant is his high consciousness of God, which prompts him to call God as his father, his openness to the Spirit and his response to God.<sup>316</sup> Hick argues, therefore, that all theology and all doctrines like that of incarnation and the uniqueness of Christ are the creation of the Church.<sup>317</sup>

Regarding the question of salvation, Hick says that God wills the salvation of all and not just of few people, and so the claim of Christianity that salvation in its fullness is found only in Jesus Christ or in Christianity contradicts the God of love revealed by Jesus Christ.<sup>318</sup> He defines salvation as human change, the gradual transformation from self-centeredness to a new orientation centred in God, and when we view salvation in this way, then we can say that salvation is taking place in all religions and not just in Christianity.<sup>319</sup> Hick makes three claims regarding this salvation as human transformation: Firstly, each religious tradition achieves this human transformation in its own particular way. Secondly, this transformation is essentially one and the same in all religious traditions. Thirdly, human transformation occurs or takes place to the same extent in each religious tradition since they are on equal footing as regards the context of salvation.<sup>320</sup> Hick concludes: If we accept that salvation and liberation are taking place within all the great religious traditions, then we must also frankly acknowledge that there is a plurality of saving human responses to the ultimate divine reality.<sup>321</sup>

<sup>315</sup> Cf. Gavin D'Costa, "Pluralist Arguments: Prominent Tendencies and Methods", *Catholic Engagement with World Religions-A Comprehensive Study*, Karl J. Becker & Ilaria Morali (Eds.), New York: Orbis Books, 2010, p. 331.

<sup>316</sup> Cf. Mahmut Aydin, *Modern Western Christian Theological Understanding of Muslims since the Second Vatican Council*, USA: Library of Congress Cataloguing Publication, 2002, p. 206.

<sup>317</sup> Cf. John Hick, "A Pluralist View", *More than One Way? Four Views on Salvation in a Pluralistic World*, John Hick & Dennis L. Okholm & Timothy Ross Philips Eds., Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995, p. 42.

<sup>318</sup> Cf. Gavin D'Costa, *Pluralist Arguments: Prominent Tendencies and Methods*.

<sup>319</sup> Cf. John Hick, *A Pluralist View*, p. 43.

<sup>320</sup> Cf. Mahmut Aydin, *Modern Western Christian Theological Understanding of Muslims since the Second Vatican Council*, p. 210.

<sup>321</sup> Cf. John Hick, *Problems of Religious Pluralism*, USA: The Macmillan Press, 1985, p. 34.

## D. Paul Knitter's Soteriocentric Pluralism

Paul Knitter speaks of a soteriocentric model in the theology of religions. According to this model, justice is the yardstick to evaluate all the religions.<sup>322</sup> Knitter held on to the theocentric pluralism of John Hick. In fact, in his book *No Other Name?* published in 1985, Knitter says that "we are in the midst of an evolution from Christocentrism to theocentrism . . . . I feel that the theocentric model holds the greatest promise for the future of interreligious dialogue and for the continued evolution of the meaning of Jesus Christ for the world."<sup>323</sup> Along with Hick, Knitter makes a demand, "that absolutist interpretations of Christianity be dismissed as oppressive and unwarranted in light of the world's religious diversity".<sup>324</sup> However, there is a gradual transition seen in Knitter's thought on pluralism, from being theocentric to being soteriocentric – a term that he himself coined. In an article entitled *Toward a Liberation Theology of Religions* published in 1987, he sees liberation/salvation as the central theme of interreligious dialogue. According to him, "Many Religions" and "Many Poor" are the two important challenges before Christianity today. The theology of religions and liberation theology, which deal with these two challenges respectively by trying to respond to the question of suffering and poverty, are to be brought in contact and recognition with each other in order to contribute "effectively and creatively" to the life of the Christianity and the world.<sup>325</sup> Hence, "If Christian attitudes have evolved from ecclesiocentrism to Christocentrism to theocentrism, they must now move on to what in Christian symbols might be called "kingdom-centrism" or more universally "soteriocentrism".<sup>326</sup> In the soteriocentric approach, "God is not reduced to humanity but affirmed as the very condition for the possibility of saving humanity."<sup>327</sup> This new evolution is inspired by the need to recognize within the world religions a shared locus of religious experience, instead of searching for "one God" or "one ultimate" or "a common essence" or "a mystical centre".<sup>328</sup> Knitter proposes the liberation theologians' "preferential option for the poor and

<sup>322</sup> Cf. Stephen Kaplan, *Different Paths, Different Summits-A Model for Religious Pluralism*, New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2002, p. 22.

<sup>323</sup> Paul F. Knitter, *No Other Name?* pp. 166–167.

<sup>324</sup> Kenneth Rose, *Pluralism: The Future of Religion*, New York, London, New Delhi, Sydney: Bloomsbury, 2013, p. 29.

<sup>325</sup> Cf. Paul F. Knitter, "Toward a Liberation Theology of Religions", *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness: Toward a Pluralistic Theology of Religions*, John Hick & Paul F. Knitter (Eds.), Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1987, p. 178.

<sup>326</sup> *Ibid.* P., 187.

<sup>327</sup> Paul F. Knitter, "Missionary Activity Revised and Reaffirmed", *Christian Mission and Interreligious Dialogue*, Paul Mojzes & Leonard Swidler (Eds.), Lewiston, Queenston, Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, p. 78.

<sup>328</sup> Cf. Paul F. Knitter, "Toward a Liberation Theology of Religions", p. 186.

non-person” as the shared locus for the religions. The preferential option for the poor in today’s world would provide a proper context for the dialogue in which different religions will be able to know and understand each other, collaborate with each other for common causes and edify each other: “If the religions of the world can understand poverty and oppression as a common problem, if they can share a common commitment (expressed in different forms) to remove such evils, they will have the basis for reaching across their incommensurabilities and differences in order to hear and understand each other and possibly be transformed in the process.”<sup>329</sup> Speaking about the interreligious dialogue which is to be the medium for the religions to express together their common concerns, Knitter says: “We encounter other religions, not primarily to enjoy diversity and dialogue, but to eliminate suffering and oppression, not only to practice charity, but first of all, to work for justice.”<sup>330</sup> In such a soteriocentric dialogue the religions will realise, that, “that which unites the religions in common discourse and praxis is . . . to what extent they are engaged in promoting human welfare and bringing about liberation with and for the poor and nonpersons.”<sup>331</sup> With the adaptation of soteriocentric dialogue, Christians will be able to fulfil the present day demands of their missionary vocation by reaching out to their fellow pilgrims on the other paths in a shared effort to promote the well-being of all people and the earth.<sup>332</sup> Hence, the primary mission of the Church is to promote and preach the kingdom of God and its values.

### 3.2.2 The Catholic Church and Other Religions at Vatican II

One significant development that took place in Catholic theology since Vatican II is the striking change in the way the Church understands other religions. Vatican II brought about an immense change in the attitude and relation of the Catholic Church to the other religions. However, it is important to know the relation of the Church with their religions prior to Vatican II in order to understand how exactly Vatican II becomes a new phase in this relation.

Paul Knitter describes the attitude of the Catholic Church toward other religions up to the twentieth century as a “teeter-tottering between two fundamental beliefs: God’s universal love and desire to save, and the necessity of the Church to save.”<sup>333</sup> The balance between these two beliefs was hardly established. In fact, most of the time, the first belief was abandoned or neglected in favour of the sec-

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<sup>329</sup> Ibid.

<sup>330</sup> Ibid., p. 181.

<sup>331</sup> Ibid., p. 187.

<sup>332</sup> Cf. Paul F. Knitter, *Missionary Activity Revised and Reaffirmed*, p. 92.

<sup>333</sup> Paul knitter, *No Other Name?* p. 121.

ond one.<sup>334</sup> The presence of other religions was considered a threat to Christianity. Hence, a general reaction and attitude toward other religions was negative and defensive. The general view was that no compromise could be made between the Christian faith and other religions, simply because other religions were nothing but the secret working of the devil under the guise of gods.<sup>335</sup> There were attempts to eliminate and exterminate other religions by using force and power – all justified in the name of religion. Augustine called the Persecution of Pagans, ‘out of love of God’; whereas when the pagans persecuted the Christians, he called it ‘out of cruelty.’<sup>336</sup> Although the early Fathers emphasised the uniqueness and absoluteness of Christ as a saviour, they also felt that “an authentic revelation and possibility of salvation was offered to all people.”<sup>337</sup> Justin, Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria held that persons who were not baptised could nevertheless be saved by the universal presence and activity of the Logos.<sup>338</sup>

The expression: *Extra ecclesiam nulla salus* (Outside the Church no salvation) initially formulated by Origen (c.185–254), followed by Cyprian (c.206–58) who gave it considerable attention, and taken over by Augustine (c.354–430), speaks about the Church’s attitude of disdain and negativity toward other religions.<sup>339</sup> In

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<sup>334</sup> Cf. Ibid.

<sup>335</sup> Cf. Justine Martyr, “The First Apology of Justine”, Ante-Nicene Fathers, Alexander Roberts & James Donaldson (Eds.), Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996, p. 164.

<sup>336</sup> Cf. Thomas Emprayil, *The Emerging Theology of Religions*, Padra: Vincentian Asharam, 1980, p. 5.

<sup>337</sup> Paul knitter, *No Other Name?*

<sup>338</sup> Cf. Jose Kuttianimattathil, “Tracing the Developments in the Church’s attitude to other Religions”, *Third Millennium*, Vol. 3, no. 1, January-March 2000, p. 7.

<sup>339</sup> Gavin D’Costa, “Inter-Religious Dialogue”, *The Blackwell Companion to Catholicism*, James J. Buckley, Frederick Christian Bauerschmidt & Trent Pomplun (Eds.), Malden, Oxford, Victoria: Blackwell Publishing, 2007, p. 450–451: “It is not possible to fully trace the complex history which properly contextualizes this statement, except to note seven important factors (see Dupuis, 1977: 84–109; D’Costa, 1990a; Sullivan, 1992). First, Cyprian’s use of extra ecclesiam bore reference to schismatics, not to adherents of the world religions. Second, Jews, heretics, pagans, and schismatics belonged to the same category: they knew the truth and wilfully perverted and rejected it (Islam was also later assimilated within this category). This was an assumption shared widely until the discovery of the New World at the end of the fifteenth century. Third, whether these four groups are actually guilty of this wilful rejection is an open question. Most historians today would hesitate to make this move, but we must not be anachronistic in judging the tradition or we will fail to see the real import of the extra ecclesiam teaching, even if we can question cases of its historical applicability. Fourth, in so much as truth was rejected and charity and grace spurned so as to follow the devil, the subsequent destiny of such people was inevitable. Fifth, the positive significance of the extra ecclesiam teaching (constantly reiterated) is to affirm the intrinsic connection between Christ, the mediator of salvation, and his visible body, the Church (A Protestant rendering of this axiom would be “outside Christ, no salvation.”). Sixth, while this axiom actually affirmed a positive truth, it was sometimes used in a rigorist and politically manipulative manner, the former being formally condemned when in 1949 the Jesuit

the opinion of Jacques Dupuis, it was Fulgentius of Ruspe, who formulated the axiom *Extra ecclesia nulla salus* in its most rigid form and applied it to pagans, Jews, heretics and schismatics.<sup>340</sup> This formula later comes to be expressed in the letter of Pope Innocent III to the archbishop of Tarragona in 1208 which contained a profession of faith, in the fourth Lateran Council of 1215, in Pope Boniface VIII's bull *Unam Sanctam* (1302) and most importantly in the Reunion Council of Florence (1442) in its "decree for the Jacobites", which as the first official document of the church excludes, besides heretics and schismatics, Jews and Pagans, too, from salvation.<sup>341</sup>

It is in the twentieth century that one sees a gradual transition in the Church's attitude toward other religions, from being negative to being positive and respectful. It was in this time of development in the Roman Catholic theology that the Catholic faith began to move "from holding "*outside* the church, no salvation," to "*without* the church, no salvation."<sup>342</sup> And the central event in this historical shift from negativity to positivity, from pessimism to optimism, was the Second Vatican Council. It was at Vatican II that for the first time in its history, the Church abandoned its exclusive claims to religious truth. And this voluntary abandonment of the exclusive claims to the religious truths on the part of the Church is an extraordinary and remarkable act in the history of the religions.<sup>343</sup> Although the teaching of the Council on the religions is also expressed in its Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, the Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity *Ad Gentes* (AG 1965) and the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes* (GS 1965), there are two important documents, namely, *Dignitatis Humanae*, Declaration on the Religious Freedom, and *Nostra Aetate*, Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, which deal with the Catholic Church's teaching on other religions.

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Leonard Feeney applied extra ecclesiam to Protestants and Hindus. Tragically and sadly, his refusal to retract led to his excommunication. Seventh, it has been a constant teaching since the Middle Ages, although variably applied, that those who die without actually rejecting the Gospel and who follow the natural law in their hearts and actions are not condemned to perdition. This category chronologically first related to the great philosophers of antiquity, the holy pagans of the Old Testament, then to the holy men and women of Israel, and eventually, after the discovery of the New World, to people of different faiths – who could, in some circumstances, be understood analogically to the holy pagans of the Old Testament."

<sup>340</sup> Cf. Jacques Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, New York: Orbis Books, 1997, p. 92.

<sup>341</sup> Cf. Isaac Padinjarekuttu, "Religious Pluralism in the Teachings of the Church", *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection*, Vol. 64, no. 11, November 2000, p. 850.

<sup>342</sup> Paul Knitter, *No Other Name?* p. 123.

<sup>343</sup> Cf. Karl Gabriel, Christian Spiess, Katja Winkler, *Wie fand der Katholizismus zur Religionsfreiheit? Faktoren der Erneuerung der Katholischen Kirche, Katholizismus zwischen Religionsfreiheit und Gewalt, Band 2*, Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2016, S. 7.

### 3.2.2.1 Religious Liberty of Man

*Dignitatis Humanae* (DH), the Declaration of the Roman Catholic Church on Religious Freedom<sup>344</sup> gives us an idea of the changing perspective of the Catholic Church in the face of many religions. It was the most bitterly contested document of the Council, and the discussion over the thema led to most heated argumentation.<sup>345</sup>

The Church recognizes the increasing awareness among the people of human dignity and their aspiration to exercise fully their own judgement in matters of faith, without any coercion or excessive restriction of their freedom (DH 1). The document reaffirms its conviction that “the one true religion exists in the Catholic and Apostolic Church” and that all are bound to seek the true religion and to embrace it. At the same time, the document recognizes that the truth cannot be forced upon anyone. The Council thus declares that every human being has the right to religious freedom, which is free of any form of external coercion, and this right is based on the very dignity of the human person (DH 2). Religious freedom based on human dignity is thus the central theme of the document. The right of human persons to religious freedom comes from God Himself who has bestowed the human persons with “reason and free will”. It is in the light of this freedom that human persons should be able to search for the religious truth and embrace it, and not because of some external pressure of any kind. Religion is a matter of conscience and all are called to follow the conscience and seek God. In this sense, the Church sees every kind of hindrance or force on man to act against the conscience as improper and against the divine law (DH 3). The document also calls on governments to allow the people “free exercise of religion in society”, both individually and on the level of community. The Church thus “no longer sees uniformity of religions as a necessary or even an ideal basis for the common good of society.”<sup>346</sup> The document further speaks about the communal exercise of religious freedom and insists that religious communities have the right to be free from civil interference in the selection, training, appointment and transfer of their own

<sup>344</sup> The Document begins with a general introduction and has two chapters: 1) The General Principle of Religious Freedom, 2) Religious Freedom in the Light of Revelation.

<sup>345</sup> For the history of the document refer: Thomas P. Hahnenberg, *A Concise Guide to the Documents of Vatican II*, pp. 147–150; Richard Gaillardetz & Catherine E. Clifford, *Keys to the Council*, pp. 138–142; Roman E. Siebenrock, “*Theologischer Kommentar zur Erklärung über die religiöse Freiheit-Dignitatis Humanae*”, *Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum zweiten Vatikanischen Konzil, Band IV*, Peter Hühnermann & Bernd Jochen Hilberath (Hrsg.), *Freiburg im Breisgau: Verlag Herder*, 2005, S. 131–164; Jeffrey Gros, “Declaration on Religious Freedom Dignitatis Humane”, *Evangelization and Religious Freedom: Ad Gentes, Dignitatis Humane, Rediscovering Vatican II*, Stephen B. Bevans & Jeffrey Gros (Eds.), New York: Paulist Press, 2009, pp. 151–175.

<sup>346</sup> Jeffrey Gros, *Declaration on Religious Freedom Dignitatis Humane*, p. 181.

ministers, in communicating with other religious authorities and communities in other parts of the world, and erecting buildings for religious purposes, and in acquisition and use of the property they need. They must be able to give a public witness to their beliefs without being prevented (DH 4). Thus, on the one hand, through this decree the Catholic Church was demanding that it may function in the civil society unrestrained and unhindered, and on the other hand, the Church was calling for equal treatment of all religions under the law in the civil society.<sup>347</sup> This can be seen as the central teaching of the Council regarding religious freedom.<sup>348</sup> Every family has the right to practice its own religion and bring up the children in those religious beliefs and values (DH 5). The document also emphasises the role of the governments in respecting and protecting the religious freedom of the people (DH 6–8).

The decree sees religious freedom as grounded in the divine revelation. The Scriptures and the tradition speak about free response to the Word of God, and not forced response. “The act of faith of its very nature is a free act” (DH 10). Hence, “in religious matters every form of human coercion should be excluded”. The best example in this matter is that of Jesus himself, who did not force people to follow him, but instead “acted patiently in attracting and inviting his disciples”. Thus, “while the Church claims for itself the freedom to proclaim and to give witness to the Gospel, including freedom from the interference of civil authorities in church matters, it commits itself to carry on its evangelizing mission in a manner that shows the utmost respect for the freedom and the religious convictions of others”.<sup>349</sup>

We can see a great deal of remarkable change in the Church’s attitude toward other religions manifested by this small document. And, therefore, the document continues to be one of the important milestones achieved by the Council in its efforts for *aggiornamento* in the Church. “For it marked the truly catholic reach of the Church in affirming the sense of the “human person” as a bearer of unalienable human rights, including a right to religious freedom even when that religion does not find its ground in the truths professed by the Church.”<sup>350</sup> And this was the starting point for the dialogue initiated by the Church with other religions.

<sup>347</sup> Cf. Joan Frawley Desmond, “Dignitatis Humanae sets Standard for defending Religious Freedom”, <http://www.ncregister.com/site/article/dignitatis-humanae-sets-standard-for-defending-religious-freedom>, 11.05.2017.

<sup>348</sup> Cf. Ibid.

<sup>349</sup> Richard Gaillardetz & Catherine E. Clifford, *Keys to the Council*, P. 145.

<sup>350</sup> Hadley Arkes, “Dignitatis Humanae: Teaching for a vanishing World”, <https://www.thecatholicthing.org/2015/12/15/dignitatis-humanae-teaching-for-a-vanishing-world/>, 12.05.2017.



### 3.2.2.2 Church and the Dialogue with Religions

The Council does not stop at affirming the religious freedom of every individual person as the fundamental right. It goes ahead in expressing its respect and appreciation of other religions in its document *Nostra Aetate- Declaration on the relation of the Church to non-Christian Religions* (NA), which is also “one of the most disputed documents of the Council.”<sup>351</sup> The history behind the development and coming into existence of this document is very interesting and is a proof of the activity of the Holy Spirit.<sup>352</sup> At the same time, the document is also an “expression of the commitment of the Catholic Church to enter into dialogue with members of other religious traditions”,<sup>353</sup> indicating a remarkable change in the way the Catholic Church sees and understands other religions – a “fresh approach of the Catholic Church to members of other faiths”.<sup>354</sup>

The document stresses on that which unites the humanity by placing the whole humanity with all the religions “within the framework of salvation history and against the eschatological horizon of God’s destiny for humankind.”<sup>355</sup> Different religions try to provide answers to the deeper aspirations and the questions about the human existence, which are posed before man (NA 1). NA “places the meeting of the Church with the world religions in the broad context of the common origin and destiny of all people in God and the search, common to all religious traditions, to answer the ultimate questions that beset the human spirit.”<sup>356</sup> Other religions not only provide human answers to life’s problems, but also precious religious values (GS 12). The Council through NA recognizes that other religions have the answers which are affirmed and accepted by the Church.<sup>357</sup> The Council positively affirms the value of the religions (NA 2, 3, 4)<sup>358</sup> and proclaims: The Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions. It has high regard for the manner of life and conduct, the precepts and doctrines which, al-

<sup>351</sup> Risto Jukko, *Trinity in Unity in Christian-Muslim Relations: The Work of the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious dialogue*, Leiden, Boston: BRILL, 2007, p. 7.

<sup>352</sup> For the history of *Nostra Aetate* see Richard Gaillardetz & Catherine E. Clifford, *Keys to the Council*, pp. 180–183; Edward Idris Cassidy, *Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue*, pp. 125–128; Knut Wenzel, *Das Zweite Vatikanische Konzil*, pp. 148–151; Edward P. Hahnenberg, *A Concise Guide to the Documents of Vatican II*, pp. 156–158.

<sup>353</sup> Richard Gaillardetz & Catherine E. Clifford, *Keys to the Council*, p. 180.

<sup>354</sup> Douglas Pratt, *The Church and Other Faiths: The World Council of Churches, the Vatican and Interreligious Dialogue*, Bern: Peter Lang, 2010, p. 176.

<sup>355</sup> Richard Gaillardetz & Catherine E. Clifford, *Keys to the Council*, p. 183.

<sup>356</sup> Jacques Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, p. 164.

<sup>357</sup> Cf. Karl Kardinal Lehmann, “*Nostra Aetate, ein folgenreicher Konzilstext: Erklärung des Vorsitzenden der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz*”, *Nostra Aetate- Ein zukunftsweisender Konzilstext. Die Haltung der Kirche zum Judentum 40 Jahre danach*, Hans Hermann Henrix (Hrsg.), Aachen: Einhard Verlag, 2006, S. 233.

<sup>358</sup> See also *Ad Gentes* no. 10 & *Lumen Gentium* no. 16.

though differing in many ways from its own teaching, nevertheless often reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens all men and women” (NA 2).<sup>359</sup> In the same line, in its decree *On the Church’s Missionary Activity-Ad Gentes Divinitus* (AG 7 December 1965), the Church recognizes the place other religious traditions outside the Church have in God’s saving design (AG 3). In this way, the Church “aims to instil a spirit of respect for their rich traditions and to promote genuine dialogue with them in the hope that we might work together for the betterment of the human community.”<sup>360</sup> Michael Barnes sees here a very practical implication: “If the Church is to respond generously to the imperative to enter into dialogue with people of other faith traditions, it must first listen and learn how the Spirit may be at work leading the church into a deeper understanding of God’s Word.”<sup>361</sup> This calls for openness to all forms of dialogue that is imbued with the spirit of justice and love and for a collaborative search for moral and spiritual enrichment (Cf. GS 92; AG 11, 12, 16, 18, 34; NA 2, 3, 5). This was surely a remarkable and a striking change in the Catholic approach to religions in which “rather than stress and condemn what is to be found there that is not compatible with Christian teaching and understanding, dialogue and cooperation are proposed.”<sup>362</sup> The attitude of respect and appreciation towards other religions was further developed and the firm resolve to embrace the path of dialogue with them was further strengthened and supported through the official documents of the popes after Vatican II. The first document in the series of the documents followed after Vatican II was *Ecclesiam Suam* (ES), an encyclical issued by Pope Paul VI in 1964 which addressed the contemporary nature and mission of the Church around that time.<sup>363</sup> It “manifested an openness that had been denied previously; however, this openness was a significant necessity in order to enhance the work of the Church.”<sup>364</sup> The encyclical stresses the necessity of the dialogue between the world and the Church (ES 3),<sup>365</sup> and speaks of three important points of reflection for the Church:

<sup>359</sup> Although the Council speaks of the positive value of other religions in its documents, it does not however, explicitly affirm that these religions are ways of salvation for their followers. On the other hand, the Church holds on to its duty to proclaim to everyone Christ, in whom people find the fullness of their religious life (NA 2). See also, Isaac Padinjarekuttu, *Religious Pluralism in the Teachings of the Church*, p. 853 & Gavin D’Costa, *Interreligious Dialogue*, pp. 452–453.

<sup>360</sup> Richard Gaillardetz & Catherine E. Clifford, *Keys to the Council*, p. 185.

<sup>361</sup> Michael Barnes, “Opening up a Dialogue: Dei Verbum and the Religions”, *Interreligious Reading after Vatican II: Scriptural Reasoning, Comparative Theology and Receptive Ecumenism*, David F. Ford & Frances Clemson (Eds.), UK: Wiley Blackwell, 2013, p. 20.

<sup>362</sup> Edward Idris Cassidy, *Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue*, p. 130.

<sup>363</sup> Cf. Douglas Pratt, *The Church and Other Faiths*, p. 183.

<sup>364</sup> Mario I. Aguilar, *Church, Liberation and World Religions: Towards a Christian-Buddhist Dialogue*, London: Bloomsbury, 2012, p. 21.

<sup>365</sup> Pope Paul VI, “*Ecclesiam Suam*, Encyclical of Pope Paul VI on the Church, August 6th 1964”, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_enc\\_06081964\\_ecclesiam.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_06081964_ecclesiam.html), 15.05.17.

self-knowledge, renewal and dialogue in order to carry out its task of serving the society. The Church is a part of the world and every change that affects the world, affects also the Church equally. Hence, dialogue is seen as a necessary imperative. Placing the origin of the dialogue in the context of the Salvation History (ES 70), the Pope calls on the Church to faithfully continue this dialogue with the world ahead. The Pope speaks of the Church's dialogue with the world, with other religions, with other Christian churches and within the Church.<sup>366</sup> His emphasis on the necessity of dialogue in the Church is also repeated in his apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (EN) which was published on December 8, 1975.<sup>367</sup> Pope Paul VI reaffirmed the respect and esteem of the Church for those religions which carry in them the echo of thousands of years of searching for God, a quest which is incomplete but often made with great sincerity and righteousness of heart (EN 53). However, unlike *Ecclesiam Suam*, which brought out the true spirit of dialogue in Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* shows a clear restraint shown by him on the theme of dialogue.<sup>368</sup> In the words of Jacques Dupuis, "Paul VI, who with the programmatic encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam* had become the "pope of dialogue", remains silent in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* on the subject of interreligious dialogue."<sup>369</sup> And yet one cannot deny that through his insistence on dialogue Pope Paul "undoubtedly influenced the Council's positive attitude toward the world as well as members of other religions."<sup>370</sup>

Pope John Paul II, too, continued the legacy of dialogue in his writings. The important characteristic of his theology of religions is his emphasis on the operative presence of the Spirit of God in the life of the non-Christians and their religious traditions.<sup>371</sup> In his first encyclical letter *Redemptor Hominis* (RH 4 March 1979), the Pope speaks of the "firm belief of the followers of the non-Christian religions" as "a belief that is also an effect of the Spirit of truth operating outside the visible confines of the Mystical body (RH 6)."<sup>372</sup> The mission of the Church, in

<sup>366</sup> Cf. Jacques Dupuis, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of the World Religions*, New York: Orbis Books, 1991, p. 209.

<sup>367</sup> Pope Paul VI, "*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Apostolic Exhortation of His Holiness, Pope Paul VI", [http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_exh\\_19751208\\_evangelii-nuntiandi.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19751208_evangelii-nuntiandi.html), 15.05.2017.

<sup>368</sup> The Pope does encourage dialogue and emphasises dialogue, but at the same time, he emphasises Christianity as the only true religion (EN 53).

<sup>369</sup> Jacques Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, p. 173.

<sup>370</sup> Jacques Dupuis, "A Theological Commentary: Dialogue and Proclamation", *Redemption and Dialogue: Reading Redemptoris Missio and Dialogue and Proclamation*, William R. burrows (Ed.), Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1993, p. 125.

<sup>371</sup> Cf. Jacques Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, p. 173; Cf. Jacques Dupuis, *A Theological Commentary: Dialogue and Proclamation*, p. 127.

<sup>372</sup> Pope John Paul, "*Redemptor Hominis*", *Encyclicals*, Kerala: Carmel International Publishing House, 2005, p. 1076.

his opinion, begins with an approach of respect, discernment and esteem for other religions and for all that is the work of the Spirit in them (RH 12). His view of the other religions as having the operative presence of the Spirit is intensely brought out in his encyclical *Dominum et Vivificantem* (DEV-18 May 1986), wherein the Pope speaks of the universal activity of the Holy Spirit before the time of the Christian economy as well as today outside the church.<sup>373</sup> The Spirit of God scatters the seeds of truth and grace in the hearts of individuals, peoples, cultures and religions (DEV 53). Therefore, he speaks of his respect and esteem for the people of other faiths. The theme of the universal presence and activity of the Holy Spirit recurs once more in the encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*<sup>374</sup> (RM-7 December 1990). The universal presence of the Holy Spirit can be seen “as an important element in establishing the foundation for the Church’s practice of interreligious dialogue.”<sup>375</sup> Interreligious dialogue for Pope John Paul is important for the transformation of the world which can be brought about only through religions. It is “a path that can promote respect among the members of different religions and help to bring peace and harmony to a world torn by conflict and war, poverty, and the destruction of the environment, a world that is captivated by materialism and secularism, in deep need of finding significant existence.”<sup>376</sup> Besides the writings of the popes, there have been a number of official dialogue meetings initiated by the Catholic Church and a number of important documents published by the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue.<sup>377</sup> It is important to note that in all its deliberation regarding the dialogue with religions and openness to them, the Church holds on to its mission of proclaiming Christ and his Gospel to all the people (LG 16; NA 2; AG 1; EN 15; RM 31). One of the most important documents is: *Dialogue and Proclamation* (DP 1984).<sup>378</sup> The aim of the document was “to show the place which interreligious dialogue occupies in the overall evangelizing mission of the church.”<sup>379</sup> The document emphasises the missionary aspect of the Church and

<sup>373</sup> Pope John Paul II, “*Dominum et Vivificantem*” Encyclicals, Kerala: Carmel Publishing House, 2005, pp. 817–910.

<sup>374</sup> Pope John Paul II, “*Redemptoris Missio*” Encyclicals, Kerala: Carmel Publishing House, 2005, pp. 577–6474.

<sup>375</sup> Jacques Dupuis, A Theological Commentary: Dialogue and Proclamation, p. 128.

<sup>376</sup> Harold Kasimow, “John Paul II and Interreligious Dialogue, An Overview”, John Paul II and Interreligious Dialogue, Byron L. Sherwyn & Harold Kasimow (Eds.), New York: Orbis Books, 1999, p. 2.

<sup>377</sup> For an overview of the Church’s efforts for dialogue with other religions, see Edward Idris Cassidy, Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue. & Robert B. Sheard, Interreligious Dialogue in the Catholic Church Since Vatican II: An Historical and Theological Study, Lewiston/ Queenston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1987.

<sup>378</sup> Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, “Dialogue and Proclamation”, [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/interelg/documents/rc\\_pc\\_interelg\\_doc\\_19051991\\_dialogue-and-proclamatio\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/interelg/documents/rc_pc_interelg_doc_19051991_dialogue-and-proclamatio_en.html), 16.05.17.

<sup>379</sup> Jacques Dupuis, A Theological Commentary: Dialogue and Proclamation, p. 129.

states that this mission of the Church extends to all people (DP 79). The document calls interreligious dialogue as the integral part of the mission of the Church and calls on the Church to engage in a fourfold dialogue with religions:

- a) The *dialogue of life*, where people strive to live in an open and neighbourly spirit, sharing their joys and sorrows, their human problems and preoccupations.
- b) The *dialogue of action*, in which Christians and others collaborate for the integral development and liberation of people.
- c) The *dialogue of theological exchange*, where specialists seek to deepen their understanding of their respective religious heritages, and to appreciate each other's spiritual values.
- d) The *dialogue of religious experience*, where persons, rooted in their own religious traditions, share their spiritual riches, for instance with regard to prayer and contemplation, faith and ways of searching for God or the Absolute (DP 42).

The Church's emphasis on dialogue with the religions and its resolve to remain at the same time faithful to its missionary vocation and commitment gives rise to a question about the integration of both these aspects.<sup>380</sup> Many theologians who are involved in interreligious dialogue, question the Catholic Church's understanding of the dialogue, which includes respecting the other and at the same time proclamation of the Gospel. As an answer to the questions evolving around the mission of the Church and its dialogue with the religions, one can consider what Pope John Paul said in his address to the members of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue: "There remains many a question which we have to develop and articulate more clearly. How does God work in the lives of the people of different religions? How does his saving activity in Jesus Christ effectively extend to those who have not professed faith in him? In the coming years, these questions and related ones will become more and more important for the Church in a pluralistic world, and pastors, with the collaboration of the experienced theologians, must direct their studious attention to them."<sup>381</sup>

In the present times, however, there have been efforts to establish close relationships with the major world religions like Judaism, Hinduism, Islam and Buddhism in order to acknowledge, appreciate and affirm the good and the beautiful in them. The credit for this wonderful change and transformation in the Church goes to the Vatican II which through its documents "sought to establish a new climate

<sup>380</sup> James L. Heft, "Catholicism and Interreligious Dialogue", *Catholicism and Interreligious Dialogue*, James L. Heft (Ed.), USA: Oxford University Press, 2012, p. 7.

<sup>381</sup> "Bulletin, n. 66, vol. 22/3 (1987), 225", cited in: Francis A. Sullivan, *Salvation outside the Church? Tracing the History of the Catholic Response*, New York: Paulist Press, 1992, p. 198.

in which encounter and dialogue were understood as part of the church's role in the world."<sup>382</sup> "In its desire to affirm all that is good and true in other religions and to recognize their source in the one, loving God of all, Vatican II marks the commitment of the Catholic Church to live in a religiously pluralist world with an attitude of humility, respect and mutual esteem."<sup>383</sup> Thanks to the change of attitude initiated by the Council, the Church has learnt through this commitment "to relate to people of different religions in different ways, through neighbourliness, through joint action, through the sharing of spiritual values, through formal discussions."<sup>384</sup> Such a commitment will help the Church together with other religions to become messengers of peace and reconciliation on their journey to the ultimate goal of desire of the entire humanity, which is God.

#### **4 A New Way of being Church (Ecclesiological thought of Pope Francis)**

In March 2013, as the prefect of the College of Cardinals announced to the people in St. Peter's square the election of the new pope, he said, "I announce to you a great joy: We have a Pope". Since then, the election of Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio has proved to be good news, not only for the Catholic Church, which was beset by a sense of scandal and dysfunction at its heart, but also for the entire world community. Through his words and actions, the Pope has been continuously attracting not only Christians, but also the people of other faiths from around the world. Pope Francis was not involved in any way in Vatican II. In fact, he was ordained after the Council. Yet there is something that connects and relates him to the Vatican Council, namely his emphasis on the need for reform and renewal in the Church. His life, his words and his actions as the Pope manifest his intention to go ahead with the reforms suggested by the Council and to give a flesh to the Council's vision. He wants to offer the Catholic Church "a fresh reception of the council, one that holds promise for continuing the unfinished building project of Vatican II."<sup>385</sup> Therefore, his programme of the Church reform is based on the Vatican II and "his commitment to conciliar values is instinctive, strong, and different

<sup>382</sup> Marianne Moyaert, "Interreligious Dialogue", *Understanding Interreligious Relations*, David Cheetham, Douglas Pratt & David Thomas (Eds.), UK: Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 200.

<sup>383</sup> Richard Gaillardetz & Catherine E. Clifford, *Keys to the Council* P. 187.

<sup>384</sup> Michael L. Fitzgerald, "What the Catholic Church has Learnt from Interreligious Dialogue", <http://www.cismor.jp/uploads-images/sites/3/2008/02/What-the-Catholic-Church-Has-Learnt-from-Interreligious-Dialogue.pdf>, 16.07.2017.

<sup>385</sup> Richard R. Gaillardetz, *An Unfinished Council -Vatican II, Pope Francis and the Renewal of Catholicism*, Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2015, p. 115.

in kind from that of either of his immediate predecessors.”<sup>386</sup> The very name Francis taken by the Pope (inspired by St. Francis of Assisi who was called by God to rebuild and restore His Church) gave a clear indication of the direction in which the Pope wanted to take the Church. It is a name which “signifies humility, a dedication to the poor, to peace, to dialogue, to service, to the church getting back to gospel principles in all aspects of life and therefore moving away from power and prestige toward simplicity, to following the gospel rather than human ambition.”<sup>387</sup> It is not so much a name but a programme – a reform programme which the Pope wants to initiate in the Church. In his first ever apostolic exhortation: *Evangelii Gaudium – Joy of the Gospel*<sup>388</sup> the Pope speaks of the urgency of reform on all the levels of the Church. However, this reform cannot be the initiative of the Pope alone, but of the whole Church. Hence, the Pope calls on all the faithful to join him and support him in shouldering this great responsibility that has been entrusted to him.

#### 4.1 A poor Church for the poor

The concern for the poor is surely not something new in the life of Church. The poor were the important part of the kingdom of God preached by Jesus Christ and his disciples. Concern for the poor continues to be an important dimension of the Church’s mission, although it may not have had equal importance at all the times in the history of the Church. An important impetus to the concern for the poor came from the Second Vatican Council and later from the Latin American and Caribbean Churches, which spoke of “Church of the poor”.<sup>389</sup> In *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis expresses his desire for a Church, which is poor in heart and mind and structure. He speaks of a Church “which is poor and for the poor” (EG 198). A poor Church for the poor has the poor people as its centre and it discovers in the poor its organizational, structural and mission principle.<sup>390</sup> A poor Church for the poor is the heart of all the pastoral concerns and projects of Pope

<sup>386</sup> Eamon Duffy, “Who is the Pope”, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2015/02/19/who-is-pope-francis/>, 23.11.2016.

<sup>387</sup> Gerard Mannion (Ed.), “Pope Francis’ Agenda for the Church – *Evangelii Gaudium* as papal manifesto”, Pope Francis and the Future of Catholicism: *Evangelii Gaudium* and the Papal Agenda, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017, pp. 5–6.

<sup>388</sup> Pope Francis, “*Evangelii Gaudium* – On the Proclamation of the Gospel in today’s world”, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20131124\\_evangelii-gaudium.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html), 24.05.2017. Henceforth cited as EG.

<sup>389</sup> Francisco de Aquino Junior, “*Eine Arme Kirche für die Armen: Eine Pastoraltheologische Betrachtung*”, Jorge Gallegos Sánchez & Markus Luber (Hrsg.), *Eine arme Kirche für die Armen. Theologische Bedeutung und Praktische Konsequenzen*, Regensburg: Verlag Friedrich Pustet, 2015, S. 19–42.

<sup>390</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 29.

Francis and the most distinctive characteristic of his office as the chief shepherd of the flock the Church.<sup>391</sup> For Francis, “faith enters the Church through the heart of the poor and not through the heads of the intellectuals.”<sup>392</sup> Hence, the poor are at the heart of the Church’s ministry and mission.

An inspiration for such a Church comes to the Pope surely from St. Francis of Assisi, “a saint renowned for his love affair with Lady Poverty.”<sup>393</sup> Inspired by the life and example of the little poor man from Assisi, the Pope wants a Church which will not just go out and help and support the poor but become one with them. The theological basis for such a poor Church is according to the Pope the life of Christ “who became poor and was always close to the poor and the outcast” (EG 186). This means, “for the Church, the option for the poor is primarily a theological category rather than a cultural, sociological, political or philosophical one” (EG 198). God has a very special place for the poor in His heart (EG197) and “this divine preference has consequences for the faith life of all Christians” (EG 198). Pope Francis refers to a number of Biblical texts in order to show how the poor had an important role in the entire salvation history (EG 197). Since God loves the poor and is on the side of the poor, the Church, too, inspired by the scriptures, makes the option for the poor (EG 197).

Francis criticises the rising capitalism in today’s world which makes the poor poorer while the few affluent enjoy life at the cost of these poor. Warning against the economy of exclusion and inequality which makes the poor suffer and creates imbalance in the society, the Pope says: “Such an economy kills” (EG 53). In fact, if 1.4 billion people today live in extreme poverty and if every year 5.6 million children suffer from and die of malnutrition, then the global economic system is surely not a fair system and is out of order.<sup>394</sup> It is not a life-promoting system but life destroying. It is against the “globalization of indifference” resulting from such a system that Pope Francis wants to raise his voice,<sup>395</sup> in the hope of transforming today’s world which excludes the people systematically and treats them as dirt.<sup>396</sup>

Since options for the poor is the central concern of the Church’s mission and is related to the kingdom of God preached by Jesus, Pope Francis calls on the Church to focus its attention on the poor in the world. The Church needs to go out to the

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<sup>391</sup> Cf. Ibid.

<sup>392</sup> Thomas Reese, “Pope Francis’ Ecclesiology rooted in the Emmaus story”, <https://www.ncronline.org/news/spirituality/pope-francis-ecclesiology-rooted-emmaus-story>, 28.05.2017.

<sup>393</sup> John L. Allan Jr., “Challenges to vision of a ‘poor Church for the poor’”, <https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/challenges-vision-poor-church-poor>, 24.05.2017.

<sup>394</sup> Cf. Walter Kasper, “*Wir sind Kirche der Armen*”, <http://www.theeuropean.de/walter-kasper/10619-papst-franziskus-veraendert-die-kirche>, 26.05.2017.

<sup>395</sup> Cf. Ibid.

<sup>396</sup> Cf. Niklaus Kuster & Martina Kreidler-Kos, *Der Mann der Armut. Franziskus-ein Name wird Programm, Freiburg im Breisgau: Verlag Herder, 2014, S. 29.*



poor and suffering. It needs to open itself to the suffering of the needy and poor instead of remaining closed with its own internal concerns. In this connection, Pope Francis says: “I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security” (EG 49). Each individual Christian and every community are called to be an instrument of God for the liberation and promotion of the poor and for enabling them to be fully a part of the society (EG 187). Francis speaks of the Church going out to the “periphery” (EG 20, 30, 59). The word ‘periphery’ refers to the socially and economically, politically and culturally unprivileged persons who according to him are the first addressees of the Gospel. It is in these poor, marginalized, simple people on the city peripheries that the most authentic and most profound human values are found.<sup>397</sup> Pope Francis challenges the Church “to accompany people from the margins into a journey towards the fullness of life and love.”<sup>398</sup>

To be poor, however, does not mean, “we must become champions of poverty or, as it were, “spiritual tramps”!”<sup>399</sup> “A poor Church is a Church that places all material means at the service of the Gospel, of the Liturgy, and of Charity for the poor.”<sup>400</sup> Pope Francis’ call for a poor Church for the poor aims towards creating a tendency of having the minimum in order to give or share the maximum with the needy; towards a fair and equal consumption of goods, so that all will have what is needed for a descent and a dignified life; and toward setting a contrary sign in the world that is marked by selfishness, possessiveness and abuse of goods.<sup>401</sup> At the same time for Pope Francis, the idea of a preferential option for the poor is not limited to merely helping the poor materially. A poor Church for the poor is one which encounters Christ in the poor and serves Him in the poor. “A poor Church for the poor begins by reaching out to the flesh of Christ. If we reach out to the flesh of Christ, we begin to understand something, to understand what this poverty, the Lord’s poverty, actually is”.<sup>402</sup> Poverty is “the flesh of the poor

<sup>397</sup> Cf. Roberto Vinco, “*Papst Franziskus und die Sprache der Peripherien*”, *Barmherzigkeit und Zärtliche Liebe: Das Theologische Programm von Papst Franziskus*, Kurt Appel & Jakob Helmut Deibl (Hrsg.), Freiburg im Breisgau: Verlag Herder, 2016, S. 183.

<sup>398</sup> Vincent Long Van Nguyen, “Pope Francis and the Challenges of the Church today”, <https://www.catholicweekly.com.au/pope-francis-and-the-challenges-of-the-church-today/>, 25.05.2017.

<sup>399</sup> Pope Francis, “Address to Participants in the Ecclesial Convention of the Diocese of Rome-17 June 2013”, [https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/june/documents/papa-francesco\\_20130617\\_convegno-diocesano-roma.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/june/documents/papa-francesco_20130617_convegno-diocesano-roma.html), 24.05.2017.

<sup>400</sup> Martin Schlag, “Pope Francis wants a poor Church for the poor. Where is he taking the Church?”, <http://mceproject.org/it/ricerca/249-pope-francis-wants-a-poor-church-for-the-poor-where-is-he-taking-the-church.html>, 24.05.2017.

<sup>401</sup> Cf. Leonardo Boff, *Franziskus aus Rom und Franz von Assisi: Ein neuer Frühling für die Kirche*, Übersetzt von Bruno Kern, Hoogeweg: Butzon & Bercker, 2014, S. 73.

<sup>402</sup> Pope Francis, “Vigil of Pentecost with Ecclesial Movements-18th May, 2013”,

Jesus, in that child who is hungry, in the one who is sick, in those unjust social structures.”<sup>403</sup> The Church needs to go out and touch this flesh of Christ suffering and in misery. The Church must meet the poor, live with them, listen to them, have a dialogue with them and sympathize with them and care for them, not only materially but also spiritually.<sup>404</sup> Pope Francis desires a Church “unafraid of going forth into their night. We need a Church capable of meeting them on their way. We need a Church capable of entering into their conversation.”<sup>405</sup>

Francis’ understanding of poverty is very simple, yet profoundly theological. The realisation of a poor Church for the poor in the light of what he says is surely not an easy process. It is a highly prophetic call. But with such a charismatic and spiritual shepherd like Pope Francis, who leads by example, the Church can surely begin its journey in that direction in the hope of achieving this goal. Pope Francis is truly, as the archbishop of Canterbury says, “an extraordinary humanity on fire with the spirit of Christ.”<sup>406</sup> The world today needs more prophets and visionaries like Pope Francis to call the world to reflect and change, so that a better and just world order may be established.<sup>407</sup>

## 4.2 A Listening Church

Pope Francis wants today’s Church to be a “listening Church”. The kind of listening he refers to is “a mutual listening in which everyone has something to learn.”<sup>408</sup> A listening Church does not comprise just of Pope and the college of bishops. A listening Church includes all the members of the Church, from the greatest to the least. “Faithful people, the college of bishops, the bishop of Rome: we are one in listening to others; and all are listening to the Holy Spirit, the “Spirit of truth” (Jn 14:17), to know what the Spirit “is saying to the Churches” (Rev 2:7).”<sup>409</sup>

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[http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/may/documents/papa-francesco\\_20130518\\_veglia-pentecoste.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/may/documents/papa-francesco_20130518_veglia-pentecoste.html), 26.05.2017.

<sup>403</sup> Thomas C. Fox, “Pope Francis speaks again on World Poverty”, <https://www.ncronline.org/bl ogs/ncr-today/pope-francis-speaks-again-world-poverty>, 26.05.2017.

<sup>404</sup> Cf. Leonardo Boff, *Franziskus aus Rom und Franz von Assisi*, p. 73.

<sup>405</sup> Pope Francis, “Address of Pope Francis-Meeting with the Bishops of Brazil, 28th July 2013”, [https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/july/documents/papa-francesco\\_20130727\\_gmg-episcopato-brasile.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/july/documents/papa-francesco_20130727_gmg-episcopato-brasile.html), 27.05.2017.

<sup>406</sup> Lizzy Davis, “Pope and archbishop of Canterbury find common ground at talks in Rome”, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jun/14/pope-archbishop-canterbury-talks-rome>, 27.05.2017.

<sup>407</sup> Cf. Jörg Alt, “*Eine arme Kirche für die Armen*”, [http://stimmen-der-zeit.de/zeitschrift/ausgabe/details?k\\_beitrag=4099540&cnid=13&k\\_produkt=4099872](http://stimmen-der-zeit.de/zeitschrift/ausgabe/details?k_beitrag=4099540&cnid=13&k_produkt=4099872), 25.05.2017.

<sup>408</sup> Pope Francis, “Pope Calls for a Listening Church”, <http://www.americamagazine.org/content/all-things/pope-calls-listening-church>, 27.05.2017.

<sup>409</sup> Ibid.

It is in this context that Francis speaks of “thinking with the Church”.<sup>410</sup> Thinking with the Church implies, “that we get beyond our often self-styled, and often self-serving credos . . . (thinking with the Church) also means much more than a scrupulous, servile obedience to every ecclesiastical decree. It means thinking with the *whole* Church and not just the ones who count ecclesiastically. It means daring to enter into a “complete web of relationships” and living in a receptive solidarity with all God’s people.”<sup>411</sup> Francis’ inspiration for a listening Church comes from the image of the holy, faithful People of God in *Lumen Gentium* no. 10: “The people itself constitutes a subject. And the Church is the People of God on the journey through history, with joys and sorrows. Thinking with the church, therefore, is my way of being a part of this people. And all the faithful, considered as a whole, are infallible in matters of belief, and the people display this *infallibilitas in credendo*, this infallibility in believing, through a supernatural sense of the faith of all the people walking together.”<sup>412</sup> Hence, it is not just the hierarchical Church, which is the part of the thinking Church, but also the believing Church, made of ordinary believing and practicing Catholics. “When the dialogue among the people and the bishops and the Pope goes down this road and is genuine, then it is assisted by the Holy Spirit.”<sup>413</sup> As Richard Gaillardetz says, one should not “overlook the audacity of this claim. Francis is saying that we can be confident of the assistance of the Holy Spirit to the bishops *on the condition that* they are open to listening to others. This perspective stands in startling contrast to the almost mechanistic notions of the Holy Spirit often invoked by the church leaders.”<sup>414</sup>

In *Evangelii Gaudium*, Francis speaks of the infallibility *in credendo* of the people of God by virtue of baptism through the Holy Spirit and says that the people of God “does not err in faith, even though it may not find words to explain that faith” (EG 119). He emphasises that “The presence of the Spirit gives Christians a certain connaturality with divine realities, and a wisdom which enables them to grasp those realities intuitively, even when they lack the wherewithal to give them precise expression” (EG 119). “Through the gift of the Holy Spirit, the members of the Church possess the ‘*sense of the faith*’. It is a kind of “spiritual instinct” which allows them to *sentire cum Ecclesia* and to discern, what conforms to the Apostolic faith and to the spirit of the Gospel.”<sup>415</sup> Therefore, Francis calls

<sup>410</sup> Antonio Sparado, “A Big heart open to God: An Interview with Pope Francis”, <https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2013/09/30/big-heart-open-god-interview-pope-francis>, 24.05.2017.

<sup>411</sup> Richard Gaillardetz, *An Unfinished Council*, p. 122.

<sup>412</sup> Antonio Sparado, *A Big heart open to God: An Interview with Pope Francis*.

<sup>413</sup> Ibid.

<sup>414</sup> Richard Gaillardetz, *An Unfinished Council*, p. 122.

<sup>415</sup> Pope Francis, “Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to the Members of the International Theological Council, December 6th, 2013”, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/december/documents/papa-francesco\\_20131206\\_commissione-teologica.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/december/documents/papa-francesco_20131206_commissione-teologica.html), 27.05.2017.

on the theologians of the Church to develop the quality of listening: Listening to the Word of God and receiving it into the hearts and humbly listening to “what the Spirit says to the churches” (Rev 2:7), through the various manifestations of the faith lived by the People of God”,<sup>416</sup> and “to develop the criteria for discerning authentic expressions of the *sensus fidelium*.”<sup>417</sup>

Francis’ desire for a listening Church is manifested in his challenge to the Bishops:

In his mission of fostering a dynamic, open and missionary communion, he (a bishop) will have to encourage and develop the means of participation proposed in the Code of Canon Law, and other forms of pastoral dialogue, out of a desire to listen to everyone and not simply to those who would tell him what he would like to hear. Yet the principal aim of these participatory processes should not be ecclesiastical organization but rather the missionary aspiration of reaching everyone (EG 31).

This passage implies, that “consultation is more than gathering together safe voices that function as little more than an ecclesiastical echo chamber.”<sup>418</sup> The Pope’s desire for and commitment to a listening, participatory and synodal Church is seen in the extraordinary Synod of Bishops on the Family, which was “marked by genuine exchange of viewpoints and often lively disagreements”<sup>419</sup> and not by passive acceptance and approval. In his interviews and speeches to the bishops and in other talks, Pope Francis keeps repeating the theme of the synodality and his desire for consultation and dialogue in the Church. Pope Francis proposes an ecclesiology, “that takes seriously the nature of the church as a true communion of the faithful and their pastors in synergetic relationship, an ecclesiology that calls for a genuine dialogue between the Pope and bishops, local churches and Rome, pastors and their faithful.”<sup>420</sup>

### 4.3 A Merciful Church

Mercifulness is another dimension of a Church envisioned by Pope Francis. In fact, the theme of mercy can be seen as the guiding principle of his programme

<sup>416</sup> Pope Francis, “Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to the Members of the International Theological Council, December 5th, 2014”, [https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2014/december/documents/papa-francesco\\_20141205\\_commissione-teologica-internazionale.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2014/december/documents/papa-francesco_20141205_commissione-teologica-internazionale.html), 27.05.2017.

<sup>417</sup> Pope Francis, *Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to the Members of the International Theological Council*.

<sup>418</sup> Richard Gaillardetz, *An Unfinished Council*, pp. 123–124.

<sup>419</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 125.

<sup>420</sup> Thomas P. Rausch, “A Listening Church”, *Go into the Streets! The Welcoming Church of Pope Francis*, Thomas P. Rausch & Richard R. Gaillardetz (Eds.), New York: Paulist Press, 2016, p. 81.

for the Church. Basing himself on the New Testament he says, “Mercy has become living and visible in Jesus of Nazareth, reaching its culmination in him.”<sup>421</sup> In his sermons, interviews and other writings, the Pope keeps on repeating his thoughts on mercy: God’s mercy is unending; God is never tired of showing mercy to everyone who comes to Him. God does not fail those who trust in His mercy. A little mercy can change and transform the world.<sup>422</sup> “God’s mercy, rather than a sign of weakness, is the mark of his omnipotence.”<sup>423</sup>

Speaking about the role of the Church in the world in the light of God’s mercy, Pope Francis says that Mercy is to be the very foundation of the Church’s life and activity. “The very credibility of the Church is seen in how she shows merciful and compassionate love.”<sup>424</sup> Just like the merciful father whose house was open to his wayward son who returned back seeking his forgiveness and mercy, the Church, too, is to open itself in order to receive those who come to it seeking the forgiveness and mercy of God: “The Church is called to be the house of the Father, with doors always open” (EG 47). It must be “a place of mercy freely given, where everyone can feel welcomed, loved, forgiven and encouraged to live the good life of the Gospel” (EG 114). In this context, the Pope also speaks of the ministers (Bishops, Priests and also Christians) as “ostiaries” (doorkeepers) who receive and welcome all people who come to the Church seeking God’s mercy, and let them in. No person in need of mercy who comes to the Church must be sent away or excluded from the Church. Ministers must always remember that they are servants of the mercy of God: “who am I that I could withstand the Holy Spirit? Who am I to change the ministry of the ostiary in a Church that, instead of opening, closes doors? Who am I to say ‘here and no further’? Who am I to cage the Holy Spirit?”<sup>425</sup>

Regarding the sacrament of penance, which is understood as the place of experience of God’s mercy, the Pope says: “The Church is not the mistress of the power of the keys but a servant of the ministry of mercy, and she rejoices every time she can offer this divine gift.”<sup>426</sup> The Church has received the command from Jesus to be merciful as the heavenly Father is merciful. Hence, “the Church,

<sup>421</sup> Pope Francis, “*Misericordiae Vultus* – Bull of Indiction of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy”, [https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_letters/documents/papa-francesco\\_bolla\\_20150411\\_misericordiae-vultus.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_letters/documents/papa-francesco_bolla_20150411_misericordiae-vultus.html), 27.05.2017.

<sup>422</sup> Cf. Walter Kasper, *Wir sind Kirche der Armen*.

<sup>423</sup> Pope Francis, *Misericordiae Vultus – Bull of Indiction of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy*.

<sup>424</sup> Ibid.

<sup>425</sup> Pope Francis, “We are all Ostiaries-Morning Meditation, 12th May, 2014”, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/cotidie/2014/documents/papa-francesco-cotidie\\_20140512\\_ostiaries.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/cotidie/2014/documents/papa-francesco-cotidie_20140512_ostiaries.html), 28.05.2017.

<sup>426</sup> Pope Francis, “The Joy of Discipleship”, <https://cruxnow.com/church/2016/04/17/pope-francis-the-joy-of-discipleship/>, 28.05.2017.

which is holy, does not reject sinners . . . . ; she does not reject us because she calls everyone, welcomes them, is open even to those furthest from her. She calls everyone to allow themselves to be enfolded by the mercy, the tenderness, and the forgiveness of the Father, who offers everyone the possibility of meeting him, of journeying toward sanctity.”<sup>427</sup> The Sacrament of Reconciliation is an occasion where the ministers of the Church manifest their true nature and duty as the agents of God’s mercy. Hence, Francis reminds the priests that “the confessional must not be a torture chamber but rather an encounter with the Lord’s mercy which spurs us on to do our best” (EG 44). Ministers are, in other words, not arbiters of grace but its facilitators.<sup>428</sup> It is important to note that Francis’ stress on mercy does not in any way relativize the destruction that sin causes to the humanity and the world: “The Church condemns sin because it has to relay the truth: “This is sin”. But at the same time, it embraces the sinner who recognizes himself as such, it welcomes him, speaks to him of the infinite mercy of God.”<sup>429</sup> Speaking of the mission of the Church to cure and heal, the Pope calls the Church as a field hospital: “It’s true: there are many, many wounded! So many people need their wounds healed! This is the mission of the Church: to heal the wounds of the heart, to open doors, to free people, to say that God is good, God forgives all, God is the Father, God is affectionate and God always waits for us.”<sup>430</sup>

Francis’ motive is very clear: he wants mercy to be the guiding principle of all that the Church is and does in the world. He wants the Church to realise that God’s mercy and love is the reason why the Church exists in the world. The Church is in the world to manifest the mercy and forgiveness and the love of God not only in words but also in action. He wants to give Christians an understanding of God’s mercy, a practical expression and form. Hence, Pope Francis has been making efforts to give practical or pastoral orientation to the doctrine of the Church. In his address to the participants in the plenary session of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, he summarised the purpose of the doctrines of the Church in a sentence: “In reality, doctrine has the sole purpose of serving the life of the People of God and it seeks to assure our faith of a sure foundation.”<sup>431</sup> In the past five

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<sup>427</sup> Ibid.

<sup>428</sup> Richard Lennan, “Ministry as Merciful Accompaniment”, *Go into the Streets! The Welcoming Church of Pope Francis*, Thomas P. Rausch & Richard R. Gaillardetz (Eds.), New York: Paulist Press, 2016, p. 145.

<sup>429</sup> Pope Francis, *The Church of Mercy: A Conversation with Andrea Tornielli*, transl. Oonagh Stransky, London: Bluebird Books for Life, 2016, p. 48.

<sup>430</sup> Pope Francis, “The Church should be like a field hospital – Homily at Casa Santa Marta 2nd May, 2015”, <http://www.romereports.com/2015/02/05/pope-francis-homily-the-church-should-be-like-a-field-hospital>, 28.05.2017.

<sup>431</sup> Pope Francis, “Address to the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith-January 31st 2014”, <https://zenit.org/articles/pope-francis-address-to-congregation-for-the-doctrine-of-the->

years, there have been several examples of Francis' commitment to the pastoral orientation of the doctrine. One best example manifesting his commitment is his openness to reconsider the question of communion for the divorced and remarried couples. As a rule, those Catholics who are divorced and have remarried are prohibited from receiving the communion. But even in this situation, Pope Francis wants to treat such Catholics with mercy. He calls for a little more mercy to be shown to them and says, that "The Eucharist, although it is the fullness of sacramental life, is not a prize for the perfect but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak" (EG 47). A similar thought was repeated in his press conference on his return flight from Rio de Janeiro: "The Church is a mother: she has to go out to heal those who are hurting, with mercy. If the Lord never tires of forgiving, we have no other choice than this: first of all, to care for those who are hurting. The Church is a mother, and she must travel this path of mercy."<sup>432</sup>

Another example is his famous remark, "Who am I to judge" in relation to the homosexuals wherein he said: "If a person is gay and seeks God and has good will, who am I to judge?"<sup>433</sup> The Pope is aware of the Church's teaching, according to which homosexual acts are sinful, not homosexual orientation. And the Pope does not intend in any way to change the mind of the Church in this regard.<sup>434</sup> What the Pope wants is to place the issue of homosexuals in the context of Christian mercy: "People must be accompanied as Jesus accompanies them, when a person who has this condition arrives before Jesus, Jesus surely doesn't tell him "go away because you are homosexual."<sup>435</sup> It's thus the human person who is in the centre and important, and not so much the doctrine and the discipline. Pope Francis wants the Church today to become the mirror reflecting God's mercy and love through its exercise of mercy in dealing with the people in the world.

The Pope wants the Church to extend the mercy of God and to be open to others. In this sense he has been also making efforts for a threefold dialogue: Dialogue with other Christian traditions; dialogue with other religious traditions and dialogue with the nature. The goal of this dialogue is the unity of mankind and the cooperation between them for the betterment of the world and for the estab-

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faith/, 28.05.2017.

<sup>432</sup> Pope Francis, "Press Conference of Pope Francis during the return Flight 28th July, 2013", [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/july/documents/papa-francesco\\_20130728\\_gmg-conferenza-stampa.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/july/documents/papa-francesco_20130728_gmg-conferenza-stampa.html), 28.05.2017.

<sup>433</sup> Ibid.

<sup>434</sup> Cf. Nick Squires, "Pope Francis says transsexuals and gay people should be embraced by the Catholic Church", <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/10/04/pope-francis-says-transsexuals-and-gay-people-should-be-embraced/>, 28.05.2017.

<sup>435</sup> George Burke, "Pope Francis' in-flight Press Conference from Azerbaijan-2nd October, 2016", <http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/full-text-pope-francis-in-flight-press-conference-from-azerbaijan-24352/>, 28.05.2017.

lishment of the Kingdom of God. Just as the Second Vatican Council through the initiatives of Pope John XXII and later Pope Paul VI wanted to make the Church an instrument to bring the world closer to God, so also Pope Francis wants today through his reform programme to make the Church realise its mission in the world as the instrument of God in order to bring human beings closer to God. In his writings, interviews and sermons Francis speaks often of a Church, which is a little more human, a little friendlier, a little more loving and a little more merciful in her approach and dealing with the world. He does not want to undertake this project of a new reformed Church alone. He wants the entire Church to get involved in this project. He wants the bishops all over the world to give him a helping hand through their experience, and through their suggestions, and he also wants the faithful to help him and walk with him this way of renewal. At the same time, he wants, in all his humility, that the faithful pray for him so that he gets the strength of the Holy Spirit to take the Church to where it belongs or what it is supposed to be – a human Church for the world. The way which the Pope wants to go is surely difficult and full of challenges, both from inside and outside, but it is not impossible. With Pope Francis, the winds of change have once again begun to blow in the life of the Church. And I hope that these winds will not stop without changing the face of the Church through the power of the Holy Spirit who is the founding and guiding principle of the Church.

## 5 Conclusion

I would like to conclude this chapter with following points:

- The Church envisioned by Vatican II is a human Church (not reference to its origin but its mission in the world and the way it deals with the world), which is in the world and is one with the world in its joys and sorrows. It is a Church, which tries to show solidarity with man in his sufferings, in his joys, in his anxieties and in his beliefs. The Church exists in the world to show the world the path that leads to God – the Church is the hand extended by God to the world in order to bring it out of misery. While the world is created by God, it is good, and the institutions that exist in the world, namely, marriage, family, etc. The Church has a mission in the world and for the world which it carries out through its members.
- The Church envisioned by Vatican II is one which works to establish the peace in the world – peace between the nations, between the religions and peace between the people.
- The Church envisioned by Vatican II is a Church that is characterized by dialogue: dialogue with different Christian churches and dialogue with other religious traditions. The Church respects and loves the different Christian churches



as originating from the one and the same principle of life – the Holy Spirit and from the one founder – Jesus Christ. At the same time, the Church respects and accepts different religious traditions as good and true. The Church respects and recognizes the reality of religious pluralism and wants to have dialogue with the religions and in collaboration, realise what the different religions teach: universal peace, universal brother-sisterhood.

- The Church envisioned by Vatican II is also manifest in a Church that is the dream of Pope Francis: An open Church for all, without boundaries and limitations; a Church rich in mercy and goodness to all; a Church on the side of the weak and the suffering who are the dearly beloved people of God.

Having studied the ecclesiological thought of the Second Vatican Council and the different characteristics which are also to be seen as the challenges posed by the Council before the Church, I will turn my attention in the next chapter to the Indian context in order to study how the ecclesiological challenges of Vatican II are being realised in the Indian multicultural and multi-religious context.

## **Chapter IV THE CHALLENGES OF VATICAN II FOR THE INDIAN CATHOLIC CHURCH**

The event of the Second Vatican Council can be considered as an event of grace and of a very special and immense importance for the Indian Catholic Church. The paradigm shift experienced by the universal Church at the Council has also been experienced by the Indian Church. The Council, with its changed understanding of the Church, namely, its nature, mission and purpose, has been constantly challenging the Indian Catholic Church to analyse, introspect and renew itself. The ecclesial community in India is continuously called upon to die in the Indian soil and to germinate in it, in order to come to life, grow and bear abundant fruit. It is called to become the Indian Church – a Church of the soil. The challenges set by the Council for the Indian Church can also be seen as the mission of the Church today in India for the Indian society.

There are different challenges. However, dealing with these challenges and finding out solutions to the questions and problems cannot be done from a distance. An ecclesiology for an Indian Catholic Church cannot be conceived in any other better way than by taking stock of the Indian situation and the Indian context. It should be an ecclesiology springing forth from the Indian context, the Indian life situation. The Indian Church finds itself in a context defined by poverty, plurality (of religions) and diversity (of cultures). There is a need to develop a theology (in our discussion an ecclesiology), which is in the words of Stephen Bevans “thoroughly contextual on the one hand and global or intercultural on the other.”<sup>1</sup> “The context is not merely a stage on which the theological truths are unpacked; the context goes to make up the very texture of theology.”<sup>2</sup> In this sense, the concrete life context of India is the foundation on which Indian ecclesiological reflections have to be based, because the challenges arise from the context in which the Indian Church finds itself today. As discussed earlier, the Indian context is characterized

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen Bevans & Katalina Tahaafe-Williams (Eds.), *Contextual Theology for the Twenty-first Century*, Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 2012, p.8. Many theologians speak of contextual theology: a theology which takes into consideration the particular context in which Christian faith is lived and practiced. The examples of contextual theology are: Dalit Theology, Liberation Theology, Black Theology, Minjung Theology etc. For more information on Contextual theology see: Stephen Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1992; Angie Pears, *Doing Contextual Theology*, London & New York: Routledge, 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Felix Wilfred, *Asian Dreams and Christian Hope*, New Delhi: ISPCK, 2003, p. 278.

by three important elements: poverty, religious pluralism and cultural diversity.<sup>3</sup> These are not only the three realities which define India, but also three challenges which the Indian Church faces and the missionary tasks that the Indian Church is to fulfil. Hence, it is by examining and studying these realities and developing praxis in the light of Vatican II teachings that the Indian Church will be able to face and overcome the different challenges and develop an ecclesiology in Indian context.

## 1 To be a prophetic Church

One of the most important tasks in the mission of the Indian Church is to be a prophetic Church – a Church which is prophetic in its words and actions. A prophet is to be a mouth-piece of God, a spokesperson for God.<sup>4</sup> As a prophet, the Church in India has the mission to make the voice of God heard in the society today. It has the duty to raise its voice against the injustice and unjust practices in the society and to find out ways to overcome it. In short, the prophetic dimension of the Indian Church consists in continuously challenging, questioning and striving to change the Indian society for better.

### 1.1 A Poor Church for the Poor

#### 1.1.1 The Socio-economic-political situation of India today

India is world's largest democracy and is second to China when its population is concerned. India has a prominent place at the international level due to the technological and scientific development to which the country has headed in the last few decades. From explorations in space, nuclear and defence technology to inventions that have improved everyday life, there are a few milestones which India has achieved in the scientific and technological progress in the last few years. It

<sup>3</sup> In a similar line of thought, George Soares-Prabhu, an Indian exegete and theologian, speaks of three important factors which characterize the Indian situation: a) massive *economic* poverty, which India shares with the third world, b) *pluriform religiosity*, which is a mark of its Asian-ness, and c) *institutionalized inequality* (cast system), which is specific to India alone. These three factors are in such a way interrelated that, they influence each other mutually. Cf. George M Soares-Prabhu, "The Indian Church challenged by Poverty and Caste", Biblical Themes for a Contextual Theology Today, Isaac Padinjarekuttu (Ed.), Collected Writings of George M. Soares Prabhu, Vol. I, Pune: Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth Theology Series, 1999, p. 142.

<sup>4</sup> For more information on Prophets See: Luke Timothy Johnson, Prophetic Jesus, Prophetic church: The Challenge of Luke Acts to Contemporary Christians, Grand Rapids, Michigan & Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011; David L. Petersen, The Prophetic Literature-An Introduction, Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002; Wilda Gafney, Daughters of Miriam-Women Prophets in Ancient Israel, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008.

is one of the fastest growing and developing countries in the world. India is at present “the fastest growing amongst the major economies of the world, the second largest reservoir of scientific and technical manpower, the third largest army, the sixth member of the nuclear club, the sixth member in the race for space, and the tenth largest industrial power. From a net food grains importing country, India is now a leading exporter of food commodities.”<sup>5</sup> Despite the fact that India has been on the road to development and progress, one cannot just turn a blind eye to the tremendous social, economic, political and even religious problems which Indian society faces at large. India has been facing a difficult crisis in the areas of social, political, economic and religious life. This crisis manifests itself in the inequality at the different spheres of life. According to Michael Amaladoss, an Indian Catholic theologian, “Economic inequality is manifested as more people are still below the poverty line . . . below the surface of democratic institutions there seems to be still a largely feudal structure, with political power in the hands of an affluent elite. Social inequality besides the problem of ethnic and religious minorities, the caste system is strong, oppressed are the outcasts who are economically poor and politically powerless.”<sup>6</sup> The massive poverty, inequality, oppression, corruption, discrimination and marginalisation are a witness to the fact that India is floundering in this crisis and needs to overcome this crisis desperately in order to establish a better social, economic, political and religious order.

### *1.1.1.1 Economic Situation*

The biggest factor which continues to disturb the image of a better India is the problem of massive and dehumanizing poverty which millions of India's people continue to suffer from. There is a stark contrast between India's progress chart as a whole and the actual Indian situation. On the one hand India is emerging to be the fastest growing economy and can boast of its overall economic growth and better financial status.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand there are signs of greater misery,

<sup>5</sup> Pranab Mukherjee, “President Pranab Mukherjee's Speech on the Eve of Republic day”, <http://www.ndtv.com/india-news/president-pranab-mukherjees-speech-on-eve-of-republic-day-full-text-1652726>, 12.08.2017.

<sup>6</sup> Michael Amaladoss, “Inequality, Liberation Theology and Christian Social Activities”, *Inequality: Its Basis and Search for Solutions*, Walter Fernandes (Ed.), New Delhi: Indian Social Institute, 1986, p. 263, cited in: cited in Lancy Rodrigues, *A Critique of Globalization in the light of Catholic Social Teaching with special Reference to India*, Romae: Academia Alfonsiana, 2006, pp. 83–84.

<sup>7</sup> India's gross domestic product (GDP) rate grew by 7 per cent year-on-year in October – December 2016 quarter, which is the strongest among G-20 countries, as per Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) *Economic Survey of India*, 2017. According to IMF *World Economic Outlook Update* (January 2017), Indian economy is expected to grow at 7.2 per cent during the Financial Year 2016–17 and further accelerate to 7.7 per cent dur-

rising unemployment, more families going below the poverty line. With one third of the world's poorest living in India, the country has a greater share of the poor.<sup>8</sup> India is in the list of top ten wealthiest countries, owing to its large population, whereas, on the basis of per capita the average Indian is quite poor.<sup>9</sup> According to the World Bank's poverty profile of India in the year 2016, 270,000,000 people of India are poor, which means one out of every five people is poor, and 80% of India's poor live in rural areas. They have lower assets and less access to the basic life amenities.<sup>10</sup>

The tragedy is that this poverty exists amidst plenty and extravagance. Where the few rich live in affluence and overflowing riches, the majority of the Indian population live on less than \$2 per day. With such a meagre income, the poor can hardly get proper food, leave alone other basic necessities of life, to which every human person is entitled. This only means, the continuous growth and spread of hunger, disease, illiteracy, lack of basic necessities. "India's status has gone down despite the economic growth, inequality has widened which makes the poor poorer. In child mortality, infant mortality and maternal mortality, India seems to have the largest populations in all these categories."<sup>11</sup> In this way, just as the growth in business, economy, technology is proving a cause of international name and fame to India, the extreme poverty and the misery of the poor continues to be a cause of shame for India.

Poverty that exists in India is not only the poverty which is defined in terms of material riches, but also the poverty which is measured by the dignity, freedom and worth that a person has. The famous Nobel-prize winner Amartya Sen opines that poverty does not mean being economically poor only, it also means the lack of freedom and capability to realise one's potential as a human being. "Development requires the removal of major sources of unfreedom: poverty as well as tyranny, poor economic opportunities as well as systematic social deprivation, neglect of public facilities as well as intolerance or overactivity of repressive states."<sup>12</sup> Poverty is not only material insufficiency, but also the incapability and

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ing Financial Year 2017–18. IBEF, <https://www.ibef.org/economy/indian-economy-overview>, 03.08.2017.

<sup>8</sup> Dean Nelson, "India has one third of world's poorest, says World Bank", <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/india/10003228/India-has-one-third-of-worlds-poorest-says-World-Bank.html>, 05.08.2017.

<sup>9</sup> PTI (Press Trust of India) "India among ten rich countries but average Indian quite poor: Report", <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/indicators/india-among-10-rich-countries-but-average-indian-quite-poor-report/articleshow/52520769.cms>, 05.08.2017

<sup>10</sup> World Bank, "India's Poverty Profile", <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/infographic/2016/05/27/india-s-poverty-profile>, 05.08.2017.

<sup>11</sup> Dean Nelson, *India has one third of world's poorest, says World Bank*.

<sup>12</sup> Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom*, New York: Anchor Books, 2000, p. 3.

lack of freedom to develop oneself out of one's misery. In this sense, poverty in India is caused not only through the natural disasters and through man-made calamities but also through human selfishness, greed, exploitation of the powerless and the refusal to share the resources with others. In their desire for more, the rich want to control the resources and the lives of the poor, relegating them to the status of slaves. The poor generally lack a number of elements to lead a happy, worthy and respectable life such as education, access to land, health and longevity, justice, family and community support, credit and other productive resources, a voice in institutions, and access to opportunity.<sup>13</sup> They are in a way controlled by the elite society who does not want them to come out of their misery. Hence, the poor need to be liberated and freed from their misery. They need to be cared for and loved, so that they don't feel that they are the unwanted and unimportant members of the Indian society. Poverty in India is multifaceted reality which needs to be dealt with in all its dimensions. In the words of C. T. Kurien Indian poverty is "a mass poverty of a kind that is unprecedented in history and which has no parallel anywhere else in the world today."<sup>14</sup>

#### *1.1.1.2 Political situation*

The political situation in India adds to the misery and the woes of the millions of suffering poor. The role of the politics of a country is to serve the nation and try to achieve the all-round development of all the people without distinction. However, the politics in India seems to serve the rich and elite who also control the political system of the country. Ruling party becomes a puppet in the hands of the rich to whom the party is indebted through the funding at election and otherwise. Selfish politicians and their wrong politics are not only defaming Indian image internationally but also harming its growth.

The Constitution of India speaks of India as sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic republic<sup>15</sup>, which pledges to provide its citizens Justice, liberty, equality and fraternity.<sup>16</sup> The role and the goal of the politics is to work objectively towards the promotion of these values and the assurance of safety, security, peace and prosperity in the country to which they pledge themselves. Unfortunately, the situation that the Indian politics portrays today is totally contrary. Indian politics,

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> C. T. Kurien, *Poverty and Development*, Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1974, p. 74.

<sup>15</sup> The Constitution of the French Republic promulgated on October 4<sup>th</sup>, 1958 also speaks of France as indivisible, secular, democratic and social Republic. See: <http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/langues/welcome-to-the-english-website-of-the-french-national-assembly#Title1>, 20.10.2017.

<sup>16</sup> The Constitutions of India – the Preamble, <http://www.legislative.gov.in/sites/default/files/coi-4 March2016.pdf>, 18.08.2017.

instead of being “a ray of hope to millions of Indians after decades of struggle against the imperialists; a ray of light at the end of the darkest period in Indian history, has now turned into a virtual monster eating into the lives of the very people who made it.”<sup>17</sup>

The reasons for the present political situation in India are varied: firstly, most of those involved in politics are uneducated or hardly educated. The uneducated are the ones who want to lead the country, whereas those really qualified have no place in the decision-making process of India’s development and future. In this way, whereas the politicians or the ministers in European countries and many other countries are highly educated and highly capable to lead the country, the ministers in India are hardly educated and capable. Secondly, the free and fair political system in India is threatened by the involvement of criminals in the active politics.<sup>18</sup> India is perhaps the only democracy where “Indian politicians who have been charged with or convicted of serious misdeeds are three times as likely to win parliamentary elections as those who have not.”<sup>19</sup> Every third minister in Indian politics has criminal background. For example, the general election of 2014 elected 186 members to the Indian parliament who had serious criminal background.<sup>20</sup> Many politicians take the help of criminals in order to win the elections and even to suppress and silence the voices raised against the evil practices in the politics and in the society.<sup>21</sup> It is a shameful fact, that instead of supporting those who fight for social causes, their deaths and their murders are celebrated and justified in India.<sup>22</sup> Criminal mind sets have also encouraged corruption in the country at all the levels, especially in the government offices, where nothing goes ahead

<sup>17</sup> Trishala Gupta, “The Indian Politics: Good, bad and ugly”, <https://www.youthkiawaaz.com/2010/06/the-indian-politics-good-bad-and-ugly/>, 13.08.2017.

<sup>18</sup> Debu C. “Present political scenario and how it is affecting India”, <http://www.mapsofindia.com/my-india/politics/present-political-scenario-and-how-it-is-impacting-india>, 13.08.2017.

<sup>19</sup> Milan Vaishnav, “The dark side of Indian Politics – why many Indian politicians have a criminal record”, <https://www.economist.com/news/books-and-arts/21716019-penchant-criminality-electoral-asset-india-worlds-biggest>, 13.08.2017.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Johnlee Varghese, “186 Indian members of Parliament have criminal cases including murder and rape”, <http://www.ibtimes.co.in/186-indian-members-parliament-have-criminal-cases-including-murder-rape-600584>, 13.08.2017.

<sup>21</sup> There are many instances in which many social thinkers have lost their lives because they tried to oppose the politicians in their criminal and malicious intents. Mr. Govind Pansare, Dr. Narendra Dabholkar, and a recent example is of senior Journalist Gauri Lokesh who was shot dead in front of her house because she stood and fought for truth. Their fault was that they stood for equality, Freedom of expression, Freedom of religion and the spirit of tolerance.

<sup>22</sup> It was really shocking that after the senior journalist Gauri Lankesh was murdered by unknown men in 2017, her death was openly celebrated by many in India through online platforms like Twitter and Facebook. And even more shocking was to know that many of those who were celebrating the death of Gauri Lankesh – the death of free speech and democracy, were the once who are followed on Twitter by the Indian Prime Minister.

without bribe.<sup>23</sup> In the opinion of L. Jayaseelan, “Corruption in high places has become a way of life which rejects accountability as an irrelevant demand”. He adds further that “the law will take its own course” is an eyewash because it gives enough time to “bribe and scuttle investigations”.<sup>24</sup> S. Arulsamy says: “When corruption combines with criminalization, a nexus between criminals and politicians is created, starts eating into our political life and system and together with criminalization it becomes a threat to our democracy”.<sup>25</sup> Every political party has its own agenda and petty motives and they focus mainly on the vote bank politics and thereby neglect the national agenda of common good. Most often the motives and the agenda of the political parties reflect and serve the interests of the rich class who control the political system in India. In the bargain, the common good suffers overall. Hence, political system of India has been a cause of degradation of Indian society. It is a system that is “exploitative and oppressive and as a consequence the gap between the haves and have-nots has widened and people are exploited at large”.<sup>26</sup>

#### 1.1.1.3 Social situation

Indian society is known for its religious, cultural and linguistic diversity. Unity in diversity is a defining characteristic of Indian society. The institution of family and marriage and the family values have been held in high esteem and are respected from earlier times up to the modern times. However, Indian social system has also a weak point: “The Indian social system is fraught with inequalities and deep-rooted discrimination based on caste”.<sup>27</sup> We cannot understand the poverty in India merely in economic and political terms. As I mentioned earlier, poverty is also defined by the amount of freedom and dignity that a person enjoys in the society. Hence, it is important to take into consideration the social status of a person if we

<sup>23</sup> Uruguayan Author Eduardo Galeano in his book “The Open Veins of Latin America speaks about corruption destroying the value system of the continent’s governance. He describes how the continent was exploited by the foreign powers and humiliated and let down by the power hungry and corrupted regimes and was turned into so called “kingdom of institutionalized corruption.” He speaks of the natural resources of the Continent as the main cause which added to the corruption. The foreign powers kept exploiting the natural resources of the continent and the corrupt governments betrayed the people by selling themselves into the hands of the foreign powers for their selfish motives. Eduardo Galeano, *Open Veins of Latin America – Five Centuries of the Pillage of a Continent*, transl. Cedric Belfrage, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1997.

<sup>24</sup> L. Jayaseelan, “Today’s Political Scenario”, *Integral Liberation*, vol. 2, 1998, p. 219–223 cited in: Lancy Rodrigues, *A Critique of Globalization in the light of Catholic Social Teaching*, p. 94.

<sup>25</sup> S. Arulsamy, “The Urgency of Promoting Lay Leadership in Emerging India”, *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection*, Vol. 69, no. 5, 2005, p. 363.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96.



want to understand a person's situation. We need to understand how caste system in India furthers and supports the poverty and dehumanization.

### A. Caste System

Caste system is a form of social stratification in India. Caste system has been the hallmark of Indian society from the ancient times, even up to today.<sup>28</sup> Although both caste and class are considered to be the basis of hierarchical ranking, caste system, which is rooted in religious belief, is considered to be more important basis of social stratification for social, economic and religious purposes.<sup>29</sup> Describing the importance and prevalence that Caste system has in India, Dipankar Gupta says, "If there is one institution that sets India apart from the rest of the world, it is caste."<sup>30</sup> Caste system however, can be described as a curse to the Indian society, a disease from which the Indian society has been suffering since generations and has not yet overcome it. It is "the most dehumanizing and oppressive social evil that exists in India."<sup>31</sup> It is "an exploitative structure in which dominant castes possess the economic resources and political power and this has resulted in the hierarchy of the social order which was imposed on the population by a few powerful people".<sup>32</sup>

According to the caste system, the traditional Indian society is divided into four main castes: At the top, *Brahmins*, as priests and teachers; next to them are the *Kshatriyas*, the warriors and rulers; third, *Vaishyas*, who were traders; at the lowest level, *Shudras*, the labourers.<sup>33</sup> These casts were "ostensibly professional divisions but were locked firmly into place by birth and a rigid structure of social rules that governed interaction between and within them."<sup>34</sup> Caste system influenced for centuries the religious and social life in India, with each group occu-

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Bernard S. Cohn, *India: The Social Anthropology of Civilization*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 124.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Ram Ahuja, *Society in India: Concepts, Theories and Recent Trends*, Jaipur & New Delhi: Rawat Publications, 2003, p. 35.

<sup>30</sup> Dipankar Gupta, *Mistaken Modernity: India between Worlds*, New Delhi: Harper Collins Publishers, 2000, p. 117.

<sup>31</sup> Cinthia Pinto, *Encountering Christ in the Suffering Humanity (Mt. 25: 31–46): Christological Contributions of Samuel Rayan and Raimon Panikkar and the Significance of Suffering of the battered Women of Maher from Christian and Hindu Perspective*, Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2011, p. 12.

<sup>32</sup> Lancy Rodrigues, *A Critique of Globalization*, p. 98.

<sup>33</sup> For more information on Caste system please refer: Ram Ahuja, *Society in India: Concepts, Theories and Recent Trends*, p. 35. & K.L. Sharma (Ed.), *Social Inequality in India-Profile of Caste, Class, Power and social mobility. Essays in Honour of Professor Yogendra Singh*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Jaipur & New Delhi: Rawat Publications, 1999; C. J. Fuller, *Caste Today*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997.

<sup>34</sup> Lavanya Sankaran, "Caste is not past", <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/16/opinion/sunday/caste-is-not-past.html?mcubz=0>, 18.08.2017.

pying a specific place in this complex hierarchy. It provided an individual a fixed social status and predetermined and controlled an individual's social behaviour.<sup>35</sup> The caste system gave the upper castes many social, economic, cultural and political privileges, and allowed and approved the oppression of the lower castes by them. This created a social order which benefited only a small group of the society which was rich and powerful and gave rise to the oppressive structures in the society, which exist in India till today. To describe the Cast-system in the words of George-Soares Prabhu: just like pollution adversely affects every nook and corner of an industrial city, so also the caste system in India affects all the aspects of Indian life.<sup>36</sup> Caste system is "a social catastrophe" which "infects all Indian religions" and functions as religiously legitimated system of stratification by ascription which deeply divides the Indian society, hampers its economic growth and sanctions the ruthless oppression of millions of its peoples."<sup>37</sup>

Indian Constitution has forbidden any discrimination based on caste. In its articles 14–17 the Indian Constitution speaks of equality before the law and equal justice for all the Indian citizens.<sup>38</sup> It prohibits any discrimination on the grounds

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Babu Joseph Kalathil, *The Joy of Believing: The Vision and Relevance of Lumen Fidei and Evangelii Gaudium in Indian Context*, Hamburg: Anchor Academic Publishing, 2015, p. 82.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. George Soares-Prabhu, "From Alienation to Inculturation – Some Reflections on doing Theology in India today", *Biblical Themes for a Contextual Theology Today*, Biblical Themes for a Contextual Theology Today, Isaac Padinjarekuttu (Ed.), Collected Writings of George M. Soares Prabhu, Vol. I, Pune: Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth Theology Series, 1999, p. 86.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> 14. The state shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India. 15 (1) The State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them. (2) No citizen shall, on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them, be subject to any disability, liability, restriction or condition with regard to – (a) access to shops, public restaurants, hotels and places of public entertainment; or (b) the use of wells, tanks, bathing ghats, roads and places of public resort maintained wholly or partly out of State funds or dedicated to the use of the general public. (3) Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from making any special provision for women and children. [(4) Nothing in this article or in clause (2) of article 29 shall prevent the State from making any special provision for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens or for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes.] 16. (1) There shall be equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State. (2) No citizen shall, on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, descent, place of birth, residence or any of them, be ineligible for, or discriminated against in respect of, any employment or office under the State. (3) Nothing in this article shall prevent Parliament from making any law prescribing, in regard to a class or classes of employment or appointment to an office under Government of, or any local or other authority within, a State or Union territory, any requirement as to residence within that State or Union territory] prior to such employment or appointment. (4) Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from making any provision for the reservation of appointments or posts in favour of any backward class of citizens which, in the opinion of the State, is not adequately represented in the services under the State. matters of promotion, with consequential seniority,

of caste, creed and sex, race or birth place. It prohibits any practice of untouchability and speaks of equal opportunities for all in the matters of public employment. Despite the measures undertaken to curb this evil social system, it still continues to exist in India. In other words, "Caste system in India is so rigidly deep-rooted in its socio-cultural and religious life that it now almost has God-given approval behind it. And anything against or in opposition of this system is considered to be a sin or disrespect to God."<sup>39</sup> An important factor which supports the existence of caste system in India is the cruel political system in India: "the forces of democratic politics ensure that it will thrive and never be forgotten as a crucial social index."<sup>40</sup> Caste has become an important tool to attract votes and gain power. Arjun Sharma observes: "caste is employed to play an ideological role in politics to legitimize capitalist exploitation."<sup>41</sup> Caste system thus, "is entrenched in the very flesh of the Indian people and infects all the limbs and movements of the nation."<sup>42</sup>

### B. Dalits in India

Under the fourth group in the caste system *Shudras* is another category of people who are the lowest. They are called *Dalits* or *untouchables*. It is a *Sanskrit* word which means "trampled upon". Since *Dalits* did not belong to the four castes category, they were known as untouchables and were officially called as Scheduled Castes. *Dalit means* "1) the broken, the torn, the rent, the burst, the split, 2) the opened, the expanded, 3) the bisected, 4) the driven asunder, the dispelled, the scattered, 5) the down trodden, the crushed, the destroyed, 6) the manifested,

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to any class] or classes of posts in the services under the State in favour of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes which, in the opinion of the State, are not adequately represented in the services under the State.] Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from considering any unfilled vacancies of a year which are reserved for being filled up in that year in accordance with any provision for reservation made under clause (4) or clause (4A) as a separate class of vacancies to be filled up in any succeeding year or years and such class of vacancies shall not be considered together with the vacancies of the year in which they are being filled up for determining the ceiling of fifty per cent. reservation on total number of vacancies of that year.] (5) Nothing in this article shall affect the operation of any law which provides that the incumbent of an office in connection with the affairs of any religious or denominational institution or any member of the governing body thereof shall be a person professing a particular religion or belonging to a particular denomination. 17. "Untouchability" is abolished and its practice in any form is forbidden. The enforcement of any disability arising out of "Untouchability" shall be an offence punishable in accordance with law.

<sup>39</sup> Namit K. Srivastava, "Caste System in India", <http://www.indiacelebrating.com/social-issues/caste-system/>, 18.08.2017.

<sup>40</sup> Lavanya Sankaran, *Caste is not past*.

<sup>41</sup> Arjun Sharma, *Caste, Class and Politics in Rural India: A Comparative Study of Village Panchayats, Bihar and West Bengal*, New Delhi: Khama Publisher, 1993, p. 18.

<sup>42</sup> S. Arulsamy, "Liberation Theology in India", *Indian Theological Studies*, Vol. 23, no. 3, 1985, p. 275.

the displayed.”<sup>43</sup> However, the name ‘*Dalit*’ has been chosen by the *Dalits* themselves. John Webster gives us three reasons for choosing this term: “First, the label indicates that the condition of the Dalits has not been of their own making or choosing it; it is something which has been inflicted upon them by others. Thus, secondly, there is an element of militancy built into the label; Dalits seek to overcome the injustices and indignities forced upon them so as to gain the equality and respect hitherto denied to them. “*Dalit*” also indicates that all these castes (*Pariahs*, *Chamars*, *Mahars*, *Bhangis* etc.) share a common condition and should therefore unite in a common struggle for dignity, equality, justice and respect under a common name.”<sup>44</sup> *Dalits* are in other words “social outcasts, economically impoverished, politically powerless and suffer from a low image”,<sup>45</sup> in need of justice. Untouchability is the cruellest and most inhuman aspect of caste system. The very name ‘untouchables’ “reflects a cardinal principle of caste hierarchy, which is the relationship between the pure and the impure.”<sup>46</sup> *Dalits* are socially excluded “on account of their extreme collective impurity from particular relations with higher beings, both human and divine.”<sup>47</sup> As *Dalits* or untouchables the people belonging to this category have lowest position in the Hindu social structure. They are hardly visible in the fields of trade, commerce and industry, rather, their main task is to do very menial and degrading jobs like disposing of garbage, cleaning septic tanks, removal of human and animal waste, disposing of the dead animals etc.; they are segregated from the mainstream society and suffer a physical and social isolation from the rest of the society and they are the highest among the uneducated class of the Indian society. Most of them have neither their own land or house or any property. They have no voice in the society and no rights to affirm, rather their only purpose of being in the society is to be slaves who are oppressed and treated inhumanly by the upper castes and the elites of the society. Hence, *Dalits* are those who are oppressed and are broken. “They are *avarnas*, colourless and non-descript; or *panchmas*, those left over as it were after the four castes have been counted; or *antyajas*, last born, as if they were an accident, an unwelcome appendix, an unwanted tail.”<sup>48</sup> The situation of *Dalits* is not better even

<sup>43</sup> Arvind P. Nirmal, “Towards a Christian Dalit Theology”, *Emerging Dalit Theology*, Xavier Irudayaraj (Ed.), Madras: Jesuit Theological Secretariat & Madurai: Tamilnadu Theological Seminary, 1990, p. 123.

<sup>44</sup> John C. B. Webster, “The Dalit Situation in India Today”, [http://www.ijfm.org/PDFs\\_IJFM/18\\_1\\_PDFs/jw\\_dalit\\_situation.pdf](http://www.ijfm.org/PDFs_IJFM/18_1_PDFs/jw_dalit_situation.pdf), 26.08.2017.

<sup>45</sup> Lancy Rodrigues, *A Critique of Globalization*, p. 99.

<sup>46</sup> Christophe Jaffrelot, “The Politics of Caste”, *Understanding Contemporary India*, Neil DeVotta (Ed.), 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, USA: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2010, p. 249.

<sup>47</sup> S. M. Michael (Ed.), *Untouchable: Dalits in Modern India*, USA: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1999, p. 2.

<sup>48</sup> Samuel Rayan, “Outside the Gate, Sharing the Insults”, *Leave the Temple*, Felix Wilfred (Ed.), Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1992, p. 129.

today in many parts of India. *Dalits* continue to be oppressed and treated in inhuman ways; their dignity continues to be trampled underfoot. *Dalits* in India form nearly 25% of the country's population, which means, one out of five Indians is a *Dalit* – a person condemned to be untouchable.<sup>49</sup> According to a 2010 report by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) on the Prevention of Atrocities against Scheduled Castes, every 18 minutes a crime is committed against *Dalits*. Every day, on an average, three *Dalit* women are raped, two *Dalits* are murdered, and two *Dalit* houses are burnt.<sup>50</sup> According to the NHRC statistics about the general situation of *Dalits* in India, “37 percent *Dalits* live below the poverty line, 54 percent are undernourished, 83 per 1,000 children born in a *Dalit* household die before their first birthday, 12 percent before their fifth birthday, and 45 percent remain illiterate”, as if this is not dehumanizing enough, “*Dalits* are prevented from entering the police station in 28 percent of Indian villages. *Dalit* children have been made to sit separately while eating in 39 percent government schools. *Dalits* do not get mail delivered to their homes in 24 percent of villages. And they are denied access to water sources in 48 percent of our villages”.<sup>51</sup> They are not allowed access even to the temples so that the high caste members do not come into contact even with their shadow and become impure. In the last few years there have been many examples where members of the *Dalit* community were denied access to the temples and to the water-wells and were manhandled and brutally killed. They are denied the basic human dignity which is proper to every human person. Human dignity in other words is “a rare commodity”<sup>52</sup> for the *Dalits*.

Since the country's independence, there have been efforts on the part of the government to better the situation of *Dalits* and to prohibit the caste system. Christianity has also contributed its might to the annihilation of the caste system. At the same time, there were many social leaders in India, who raised their voice against the prevailing caste system and made attempts to alleviate the sufferings of the *Dalits* in order to give them equal place in the society. Shree Narayan Guru, Periyar E. V. Ramaswamy, Dr. Bhimrao (Babasaheb) Ambedkar, Mahatma Jyotiba Phule, Mahatma Gandhi are few national heroes who tried to free the Indian society not only from the external threats and slavery but also from internal plagues which threatened the unity of India.<sup>53</sup> It is, therefore, not only the Christian Church

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Himansu Charan Sadangi, *Dalit: The Downtrodden of India*, Delhi: Isha Books, 2008, p. 26.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Ajit Kumar Jha, “The *Dalits*, still Untouchable”, <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/dalits-untouchable-rohith-vemula-caste-discrimination/1/587100.html>, 19.08.2017.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Yvon Ambroise “Oppression and Liberation: A Base for Theological Reflection on Indian Experience”, Felix Wilfred (Ed.), Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1992, p. 39.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Michael Amaladoss, *A Call to Community*, Anand: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1994, pp. 53–67.

which raised its voice against the caste system, but there were also other religious communities before the Church, who rejected this evil of caste system.<sup>54</sup> It is true that *Dalit* community in many parts of India is becoming aware of its rights and is raising its voice against the injustice and ill-treatment and disrespect meted out to it in a country which stands for justice, equality and fraternity. However, any attempts on their part to assert their rights and dignity are often met with strong resistance from the elites and upper castes, resulting in atrocities and violence to *Dalits*. They continue to suffer exclusion and dehumanization. Hence the question remains unanswered even today: How long will this discrimination go on? Can India become caste free?

### C. Caste system in the Indian Church

The project “abolition of Caste system in Indian society” is not an easy project for the Indian Church. There is a long way to go before the Church with the help of the Government succeeds in wiping out this inhuman, oppressive and exploitative system from the face of Indian society. “Although untouchability has been abolished by law and the barriers of the Caste system have been weakened, they still exist in the minds of the people and are practiced in the society.”<sup>55</sup> Even the Indian Church has not been an exception to it. It’s a sad fact that the Caste system over the years became a part of the Indian Church and has remained so until today, although not in all parts of India. The unjust, oppressive hierarchical caste system was incorporated into the life system of the Indian Church without any objecting or questioning the insidious practice against the human dignity and equality.<sup>56</sup>

The Indian Church has 25 million Christians. Around 70% of these are *Dalits*, whereas only 30% are from higher castes.<sup>57</sup> The conversion to Christianity does not seem to have changed their fate and their miserable situation. Despite being Christians, their situation is no better than their *Dalit* brethren of other faiths. James Massey speaks of a threefold discrimination faced by the Christian *Dalits*<sup>58</sup>:

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Peter C. Phan, “Living for the Reign of God: Liberations, Cultures, Religions. A Theology of Liberation for the Asian Churches”, Movement or Moment? Assessing Liberation Theology Forty Years after Medellin, Patrick Claffey & Joe Egan (Eds.), Bern: Peter Lang International Academic Publishers, 2009, pp. 76–77.

<sup>55</sup> Andreas Ananguru Yewangoe, *Theologia Crucis in Asia – Asian Christian views on Suffering in the face of overwhelming poverty and multi-faceted religiosity in Asia*, Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi BV, 1987, p. 55.

<sup>56</sup> Jebamalai Raja, “The Problem of Caste within the Church”, <http://www.dharmaramjournals.in/ArticleFiles/The%20Problem%20of%20Caste%20within%20the%20Church-Jebamalai%20Raja-January-March-1999.pdf>, 21.08.2017.

<sup>57</sup> B. Chinnappan, “Caste identity within the Church-Twice alienation”, <http://www.dalitchristians.com/html/castechurch.htm>, 27.08.2017.

<sup>58</sup> Elze Sietzema-Riemer in her research on the *Dalits* in the Christian Church prefers the term ‘Christian *Dalits*’ rather than the term ‘*Dalit* Christians’. Quoting John Webster, she says that

Firstly, being *Dalits* they are oppressed just like other *Dalits* belonging to other religions and continue to face exploitation at the social, economic and political levels from the hands of the so-called upper castes. Besides this, they also face discrimination, from the government of India and the other from their fellow Christians who consider themselves as of upper caste origin.<sup>59</sup> Christian *Dalits* are *Dalits* and are oppressed by their fellow Indians of higher castes just like any other *Dalit*. However, because they are Christian *Dalits*, they are meted out a treatment worse than the *Dalits* belonging to any other faiths. In the eyes of the higher castes in addition to their ‘crime’ of being born in an untouchable caste, Christian *Dalits* made the ‘mistake’ of embracing the Christian faith.<sup>60</sup> As a result Christian *Dalits* are in fact twice discriminated, namely, as *Dalits* and as Christians.<sup>61</sup>

Christian *Dalits* continue to be oppressed in all the ways at the hands of the high castes in spite of having converted to Christianity, because the conversion to Christianity has not helped them to get rid of their caste status. M. Arularaj says: “Those who commit atrocities against Dalits do not differentiate between Christian Dalits and non-Christian Dalits. For an Indian, a Dalit is a Dalit, whether Christian or not.”<sup>62</sup> Hence, becoming Christian changes neither their caste status, nor their fate which is manipulated by the higher castes. Christian *Dalits* along with the Muslim *Dalits* suffer discrimination from the government who has denied them the status of Scheduled Castes. According to the government, Caste system is of Hindu origin and does not exist in Christianity. In Christianity, there is no untouchability. Hence, when a Hindu *Dalit* converts to Christianity, he is freed of caste and is not entitled to the benefits and advantages the government gives for the Scheduled Castes. At the same time, there is also a fear that if the Christian *Dalits* (and Muslim *Dalits* too) are given the status of Scheduled castes, then the Hindu *Dalits* may leave Hinduism and convert to Christianity in order to free themselves from unruly caste discriminations.<sup>63</sup> Hence, the government has till today not included Christian and Muslim *Dalits* in the Scheduled Castes category.

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the term ‘Christian *Dalits*’ conveys a greater sense of solidarity with other *Dalits*. Hence, I too prefer the term “Christian *Dalits*” used by her. Cf. Elze Sietzema-Riemer, “Christian Dalits, A Research on Christian Dalits in India”, <http://www.indianet.nl/pdf/christiandalits.pdf>, 27.08.2017.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. James Massey, *Dalits in India: Religions as a Source of Bondage or Liberation with a Special Reference to Christians*, New Delhi: Manohar Publishers & Distributors & ISPCK, 1995, p. 97.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Godwin Shiri, *The Plight of Christian Dalits: A South Indian Case Study*, Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 1997, p. 240.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 114.

<sup>62</sup> M. R. Arularaj, *Jesus the Dalit*, Secunderabad: Jeevan Institute of Printing, 1996, p. vi.

<sup>63</sup> Thomas Schirrmacher, *Racism – With an Essay on Caste in India* by Richard Howell, Bonn: Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft, 2012, p. 105.

From the present ruling party which formed the government in India, Christian *Dalits* can hardly expect this favour of Scheduled Castes status.

Christian *Dalits* find no solace even in their own Christian Church. They feel themselves strangers in Christian Church due to the manifold discrimination they face at all levels in the Church. It is a surprising fact that the Church professes its faith in Jesus Christ who was a friend of everyone without discrimination, and still practices caste system which is contrary to the will of its founder. The practice of caste discrimination was accepted and continued by missionaries who came to India. For most of them mission of winning souls was important than opposing the caste system. They did not see caste system as hurdle to their mission, because they did not see caste system “as diametrically opposed to the Christian faith.”<sup>64</sup> The history shows that many missionaries supported the caste system even in the Church and did not try to abolish it.<sup>65</sup> In this regard Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, an important face for the *Dalits* criticised the Christian missionaries saying that they denounced the idol worship but did nothing to do away with the caste system which was no less than idolatry.<sup>66</sup> Although *Dalits* with 70% form the majority of Indian Christian population, their influence and position in the Church is not conspicuous. This is all the more true of the *Dalits* in the Catholic Church “where the Dalits are eclipsed by the powerful high-class Catholics.”<sup>67</sup> The so called high caste Christians are often biased and discriminate against the *Dalits* at all levels of institutional, communal and administrative bodies.<sup>68</sup> For example, in spite of the *Dalits* majority only 600 of India’s 17,000 priests and six of the 160 bishops come from the *Dalit* community.<sup>69</sup> Even for the selection of bishops priests from higher castes are preferred. At the same time if a *Dalit* priest is appointed to work in a parish which has high caste people, he faces rejection from the parishioners. Does this mean that the Christian *Dalits* do not have love for Christ and the Church? Or has the Church rather, failed to give due recognition to *Dalits* as true believers in Christ? Christian *Dalits* suffer more discrimination in the rural areas, than in the urban congregations. They experience clear discrimination

<sup>64</sup> Megan Sweas, “Caste off: The Plight of Catholic Dalits in India”, <http://www.uscatholic.org/articles/201301/caste-26818>, 27.08.2017.

<sup>65</sup> For more information see: John C. B. Webster, *Dalit Christians: A History*, Delhi: The Indian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1992; Andreas Anangguru Yewangoe, *Theologia Crucis in Asia*, p. 55.

<sup>66</sup> David Haslam, *Caste Out! The Liberation Struggle of the Dalits in India*, London: CTBI Inter Church-House, 1999, p. 23.

<sup>67</sup> Jyoti T. Hermit, “Contextualising Caste Identity: Double Migration of Dalit Christians in India”, <http://ijellh.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/20.-Dr.-Jyoti-T.-Hermit-paper-final.pdf>, 31.08.2017.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. Anderson H. M. Jeremiah, *Community and Worldview among Paraiyars of South India – Lived Religion*, London. New Delhi. New York. Sydney: Bloomsbury, 2013, p. 4.

<sup>69</sup> Megan Sweas, *Caste off: The Plight of Catholic Dalits in India*.



even in the places of worship. Christian *Dalits* live in exclusion and are treated unequally in worship, sharing of Eucharist, getting space in church activities and in burial grounds.<sup>70</sup> They are hardly allowed any participation in the Church administration and other activities. Even in their social life and relations with their Christian neighbours who are high castes, they face strong discrimination in some parts of India. No marriages are allowed between the Christian *Dalits* and the so called high caste Christians. “In states like Goa and Tamil Nadu the upper caste Catholic Brahmins discriminate against the lower castes by forbidding marriage between the two classes and prohibiting intermingling of the lower caste with the upper caste.”<sup>71</sup>

Although the Catholic Church claims that it is opposed to caste discrimination and is working in order to put an end to this evil caste practice, it is an undeniable fact that the practice of untouchability and discrimination exists in the Catholic Church even today. Michael Amaladoss says: “the Bishops of India declared some years ago that the caste system is sinful. But they have not launched any credible social movement to abolish it even within the Church.”<sup>72</sup> The Indian Catholic Church has surely been contributing greatly towards the upliftment of the poor – the Christian *Dalits* and preaching and acting against the prevailing caste system, both within and without. However, “it still exists in the mind of the people and still practiced in the society and the Church, even though the barriers of caste system have been weakened.”<sup>73</sup> Therefore, the Catholic Church needs to take seriously the issue of caste system and join the *Dalits* in their struggle and fight for freedom and dignity: “In that struggle the Church has proven to be weak, ineffective and often an instrument of caste oppression, even though it is predominantly Dalit in composition. The Church must repent and become the shalom community God created it to be, living and acting in solidarity with all Dalits.”<sup>74</sup>

### 1.1.2 The Response of the Indian Church

The Second Vatican Council challenges the Indian Catholic Church to join hands with all the people of good will in order to establish peace and harmony, brotherhood and justice, equality and stability in the Indian society, which is wounded

<sup>70</sup> Cf. Swaminathan Natarajan, “Indian Dalits find no refuge from Caste in Christianity”, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-11229170>, 26.08.2017.

<sup>71</sup> Jyoti T. Hermit, *Contextualising Caste Identity*.

<sup>72</sup> Michael Amaladoss, “A New Way of Being Christian in India Today: Theological Reflections”, Church’s Engagement in Civil Society, Anthony Kalliath & Francis Gonsalves (Eds.), Bangalore: ATC, 2009, p. 147.

<sup>73</sup> K. P. Kuruvila, *The Word became Flesh: A Christological Paradigm for doing Theology in India*, Delhi: ISPCK, 2002, p. 33.

<sup>74</sup> John Webster, *The Dalit Christians: A History*, Delhi: ISPCK, 1992, p. 235.

by the evils of social injustice, inequality, violence to women, oppression, corruption, etc. Man is today wounded. Man is suffering. The Council stresses on the human rights and dignity for the establishment of a just society (GS 26). The dignity of each human being as created in the image of God comes from their call to communion with God. However, this human dignity is being trampled upon in India. Hence, the Indian Church while fulfilling its mission of sharing good news with the Indian society is to work for the protection and promotion of human dignity. Indian Church is called upon to make social justice a key criterion for social living. God is a God of justice and righteousness. He is a God who gives each one equally without merit. He is a just God. The Bible speaks of justice as right relationship with God, with one-another and with the nature. Biblical justice is based on “respect and sensitivity to the needs and feelings of the other”.<sup>75</sup> The Catholic Church understands justice as “rendering to all persons what is due to them.”<sup>76</sup> The Indian Church needs to work in order to establish social equality, so that all (especially the poor) are equally treated and have equal rights. In the face of crimes committed against human rights and dignity, the questions with which the Indian Catholic Church is confronted today are: “how can we play a prophetic and witnessing role to the person and message of Jesus Christ? How can we fight against poverty and build a civilization of love, in some practical and meaningful ways?”<sup>77</sup> The Church is thus, challenged to be “the authentic voice of Jesus Christ, the man who suffered and died on the cross, so that a just human society can be built, the man who promised the kingdom of God to those persecuted for championing the cause of justice and righteousness among men”.<sup>78</sup>

#### *1.1.2.1 The concern for the poor in the Official Documents of CBCI (Conference of Catholic Bishops in India)*

The response of the Catholic Church to the situation of India was initially based on different types of social works and charitable activities for the poor. The betterment of the poor in material sense was deemed more important in the process of nation-building. Hence, the Catholic Church engaged in educational and social

<sup>75</sup> Deenabandhu Manchala, “Mission as Struggles for Justice: From the Perspective of those who are denied Justice”, *Quest for Justice: Perspectives on Mission and Unity*, Abraham P. Athyal & George Mathew Nalunnakkal (Eds.), Delhi: ISPCK, Nagpur: NCCI, Chennai: Gurukul, 2000, p. 46.

<sup>76</sup> Anna Kasafi Perkins, *Justice as Equality: Michael Manley’s Caribbean vision of Justice*, New York: Peter Lang Publ., 2010, p. 112.

<sup>77</sup> Nirmala Carvalho, *Year of Faith in India: Poverty is destroying the Country*, <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Year-of-Faith-in-India:-Poverty-is-destroying-the-country-29424.html>, 11.09.2017.

<sup>78</sup> P. T. Kuriakose, “The Challenge and the Response”, *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection*, Vol. 41, no. 5, May 1977, p. 200.

welfare activities. Social work and helping the poor was seen as a way to evangelize them in the process. However, it was the Second Vatican Council, which gave the mission of the Church in India a new form and meaning. The social vision of the Indian Catholic Church underwent renewal with the Council. The Indian Church's inspiration to work for the cause of social justice and equality comes from the social teaching of the Catholic Church, which has been handed down in a special way through the Vatican II. It was the second Vatican Council which helped the Indian Catholic Church to understand its purpose in the Indian society and the challenges which the Indian society poses before the Church. The 'All India Seminar on the Church in India' organized by CBCI in 1969 after the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council, was aimed at reflecting and focussing on the challenges before the Indian Catholic Church and the measures to be undertaken in order to confront these challenges. The seminar took stock of the disrupting social situation in India caused by extreme and dehumanizing poverty, socio-economic-political exploitation and oppression, discrimination of people and called upon the Indian Catholic Church to work towards social reform and change, towards establishment of justice and equality. It created in the Catholic Church a new sense of obligation towards the country and its suffering poor. An important part of the vocation of the Church is "to struggle strenuously for a radical reform of the social, political and economic structures of the world that permit and tend to perpetuate abject poverty in the midst of unprecedented affluence."<sup>79</sup>

In its general meeting of 1970 in Ernakulam, the CBCI reaffirmed its desire to work for a just and peaceful Indian society. It called upon the priests to be open and sensitive to the poor and to work with them in order to uplift their situation. In this context, it also spoke about helping the problems of labour by setting up a labour commission.

We have set up a commission to deal exclusively with labour. We are aware of the hardships that are the lot of the working class in agriculture or industry and shall endeavour to work for the humanisation of their conditions and withholding their rights. We are also aware of the problems of land reform, unemployment and underemployment and their implications for society. The Church has to make known her social doctrine to the millions of our citizens and to work with them to bring about a better social order.<sup>80</sup>

The Indian Catholic Church finds itself in a society whose majority members are poor, suffering and starving. The social, economic and political oppression and exploitation of the poor cannot let the Church live in peace but disturb it. Hence,

<sup>79</sup> All India Seminar: Church in India Today – Bangalore 1969, New Delhi: CBCI, 1969, p. 245.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. CBCI, Catholic Bishops Conference of India, Ernakulam, January 7–16, 1970, New Delhi: CBCI Centre, 1970, p. 271.

the Church is called on to take side with the poor in their struggle to overcome the misery. The Declaration of the International Theological Conference on Evangelization and Dialogue held in the year 1971 at Nagpur in India says:

The social conditions and problems of our people make it imperative for the Church to deepen their dialogue in courageously participating in the struggles for development . . .<sup>81</sup>

It further speaks about the Church's role in the development as both positive and liberating: "positive in so far as it participates within its capabilities in building a more humane environment for men in temporal sphere; liberating by a radical transformation of social attitudes and socio-economic structures of the country in order that our efforts will increase economic growth, which should take place in such a way that social justice is ensured."<sup>82</sup> In May 1971, the CBCI issued a statement on "Poverty and Development" thereby, giving a clear cut expression to the concern of the Indian Catholic Church for the Poor:

The Church in India . . . is deeply concerned about the deep-rooted causes of poverty and unemployment in our own land. Because we are firmly convinced of the fundamental Christian truth that 'every man is my brother', we also hope that we can respond to the times which reveal themselves so eloquently in the cries for justice and liberation from the fetters of an exploitative society, that by its social structures perpetuates the enslavement of millions. The Church is very much with the prevailing movement in India to do away with the root-causes of poverty through its concern and active participation in programmes geared to this cause.<sup>83</sup>

However, commitment to Justice and liberation requires more than mere charitable works and relief works. It requires genuine efforts to do away with the oppressive and exploitative structures. Hence, the statement called the Indian Catholic Church to work toward the transformation of the exploitative and oppressive structures. The Church is called to "thirst for social justice and throw all her forces in the struggle for liberation."<sup>84</sup> This liberation is neither mere material liberation which is liberation from poverty and social oppression, nor mere eschatological liberation. The liberation to which the Indian Catholic Church wants to commit itself is holistic liberation. It is "integral, not restricted to pure spirituality or es-

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<sup>81</sup> "Declaration of the Conference on Evangelization and Dialogue in India", *Evangelization, Dialogue and Development: Selected Papers of the International Theological Conference, Nagpur (India) 1971*, Mariasusai Dhavamony (Ed.), Roma: Universita Gregoriana Editrice, 1972, p. 8. Henceforth cited as "Declaration of the Conference on Evangelization and Dialogue in India."

<sup>82</sup> Declaration of the Conference on Evangelization and Dialogue in India, p. 9.

<sup>83</sup> CBCI, Report of General Meeting of the CBCI, Bombay, April 15–16, 1971, New Delhi: CBCI Centre, 1971, pp. 42–46.

<sup>84</sup> Declaration of the Conference on Evangelization and Dialogue in India no. 30, p. 9.

chatology, but including renewal, liberation and fulfilment of the human person and human society.”<sup>85</sup>

At the meeting of 1978 in Mangalore CBCI discussed the theme “Church’s Response to the Urgent Needs of the Country”. The report of the meeting stated:

Poverty, stratification and malnutrition characterize the lives of our countrymen and any attempt to work for justice must begin by enabling people to realise what is most basic in the rights of men. In the achievement of a just society the entire Christian community is involved, working in collaboration with all men of good will... We encourage our committed laymen imbued with the correct attitude towards society, to move into such fields where they can influence the change of unjust structures.<sup>86</sup>

The Church encourages the lay people to come forward and join hands with the priests and nuns in order to carry forward the mission of liberation. In the opinion of Felix Wilfred, the above statement is one of the very important statements made by CBCI. There are four important points in the statement to be noted: Firstly, there is a stress on peoples’ participation in the work of justice; secondly, the work of justice is seen as the responsibility of the whole community; thirdly, the need for collaboration with all men of good will is being felt; and lastly, the Christian lay people are reminded of their duty to engage in the society in order to influence and transform the unjust structures.<sup>87</sup> An important point made by Mangalore meeting was a desire to see “a Church of the poor, with greater simplicity and less ostentation, with more courage to stand for justice and human values rather than a Church sitting on the fence of vested interests.”<sup>88</sup> In this context the bishops discussed the plight of the scheduled caste Christians in the face of discrimination practiced against them on the basis of religion, and spoke of it explicitly as one of the most important problems the Church needed to tackle.<sup>89</sup> The CBCI committee for the *Harijan*<sup>90</sup> Welfare, formed in 1974, was to work in this direction and conscientize the people on the injustice done to people and to have an action plan on behalf of these people.<sup>91</sup>

The emphasis on human liberation in its totality, on human dignity and total development was repeatedly stressed in the different documents of CBCI in the following years. The Church stressed on the total development of man which is

<sup>85</sup> John Moniz, “Liberated Society” Gandhian and Christian Vision Comparative Study, Roma: Editrice Pontifica Universita Gregoriana, 1996, p. 427.

<sup>86</sup> Cf. Report of the General Meeting of the CBCI, Mangalore, 1978, New Delhi: CBCI Centre, 1978, nos. 2, 4, 13.

<sup>87</sup> Cf. Felix Wilfred, *The Emerging Church in a New India*, Trivendrum: Jayamatha Training Institute Press, 1988, p. 122.

<sup>88</sup> Report of the General Meeting of the CBCI, Mangalore, 1978, p. 20.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82.

<sup>90</sup> The term *Harijan* means ‘God’s people’ and was used by M. K. Gandhi for the *Dalits*.

<sup>91</sup> Cf. Felix Wilfred, *The Emerging Church in a New India*, p. 215.

also another name for peace.<sup>92</sup> In its meeting of 1998 held at Varanasi the CBCI stated the two major problems which needed special attention: poverty and caste system. The document speaks of poverty not just in economic categories but in terms of discrimination of every type which the poor in India face.<sup>93</sup> The CBCI called for an attitude of respect and love towards the poor, the *Dalits* and the tribal and see Jesus in them.<sup>94</sup> The Church wanted to make every effort to free the poor from the chains of corrupt and discriminatory systems by collaborating with those who wanted to help uplift the poor from their sufferings.

The Catholic Church in India has time again through its official documents raised its concerns regarding social injustice, inequality, discrimination on the basis of caste and creed, and has always tried to support the victims. The documents of CBCI since the Vatican Council up to today are a witness to the fact that the Indian Catholic Church has always taken sides with the poor, the oppressed and the less-privileged in the Indian society and given voice to their concerns and their grievances. The Catholic Church has been making efforts for the holistic liberation of people in India. The credit goes again to the efforts of the Church in understanding the renewed liberative vision of the Second Vatican Council through numerous research seminars and consultations. Although a minority (in comparison to other religions), the Indian Catholic Church has always been trying to make a difference in the lives of the poor of the country in its effort to restore their dignity and human worth to them.

### 1.1.2.2 *The Option for the Poor*<sup>95</sup>

The Catholic Church of India is challenged by the Vatican II Council to become a poor Church for the poor. A poor Church for the poor is a manifestation of the risen Christ in the Church and the poor.<sup>96</sup> Jesus began his earthly ministry by announcing his preferential love, care and attention to the poor and the suffering; he stressed on the absolute priority of the good news to the poor (Lk 4, 16-ff). He

<sup>92</sup> Cf. L. Thumma, "Human Person, Human Dignity and Human Society: Biblical Foundations and Theological Perspectives in the Social Teachings of the Church", *Indian Theological Studies*, Vol. 39, nos. 3-4, 2002, pp. 219-256.

<sup>93</sup> CBCI, "The Role of the Church in India today" The Message of the Catholic Bishops of India, the General Body Meeting, Varanasi, 21-28 March 1998, Varanasi - no. 4.1.2", *Word and Worship*, Vol. 31, nos. 2-3, March-June 1998, pp. 129-139.

<sup>94</sup> Cf. Lancy Rodrigues, *A Critique of Globalization*, p. 140.

<sup>95</sup> The theological notion of the *preferential option for the poor* was first used in the writings of Latin American Catholic Bishops in the 1968 CELAM (*Consejo Episcopal Latinamericano*) Conference in Medellin. It was later reconfirmed in the 1979 CELAM Conference in Puebla.

<sup>96</sup> Cf. Amal Raj Chellakan, *Eradication of Poverty and Empowerment of the Poor: Theology of Creation and the Newest Policies of Development in the Age of Globalisation*, Delhi: ISPCK, 2007, p. 341.

loved the poor and the neglected, and preferred to be identified with them, had table fellowship with these simple people, because they were people of God (*qahal Yahweh*) the *anavim*<sup>97</sup> of God. Hence, inspired by the example of its Lord and Master, the Indian Catholic Church too is called to commit itself to the poor and to their cause. It is called to “concretely represent the risen Christ, who is crucified in the poor and remains a sign of hope for them because He became faithful to history by launching and overcoming the death and the wretchedness in the world.”<sup>98</sup> The Church is to become a living witness to Christ by “a wholehearted commitment to the poor and is impelled to opt in favour of them.”<sup>99</sup> To stand for the poor and to opt for them is to be the hallmark of the Church. The first and the most fundamental thing for the Indian Church is to be in deep solidarity with the least and marginalized and to join itself with the forces who have taken up the cause of the poor. Just as its founder and life giver, Jesus Christ, the Church too needs to identify itself with the suffering masses in their poverty and misery.

Pope Francis in his encyclical *Evangelii Gaudium* speaks about what it means to make a preferential option for the poor: “Our preferential option for the poor must mainly translate into a privileged and preferential religious care (EG 200).” When the Church makes the good news of liberation to the poor and the neglected its mission, it will be known as the Church willed by Christ. Hence, the Church needs to be on the side of the poor and not be neutral. The 1986 Nobel Peace Prize Winner Elie Wiesel says: “We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the oppressed. Silence helps the tormentor, never the tormented.”<sup>100</sup> Catholic Church in India needs to take clear stance and make a wholehearted commitment to the poor. It must identify and stand in solidarity with the marginalized and oppressed. In the words of Pope Francis, the Indian Catholic Church must become “a poor Church for the poor” (EG 186 ff). The Church will be the sacramental presence of Christ in the Indian society and become “a sacrament of liberation (for the Indian suffering masses) insofar as it is the Church of the poor.”<sup>101</sup> However, it is not enough for the Church to show its solidarity and oneness with the poor in words or only through its official teachings. What is more important is our

<sup>97</sup> The Hebrew word *anavim* denotes ‘the poor and the meek’. Cf. Noam Zohar “Jewish Perspectives on Poverty”, *Poverty and Morality: Religious and Secular Perspectives*, William A. Gallston & Peter H. Hoffenberg (Eds.), New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. 207.

<sup>98</sup> Amal Raj Chellakan, *Eradication of Poverty and Empowerment of the Poor*, p. 341.

<sup>99</sup> Jose Madappattu, *Evangelization in a Marginalizing World-With Special Reference to the Marginalised Satnamis in the Diocese of Raipur, Germany*: Styler Verlag, 1996, p. 74.

<sup>100</sup> Veronica McDermott, *We must say No to the Status Quo: Educators as Allies in the Battle for Social Justice*, California: Corwin, 2017, p. 148.

<sup>101</sup> Ignacio Ella Curia, “*La Iglesia de Los Pobres, Sacramento Historic de la liberacion*”, *Estudios Centroamericanos (ECA)*, p. 148, cited in Kevin F. Burke, *The Ground Beneath the Cross: The Theology of Ignacio Ellacuria*, Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2000, p. 194.

presence and involvement in the struggles of the poor. In order to transform the lives of the suffering millions the Church needs to get actively involved in their life. Option for the poor in this sense is “to enter the world of the oppressed race, culture and social class and to take stock of the social conflict and side with the dispossessed.”<sup>102</sup> The Church needs to become one with the poor in order to lift them up from their poverty and misery. It needs to show solidarity with the poor, because “solidarity with the downtrodden is an essential constituent of the Christian Church. It is in choosing to be identified with them that the coming kingdom is discerned, met and served.”<sup>103</sup> The mystery of incarnation is nothing but God’s way of identifying with the struggling and suffering humanity. The mystery of incarnation challenges and invites the Catholic Church in India to pitch its tent in the midst of the suffering Indian society and seek communion with every suffering and struggling member of the society.<sup>104</sup>

Firstly, the Catholic Church in India needs to become a poor community marked with a simple lifestyle. Jesus Christ was born poor, led a poor and simple lifestyle and died poor. Although Son of God, he made himself poor for the sake of the poor. The Church’s identification with India’s poor and suffering masses calls for simplicity of lifestyle on the part of the Church.<sup>105</sup> In its efforts to be a poor Church for the poor, it must in its way of life “share something of their poverty. The Church cannot set up islands of affluence in a sea of want and misery.”<sup>106</sup> The commitment of the Church to the cause of the poor implies practising a simple lifestyle on the part of the Church leaders so that the Church may be truly seen on the side of the poor and not on the side of the rich and the powerful. “In the face of Christ disfigured in the suffering poor and the oppressed, our religious leaders will have to change their style of life which associated them with privileged groups. Divested of all superficialities they will not only be identified with the

<sup>102</sup> Antony Kalliath, “Building Relationships on ‘Justice’ for the ‘Poor’ in the Neo-Liberal World”, *Building Solidarity: Challenge to Christian Mission*, Joseph Mattam & Joseph Valiamangalam (Eds.), Delhi: ISPCK & FOIM, 2008, P. 181.

<sup>103</sup> Samuel Rayan, *Outside the Gate, Sharing the Insult*, p. 143.

<sup>104</sup> FABC, “Being Church in Asia: Journeying with the Spirit into fuller Life – Final Statement of the FABC International Theological Colloquium, Thailand 16<sup>th</sup> April 1994”, *For All the Peoples of Asia: Asian Bishops’ Conferences. Documents from 1992 to 1996*, Franz-Josef Eilers (Ed.), Vol. 2, Quezon City, Philippines: Claretian Publications, 1997, pp. 224–225.

<sup>105</sup> Cf. Paul Puthanangady, “A Relevant Vision for the Church in India”, *Bend Without Fear: Hopes and Possibilities for an Indian Church, Essays in Honour of Professor Kurien Kunnumpuram, Kuruvilla Pandikattu & Rosario Rocha* (Eds.), Delhi: ISPCK & Pune: Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, 2003, p. 12.

<sup>106</sup> FABC, “Asian Bishops’ Meeting: Message and Resolutions of the Asian Bishops’ Meeting, Manila, 29th November, 1970”, *For All the Peoples of Asia: Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences. Documents from 1970 to 1991*, Gaudencio B. Rosales & C. G. Arevalo (Eds.), New York: Orbis Books & Diliman: Claretian Publications, 1992, p. 5.



poor around them but this will also be apparent to others.”<sup>107</sup> It is a sad fact that at times the Catholic Church in India at times through the life-style of its leaders has given an impression that it is a Church of the rich and powerful and not a Church for the poor and the simple. Its institutions at times make one believe that it has nothing to do with the liberation of the poor. The Church in India is known for its educational and welfare institutions, and these are neither poor nor vulnerable. Sr. Shalini Mulackal, president of Indian Theological Association said during the Congress of Asian Theologians in Cochin, India in April 2016 that, the Church in India is losing its identity as the Church of the poor: “Today the church is no more the church of the poor, but one can even say it is the church of institutions.”<sup>108</sup> Through the foreign funding agencies and other helping associations the Church has been able to collect large amounts in order to build institutions in the name of service to the poor. But the poor at times have unfortunately no place in those institutions. Financial help coming from abroad has not always been a good thing for Church personnel and it tends to breed both arrogance and irresponsibility among those who handle it.<sup>109</sup> The fact is that the Catholic Church in India has many institutions, and, regrettably, some are mere money-making institutions”.<sup>110</sup> Hence, it needs to examine its life and ministry today and go back to its vocation – its true mission of working for the total liberation and the holistic development of the people. The Church needs to come out of its institutions and go out into the suffering society in order to participate “in the brokenness of the people, in their hopes, disappointments and anxieties.”<sup>111</sup> The Church needs to challenge its institutions in the various fields of mission and question their aim and purpose: “whether they are at the service of the poor or in favour of the rich and the powerful.”<sup>112</sup> It needs to remind itself of its duty to give a voice to those who are unheard and to help those who are most vulnerable. In this way the Church will be authentic to its vocation and to the teaching the Vatican II. The Indian Catholic Church thus needs to do a soul searching. It needs to see the world through the eyes of the poor and suffering. If the Church learns to see the world through the eyes of the suffering

<sup>107</sup> Declaration of the Conference on Evangelization and Dialogue in India no. 33, p. 10.

<sup>108</sup> Anto Akkara, “Church is no longer ‘Church of the poor’ says Indian theologian nun”, <http://www.globalsistersreport.org/news/trends/church-no-longer-church-poor-says-indian-theologian-nun-39416>, 14.09.2017.

<sup>109</sup> Cf. Myron J. Pereira, “Rich Church, Poor Catholics?”, <http://www.ucanews.com/news/rich-church-poor-catholics/76554>, 13.09.2017.

<sup>110</sup> Anto Akkara, *Church is no longer ‘Church of the poor’ says Indian theologian nun*.

<sup>111</sup> Jacob Kavunkal, “Church’s Service to the World”, Vatican II: A Gift and A Task- International Colloquium to mark the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Vatican Council II, Jacob Kavunkal, Errol D’Lima & Evelyn Monteiro (Eds.), Mumbai: St. Pauls, 2006, p. 125

<sup>112</sup> Kuncheria Pathil, “Theological Reflections on the Church from India”, [http://files.www.catholicethics.com/resources/publications/06.04.2012.5.\\_Pathil.pdf](http://files.www.catholicethics.com/resources/publications/06.04.2012.5._Pathil.pdf), 12.07.2016.

and the struggling people of India, it will bring a radical change in the perspective of the Church in relation to the cause of social justice in India today and will have “a deep transformative effect on the Church’s mode of being in the society, on its priorities and its thinking.”<sup>113</sup>

The Church’s incarnation into the situation of the poor will pave way for dialogue with the poor. Dialogue with the poor is one of the three types of dialogue (triple dialogue) adapted by the Asian Church for the mission of communicating and proclaiming the good news.<sup>114</sup> Dialogue with poor is aimed not just at helping the poor in their misery but to include them in the Church and the society, to restore them their dignity as human persons. Dialogue with the poor is a manifestation of dialogue with God Himself who is ever present in His poor and suffering people. God is continuously at work in the lives of the poor. Hence, in the words of Pope Francis, we need “to lend our voice to their causes, but also to be their friends, to listen to them, to speak for them and to embrace the mysterious wisdom which God wishes to share with us through them” (EG 198). Through the dialogue with poor the Church will be able to learn the attitudes of humility and simplicity. In and through the dialogue with them the Church will be able to make the poor aware of the injustice done to them and equip them to demand their rights. However, “the Church should understand its role only as a participant in this movement of liberation, and not as one who directs, much less one who monopolizes it. This participation should flow from the acknowledgement that the ideals of God’s Kingdom and the power of his spirit are active in the struggles and the aspirations of the poor for greater humanity.”<sup>115</sup>

Above all, the Church cannot be the Church of the poor and for the poor if it is not prophetic. Indian Catholic Church has been doing a very wonderful and noteworthy work in helping the poor and those who suffer social injustice. Through the Caritas India the coordinating agency, Catholic Church has sought to serve the Indian society in different spheres, be it educational field, medical field or field of social service. At the same time the Church has also tried to undertake the empowerment programme and community building projects in India.<sup>116</sup> This varied service of the Catholic Church in Indian society is “an expression of a love that seeks the integral good of man . . . It seeks to promote man in varied arenas of life

<sup>113</sup> Felix Wilfred, “Liberation in India and the Church’s Participation”, *Leave the Temple*, p. 184.

<sup>114</sup> FABC (Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences), “A Renewed Church in Asia: A Mission of Love and Service – The Final Statement of the Seventh FABC Plenary Assembly, 3–12 January”, *For All the Peoples of Asia: FABC Documents from 1997–2001*, Franz-Josef Eilers (Ed.), Vol. 3, Quezon City, Philippines: Claretian Publications, 2002, p. 4.

<sup>115</sup> Felix Wilfred, *Liberation in India and the Church’s Participation*, p. 176.

<sup>116</sup> Cf. CBCI, “Church’s Role for a better India”, [http://www.syromalabarchurch.in/document\\_details.php?res=18](http://www.syromalabarchurch.in/document_details.php?res=18), 19.09.2017.

and human activity.”<sup>117</sup> But the Church should not be satisfied with this work. The Church should not “rest on her laurels”.<sup>118</sup> The Catholic Church’s service in Indian society – its “response of helping ‘to bury the dead, heal the wounded and console the victims’ amounts to treating only the symptom and not offering the remedy or solution of the problems. Arguably such an approach is nothing more than that of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) like the International Red Cross (ICRC) or Medecine sans Frontieres (MSF).”<sup>119</sup> The Catholic Church needs to recommit itself to its prophetic mission in Indian society. The Church is not only to participate in the joys and sorrows of the world, not only to be in solidarity and in service to the needy but also to become courageous witness(es) to truth, advocate(s) of the poor, defender(s) of justice . . . ”<sup>120</sup> Although the Catholic Church is a minority in India, its influence on the Indian society is tremendous. Hence, it needs to bring a change in the Indian society by being the leaven of change and by being “light to dispel the darkness of sin such as corruption, injustice, oppression”.<sup>121</sup> It is possible when the Indian Catholic community is ready to move out of its secured fortresses and share the insecurity of the poor and the suffering, understand their situation, and organize them in order to voice their opinions and fight with them and for them for their rights. In this way, the option for the poor will become an option against the oppressive, sinful structures and an option ‘for justice’.<sup>122</sup>

### *1.1.2.3 The Indian Catholic Church against Caste*

#### *1.1.2.3.1 A Casteless Society*

One of the ways to show its commitment towards the prophetic mission is the opposition to all forms of discrimination. The Indian Catholic Church needs to challenge the oppressive structure of caste system that still exists in the Indian society in spite of the progress that the society has been making. It needs to commit itself towards the establishment of an Indian society in which there is no place for caste discrimination. Every person is being created in the image and the likeness of his/her creator. God has endowed every person with equal dignity because He created the human beings equally. Discriminating people on the basis of castes is

<sup>117</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, “Encyclical Letter- *Deus Caritas Est*, 25th December, 2005”, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_enc\\_20051225\\_deus-caritas-est.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20051225_deus-caritas-est.html), 19.09.2017.

<sup>118</sup> CBCI, *Church’s Role for a better India*.

<sup>119</sup> S. J. Emmanuel, “Asian Mission for the next Millennium: Chances and Challenges”, <http://www.theway.org.uk/Back/39Emmanuel.pdf>, 19.09.2017.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Jose Maria Vigil, “The Option for the Poor is an option for Justice and not Preferential: A new Theological-Systematic Framework for the Option for the Poor”, <http://servicioskoinonia.org/relat/371e.htm>, 20.09.2017.

a sin. "It is not only a denial of human dignity and equality, but also against the fundamental teaching of Christ who was friend of outcasts of His time, and freely mixed with them. He came to tell humankind that we are brothers and sisters having God as common Father."<sup>123</sup> Therefore, "it is the Church's obligation to work unceasingly to change hearts, helping all people to see every human being as a child of God, a brother or sister of Christ, and therefore a member of our own family."<sup>124</sup>

### 1.1.2.3.2 A Casteless Indian Catholic Church

As we have seen earlier, the problem of caste exists unfortunately even within the Catholic Church. The Church cannot go out to put the society in order without first putting its own household in order. "It is inconsistent for Christians to demand change in the country as a whole, if they close their eyes to the plight of those who came to the Church in search of equality preached by Christ but continue to be treated as untouchables."<sup>125</sup> Hence, it is the need of the time to oppose and abolish every type of caste discrimination in the Church and to rescue the Church from the fetters of caste system. Only then, can the Church, as the community of equals work to establish a casteless Indian society. In short, we need a casteless Church where every member whether rich or poor big or small, is equal in dignity and respect. The existence of caste system both "in Indian society and within the Indian Church is obviously a serious challenge to the identity of the Church as the sacrament (and so the effective sign) of the Kingdom of God."<sup>126</sup>

Caste system both in the Indian society and in the Catholic Church is nothing but "an outright denial of the presence of God in humanity and especially in the Church".<sup>127</sup> Caste system is totally contrary to the Gospel message which stresses and proclaims the equal dignity of all human beings. The Catholic Church in India is aware of the evil caste system existing even among its members and has exhorted the faithful to make efforts in eradicating this evil practice. It has from time to time through its official statements admonished the members of the Church to move towards greater equality of all. The Statement of the CBCI General Body Meeting in Mangalore, January 1978 says: "The dignity of man confers

<sup>123</sup> CBCI, Final Statements of the General Body Meeting of CBCI 1962–2002, New Delhi: CBCI Centre, 2003, pp. 99–100.

<sup>124</sup> Pope John Paul II, "Address of Pope John Paul II to the Bishops of India on their *Ad Limina* Visit, 17<sup>th</sup> November, 2003", [http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/2003/november/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_spe\\_20031117\\_ad-limina-india.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/2003/november/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_20031117_ad-limina-india.html), 19.09.2017.

<sup>125</sup> Walter Fernandes, "A Socio-Historical Perspective for Liberation Theology in India", *Leave the Temple: Indian Paths to Human Liberation*, Felix Wilfred (Ed.), Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock Publ., 2009, p. 32.

<sup>126</sup> George Soares Prabhu, *The Indian Church challenged by Poverty and Caste*, p. 152.

<sup>127</sup> Jebamalai Raja, *The Problem of Caste within the Church*.

certain inalienable rights upon him, whatever be the accident of his birth. Any curtailment or, what is worse, denial of these rights is an act of injustice. Hence, discrimination of any type must be part of our Christian concern. When, unfortunately, it is practiced within the Church itself, it becomes a counter-sign to the Gospel values we profess.”<sup>128</sup> One of the strongest ever statements against caste system, was made by CBCI in its meeting in Trichy in 1982, where the Catholic Church denounced the caste system:

We state categorically that caste with its consequent effects of discrimination and ‘caste mentality’ has no place in Christianity. It is in fact a denial of Christianity because it is inhuman. It violates the God-given dignity and equality of the human person. God created man in his own image and likeness . . . Thus, human dignity and respect are due to every person and any denial of this is sin against God and man . . . Catholics in particular are called to reflect on whether they can meaningfully participate in the Eucharist without repudiating and seriously striving to root out caste prejudices and similar traditions and sentiments both within the Church and outside. It is intolerable that caste should be a determining factor in membership of pastoral or parish councils and other associations; and even worse, in ecclesiastical appointments and posts of responsibility in religious congregations.<sup>129</sup>

In its meeting of 1988, the CBCI vowed to commit itself to the abolition of caste system saying: “The abolition of caste system among Christians and the integration of the Christians of Scheduled Caste Origin in the mainstream as equals will be for us a top priority”.<sup>130</sup> At the same time the CBCI called on the Christian community to put an end to all forms of discrimination in the places of worship, cemeteries, in the Church’s administration and in the various field of activities of the Church. In 1990, the Bishops in Tamilnadu initiated a ten-point programme for the *Dalit* empowerment and it was aimed at eliminating the discrimination against *Dalits* in all spheres of life.<sup>131</sup> In the meeting in Varanasi in March 1998, the CBCI declared:

The prevalence of the caste system, not only in society but also in some parts of the Church in India even at the close of the 20th century, is a matter of shame and disgrace to all of us. It is a cause of sorrow and expression of our inability to live our Christian

<sup>128</sup> CBCI, “CBCI Office for Scheduled Castes/ Backward Classes”, <http://www.cbci.in/all-Comm-issions/Sc-st-bc.aspx>, 19.09.2017.

<sup>129</sup> CBCI, “CBCI General Body Meeting in Tiruchirappally, January 4–14, 1982”, [http://www.dalitchristians.com/Html/CBCI\\_Tiruchirappally010482.htm](http://www.dalitchristians.com/Html/CBCI_Tiruchirappally010482.htm), 12.09.2017.

<sup>130</sup> CBCI, Report of the General Meeting of the CBCI, Kottayam, January 1988, New Delhi: CBCI Centre, 1988, p. 28.

<sup>131</sup> Peter C. Phan, “Living for the Reign of God: Liberation, Cultures, Religions. A Theology of Liberation for the Asian Churches”, Movement or Moment? Assessing Liberation Theology Forty Years after Medellin, Patrick Claffey & Joe Egan (Eds.), Bern: Peter Lang International Academic Publishers, 2009, p. 80.

faith adequately. It is not only a denial of human dignity and equality but also against the fundamental teaching of Christ who was a friend of the outcasts of His time, and freely mixed with them... If our Christian communities are divided and discriminated on the basis of caste we cannot affirm in truthfulness that the Gospel has touched our life, and that we are the disciples of Christ even if we celebrate our worship devoutly and proclaim our faith correctly... discrimination against anybody on the basis of caste is a sin against God and humanity. This needs to be proclaimed from the house tops so that the caste system will be removed from the Christian community totally as part of our preparation for Yesu Krist Jayanti 2000.<sup>132</sup>

The pastoral letter of CBCI on the occasion of *Yesu Krist Jayanti* 2000 stated: "Our efforts to build up communities of love and sharing meet with serious difficulties coming from sociological and cultural factors. In some parts of our country, our communities are not free from caste discriminations. This prevents them from respecting the sacred dignity of the human person, which Christ came to communicate to human kind. We need to eradicate this sinful reality from our Christian Communities."<sup>133</sup>

Pope John Paul II admonished the Indian Bishops during their *Ad Limina* visit in 2003: "At all times, you must continue to make certain that special attention is given to those belonging to the lowest castes, especially the Dalits. They should never be segregated from other members of society. Any semblance of a caste-based prejudice in relations between Christians is a countersign to authentic human solidarity, a threat to genuine spirituality and a serious hindrance to the Church's mission of evangelization. Therefore, customs or traditions that perpetuate or reinforce caste division should be sensitively reformed so that they may become an expression of the solidarity of the whole Christian community."<sup>134</sup> The CBCI reaffirmed its commitment to the cause of *Dalits* in its 30<sup>th</sup> General Body Meeting held in Bangalore in 2012 and said:

Recognizing that untouchability and caste discrimination are contrary to the Gospel of Jesus, we will root out this evil, wherever it exists, from within the Church and make concerted efforts to empower dalits. We commit ourselves to join hands with our dalit brothers and sisters in their fight for equal rights and the Constitutional benefits which are denied to them on the basis of religion. We assure the marginalized and weaker sections that we will do everything possible to train and equip them for leadership positions at local, regional and national levels.<sup>135</sup>

<sup>132</sup> CBCI, "CBCI Meeting at Varanasi, 21–28 March, 1998", [http://www.dalitchristians.com/Html/CBCI\\_Varansi032198.htm](http://www.dalitchristians.com/Html/CBCI_Varansi032198.htm), 19.09.2017.

<sup>133</sup> CBCI, "Statements of CBCI on Dalit issue", <http://www.dalitchristianscbci.org/Statements.aspx>, 19.09.2017.

<sup>134</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Address of Pope John Paul II to the Bishops of India on their Ad Limina Visit, 17<sup>th</sup> November, 2003*.

<sup>135</sup> CBCI, *Church's Role for a better India*.

As a sign of this commitment, the CBCI published a policy document for *Dalits* in 2016 entitled: *Policy of Dalit Empowerment in the Catholic Church in India: An Ethical Imperative to Build Inclusive Communities*.<sup>136</sup> The document is aimed at the empowerment of *Dalits* and includes “commitments such as ensuring that Dalits are given equal employment opportunities; more competent and cohesive lay leadership development for Dalit men and women at both regional and diocesan levels in the Church; building an interactive portal and helpline for the community; dedicated funding and scholarship structures to assist marginalized Dalit students to further their education and to facilitate the Dalit community’s access social justice.”<sup>137</sup>

The Catholic Church is challenged today to become a community of equals because it is a community called by God who values every human being equally. As a community of equals it signifies the Kingdom of God. In the Kingdom of God there is no one higher or lower, rather all are equal because all are children of God. In this sense if there are people in the Church who are not treated equally, who suffer discrimination, it is a contradiction to the idea of the Church. Hence, “the existence of Christian *dalits* is not just a shocking scandal, it erodes the very identity of the Church as the community which symbolizes the Kingdom.”<sup>138</sup> It is “a fundamental spiritual problem touching the very basis of (our) faith in God, who is the Creator and Father of all men and women, and their faith in Christ, the brother and saviour of everyone, beginning with the lowest and the least.”<sup>139</sup> The Church cannot be the agent of Peace, Justice and equality to the Indian society, if within itself it is not a society marked with equality.

The Second Vatican Council spoke of the Church as a Communion. The Church as communion is a symbol of the heavenly or eschatological communion. This communion involves: “A vertical communion with God and a horizontal communion among human persons.”<sup>140</sup> It means the Church as a community is characterized by both its spiritual or vertical dimension and social or horizontal dimension. Social dimension is as much important as the spiritual dimension. If the Catholic Church in India has to be a true living symbol of the ecclesial communion, then it must not forget its social dimension. It must become a community of love, sharing, respect, freedom, equality and solidarity. The sacraments which the Church celebrates must also be lived in the concrete life. The spiritual di-

<sup>136</sup> <http://www.cbci.in/Policies.aspx>, 19.09.2017.

<sup>137</sup> Christian Solidarity Worldwide, “India Catholic Bishops’ Conference to empower Dalits”, <http://www.csw.org.uk/2016/12/16/news/3391/article.htm>, 20.09.2017.

<sup>138</sup> George Soares Prabhu, *The Indian Church challenged by Poverty and Caste*, p. 153.

<sup>139</sup> Samuel Rayan, *Outside the Gate, Sharing the Insult*, p. 128.

<sup>140</sup> Paula Jean Miller, *Members of One Body: Prophets, Priests and Kings*, New York: Alba House, 2000, p. 8.

mension of our faith must be lived and celebrated socially. Or else it won't be meaningful. Michael Amaladoss in his book "A Call to Community", while referring to the significance of sacrament of the Holy Eucharist in the area of building a new Christian community says: "the Eucharist is significant only in the context of a community that is actively trying to live what it signifies. It is a life of love, sharing and fellowship that gives meaning to the Eucharist. Otherwise we have nothing to celebrate."<sup>141</sup> George Soares-Prabhu too understands Eucharist as the symbol of a new community of love, sharing and equality, which Jesus announced through his table-fellowship with the tax-collectors, sinners and outcasts, and finally through the last supper with his disciples. In his opinion when the caste system enters the celebration of the Eucharist, it is nothing but the sin of sacrilege of the Holy Eucharist: "To celebrate the Eucharist while breaking up its participants into caste groups, and to treat fellow members of the one eucharistic community (the true 'body of Christ') as outcasts, by consigning them to special parts of the Church or to separate places in a communion queue, is therefore to parody the Eucharist. It is to turn the joyous, hope-filled, liberating meals of Jesus into caste meals, or the self-righteous celebrations of the Pharisaic *chaburim*."<sup>142</sup> It is because, the caste system denies the ones discriminated their worth and dignity. The Church should make every effort in words and deeds to root out the evil of inequality and discrimination, so that no person is marginalized on the basis of his caste, colour, origin or culture. The Indian Catholic Church is thus, challenged by the Second Vatican Council, to become a real local Church – a real community reflecting the first Christian community mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 2, 42–47) which was characterized by love, service and sharing. In the words of Michael Amaladoss, "the Church has a facilitating role in building up communities of people characterized by respect for the dignity and individuality of every human irrespective of his caste, creed or ethnicity, a sense of concern for one another, a readiness to share without being selfish and a sense of togetherness and participation expressed in dialogue and collaboration."<sup>143</sup> He proposes a twofold plan of action for the Church in order to abolish and destroy all caste-discrimination within the Church: "On the one hand there must be a evangelistic campaign pointing out to the unchristian nature of untouchability, seeking to educate the people and challenge them to a conversion of minds and hearts in the

<sup>141</sup> Michael Amaladoss, *A Call to Community: The Caste System and the Christian Responsibility*, Gujarat: Gujarat Sahitya Prakashan, 1994, p. 129.

<sup>142</sup> George Soares Prabhu, "The Table Fellowship of Jesus – *Its Significance for Dalit Christians in India today*", *Biblical Themes for a Contextual Theology Today*, Isaac Padinjarekuttu (Ed.), Pune: Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth Theology Series, 1999, p. 235.

<sup>143</sup> Michael Amaladoss, "The Future of the Church's Mission in India", *Jeevadhara*, Vol. 17, no. 101 '1987, p. 380.



name of the good news of Jesus Christ. On the other, we need to identify concrete instances and tackle every individual case in a systematic way.”<sup>144</sup> However, this plan can be implemented and realised only when the bishops, the priests and the religious make efforts in this direction.

## **1.2 A Church on the Side of the Women**

The prophetic role of the Indian Catholic Church demands that the Church takes the side of the weak and those who are unable to raise their voice. The Church is to be the strength of the weak. An important part of the Church’s prophetic mission is to support the development of women in India, to stand for them, to speak for them and to fight against the injustice, discrimination and the second-class treatment meted out to them in the Indian society.

### **1.2.1 Situation of Women in today’s India**

The situation of women can be evaluated both positively and negatively, although from the negatives there is much to be learnt and much to be done for the development and empowerment.

#### *1.2.1.1 A Positive Evaluation*

Positively speaking, the status of Indian women has radically changed since India obtained independence from the British in 1947. Since the Independence efforts have been made for the upliftment of the women folk. “Both the political and cultural changes that followed independence provided equality of opportunities to women in education, employment and political participation.”<sup>145</sup> Indian woman is on the road to development and towards the full realisation of her potentials. The ratio of women, who are not only educated but highly educated, has increased in India in the last decade. Women are working in all professions as equal to men, be it Engineering field, medical field, aviation, science, law or social field or even politics. Thanks to the development and empowerment of women, an Indian woman was the 12<sup>th</sup> President of the Indian Republic. At the same time, there are women in today’s India, like Medha Patkar and many others who through their commitment to the common good have made a lasting impression on the world. Since the independence, the various ruling parties through their governments have

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<sup>144</sup> Michael Amaladoss, *A Call to Community: The Caste System and the Christian Responsibility*, Gujarat: Gujarat Sahitya Prakashan, 1994, p. 124.

<sup>145</sup> Vidyadhar S. Naganahalli, *Education and Empowerment of Women in India*, Solapur: Laxmi Book Publication, 2014, p. 26.

tried to implement different initiatives for the betterment of Indian women.<sup>146</sup> The Indian Constitution speaks of equal work opportunities and equal pay and safety for women without any discrimination in the society against them.<sup>147</sup> Thanks to the government initiatives and efforts made by the women themselves in educating and developing themselves, over the years, Indian women have made a substantial impact and achieved success across sectors, both within the country and overseas.

### *1.2.1.2 A Negative Evaluation*

In spite of the progress achieved by women and the initiatives taken by the government, suffering and discrimination continues to be the lot of Indian women even today. The rural women are the ones who are affected by this lot the most. Most of the Indian women are thrice discriminated: “treated as untouchables and outcasts due to their caste, face gender discrimination being women, and finally economic impoverishment due to unequal wage disparity, with low or underpaid labour.”<sup>148</sup> They suffer discrimination in the family, in the society and in the places of worship. This does not mean that the urban women have overcome the problems of discrimination and oppression. However, the urban society is naturally influenced by new thinking which comes through education and development. Hence, urban women suffer less socially and religiously than the women in rural areas. Rural societies are male dominated societies, wherein the women have no voice at all. Their only aim and God-given purpose in the society or in the world (as believed by men) seems to be giving birth to children and doing housework. They are not allowed to study and educate themselves or qualify themselves for taking up jobs in order to become independent. The male dominated society which forms the majority of Indian society sees women as subordinate to men. Indian women face a number of threats ranging from child marriage, dowry killings and human trafficking to rape and domestic violence, largely due to deep-rooted attitudes that view them as inferior to men.<sup>149</sup> It is really a strong paradox, that the Indian religions respect the goddesses and worship them but do not respect the women and treat them with dignity. Pooja Bedi, an Indian writer brings this contrast between worship and life in India aptly: “It’s amazing how we revere women in the forms of goddesses, Lakshmi the bringer of wealth, Saraswati for education and wisdom,

<sup>146</sup> The different schemes for the empowerment of women can be read on the website of the Indian Government. Ministry of Women and Child Development, <http://wcd.nic.in/schemes-listing/2405>, 29.09.2017.

<sup>147</sup> Cf. Articles 15,1; 15,3; 16,2; 39a,39d,39e, 42 etc. of the Indian Constitution.

<sup>148</sup> Indira Priyadarshini N. Badiger, *Scheduled Caste Women and Higher Education: A Sociological Study*, Solapur: Laxmi Book Publication, 2015, p. 51.

<sup>149</sup> Nita Bhalla, “Almost 80 percent of Indian women face public harassment in cities: survey”, <http://www.businessinsider.com/r-almost-80-percent-of-indian-women-face-public-harassment-in-cities-survey-2016--5>, 29.09.2017.

Durga for her strength, Kali for her energy and battle spirit, and yet do not worship the same qualities in our women at home.”<sup>150</sup> On the one hand majority of Indians worship goddesses, and on the other hand, in most part of India women are ill-treated, disrespected, harassed and molested. The women in India in majority of Indian Society suffer from different types of atrocities done to them.

\* Violence: In many parts of India, whether rural or urban, women suffer from violence of different kind. It is a shame that even after 70 years of India’s independence, Indian woman is not free from violence committed against her in the name of religion, society, caste and gender. According to a survey (2014) done by BBC News, about once every five minutes an incident of domestic violence is reported in India, under its legal definition of “cruelty by husband or his relatives”.<sup>151</sup> Dowry system which still exists in many places in India, adds to the misery of women. Indian woman in many parts of Indian society is not safe at home. But Indian woman is also not safe out on the roads. The patriarchal mindset manifests itself not only at home, but also in workplaces and in streets. Women are being raped, gang-raped and then brutally murdered. In India, every 15 minutes a woman is raped and every two minutes a woman is victim of crime.<sup>152</sup> According to the statistics of the India’s Crime Records’ Bureau (NCRB) 34, 651 cases of rape and 4,437 cases of attempted rape were registered across India in the year 2015.<sup>153</sup> At the same time there were also 1,30,000 cases of sexual assault on women. The victims included women across all age groups, from under six years of age to over 60. Sadly, the Capital of India, Delhi was seen as the most dangerous territory for women, with 6 rapes taking place every day in the capital. With the new government taking over in 2014, the violence against women is on the rise in many BJP (*Bharatiya Janta Party*) ruled states. The *Dalit* women are raped, paraded naked and their dignity is trampled upon in public. *Dalit* women are looked upon as things and not human beings. The Government hardly does anything. Because, since *Dalit* are outcastes and almost no human beings, raping *Dalit* women is also not seen a serious crime: Mary Grey says: “Rape is associated with dishonor: but *Dalit* women are considered to be without honor to begin with,

<sup>150</sup> Pooja Bedi, “Respect the goddess within every woman”, <https://blogs.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/heartchakra/respect-the-goddess-within-every-woman/>, 07.10.2017.

<sup>151</sup> Cf. Geeta Pandey, “100 Women 2014: Violence at Home is India’s failing”, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-29708612>, 30.09.2017.

<sup>152</sup> Shaan Khan, “What’s really behind India’s Rape Crisis”, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/whats-really-behind-indias-rape-crisis>, 30.09.2017.

<sup>153</sup> Cf. Zena Tahhan, “India: more than 34, 000 Cases of Rape reported in 2015”, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/08/india-34000-cases-rape-reported-2015--160831140518208.html>, 30.09.2017.

hence rape is considered as a minor offence . . . ”<sup>154</sup> If a woman or a girl becomes victim of rape or any sexual assaults, it is normally the victim who is blamed and not the one who committed the crime. The tragedy is that most of the perpetrators of crimes on women are directly or indirectly protected by the politicians. The Government is insensitive to these issues. The women in India continue to suffer and struggle to make their way ahead on the top with men. Domestic violence is not a phenomenon existing only in India, there are many countries which face this problem. But, in India the victims prefer most of the times not to report the atrocities done to them. And even if some women report to the police or to the concerned authorities, there is hardly any action taken.<sup>155</sup> The problem of violence against women instead of abating, has become worse.

\* **Abortion:** The abortion is another area where Indian women suffer. They suffer the trauma. The abortion of females is on the rise in India. Most of the families, specially the traditional families do not want girls. Girls are considered only a burden to the family and not a blessing. “Since it is harder for girls and women to find work or be viewed as equal to men, large sectors of Indian society believe that it is better not to give them life.”<sup>156</sup> When a girl is born in a family, the family has to invest so much into her upbringing, education and marriage and one day send the girl to another family, whereas, if a son is born, he can take the family ahead and look after the family. This is the reason why even the tradition of infant marriages exists in some parts of India. Dowry system prevalent in Indian society in many parts is also an added reason for the rise in female infanticide.

\* **Lack of Education:** In many parts of India, women have no access to the education. Women are considered to be meant only for house work and to look after the family. Hence, they are not to waste their time and life studying and earning. It is the husband, the man, the male who will earn and support the family financially and not the woman. Since women are denied the right to education, their

<sup>154</sup> Mary C. Grey, *A Cry for Dignity: Religion, Violence and the Struggle of Dalit Women in India*, London & Oakville: Equinox Publishing, 2010, p. 85.

<sup>155</sup> A Report by Saksha, a Delhi-based women’s organization in one of its reports revealed a shocking attitude of the judges towards domestic violence: “74% of the judges felt that preservation of the family should be a primary concern for women even if there is violence in the marriage. 90% of the judges said they would not opt for legal redress in case of domestic violence involving or other family’s relatives. 51] of the judges said that women who stay with men who abused them are partly to be blamed for their situation.” Sheela Ramanathan (Ed.), *A Life Free from Violence- The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act. A Commentary*, New Delhi: Human Rights Law Network, 2010, pp. viii-ix.

<sup>156</sup> Nirmala Carvalho, “Mary stands as our Hope against the selective abortion of girls”, <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Mary-stands-as-our-hope-against-the-selective-abortion-of-girls-41730.html>, 20.09.2017.

dreams of rising above the misery and contributing towards self-growth and the betterment and progress of the country are only shattered.

\* Lack of Freedom: Women have in general lesser freedom than men. Although India is on the way towards immense development, most of the country's citizens are underdeveloped what their views and opinions about the women concern. Women have no freedom to dress as they want, they have no freedom to go when and wherever they want to go. The traditional society decides what a woman can do, how she should behave etc. This is continued even today. There are moral police who try to teach women the habits and manners proper to women and limit their freedom. If women try to raise their voice against the injustice done to them by way of protests or through mass media, they are silenced in a way that they are dishonoured through insulting words: "If a woman were to stand up to injustice in the family, we would quash the Durga within her and tell her to shut up and to accept being tormented, ridiculed or harassed. When she can't bear it anymore and the Kali within her emerges in full force, she is abused, told she has no respect for family or elders, called names and slandered for seeking retribution."<sup>157</sup> This is today's scenario, which existed since years, but has been on the rise since 2014. Thus, despite the tremendous progress, women in India still are suppressed and are denied their freedom and rights, and face discrimination from the birth till death.

### 1.2.2 Situation of Women in the Church Today

The fate of women within the Indian Catholic Church too is not better. Women in the Church continue to suffer certain types of marginalisation in the Church. They are expected even today in many places to take up the roles like care-taking, nursing or carrying out less-valued tasks in the society. They are not expected or encouraged to do something extraordinary other than these tasks. Their participation in the ecclesiastical administration and in the liturgical functions is limited because the Catholic Church still continues to be patriarchic in heart and mind and its system. The participation of women (whether lay or nuns) in the decision-making of the Church is very little. At the national level or at the local level, too, there are hardly any women included in the decision-making bodies, whether in the parishes or in the dioceses. Since, decision-making has been seen as the monopoly of the men alone even in the Church, women refrain from coming ahead. The Church too does not seem to be encouraging the active participation of more and more women at all the levels of its functioning. Hence, the Catholic Church is challenged by the Vatican Council II to overcome its patriarchal attitude which discriminates against women and give women equal status like men

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<sup>157</sup> Pooja Bedi, *Respect the goddess within every woman*.

in all levels of its life. As Edward Schillebeeckx says, “as long as women are left completely outside all decision-making authorities in the Church, there can be no question of real women’s liberation”.<sup>158</sup>

An important issue that the Indian Catholic Church faces is the issue of sex abuse by clergy. Many nuns in the Indian Church have been the victims of clergy abuse. The abuses take place in parishes, schools and social service centres where the nuns work as subordinates to the priests. Unfortunately, the victims refrain from speaking openly about the abuse they suffer, and added to it, the Catholic Church (holding on to its institutional character and patriarchal attitude) has failed to address these issues of sex abuse by clergy and deliver justice and the perpetrators of the crimes are going scot-free. “The poor treatment of Catholic religious women by male members of the Church is a very serious problem in India. If it comes out, it will be like tsunami”,<sup>159</sup> says Sr. Manu Kulapuram, the national secretary of the Forum of Religious for Justice and Peace.

### 1.2.3 Vatican Council II and Women

The Vatican II Council documents do not contain an exclusive reflection on the status and role of women both in the Church and the world. This does not mean that the Council did not take the women seriously. Rather, every time the Council spoke of human dignity, human rights, human equality (e.g. *Gaudium et Spes*) it referred exclusively to both men and women and not to men alone. An important text which emphasises the equality of both man and woman is GS 29: “with respect to the fundamental rights of the person, every type of discrimination, whether social or cultural, whether based on sex, race, colour, social condition, language or religion, is to be overcome and eradicated as contrary to God’s intent. For in truth it must still be regretted that fundamental personal rights are still not being universally honoured. Such is the case of a woman who is denied the right to choose a husband freely, to embrace a state of life or to acquire an education or cultural benefits equal to those recognized for men.” There are also many other texts which indirectly speak of women’s status. Towards the close of the Council in 1965, Pope Paul VI in his address to women shared the appreciation and encouragement of the Church towards the women: “women of all states – girls, wives, mothers and widows . . . , consecrated virgins and women living alone.”<sup>160</sup> The Pope invited and exhorted the women in the name of the entire Church to

<sup>158</sup> Edward Schillebeeckx, *Ministry: A Case for Change*, London: SCM, 1981, p. 97.

<sup>159</sup> Jose Kavi, “Clergy Abuse of Nuns in India”, <http://globalsistersreport.org/news/equality/religious-leaders-women-india-struggle-clergy-abuse-nuns-40571>, 30.09.2017.

<sup>160</sup> Pope Paul VI, “Closing of the Second Vatican Council: Address to Women, 8 December, 1965”, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/speeches/1965/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_spe\\_19651208\\_epilogo-concilio-donne.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/speeches/1965/documents/hf_p-vi_spe_19651208_epilogo-concilio-donne.html), 30.09.2017.

share the responsibility for the future of the humanity and the world. Thus, the Church recognized and stressed the need for the equality of women and the need for their equal participation in the progress of the world and the humanity.

### **1.2.4 The Indian Catholic Church's Role in the Empowerment of Women**

Vatican Council II challenges the Indian Catholic Church to work towards the empowerment of women and to give them equal status in the society as well as in the Church.

#### *1.2.4.1 Charitable Activities and Self-help Orientation*

One of the ways in which the Indian Catholic Church has been responding to the concern for women empowerment is by engaging in charitable activities. Through different charitable projects, the Catholic Church has sought to help the women who are suffering and struggling in the society and who have been victims of a cruel-male dominated society, namely, the orphans, the widows, the handicapped, the unwed mothers, and to rehabilitate them. "The Church is actively involved in the promotion of women's cause and it has drawn inspiration for its charitable work from God as the great benefactor."<sup>161</sup> At the same time, priests and nuns have been working in rural areas as social workers and supporting rural women's development by helping them acquire skills through self-help orientations. However, all this has not changed the experience of subordination and oppression faced by women, though it might have helped the women to some extent.<sup>162</sup>

#### *1.2.4.2 Empowerment of women for a better society*

An African proverb says, if you educate a man, you educate an individual, but if you educate a woman, you educate a family (nation). Similarly, if a woman is empowered for social transformation, she will transform the whole society. Sociologist Dhruba Hazarika defines women empowerment as: "equipping women to be economically independent, self-reliant, have positive esteem to enable them to face any difficult situation and . . . (their ability) to participate in development activities."<sup>163</sup> The need of the hour today is to empower women, to help them become aware of their dignity, their rights in the society and to voice out their opinions in

<sup>161</sup> Stella Baltazar, "Women & the Church: A Search for an Identity", *The Church in India in Search of a New Identity-The 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Indian Theological Association* 4-8, May 1996, Kurien Kunnupuram, Errol D'Lima & Jacob Parappally (Eds.), Bangalore: NBCLC, 1997, p. 221.

<sup>162</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 222-223.

<sup>163</sup> Dhruba Hazarika, "Women Empowerment in India: A Brief Discussion", [https://www.ripublication.com/ijepa/ijepav1n3\\_1.pdf](https://www.ripublication.com/ijepa/ijepav1n3_1.pdf), 14.10.2017.

the society. The Church needs to support the education of women, so that women are equipped with knowledge and filled with the awareness of their rights and their place in the society. The Catholic Church's emphasis on the women empowerment as an important aspect of social service is already making great contribution in Indian society. Through the empowerment women "have manifested a courage to bear all consequences disproving the traditional myth that women are weak and fragile. Women have manifested a new dynamism which speaks of different qualities in their life. This qualitative change is born of their new formed identity as dignified human persons."<sup>164</sup>

#### 1.2.4.3 *The Role of CBCI in the Women Empowerment*

As we have seen earlier, the Catholic Church in India has committed itself anew to the social cause in India since the Vatican Council II. Through different initiatives, through different documents, it has been supporting the poor, the less privileged in the Indian society and working to better their situation. Women, too, were included as a part of the Church's social mission, although there are very few references to the women's cause in CBCI documents till 1992. In order to respond to the challenge of empowering women in Indian society, the Catholic Church established in Poona the first Catholic centre *Streevani* – women's voice – in 1982 to deal with women's issues. It was in 1992 that the CBCI in its meeting at Poona spoke for the first time openly and exclusively about the cause of women.<sup>165</sup> The concluding statement of the meeting says:

In their concluding statement the bishops said: "Discrimination against women seems to be embedded in the structure of our society . . . . Violence against women sometimes starts from the very moment of conception of the girl child and is experienced by them at all the stages of their life. Violence that is physical, sexual and psychological and practiced against women is the result of inhuman and unchristian attitudes. With a sense of sorrow, we must admit that women feel discriminated even in the church."<sup>166</sup>

At the same meeting, the CBCI desk for women was formed in order to promote all initiatives and programmes towards women's empowerment, and it was later granted the status of CBCI commission for women in 1996. In 2009, the CBCI issued the *Gender Policy of the Catholic Church in India* aimed at creating a gender just Church and society with a special focus on the marginalized – a just Church and a just society, wherein not only men but also women have an equal status and role.<sup>167</sup> The document focuses its attention on eight important areas

<sup>164</sup> Ibid. 225.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., p. 227.

<sup>166</sup> CBCI Office for Women, <http://www.cbci.in/all-Commissions/women.aspx>, 01.10.2017.

<sup>167</sup> CBCI, "Gender Policy of the Catholic Church of India", [http://cbci.in/DownloadMat/Gender\\_Policy.pdf](http://cbci.in/DownloadMat/Gender_Policy.pdf), 20.09.2017.



of concern and includes policies and strategies for implementation. The CBCI has also promulgated *Guidelines to Deal with Sexual Harassment at Workplace* on 14 September 2017 in order to help the victims get justice. The document “establishes mechanisms for the prevention of all forms of harassment and for the resolution of harassment complaints . . . provides practical guidance on what constitutes harassment and the manner in which it will be handled. Being aware that the harassment of the victim can be gender indiscriminate, the Guidelines in its current format is one step further in gender inclusiveness.”<sup>168</sup>

#### 1.2.4.4 *The Task Today*

Despite the efforts made by the Indian Government through the implementation of different policies and programmes in favour of women, the oppression of women still continues. The same phenomenon exists even in the Indian Church, although the Catholic Church has been on the forefront in order to defend the rights and dignity of women in India and particularly within the Church. The Indian Catholic Church has a long way to go in establishing and preserving a culture of respect and equality of women both within and without. In the opinion of Rekha Chennattu, theological illiteracy is one of the reasons for the subordination of women in the Church. Hence, they need enough biblical and theological formation which will make them aware of their place in the Church and empower them to take their rightful place in the Church.<sup>169</sup> At the same time, the Church needs to stop from time to time and take a look at the work it is doing in the field of women empowerment. There is also a need to study and reflect in order to explore and discover all distortions taking place in the Church (especially those denying the equal rights of women) and to challenge them.<sup>170</sup> The Church needs to reflect on getting rid of patriarchal attitudes in order to create free space for women to come ahead and come up in the Church.

Concerning the question of women in the Indian society, the Catholic Church needs to support the suffering women ever more strongly in their struggle against the existing patriarchy and the evil system of discrimination. It is also a struggle against the “agenda of the politically right wing upper caste women”<sup>171</sup> whose

<sup>168</sup> CBCI, “Guidelines to Deal with Sexual Harassment at Workplace, 14 September 2017”, <http://www.cbci.in/Newletter/Newletter915152215109.pdf>, 26.09.2017.

<sup>169</sup> Cf. Rekha M. Chennattu, “Dignity of Women: Christian Perspectives”, <http://dharmaramjournals.in/ArticleFiles/DignityofWomenChristianPerspectives-RekhaM.Chennattu-January-March-2012.pdf>, 20.09.2017.

<sup>170</sup> Shalini Mulackal, “The Impact of Christianity on Women’s Empowerment: An Indian Perspective”, [http://www.streevani.org/pdf/newsletter\\_march2017.pdf](http://www.streevani.org/pdf/newsletter_march2017.pdf), 01.10.2017.

<sup>171</sup> Felix Wilfred, *Dalit Empowerment: Commemorating the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of NBCLC – In Service of the Church and the Nation*, Delhi: ISPCK, 2007, p. 108.

concerns and interests perpetuate the misery of women in the society. The empowerment of Indian women will be possible when the issues which hinder it are resolved, namely, education, poverty, health and safety, professional inequality, morality and inequality, household inequality, etc.<sup>172</sup> The battle of the suffering women will be won only when it is continued through the sustained efforts by women. The Church's role is to support these women and to raise its prophetic voice in favour of them, so that women are liberated totally from their misery and live their life in the same freedom that every man has. At the same time, the Church has to make sustained efforts to create and spread awareness in society in support of women's empowerment. It must continuously make efforts to create a social climate in which "there is no gender discrimination and women have full opportunities of self-decision making and participating in social, political and economic life of the country with a sense of equality."<sup>173</sup> In the words of Sr. Shalini Mulackal, "We (*Indian Catholic Church*) cannot be complacent (*and cannot be truly a Church on the side of women*) until each and every woman is emancipated (*both in the Church and in the Indian society*) from all shackles and inner bonds."<sup>174</sup>

## 2 To be an Inculturated Church

Pope Paul VI during his apostolic pilgrimage to Uganda in 1969 said this at the conclusion of the symposium organized by the bishops of Africa: "You may, and you must have an African Christianity."<sup>175</sup> These words of Pope Paul VI continue to be words of encouragement not only for the Church in Africa but for the Church in the whole world, and in our context for the Indian Catholic Church: *you must have an Indian Christianity*. The Second Vatican Council challenges the Indian Catholic Church to become an inculturated Church – a Church totally Indian in mind and heart. Without inculturation, the mission of the Church is incomplete. Inculturation is necessary in order to become an authentic Indian Church. It is possible only when the Gospel message can enter the cultures of the people – cultures which are part of people's identity and being. An attempt on the part of the Indian Church to spread the Gospel and bringing people to believe in the good news without becoming the Church of the soil "would be on the one hand a lim-

<sup>172</sup> Cf. Rajeshwari M. Shettar, "A Study on Issues and Challenges of Women Empowerment in India", <http://iosrjournals.org/iosr-jbm/papers/Vol17-issue4/Version-1/B017411319.pdf>, 17.10.2017.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> Shalini Mulackal, *The Impact of Christianity on Women's Empowerment: An Indian Perspective*. The addition in italics, in brackets is mine.

<sup>175</sup> Pope Paul VI, "Homily at Mass at the Conclusion of the Symposium -31 July, 1969", <http://www.totus2us.co.uk/universal/uganda/pvi-pilgrim-visit-1969/>, 12.10.2017.

itation of the capacity of the conversion to Christ” and “on the other hand, such evangelization would make our God and Father, a God who excludes people.”<sup>176</sup> The term ‘inculturation’, according to Dhavamony, implies “the insertion of the Gospel message in the heart of a culture and indicates the birth of the Church in a people and from this people.”<sup>177</sup> Inculturation in this sense can be understood as the process of insertion of the Church in a culture. It is a process of translating “ways of living and expressing Christian faith into local thought patterns and traditions.”<sup>178</sup> It is a process in which the Church becomes one with the culture in which it is inserted.<sup>179</sup> The term was introduced and popularized largely by the members of the Society of Jesus.<sup>180</sup> The term has gained all the more importance in the Indian Catholic Church since Vatican II.

Although the Catholic Church has contributed tremendously to India’s growth and has tried to prove itself totally Indian, even today the Catholic Church in India is seen by the Indians more as a Western Church than an Indian Church. It is considered a foreign element on Indian soil. Many Indians see the Catholics or Christians as foreigners and outsiders and do not accept them as their own kith and kin. Despite the fact that the Catholic Church has been doing wonderful works in order to develop and improve the situation in the Indian society in different ways, be it social work, the medical field or educational field, for Indian society, the Church still remains a foreign Church – an alien Church. Hence, one can ask: What are the reasons for this feeling of foreignness which prevails among the people of India about the Catholic Church? Has Christianity in general and the Catholic Church in particular failed to become one with India’s cultures and traditions? What are the reasons for this failure? The reasons for this foreignness of the Indian Church are varied.

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<sup>176</sup> “Synodus Episcoporum, Bulletin 12 (April 1994), p. 15 cited in: Solomon Okezie Obasi, *Evangelization and Modernity: Cultural Issues as Missiological Imperative in Ecclesia in Africa*, Hamburg: Verlag Dr. Kovac, 2008, p. 28.

<sup>177</sup> Mariasusai Dhavamony, *Christian Theology of Inculturation, Dokumenta Missionalia – 24*, Roma: Editrice Pontificia Universita Gregoriana, 1997, p. 157.

<sup>178</sup> Gerald O’Collins, *Living Vatican II – The 21<sup>st</sup> Council for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, New York, Mahwah: Paulist Press, 2006, p. 168.

<sup>179</sup> There were also many other terms used before the use of inculturation, like: ‘adaptation’, ‘accommodation’, ‘contextualisation’, however, these terms expressed only the extrinsic contacts between the Gospel message and the given cultures. Even the term ‘acculturation’, which denotes the contact between two cultures and the changes resulting from it, is not seen by many as a proper term because the Church is not bound to any particular culture. Cf. Arij Roes Crollius & Theoneste Nkeramihigo, *What is so New about Inculturation?*, Working Papers on Living Faiths and Cultures-V, Roma: Editrice Pontificia Universita Gregoriana, 1991, pp. 3–4.

<sup>180</sup> Cf. Aylward Shorter, *Toward a Theology of Inculturation*, Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2006, p. 10.

1. First reason for the foreignness of the Catholic Church in India is the cultural gap between Christianity and Indian society. The culture brought and followed by the Christians was western. Even today the Catholic Church is western in its style of functioning, dressing, eating habits, and in its practice of faith. All this gives the impression that Christianity is a foreign religion imported from the West. The new social system and spirituality introduced by Christianity is contrary to the Indian socio-religious tradition, and the way Christianity was presented has no appeal for Indian society.<sup>181</sup> On the contrary, it seems like the Church is “imposing an alien cultural value on Indian Christians.”<sup>182</sup> Since Indians identify Christianity with western culture, conversion to Christianity is also considered as conversion to the western culture. Hence, many learned Indians (Hindus) oppose the Church and all forms of conversion on the part of the Church with a reason that it is a move to destroy the Indian culture.<sup>183</sup>
2. It was during the colonial period that Christianity began to spread in India extensively. As a result, Christianity was identified with the religion of colonial oppressors.<sup>184</sup> For Indians, the colonial rulers who ruled India and the missionaries who came to India were not different. Walbert Bühlmann describes this attitude of the people in following way: “Whatever the intention of the messengers of faith, missions looked like the other face of colonialism to the native peoples. Soldiers who conquered the territory, merchants who exploited it, missionaries baptizing and founding schools – all came from the same country, had the same colour skin, spoke the same language and exchanged hospitality. No one could seriously doubt that they were all part of the same commodity.”<sup>185</sup> The very fact that Christianity is the religion of those who once oppressed and looted India adds to the hatred for the Christians and the Catholic Church in India. The project of conversion of India to Christianity started by the missionaries even at the cost of mocking and, at times, even destroying the local cultures and religions and follows the Christians in India even till this date. All the social work that the Catholic Church is engaged in is viewed with suspicion. Christian activities are seen as “conversion motivated religious activities”<sup>186</sup> in India today even by the educated Indians.

<sup>181</sup> Thampi Thomas Panangatu, *Comparative Study of Religious Traditions of the Saora Tribe of Orissa and the Influence of Christian Traditions*, Marburg: Tectum Verlag, 2009, p. 220.

<sup>182</sup> M. V. Kamat, “What is this all about saving souls?”, <http://www.hvk.org/2008/1108/63.html>, 20.10.2017.

<sup>183</sup> Cf. Cyril J. Kuttianikkal, *Khrist Bhakta Movement: A Model for an Indian Church? Inculturation in the Area of Community Building*, Zürich; Bern: LIT Verlag, 2014, p. 55.

<sup>184</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*

<sup>185</sup> Walbert Bühlmann, *The Coming of the Third Church*, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1977, p. 43.

<sup>186</sup> Thampi Thomas Panangatu, *Comparative Study of Religious Traditions of the Saora Tribe of Orissa*, p. 221.

3. The Indian Church is financially heavily dependent on the West. The foreign donations received by the Catholic Church in the name of social work and projects are today looked at with suspicion by the Indians and the Indian government. The purpose and aim of such donations are questioned. The BJP-controlled administration alleges that non-profit and non-governmental organizations are using foreign money for illegal and anti-national activities, including religious conversions.<sup>187</sup> Although these accusations may not prove to be 100% true, there may be some grain of truth in it. Secondly, in the opinion of Samuel Rayan, “economic dependence often carries with it spiritual dependence.”<sup>188</sup> It only means if the Church is financially dependent on the West, it automatically and indirectly becomes dependent even spiritually and accepts the guidelines of the West (Rome) regarding the liturgy, worship and spirituality as the command of the Lord Himself and implements them on Indian soil (even if such directives may or may not be applicable to Indian context). This results in the mockery “of (our) cultural and spiritual sensibilities” and presents a wrong image of the Catholic Church as “foreign and culturally-nationally alienating.”<sup>189</sup> The Church is seen as “manipulated by strings from elsewhere.”<sup>190</sup>
4. The fourth reason for the hatred of Indians towards the Church has to do with the so-called ‘historical mistake’ as observed by S. M. George: In the face of growing Protestantism, the Catholic Church felt the need to assert and emphasise what the author calls “One Church, One Faith, One tradition and One Fold”. This implied that the Catholic Church in whatever culture or context it found itself had to have a uniform way of leadership, worship and faith. And the Catholic Church feared that the adaptation to the local cultures, traditions and languages may result in deviations and divisions from the universal Church.

<sup>187</sup> Cf. Nirmala Carvalho, “Indian Government seeking stricter controls over foreign donations”, <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/India-government-seeking-stricter-controls-on-foreign-donations-3877.html>, 19.10.2017. The Niyogi Committee appointed by Indian Government in 1954 in order to investigate the social, economic and religious report activity of the foreign missionaries published its report in April 1956, which accused the missionaries of using the foreign funds received for charitable purposes for the Christianization of the Indian masses. The conversion of masses according to the report was not a result of conviction, rather, of allurements and inducements. For more information on this report see, Ram Goel, “Vindicated by Time: The Niyogi Committee Report on Christian Missionary Activities”, <http://voiceofdharma.org/books/ncr/>, 20.10.2017.

<sup>188</sup> Samuel Rayan, “Flesh of India’s Flesh”, Jeevadhara, vol. 6, no. 33, May-June 1976, p. 266.

<sup>189</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 267.

<sup>190</sup> Arul M. Varaprasadam, “Inculturation: The Crucial Challenges in the Indian Situation”, Building the Church in Pluricultural Asia, R. Haradawiryan & others (Eds.), *Interculturation - Working Papers on Living Faith and Cultures-VII*, Roma: Editrice Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 1986, P. 44.

Hence, the Church was unwilling to venture the way of inculturation and get acquainted with the local cultures. Latin mass, western style of dressing for mass, western style of singing dominated the liturgy.<sup>191</sup>

5. Another reason, in my opinion, for the hatred toward the Catholic Church and to label it a foreign Church is that the Catholic Church, particularly its leaders, fail to take a stance on social happenings. When an atrocity is done to any of its members or to any Christian in general, the Church raises its voice instantly. But this is not seen when the same thing happens to any member of another religion. While there is generally a lot of discussion on social happenings and people take a stance, the Catholic is generally silent about the happenings or rather very slow in reacting (maybe in order not to be at tug of war with the government and the present political system and to keep up its status and relationship with political parties in the society).<sup>192</sup>

The Catholic Church continues to be foreign even today through its liturgical practices, style of living, the architecture, the dressing style, etc. In the words of S. M. George, “Whether we accept or not, it is a fact that in spite of all its contributions for human welfare, the Church has not earned a rightful place of belonging to our country. As a result, the Church is considered only as a ‘foreign service agent’ in our country. We always feel like strangers in our own country and there are fanatics who say even openly, ‘Let the Christians go back to their countries’.”<sup>193</sup> The Catholic Church continues to be an imported religion. It continues to be like a potted plant which is brought from the West and has failed to root in deep into the Indian soil because it is not planted in the Indian soil.<sup>194</sup> The estrangement of the Catholic Church from India’s masses is the result of the fact that “we (Church) did not take efforts to prove that we belong to this Indian soil, to this Indian culture. It is because the Church was not able to relate all her activities to the local people, particularly the people of other faiths. It is because all the activities of the Church were not founded on a solid foundation – the foundation of local culture and tradition which should have been the only strong foundation for all our (Catholic Church’s) works.”<sup>195</sup>

<sup>191</sup> Cf. S. M. George, “Fine Arts and the Mission of the Church”, Communication as Mission\_ National Consultation at Ishvani Kendra, Pune 12–16 December, 2006, L. Stanislaus & Jose Joseph (Eds.), Delhi: ISPCK & Pune: Ishvani Kendra, 2007, p. 127.

<sup>192</sup> It is a new trend to be labelled as anti-national and not a friend of India, if you try to question the present social happenings, the politics and the political moves.

<sup>193</sup> S. M. George, *Fine Arts and the Mission of the Church*, p. 128.

<sup>194</sup> Cf. Ibid., p. 129.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid., pp. 128–129.

## 2.1 Vatican II on Inculturation

The Council never used the term ‘inculturation’ in any of its documents. The term ‘inculturation’ first appeared in the message of the Synod of Bishops to the entire Church in 1977.<sup>196</sup> However, it did strongly advocate and support inculturation.<sup>197</sup> It won’t be an exaggeration to say that “the Council marked a moment of reorientation of the Church vis-à-vis its own concept of culture and its relationship with the plurality of cultures in the world.”<sup>198</sup> In my view, there are four important conciliar documents which have a bearing on inculturation.

*Lumen Gentium* speaks of local churches as an expression of the universal Church ‘and these local churches retain their cultural diversities (LG 23). The document describes the universal Church as “made up of local churches that may contain their own traditions, but that are bound by the Holy Spirit.”<sup>199</sup>

*Gaudium et Spes* in chapter two of its second part, “The Proper Development of Culture (GS 53–62)”, offers an important description of culture.<sup>200</sup> GS no. 58 speaks positively about the relationship between the Gospel and culture.<sup>201</sup>

<sup>196</sup> Synod of Bishops, Message to the People of God by the Synod of Bishops (Rome 1977), Bangalore: NBCLC, 1977.

<sup>197</sup> Cf. Kurien Kunnupuram, “Inculturation at Vatican II”, Jeevadhara, Vol. 6, no. 33, May-June, 1976, pp. 283–292.

<sup>198</sup> Bartholomew Winters, Priest as Leader: The Process of Inculturation of a Spiritual-Theological Theme of Priesthood in a United States Context, Roma: Editrice Pontificia Univercita Gregoriana, 1997, p. 13.

<sup>199</sup> Lindsay A. Morcom, “Balancing the Spirit in Aboriginal Catholic Education in Ontario”, Catholic Education in the Wake of Vatican II, Rosa Bruno Jofre & Jon Igelmo Zaldivar (Eds.), Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 2017, p. 262.

<sup>200</sup> The word “culture” in its general sense indicates everything whereby man develops and perfects his many bodily and spiritual qualities; he strives by his knowledge and his labour, to bring the world itself under his control. He renders social life more human both in the family and the civic community, through improvement of customs and institutions. Throughout the course of time he expresses, communicates and conserves in his works, great spiritual experiences and desires, that they might be of advantage to the progress of many, even of the whole human family. Hence it follows that human culture has necessarily a historical and social aspect and the word “culture” also often assumes a sociological and ethnological sense. According to this sense we speak of a plurality of cultures. Different styles of life and multiple scales of values arise from the diverse manner of using things, of labouring, of expressing oneself, of practicing religion, of forming customs, of establishing laws and juridical institutions, of cultivating the sciences, the arts and beauty (GS 53).

<sup>201</sup> There are many ties between the message of salvation and human culture. For God, revealing Himself to His people to the extent of a full manifestation of Himself in His Incarnate Son, has spoken according to the culture proper to each epoch. Likewise, the Church, living in various circumstances in the course of time, has used the discoveries of different cultures so that in her preaching she might spread and explain the message of Christ to all nations, that she might examine it and more deeply understand it, that she might give it better expression in liturgical celebration and in the varied life of the community of the faithful. There are many ties between

*Gaudium et Spes* no. 44 speaks of the hidden riches in the human cultures, which are profitable for the Church. All the above affirmations in *Gaudium et Spes* point to the fact that “although the document did not use the term, it certainly hinted at and laid the foundations for what would come to be known as ‘inculturation’”<sup>202</sup>

*Ad Gentes* – The Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity is another conciliar document which is instrumental in developing “the Church’s understanding of and relationship to culture”.<sup>203</sup> With regard to incarnation and culture the document says: “The Church, in order to be able to offer all of them the mystery of salvation and the life brought by God, must implant herself into these groups for the same motive which led Christ to bind himself, in virtue of his incarnation, to certain social and cultural conditions of those human beings among whom He dwelt” (AG 10). The document thus calls for the incarnation of the Gospel into the human cultures. The mission of the Church in different cultures and different groups of people is described in terms of “social insertion and active presence”.<sup>204</sup> This teaching provided a basis for developing the doctrine of inculturation later.<sup>205</sup>

The Council’s document on the liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (SC), called for liturgical renewal in the Church by adapting the liturgy to the culture and traditions of the people in different parts of the world and introduced the use of vernacular in liturgy (SC 37–40). In the opinion of Kenneth Martin, nos. 37–40 of the document are “the basis for any discussion of liturgical adaptation and/

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the message of salvation and human culture. For God, revealing Himself to His people to the extent of a full manifestation of Himself in His Incarnate Son, has spoken according to the culture proper to each epoch. Likewise, the Church, living in various circumstances in the course of time, has used the discoveries of different cultures so that in her preaching she might spread and explain the message of Christ to all nations, but at the same time, the Church, sent to all peoples of every time and place, is not bound exclusively and indissolubly to any race or nation, any particular way of life or any customary way of life recent or ancient. Faithful to her own tradition and at the same time conscious of her universal mission, she can enter into communion with the various civilizations, to their enrichment and the enrichment of the Church herself. The Gospel of Christ constantly renews the life and culture of fallen man, it combats and removes the errors and evils resulting from the permanent allurements of sin. It never ceases to purify and elevate the morality of peoples. By riches coming from above, it makes fruitful, as it were from within, the spiritual qualities and traditions of every people of every age. It strengthens, perfects and restores them in Christ (GS 58).

<sup>202</sup> Bartholomew Winters, *Priest as Leader*, p. 15.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>204</sup> Cf. Julian Saldanha, “Vatican II and the Principle of Inculturation”, *Vatican II: A Gift and a Task-International Colloquium to Mark the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Vatican Council II*, Jacob Kavunkal, Errol D’Lima & Evelyn Monteiro (Eds.), Bombay: St. Pauls Society, 2006, p. 200.

<sup>205</sup> Cf. Diego Irarrazaval, *Inculturation: New Dawn of the Church in Latin America*, transl. Phillip Berryman, Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2008, p. 47; Bartholomew Winters, *Priest as Leader*, p. 16.



or inculturation”.<sup>206</sup> However, the revision of the Roman Rite and the vernacular translation of it in no. 38 is viewed by Shorter as “merely a dress rehearsal for a truly creative stage.”<sup>207</sup> In spite of the fact that the Council emphasised the ‘substantial unity of the Roman Rite’ (SC 38) and had no intention to promote the creation of new rites suiting to the local cultures and contexts, “the council was nevertheless positive in its approach to cultures and expressed a desire that the Church be enriched by the cultures in which it was incarnated”.<sup>208</sup>

## 2.2 Inculturation in the Indian Catholic Church

Notwithstanding the allegations levelled against the Catholic Church in India, one cannot deny the fact that the Catholic Church took inspiration from the Vatican Council II, and has made sincere and conscious efforts “to express Christian belief, worship and praxis in indigenous cultural forms.”<sup>209</sup> That the Indian Catholic Church took the call of the Council for renewal and inculturation seriously is seen in the various initiatives of CBCI.

### 2.2.1 Liturgical Inculturation

The focus of the inculturation in the Indian Catholic Church was initially in the area of liturgy. Following the event of the Vatican Council II, the CBCI instituted in the year 1966 the commission for Catechetical and Liturgy and decided to start a centre in order to organize and animate the liturgical and catechetical renewal in India, based on the principles outlined by Vatican II. The centre was inaugurated in the following year.<sup>210</sup> It was to focus on four areas of the Indian Catholic Church’s function: “Social justice, seeking liberation and the creation of a just society; interreligious dialogue with people of any religions or ideology; inculturation of all aspects of Christian living; and authentic Christian spirituality.”<sup>211</sup>

<sup>206</sup> Kenneth J. Martin, *The Forgotten Instruction: The Roman Liturgy, Inculturation and Legitimate Adaptations*, Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 2007, p. 10.

<sup>207</sup> Although the document called for a renewal of liturgy through its adaptation in different contexts and cultures, it still remained rigid in some way in its call and held on to the Latin rite. Shorter says: Although it (the document) made provisions for the benefit of the different groups, regions and peoples, it did not envisage the possibility of creating new rites. On the contrary, the preservation of the ‘substantial unity of the Roman Rite’ was the *conditio sine qua non* of all liturgical renewal. Cf. Aylward Shorter, *Toward a Theology of Inculturation*, pp. 191–192.

<sup>208</sup> Bartholomew Winter, *Priest as Leader*, p. 17.

<sup>209</sup> Lionel Fernandes, “Changing Perceptions of Indian Christians in Independent India”, *Journal of Religious Studies*, vol. 2, no. 2, 1999, p. 156.

<sup>210</sup> The Centre was initially called as ‘National Catechetical and Liturgical Centre’ and later came to be known as the ‘National Biblical, Catechetical, Liturgical Centre (NBCLC)’. For more information see: J.A.G. Gerwin van Leeuwen, *Fully Indian – Authentically Christian*, pp. 2–8.

<sup>211</sup> Paul M. Collins, “Culture, Worship and Power: A Case Study of South India”, *Church and Religious ‘Other’*, Gerard Mannion (Ed.), London & New York: T&T Clarke, 2008, p. 63.

However, the liturgical inculturation was initially undertaken with precaution and uncertainty.<sup>212</sup> This attitude is clearly expressed in the report of the CBCI meeting of 1966, which stated that “Adaptation must concern only the elements subject to change”, and that there should not be much change or renewal in the way the mass was celebrated.<sup>213</sup> Some of the Indian bishops were so Romanised in their liturgical practices that they were ready to accept the changes introduced by the universal Church, but not the ones from India, and other bishops who were positive about the inculturation had nevertheless done very few adaptations in the liturgy in their dioceses, as is clear in the communication of CBCI commission for liturgy to “*Consilium* for the implementation of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy”.<sup>214</sup>

The All India Seminar convoked for the purpose of discussing ways of bringing renewal into the Indian Church as suggested by Vatican II said, that “Our Liturgy should be closely related to the Word of God, the Indian cultural and religious tradition, and actual life situations”.<sup>215</sup> The seminar called on all the Catholic faithful in India to bring the liturgy close to the Indian culture and religious tradition: “As a first step towards giving our liturgy a more Indian character we recommend that all concerned should, in addition to following an Indian way of life, create an Indian atmosphere in worship, by adopting suitable Indian decorations, furnishings, postures, gestures etc., by composing prayers and hymns which may also take their inspiration from the cultural heritage of India.”<sup>216</sup> The Seminar also called on both the clergy and the faithful to cooperate with each other in the process of liturgical inculturation.

The second All India Liturgical Meeting, which took place in Bangalore from January 27–31, 1969, gave a strong impetus to the efforts towards indigenisation by preparing a long-term plan to facilitate the liturgical inculturation on India, which consisted of three phases: 1) creating an Indian atmosphere through music, postures, decoration, objects and other elements of worship; 2) translation of liturgical rites into vernaculars and original composition of new texts; 3) use of scriptures of other religions.<sup>217</sup> The programme of liturgical inculturation was initiated in the first phase by introducing “twelve external elements for creating an

<sup>212</sup> Cf. Julian Saldanha, *Inculturation*, Bandra: St. Paul Publications, 1987, p. 48.

<sup>213</sup> Cf. “Report of the General Meeting of the CBCI, Delhi, October 13–20, 1966”, pp. 12–14, cited in: Joseph Prasad Pinto, *Inculturation through Basic Communities: An Indian Perspective*, Bangalore: ATC, 1985, P. 104.

<sup>214</sup> Cf. Julian Saldanha, *Inculturation*, p. 48.: *Consilium* was formed by Pope Paul VI for the purpose of accomplishing the task of practical implication of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy.

<sup>215</sup> All India Seminar, p. 242.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 280.

<sup>217</sup> Cf. J.A.G. Gerwin van Leeuwen, *Fully Indian – Authentically Christian*, p. 70.

Indian atmosphere of worship”.<sup>218</sup> These twelve elements for minor adaptations were approved by the CBCI in March 1969 and were also accepted and approved by the Holy See in the same year.<sup>219</sup> The twelve points include: a squatting posture instead of standing, *Anjali hasta* and *Panchanga pranama* as forms of reverence, *arati* as a form of welcome or worship, use of a shawl in the place of western liturgical vestments, tray, oil lamps, a simple incense bowl with handle, touching objects to one’s head instead of kissing them.<sup>220</sup> The second phase in the process of liturgical inculturation included the creative and meaningful translation of the rites into the various vernaculars. It was a phase “From translation to cautious adaptation and from cautious adaptation to original composition.”<sup>221</sup> The third phase of inculturation paved way for the use of the scriptures of other religions not only for prayer and meditations, but also for official liturgical celebrations.<sup>222</sup> For the liturgy to become genuinely Indian, it was important to “experience God who has manifested Himself (to us) in Jesus Christ and who manifests Himself today through the scriptures and other signs and symbols of other religions too.”<sup>223</sup> An important development in the process of inculturation at this period was an Indian Anaphora, which was “profound, pleasing to one who loved things Indian, prayerful, and in accordance with the Indian genius and not contrary to the faith.”<sup>224</sup> Although the Indian Anaphora was met with huge approval by the majority of the Indian bishops, it still failed to find favour in Rome and was not approved by the Holy See.<sup>225</sup>

<sup>218</sup> Augustine Kanjamala, *The Future of Christian Mission in India: Toward a New Paradigm for the Third Millennium, Missional Church, Public Theology, World Christianity 4*, Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2014, p. 202.

<sup>219</sup> For information on the twelve points and the approval letter by the Holy See, see: Jesudhasan Michael, *Liturgical Renewal in India: Before and After the Second Vatican Council*, Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2004, pp. 29–33.

<sup>220</sup> Julian Saldanha, *Inculturation*, p. 50. The introduction of the twelve points into the Indian Catholic Liturgy not only found wide acceptance, but also strong criticism. The points of adaptations were accepted more easily by the Catholic faithful living in villages, than those living in urban areas. See: S. Joseph Lionel, *Vatican II and Liturgical Renewal: Historical and Theological Study of the Conciliar Constitution on Liturgy and its Implementation*, Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2013, pp. 115–118; Julian Saldanha, *Inculturation*, pp. 51–52.

<sup>221</sup> J.A.G. Gerwin van Leeuwen, *Fully Indian – Authentically Christian*, p. 70.

<sup>222</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*

<sup>223</sup> D. S. Amalorapavadass (Ed.), *Statement on Non-Biblical Scriptures*, Bangalore: NBCLC, 1976, p. 37.

<sup>224</sup> Julian Saldanha, *Inculturation*, p. 53.

<sup>225</sup> J.A.G. Gerwin van Leeuwen, *Fully Indian – Authentically Christian*, p. 79.: It was the letter from Cardinal Knox, the prefect of the Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship in which he asked “to put an end to certain liturgical practices connected with indigenisation.” For a detailed history of the Indian Anaphora see: Jesudhasan Michael, *Liturgical Renewal in India*, pp. 38–50.

On the local level, too, there had been lot of experiments in the liturgical field with the aim to Indianize the liturgy. Over the years 'the three Indian Churches (Latin Church, Syro-Malabar, Syro-Malankar) have been making attempts and planning toward inculturation: They took up the risk by "taking up the task of inculturation and renewal of their respective liturgies safeguarding their ecclesial identity and specific tradition" and at the same time "by working for authentic Indian ways of worship, with a variety of forms and expressions which can manifest fully the richness of the mystery of Christ within the one ecclesial confession and celebration of faith."<sup>226</sup> The role of NBCLC over the years in the work of inculturation can hardly be overlooked. The efforts taken through the NBCLC contributed largely to the liturgical renewal of the Indian Catholic Church which was liturgically asleep until then.<sup>227</sup> The mission of inculturation initiated after Vatican II through the initiatives and under the guidance of its founding director Fr. D.S. Amalorapavadass<sup>228</sup> has been continued in various ways even to date through the organization of different seminars and workshops on the theme of inculturation and is bearing fruit. The NBCLC which stays under the patronage of CBCI is "an indication of the desire for inculturation of the Church."<sup>229</sup>

By way of evaluation, it must be noted that the efforts made by NBCLC towards liturgical inculturation were aimed at creating an atmosphere of worship by using postures, gestures and other objects and symbols which were typical of Indian religious tradition.<sup>230</sup> This means that the inculturation that took place was only peripheral, superficial or external. These Indian elements used in the liturgy were mostly from *Brahminical* culture (the higher class in the caste system) and as a result, were rejected by the lower sections of society.<sup>231</sup> The lower sections of society felt neglected. At the same time, some elements taken from the Indian religious tradition seemed just like a colouring and decoration on the Indian liturgy and did not seem to appeal to the people.<sup>232</sup> Most importantly, the initiatives for liturgical inculturation failed to take into consideration the community in which the liturgy was being celebrated. Liturgical inculturation failed to relate

<sup>226</sup> Jose Matthew Kakkallil, "Liturgical Inculturation in India", Liturgy and Inculturation-Introduction, Jozef Lamberts (Ed.), Leuven: Peeters, 1996, p. 114.

<sup>227</sup> Cf. J.A.G. Gerwin van Leeuwen, Fully Indian – Authentically Christian, p. 95.

<sup>228</sup> D. S. Amalorapavadass can be seen as the mastermind behind the liturgical inculturation in India after Vatican II. For more details on D.S. Amalorapavadass and his efforts towards inculturation in Liturgy refer the book: J.A.G. Gerwin van Leeuwen, Fully Indian-Authentically Christian.

<sup>229</sup> Cyril J. Kuttiyanikkal, Khrist Bhakta Movement, p. 87.

<sup>230</sup> Cf. D. S. Amalorapavadass, Gospel and Culture, Bangalore: NBCLC, 1978, p. 81.

<sup>231</sup> Cf. Cyril J. Kuttiyanikkal, Khrist Bhakta Movement, p. 88.

<sup>232</sup> Cf. Michael Amaladoss, Beyond Inculturation- Can the Many be One? Delhi: Vidyajyoti Education & Welfare Society/ ISPCK, 1998, p. 94.

to the concerns of the grass-root community of the Church in India.<sup>233</sup> Inculturation “should begin “from the people and the way they celebrate their life.”<sup>234</sup> But the process of inculturation neglected the local community, which is an essential medium of inculturation, and failed to realise that “inculturation must be closely bound with involvement in the lives of the people.”<sup>235</sup> It failed to realise that “A Church that stands with sisters and brothers of other faiths in confronting the issue of life and death will necessarily be transformed in the process. In other words, it will become inculturated at a level which includes but goes deeper than changes in ritual and symbol.”<sup>236</sup> Inculturation in India was rather a result of academic endeavours and not of the outcome of faith of the local community.<sup>237</sup> The plan of action for liturgical inculturation was prepared chiefly by a group of experts and consultants, whereas the common people or the local community with its practical suggestions were neglected. Speaking about the liturgical reform – the inculturation in India after Vatican II – Jacques Dupuis observes: “Rather than emerge from the masses and speak to them, the reform emerged from the academy and spoke to the elite.”<sup>238</sup> In the opinion of Julian Saldanha, the local Christian communities “which are also open to small human communities . . . ” are “an ideal starting point for inculturation.”<sup>239</sup> By way of conclusion to this topic on liturgical inculturation, I would like to quote Jose Mathew Kakkallil who beautifully and aptly explains the need and significance of liturgical inculturation in India:

India has been seeking a God who is mysterious and fascinating. Hence, a sense of awe and a sense of mystery are the characteristic features of her worship and sacramental systems through rites and symbols. The spirit of liturgy includes the elements of the sense of the sacred, reverence, adoration and the glory of God. Liturgy, the focus of a living faith-building and faith-strengthening encounter with God, is essentially an experience of people. Such a liturgy, when it is contextualised, will become a source of strength to build up a Christian community which shares the joy and sorrows of people today. In other words, such a liturgy is able to give a unique expression to Christian faith that encompasses all dimensions of human existence.<sup>240</sup>

<sup>233</sup> Paul M. Collins, *Culture, Worship and Power*, pp. 64–65.

<sup>234</sup> Jose Matthew Kakkallil, *Liturgical Inculturation in India*, p. 116.

<sup>235</sup> Julian Saldanha, *Vatican II and the Principle of Inculturation*, p. 209.

<sup>236</sup> Saturnino Dias, “The Story of Jesus in Asia: A Celebration of Faith and Life”, [http://www.fabc.org/asian\\_mission\\_congress/amcPurpose.html](http://www.fabc.org/asian_mission_congress/amcPurpose.html), 25.10.2017.

<sup>237</sup> Cf. Cyril J. Kuttianikkal, *Khrist Bhakta Movement*, p. 89.

<sup>238</sup> Jacques Dupuis, “Inculturation and Inter-Religious Dialogue in India today”, *A Universal Faith? People, Cultures, Religions and their Christ*, Essays in honour of Prof. Dr. Frank De Graeve, Catherine Cornille & Valeer Neckbrouck (Eds.), Louvain: Peeters Press p. 31.

<sup>239</sup> Julian Saldanha, *Vatican II and the Principle of Inculturation*, p. 209.

<sup>240</sup> Jose Matthew Kakkallil, *Liturgical Inculturation in India*, p. 116.

### 2.2.2 Inculturation in Spirituality

Indian Spirituality has always impressed and attracted people of different faiths. It presents itself as a search or quest for truth – the ultimate and absolute truth. This search for truth “culminates in the attainment of a supreme state of spiritual freedom which is the highest essence of Indian spirituality”<sup>241</sup>. The tremendous influence that Indian spirituality has over Indian cultures is clearly seen in the daily lives of Indians and is “a common nexus to all the religions of Indian origin and through mysticism, it has been significantly assimilated in other religions which flourish on Indian soil.”<sup>242</sup> The Catholic Church in India needs to respect and appreciate the tremendous spiritual heritage that the Hindu religion and the religions of Indian origin possess, and assimilate the common meeting points of spirituality in its own Christian spirituality. This is possible only through “serious and sincere encounter with Indian spiritual traditions.”<sup>243</sup>

#### 2.2.2.1 Christian Ashrams as places of Spiritual Inculturation

*Ashrams* existed in ancient India as the spiritual powerhouses. Indian religious scriptures (Hindu scriptures) speak of the human quest for ultimate realisation. This required a practice of detachment from self and the world and attachment to God, through prayer, meditation, austerity, etc. *Ashrams* were seen as the places of quietness and simplicity which helped the seekers of highest truth to attain their ultimate goal.<sup>244</sup> Along with liturgical inculturation, there was also a desire for inculturation in spirituality in the Indian Church after Vatican II.<sup>245</sup> This desire was prompted by the feeling that “India is a spiritual nation and only a spiritual inculturation can win the heart of India.”<sup>246</sup> Ashramic inculturation was seen as an apt way for spiritual inculturation. The idea of inculturation through *ashrams* was introduced in the Indian Church by Robert De Nobili (1577–1656) and Brahmabandav Upadhyaya (1861–1907), and were continued through Fr. Jules Monchanin, Dom Henri Le Saux (Swamy Abhishiktananda), Dom Bede

<sup>241</sup> M. M. Agarwal, *Spirituality and Indian Culture*, New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 2005, p. 44. Jesus too says in the Gospel according to St. John: “... you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8, 32).

<sup>242</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>243</sup> K. R. Sundararajan & Bithika Mukerje (Eds.) *Hindu Spirituality, Post-classical and Modern*, Vol. II, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas Publ., 2003, p. xxxv.

<sup>244</sup> For the history of Ashrams in Indian tradition see: Paul Pattathu, *Ashram Spirituality: A Search into the Christian Ashram Movement against its Hindu Background*, Indore: Satprakashan, 1997, pp. 19–161.

<sup>245</sup> The idea of ashramic inculturation in the Indian Church existed already

<sup>246</sup> Cyril J. Kuttianikkal, *Khrist Bhakta Movement*, p. 89.

Griffiths (Swamy Dayananda) and Francis Mahieu.<sup>247</sup> It was after Vatican II that the Catholic Ashram Movement gained greater momentum in India. The All India Seminar in 1969 stressed “the indispensability of Ashram spirituality for any meaningful renewal in the Church and encouraged Christians to adopt this way of life.”<sup>248</sup> In its declaration, the seminar said: “In India today we should also encourage the monastic vocation and the setting up of *ashrams* both in rural and urban areas.”<sup>249</sup> The many documents which followed here after, stressed the need for the Catholic Church to enter into the religious traditions of India and noted the importance of *ashrams* in the life of the Church in its search for its true identity in India.<sup>250</sup> The definition of Christian *ashram* emerged during the All-India Consultation on *Ashrams* organized in NBCLC-Bangalore from 7–11 June, 1978:

An Ashram may be called a place of intense and sustained spiritual quest, centred round a Guru, man or woman (usually one-sometimes more such persons) recognized by others as a person of deep spiritual experience. In an ashram primacy is given to this relentless quest through *sadhanas* or specially Indian spiritual practices. It is a place, where above all, people can experience God, and live in an ever-deepening awareness of His Presence. This is fostered by renunciation and detachment and an atmosphere of silence, peace and joy.<sup>251</sup>

#### A. Christian *Ashrams* as Centres of Indian Christian Spirituality

There are many elements which are common to both Indian and Christian spirituality. Inculturation in spirituality can be achieved in *ashrams* by combining everything spiritual both Christian and Indian.<sup>252</sup> The search for the ultimate truth

<sup>247</sup> For detailed information on the history of Christian *Ashrams* see: Paul Pattathu, *Ashram Spirituality*, pp. 164–272; Joseph Prasad Pinto, *Inculturation through Basic Communities*, pp. 123–126; Paul Collins, *Christian Inculturation in India, USA & England*: Ashgate, 2007, pp. 77–89. Swamy Samarkone, “Ashram Life: An inculturated way of Christian living in India”, *Renewed Efforts at Inculturation for an Indian Church. Papers Presented at the Twenty-Fourth Annual Meeting of Indian Theological Association April 24–28, 2001*, St. Pius College, Goregaon, Mumbai, Erasto Fernandez & Joji Kunduru (Eds.), Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2002, pp. 108–121.

<sup>248</sup> Swamy Samarkone, *Ashram Life: An inculturated way of Christian living in India*, p. 122.

<sup>249</sup> All India Seminar, p. 243.

<sup>250</sup> The theme of ashrams was discussed in different meetings and conferences: Nagpur Theological Conference (1971); The Patna Consultation (1973); All-India Consultation on Ashram Movement (1978). See: Mariasusai Dhavamony (Ed.), *Evangelization, Dialogue and Development-Selected Papers of the International Theological Conference, Nagpur (India) 1971*, Roma: Universita Gregoriana Editrice, 1972, pp. 1–20; “Statement of All India Consultation on Ashrams”, *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflections*, Vol. 42, 1978, pp. 383–385.

<sup>251</sup> “What is an Indian Christian Ashram? Statement of the All-India Consultation on Ashrams 7<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> June, 1978”, *Word and Worship*, 7 (1978), p. 274, cited in: Paul Pattathu, *Ashram Spirituality*, p. 271.

<sup>252</sup> D.S. Amalorapavadass (Ed.), *Indian Christian Spirituality*, Bangalore: NBCLC, 1982, p. 39.

is common to both religions. *Ashrams* become a place where the persons in search of ultimate truth begin their search. Through the practice of daily meditation (*dhyana*), simplicity of life and non-possession (*aparigraha*), which are common to both Christian and Indian traditions, *ashrams* help the seekers of ultimate truth to remain focussed and on the path toward their goal.

A guru is the centre of an *ashram*, around whom the disciples gather themselves. In both Hinduism and Christianity, a guru is: A God-experienced man; he communicates his experience to others; and his God-experience helps him to live in truth and to teach others and show them the way of truth.<sup>253</sup> For a Christian *ashram*, Jesus Christ is *Sadguru*.<sup>254</sup> A guru is not only the central authority in an *ashram*, but also spiritual master. The relation between *Guru* and *Shishya* (Master and disciple), which is known both to Christian and Hindu spirituality, is lived out and practiced in Indian Christian *ashrams*. The worship in Christian *ashrams* combines the spiritual elements of Indian traditions with those of Christianity and makes it a truly Indian Christian worship.

#### B. Christian Ashrams as Centres of Interreligious Dialogue

The spirituality practiced in the Christian *ashrams* helps the people to recognize other religions, too, as nothing but the manifestations of the one and the same God and respect and appreciate them. This acceptance and appreciation of other religions leads to dialogue with these religious traditions, without any distinctions between them. Dialogue helps in removing all misunderstandings, and they live in harmony with each other.

##### 2.2.2.2 A Critical Evaluation of the role of Ashrams in Inculturation in India

By way of positive evaluation, one can say that Christian *ashrams* have contributed a lot toward the process of inculturation in the Indian Catholic Church.

Firstly, *ashrams* helped the Church to identify itself as Indian and not western. *Ashrams* tried to give Christians in India a new identity as the sons and daughters of India.<sup>255</sup> *Ashrams* have helped the Church to overcome the stigma as Western Church and have presented the Christian religion as understandable to Indians. Secondly, *Ashrams* have contributed immensely in the area of liturgical inculturation. *Ashrams* have introduced the inclusion of Indian *mantras*, *bhajans*, gestures and postures, traditional Indian symbols into the Christian worship and made it Indian Christian worship. In addition, Christian *ashrams* have successfully made their own the mystical dimension of Indian Spiritual tradition by including the

<sup>253</sup> Paul Pattathu, *Ashram Spirituality*, pp. 304–305.

<sup>254</sup> Cf. Catherine Cornille, *The Guru in Indian Catholicism: Ambiguity or Opportunity of Inculturation?* Louvain: Peeters Press, 1991, p. 157.

<sup>255</sup> Cf. Paul Pattathu, *Ashram Spirituality*, p. 338.



*dhyana* (meditation) and *Sadhana* (Indian methods of prayer) and *Yoga* in their spiritual activities.<sup>256</sup> Thirdly, Christian *ashrams* are very simple in their life-style and structures and open to everyone. The simplicity and hospitality of the *ashrams* have helped present an image of a Church which is simple, humble, welcoming and service-minded and not a Church which is authoritarian, powerful and rich. Fourthly, Christian *ashrams* have also helped initiate and improve the interreligious relations in India. By organizing interreligious gatherings and prayer meetings and by creating an all religion-friendly atmosphere and environment, *ashrams* have attracted the longing for dialogue on the part of other religions.

At the same time, the Christian *ashram* movement has over the years also faced criticism from both Christians and Hindus.

Firstly, many *Dalit* and tribal Christians are not impressed by the ashramic inculturation, because, the very word *ashram* in its Sanskrit root refers to four stages of life, which are a product of 'Brahminical hermeneutics'. Hence, adopting the life of a *sanyasi* and practicing the *ashram* way of life is to endorse the values of Brahminical Hinduism and the caste system.<sup>257</sup> Many Christians criticise the *ashram* movement as a compromise of Christian spirituality and faith, saying that "it undermines the distinctiveness of Christian revelation and underplays the significance of Christ, by its contemplative stress on the inward movement of the individual soul to experience the immanent God."<sup>258</sup> Aloysius Pieris sees in *ashramic* inculturation the danger of "theological vandalism", in which religious elements from non-Christian religions (mainly Hinduism) are used in Christian prayers and worship without having any reverence and respect for the wholeness of the religious experience of these religions.<sup>259</sup> Such practice made the process of inculturation only meaningless and futile. Further, some feel that the *ashram* movement gives importance to the contemplative aspect of life but neglects the active dimension, namely, the service aspect. In the opinion of George Soares-Prabhu, *ashrams* are an ineffective means for inculturation because they are imitative and apologetic, and the theology and spirituality developed and practiced in *ashrams* relates to Brahminic spirituality and not to the situation of the poor.<sup>260</sup>

Some of the Hindu thinkers, too, criticise the Christian *ashram* movement as an unnecessary imitation of Hindu *ashrams*. They feel that the *ashram* movement is another way of continuing the work of conversion of the Hindu masses. For

<sup>256</sup> Cf. Cyril J. Kuttyanikkal, *Khrist Bhakta Movement*, p. 100.

<sup>257</sup> Paul Collins, *Culture, Worship and Power*, p. 77.

<sup>258</sup> Judith M. Brown, "Ashram", *The SCM Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, Gordon S. Wakefield (Ed.), London: SCM Press, 1983, p. 29.

<sup>259</sup> Cf. Aloysius Pieris, *Asian Theology of Liberation*, London: T & T Clarke, 2006, pp. 41–42.

<sup>260</sup> George Soares-Prabhu, "From alienation to inculturation: Some Reflections on Doing Theology in India Today", *Biblical Themes for a Contextual Theology Today*, Isaac Padinjarekuttu (Ed.), Pune: Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth Theology Series, 1999, pp. 100–102.

example, Sitaram Goel, a Hindu writer, criticises Christian *ashrams*, saying: “At their best the Christian ashrams can produce only hypocrites, at their worst only scheming scoundrels.”<sup>261</sup> Regarding the use of Indian (Hindu) spiritual methods in Christian *ashrams* in order to combine them with Christian spirituality, he says: “It is useless to tell the missionaries that Hindu *sâdhanâ* has nothing to do with buying a piece of land, building some stylized houses on it, exhibiting pretentious signboards, putting on a particular type of dress, and performing certain rituals in a particular way. Hindu *sâdhanâ* has been and remains a far deeper and difficult undertaking. It means being busy with one’s own self rather than with saving others. It means clearing the dirt and dross within one’s own self rather than calling on others to swear by a totem trotted out as the only saviour. It has no place for abominable superstitions like the atoning death of a so-called Christ. Above all, it is not consistent with double-talk-harboursing one motive in the heart and mouthing another. A counterfeit must remain a counterfeit, howsoever loudly and lavishly advertised. It is a sacrilege that those who are out to cheat and deceive should use the word “*sadhana*” for their evil exercise.”<sup>262</sup>

Notwithstanding all the criticism that the Christian *ashram* movement faces, it is still right to claim that Christian *ashram* movement is still relevant in India and can continue to contribute greatly to the process of inculturation. The contribution of Christian *ashrams* so far to the inculturation cannot just be overlooked because of the criticism which it has received. One cannot neglect the fact that “it is in the Catholic ashrams that the pioneering efforts toward inculturation on all levels have taken place.”<sup>263</sup> Christian *ashrams* can even today become the true mediums of inculturation by being the promoters, not only of the contemplative dimension, but also of the active dimension of life. They cannot only be engrossed in the contemplation of the divine, but also get involved in the life and struggles of society. It is the contemplative dimension from which *ashrams* will take their inspiration and strength for social reforms and transformation. As Michael Amaladoss suggests, Catholic *ashrams* in India can contribute to the promotion of social justice in India in three ways, or the role of the Catholic *ashrams* in the Indian society can be threefold, namely, inspiring or exemplary, formational and promoting<sup>264</sup>: Firstly, *ashrams* can “build up and be a model of the community that every movement

<sup>261</sup> Sitaram Goel, “Catholic Ashrams: Sanyasins or Swindlers?”, <http://voiceofdharm.org/books/ca/index.htm>, 30.10.2017.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid. With all the respect to this Hindu author, I would still object to the statement that he makes. Although there must have been some grain of truth in what he says (considering the past history of Christian missions in India), most of what he says seems to be the result of the prejudiced attitude he has toward the Catholic Church.

<sup>263</sup> Catherine Cornille, *The Guru in Indian Catholicism: Ambiguity or Opportunity of Inculturation?* p. 146.

<sup>264</sup> Cf. Ibid., p. 184.

for social justice wants to create through its struggle.”<sup>265</sup> Catholic *ashrams* are to become communities which are marked with freedom, equality, sharing and worship, communities which are open to all people irrespective of their colour, sex, religion or age. In this way, the *ashrams* will become a contra-sign to the oppressive discriminating structures of the Indian society. Secondly, *ashrams* need to “be a place of training where people who wish to engage in service can be trained in ideals, motivation and method.”<sup>266</sup> *Ashrams* can awaken people to social consciousness and create in them the need to participate in the social struggle and transformation.<sup>267</sup> Thirdly, Catholic *ashrams* today can lead from the front and “play a leadership role in the promotion of social justice in the community (without being opposed to the first two ways).”<sup>268</sup> This can take place in many and varied ways like “development conscientisation, symbolic affirmation, education, formation, communication, research, organization etc.”<sup>269</sup>

### 2.2.3 Theological Inculturation

Since the beginning of the Church in India, there were efforts to develop an Indian theology.<sup>270</sup> However, for the initiation of the theological inculturation in India, one looks back to Robert De Nobili who tried to bring a confrontation a meeting between Hinduism and Christianity and their cultures, traditions, spirituality and philosophy. Robert De Nobili “followed a policy of socio-cultural adaptation, acknowledged that there are valuable elements in Hindu sacred writings, tried to establish a Brahmin seminary and desired to have a Sanskrit liturgy.”<sup>271</sup> According to Michael Amaladoss, there were three types of interactions between Hinduism and Christianity which led to theological inculturation<sup>272</sup> prior to Vatican II in India: Firstly, the Hindu reformers “sought to integrate the moral teaching of Jesus in their own Hindu context”, secondly, some Christian missionaries attempted to portray Christianity as the “the fulfilment” of Indian religious and philosophical tradition, and thirdly, some Indian Christians “sought to understand their Chris-

<sup>265</sup> Michael Amaladoss, “Ashrams and Social Justice”, The Indian Church in the Struggle for a New Society, D.S. Amalorapavadass (Ed.), Bangalore: NBCLC, 1981, p. 376.

<sup>266</sup> Ibid.

<sup>267</sup> Cf. Catherine Cornille, The Guru in Indian Catholicism: Ambiguity or Opportunity of Inculturation? p. 187.

<sup>268</sup> Michael Amaladoss, Ashrams and Social Justice, p. 376.

<sup>269</sup> Ibid., p. 377.

<sup>270</sup> Cf. Antony Mookenthottam, Towards a Theology in Indian Context, Bangalore: ATC, 1980, p. 11.

<sup>271</sup> Ibid.

<sup>272</sup> For Indian Contributions to Christian theology see: Sunand Sumithra, Christian Theologies from an Indian Perspective, Bangalore: Theological Book Trust, 1995.

tian faith in the Hindu cultural context.”<sup>273</sup> Among those who attempted to bring an inculturation in Christian theology in India, Brahmandhab Upadhaya may be considered as the first Catholic Indian theologian.<sup>274</sup> Later attempts were made by theologians like Pierre Johanns (1882–1955), Jules Monchanin, Swamy Abhishiktananda, Raymond Panikkar, D. S. Amalroapavadass, Ishanand Vempeny, and J. B. Chethimattam, all who tried to highlight the similarities in the Hindu and Christian faiths.<sup>275</sup> There are many other Indian theologians and western theologians working in India who have tried to make a significant contribution in the field of Indology and Indian Christian theology. Theologians like George Soares-Prabhu, Michael Amaladoss, Felix Wilfred, Samuel Rayan and Sebastian Kappen were concerned with the social dimension and significance of the Christian theology in Indian context. They have tried to develop a theological reflection which takes into consideration the local historical situation and brings faith into a face to face confrontation with the culture and the life-situation of Indian society.

Just like the Catholic theologians, many Protestant theologians, too, have played a significant role in the development of the Indian Christian theology. It was the contribution of Sadhu Sundar Singh, A. J. Appasamy, Vengal Chakkarai, P. Chenchiah, Paul Devanandan, etc., that helped the development of Indian Christian theology. Both the Catholic and Protestant theologians “bear witness to the growth of an Indian theology and the significant efforts Indian theologians are making to meet the challenge of our times in the light of the word of God.”<sup>276</sup>

### 2.2.3.1 *Dalit Theology of Liberation*

*Dalit* theology<sup>277</sup> is a fruit of new liberation-theological thinking developed by Asian and, in particular, Indian theologians. In the opinion of Felix Wilfred, it is “the greatest achievement of Indian theology” and “has made a significant impact in the way theology is to be pursued in India.”<sup>278</sup> *Dalit* theology was influenced

<sup>273</sup> Michael Amaladoss, *Beyond Inculturation*, p. 4.

<sup>274</sup> Cf. Antony Mookenthottam, *Towards a Theology in Indian Context*, p. 12.

<sup>275</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 11–12.

<sup>276</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>277</sup> The reflection I have presented on *Dalit* theology is mostly of the non-Catholic Christians. For example, Arvind P. Nirmal was a member of the Church of North India (CNI). Similarly, James Massey, another important figure in the reflection on *Dalit* theology, too, was a member of the Church of North India. However, there were also attempts on the part of the Catholic theologians, too, to contribute to the development of *Dalit* theology in India. Most important among them are Sebastian Kappen: Sebastian, Felix Wilfred and Samuel Rayan. See: Felix Wilfred, *Leave the Temple: Indian Paths to Human Liberation*, Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock Publ., 2009; Paul Puthanangady (Ed.), *Towards an Indian Theology of Liberation: The Statement Papers and Proceedings of the Ninth Annual Meeting of the Indian Theological Association*, Madras, December, 28<sup>th</sup>–30<sup>th</sup> 1985, Bangalore: ITA & NBCLC, 1986.

<sup>278</sup> Felix Wilfred, *Margins: Sight of Asian Theologies*, Delhi: ISPCK, 2008, p. 60.

largely by Latin American Liberation theology and African black theology, and was seen as a “counter theology movement”.<sup>279</sup> Just as these theologies developed out of the pain, struggle and oppression of the common people, *Dalit* theology is an outcome of the *Dalits* suffering under the unjust oppressive caste system in India.<sup>280</sup> The existing traditional theology was mainly Western in heart and was formulated by the elites in order to serve the interests of the elites and the faith of the *Dalits* was thereby marginalized. Thomas Kadankavil says: “In India theology has been for too long the preserve of the elite, an academic activity and an intellectual activity the elite did for the elite with little or no direct contact with realities experienced by people.”<sup>281</sup> It was a theology from above and failed to give an apt expression to the faith-experience of the majority of Christians in India. Consequently, “the theological thinking in India has been alienated from the reality of the masses, especially, from the Christian community, the majority of whom are dalits and tribals”.<sup>282</sup> Hence, “Both the European missionary movement and the traditional Indian ‘Christian Theology of the 20th Century were rejected as metaphysical speculations having nothing to do directly with the history and existence of the marginalized majority within the Indian Church’”.<sup>283</sup> A need was felt for a theology which sprang forth from and was rooted in the life-experience of the majority of Christians, in the context of emerging *Dalit* aspiration for liberation. The main proponent of *Dalit* theology is Arvind Nirmal (1936–1995), a member of the Church of North India, who was himself a Christian *Dalit*.<sup>284</sup> *Dalit* theology is thus, “a theology by the Dalits for the Dalits”.<sup>285</sup> Nirmal develops *Dalit* theology as a counter-theology to the existing theological trend. He says: “Broadly speaking, Indian Christian theology in the past has tried to work out its theological systems in terms of either Advaita Vedanta or Vishishta Advaita. Most of the

<sup>279</sup> George Arby, “Liberation in Modern Theological Trends”, *Marginalization and Liberation: Theoretical and Contextual Studies*, Kleetus K. Varghese (Ed.), Bangalore: ATC, 2008, p. 91.

<sup>280</sup> James Massey calls the Latin American ‘Liberation Theology’, South African ‘Black Theology’, Korean born ‘Minjung Theology’ and Filipino born ‘a theology of struggle’ as sisters (in some cases senior sisters) of *Dalit* theology. Cf. James Massey, *Roots of Dalit History, Christianity, Theology and Spirituality*, Delhi: ISPCK, 1996, P. 76.

<sup>281</sup> Thomas Kadankavil, “Salvation from the Dalit Perspective: Earthly or Eschatological”, <http://www.dharmaramjournals.in/ArticleFiles/SalvationfromtheDalitPerspectiveEarthlyEschatological-ThomasKadankavil-April-June-1997.pdf>, 22.09.2017.

<sup>282</sup> K. P. Kuruvila, “Dalit Theology: An Indian Christian Attempt to give Voice to the Voiceless”, <http://jacthanni.blogspot.ch/2008/03/dalit-theology-indian-christian-attempt.html>, 21.09.2017.

<sup>283</sup> George Oomen, “The Emerging Dalit Theology: A Historical Appraisal”, <http://www.religion-online.org/article/the-emerging-dalit-theology-a-historical-appraisal/>, 20.09.2017.

<sup>284</sup> Arvind Nirmal can be called as father of *Dalit* theology. There were also other *Dalit* theologians like M. E. Prabhakar, Bishop M. Azaria, K. Wilson, D. Devasahayam and James Massey who made efforts to develop the *Dalit* theology.

<sup>285</sup> Hans Schwarz, *Theology in a Global Context- The Last Two Hundred Years*, Grand Rapids & Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005, p. 529.

contributions to Indian Christian theology in the past came from caste converts to Christianity. The result has been that Indian Christian theology has perpetuated within itself what I prefer to call the 'Brahminic' tradition. This tradition has further perpetuated intuition-interiority oriented approach to the theological task in India. One wonders whether this kind of Indian Christian theology will ever have a mass appeal."<sup>286</sup> *Dalit* Theology as a counter-theology is thus a critical reflection on the God-experience in the light of the *Dalit* situation.

*Dalit* theology has as its starting point the experience of pain and suffering of the *Dalits*.<sup>287</sup> There are three elements which play an important role in *Dalit* theology, namely, "the aspiration of Dalits for fuller liberation, the recognition that God is on the side of the Dalits and the conviction that Christ is the model for the struggle, a struggle which continues today through the Holy Spirit."<sup>288</sup> *Dalit* theology deals with "caste discrimination, deprivation and dehumanization that the dalits or the untouchables of the country are subjected to and the historical determination to free themselves from every form of suppression and subjugation."<sup>289</sup> *Dalit* experience is marked by suffering or pathos and oppression. Arvind Nirmal says, "It is in and through this pain-pathos the sufferer knows God. This is because the sufferer in and through his/ her pain-pathos knows that God participates in human pain."<sup>290</sup> It is the *Dalit* life and situation which is the starting point of *Dalit* theology. When *Dalit* experience becomes the starting point of *Dalit* theology, a way will be paved for the critique of caste system and for the intensified process of *Dalit* emancipation.<sup>291</sup> *Dalits* are here the subjects of *Dalit* theology and not the objects. The goal of *Dalit* theology is the total liberation of the *Dalits*, without which *Dalit* theology will not make any sense at all. In his book '*Dalit* Christians of Andhra', Rajpramukh formulates the goal or concern of the *Dalit* theology as "not mainly what would happen to the soul after the death, but what happens to the human beings to have their human dignity and honour as anybody else."<sup>292</sup> In other words, it is "the liberation of Dalits and their empowerment, i.e.

<sup>286</sup> Arvind P. Nirmal, *Towards a Christian Dalit Theology*.

<sup>287</sup> The traditional Indian Christian theology failed to give expression to the *Dalit* experience and address their situation. *Dalit* theology developed as an answer to it and took into consideration the *Dalit* situation.

<sup>288</sup> David Haslam, *Caste Out*, p. 138.

<sup>289</sup> P. Suryaprakash, "Christianity in India: A Promised Land for Dalits?", <http://www.ev-akademi-e-boll.de/fileadmin/res/otg/doku/641010-Prakash.pdf>, 08.09.2017.

<sup>290</sup> Arvind Nirmal cited in: K. P. Kuruvila, *Dalit Theology: An Indian Christian Attempt to give Voice to the Voiceless*.

<sup>291</sup> Cf. Jangkhoham Haokip, *Can God save my Village? Theological Study and Identity among the Tribal People of North-East India with a Special Reference to the Kukis of Manipur*, UK: Langham Monographs, 2014, p. 257.

<sup>292</sup> K. P. Rajpramukh, *Dalit Christians of Andhra: Under the Impact of Missionaries*, New Delhi: Serials Publications, 2008, p. 74.

strengthening Dalits, providing comfort to them, the good news that God is with them in their struggle, that they are God's children and that they have their own God-given identity and that they are people with worth and dignity."<sup>293</sup>

The Bible provides a strong basis for doing *Dalit* theology. Nirmal takes the creed in Deuteronomy 26, 5–12 as the starting point of theology: "A wandering Aramean was my father . . ." in order to describe the identity and life of the *Dalits* as 'no people' who became 'God's people'.<sup>294</sup> The goal of *Dalit* theology is thus restoration of the human dignity to the *Dalits*. *Dalit* theology speaks of Christian God as a *Dalit* God.<sup>295</sup> The Christian God, who reveals Himself through the Prophets and through His Son Jesus, is a *Dalit* God on the side of *Dalits*.<sup>296</sup> He is a God of *Dalits*. The Christian God who has always been on the side of *Dalits* is the paradigm for doing *Dalit* theology.<sup>297</sup> "It not only helps them to come to terms with their historical consciousness, which is submerged in pathos and protest, but also to comprehend a God who in Jesus restores 'humanness' to Dalits."<sup>298</sup> The Christian God is a servant God. He is a God who serves. This God identifies Himself with the *Dalits* who are the servants of the society. The idea of the suffering servant God in Isaiah is central to the understanding of a *Dalit* or servant God in the Bible. "He (Christian God) is a servant God – a God who serves. Service has always been the privilege of dalit communities in India . . . .Against this background the amazing claim of a Christian Dalit Theology will be that the God of dalits, the self-existent, the *swayambhu*, does not create others to do service work, but does servile work himself. Servitude is innate in the God of dalits . . ." <sup>299</sup> This means that God is present in the *Dalits*. God is so much one with the *Dalits* that encountering God and embracing *Dalits* becomes synonymous: "To speak of a Servant God, therefore, is to recognise and identify Him as a truly dalit deity."<sup>300</sup> Service and love of the *Dalits* becomes ultimately the service of God who resides in them. A. Arula Raja puts it in the following way: "The 'polluted' Dalits have

<sup>293</sup> Balasundaram "Dalit struggle and its Implications for Theological Education", cited in Peniel Rajkumar, *Dalit Theology and Dalit Liberation, Problems, Paradigms and Possibilities*, London & New York: Routledge, 2016, p. 41.

<sup>294</sup> Michael Amaladoss, *Life in Freedom: Liberation Theologies from Asia*, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1997, p. 28.

<sup>295</sup> Arvind Nirmal has developed the idea that Christian God is a *dalit* God. Cf. James Massey, *Indigenous People: Dalits: Dalit Issues in Today's Theological Debate*, Delhi: ISPCK, 1994, pp. 223–230.

<sup>296</sup> Arvind Nirmal, *Towards a Dalit Theology*, p. 134.

<sup>297</sup> Cf. Jesudas M. Athyal, "The Changing Face of the Indian Society and the New Challenges for Dalit Theology", <http://jmathyal.tripod.com/id1.html>, 22.09.2017.

<sup>298</sup> George Oomen, *The Emerging Dalit Theology: A Historical Appraisal*.

<sup>299</sup> Arvind Nirmal, *Towards a Dalit Theology*, p. 135.

<sup>300</sup> Arvind Nirmal, "A Dialogue with Dalit Literature", *Towards a Dalit Theology*, M. E. Prabhakar (Ed.), Delhi: ISPCK, 1989, p. 81.

become the ‘sacred’ channels communicating God’s grace. These sacraments are to be celebrated if we are to be liberated by God’s salvific will.”<sup>301</sup>

The *Dalit* theologians see Jesus as a *Dalit*. The Jesus which Christian *Dalits* believe in is a *Dalit* Jesus – a God who does not believe in caste hierarchy and is Lord for everyone who is marginalized and oppressed – economically, politically, culturally – and has been broken by the system. Jesus shares in their brokenness and *Dalitness* because he too suffered rejection, mockery, contempt, torture and death. “In their common disfigurement lies the ‘pathos’ that binds God and human beings: the pathos of Jesus, the crushed/ broken Son of God, and the pathos of Dalits, the oppressed/ broken children of this same God, pave a pathway into the heart of the Divine.”<sup>302</sup> In his suffering and brokenness, he was saved and redeemed by God his Father who made him whole. God wants to save all the broken and the suffering children and make them whole through His son Jesus. The incarnation of Jesus as man is “the climax of God’s acting in solidarity with human beings, particularly with the oppressed.”<sup>303</sup> The *Dalitness* of Jesus was best seen on the cross where he was totally broken and crushed. His last cry from the cross “my God my God why have you forsaken me (Mt. 27, 46–47)”, is one of the most authentic expression of *Dalit* experience of God-forsakenness. But the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, to new life, is also a symbol of hope for a bright future for the *Dalits*.<sup>304</sup> “God’s divinity and his humanity are both characterized by his *Dalitness*. He is one with the broken. He suffers when his people suffer. He weeps when his people weep. He laughs when his people laugh. He dies in his people’s death and raised again in his people’s resurrection.”<sup>305</sup> Jesus draws all the broken, rejected to God in order to be made whole. He gives them a hope for dignified and better life and future. To believe in the *Dalitness* of Jesus Christ is “to realise that the God of Jesus Christ will save them from inhumanity, social oppression, economic exploitation and cultural subjugation.”<sup>306</sup>

<sup>301</sup> A. Maria Arul Raja, “Christian Leadership and Dalit Issues and Concerns”, A Theology from Dalit Perspective, James Massey & S. Lurduswamy (Eds.), p. 61 cited in: Sathianathan Clarke, “Dalit Theology: An Introductory and Interpretive Theological Exposition”, Dalit Theology in the Twenty-first Century, Discordant Voices, Discerning Pathways, Sathianathan Clarke, Deenabandhu Manchala & Philip Vinod Peacock (Eds.), New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010, p. 30.

<sup>302</sup> Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>303</sup> James Massey, Downtrodden: The Struggle of India’s Dalits for Identity, Solidarity and Liberation, Geneva: WCC, 1997, p. 60.

<sup>304</sup> Cf. “Jesus, a Dalit among Dalits: Presenting Jesus to the Outcasts of India”, <http://www.dalitchristians.com/Html/Resources.htm>, 27.09.2017.

<sup>305</sup> K. P. Kuruvila, *Dalit Theology: An Indian Christian Attempt to give Voice to the Voiceless*.

<sup>306</sup> M. E. Prabhakar, “Christology in Dalit Perspective”, Frontiers of Dalit Theology, Devasahayam (Ed.), New Delhi: ISPCK/Gurukul, 1997, p. 409.



### 2.2.4 Contemporary Indian theology of Inculturation

The Catholic Church in India, despite tremendous efforts towards inculturation in different fields, has been subject to criticism that it failed to achieve the inculturation in its real sense. In the words of Selva Raj, inculturation in the Indian Catholic Church has so far been “institutional inculturation”, an initiative undertaken primarily and mostly by the so-called elites in the Church, namely, the Church hierarchy and a handful of experts, and not a “popular inculturation” which comes from the people – from below.<sup>307</sup> For the most part, the process of inculturation in Indian Catholic Church seems to be controlled by the Vatican by having a check even on the culturally conditioned varied faith expressions of people in India.<sup>308</sup> *Dalit* theology in India criticises the inculturation process as being heavily influenced by the higher culture (Brahminical culture).<sup>309</sup> Due to its focus on the elite culture in India and neglect of the lower cultures or other religious traditions, the process of inculturation in India has failed to appeal to the majority of Christians who come from tribal and *Dalit* backgrounds and has failed to be relevant to them.<sup>310</sup> “Sanskritic” and “Brahminical” brands of *swadeshi* initiated by upper-caste Christians, whether in theology or in liturgy, has hardly been intelligible to the tribal and *Dalits*.<sup>311</sup> Hence, there is a need felt to bring a revolutionary change in the process of inculturation in the Indian Catholic Church. A need is felt to undertake the process of inculturation which takes into consideration the concerns of the people and transforms the people in order to transform the society in the spirit of brotherhood and service. The most important champions of this view are Michael Amaladoss, Samuel Rayan and Felix Wilfred.

A. Michael Amaladoss<sup>312</sup>

In two of his books, Michael Amaladoss systematically presents his theological reflection on inculturation.<sup>313</sup> He begins by clarifying the terms acculturation,

<sup>307</sup> Cf. Selva Raj, “Two Models of Indigenization in South Asian Catholicism: A Critique”, *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection*, Vol 69, no. 6, June, 2005, pp. 415–430.

<sup>308</sup> Union of Catholic Asian News, “Vatican hampers liturgical inculturation, bishops say”, [http://www.natcath.org/NCR\\_Online/archives/111502/111502f.htm](http://www.natcath.org/NCR_Online/archives/111502/111502f.htm), 20.11.2017.

<sup>309</sup> Paul Collins, *Culture, Worship and Power*, p. 92.

<sup>310</sup> Cf. Amaladoss, *Beyond Inculturation*, pp. 10–11.

<sup>311</sup> Cf. Joseph Taramangalam, “Whose Swadeshi? Contending Nationalisms among Indian Christians”, *Asian Journal of Social Science*, Vol. 32, no. 2, 2004, p. 240.

<sup>312</sup> Michael Amaladoss is a Jesuit theologian born in Tamilnadu, India. He did his masters in liturgy and Ph.D. in sacramental theology at the *Institut Catholique* in Paris. His theological thought has made a tremendous contribution towards the development in the Indian theological reflection.

<sup>313</sup> The two books are: Michael Amaladoss, *Becoming Indian: The Process of Inculturation*, Rome: Centre for Indian and Inter-religious Studies & Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 1992 & Michael Amaladoss, *Beyond Inculturation: Can the Many be One?*, Delhi: Vidyajyoti Education and Welfare Society/ ISPCK, 1998.

adaptation and inculturation and highlights the difference between these terms.<sup>314</sup> Then he goes on to explain the process of inculturation. Just dressing up the liturgical rite in local symbols is not inculturation for him. Inculturation is much more than a mere dressing up in order to suit to a society. Inculturation is “not merely a new way of expressing, but a new way of being”, in which “the symbols and customs of a culture acquire a new significance”.<sup>315</sup> It is a process in which “Christianity discovers in itself new aspects that emerge from its encounter with new cultures and in the process undergoes true development.”<sup>316</sup> Such a process of inculturation penetrating all the aspects of faith and life of the people leads to the emergence of a local Church.<sup>317</sup> Inculturation is thus a mutual process in which both the Gospel and the cultures which it encounters undergo change and transformation. Inculturation is not a finished project, but an ongoing and continuous process – an ongoing dialogue between Gospel and cultures.<sup>318</sup> Through the process of inculturation, the relation between Gospel and culture becomes dialectical, while remaining at the same time incarnational in its interior. He emphasises that the process of inculturation should be natural, just as it was in the early Church. However, since this natural process, in his opinion, was blocked for some centuries, he sees it necessary “to undo the artificial structures in place and create an appropriate climate before the natural process can start functioning.”<sup>319</sup> He recognizes the difficult situation in which the Church in the present times finds itself, regarding the natural process of inculturation. Nonetheless, he considers this task as unavoidable because inculturation, according to him, is necessary, “not only for the life of the Christian community, but also for its ongoing mission.”<sup>320</sup> In his opinion, authentic inculturation is a process from below and in this sense, the basic question “what do we inculturate?” needs to be transformed and framed as “who inculturates?”<sup>321</sup> It is the local community who inculturates and is the agent of authentic inculturation, according to Amaladoss, “which in its context/culture responds to the Word of God proclaimed.”<sup>322</sup> However, inculturation, in his opinion, is not limited just to the building up of local communities; rather, the scope of inculturation extends itself beyond the local Church to building up the Kingdom of God. Inculturation, thus has a twofold dimension: “There is a cosmic level in

<sup>314</sup> Cf. Michael Amaladoss, *Becoming Indian: The Process of Inculturation*, pp. 3–5.

<sup>315</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>316</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>317</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 5, 8.

<sup>318</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 5, 12–13.

<sup>319</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>320</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>321</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>322</sup> Paul Collins, *Context, Culture and Worship: The Quest for ‘Indian-ness’*, Delhi: ISPCK, 2006, p. 147.

which the values of the Reign of God are finding progressive expression in the cultural, economic and socio-political structures of the world. There is also an ecclesial level in which the Church is being built up as a witness and servant of the mystery."<sup>323</sup> Inculturation as a dialogue between Gospel and cultures is impossible without interreligious dialogue. Interreligious dialogue, Amaladoss argues, "not only reveals the various ways of God's self-manifestation, but makes possible the emergence of this integrality through mutual influence and enrichment."<sup>324</sup>

In his later book, "Beyond Inculturation: Can the Many be one?" Amaladoss presents his revised and advanced understanding of inculturation. Amaladoss feels that "while all agree on the need of inculturation, there is little agreement about how it is done and what its implications are."<sup>325</sup> Amaladoss has a difficulty understanding inculturation based on the incarnation model as an embodiment of the Gospel in various cultures, because it gives a negative image of the Gospel as dominating and self-imposing.<sup>326</sup> On the contrary, what actually happens is inter-cultural and interreligious dialogue between the two different cultures and communities. The incarnation is a wrong paradigm in understanding the process of the Gospel-culture encounter.<sup>327</sup> Hence, Amaladoss feels the need to go beyond inculturation. He suggests two ways: The first way is that of dialogue between Gospel and cultures without any domination on the part of the Christian culture. Secondly, if the fruit of inculturation is to be the building-up of an authentic local Church that responds freely and creatively to the Gospel without experiencing any alienation from their own culture and context, which would result through the importing of an alien culture, and if the goal and mission of these local churches is the Kingdom of God and not the Church itself, then the local church needs to get involved in the wider world and its problems and engage in dialogue with other religions.<sup>328</sup> Amaladoss finds Christianising of cultures irrelevant and also impossible. On the contrary, the Gospel can challenge a culture and transform it without dominating or subjugating it.

Amaladoss proposes the Gospel-culture encounter to be encouraged for the transformation. This encounter between Gospel and cultures is to be seen in the wider context of the divine-human encounter. It is not the Gospel that encounters the cultures but God Himself who encounters the human person-in-community. Amaladoss speaks of three stages in the Gospel-culture encounter: In the first stage, the community frees the good news (foundational experience) from the

<sup>323</sup> Michael Amaladoss, *Becoming Indian: The Process of Inculturation*, pp. 15–16.

<sup>324</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>325</sup> Michael Amaladoss, *Beyond Inculturation*, p. xii.

<sup>326</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 15–16.

<sup>327</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>328</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

historically and culturally conditioned embodiment which accompanies it; in the second and crucial stage, the good news encounters and enters into the life situation of the community which reads and interprets contemporary life in the light of the good news and tries to discern the action of God in and through His Spirit today; the third stage leads to “creative re-making of the community” in which the people are changed, their worldviews and the value systems of their cultures are changed and the unjust economical and socio-political structures are transformed.<sup>329</sup> Thus, authentic inculturation is that in which the Gospel encounters a culture “incarnates itself in it, promoting the good and purifying the imperfect elements and thus making it new.”<sup>330</sup>

Building up the Kingdom of God is the important aspect of the mission of the Church. It is in “contributing to the building of the Kingdom in a particular place that the Church becomes a local Church, rooted in and relevant to the local social context.”<sup>331</sup> The local Church, hence, needs to focus on the building up of a new society of freedom and justice, fellowship and peace. For the project of building up the Kingdom of God, Amaladoss calls on the Indian Church, firstly, to be a prophetic and counter-cultural community. As a counter-cultural community “it will never be a neat fit between the gospel and the local culture. It will always be on the margins—a liminal community. But it will be a credible witness to the Kingdom.”<sup>332</sup> The Indian Church, in his opinion, needs to give up its reliance on any type of political, economic or social power and rely on its life of witness. The Church needs to take the side of the poor, the oppressed and the marginalized in their struggle for justice and for rights and, at the same time, the Church has to collaborate with the people of good will who are committed to the same task. In short, the Indian Church has to become “a community of sharing, committed to justice for all, opting particularly for poor and the oppressed, to struggle with them for equality and justice.”<sup>333</sup>

Secondly, the Indian Church must engage in dialogue with other religions and seek their collaboration in this common project of the Kingdom. An authentic and transformative inculturation is impossible without interreligious dialogue.<sup>334</sup> Cultures and religions are interrelated. While culture seeks to make life meaningful, religion is man’s search for ultimate meaning and tries to answer the ultimate

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<sup>329</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 27–32.

<sup>330</sup> Michael Amaladoss, “Culture and Dialogue”, *International Review of Mission*, Vol. 74, no. 295, April 1985, p. 169.

<sup>331</sup> Michael Amaladoss, *Beyond Inculturation*, 67.

<sup>332</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 72.

<sup>333</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 73.

<sup>334</sup> Michael Amaladoss, *Becoming Indian: The Process of Inculturation*, p. 14.

questions. Hence, intercultural encounter also becomes interreligious encounter.<sup>335</sup> India is a land of many cultures. The task of transforming this Indian society and its cultures cannot be only of one religion. Rather, all the religions are called to contribute to this task by coming together and dialoguing with each other.<sup>336</sup> The focus of dialogue should be “cultural and religious transformation as a means of social transformation.”<sup>337</sup> In such a venture, the religious groups involved will be able “to develop a consensus on common spiritual and social values that it wishes to promote, while each religious group finds the basis, motivation and inspiration for the common task in its own religion.”<sup>338</sup> This kind of dialogue will gradually lead to “living together as one community in spite of religious differences.”<sup>339</sup>

### B. Samuel Rayan

Samuel Rayan is counted as one of the most important and impressive Indian theologians who have tried to change the shape of theology in India.<sup>340</sup> In the words of Kurien Kunnupuram, Samuel Rayan “did not just try to relate Christian faith to the Indian situation. Rather, he has sought to understand and interpret the Christian faith in the light of the religious and secular realities of our land. And this effort has given shape to a theology which is truly Indian and genuinely Christian.”<sup>341</sup> Theologizing in India means for Rayan bringing Christian faith and Indian reality face-to-face with each other with the aim of questioning and illumining each other and bringing out implied aspects of truth.<sup>342</sup> His main theological concern was the liberation of the so-called third world from various types of bondages and slaveries.<sup>343</sup> Rayan’s understanding of the mystery of the human person as the gift and grace from God prompted him to stand for the cause of life, human dignity,

<sup>335</sup> Cf. Michael Amaladoss, “The Challenges of Gospel-Culture Encounter”, <http://www.oecd.pcn.net/mission/News17Congr8.htm>, 20.11.2017.

<sup>336</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 72.

<sup>337</sup> Michael Amaladoss, “New Images of Mission”, [http://www.alboan.org/javier2006/pdf\\_cs/amaladoss\\_asia.pdf](http://www.alboan.org/javier2006/pdf_cs/amaladoss_asia.pdf), 20.11.2017.

<sup>338</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>339</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>340</sup> Samuel Rayan is a Jesuit theologian born in Kerala. He obtained his doctorate in theology from Gregorian University, Rome. He worked with the students of Kerala for 12 years, followed by his service as a professor of theology in the Jesuit Theological Institute, where he currently resides as professor emeritus. He has written over 300 articles.

<sup>341</sup> Kurien Kunnupuram, “Samuel Rayan: A Great Indian Theologian”, *Bread and Breath: Essays in Honour of Samuel Rayan S.J., T.K. John (Ed.)*, Gujarat: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1991, p. 19.

<sup>342</sup> Samuel Rayan, “Tomorrow’s Asian Church will be more Prophetic”, [https://www.ucanews.com/story-archive/post\\_name=/1999/02/15/tomorrows-asian-church-will-be-more-prophetic&post\\_id=1853](https://www.ucanews.com/story-archive/post_name=/1999/02/15/tomorrows-asian-church-will-be-more-prophetic&post_id=1853), 22.11.2017.

<sup>343</sup> Cf. Felix Wilfred & M. M. Thomas (Hrsg.), *Theologiegeschichte der Dritten Welt Indien, übersetzt aus dem Englischen von E. Anneliese Gensichen, Hans-Werner Gensichen & Theodora Karnasch, München: Kaiser Verlag, 1992, S. 241.*

worth, rights and freedom both in the Church and the world. His faith in humanity has moved him to be in solidarity with the smallest, the rejected, and the outcasts of Indian society and develop a theological reflection which represents these sections of Indian society.<sup>344</sup> Rayan's best and unique contribution to Indian theology is, in the opinion of Felix Wilfred, this, that he sensitised Indian theology to the issues of human rights and justice as well as the struggles of the Indian masses for a new and better social order.<sup>345</sup> Rayan's theology of inculturation consists in his call to the Christian community – the Church – to empty itself and incarnate itself into the life of the majority of the India's people who are poor, struggling and suffering.

Rayan begins with the critique of the situation of the Indian Church. In his opinion, in spite of many efforts toward inculturation, the Indian Church continues to be a colonial Church with its heavy dependence on the West (Rome) for almost all purposes.<sup>346</sup> The Church in India, with its theology, spirituality and liturgy, over the years, has been "largely shaped by West Asian and European perceptions, experiences, interests, questions and needs."<sup>347</sup> As a result, there is still no Indian Church, "a church of India sprung from our (India's) own experience of Jesus Christ, come in our flesh, dwelling in our midst and bearing our wounds."<sup>348</sup> On the contrary, the Church on Indian soil appears like a potted plant, transported from somewhere else (Europe) "instead of letting the Word fall in the soil of our life, religion and culture, and take root there and sprout and grow to be our vision, nurture and shelter."<sup>349</sup> Even the self-understanding of the Church is "borrowed from the self-understanding of the local Church of Rome".<sup>350</sup> Another point of criticism that Rayan makes about the Indian Church is its lack of apathy towards the social situation. He sees the Indian Church as becoming a Church of devotions rather than a Church committed to the Gospel demands – a Church tending more towards promoting piety than justice.<sup>351</sup> Rayan's theology is a call to the Indian Church to rid itself of all the ties with everything that does not help it to be the Church of the soil and to commit itself to the struggle against the exist-

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<sup>344</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 242.

<sup>345</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 246.

<sup>346</sup> Samuel Rayan, "Decolonization of Theology", <https://sedosmission.org/old/eng/Rayan.html>, 23.11.2017.

<sup>347</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>348</sup> Samuel Rayan, "The Ecclesiology at Work in the Indian Church Today", Searching for an Indian Ecclesiology. The statement, Papers and the Proceedings of the Seventh Annual Meeting of the Indian Theological Association, Nagpur, October 21–23, 1983, Gerwin van Leeuwen (Ed.), Bangalore: ATC, 1984, p. 196.

<sup>349</sup> Cf. Samuel Rayan, *Decolonization of Theology*.

<sup>350</sup> Samuel Rayan, *The Ecclesiology at Work in the Indian Church Today*, p. 197.

<sup>351</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 200–201.

ing, large scale, institutionalised oppression and degradation of the masses and to their resurrection into the new humanity offered in Jesus' life, death and life out of death."<sup>352</sup> It is a call to a radical inculturation in which for the real incarnation into India's soil, the Church must participate in the suffering and struggles of the poor masses for liberation, take sides and identify with them.<sup>353</sup>

Rayan roots his theological reflection on inculturation in the mystery of Incarnation. In his opinion, a proper vision and understanding of Jesus and his options, his ways of inculturation and solidarity can help the Indian Church to make the right choices in its efforts for an authentic inculturation.<sup>354</sup> For Rayan, Jesus is a revolutionary who was able to break all the social barriers which belittled the poor and the smallest sections of his time, and identified himself with them. Through his identification with the poor and the lowly, he made their culture his own.<sup>355</sup> Jesus through his incarnation was truly and fully human (just as he was fully divine) and he knew the pain that the poor and rejected of the society suffered. Jesus showed solidarity with them, identified with them, stood by them in their struggle for a worthy existence and liberation. Together with these suffering and struggling people he tried to initiate a new social order marked with equality, sharing, love and selflessness. The Indian Church has to take the inspiration from the incarnation of Jesus who became "flesh of our flesh", and incarnate itself in the Indian context by taking on the "flesh of the local context".<sup>356</sup> Jesus the 'Word made Flesh' is "flesh, sensitivity, and loving compassion, carrying in his corporate personality all flesh, all who are weak and vulnerable, the powerless multitude of the wretched of the earth."<sup>357</sup> The flesh Jesus assumed is "a flesh of poverty and historical weakness."<sup>358</sup> In his experience of weakness, powerlessness and rejection, Jesus became one with all those who suffer the same fate in the society. Following the example of Jesus, the Church must assimilate vitally and make its own the entire person of Jesus – the flesh of Jesus, that is, it must identify itself with his powerless and rejected condition; it must live and struggle with and for the millions to whom life is scarcely permitted, whose bread of life

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<sup>352</sup> Ibid., p. 212.

<sup>353</sup> Samuel Rayan, "Incarnation and the Local Church", *Mission Studies*, Vol. 3, no. 1, January 1986, p. 23.

<sup>354</sup> Cf. Samuel Rayan, "Inculturation and Peoples' Struggles", *Indian Missiological Review*, Vol. 19, no. 1, 1997, pp. 35–45.

<sup>355</sup> Cf. Joseph Mattam, "The Message of Jesus and our customary theological language: An Indian approach to a new language in theology and culture", *Sharing Diversity in Missiological Research and Education*, L. Stanislaus & John F. Gorski (Eds.), Pune: Ishvani Kendra & Delhi: ISPCK, 2006, p. 52.

<sup>356</sup> Cf. Samuel Rayan, "Flesh of India's Flesh", *Jeevadhara*, Vol. VI, 1976, pp. 260–263.

<sup>357</sup> Samuel Rayan, *Outside the Gate, Sharing Insult*, pp. 139–140.

<sup>358</sup> Jon Sobrino, *Spirituality and Liberation: Toward Political Holiness*, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1988, p. 127.

is daily taken away and who are massacred and burnt at the slightest sign they show of movement, growth or dignity.<sup>359</sup> The Church must participate in the liberating mission of Jesus. The Indian Church is challenged by Rayan to do away with the “feudal-capitalist or class ecclesiology” that is at work in its life and join the people’s movements in their struggle against unjust, oppressive structures.<sup>360</sup> The Indian Church can follow Jesus authentically and effectively when it respects human dignity, recognizes the power of the people and fights against the demonic and inhuman powers.

Rayan’s theological reflection on inculturation which is deeply Christological and incarnational in character is calling for an inculturation process “which is always dying and rising, critical and creative; one in which the ruling concern shall never be the Sabbath but women and men, their health, their food and their dignity.”<sup>361</sup> True inculturation in his opinion is possible only “with the insertion of the faith into the life – stream of peoples, and the expression of faith – life in terms of their concrete historical existence, as well as the insertion of the people’s life into the faith at levels deeper than any particular expressions.”<sup>362</sup> It is only through social praxis and engagement that the Church in India will be effectively inculturated in India and become a true witness of the good news.<sup>363</sup>

### C. Felix Wilfred

Felix Wilfred is a very prominent Indian Catholic theologian who is known very well both in Asia and in Europe for his thought-provoking theological reflections.<sup>364</sup> He has developed his own unique theological reflection on the problem of inculturation in the context of liberation in Asia and particularly in India. In contrast to the traditional inculturation trend which relied heavily upon the Sanskrit or brahminic tradition, Wilfred, sees rather, in the traditions and views of the *Dalits* and the discriminated of the society who form the majority of the Christian population in India, the meeting point between the Gospel and the Indian culture and tradition.<sup>365</sup>

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<sup>359</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 140.

<sup>360</sup> Cf. Samuel Rayan, *The Ecclesiology at Work in the Indian Church Today*, p. 204.

<sup>361</sup> Samuel Rayan, *Incarnation and the Local Church*, p. 22.

<sup>362</sup> Samuel Rayan, *Flesh of India’s Flesh*, p. 267.

<sup>363</sup> Cf. Felix Wilfred & M. M. Thomas (Hrsg.), *Theologiegeschichte der Dritten Welt Indien*, p. 246.

<sup>364</sup> Felix Wilfred was born in on 21<sup>st</sup> February, 1948 in Tamilnadu. He studied in Italy and France and has been teaching as visiting professor in Germany and USA. He was a member of the International Theological Commission presided over by Joseph Ratzinger. Presently, he is the director of the Asian Centre for Cross-cultural Studies, which he himself has established.

<sup>365</sup> Cf. Georg Evers, “Felix Wilfred, *Theologe aus Indien*”, <http://www.forum-weltkirche.de/de/personen/15748.felix-wilfred.html{kursiv,29.11.2017/}>.



Wilfred's theological reflection on inculturation is his attempt to answer the varied questions which the situation of the Church in the multi-religious and multicultural India poses: "What is the image the church projects in India today? What is its role in the midst of a situation of oppression, injustice, poverty, misery and starvation? What does it mean to be a church in a country inhabited by people belonging to different religious traditions which guide their vision and action? Where is the specific Christian identity when Christians work shoulder to shoulder with others in the struggle for justice?"<sup>366</sup>

In spite of the tremendous efforts by some of the missionaries and even the Indian Church itself, the image of the Church which still prevails all over the country is that of a Church which is a stranger or foreigner. Wilfred aptly criticises the traditional way of inculturation, which was principally Western or Roman at heart. It was this Western style of inculturation of the Gospel message in India that has resulted in the refusal of Christ and his Gospel in India.<sup>367</sup> He sees the traditional inculturation efforts as of pastoral nature and the theology behind this type of inculturation was mostly a theology of incarnation which in his opinion is inadequate.<sup>368</sup> With its focus mainly on Christianity and not on the cultures into which the Gospel was to be inculturated, the traditional models of inculturation saw the culture as means or an instrument to make the Christian faith indigenous and local.<sup>369</sup> Hence, he suggests a shift in the methodology and approach to inculturation. In Wilfred's opinion, the prevalent models of inculturation are inadequate in the sense that they do not touch the heart of the inculturation question namely, the question of *method*. These models employ a method which let *the theological precede the anthropological*, which he finds wrong, because there can be "true inculturation only when the anthropological (cultural forms and expressions, patterns of thought and social relationship, . . . ) precedes the theological (faith, mystery of the Church, grace . . . )."<sup>370</sup> In other words, Wilfred's method implies that the Christian faith and the Gospel be understood through the cultural language in a given (Indian or Asian) context: "Instead of trying to make the Church and the faith local and indigenous by relating them to Asian cultural forms, we should perceive and understand the *what* of the Church and the faith in terms of Asian culture and way of life, social organizations, and religious experience. For, the way of thinking, eating, worshipping, contracting marriages, relating to each

<sup>366</sup> Felix Wilfred, "Action Groups and the Struggle for Justice in India: Ecclesiological Implications", *Ecumenical Review*, Vol. 39, no. 3, July 1987, p. 300.

<sup>367</sup> Felix Wilfred, "Inculturation as a Hermeneutical Question: Reflections in the Asian Context", *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection*, Vol. 52, no. 9, September 1988, p. 422.

<sup>368</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 423.

<sup>369</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 423–424.

<sup>370</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 424.

other in family, in society . . . all of which form part of the culture of a people are not simply matters of daily life, but they are blessings of God.”<sup>371</sup> True inculturation in this sense would mean “*to perceive, understand and re-appropriate the essence of the Church itself in terms of Asian cultures, ways of life, interhuman relationships and communitarian existence*”, instead of trying to make the Church local by relating it to indigenous cultural forms.<sup>372</sup> Hence, the “anthropological and the cultural” are not merely the contexts of the Church-community, but on the contrary, they form “a part of the very *text* of the Church.”<sup>373</sup>

For Wilfred, every culture has a particular world-view, constituted by the religion of the people, and a true inculturation takes place only when there is an encounter and dialogue at the level of the world-view.<sup>374</sup> Religion is “the soul of a cultural tradition.”<sup>375</sup> Inculturation needs to take place within the context of religious pluralism and its challenges.<sup>376</sup> To be a Christian in India (and/or in Asia) means to be in dialogue with the members of other religions. Negative attitudes towards other religions will be a hindrance to the process of true inculturation. Pointing out to the people in Asia who continue to be the devotees of Jesus without being Christians, Wilfred calls for a new and creative interpretation of the ecclesial reality, in which “the Asian local Churches are stimulated through a deep encounter with the world-view and religions of the millions of followers of Christ” in other religions.<sup>377</sup> This kind of inculturation, in his opinion, calls for “an ecclesiology not simply centred on redemption and salvation, but integrated within the larger frame of a theology of creation.”<sup>378</sup> It calls for dialogue with other religions for a fruitful inculturation. An inculturation process which does not take into consideration other religions and the value of dialogue with them will turn out to be counter-productive, and the Christianity in this case will be always criticised and looked at with suspicion by other religions.<sup>379</sup>

The understanding and praxis of inculturation in the multi-religious context has several implications according to Wilfred:

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<sup>371</sup> Ibid., p. 424.

<sup>372</sup> Felix Wilfred, “Towards an Anthropologically and Culturally Founded Ecclesiology: Reflections from an Asian Perspective”, *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection*, Vol. 54, no. 10, October 1990, p. 504.

<sup>373</sup> Cf. Ibid., p. 5050.

<sup>374</sup> Cf. Felix Wilfred, *Inculturation as a Hermeneutical Question: Reflections in the Asian Context*, p. 428.

<sup>375</sup> Felix Wilfred, “World Religions and Inculturation”, *Indian Theological Studies*, Vol. 25, no. 1, March 1988, p. 9.

<sup>376</sup> Cf. Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>377</sup> Ibid., p. 429.

<sup>378</sup> Ibid.

<sup>379</sup> Cf. Ibid., p. 10.

### 1. Cultural Conditioning:

Inculturation cannot start with the emphasis on Christian faith and culture as the best and absolute. Christian faith has not existed independent of all other cultural expressions, rather it is to be viewed “as a complex of particular and local traditions resulting from the encounters of Christianity with a wide variety of peoples, cultures, philosophies and thought-patters.”<sup>380</sup> He sees the universal essence of Christianity as but a *conditioned and particularized* expression of Christian faith and experience.<sup>381</sup> While being aware of the fact that it is impossible “to refrain from articulating Christian faith and message in a particular language and culture”, Wilfred also stresses the transcendental character of Christian message “above all particular traditions, forms etc.”<sup>382</sup> However, the fact that the Christian faith is found as embodied in a particular culture must help the Church to guard against misunderstandings and presumptions, namely, the younger Churches cannot expect to have Christian faith which is devoid of all forms and cultural expressions and the older Churches cannot claim to have possessed universal essence of faith.<sup>383</sup>

### 2. Interpreting the Past

Making a survey of the biblical attitudes to other religions and cultures Wilfred says that biblical approach toward other religions and cultures (in different epochs of history) were “dictated by the immediate concerns of the community and the concrete social situation of the time.”<sup>384</sup> However, “that situation cannot be compared with the contemporary period when Christianity is facing for the first time other religious traditions as serious partners in dialogue.”<sup>385</sup> The approach of Christianity to the Greco-Roman cultures and philosophies in his opinion is dialogical and not adaptive.<sup>386</sup>

### 3. Shedding prejudices and adapting a correct approach

According to Wilfred, meaningful inculturation and fruitful dialogue is possible only by attaining twofold freedom, namely, freedom “from reactionary attitudes towards other religions and cultures” as well as freedom “from a kind of cultural romanticism and exaggerated reactions to neo-colonial experience and the darker side of Mission history”, since these attitudes were formed in polemic and

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<sup>380</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>381</sup> Ibid.

<sup>382</sup> Ibid.

<sup>383</sup> Cf. Ibid., pp. 11–12.

<sup>384</sup> Cf. Felix Wilfred, *Sunset in the East? Asian Challenges and Christian Involvement*, Madras: University of Madras, 1991, p. 147.

<sup>385</sup> Felix Wilfred, *From the Dusty Soil: Contemporary Reinterpretation of Christianity*, Madras: University of Madras, 1995, p. 179.

<sup>386</sup> Cf. Felix Wilfred, *Sunset in the East? Asian Challenges and Christian Involvement*, p. 148.

apologetic climate.<sup>387</sup> At the same time, Wilfred emphasises the positive approach and positive knowledge and an empathetic understanding of other religious traditions.<sup>388</sup> He calls on to refrain from judgement about other religions and comparison with them, since all religions and cultures in his opinion are in need of constant purification and renewal.<sup>389</sup>

#### 4. Positive approach and living dialogue

The same origin and destiny of mankind is to be the foundational and inspirational force for the relationship of Christianity with other religions. All religions enshrine “moral and spiritual truths” (NA 2). Hence, Wilfred calls for a living dialogue which will “lead to progressive discovery of other religions and the appreciation of their values.”<sup>390</sup> A living dialogue undertaken in an attitude of respect and appreciation instead of concentrating on “mere debate or comparison, of concepts” will lead to genuine inculturation.<sup>391</sup> Such a dialogue with other religions comes to expression in the collaboration of all religions for the betterment of the people and society. The issue of justice and liberation are the part of every religions to which they seek to respond, and the Church, too, is a part of these religious traditions which are involved in the struggle for justice.<sup>392</sup> Hence, initiatives on the part of the Church for such a project in collaboration and dialogue with other religions “is an important and much needed form of inculturation.”<sup>393</sup>

#### 5. Practice of continuous cross-cultural hermeneutics

Wilfred warns against picking out from other religions and cultures particular elements which suit us without any respect for the religions and cultures, which is nothing but “window-dressing”.<sup>394</sup> He proposes the “cross-cultural and cross-religions hermeneutics” as an essential way to “deeper inculturation and mutual understanding and dialogue among religions.”<sup>395</sup>

For Wilfred, the local or regional Churches or communities are the active subjects and agents of inculturation. The local community through its concrete living of the gospel makes authentic inculturation possible: “It is ultimately the local church, i.e., the believing community in a cultural context, aided by the Spirit who leads into all truth (Jn 16:13), which is the active subject and agent of incul-

<sup>387</sup> Felix Wilfred, *World Religions and Inculturation*, p. 18.

<sup>388</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 18–19.

<sup>389</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>390</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>391</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>392</sup> Cf. Felix Wilfred, *Action Groups and the Struggle for Justice in India: Ecclesiological Implications*, p. 306.

<sup>393</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>394</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>395</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

turation and this responsibility can neither be delegated nor substituted.”<sup>396</sup> In his opinion, inculturation without the participation of the local community as the active subject would be induced inculturation, continuing the rift between gospel and culture.<sup>397</sup> Wilfred speaks of culture and the Church as dynamic realities. Culture can act as a powerful force for socio-political transformation. Culture survives and grows through a process of change and transformation, growth and evolution based on the changes in socio-political situation. Inculturation should mean “a process through which the Church is born ever anew from out of its interaction with the socio-political realities of the context.”<sup>398</sup> This interaction is possible only when the Church inserts itself, roots itself into the culture. And this process stresses the role of the local community. In this context, Wilfred stresses the hermeneutical role of the laity in the field of inculturation.<sup>399</sup>

In conclusion, one can say that Wilfred sees inculturation as an act of interpretation and not simply a process of ‘translation’.<sup>400</sup> Inculturation is not translation of European Christianity into Indian society. Inculturation in India means “the Church has to start from where it is”, namely, with the poor, with many religions and with diverse cultures.<sup>401</sup>

### 2.2.5 Inculturation as an unfinished Project

Our study so far about the challenge of inculturation posed before the Indian Church and the criticism directed toward the inculturation process, and efforts in the Indian Church point to the fact that inculturation in the Indian Church is not complete, although it may be a success to some extent. Inculturation in the Indian Church is an unfinished project. Inculturation is not a mere adaptation of some external signs and symbols of worship. It has to go beyond this mere adaptation to incarnation into the given context and culture in India, into its life situations and struggles, joys and sorrows, grief and sufferings. Such an inculturation calls, firstly, for newness of understanding of inculturation and see it in a new light. Inculturation is to be understood today not as a process of imposition (of one dominant culture over others) leading to uniformity but as a process of transformation (through the dialogue between cultures) leading to unity in diversity. Inculturation has to do with bringing the Gospel values in dialogue and confrontation with

<sup>396</sup> Felix Wilfred, *Inculturation as a Hermeneutical Question: Reflections in the Asian Context*, p. 436.

<sup>397</sup> Cf. Felix Wilfred, *On the Banks of Ganges: Doing Contextual Theology*, Delhi: ISPCK, 2005, p. 36.

<sup>398</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 430–431.

<sup>399</sup> Felix Wilfred, *The Emergent Church in a New India*, pp. 161–162.

<sup>400</sup> Gavin D’Costa, “Inculturation, India and Other Religions: Some Methodological Reflections”, *Inculturation Gospel and Culture*, Franco Imoda (Ed.), ROMA: EPUG, 1995, p. 131.

<sup>401</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 132–133.

those of Indian religions and cultures, rather than mere translation of the Gospel into different Indian languages. Inculturation needs to be understood as a process from below and not from above, where it is initiated by few studied men. Any initiative for inculturation has to die and germinate in the soil of Indian cultures and flower with the life experience of the local people. As Anthony Gittins says, inculturation is “not about easy domesticity or paraphrased Gospel, much less about making God in our own image. But it is inextricable from the process of a real, true authentic translation, whereby the Gospel, in moving across cultures, is received according to the genius of the recipient community.”<sup>402</sup>

Secondly, a renewed understanding of inculturation calls for new ways and attitudes to be employed in the process of inculturation. Peter Schineller lists these new attitudes in his article *Inculturation and Syncretism: What Is the Real Issue?*

- The first attitude is the acceptance of risk. Without risk, there can be no gain. To put in the words of Mark Schultz, a Lutheran pastor, unless we are willing to take the risk of losing the Gospel in the process of inculturation, we will never be able to see the Gospel becoming totally integrated in a given culture.<sup>403</sup> Inculturation calls today for courage “based upon the conviction of the active presence and guidance of the Spirit of God in the human history and in the Christian community as well as in its leaders and theologians.”<sup>404</sup>
- The second attitude is an attitude of freedom. Freedom paves way for creativity. It’s only when the inculturation process is accompanied by freedom that creative ways and means of inculturation will come in. The Church leaders must not only respect and tolerate diversity and growth but also encourage newness.<sup>405</sup> Freedom means readiness “to take risks correct mistakes and go out to others in sincere openness and dialogue”, which is the need of the time.<sup>406</sup>
- Thirdly, the focus of inculturation is to be the Kingdom of God and not the Church. The Church, through inculturation in a particular context (in our case the context of India), must spread and give witness to the Kingdom of God and its values, “otherwise it becomes too narrowly focussed and unable to expand with the freedom of the children of God, led by the Spirit that blows where it wills.”<sup>407</sup>

<sup>402</sup> Anthony J. Gittins, *Bread for the Journey. The Mission of Transformation and the Transformation of Mission*, Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock Publ., 2001, p. 92.

<sup>403</sup> Stephen B. Bevans & Roger P. Schroeder, *Prophetic Dialogue: Reflections on Christian Mission Today*, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2002, p. 92.

<sup>404</sup> Peter Scheneiller, “Inculturation and Syncretism: What Is the Real Issue?”, *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, Vol 16, no. 2, April 1992, 53.

<sup>405</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*

<sup>406</sup> Michael Amaladoss, *Making All Things New. Dialogue, Pluralism & Evangelization in Asia*, New York: Orbis Books, 1990, p. 128.

<sup>407</sup> *Ibid.*

- The fourth attitude is an attitude of patience. Change comes slowly and at times, is painful, and inculturation is a slow process.<sup>408</sup>
- Fifthly, in the process of inculturation, there is a need for a sense of God at work in the world. God is not limited to Christianity alone, rather, He makes His presence felt in all religions and cultures. All religions and religious traditions are God's ways of making Himself known to the world. Hence, the Bible, while it is all important, "functions not as an end in itself, but to help us see God at work in human lives today."<sup>409</sup>
- A genuine process of inculturation needs to give heed to the voice of the people. It needs to consider the sense of the people of God.<sup>410</sup> It is the believing ordinary people who are the actual architects of fruitful inculturation. As we saw in the previous point, the Indian Catholic theologians in their theological reflection emphasise the role of the local Christian communities which are also known as the Basic Christian Communities, in the process of the inculturation of the Church in India. They see the local Christian communities as the primary agent of inculturation.<sup>411</sup> It is not the theologians and the elite few who have a monopoly in ecclesiology, rather it is first and foremost the Christian faithful who through the concrete life they live are able to give the Christian faith and spirituality a local face and shape.<sup>412</sup> Inculturation is "not first and foremost the work of experts-particularly, "outside" experts, but instead the work of ordinary people, the subjects of local social and cultural contexts."<sup>413</sup> The local Christian communities in India are the "true way of being the living Church."<sup>414</sup> Local Christian communities are the ideal place for fulfilling the Indian Church's desire to be truly inculturated and "genuinely rooted in its religio-cultural heritage and in its current socio-economic milieu."<sup>415</sup> In order to be genuine, the process

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<sup>408</sup> Cf. Ibid.

<sup>409</sup> Ibid.

<sup>410</sup> Ibid.

<sup>411</sup> Cyril Kuttianikkal's book *Krista Bhakta Movement: A Model for an Indian Church* which I have referred in my thesis and Jonas Adelin Jorgensen, Jesus Imandars and Christ Bhaktas: Two Case Studies of Inter-religious Hermeneutics and Identity in global Christianity, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2008, give us an idea of how local or basic Christian communities become the primary agent of inculturation.

<sup>412</sup> Cf. Selvister Ponneumathan, *The Spirituality of Basic Ecclesial Communities in the Socio-Religious Context of Trivendrum/Kerala, India*, Roma: Editrice Pontificia Universita Gregoriana, 1996, p. 13.

<sup>413</sup> Stephen B. Bevans & Roger P. Schroeder, *Prophetic Dialogue: Reflections on Christian Mission Today*, p. 95.

<sup>414</sup> Bibiana Joo-hyun Ro, "Bishops pledge to strengthen the Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in India", <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/asia/india/314-bishops-pledge-to-strengthen-the-small-christian-communities-secs-in-india.html>, 02.12.2017.

<sup>415</sup> Joseph Prasad Pinto, *Inculturation through Basic Communities: An Indian Perspective*, p. 237.

of inculturation has to be the outcome of the faith expression of the local community, because it is the community who lives and practices the Christian faith in its concrete life in a given culture. People should be free to express their faith locally and creatively. They must be free “to experiment, to create and even to make mistakes.”<sup>416</sup> In this way, inculturation can become a process of growth from below and not from above in which there is only imposition.

- Finally, the process of genuine inculturation calls for an attitude of “critical openness, learning and listening to the Christian message in all its richness and to the various human cultures in all their diversity”, which will mean an opening to the Spirit of God present and working in all the cultures in new, varied and exciting ways.<sup>417</sup>

### 3 A Dialoguing Church

Dialogue belongs to the very nature and essence of human reality and life. It is a medium in and through which humans relate to each other, know each other and complete each other. No man can live as an island. It is only in relating to other and knowing the other that human person knows his own self. Dialogue in the context of the Indian Church becomes an important part of the reality of the Church in India. It is only in and through dialogue that the Church will be able to know itself better; its vision will be clearer and its mission will be significant in the Indian context. Dialogue with the religions, with other churches and with the nature has become an imperative for the Church in India. It is only in and through dialogue that the Indian Catholic Church will be able to know, receive, give, grow and go ahead in its process of becoming a truly Indian Church.

#### 3.1 Dialogue with Religions<sup>418</sup> (Communion with Religions)

Indian soil has witnessed the existence of multiple religions. India is a multi-religious country with different forms of faiths living together since ages. It is also a birthplace of four of the major religious traditions of the world, namely, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism. While around 97% of the Indian population practices other religions and other faiths, only less than 3% of Indians are

<sup>416</sup> Michael Amaladoss, *Making All Things New*.

<sup>417</sup> Peter Scheneiller, *Inculturation and Syncretism: What Is the Real Issue?*

<sup>418</sup> This entire section on dialogue with religion was a part of my thesis for my Masters in Theology in 2015, titled as: *Will all be saved? The Possibility of Universal Salvation in the Writings of Karl Rahner and its Significance in the Indian multi-religious Context*. I have taken this particular part in my present study with necessary changes and some addition to it.



Christians and practice Christian faith.<sup>419</sup> Although a multiplicity of faith, almost all the world religions are accepted, tolerated, respected, loved and appreciated in India. All the world religions live in harmony and peace with each other. With the renewed vision brought in by Vatican II, the Catholic Church has begun to recognize the value of dialogue with other religions and accepted it as “a new way of being the Church” in India. The Church in India today is no more concerned with comparing and contrasting various religions vis-à-vis Christianity; instead, it focuses attention on the specific contribution which Christianity can make today to India and to humankind at large, which is possible in collaboration and dialogue.<sup>420</sup> The various dialogue-initiatives undertaken by the Catholic Church in India are a result and a fruit of the positive recognition and acceptance of other religions by Vatican II as positive and significant in the divine plan of salvation. Hence, involvement with these religions (especially Hinduism which is the major religion of India) tends to be a special concern for the Church in India. Other religions not only point out the human quest for God, they also bear testimony to the fact that even “the divine manifestations take visible, social forms.”<sup>421</sup> The Church in India understands the other religions as collaborators in its mission of establishing the kingdom of God. Hence, dialogue with these religions becomes “not only a method, not only an option, but a duty and a necessity.”<sup>422</sup>

The unity of India is threatened today, and the harmony and peace between the religions is constantly at stake due to the increasing tendency of religious fundamentalism in all the religions. At the same time, there is an attitude of mistrust being developed toward other religions together with a growing negative attachment to one's religion. Other religions are seen only as threats and hindrance to the existence and growth of one's religion. An important factor which makes interreligious relations and dialogue ever more significant today is the growing atmosphere of globalization, which seeks to promote and propagate the negative values of consumerism, individualism, domination and godlessness etc. This phenomenon of globalization can be countered only by affirming human rights and

<sup>419</sup> According to the religious census data of 2011, the total population in the country in 2011 was 121.09 crore. Hindu population is 96.63 crore (79.8 percent); Muslim 17.22 crore (14.2 percent); Christian 2.78 crore (2.3 percent); Sikh 2.08 crore (1.7 percent); Buddhist 0.84 crore (0.7 percent); Jain 0.45 crore (0.4 percent), Other religions and persuasions (ORP) 0.79 crore (0.7 percent) and religion not stated 0.29. PTI, “India has 79.8% Hindus, 14.2% Muslims, says 2011 census data on religions”, <http://www.firstpost.com/india/india-has-79--8-percent-hindu-s-14--2-percent-muslims-2011-census-data-on-religion-2407708.html>, 10.12.2017.

<sup>420</sup> Cf. Michael Barnes, *Theology and The Dialogue of Religions*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 158.

<sup>421</sup> Michael Amaladoss, *Walking Together: The Practice of Inter-Religious Dialogue*, Gujarat: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1992, p. 2.

<sup>422</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

dignity, values, justice, peace, human freedom as God-given gifts to humanity and the efforts to restore these gifts. Since all religions face the sweeping tide of globalization, it is important for all the religions to unite, collaborate and act in favour of the well-being of the entire Indian society. This is possible when the religions engage in dialogue with each other.

### 3.1.1 Hindu Fundamentalism (*Hindutva*) as a Challenge to the Interreligious Relations

The term fundamentalism is a twentieth-century phenomenon and denotes a strong reaction (of a group of Protestants) to various political, social and religious changes.<sup>423</sup> Gradually the term came to be referred to the tendencies of any group to take its religion very seriously, advocate a distinctive way of life or to expect public policy to conform to religious requirements.<sup>424</sup> The term ‘fundamentalism’ denotes the extreme attitude of the believers of every religion who claim their own religion as the only true religion and want to protect and spread their religion at all costs. These fundamentalists see their religion as beyond any form of criticism and let their religion rule and dictate every walk of their life and that of the society.<sup>425</sup> Hence, we have Christian fundamentalism, Hindu fundamentalism, Islamic fundamentalism, Buddhist fundamentalism, Jewish fundamentalism, etc. Fundamentalism becomes a chief threat to dialogue between religions. As Fornberg points out: “It belongs to the nature of fundamentalism that all criteria of truth must be found within the borders of one’s own religion, and often even within one’s own group, and the consequent conviction that all others are wrong. This stance discourages interreligious contact.”<sup>426</sup>

In the context of interreligious dialogue in India, Hindu fundamentalism has been one of the most important issues of concern – an issue which need serious attention and treatment. *Hindutva* can be seen as the reaction of the Hinduism towards Christianity and the missionaries who, in their opinion, have always tried to attack and destroy their religion and spread Christianity. To those who are familiar with the concept of Hinduism, the term *Hindutva* or ‘Hindu fundamentalism’ may appear as contradiction because Hinduism is known to be the most tolerant religion, a religion without any history of forced conversions or wars or violence.<sup>427</sup>

<sup>423</sup> Cf. Lionel Caplan (Ed.), *Studies in Religious Fundamentalism*, USA: State University of New York Press, 1987, p. 1.

<sup>424</sup> Cf. Steve Bruce, *Fundamentalism*, USA: Polity Press, 2008, p. 11.

<sup>425</sup> Cf. Oyishimaya Sen Nag, “What is Religious Fundamentalism”, <http://www.worldatlas.com/articles/what-is-religious-fundamentalism.html>, 10.12.2017.

<sup>426</sup> Tod Fornberg, *The problem of Christianity in multi-religious societies of today: The Bible in a world of many faiths*, New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1995, p. 259.

<sup>427</sup> Cf. Vincent G. Furtado, “Hindu Fundamentalism and Inter-Religious Dialogue”, *Tatva Lahari*, Paul Melwyn Dsouza (Ed.), Bangalore: Karnataka Capuchin Publication, 2007, p. 1.

In fact, it is from Hinduism that we have a great ideal of non-violence (*Ahimsa*). But the concept of *Hindutva* and Hindu nationalism “has been carved out of the models of Western fascism, particularly based on Italian and German nation of ethnic nationalism and Nazism.”<sup>428</sup> The entire *Hindutva* movement is grounded on the principle that India is a Hindu nation and that only Hindus can enjoy rights of citizenship in India. The propagators of *Hindutva* propose only one single religion for whole of India that is Hinduism. In this view, Muslims and Christians in particular, but also Jews, Parsis, Buddhists and Jains are viewed as non-Indians. *Hindutva* envisions a totally Hindu country – *Hindustan* (in the literal sense of the word). Hence, certain groups (Muslims and Christians) do not belong to the nation; they are “outsiders”, dangerous intruders. Other religions are seen as unwanted, second-class citizens and as serious threats to *Hindutva* ideology. This results in hatred and a violent attitude towards other religions, which is being witnessed presently. Such a violence is even justified in the name of nationalism. Hindu fundamentalists exploit the power of religion to form identities through a ‘divide and rule’ policy and equate India with a Hindu *Rashtra*. The Hindu fundamentalism finds its expression also in the Hindu organization in India called the *Sangh Parivar* – the family. The RSS (*Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* – National Volunteer Organization) is its ultra-conservative wing that demands unflinching patriotism and preservation of Hindu culture; the VHP (*Vishwa Hindu Parishad* – World Hindu Council) is their religious arm; the BJP (*Bhartiya Janata Party* – Indian People’s Party) is the political arm and India’s main opposition party. The present Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi too is a lifelong member of RSS and is committed “to the supremacist ideology of *Hindutva* which says that India should be an exclusive Hindu nation state in which minorities are treated as second-class citizens or worse.”<sup>429</sup>

Hindu fundamentalism is today on the rise and is very strong in its reactions against Christianity and the Church. There can be many reasons for such an attitude: Firstly, *Hindutva* ideology sees Christianity or the Church as the enemy of the Hindu nation. Christianity with its Western outlook, ideology and tendencies is seen as harming the Hindu culture and traditions and beliefs. Christianity is considered by the *Hindutva* as the most intolerant of all religions. Basing themselves on the history of Christianity both in Europe (Crusades, Persecutions of Muslims and Jews) and in Asia (persecution and forceful conversion of Hindus), they consider Christianity and the Church nothing more than an intolerant group

<sup>428</sup> J. Mattam, S. J. & P. Arockiadoss, *Hindutva, an Indian Christian Response*, Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2002, p. 16.

<sup>429</sup> Sunny Hundal, “Hindu Nationalists are gaining power in India-and silencing enemies along the way”, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/hindu-nationalists-are-gaining-power-in-india-and-silencing-enemies-along-the-way-9155591.html>, 11.12.2017.

of people. Hindu fundamentalists see the Church as having only one ulterior motive in India, namely, conversion of masses and spread of Christianity at the cost of the religion of the land. The social work undertaken by the Church in India is looked at with suspicion by *Hindutva* ideologists.

Hindu fundamentalism is affecting the social and secular fabric of India. The various atrocities done to human beings in the name of religion are witnessing to the fact that it is more religious fanaticism. Religious fanaticism, by idealizing and absolutizing a particular group's or people's religious convictions, has given rise to violence. *Hindutva* today has nothing to do with Hindu religion and belief. Hindu fundamentalism's narrowness and discriminatory attitude towards other religious minorities is quite different from the traditional Hindu attitudes of tolerance and respect as held by the most prominent Hindu thinkers and religious teachers. Hindu fundamentalism today is rather political in its nature. This is the true face of *Hindutva*: "*Hindutva* has nothing to do with spirituality, but everything to do with political economy . . . . It has very little to do with Hinduism, but everything to do with an aggressive form of cultural nationalism . . . It appears to be connected with India's past, but is actually an omen of the future . . . . For some, *Hindutva* heralds the age of India's renaissance. For others, it reflects India's march towards fascism."<sup>430</sup> The hatred campaign undertaken by *Hindutva* ideology against Christians (and other minority groups) poses the biggest challenge to the dialogue of the Catholic Church with Hinduism.

### 3.1.1.1 Indian Catholic Response to Hindu Fundamentalism

Hindu fundamentalism in modern India, with its cruel anti-religious minority stance, poses the biggest challenge in the interreligious relations between Christianity and Hinduism. Hence, efforts need to be made in order to confront this phenomenon and find out positive ways to tackle it. Different suggestions can be made by way of response.

The first response is *promotion of justice and establishment of a just society*. Fundamentalism in most cases is the result of the experience of inequality, discrimination, injustice and oppression of the poor and the minorities. Hence, the poor and the powerless try to organize themselves in terms of ethnicity or religion, language or nationhood in search of mutual support, in order to draw the society's attention to their plight. The Church can join these people in their struggle for jus-

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<sup>430</sup> Paul G. Hiebert, "A Christian Response to Hinduism", *Christian Witness in Pluralistic Contexts in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Enoch Wan (Ed.), *Evangelical Missiological Society Series no. 11*, California: William Carey Library, 2004, pp. 91–92.

tice and seek to promote social justice at all levels.<sup>431</sup> The Church needs to become voice for the voiceless.

The second response is *commitment to humanistic nationalism and nation*. *Hindutva* promotes religious nationalism. Hence, it can be countered by the efforts to strengthen humanistic nationalism. By its efforts to assert its rootedness in the Indian soil and through its prophetic role the Church in India can promote humanistic nationalism marked by justice, equality and fellowship.<sup>432</sup>

The third response is *collaboration with people of good will* in their fight against anti-national, anti-minority *Hindutva* ideologists. There are many groups who know the divide and rule strategy of *Hindutva* groups. They know that these groups are only up to destroy the unity and peace of India. Hence, these groups keep fighting against *Hindutva* in the interest of the majority of people who are tolerant and peace-loving. The Church needs to collaborate with these people in their struggle and fight against *Hindutva*.

### 3.1.2 The Question of the Uniqueness of Christ in the Interreligious Dialogue

The Christians in India find themselves in a challenging situation as Indian Christians on Indians soil. On the one hand, as Christians we except Christ as the unique saviour and on the other hand we can't deny the salvific value of other religions. The missionaries along with the early Church in India proclaimed that Christianity is the only true religion and Christ is the only true saviour. Only in and through Christ will one be saved, and there is no other way but Christ. In the Acts of the Apostles in the New Testament, Peter says, "there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4, 12). The Catholic Church emphasises and proclaims the uniqueness of Jesus Christ as the saviour of the world. This claim of uniqueness of Christ by Christianity in the West and its spread, especially in the Indian context, can be seen as a form of Christian fundamentalism. "For Christianity, the uniqueness of Christ is a fundamental doctrine that cannot be watered down in any way."<sup>433</sup>

One of the most important Church documents dealing with the issue of the uniqueness of Christ is the declaration called *Dominus Iesus*<sup>434</sup>, which was signed

<sup>431</sup> Michael Amaladoss, *Beyond Dialogue: Pilgrims to the Absolute*, Bangalore: ATC, 2008, pp. 60–61.

<sup>432</sup> L. Stanislaus, "A Christian Response to Hindutva", *Nationalism and Hindutva- a Christian Response*. Papers from the 10<sup>th</sup> CMS Consultation, Mark T.B. Laing (Ed.), Delhi: ISPCK & Pune: CMS, 2005, p. 186.

<sup>433</sup> Swami Vikrant, "Inter-Religious Dialogue", *Kristu Jyoti*, Vol. 6, no. 3, September 1990, p. 17.

<sup>434</sup> Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, "*Dominus Iesus*: On the Unicity and the Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church", [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/docume](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/docume)

by the Vatican congregation for the Doctrine of Faith on 6 August 2000 and released on 6 September 2000. This declaration “is not just a confessional document to be circulated among Church members alone. Rather, it is a declaration of the uniqueness of the Lordship of Jesus in such exclusive categories as to involve a contrast with the other lords and founders of religions.”<sup>435</sup> This document makes a claim that salvation is possible only through Christ’s mediation through the Catholic Church, which means that the non-Christian religions are inadequate, and they need Christ or they need to come to Christ if they want to attain salvation. When Cardinal Ratzinger presented the document officially, he said, “The true theme of *Dominus Iesus* is about the Lordship of Christ, whereby the Pope wanted to offer to the world a great and solemn recognition of Jesus Christ as Lord.”<sup>436</sup> Therefore, it is clear that the declaration is aimed at the people of other religions, and it is here that the problem of uniqueness becomes intense, especially in India. This document, while trying to re-emphasise the centrality of Christ and the Church, tries to counter the religious relativists, particularly those who justify religious pluralism and they are the fledging theologians of the East and Seminal thinkers of Asia and of India in particular.<sup>437</sup> The document also speaks of the rituals of other religions as obstacles to salvation (no. 21). However, this claim of the Catholic Church to Christ as unique saviour of all people irrespective of their religions and the necessity of Church for salvation (no. 20) in the document has hurt the religious sentiments of millions of Hindus (and even of other believers) and thereby created more negativity about Christianity and a stumbling block on the path to dialogue. Hindus see their gods and *avatars* (incarnations) as manifestations of the impersonal *Brahman*. Hindus accept Jesus as one of the saviours sent by God to save the world, but they can’t accept nor grant that Jesus is the one and only saviour of the world and the exclusive incarnation of God.

### 3.1.2.1 Hindu Reaction to the Christian claim of Uniqueness

The Hindus, with their eternal religion (*sanatana dharma*) and belief in the ultimate reality, which is beyond grasp, have a serious difficulty in accepting Jesus Christ as the world’s Lord and Saviour. Hindus had and even today have difficulty in understanding the claim for the uniqueness of Christ. Hence, there have been different reactions on the part of Hindus. Some of the outstanding interpreters of

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nts/rc\_con\_cfaith\_doc\_20000806\_dominus-iesus\_en.html, 10.12.2017.

<sup>435</sup> A. Pushparajan, “Dialogue. Crisis and Solution”, *Mission Today*, Vol. 4, no. 4, July-September 2002, p. 188.

<sup>436</sup> “From Cardinal Ratzinger’s interview published on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2000, by Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung”, cited in: Edmund Chia, “FABC responds to *Dominus Iesus*”, *Jeevadharma*, Vol. 31, no. 183, May 2001, p. 230.

<sup>437</sup> Cf. A. Pushparajan, *Dialogue: Crisis and solution*, p. 190.

Hinduism have interpreted the Christian view of uniqueness of Christ and Christian exclusivism as 'arrogance born out of a defective conception of Truth'.<sup>438</sup> It would be here proper to take into consideration the attitude of the Hindu thinkers to the Christian claim of uniqueness.

*Gandhi* respected the person and teachings of Christ. But he didn't consider Christ as the only saviour of the world. He in fact did not accept Jesus as the son of God and thus rejected the salvific value of Jesus' death and resurrection and the universality of the salvific grace of Jesus.<sup>439</sup> Gandhi did not believe in Jesus as the only begotten son of God, saying that the term 'son' can be used only figuratively. In his opinion, anyone who is spiritually enlightened can be called son or daughter of God.<sup>440</sup> For him, Jesus was divine, just like Rama, Krishna, etc. Hence, he says: "I do not take as literally true the text that Jesus is the only begotten son of God . . . I cannot ascribe exclusive divinity to Jesus. He is as divine as Rama or Krishna."<sup>441</sup> Gandhi explains his argument further and says, "God alone is absolutely perfect. When he descends to earth, He of his own accord limits himself. Jesus died on the cross because he was limited by the flesh".<sup>442</sup> Although Gandhi did not accept or recognize Jesus as the universal and unique saviour, he was still very much impressed by teachings of Christ (Sermon on Mount in the Gospel according to Matthew Ch. 5). The teachings of Christ not only influenced his writings but also his very life and all that he did for India. He accepted Jesus as a martyr, an embodiment of perfect sacrifice and a divine teacher.<sup>443</sup> There are three important inspirations that Gandhi drew from the life and teaching of Christ: Firstly, he realised the Christic presence of God in the poor and the marginalized and acted against the atrocities done to these people by bringing them back into the Hindu fold. Secondly, through the influence of the Christian teachings, he reinterpreted the doctrine of Karma as having social and communal dimensions rather than a merely isolated relationship with God. Thirdly, he emphasised the need for the cross or suffering love (*ahimsa*) as necessary to attain the perfection or self-realisation.<sup>444</sup> All this only tells us that although Gandhi was unhappy with Christianity as a religion (mainly because of the conversions and claims to superiority), Gandhi loved Christ and his teachings.

<sup>438</sup> Cf. Wesley Ariarajah, *Hindus and Christians: A Century of Protestant Thought*, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1991, p. 210.

<sup>439</sup> Cf. Anton Wessels, *Images of Jesus-How Jesus is perceived and portrayed in Non-European Cultures*, Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1991, p. 138.

<sup>440</sup> Cf. Mariasusai Dhavamony, *Jesus Christ in the Understanding of World Religions*, Roma: EPUG, 2004, p. 62.

<sup>441</sup> "Harijan", 6-3, 1937, cited in: Swamy Vikrant, *Inter-Religious Dialogue*.

<sup>442</sup> Michael Amaladoss, *The Asian Jesus*, New York: Orbis Books, 2006, p. 25.

<sup>443</sup> Cf. M.V. Kamath, *Gandhi: A Spiritual Journey*, Mumbai: Indus Source Books, 2007, p. 24.

<sup>444</sup> Cf. Robert Ellsberg, *Gandhi on Christianity*, New York: Orbis Books, 1991, p. 99.

A second reaction to the Christian claim of uniqueness is from *Swami Vivekananda*, who was well acquainted with Christ and his teachings. Vivekananda refuted the Christian claim that Jesus Christ is the unique revelation and incarnation of God. He, however, recognized Jesus Christ as one of the incarnations (*avatar*) of God.<sup>445</sup> Since Christ is just one of the manifestations or incarnations of God, like Buddha, Krishna or others, the Christian claim that Jesus Christ is the only and unique manifestation is a result of the fact that Christians limit God. Vivekananda sees Jesus as a true *Yogi* or a *Sanyasin* (an ascetic person), a *jivan mukta* (freed), who through his way of life had reached the stage of perfection and self-realisation. He speaks of Jesus as a true model of renunciation who had emptied himself totally in order to attain *Moksha* or salvation.<sup>446</sup>

One of the most blatant criticisms to the Christian claim of uniqueness came from Dr. *Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan*, who strongly reacted to and refuted the Christian claim of uniqueness of Jesus. It was unimaginable and inconceivable, in the opinion of Radhakrishnan, that God, who created the entire universe as His, would be concerned only with one part of the smallest of planets.<sup>447</sup> God cannot have favourites, rather He must be a God who reveals Himself equally to all the people, which makes the revelation in all religions equally valid.<sup>448</sup> Radhakrishnan denied the possibility of an absolute God revealing Himself in the relative world in a perfect manner and called on the Christians to give up their claim to be absolute religion.<sup>449</sup> Radhakrishnan however understands Jesus as Avatar or *Advaitin* in the sense that Jesus indicates the divine descent to man and human ascent to God and realises this twofold relationship perfectly in himself: "Jesus is the example of a man who has become God and none can say where His manhood ends and His divinity begins. Man and God are akin. 'That art Thou-Tat tvam asi'."<sup>450</sup>

*Raja Rammohan Roy* was one among many who rejected Christianity but accepted Christ. Roy was deeply influenced by the ethical teachings of Jesus. Roy held on to the monotheistic vision of the ultimate reality. Hence, he rejected the idea of the divinity of Christ and the idea of the Trinity. His argument was this: "True religion is ethical monotheism. Since God is ineffable and incomprehensible he cannot be identified with any outward form, whether an image (as in popular Hinduism) or in a person (as in Christianity). Jesus therefore cannot be

<sup>445</sup> Cf. Stanley Samartha, *Hindus vor dem universalen Christus: Beiträge zu einer Christologie in Indien*, Stuttgart: Evangelisches Verlagswerk, 1970, S. 63.

<sup>446</sup> Cf. Michael Amaladoss, *The Asian Jesus*, p. 23.

<sup>447</sup> S. Radhakrishnan, *The Bhagavadgita*, London: Allen & Unwin, 1958, p. 34.

<sup>448</sup> Cf. Radhakrishnan, *Religions in a Changing World*, London: Allen & Unwin, 1967, p. 132.

<sup>449</sup> Andreas Becke, *Hinduismus zur Einführung*, Hamburg: Junius Verlag, 1996, S. 25.

<sup>450</sup> S. Radhakrishnan, *The Heart of Hinduism*, p. 100 cited in: Michael Amaladoss, *The Asian Jesus*, p. 26.



called God.”<sup>451</sup> In Roy’s opinion, Christian doctrines about God were not in any way unique or superior to those of other religions, rather it was in their social values that the Christian moral precepts were incomparable.<sup>452</sup> For Roy, Jesus is a moral teacher whose teaching is very beneficial to the Indian people. Jesus’ moral teachings are a way to freedom and happiness. Hence, Jesus’ teachings have a universal value. These teachings are valid everywhere at all times.

The creative dialogue of Hinduism with Christianity initiated by Rammohan Roy was continued by his successor *Keshab Chandra Sen* (1838–1884). Unlike Rammohan Roy who saw Jesus through the eyes of ‘a westernized rationalist Hindu’, Sen found himself in a deep and an intimate devotional relationship to Jesus.<sup>453</sup> His profound understanding of the person and message of Jesus Christ reflects his deep commitment to the person of Jesus and similarly his deep commitment to the person of Jesus helped him toward the profound grasping of the person and the message of Jesus Christ.<sup>454</sup> Sen admired Jesus for his moral greatness. However, he went further in accepting the person of Christ in the light of his paschal mystery and Trinitarian relationships.<sup>455</sup> Sen saw in Jesus and his teaching the spiritual foundation not only for the progress and development of India, but for the whole of Asia. The teaching of Jesus on forgiveness and self-sacrifice are, according to Sen, the most fundamental doctrines of Gospel ethics, in which one can realise the greatness of Jesus Christ.<sup>456</sup> For the first time in the history of Indian theology, Sen tries to interpret Jesus Christ as the Logos and basing himself on the Vedantic idea of the *Brahman* as *Saccidananda*, he interprets the doctrine of the Holy Trinity as the *Sat* – Father, *Cit* – Son and *Ananda* – Holy Spirit.<sup>457</sup> Sen was a true believer and follower of Christ in his heart who adored Christ, but rejected the popular idea of the Church.

There were some factors common to all these Hindu thinkers in relation to Christ and Christianity: (1) They reject the notion of Jesus’ uniqueness, (2) do not attribute any special meaning to Jesus’ historical existence, (3) do not ascribe any universal significance to Jesus’ death on the cross and his resurrection, (4)

<sup>451</sup> John Parrat, *The Other Jesus: Christology in Asian Perspective*, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2012, p. 19.

<sup>452</sup> Cf. Abidullah Al-Ansari Ghazi, *Raja Rammohun Roy: AN Encounter with Islam and Christianity and the Articulation of Hindu self-consciousness*, USA: X Libris Corporation, 2011, p. 96.

<sup>453</sup> John Parrat, *The Other Jesus: Christology in Asian Perspective*, p. 21.

<sup>454</sup> Jacob Parappally, *Emerging Trends in Indian Christology*, Bangalore: IIS Publications, 1995, p. 6.

<sup>455</sup> Samuel Rayan, “Hindu Perceptions of Christ in the Nineteenth Century”, *Concilium*, Vol. 2, January-1993, p. 15.

<sup>456</sup> M. M. Thomas & P. T. Thomas (Eds.), *Towards an Indian Christian Theology: Life and Thought of some Pioneers*, Tiruvilla: Christava Sahitya Samithi, 1998, p. 45.

<sup>457</sup> Jacob Parappally, *Emerging Trends in Indian Christology*, p. 10.

attribute great meaning to Jesus' self-denial and living as an example, (5) attach a great deal of importance to Jesus' message of love and non-violence, and (6) do not see any surplus value in Christianity as a religion and the Church as an institute.<sup>458</sup> In all their reaction, one must recognize that these nineteenth-century Hindu thinkers have held on to the significance of their faith as a tolerant faith, by their respect and reverence for Christ. However, the phenomenon today is totally different. There are very sharp and blatant criticisms of Jesus and Christianity by some Hindu writers of today. For example, Sitaram Goel, a Hindu nationalist (1921–2003) who is known as very outspoken in his criticism of Christianity, severely criticises Christ and Christianity in his book titled: *Jesus Christ: An Artifice for Aggression*.<sup>459</sup> He calls on Hindus to realise that Jesus symbolizes neither spiritual power nor moral uprightness but is only mischief for India.<sup>460</sup> He also criticises the Christian missionaries for their mission as conversion in India. Hindu writers like Arun Shaourie, too, have in their writings criticised the missionaries and the Christian religion, in spite of the good work the Church has been doing in Indian society. A criticism of such type has made the situation between Hindus and Christians precarious, and the attitudes of Hindus to the Christians (and other minority groups) even more negative, so that dialogue becomes both a necessary and difficult.

### 3.1.2.2 Indian Christian Theologians on the Uniqueness of Christ

There have been also varied responses to the traditional doctrine of the uniqueness of Christ on the part of the Indian theologians. Most important among them are Felix Wilfred, Stanley Samartha and Raimon Panikkar.

#### A. Felix Wilfred

Felix Wilfred deals with the question of the Christian uniqueness from an Indian perspective. He sees the talk about the uniqueness and absoluteness as hardly meaningful in the Indian context characterized by a totally different religious universe.<sup>461</sup> In his opinion, the question of uniqueness is primarily a modern Western question: a question that has challenged the reflection of two streams of thoughts, namely, the dogmatists who are trying to affirm and uphold the uniqueness of

<sup>458</sup> Martien E. Brinkman, *The Non-Western Jesus: Jesus as Bodhisatva, Avatara, Guru, Prophet, Ancestor or Healer?*, transl. Henry & Lucy Jansen, London: Equinox Publishing Ltd., 2007, pp. 144–145.

<sup>459</sup> Sitaram Goel, *Jesus Christ: An Artifice for Aggression*, New Delhi: Voice of India, 1994 & 2001.

<sup>460</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 85.

<sup>461</sup> Cf. Richard Lopes, *Indian Christology of the Way*, Innsbruck-Wien: Tyrolia Verlag, 2011, p. 345.

Christ and the reactionary rebels who want to relativize it.<sup>462</sup> Western epistemology is predominantly an epistemology of differentiation and negation, and “hinges upon history where particular events or persons and their uniqueness matters. Whereas for many Asians, what matters is that the various religions are thriving, giving life, and are at peace with each another.”<sup>463</sup> This problem of uniqueness, according to Wilfred, will not end but continue in the West because of the wrong interpretations and wrong starting points in theologizing, as concerns the uniqueness of Christ. However, if Indians can interpret Christ based on their experience and in their own categories, then uniqueness won’t be a problem in India.<sup>464</sup> India has different perceptions of the ultimate mystery and its revelations. The plurality of faith in India helps Indians to realise that “the ultimate goal calls for a diversity of paths”, which makes the claim of uniqueness of Christians in India meaningless.<sup>465</sup> Therefore, Indian religions have learnt to respect and accept other religions through the practice of *sarvadharmasamabhava* (equality of all religions). Indians understand the mystery better through the different interpretations of Jesus by the Indian thinkers, even without touching upon the issue of the uniqueness. These interpretations which have sprung from the Indian experience of Christ and from the attitude of *sarvadharmasamabhava* are true Christology for India. Wilfred opines that it is possible to believe in Jesus and follow him and understand his mystery without the use of the Western language of uniqueness. Today, Christ can be best presented and made acceptable for people of India through *marga*. Here the purpose is not to avoid “the issue of the person of Jesus and talk only of his person”, but to “reconstruct the personality of Jesus, re-appropriate him and interpret him through his *marga* (way of suffering) which also will disclose his being and truth.”<sup>466</sup> Wilfred calls on the Indian Church to undertake the task of plunging into the existing reality of poverty and oppression, the multi-religious and multicultural Indian context, in order to discover the image of Jesus most suited to respond to India’s questions and challenges.<sup>467</sup>

<sup>462</sup> Cf. Felix Wilfred, *From the Dusty Soul*, pp. 178–181.

<sup>463</sup> Gemma Tulud Kruz, “God before us, God among us: Interreligious Dialogue from an Intercultural Feminist Perspective”, Edward Schillebeeckx and Contemporary Theology, Lieven Boeve, Frederiek Depoortere & Stephan van Erp (Eds.), New York: T& T Clarke, 2010, p. 89.

<sup>464</sup> Jose Kuttianimattathil, *Practice and Theology of Inter-Religious Dialogue*, Bangalore: Kristu Jyoti Publications, 1995, pp. 286–287.

<sup>465</sup> Felix Wilfred, *From the Dusty Soul*, pp. 190–191.

<sup>466</sup> Felix Wilfred, *From the Dusty Soul*, p. 197.

<sup>467</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 175.

B. Stanley Samartha<sup>468</sup>

Samartha finds it very difficult to accept the Christian claim of the uniqueness of Christ, being in the religiously plural land of India. Such a claim raises questions regarding God's relationship to the entire humanity. He denies the Christian claim that the divine mystery is revealed fully in Christ only. He criticises the Christian claim of uniqueness saying: "Through the incarnation in Jesus Christ, God relativized himself in history. Christian theologians should therefore ask themselves whether they are justified in absolutizing in doctrine one whom God has relativized in history."<sup>469</sup> Pointing out to the one expression of mystery in Hinduism as *Saccidananda* and in Christianity as the Holy Trinity, Samartha speaks of the plural ways of responding to the mystery and thereby rejects the Christian claim that Christ is the true revealer of the mystery of God: "That Jesus is the Christ of God, is a confession of faith by the Christian community. It does indeed remain normative to Christians everywhere, but to make it "absolute singular" and to maintain that the meaning of the mystery is disclosed *only* in one particular person at one particular point, and nowhere else, is to ignore one's neighbours of other faiths who have other points of reference."<sup>470</sup> Pointing out to the command of Jesus to love one's neighbour, Samartha says when Christians make exclusive claims about Jesus Christ or their faith tradition, they are not in the position to love their neighbours as themselves. If the human responses to the ultimate mystery can be plural, then it also applied to the concept of salvation as viewed by the followers of different religions. In a multi-religious situation like the one in India, the notion of salvation is understood differently by different religions and there are as many ways of understanding the concept of salvation as there are religions.<sup>471</sup> Hence, Samartha feels that the Christian claim of having the 'only answer' to all problems of all people in the world is presumptuous in a land like India, where the alternative ways of salvation have provided meaning and purpose of life to millions of people of other cultures and religions for more than two or three thousand years.<sup>472</sup> However, by his claims or rejection of exclusive claims, Samartha

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<sup>468</sup> Stanley Samartha, an Indian Protestant theologian, was born in the South Kanara district of Karnataka. He did his doctoral studies in USA on the philosophy of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan. From 1968–1975, he was the director of WCC study unit: DFI\_ Dialogue with Men of Other Faiths and Ideologies. Presently, he is lecturer and a theologian at large, particularly at UTC-United Theological College. Some of his most important works are: Stanley Samartha, *The Hindu Response to the Unbound Christ*, Bangalore: Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society, 1974; S. J. Samartha, *One Christ-Many Religions: Toward a Revised Christology*, New York, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1991.

<sup>469</sup> S. J. Samartha, *One Christ-Many Religions*, p. 76.

<sup>470</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 84.

<sup>471</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*

<sup>472</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 84–85.

does not in any way intend to undermine or deny the validity of the Christian experience of salvation in Jesus Christ. What he means is: "If salvation comes from God- and for Christians it cannot be otherwise-then possibilities should be left open to recognize the validity of other experiences of salvation."<sup>473</sup>

Samartha thus rejects exclusivism which "seeks to conquer other faiths".<sup>474</sup> He feels the need to move beyond the exclusiveness and inclusiveness and come to the clearer grasp and understanding and faith in the uniqueness of Jesus, which is possible by formulating a new theocentric theology, which would provide the basis 'for retaining the mystery of God while acknowledging the distinctiveness of Jesus Christ'. He offers a new theological position, namely, "to recognize God alone as Absolute and to consider all religions to be relative."<sup>475</sup> This position denies relativism, affirms the distinctiveness of different religions and saviour figures and makes possible 'a mutually critical and enriching relationship' between religions.<sup>476</sup>

### C. Raimon Panikkar

Panikkar<sup>477</sup> is of the opinion that Jesus Christ as unique must be a criterion for a Christians and not for the entire world or for other religions. I am a Christian and I believe in Jesus Christ. Hence, Jesus Christ becomes the unique saviour for me. Just as my mother is unique to me and she is not the universal mother, so also Jesus Christ is unique to Christianity and he is not the universal saviour.<sup>478</sup> He sees every human person just as unique as Jesus is: "Jesus Christ as a person is unique, as is everybody else. Christianity as religion is not unique; it is one religion among many. The unique saving function of Christianity (as the only religion that can save) can hardly be defended. Where is the uniqueness?"<sup>479</sup> Hence, Panikkar finds it unnecessary to impose the claim of Christian uniqueness on other religions.

For Panikkar, it is Lord (*Ishwar*) – the universal principle, whom Christians call Jesus Christ – who is the mediator or a link between God and man. All human

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<sup>473</sup> Ibid., p. 85.

<sup>474</sup> Ibid., p. 86.

<sup>475</sup> S. J. Samartha, "The Lordship of Jesus Christ and Religious Pluralism", p. 29 cited in: Jose Kuttianimattathil, *Practice and Theology of Inter-Religious Dialogue*, p. 281.

<sup>476</sup> Cf. Ibid., p. 282.

<sup>477</sup> Raimon Panikkar (1918–2010), a Spanish Catholic priest was born in Spain to a Hindu father and a Spanish Roman Catholic mother. He studied both Christianity and Hinduism equally. He specialized in comparative religion and was a great proponent of interreligious dialogue. Some of his important works include: R. Panikkar, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*, London: Darton, Longman & Tod Ltd., 1964; Raimon Panikkar, *Christophany: The Fullness of Man*, transl. Alfred Dilascia, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2004 etc.

<sup>478</sup> Raimon Panikkar, "Whose Uniqueness", *The Uniqueness of Jesus: A Dialogue with Paul F. Knitter*, Leonard Swidler & Paul Mozes (Eds.), New York: Orbis Books, 1997, p. 113.

<sup>479</sup> Ibid., p. 112.

beings are journeying towards the ultimate mystery, and all people are led to this mystery through Christ who, himself being a mystery, transforms and transfigures and divinizes everything; this Christ is the present, active, unknown and hidden Christ of Hinduism.<sup>480</sup> Recognizing these unknown, hidden, active and present dimensions of Christ in Hinduism is essential for a strong Hindu-Christian relationship.<sup>481</sup> For Panikkar, the historical Jesus is the revelation of Christ in the history in space and time. However, it is not necessary for a person to know Jesus in order to follow this way of salvation.<sup>482</sup> Christ has new names, and each of these names reveals a new aspect or dimension or manifestation of Christ, which may be unknown to Christians. But this does not mean there are many Christs, rather there are many dimensions of Christ which are revealed through other names in other religions but may be unknown to Christians.<sup>483</sup> Panikkar “considers the historical person Jesus of Nazareth to be one among many divine manifestations of the Christ Mystery that manifested itself as the crystallization point around which the human, the divine and the material could grow. Panikkar gives the crystallization point different names like Rama, Krishna, *Isvara*, *Purusha*, *Tathagatha* or even humanity, and among these many names is Jesus of Nazareth in whom Christ was present as only one instance or name among many related to his ontic salvific presence from the beginning of creation.”<sup>484</sup> In all this, Panikkar is not denying the historic facticity of the Christ-reality, rather, he wants to de-historicize the Christ-reality “as it were, no longer tied exclusively to a single historical instance.”<sup>485</sup>

### 3.1.2.3 *Christian claim of uniqueness and Interreligious Dialogue*

Some of the modern and progressive theologians are of the opinion that Christianity must give up its claim of uniqueness if it wants to be at peace and harmony with other religions in and through dialogue. Paul Knitter, for example, as we saw in an earlier chapter, calls for the uniqueness of Jesus to be reinterpreted and placed in the context of Jesus’ ethical teachings related to the Kingdom of God. He calls for a soteriocentric interpretation of the uniqueness whereas there are other theologians who hold on to the unique position of Christ in the salvation of the entire world and emphasise the need of proclaiming Jesus Christ as the unique

<sup>480</sup> Jose Kuttianimattathil, *Practice and Theology of Inter-Religious Dialogue*, p. 275.

<sup>481</sup> S. Wesley Ariarajah, *Hindus and Christians: A century of Protestant Thought*, Grand Rapids: WM B Eerdmans Publishing, 1991, p. 204.

<sup>482</sup> Cf. Dominic Veliath, *Theological Approach and Understanding of Religions*-Jean Danielou and Raimundo Panikkar: *A Study in contrast*, Bangalore: Kristu Jyothi Publications, 1988, p. 140.

<sup>483</sup> Cf. Raimond Panikkar, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*, p. 30.

<sup>484</sup> Richard Lopes, *Indian Christology of the Way*, pp. 344–345.

<sup>485</sup> Reinhold Bernhardt, “Jesus Christ as a Stumbling Block in Interreligious Dialogue?”, *Religions and Dialogue, International Approaches*, Wolfram Weisse, Katajun Amirpur, Anna Körs & Dörthe Vieregge (Eds.), Münster, New York: Waxmann, 2014, p. 145.

and universal saviour. Hence, the question is how are we to understand and confront this problem of Christian uniqueness in the multi-religious context of India? If Christianity holds a unique place in God's plan of salvation, then what about the other religions and their faith-relationship with God? Is it feasible for the Indian Christians or the Indian Church to enter into dialogue with Indian religions, particularly with Hinduism, with Christian claims of superiority? If yes, then how is it possible to reconcile the fact of Christian uniqueness with the fact of religious pluralism in a country like India?

In the opinion of Gnana Robinson, since Christian faith is characterized by monotheism, the talk of uniqueness is meaningless for Christians: "Our monotheistic faith does not give any room for the existence of any other god or for any other divine incarnation, and hence we cannot compare Jesus with Buddha, Krishna, Rama, Muhammed or with any other person."<sup>486</sup> He further says that in a multi-religious context like India, since people hold on to different faith-claims, it is important to respect their beliefs and claims without judging them. At the same time, respecting them does not mean accepting. In his opinion, the uniqueness of Christ, even if emphasised in a dialogue, is a matter of personal faith. And just as a Christian can make claims of uniqueness, another partner in dialogue, too, can make faith-claims of his religion. Therefore, there can be no imposition of personal conviction on others or quarrelling over the question of uniqueness in a dialogue.<sup>487</sup> Finally, he feels that the uniqueness of one's faith is to be expressed in and through the life-witness of that faith in the world.<sup>488</sup>

Peter Phan answers the question of uniqueness in interreligious dialogue in the following way: 1) The claim of uniqueness "if it is a fundamental article of faith of one's religious tradition, must be maintained in interreligious dialogue." However, 2) "a distinction must be made between the claim of uniqueness and universality of one's religious founder and that of one's religion as a social organization. The former claim is an affirmation of faith; the latter is an empirical statement. 3) Whereas the faith-claim of the uniqueness and universality of one's religious founder must be maintained and defended, the empirical claim of uniqueness and universality of one's institutional religion must be abandoned or at least extensively qualified in the context of interreligious dialogue."<sup>489</sup>

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<sup>486</sup> Gnana Robinson, "Dialogue with People of other Faiths and the question of the Uniqueness of Jesus Christ", *Studies in Interreligious Dialogue*, Vol. 16, no. 1, January 2006, p. 98.

<sup>487</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*

<sup>488</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*

<sup>489</sup> Peter C. Phan, *Being Religious Interreligiously: Asian Perspectives on Interfaith Dialogue*, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2004, p. 101.

Finally, as Reinhold Bernhardt says, Christian uniqueness has its proper place in worship, in praise of God, in doxology, and not in dialogue.<sup>490</sup> Michael Amaladoss, too, shares the same opinion when he says that the talk of uniqueness is meaningful only in the context of a salvific dialogue between God and humans. Such a dialogue focusses not on religions but on God's mystery, not on discussions and polemics, but on doxology, thanksgiving and praise of God. Hence, one freely expresses and confesses one's deepest experiences and convictions.<sup>491</sup> "Believers can and may speak in the superlatives of devotion in praise of the majesty of the Creator, his creative and reconciling presence in the human world and his promise of a new heaven and a new earth."<sup>492</sup> However, in the dialogue between religions, one is "not making a comparative study of creeds or doctrines, but is witnessing and listening to the mystery of God active in history and in the lives of people."<sup>493</sup>

### 3.1.2.4 *Need for an Indian Christology*

Born on the Indian soil that united different religions, the Indian theologians have finally felt the need to give up the understanding of Jesus in the Western categories and develop their own understanding of Jesus who would be graspable not only for Christians in India but for every Indian. While in some way opposing the age-old Western ways of affirming Christ's uniqueness, they have also been trying to interpret their unique faith in Jesus as the Christ in their own Indian way. There is a need to develop a unique Indian Christology for the Indian religious context. For centuries, the Indian Church has held on to the theology of the Western experience. But the terms and categories of Western theological thought fail to make an impression on an Indian mind. India is a land with a very long spiritual history. Indian spirituality in its plurality is the richest spirituality on the earth. But the teachings of Christ and the values that he brought to the earth are most impressive. However, they do not at times impress or make sense to an ordinary Hindu who has no knowledge of Christ or Christianity, because the form in which Christ and his teaching are presented to India is Western and complex. In order that "Indian Christianity has its anchor in Christ and welcomes Jesus into the Indian heart to be the indwelling Lord"<sup>494</sup>, there is a need for a new theology and a new Christology, because Indian Christian experience is very different from the Western Christian experience and a Hindu would understand the Christian mes-

<sup>490</sup> Cf. Reinhold Bernhardt, *Jesus Christ as a Stumbling Block in Interreligious Dialogue?* p. 148.

<sup>491</sup> Michael Amaladoss, *Making All Things New*, p. 79.

<sup>492</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>493</sup> Michael Amaladoss, *Making All Things New*.

<sup>494</sup> V. C. Rajasekaran, *Reflection on Indian Christian Theology*, Madras: The Christian Literature Society, 1969, p. 94.



sage better and accept it when it is presented to him in an Indian way. Therefore, a new Christology remains a need and a challenge before the Indian Church. There are many Indian Catholic theologians who have tried to present Indian Christological models carved out of their Christian faith and reflection based on the Indian religious and social contexts and suitable to Indian minds. For example, Panikkar developed a Christological reflection known as Christophany. He speaks of Jesus Christ as one name for the cosmotheandric mystery. He also speaks of a hidden, unknown presence of Jesus Christ in other religions (e.g. The Unknown Christ of Hinduism).<sup>495</sup> Jacques Dupuis in his Christological reflection speaks of Jesus as fullness of Revelation. He sees other religions as the salvific ways, which depend on the mediation of Jesus Christ the Logos.<sup>496</sup> Michael Amaladoss speaks of Jesus as the symbol. Through his use of the category of symbol, he develops the thought that “the unknown Christ is active everywhere and manifests himself in a great variety of symbols. But he becomes humanly and bodily present and active in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ, therefore, is symbolic not only of man’s relationship to God, but also of the multitudinous other expressions of the same mystery everywhere and all times.”<sup>497</sup> For my study here, I would like to deal with two theologians whose Christological reflections I find very practical and suitable for the people of India to understand, namely, Samuel Rayan and Richard Lopes.

#### A. Samuel Rayan – A Christology from Below

As we have seen earlier, Rayan speaks of a theology which sees faith as “ortho-/theo-praxis”, a theology which has its goal “the social transformation in the direction of the Reign of God with its justice, equality, freedom and peace.”<sup>498</sup> Rayan’s theological reflection is characterized by his respect for human dignity and worth. He considers the human being as the crown of creation. Hence, his theological reflection points to his taking up the cause of those who are treated in inhuman

<sup>495</sup> See. R. Panikkar, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*; R. Panikkar, *Christophany: The Fullness of Man*; R. Panikkar, *The Trinity and World Religions: Icon-Person-Mystery*, Inter-Religious Dialogue Series 4, Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1970.

<sup>496</sup> Jacques Dupuis, a Jesuit theologian born in Belgium, came to India in 1948. He completed his doctorate in Theology in Rome and taught later theology in India for many years. He served also as the director of the Journal “*Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection*” and was also an adviser to the CBCI. He has written numerous articles and books on theological and inter-religious matters. Some of his most important books are: Jacques Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis books, 1997; Jacques Dupuis, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions*, transl. Robert R. Barr, *Faith meets Faith Series*, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1991; Jacques Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions. From Confrontation to Dialogue*, transl. Phillip Berryman, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2001.

<sup>497</sup> See, Michael Amaladoss, *Making All Things New*, pp. 63–71.

<sup>498</sup> Samuel Rayan, *Decolonization of Theology*.

ways. Indian society is today marked by poverty, oppression and exploitation; hence, through a praxis-oriented theology, one will be able to take the people to God, and the people will be able to experience God as the liberator, the rescuer, who protects His people – His creation as He once did in the times of Moses. God is the God of the poor, needy, suffering and helpless, He reveals Himself today in them. Hence, inspired by the life and praxis of Jesus, who stood by the poor, the unwanted and the rejected ones, we need to go to this God and serve this God among them through our fight against oppression, exploitation and dehumanization. In this way, we will be able to recognize the presence of God in such people, and at the same time, we will be able to show them how much God cares for them and loves them through our struggles and fights against all forms of social oppression.<sup>499</sup>

Rayan is of the opinion that for centuries, the divinity of Christ has been overemphasised, which has led to the negligence and distortion of the humanity of Christ.<sup>500</sup> However, this image of Christ with his divinity overemphasised is less appealing in the Indian context. Hence, there is a need to encounter Christ in the Indian context and to articulate his significance for India. Unlike many theologians, the fathers of the Church and the teachings which emphasised the divinity, Rayan emphasises the humanity of Jesus Christ or the event of incarnation. The humanity of Jesus is very important for Rayan's Christological reflection "since "the man Jesus" unites the sacred and secular and affirms the material world."<sup>501</sup> Through his incarnation, Jesus has given us a new image of God as the loving and merciful loving father. In and through the life and actions of Jesus, he makes clear that God is God of mercy and compassion who takes sides with the poor and the marginalized. Jesus through his humanity became the bread of life, love and comfort for the poor and marginalized; he shared the lot of such people. When he commands us at the eucharistic table to do this in memory of me, it is more than the enactment of the last supper. It is a command for us in turn to become bread of support, strength, love and concern for those who not only physically hunger but also spiritually.<sup>502</sup> Hence, Jesus of history becomes for him the starting point for Christology.

Through his incarnation, Jesus not only partook of the lot of the suffering humanity, he also set himself to voice against all oppression, unrighteousness and inequality, and became a true liberator for all. In a country like India where so-

<sup>499</sup> Cynthia Pinto, *Encountering Christ in Suffering Humanity*, pp. 88–90.

<sup>500</sup> Cf. *Clement Valluvassery, Christus im Kontext und Kontext in Christus. Chalcedon und indische Christologie bei Raimon Panikkar und Samuel Rayan, Münster: LIT Verlag, 2001, S. 178.*

<sup>501</sup> Kirsteen Kim, *Mission in the Spirit: The Holy Spirit in Indian Christian Theologies*, Delhi: ISPCK, 2003, P. 178.

<sup>502</sup> Cf. Cynthia Pinto, *Encountering Christ in Suffering Humanity*, pp. 94–96.

cial inequalities and social abuses are at its peak, working for the liberation of the victims and assuring them that God is at their side is the need of the hour. Hence, a relevant Indian Christology according to Rayan must consider the concrete life situations and the life experiences of the Indians. A relevant Christology must “arise out of the pain and suffering of the people, out of the faith and reflection of the poor, and from the search of the marginalized for relevance.”<sup>503</sup> Such a Christology will be possible only by basing the Christological reflections on the human person of Jesus.

According to Rayan, a new Indian Christology will be effective only when it will have a place for the other. He speaks of discovering the common elements in Hinduism and Christianity, which will help to formulate a new Christology from below, namely, the concept of salvation and liberation, discovering God or *Atman*, sense of service and shared responsibility for social action, the indwelling presence of Christ or *Antaryamin*, etc.<sup>504</sup>

Rayan’s faith in humanity and his new interpretation of Jesus formed the basis of his ecclesiological reflection. The mission of the Church is the same as the mission of Jesus: Solidarity with the marginalized, struggle for a new social order, participation in the struggle for liberation, so that bread, freedom, righteousness and equality is possible for all God’s children.<sup>505</sup>

#### B. Richard Lopes – Christology of *Prem Marga* (way of Love)

Richard Lopes (1967) is a Jesuit belonging to the Gujarat Jesuit Province, India. He did his doctoral studies in Innsbruck. He currently teaches systematic theology in Baroda, India. Referring himself to the traditional problem of the uniqueness of Christ and its reconciliation with the Indian multi-religious context, Richard Lopes asks: how can we define the uniqueness of Christ in an Indian way for the Indian context? Who is Jesus Christ today for India, and how can his way be a unique way of salvation in the Indian multi-religious context?<sup>506</sup> Christ’s uniqueness consists in the fact that Christ loved and he suffered for the sake of this love and died for the sake of this love.<sup>507</sup> Love becomes Christ’s unique *Marga* (way) to salvation and liberation in the Indian context. It’s the way of loving –loving selflessly – that makes Christ unique. Hence, Lopes proposes the Christology of *Prem Marga* (Way of Love) as an answer to the Christological problems faced in

<sup>503</sup> Samuel Rayan, *Decolonization of Theology*.

<sup>504</sup> Cf. Cynthia Pinto, *Encountering Christ in Suffering Humanity*, pp. 111–114.

<sup>505</sup> Felix Wilfred & M. M. Thomas (Hrsg.), *Theologieggeschichte der dritten Welt*, S. 244–245.

<sup>506</sup> Richard Lopes, *Indian Christology of the Way*, p. 346.

<sup>507</sup> Matthew Vekathanam, *Christology in the Indian Anthropological Context-Man-History-Christ: Christ, the mystery of man and of the human history. An evaluative encounter with K. Rahner and W. Pannenberg*, Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Peter Lang, 1986, p. 333.

India.? He suggests chapter 15, 12–17 in the Gospel according to St. John as the key to understand the Christology of *Prema Marga*. It says:

This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another (John 15, 12- 17).

The above passage, according to Lopes, summarises the *Prem Marga* Christology. He sees all other ways of salvation merging in this Christology. The *Prem Marga* of Jesus is the most supreme *Marga* because he shares the love of God with all. The way of love for Jesus consists in loving God and loving one's neighbours too. And this love is to be expressed in actions, as Jesus himself does it on the cross.

Lopes proposes *Prema Marga* Christology characterized by suffering and Cross as a unique Christology for Indian Context. Jesus' way of suffering and cross in order to realise the salvific will of God identifies him with the millions of poor and suffering in India. Jesus leads them by example and teaches them how to live life. Jesus gave primacy to love in his entire life and teaching. His actions such as healing, forgiving, eating with sinners, teaching, miracles were all signs of his loving service. By his death on cross he taught by example that the real love – *Agape* is in laying down one's life in service of others. This ideal of self-giving love of Jesus is acknowledged by many people.

The most important and unique characteristic of Jesus for Lopes is "his kenotic love".<sup>508</sup> Jesus Christ empties himself in order to reveal God to the mankind. His suffering on the cross tells us about God suffering in human form. The cross of Jesus is also a sign of love revealed by Jesus as he died on the cross. We see God face to face in Christ hanging on the cross. Lopes opines that the uniqueness of Christ can be presented in the Indian context in the language of *Kenosis* Christology. The selfless suffering of Jesus on the cross for others is the expression of a suffering God – a God who suffers with and for His people, showing His solidarity with them.

Thus, the Indian Christology of *Prem Marga* is unique because it shows a way to Salvation-*moksha* through love, as is clear in the life of Jesus who suffered for love.<sup>509</sup> No other religion speaks of God suffering and dying out of love for His people. Indian Christology of *Prem Marga* is unique because it speaks of the

<sup>508</sup> Richard Lopes, *Indian Christology of the Way*, p. 374.

<sup>509</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 375.

selfless attitude of Jesus who made himself poor and weak for the sake of the Kingdom of God. It is the same attitude of selflessness that every Indian today needs to adapt from Jesus in order to build a better India. In this Christology, we can also account for the salvation of all because when people follow the way of love in action, they are ultimately following Christ who set them an example by his life. Hence, such a Christology will be meaningful not only to Christians in India, but also to all Indians belonging to different religions, because this Christology speaks of practical values of life and mission in the life of Jesus through which Jesus Christ becomes unique for all.

### 3.1.3 Religious Pluralism and Interreligious Dialogue

#### 3.1.3.1 Hinduism and Religious Pluralism

India is known as the cradle of religions. With almost all of the world religions existing on the Indian soil, India becomes the most fertile country for the growth of religious pluralism. India is a multicultural and a diverse nation with a flourishing history of pluralism, which has long been thriving on Indian soil for thousands of years. Religious pluralism has actually never been a problem for Indians, who have been since ages living with their neighbours of other faiths. Rather, throughout history there always have been efforts by the religious and social thinkers in India to respect this religious pluralism and see it as part of God's design for the world. As the world's largest democracy and a refuge for most of the world's religions, India presents "a unique opportunity to understand a long and multifaceted heritage of religious diversity."<sup>510</sup>

Hinduism never had a problem with the different coexisting religions. Unlike the Semitic religions who considered the followers of other religions as 'pagans' or 'infidels', the Hindu religion has respected and viewed other religions as *nana panthas* or 'innumerable paths' toward spiritual realisation.<sup>511</sup> '*Sarvodaya*', which means uplift of all, was the common dictum practiced on Indian soil.<sup>512</sup> Hinduism sees practicing religion as a matter of personal choice and freedom. In contrast to traditional Christian understanding about other religions, Hinduism has believed in the equality of all religions or *sarva dharma samabhava*. Hinduism has never claimed to be in exclusive possession of truth, rather it has always recognized other religions, too, as carrying the truth about the ultimate reality. Hinduism believes that reality or truth is one, but people call it by different names – "*Ekam*

<sup>510</sup> "Understanding Religious Pluralism in India", <https://globalcenters.columbia.edu/news/understanding-religious-pluralism-india>, 18.12.2017.

<sup>511</sup> Ashok Vohra, "Religious Pluralism and Hinduism", <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/Religious-pluralism-and-Hinduism/articleshow/8363604.cms>, 18.12.2017.

<sup>512</sup> Cf. A. Suresh, "Interfaith Dialogue in India", *Journal of Dharma*, Vol. 25, no. 1, January-March 2000, p. 10.

*sat, vipra bahudha vadanti*". Hinduism has seen every religion around it as the different experience of the one and the same reality and has continued to show respect and tolerance toward other religions. Ashok Vohra sees three techniques adapted by Hinduism with the help of which they have been able to maintain a cordial relationship of mutual tolerance and respect toward other religions for a peaceful coexistence, namely, the techniques of silence, logic and the creation of myths. And the purpose of these techniques is to avoid discussion about the teachings and practices of other religions and at the same time, to assimilate into Hinduism what is true and commendable in other religions and to refute the rest.<sup>513</sup> Religious pluralism in India is, therefore, seen not as a hindrance to India's spiritual and material growth, rather, it is an important factor, adding to India's growth and capacity for a life of mutual respect and tolerance. Religious pluralism in the Indian context can be called as "democracy among religions, in which beauty is understood as unity in diversity."<sup>514</sup>

Many of the modern Hindu thinkers have upheld and hailed religious pluralism as value, as something positive and the will of God for the world. For example, for Mahatma Gandhi religious pluralism was a "living reality".<sup>515</sup> Although born a Hindu, the study of Christianity and various religions helped Gandhi to deepen and affirm his view and understanding of all religions as true and equal. He called all religions to nurture an attitude of respect and tolerance toward each other, instead of trying to put each other down or to claim oneself to be the truth of the humanity. Only in this way can the perfect fellowship in the country be established and achieved: "I came to the conclusion long ago . . . that all religions were true, and also, that all had some error in them; and that whilst I hold by my own, I should hold others as dear as Hinduism; from which it logically flows that we should hold all as dear as our nearest kith and kin and that we should make no distinction between them. So, we can only pray, if we are Hindus, not that a Christian should become a Hindu; or if we are Mussalmans, not that a Hindu, or a Christian should become a Mussalman; nor we should we even secretly pray that anyone should be converted; but our innermost prayer should be that a Hindu should be a better Hindu, a Muslim a better Muslim and a Christian a better Christian. That is the fundamental truth of fellowship."<sup>516</sup> Gandhi links the attitude of tolerance with Hinduism. According to him, tolerance is the very essence of Hinduism. "Hinduism is non-exclusive, or all inclusive, accepts truth and revelation in all religions, gives room to the worship of all prophets, and admits that all religions are

<sup>513</sup> Ashok Vohra, *Religious Pluralism and Hinduism*.

<sup>514</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>515</sup> J. F. T. Jordens, "Gandhi and Religious Pluralism", *Modern Indian Responses to Religious Pluralism*, Harold G. Coward (Ed.), Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987, p. 3.

<sup>516</sup> Robert Ellsberg, *Gandhi on Christianity*, p. 57.

both perfect and imperfect and are able to lead man to his final goal, *moksa*, liberation from the cycle of transmigration and merger with the Absolute.”<sup>517</sup> Gandhi’s plural view of religious pluralism and the positive acceptance of it was shaped by his “day-to-day experience of living in a religiously plural environment and especially an awareness of the potential for conflict that this contained.”<sup>518</sup> In spite of the many differences among religions, which are the result of human imperfection, ignorance and instrumentality, the ultimate goal of all religions is for Gandhi the uplift of individuals in moral, spiritual and religious realms.<sup>519</sup> Hence, all religions must tolerate each other, because all religions are true. Gandhi believed in “*Sarvadharmasamavaya* – having equal regards for all faiths and creeds.”<sup>520</sup> In the person of Gandhi, not only Hinduism but the entire India and the world has a great champion and example for acceptance of religious pluralism. Ramchandra Guha, an Indian historian, in one of his articles speaks of five core components of Gandhi’s faith. These components can also be seen as summarising Gandhi’s view on religious pluralism in India: Gandhi 1) rejected the superiority of one religion over another and 2) held that all religions contain both truth and errors. Hence, he 3) rejected conversion and missionary work, and 4) advocated holding on to one’s religion and to seeking the improvement of its truth content, and 5) he proposed interreligious dialogue.<sup>521</sup>

Swamy Vivekananda is another Hindu thinker who viewed religious pluralism as a positive phenomenon. Vivekananda’s view on religious pluralism was to a great extent influenced by his master who is said to have met Prophet Mohammed and Jesus at some point in his life, after which he taught that all religions are one and have one aim and all religions preach one and the same truth.<sup>522</sup> One of the most significant contributions of Vivekananda to global spirituality and culture are his views on religious pluralism which say that truth is to be found in many religions and not only in one particular religion.<sup>523</sup> Vivekananda perhaps can be considered as the first modern intellectual to present the idea of religious tolerance and acceptance as the correct Hindu position on the phenomenon of religious

<sup>517</sup> J. F. T. Jordens, *Gandhi and Religious Pluralism*, p. 8.

<sup>518</sup> Margaret Chatterjee, “Reflections on Religions in the Indian Context”, *Journal of Hindu-Christian Studies*, Vol. 7, January 1994, p. 9.

<sup>519</sup> Cf. Vincent Moolanparambil, “Mahatma Gandhi: A Man of Mission with Religious Integrity”, *Gott- einzig und vielfältig*, Klaus Beurle (Hrsg.), *Religionen im Dialog, Band I*, Würzburg: Echter verlag, 2014, S. 197.

<sup>520</sup> Robert Ellsberg, *Gandhi on Christianity*, p. 80.

<sup>521</sup> Ramchandra Guha, “His Faith, Our Faith”, <http://www.hindustantimes.com/india/his-faith-our-faith/story-sdpOimN69y2gTuSJs1StI.html>, 19.12.2017.

<sup>522</sup> Cf. Andreas Becke, *Hinduismus zur Einführung*, S. 99.

<sup>523</sup> Cf. Jeffery D. Long, “Swamy Vivekananda and Religious Pluralism”, *Vedanta Conference*, New Dartmouth: University of Massachusetts, 2013, p. 1.

pluralism.<sup>524</sup> In his famous address at the Parliament of the World's Religions in Chicago in 1893, he said: "I am proud to belong to a religion which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance. We believe not only in universal toleration, but we accept all religions as true. I am proud to belong to a nation which has sheltered the persecuted and the refugees of all religions and all nations of the earth."<sup>525</sup>

Vivekananda speaks of freedom of choice in the matter of religion and faith. He was against one religion claiming superiority over the other. He says: "The Christian is not to become a Hindu or a Buddhist, nor a Hindu or a Buddhist to become a Christian. But each must assimilate the spirit of the others and yet preserve his individuality and grow according to his own law of growth."<sup>526</sup> What Vivekananda means is that there should be no imposition of religions on people, the individual is not allowed to practice other people's religion against his own nature; other people are to only help the person find his/her natural religion; the individual must strictly follow his own nature.<sup>527</sup> In short, Vivekananda is proposing dialogue as the tool for interreligious harmony in the face of religious pluralism. And the goal of dialogue is not to be conversion, rather mutual enrichment and harmony.

Like Gandhi and Vivekananda, the Hindu thinkers like S. Radhakrishnan, Rammohan Roy, Keshub Chandra Sen too saw religious Pluralism in India as a positive factor in establishing harmony and peace and building up a just society. They not only studied the scriptures of other religions, they also accepted and practiced the values and teachings of other religions in their own life and thinking. Keshub Chandra Sen and Rammohan Roy are the best examples of it. Thus, we see that Hinduism always accepted religious pluralism as the part of the design of the eternal God or *Brahman*. This led to the respect and acceptance of other religions in India, be it the foreign religions or their own offshoots. All in all, religious pluralism was not a problem to Indian society.

### 3.1.3.2 Religious Pluralism – A Reality to be lived

Religious pluralism is a phenomenon which needs to be accepted and respected today, especially in countries like India, which has been a shelter for so many religions. The Second Vatican Council sent out a strong message when it spoke

<sup>524</sup> Cf. T. N. Madan, *Modern Myths, Locked Minds-Secularism and Fundamentalism in India*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 190.

<sup>525</sup> *The Complete Works of Vivekananda, Vol 1, p. 3* cited in: Ibid.

<sup>526</sup> Swamy Vivekananda, "Address at the Parliament of Religions-Address at the final session-Chicago, September 27th, 1893", <https://www.ramakrishna.org/chcgfull.htm>, 19.12.2017.

<sup>527</sup> Cf. Edmund Weber, *Hindu India: Another Approach to its multiflorous religious Culture*, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2006, p. 32.



positively of all other religions, be it Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism or any other religion. The Catholic Church recognizes the positive value of other religions in the salvific plan of God and recognizes the rays of truth which these religions contain. Hence, these religions cannot be neglected and spoken of as unreal anymore. They need to be respected and the plurality of the possibility of experiencing God through them needs to be recognized and affirmed through the acceptance of religious pluralism. Religious diversity is not something to be denied or negated but, something which is to be respected and positively acknowledged as the very centre point from which all religions can grow and develop.<sup>528</sup> Perry Schmidt-Leukel feels that the acceptance of religious pluralism by all religions is necessary today for a peaceful coexistence. According to him, on the one hand, it is unlikely that one particular religion becomes superior to all other religions and globally dominant, and on the other hand, the ongoing superiority conflicts will only undermine the credibility of the religions.<sup>529</sup> Hence, he sees the multi-religious acceptance of religious pluralism as a better alternative. This is all the truer in the case of the Catholic Church in the Indian context.

The Indian theologians see religious pluralism as a part of the divine design for the world and place the origin of this religious pluralism in God. Michael Amaladoss sees God as the source of pluralism. Pluralism is described by him as “the manifestation of the richness and creativity of God.”<sup>530</sup> Pluralism is willed by God. God’s will is clearly manifested in his creation. The variedness in the creation bears the testimony to the fact that God loves diversity because there is not only unity but also beauty in diversity.

In the opinion of Jacques Dupuis, religious pluralism “must not be viewed as a mere fact of life to be reckoned with, but as a divine grace to be thankful for and an opportunity to be seized—a gift and a task.”<sup>531</sup> Religious pluralism is a gift because it is God’s initiative to search for people in order to share with them His life.<sup>532</sup> It is a task because a gift will become a return gift only when people give a perfect response to God. It is possible only when all recognize that God has His own ways of reaching out to people in varied ways and means. And these means are best manifested in the different religions, which are human efforts to search and know God. The recognition that different religions help their followers

<sup>528</sup> Paul Hedges, *Controversies in Interreligious Dialogue and the Theology of Religions, Controversies in Contextual Theology Series*, London: SCM Press, 2010, p. 264.

<sup>529</sup> Perry Schmidt-Leukel, *Religious Pluralism & Interreligious Theology, The Gifford Lectures—An Extended Edition*, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2017, p. 112.

<sup>530</sup> Michael Amaladoss, *Walking Together*, p. 168.

<sup>531</sup> Jacques Dupuis, “Christianity and Religions: Complementarity and Convergence”, *Many Manifestations? Multiple Religious Belonging and Christian Identity*, Catherine Cornille (Ed.), Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2002, p. 62.

<sup>532</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*

to reach God can help people to respect all religions and see these religions as responses of people to God. Religious pluralism is not just an acceptance of the religious other. When one is able to recognize “a rough parity among the religions concerning truth and soteriological effectiveness”, religious pluralism becomes a “distinctive way” of thinking about religious diversity as “something inherently good, to be embraced enthusiastically.”<sup>533</sup>

The task before the Indian Church today in the face of religious pluralism is not to spell out and affirm what differentiates it from other religions, but to cull out and emphasise that which unites all the religions. What the Indian Church today needs is not to focus on boundary lines that separate it from other religions, but to witness to the ways of peace in order to bring healing in the society.<sup>534</sup> In the face of religious pluralism, the Indian Church must not try “to impose a self-defensive uniformity, but to celebrate difference and pluralism as enriching, particularly when all are collaborating in building human community.”<sup>535</sup> The uniqueness of the other needs not just to be recognized and tolerated, but also accepted. Wesley Ariarajah views religious pluralism as a new situation—a historical moment in the life of the Church, giving the Church a new impetus and marking a new beginning. In his opinion, the Church needs to deal theologically with religious pluralism and “come to a new understanding of the way to relate to, live and work with people of other faiths.”<sup>536</sup> Since all the religions have the moral obligation to lead their faithful to God and to inspire people to work for peace and harmony in the society, it is important to see all religions as collaborators in this one mission. Seen in this way, religious pluralism will not become a problem to be solved theoretically but a reality to be lived practically. The Indian Church can confront the phenomenon of religious pluralism and harness its positivity and value in order to establish peace and harmony in India – a project which is possible only with the cooperation of all the existing religions in India. Interreligious dialogue is the most important means to this end. Since Hinduism is the major religion of India (83% Hindus), the Catholic Church needs to make every effort to enter into dialogue with the Hindu brethren. Interreligious dialogue is important, not just to overcome misunderstandings and rivalries between the religions, but it

<sup>533</sup> Harold Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism: The Challenge to Christian Faith & Mission*, USA: Intervarsity Press, 2001, p. 12.

<sup>534</sup> Ted Grimsrud, “Christian Faith and Religious Pluralism”, <https://thinkingpacifism.net/2012/05/08/christian-faith-and-religious-pluralism/>, 20.12.2017.

<sup>535</sup> Michael Amaladoss, “Together towards the Kingdom: An emerging Asian Theology”, p. 13, [https://insecttheology.files.wordpress.com/2013/11/worldwide\\_asia-amaladoss.pdf](https://insecttheology.files.wordpress.com/2013/11/worldwide_asia-amaladoss.pdf), 26.12.2016.

<sup>536</sup> Wesley Ariarajah, *The bible and the people of other Faiths*, Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1987, p. 63.

is “the product of our basic human desire for integration and harmony, expressing our urge to overcome our fragmented view of reality.”<sup>537</sup>

### 3.1.4 Dialogue as the new definition of the Indian Catholic Church’s Mission

In multi-religious India, the mission of the Catholic Church is no more conversions of people from their religions to Christianity in order to save their souls, rather, the mission today is, along with service, to dialogue with these religions in order to understand them and for a mutual enrichment. Religions have much to offer to the world in matters of justice, peace and equality. The engagement of all religions for the well-being of the Indian society will be effective through mutual dialogue, understanding, solidarity and cooperation between the religions.<sup>538</sup> When religions are in dialogue with each other, it becomes possible “to promote common human and spiritual values, while each religion finds reasons and justifications for it in its own tradition, while at the same time broadening it.”<sup>539</sup> Hence, the Church has to go the way of dialogue and take other religions into confidence in its mission to establish the Kingdom of God and to spread human and spiritual values. Interreligious dialogue in the Indian context must become “a way of life . . . the means of inculturation, the means to the reign of God, the means to harmony, and the means to understanding the will of God.”<sup>540</sup>

#### 3.1.4.1 Dialogue toward Liberation

All religions are called to help people in attaining liberation – liberation from sin/*samsara/dukkha*. This is an internal aspect of liberation. However, this internal liberation is not possible if there is no external liberation – liberation from the clutches of poverty, oppression and inequality. Hence, the first function of all religions is to help people attain this dimension of liberation by working against all the evil in the society. Aloysius Pieris finds any talk of the theology of religions impossible without taking into consideration the aspect of liberation of the masses. For him, a genuine theology of religions takes into consideration the con-

<sup>537</sup> Franz Xaver, *Intercultural: Challenge for the Mission of the Church*, Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2001, p. 159.

<sup>538</sup> Amos Yong, *Pneumatology and The Christian-Buddhist Dialogue- Does the Spirit blow through the Middle way?* Netherlands: Brill, 2012, p. 252.

<sup>539</sup> Michael Amaladoss, “Religion in the Public Space”, *Religion in the Public Sphere I-Religion im Öffentlichen Raum I, Forum Mission Vol. 8, Band 8*, Ernstpeter Heiniger & Paul Stadler (Hrsg.), Switzerland: Brunner Verlag, 2012, S. 23.

<sup>540</sup> Thomas C. Fox, *Pentecost in Asia: A New Way of Being Church*, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2003, pp. 207–208.

cerns of the poor.<sup>541</sup> In his opinion, religions have the potential for liberation.<sup>542</sup> Religions need to come together in dialogue and find out ways and means to counter the social evils. The Church needs to collaborate with the religions in the ongoing struggle of dismantling the oppressive structure so that every person, irrespective of religion, enjoys freedom, respect, dignity and equality. The bishops of Asia, therefore, emphasise the need for inter-faith collaboration in the struggle for liberation: The Church “must reach out to millions struggling for social transformation, a struggle that requires an inter-faith collaboration.”<sup>543</sup> This is possible only when the religions break all the barriers and overcome all the hurdles and overcome rivalry and misunderstanding between them. To put in the words of Peter Phan, the religions today need to cross the borders and reach out to the other. They need to “transcend all the differences and open up new frontiers in order to build a civilization of love.”<sup>544</sup>

The Indian Catholic Church needs to undertake a socially engaged dialogue of religions which can make the liberation a possibility. It is possible that the religions still have problems with each other at the theological and even at spiritual level, in spite of the dialogues. But the dialogue at the level of social action makes them unanimous in their undertakings because of the single aim and purpose which they serve, namely, liberation. Hence, while not denying the necessity of other forms of dialogue, namely, of spiritual and theological dialogue, a priority (practical priority) needs to be given to the dialogue of social action.<sup>545</sup> The Catholic Church has engaged itself in the past years in the dialogue with Hinduism at the level of theology, spirituality, worship, etc. However, there is a lack of dialogue at the level of social action –a dialogue of liberation, which is an urgent necessity in the Indian context. A dialogue of religions at the theological and spiritual level without any reference to social issues and concerns will remain merely at the theoretical and ideal level and won’t be effective completely. Knitter says, “. . . if the dialogue of theology or spirituality is not in some way connected with the dialogue of action, then religion, I have to say, is being turned into a sa-

<sup>541</sup> Aloysius Pieris, *An Asian Theology of Liberation*, London & USA: T&T Clarke International, 1988, p. 69.

<sup>542</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 91.

<sup>543</sup> Gaudencio B. Rosales & C. G. Arevalo (Eds.), *For All the People of Asia*, Philippines: Claretian Publication, 1992, p. 187.

<sup>544</sup> Peter C. Phan, *In our Own Tongues: Perspectives from Asia on Mission and Inculturation*, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2003, p. 137.

<sup>545</sup> Cf. Paul F. Knitter, “Inter-Religious Dialogue and Social Action”, *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Inter-Religious Dialogue*, Catherine Cornille (Ed.), UK: John Wiley & Sons, 2013, pp. 138–140.

cred canopy under which we dispense religious opium to ourselves, and worse, to others.”<sup>546</sup>

Dialogue of the religions is important for a global responsibility. In order to respond to and act against the different crises which are threatening India, be it economical or ecological or terrorism or human degradation, the major and influential religions in India along with other minor religions will have to come together and show a spirit of cooperation for the common goal of peace and harmony, safety and security in India, which will be possible only when they are in dialogue with each other. In their efforts to come together and work to put an end to common social problems and concerns, people of different religions “who are strangers to each other can lay the *hermeneutical groundwork* for getting to know each other and understanding each other’s differences. They form a *community of solidarity* with those suffering oppressions which becomes a *community of conversation* with each other.”<sup>547</sup> The Christians in India will not be able to follow the command of the Lord to love their neighbours unless they are ready to humble themselves and engage in dialogue with their neighbours belonging to other religions.<sup>548</sup> Loving others means to respect, accept, value and listen to others and be ready to learn from them and to share with them the best that we have.<sup>549</sup> It means focusing on the good that they have and not to impose on them all that we have. This is very important for a fruitful and meaningful dialogue.

#### 3.1.4.1.1 *Interreligious dialogue and the inclusion of the poor*

As we have seen earlier, the Asian bishops in their documents speak of a three-fold dialogue as the mission of the Church in Asia, which includes dialogue with the poor. The interreligious dialogue of the Catholic Church in India has for the most part been a dialogue with the higher classes or the Brahminical class and neglected the poor and the outcasts. However, such a dialogue which is confined to a few elites ignores the grassroot realities of life, the people on the margins and their life-situations.<sup>550</sup> Hence, interreligious dialogue must include the poor as the active dialogue partners. Paul Knitter says, “A dialogue of liberation or dialogue of social action that begins by forming a community of solidarity with those who are suffering brings, by necessity, new voices to the conversation; the voices of those who suffer, and those who can speak, for suffering creatures and planet.”<sup>551</sup>

<sup>546</sup> Ibid., p. 139.

<sup>547</sup> Ibid., 142.

<sup>548</sup> Paul Knitter, *Five Theses on the Uniqueness of Jesus: A Dialogue with Paul F. Knitter*, p. 6.

<sup>549</sup> Cf. Ibid.

<sup>550</sup> Cf. Muthuraj Swamy, *The Problem with Interreligious Dialogue: Plurality, Conflict and Elitism in Hindu-Christian-Muslim Relations*, London: Bloomsbury, 2016, p. 186.

<sup>551</sup> Paul Knitter, *Inter-Religious Dialogue and Social Action*, p. 143.

In fact, Knitter even goes to the extent of saying that, “The suffering, the victims, will have to have an active part in determining the agenda for the dialogue, the procedure, and format, yes, the place and language, too!”<sup>552</sup> The inclusion in the dialogue of liberation, of those who actually suffer injustice, inequality and oppression can make the dialogue effective and fruitful in the efforts of the partners involved. It is not enough that the poor and the marginalized and their misery and oppression are the starting points of dialogue of liberation. It’s not enough that the poor are mere *subjects* of the discussion on liberation, they must also become *discussants*.<sup>553</sup> If the poor are not actively involved in the dialogue, the dialogue will become “another instance of foreign aid-of experts” who are trying to rescue the poor from their misery.<sup>554</sup> The inclusion of the poor and the marginalised into the dialogue of liberation is an imperative because the religions involved in the dialogue “cannot really understand each other unless they first listen to and try to understand those who are suffering.”<sup>555</sup> The Catholic Bishops Conference of India emphasises the need of inclusion of the poor in dialogue as a necessary step for a successful dialogue toward liberation: “We have to recognize the fact that the poor too contribute much to us when we are in dialogue with them. We can learn much about their faith, hope and patience.”<sup>556</sup> Hence, the poor are to be given a voice in the dialogue of liberation. In the words of Knitter, giving the voiceless a “first voice” in the dialogue is “a question of justice, of redressing the unjustifiable neglect of voices of the marginalized.”<sup>557</sup>

### 3.1.4.2 Dialogue and spreading the Kingdom of God

Religions in general believe that their end-purpose and goal on earth is to establish a society characterized by peace, love, fraternity, and collaboration. For example, Christians call it the Kingdom of God and the Hindus call it *Ramara-jya*. Confronted with the plurality of religions in India, Christianity in general and the Catholic Church in particular today needs to change its understanding of itself from being “Church centred” to being “Kingdom of God centred”, and its purpose must be to serve this Kingdom of God and not to control or direct it with and in human capacities.<sup>558</sup> The Church needs to make a strong transition

<sup>552</sup> Paul Knitter, *One Earth, Many Religions: Multifaith Dialogue and Global Responsibility*, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1995, p. 128.

<sup>553</sup> Cf. Muthuraj Swamy, *The Problem with Interreligious Dialogue: Plurality, Conflict and Elitism in Hindu-Christian-Muslim Relations*, p. 187.

<sup>554</sup> Paul Knitter, *Inter-Religious Dialogue and Social Action*.

<sup>555</sup> Ibid.

<sup>556</sup> CBCI, “The Church in Dialogue-The Final Statement of 25<sup>th</sup> General Body meeting of the CBCI, 1–8 March, 2002, Jalandhar”, *Indian Theological Studies*, Vol. 39, no. 3–4, 2002, p. 376.

<sup>557</sup> Paul Knitter, *Inter-Religious Dialogue and Social Action*.

<sup>558</sup> Cf. Paul Knitter, *Introducing Theologies of Religions*

from being ecclesiocentric to being regnocentric, “witnessing to the Kingdom of God, spreading gospel values-God’s presence in Jesus bringing forgiveness and reconciliation, justice and peace throughout the world”.<sup>559</sup> John Fullenbach, while describing the Kingdom of God-centred mission of the Church in the pluralistic world says, “If the Kingdom is the ultimate goal of God’s intentionality with all of humanity, then the question no longer is how these other religious traditions are linked to the Church but rather how the Kingdom of God was and is concretely present in these religions.”<sup>560</sup> When the service of this Kingdom of God becomes the goal or prime motive of the Church’s missionary zeal and efforts in India and anywhere in the world, then the attitude of the Christianity to the other religions will not be of superiority, rather, it will change from being negative to being very positive. Knitter believes that the symbol of the reign of God is clear enough to ‘point to’ a common destination for all religions, but also broad enough to affirm the really different, distinctive, and universally urgent ways in which the various communities contribute to this common goal of greater well-being of humans and all sentient beings.”<sup>561</sup> In the Kingdom-centred understanding of the Church and its mission, the other religions will be not only “ways of salvation”, rather, they will be also seen as “the active and God-willed ways of the Kingdom” to the Kingdom of God.<sup>562</sup> In this way, the kingdom of God will become “a gift and a task”, not only for the Church but also for other religions.<sup>563</sup>

Building and spreading the Kingdom of God is a spiritual project of the Church and of all other religions. This project of the Kingdom of God means establishing a society in which well-being of human beings is the topmost priority along with the preservation of the planet earth. Christians definitely are aware and have an idea of how this Kingdom of God should be realised on earth. However, they must also admit and recognize that there can be also many meaningful contributions to this project from other people even though they are not Christians. In this way, the other religions will not be looked upon by the Church as the helping hands in this mission, rather, they will be viewed as co-workers, working hand in hand with the Christians in order to realise and establish the Kingdom of God on earth.<sup>564</sup>

<sup>559</sup> Thomas P. Rausch, *Eschatology, Liturgy and Christology: Toward Recovering an Eschatological Imagination*, Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, p. 156.

<sup>560</sup> John Fullenbach, “Kingdom of God as Principle of Action in the Church”, 20 November, 1999, <https://sedosmission.org/old/eng/fuellenbach.htm>, 25.12.2017.

<sup>561</sup> Paul F. Knitter, “Christian Theology in the Post-Modern Era”, *Pacifica*, no. 18, October 2005, p. 332.

<sup>562</sup> Cf. Paul Knitter, *Jesus and the Other Names: Christian Mission and Global Responsibility*, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1996, p. 118.

<sup>563</sup> John Fullenbach, *Kingdom of God as Principle of Action in the Church*.

<sup>564</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 120.

With this understanding of the Kingdom of God and the religions as the ways of the Kingdom of God and co-workers with Christianity, the issue of the traditional way of conversion loses its importance. Conversion in today's India would mean bringing people closer to the Kingdom of God – a common project of all religions. Salvation takes on a new meaning in this sense as the transformation of the world and humanity. Conversion today does not mean making more and more people the members of the Church but means making them the members of God's Kingdom by inspiring them to lead a better life. Conversion doesn't mean having churches or temples or mosques full of believers, rather it means having space in heart and life for each religion and each faith and respecting it. In the words of Mother Teresa, conversion as a mission in India would mean to help a Hindu to become better Hindu, to help a Christian to become a better Christian, to help a Muslim to become a better Muslim and to help them meet God.<sup>565</sup>

### 3.1.4.3 Dialogue and Peacebuilding

Dialogue towards peace concerns peace among the religions and peace in society. Pope Francis considers dialogue as a means to foster “understanding, harmony, concord and peace.”<sup>566</sup> In a multi-religious context like India, peace is not a luxury but a struggle – a continuous struggle against injustice, oppression, inequality and discord, which is possible if all the religions would unite themselves instead of having conflicts among themselves. Hans Küng says that there can be no peace in the world without religious peace.<sup>567</sup> All religions are to promote peace and encourage their followers to be the instruments of peace. Religions “must not stop receiving God's peace and establishing it upon earth.”<sup>568</sup> If the religions want to function as ways to God, while at the same time having conflicts among themselves, they can never become ways to God. If a religion wants to work for peace, harmony and justice, while at the same time having problems with other religions, it will never be able to reach its goal. On the contrary, the pursuit of peace must bring the religions together to work for the well-being of society. Peace-making or establishment of peace in society is a journey. However, “our journey to peace is not exclusively the Christian journey. We cannot travel it alone. It is not enough to make our own Christian and biblical reflections without taking into account all

<sup>565</sup> Cf. Seraphim, “Mother Teresa of Calcutta-A Different kind of Christian”, <https://ocoy.org/mother-teresa-a-different-kind-of-christian/>, 20.12.2017.

<sup>566</sup> Pope Francis, *Church of Mercy*, pp. 140–141.

<sup>567</sup> Cf. Hans Küng, *Christentum und Weltreligionen: Hinführung zum Dialog mit Islam, Hinduismus und Buddhismus*, München: Piper, 1984, S. 617.

<sup>568</sup> Nirmala Carvalho, “Religious Leaders in India gather to preach non-violence, world peace”, <https://cruxnow.com/global-church/2017/08/18/religious-leaders-india-gather-preach-non-violence-world-peace/>, 27.12.2017.



the available resources of the experiences and contributions of other faiths. This (journey towards peace) is the journey of all the faithful who are committed to peace.”<sup>569</sup> The Catholic Church in India has to understand this fact and accept the solution of dialogue in order to establish peace with other religions, mainly with Hinduism, so that together and united they will be able to work to establish peace in the society.

Dialogue can help solve the conflicts between the Indian Church and Hinduism. However, this will require efforts not only on the part of the Church, but also on the part of Hinduism. Since the goal of the dialogue is to be peacebuilding (a common goal) not only among the partners, but also in the society, both the partners need to make equal efforts to get rid of their violent natures, whether of the past or in the present.<sup>570</sup> There is a need to address the root cause of conflicts and focus on repairing and building up relationships. This will involve “a complex and dynamic process of changing relationships, perceptions, attitudes, behaviors, interests and underlying structures that encourage and perpetuate violent conflicts.”<sup>571</sup> Despite the good work being done by the Catholic Church, it is looked at with suspicion and is often the victim of hatred and violence. The Church in India needs to shed its image as a foreign invader and try to become an insider. This needs an attitude of trust. It needs to build an attitude of trust with Hinduism, which will require “clarifying misunderstandings, removing negative perceptions and stereotypes, and transforming enemy images.”<sup>572</sup> When there is an attitude of trust created, and conflicts resolved, it will be possible for the Catholic Church in collaboration with Hinduism to work out ways to establish peaceful relationships. However, this process as I mentioned earlier, is not easy, rather it is a task which will demand continuous patience, humility and understanding on the part of both Christianity and Hinduism.

The efforts to establish peace among religions will also gradually lead to peace in the society. If the dialogue between the Indian Church and Hinduism results in the establishment of friendly and peaceful relationships, their aim on earth will

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<sup>569</sup> Saw Hlaing Bwa, “Together in our Journey, Toward a Community of Peace for all”, *Glaube und Denken. Mission, Dialog und friedliche Koexistenz: Zusammenleben in einer multireligiösen und säkularen Gesellschaft- Situation, Initiativen und Perspektiven für die Zukunft*, Andrea König (Hrsg.), Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2010, S. 251.

<sup>570</sup> I say of the past or in the present because Christianity has been in the past a violent religion, and Hinduism has also been witnessing to the fact of extremism and violence among its followers. Hence, both these attitudes need to be overcome through new attitudes of acceptance, respect, understanding and friendship.

<sup>571</sup> S. Ayse Kadayifci-Orellana, “Inter-Religious Dialogue and Peacebuilding”, *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Inter-Religious Dialogue*, Catherine Cornille (Ed.), UK: John Wiley & Sons, 2013, p. 151.

<sup>572</sup> Ibid.

also become clear. All religions are to work for the building up of one united human community in equality, justice and peace. In the light of this fact, the Indian Church and Hinduism together with other religions will work hand-in-hand to build peace in the Indian society. The absence of peace in Indian society is not just the result of violence and conflicts between religions and fundamentalism and communalism, rather, it is also the result of the denial of the basic socio-economic and cultural rights to the majority of people, which leads to denial of justice and negation of peace. The Indian Church in its mission of justice and peace can collaborate with Hinduism and other religions and work to bring justice and peace to those whom it is denied. It is in mutual collaboration, understanding and support that the Indian Church together with Hinduism and other religions will be able to fulfil its aim and purpose on earth and specially in Indian context – to become instruments of peace, justice and salvation for all.

All religions have been in the past cause of violence and destruction. Religions are supposed to be human ways of searching for God and finding answers to the ultimate questions of life. Instead, religions have acted contrary to their aim and purpose. They have been the cause of loss of human life, the cause of disharmony and discord. It is now time that religions realise the harm they have done to the world and to humanity. Religions need to rid themselves of their image as causes of conflicts and work to restore and rebuild their images as factors for reconciliation and communal development.<sup>573</sup> Religions need to atone for the wrongs and crimes they have done against humanity. This atonement can be done when the religions unite themselves in order to save and heal, repair and restore the fallen humanity. This is possible only through dialogue and collaboration between the religions.

### **3.2 Dialogue with Churches (Communion among the Churches)**

Although a tiny minority in India, Christianity is divided into various denominations or churches. There are more than 200 Christian denominations or churches in India. The Roman Catholic Church is the biggest of the churches, not only in terms of numbers, but also in terms of structures, organizations and in terms of influence on the Indian society. However, the contribution of the Catholic Church to the ecumenical efforts is not very satisfying in comparison to the initiatives taken by other churches. Vatican II with its decree on ecumenism gave a thrust to the ecumenical relations with other churches, and “the Church in India” Seminar of 1969 took up the ecumenical suggestions of Vatican II and made different recommendations and suggestions for ecumenical relations in India. However, except for the

<sup>573</sup> Cf. Jorgen S. Nielson, “The Contribution of Interfaith Dialogue towards a Culture of Peace”, <http://wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/interreligious/cd36--06.html>, 30.12.2017.

progress made in the ecumenical field in the years following the Council and the Church in India Seminar<sup>574</sup>, not much and noteworthy has been done on the part of the Catholic Church, in order to better the relationships with the other churches. Kuncheria Pathil feels that the Catholic Church has consistently ignored the reality and existence of the other churches in India. In his opinion, “to ignore the presence of others is worse than condemning them as heretics and schismatics.”<sup>575</sup> Albert Muthumalai in his report on ecumenism in India presented during the first ecumenical conference of Jesuit ecumenists speaks of how the Indian Catholic Church made a very energetic and motivated move in the ecumenical direction after the Vatican Council and after some years became ecumenically inactive.<sup>576</sup> Even today, the Catholic Church continues to be less concerned about improving the relationships with the other churches and keeps ignoring their existence. It is very obvious from the fact that the CBCI does not have an independent commission for ecumenism and that the Catholic Church is till today not a member of the National Council of Church in India<sup>577</sup> Both the CBCI and the NCCI work on parallel lines in India, and never had any “serious joint-consultation at the national level.”<sup>578</sup> The ecumenical involvement of the Catholic Church is visible mostly in the occasional ecumenical celebrations, in the Unity Octave, etc. However, this is not enough for the realisation of the ecumenical vision of Vatican II. There is a

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<sup>574</sup> The CBCI Commission for Ecumenism in India made tremendous progress in the post-conciliar period, bringing new life in the ministry of ecumenism. “First and foremost, in response to the suggestion made at the All India Seminar, the Catholic Bishops Conference of India had re-organized the Commission for Ecumenism and Dialogue into two separate Commissions: one for Ecumenism and the other for Dialogue with non-Christians and non-believers. Since then the separate CBCI Commission for Ecumenism devoted its time and energy at various levels and played a very significant role for the promotion of ecumenism in India.” See: A. Suresh, “Ecumenism Response to the Call of the Church in India Seminar 1969”, *The Church in India. After the All India Seminar, 1969: An Evaluation*, Paul Puthanangady (Ed.), Bangalore: Yesu Krist Jayanti, 2000, p. 121.

<sup>575</sup> Kuncheria Pathil, “Ecumenical Reality of the Indian Church”, *The Church in India in Search of a New Identity*, p. 288.

<sup>576</sup> Albert Z. Muthumalai, “Report on India”, *Towards a “Dialogue of Life”: Ecumenism in the Asian Context*, Pedro S. De Archutegui (Ed.), Quezon City: Loyola School of Theology, 1976, p. 245.

<sup>577</sup> The National Council of Churches in India is the Ecumenical Forum of the Protestant and Orthodox Churches in India. The Council was first established in 1914 as the National Missionary Council and in 1923; the Council constituted itself as the National Christian Council of India, Burma and Ceylon. It was in 1979, that the Council came to be fully established as the National Council of Churches in India. The NCCI has 30 member-churches, 17 Regional Christian Councils, 18 All India Organizations and 7 Related Agencies and represents about 14 million Indians. The aim of NCCI is initiation, promotion and coordination of various forms of ministries of witness and service in the wider community and society. NCCI, “Introduction”, <http://ncci1914.com/introduction/>, 03.03.2018. (NCCI).

<sup>578</sup> Kuncheria Pathil, *Ecumenical Reality of the Indian Church*.

need for much stronger and greater ecumenical collaboration on the part of the Indian Catholic Church. The unity of the Church can be lived and achieved not just by speaking of it at the conferences, meetings, seminars and at ecumenical celebrations, but by working towards it and for it in cooperation with one another. In the following section, I suggest three reasons why ecumenical solidarity is important in Indian churches or what are the three important purposes which the ecumenical unity of the Catholic Church with the other Christian churches can serve.

### **3.2.1 Ecumenical Solidarity for the assertion and Protection of the Christian Identity and Existence**

Christians in India are even today seen more as foreigners – a product of foreign missionaries, especially by the *Hindutva* groups. The Christian churches need to be united in order to affirm and assert their identity as Indian Christians. Instead of stressing denominational differences, the Churches need to become united into one church of India – an Indian Church.

In many parts of India, Christians belonging to different churches are being targeted and attacked and persecuted. The minority groups are a soft target at the hands of the fringe groups. Any resistance to these attacks and to the persecutions is possible when Christians of all the churches come together and put up a fight against these bad forces in the society. It is only in the unity that Christians in India can withstand any attacks or persecutions and resist it. Collective efforts can bring better results than every individual church trying to voice its opinion against the injustice done to it in the Indian society. A divided house cannot stand (Mk 3, 25). Similarly, if Christianity in India is divided, it will be easy for the haters of Christianity and even for the governments, who do not favour Christianity, to make laws and act against Christianity in an attempt to silence it. A divided Christianity in India will not be able to present itself as the people of God – people of the risen Christ who is their uniting force. Only when the different Churches unite themselves in heart and mind will they be able to raise their voice against the atrocities done to them and to other minority groups. Taking into consideration the present situation of the minority religions and the treatment meted out to them, especially to the Christians, unity is an imperative for the Christian churches in India. The churches need to form associations, unity platforms (*Ekta manch*) in order to give voice to their opinion at the national and local level and to protect their identity and existence, of course not by having to resort to violence but through peaceful means. Together and united, the Indian Christians will be able to raise a collective voice with a greater capacity to influence governments and public opinion while also providing research for justice education in our respective churches.

Since the Catholic Church in India is the biggest Christian community, it has an important role and function to play in the affirmation and protection of the Christian identity in India by uniting all the Christian churches. The hierarchy has an important role to play in the work of getting the churches together. The hierarchy needs to avoid creating theological barriers in the way of unity and create divisions, and instead, work to help the Christians overcome all the boundaries and barriers that may be existing between the churches.

### 3.2.2 Ecumenical solidarity for a common cause

Archbishop Justin of Canterbury says, “Good relations between different Christian traditions are the ‘oxygen’ that allows the Church to fulfil its mission and proclaim the Gospel.”<sup>579</sup> It is impossible that the Indian Christian churches will achieve full communion through mutual recognition and intercommunion in the near future.<sup>580</sup> Hence, the Indian churches today “need to enter into mutual collaboration and healthy relationship based on the strong foundation of (our) fundamental unity in Christ, one and same baptism and scriptures.”<sup>581</sup> Nor is it realistic to think that Indian churches will have an opinion – a stand different than that of the world churches. Instead of hanging on to the doctrinal differences and harping on them, the churches in India need to come together in practice.<sup>582</sup> To some extent there may be an attitude of dialogue existing between the Indian Catholic Church and other Christian churches. However, dialogue alone is not enough to foster and strengthen the Christian unity. Dialogue needs to be accompanied by praxis. Dialogue needs to be supplemented by “*dia-praxis*”.<sup>583</sup> Hence, instead of concentrating on what separates them, the churches need today to concentrate on what unites them. Instead of wasting time, energy and resources “quibbling over

<sup>579</sup> Archbishop Justin, “Ecumenism: The Oxygen of Mission and Evangelism”, State News Service, 24 May 2013, Academic One File, <http://link.galegroup.com/apps/doc/A333585086/AONE?u=luzern&sid=AONE&xid=997f47b8>, 26.02.2018.

<sup>580</sup> Cf. Kuncheria Pathil, *Ecumenical Reality of the Indian Church*, p. 308.

<sup>581</sup> Ibid.

<sup>582</sup> Aloysius Pieris speaks of “Inter-ecclesial Ecumenism” and “Trans-ecclesial Ecumenism”. In his opinion Inter-ecclesial or classical ecumenism refers to “a charism specific to the local churches of the West” and concerns the discussions on doctrinal differences, codification of inter-church discipline etc. However, Asian churches have no time to face one another as in the classical model; they need rather, to face the world together. He calls this new praxis as trans-ecclesial ecumenism. In his opinion, “inter-ecclesial ecumenism, in Asia, ought to be a *by-product* of this new praxis which is trans-ecclesial, Christ-centered and world-oriented.” See: Aloysius Pieris, *Contemporary Ecumenism and Asia’s Search for Christ*, Manila: Asian Congress of Jesuit Ecumenists, 1975, pp. 27–28.

<sup>583</sup> Antje Jackelen, “Ecumenism Today?!” , *Dialogue: A Journal of Theology*, Vol. 44, no. 1, January 2005, p. 52.

differences between the denominations”<sup>584</sup>, the churches today need to concentrate on bringing the Gospel message to the Indian society in its concrete form. Christ is one, not divided. Similarly, the churches centred round and founded on Christ as the cornerstone cannot be divided. Christ’s message – the one Gospel message, his Good News – is understood, lived and spread by different churches in different way. But all churches are united by the one message of Christ, which inspires them to live and work to realise Christ’s mission in India. As a tiny minority with just around 3%, it won’t be enough just to come together in the name of ecumenism in order to oppose the government bills, laws and schemes which affect the minority rights. The churches need to go beyond that because this is not to be the sole purpose of the ecumenical unity. Rather, the true aim of ecumenical unity is to serve the common good, the betterment of all the people.<sup>585</sup>

The Indian Christian churches today need “a new baptism of immersion, immersion into the life of the poor and the oppressed, immersion into India’s rich cultural traditions, and immersion into the living and pluriform religious traditions and values” of Indian soil.<sup>586</sup> This threefold immersion is nothing other than the threefold dialogue of Indian Christianity with threefold realities of India. This threefold dialogue or immersion is brought about ecumenically “when Christians of different denominations come together to engage in the praxis of dialogue with poor, the cultures and religions of Asia.”<sup>587</sup> The threefold dialogue is to be the goal of the ecumenical relationships in the Indian society and it is this goal, for the achievement of which the churches in India need to unite themselves. The Indian Catholic Church, which has so far in general failed to unite itself with other churches in the ecumenical social ventures or has not considered other churches in its work for the betterment of Indian society, can follow the way of solidarity with other churches and lead by example. Kuncheria Pathil suggests, that the Catholic Church goes ahead and joins the NCCI (National Council of Churches in India) and “co-ordinate the activities of all the Churches in India for the effective common witness and proclamation of the Good News given by Christ.”<sup>588</sup> It is important to realise that if the pursuit of peace and the development of a constructive Indian society is to be an important aspect of the Christian mission in

<sup>584</sup> Kay Marshal Strom, In the Presence of the Poor. *Changing the face of India*, USA, UK, India: Authentic Publishing, 2009, p. 18.

<sup>585</sup> Cf. Viju Wilson, “Ecumenism as Unity for Struggle: Looking again at the Ecumenical Case in India”, Pathways for Ecclesial Dialogue in the Twenty-First Century. *Revisiting Ecumenical Method*, Mark D. Chapman & Miriam Haar (Eds.), New York, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016, p. 134

<sup>586</sup> Kuncheria Pathil, *Ecumenical Reality of the Indian Church*, p. 309.

<sup>587</sup> Edmund Chia, “Receptive Ecumenism through Asia’s triple dialogue theology”, *Pacifica*, Vol. 28, no. 2, 2015, p. 134.

<sup>588</sup> *Ibid.*

India, then solidarity is not an option, but a necessity.<sup>589</sup> In order that Christianity becomes a peacemaker in Indian society, Christians must first strive for unity in action for peace. The WCC document “An Ecumenical Call to Just Peace”, says: “The church divided about peace, and churches torn by conflict, have little credibility as witnesses or workers for peace. The churches’ power to work for and witness to peace depends on finding a common purpose in the service of peace despite differences in ethnic and national identity, and even in doctrine and church order.”<sup>590</sup>

### 3.2.3 Ecumenical Solidarity a Symbol of the perfect Unity to be achieved

Jesus prayed, “that they may be one” (Jn 17, 21) – *Ut unum sint*<sup>591</sup>. This is the perfect unity which all the churches believe will be attained at the end of the times. The ecumenical efforts undertaken by the Christian churches are a journey towards the final unity, which is also the destiny or goal of the ecumenical relationships. But, the movement and the journey towards this perfect unity has to begin here on earth. And our efforts toward ecumenical solidarity are a sign and an indication of this unity. This unity, however, does not mean “return of all the Churches to the Catholic model; nor is it a return to the Orthodox or Protestant model, as if any one model is right.”<sup>592</sup> Diversity and plurality has been part and parcel of Christianity right from the beginning. Yet, there was unity in this diversity. In spite of the diversity, Christians everywhere were one of heart and mind. When this is true of Christianity since its beginning, then, it is important to realise that “the existing individual Churches and their identities are our precious heritage that must be maintained and safeguarded, though these identities shall not be conceived as static or closed.”<sup>593</sup> Any attempt towards the uniformity of the churches will only distort the vision of unity and go against the will of God who in and through His Spirit gathers the people of God from all races and directions and unites them into one Body of Christ. Therefore, what we need today is to become one of heart and mind, and not oneness in structures and authority. Oneness and unity in spirit is more important than uniformity of structure, rituals and rites. In other words, the oneness of the churches which I speak of “does not imply

<sup>589</sup> Cf. Flaminia Giovannelli, “Solidarity of Nations vs National Egoism: Solidarity the way to the Future”, [http://www.justpax.va/content/dam/giustiziaepace/sottosegretariointerventi/2017/Sottosegretario\\_LVIV20October2017...pdf](http://www.justpax.va/content/dam/giustiziaepace/sottosegretariointerventi/2017/Sottosegretario_LVIV20October2017...pdf), 06.03.2018.

<sup>590</sup> World Council of Churches, “An Ecumenical Call to Just Peace, *Guide our feet into the way of Peace (Luke 1, 79)*”, [http://www.overcomingviolence.org/fileadmin/dov/files/iepc/resources/ECJustPeace\\_English.pdf](http://www.overcomingviolence.org/fileadmin/dov/files/iepc/resources/ECJustPeace_English.pdf), 06.03.2018.

<sup>591</sup> This speaks of the spiritual motive for the ecumenism.

<sup>592</sup> Kuncheria Pathil, *Ecumenical Reality of the Indian Church*, p. 298.

<sup>593</sup> Ibid.

that there is a single structure or a single centre among the many different expressions of faith and practice. It refers rather fundamentally to its orientation towards a common calling. To be ecumenical means to be committed to the oneness to which God calls the world in the saving gift of Jesus Christ. It also means to recognize the brokenness of the Church in history and the call of God, especially in this century, to heal this disunity of Christ's people."<sup>594</sup> Ecumenical efforts are to be oriented towards spiritual unity, and not towards organizational, conceptual or doctrinal unity.<sup>595</sup> The Catholic Church, not only in India, but all over the world, together with other Christian churches needs to give heed to the voice of the Spirit of God calling to this unity. "It is a call to bear witness to unity by making an optimum use of the abilities, history, experience, commitment and spiritual tradition of everyone involved. This includes submission to one another and the search to understand the will of the Lord in a spirit of repentance and reconciliation."<sup>596</sup>

Pope Francis in his letter of October 2017 to the Bishops of India says, "The path of the Catholic Church in India cannot be that of isolation and separation, but rather of respect and cooperation."<sup>597</sup> An attitude of isolation and separation, of indifference and rivalry towards other churches is no help in pursuing the call of Christ to the unity of the Church. "It is commonly admitted that we live today in a world of tensions, antagonisms, conflicts, wars, and rumors of wars (Mt. 24:6). Within such a situation isolation or destruction in no way can constitute paths to be followed by Christian churches."<sup>598</sup> Hence, the approach to be followed by the Indian Catholic Church is the approach of cooperation, respect and acceptance in order to work for the Christian unity "that represents both justice and peace."<sup>599</sup>

<sup>594</sup> Lalramliana Pachuau, "Ecumenical Vision: An Indian Church Perspective", [http://cca.org.hk/home/ctc/ctc-xxv-1--2/47--52\\_lalramliana\\_pachuau.pdf](http://cca.org.hk/home/ctc/ctc-xxv-1--2/47--52_lalramliana_pachuau.pdf), 28.02.2018.

<sup>595</sup> Cf. Kuncheria Pathil, *Ecumenical Reality of the Indian Church*, p. 301.

<sup>596</sup> WCC, "Final Statement from the consultation "Ecumenism in the 21st Century", 30<sup>th</sup> November-3<sup>rd</sup> December", <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/ecumenical-movement-in-the-21st-century/foundational-texts/final-statement-from-the-consultation-ecumenism-in-the-21st-century>, 06.03.2018.

<sup>597</sup> Pope Francis, "Letter of His Holiness Pope Francis to the Bishops of India, 9<sup>th</sup> October, 2017", *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection*, Vol. 82, no. 1, January 2018, p. 76.

<sup>598</sup> WCC, "Final Report of the Special Commission on Orthodox participation in the WCC, September 2002", <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/central-committee/2002/final-report-of-the-special-commission-on-orthodox-participation-in-the-wcc>, 06.03.2018.

<sup>599</sup> Olav Fykse Tveit, "The Report by the WCC general secretary Rev. Dr. Olav Fykse Tveit to the WCC executive committee, June 2017", <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/general-secretary/speeches/the-report-by-the-wcc-general-secretary-rev-dr-olav-fykse-tveit-to-the-wcc-executive-committee-june-2017>, 03.03.2018



### 3.3 Dialogue with Nature (Communion with the Nature)

#### 3.3.1 Care for Environment: A burning issue

A special issue of the American magazine titled *Scientific America* (2005), devoted to the environmental situation worldwide and the future prospect of avoiding environmental destruction, had a very special and urgent message and a warning for the world: “Humanity, and with it all life on earth, stands at crossroads.”<sup>600</sup> The earth, our planet, our beloved home, is suffering from environmental crisis. Owing to human selfishness, greed and the human incapacity and insensitivity to listen to the cry of the earth, the earth is inclining towards destruction day by day. John Hart calls it a multi-dimensional crisis – a crisis “of context, consciousness and conscience”.<sup>601</sup> Through environmental crisis the world and humanity is facing “an enormous challenge to its continued existence, a challenge that it has created itself.”<sup>602</sup>

The reality of the crisis is not as small as the word. It is infecting mother earth and life and is very huge and a very grievous blow to the planet earth. The emission of greenhouse gases due to burning of fossil fuels has taken environmental pollution and global warming to an alarmingly high level. The degradation of air quality, of water quality, scarcity of fresh and drinkable water, contaminated lands, deforestation, soil erosion and degradation, loss of habitat and the loss of biodiversity are all different forms in which the environmental crisis expresses itself. There is an increase in ecological disaster that is occurring around the world. If the exploitation of the earth continues and if human greed exceeds the respect for even the tiniest life and for creation, then one day there will be nothing left – no plants, no birds, no animals, no creatures, not even the planet earth itself. As Alice Walker writes, “It is not so much a question of whether the lion will one day lie down with the lamb, but whether the human beings will ever be able to lie down with any creature or being at all.”<sup>603</sup> Hence, it is the need of the hour that the entire world population unites itself in agreement on the care for and the protection of mother earth and its environment.

<sup>600</sup> Jan Oosthoek & Barry K. Gills (Eds.), “Humanity at the Crossroads: The Globalization of Environmental Crisis”, *The Globalization of Environmental Crisis*, London, New York: Routledge, 2008, p. 1.

<sup>601</sup> John Hart, *What are they saying about Environmental Theology?* New York, Mahwah: Paulist Press, 2004, p. 1.

<sup>602</sup> Roger S. Gottlieb, “Religion and the Environment”, *Religion and the Environment: Critical Concepts in Religious Studies*, Roger Gottlieb (Ed.), Vol. 1, *Overviews; Ecotheology I-Judaism, Christianity*, London & New York: Routledge, 2010, p. 9.

<sup>603</sup> Alice Walker, *Living by the Word: Selected Writings 1973–1987*, San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988, p. 173.

Our earth is finite and is limited in its resources and the capacity to support the inhabitants. The Global Footprint Network says: “Today humanity uses the equivalent of 1.7 Earths to provide the resources we use and absorb our waste. This means it now takes the Earth one year and six months to regenerate what we use in a year. We use more ecological resources and services than nature can regenerate through overfishing, overharvesting forests, and emitting more carbon dioxide into the atmosphere than forests can sequester.”<sup>604</sup> According to a recent World Bank report “the number of people fleeing crop failures, droughts and rising sea levels will grow drastically over the next three decades if world governments do not intervene.”<sup>605</sup> It is high time for the world community to unite and cooperate with each other in order to undertake measures to curb the environmental crisis.

India, too, is not an exception to ecological problems and the crisis that the entire world faces today. According to a recent report by international journal “Lancet”, there were almost 2.5 million deaths in India in 2015 due to pollution.<sup>606</sup> The polluted rivers, untimely rains, hot summers and deadly earthquakes are all signs that India is tragically getting affected by the ecological imbalance due to the exploitation of mother earth. Hinduism, India’s biggest religion, speaks of earth as sacred. However, in reality there is hardly any reverence remaining for the earth and the environment. India is a strange land of contradictions, where “the majority of its people are expected each morning to beg pardon of the earth for stepping on it, while, almost blissfully, its rivers are fouled up and its environment polluted.”<sup>607</sup> Ramchandra Guha, an Indian journalist, historian and environmentalist, describes the environmental crisis in India in a succinct way: =

India today is an environmental basket case, and in at least five respects: (1) The rapid depletion of groundwater aquifers; (2) the impending or actual death of our major rivers through household sewage and industrial effluents; (3) the excessively high rates of air pollution in our cities; (4) the unregulated disposal of chemical and toxic waste; and (5) the continuing degradation of our forests and the associated loss of biodiversity. These problems have local, regional, and

<sup>604</sup> See, <https://www.footprintnetwork.org/our-work/ecological-footprint/#worldfootprint>, 23.03.2018.

<sup>605</sup> AFP, “Warming climate will displace millions in coming decades: World Bank”, <https://citizen.co.za/news/news-africa/1861633/environment-climate-migration-water-worldbank/>, 22.03.2018.

<sup>606</sup> Cf. Sushma Dey and Vishwa Mohini, “India saw 2.5 million deaths due to pollution in 2015: Study”, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/india-saw-2-5-million-deaths-due-to-pollution-in-2015-study/articleshow/61158395.cms>, 22.03.2018.

<sup>607</sup> Clement Campos, “*Laudato Si'*: An Indian Perspective”, *Theological Studies*, Vol. 78, no. 1, p. 215.

national impacts. Collectively considered, they raise a huge question against the sustainability of present patterns of agrarian and industrial development.<sup>608</sup>

While India is making tremendous progress and is one of the fastest developing countries of the world, it is also lagging behind in preserving and protecting the environment. The development is costing India its nature, its environment. The tendency to development at any cost has brought a curse to India in the form of “Polluted skies, dead rivers, disappearing forests and displacement of peasants and tribals.”<sup>609</sup> A major factor contributing to India’s environmental degradation is the apathy and corruption of the politicians who have no concern for the environment and who treat the issue of the environment as something very petty.<sup>610</sup>

Despite the ratio of educated people increasing, India still finds it difficult to deal with and treat this important issue of ecological crisis. There are two reasons why the environmental concern poses a tremendous challenge to India: “Firstly, the exploding population and the needs of the billions makes environmental sustainability a very difficult issue. The other big challenge is lack of environmental awareness and conservation.”<sup>611</sup> Unless efforts are made to change this situation, there is no hope and chance for a way out of the ecological crisis that India faces. Environmentalists speak of sustainable development as a solution for ecological problems. Sustainable development implies “managing the diverse interests of a prosperous economy and simultaneously maintaining a healthy environment.”<sup>612</sup>

### 3.3.2 Earth belongs to God

Psalm 24 in the Bible declares: “The earth is the Lord’s and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.” If this Bible verse is understood properly, it can “deepen our appreciation of the creative power of God”<sup>613</sup>, and increase our respect, love and value for the earth. The Bible does not see the world as an accident; it rather traces the origin of the earth and the entire universe in God. Creation of the earth is “an intentional act of God that is provided to human beings

<sup>608</sup> Ramchandra Guha, “The Environmental Challenge”, <http://ramachandraguha.in/archives/the-environmental-challenge.html>, 18.03.2018.

<sup>609</sup> Ramchandra Guha, “The Past and Present of Indian Environmentalism”, <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/the-past-present-of-indian-environmentalism/article4551665.ece>, 20.03.2018.

<sup>610</sup> Cf. Ibid.

<sup>611</sup> Sujatha, “Environmental Issues in India Today”, <https://www.mapsofindia.com/my-india/india/environmental-issues-in-india-today>, 23.03.2018.

<sup>612</sup> Mahesh Chandra, “Environmental Concerns in India: Problems and Solutions”, <https://scholarlycommons.law.hofstra.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1278&context=jibl>, 24.03.2018.

<sup>613</sup> Dianne Bergant, *The Earth is the Lord’s: Bible, Ecology and Worship*, Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1998, p. 5.

as a gift.”<sup>614</sup> Our Christian faith tells us that in the beginning God created heavens and the earth, and He adorned it with beautiful flowers, fruits, thousands of animals, birds and plants. And the creation was good. The opening pages of the Bible also repeatedly emphasise and bear testimony to the fact that the Creator looked upon his creation and “saw that it was good” (Gen. 1:4; 1:10; 1:12; 1:18; 1:21; 1:25). Creation reflects the beauty, the goodness, the grandeur of God. It is this goodness that the divine creator saw in the beauty of creation and the value he placed in them through His act of creating them, which make the environmental problems “morally significant and politically urgent.”<sup>615</sup>

Leonardo Boff says, “Creation is sacramental, since all creatures are God’s representatives and messengers and revelatory of divine presence.”<sup>616</sup> As a sacrament, creation is “the mediation or place of revelation of the immanent presence of the Spirit.”<sup>617</sup> It is “the Lord’s self-manifestation. It is something God is saying and doing, an ongoing revelation, an unfolding word of God in which something of God’s attitude to us is conveyed: the way God holds us dear and precious, the way God relates to us in life-bearing gifts.”<sup>618</sup> Earth is a sacramental gift of God to mankind and in and through this sacramental gift, God gives three basic interrelations of human existence: “First, our relation to the earth, the source that continues to meet our material needs. Second, our relation as stewards of the earth links us in a special way to God, for we have our calling in continuing answerability to our Creator for the care of creation. Third, through these relations to God and to creation, we receive our relationship to ourselves and our fellow creatures, our identity as co-responsible and mutually answerable both to our own time and to future generations.”<sup>619</sup> Creation reflects the active presence of God through His Holy Spirit. Creation (Earth) is God’s Body.<sup>620</sup> The presence of the Spirit also affirms the divine value, which creation possesses from the beginning. Hence, it is not enough to see the reflection of the creator in the creation and contemplate the

<sup>614</sup> Cardinal Turkson, “Cardinal Turkson speaks on environment, *Laudato Si*”, <http://fore.yale.edu/news/item/cardinal-turkson-speaks-on-environment-laudato-si/>, 20.03.2018.

<sup>615</sup> Willis Jenkins, *Ecologies of Grace: Environmental Ethics and Christian Theology*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2008, p. 64.

<sup>616</sup> Leonardo Boff, *Ecology and Liberation: A new Paradigm*, transl. John Cumming, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1996, p. 46.

<sup>617</sup> John Hart, *Sacramental Commons-Christian Ecological Ethics*, Oxford, New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2006, P. 33.

<sup>618</sup> Samuel Rayan, “The Earth is the Lord’s”, *Ecotheology: Voices from South and North*, David G. Hallman (Ed.), Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1994, p. 132.

<sup>619</sup> Theodore Runyon, *Exploring the Range of Theology*, Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2012, p. 120.

<sup>620</sup> The idea of the Earth as the Body of God is a view suggested by Sallie McFague in order to respond to the ecological crisis. See: Sallie McFague, *The Body of God: An Ecological Theology*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993.

beauty, rather, it is also important to establish a relationship of respect, love and care for the creation, based on who they are, and not just for their manifestation of divine presence.<sup>621</sup>

Earth belongs to God. God cares for his creation. He continues to sustain, uphold and renew His creation which He created in love. The Earth is the Lord's. It implies that "its fundamental value does not lie in its usefulness to us. Rather, it lies in the fact of its having come from the creative hand of God, who acknowledged that all things were good even before humans appeared on the scene (Gen 1:4,10,12,18,21,25)."<sup>622</sup>

### 3.3.3 Earth is our common Home (Man as steward and not exploiter)

Of all the created realities, the creation of human beings is the best of God's creations. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* reinforces this fact: "*Man is the summit* of the Creator's work, as the inspired account expresses by clearly distinguishing the creation of man from that of the other creatures" (CCC 343). Created in God's image and likeness and endowed with the unique powers of reason and will, human beings are known as the crown of creation. The earth with all the creation is entrusted to man. Man is called to be a steward, a caretaker. However, this does not mean that the world, the earth and nature was created for the use of humanity and that man has the final say in how the world is to be used. When one looks at creation in such a way, then "Mother earth" becomes depersonalized, humanized into a vague concept of an abstract "Nature".<sup>623</sup> God's mandate to care for the earth, watch over it, govern it, subdue it then becomes a "religious license for anthropocentric domination".<sup>624</sup> Man is to be the steward of creation and not exploit it for his own selfish gains. Man is called by God to serve the good of human beings and all of creation as well. The Bible speaks of 'responsible stewardship', which "must uphold the common good of humanity, while also respecting the end for which each creature was intended, and the means necessary to achieve that end. If man exercises dominion in a way that ultimately destroys nature's creative potential or denies the human family the fruits of creation, such action constitutes an offense against God's original plan for creation."<sup>625</sup> "A good steward does not allow the resources entrusted to him to lie fallow or to fail to produce their proper

<sup>621</sup> Cf. John Hart, *Sacramental Commons-Christian Ecological Ethics*, p. 33.

<sup>622</sup> Dianne Bergant, "The Earth is the Lord's", <https://www.americamagazine.org/content/good-world/earth-lords>, 25.03.2018.

<sup>623</sup> Tom B. K. Goldtooth, "Respect for Mother Earth: Original Instructions and Indigenous Traditional Knowledge", *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Religion and Ecology*, John Hart (Ed.), UK: John Wiley & Sons Ltd., 2017, p. 463.

<sup>624</sup> Willis Jenkins, *Ecologies of Grace: Environmental Ethics and Christian Theology*, p. 80.

<sup>625</sup> Tom B. K. Goldtooth, *Respect for Mother Earth: Original Instructions and Indigenous Traditional Knowledge*, p. 460.

fruit. Nor does he destroy them irrevocably. Rather, he uses them, develops them, and, to the best of his ability, strives to realise their increase so that he may enjoy his livelihood and provide for the good of his family and his descendants.”<sup>626</sup> True human stewardship consists in “respect for nature and intimacy with God.”<sup>627</sup>

Boff speaks of “God syndrome”, which the modern man has produced: “The human being behaves as if he or she is God. Through the project of techno-science human beings thought they could do anything, that there would be no limits to their desire to understand everything, to dominate everything and to design everything.”<sup>628</sup> It is important to understand that we human beings are sojourners on earth and as sojourners on earth, “we are entrusted to leave the earth in as good or better shape than when we arrived.”<sup>629</sup> Human beings consider the earth and the entire creation as ‘objects’ to be used and abused. The earth is sacred. Hence, we must never treat the earth as “a market commodity put up for sale and haggled over—any more than our own bodies and selves, or the self and body of our mother, or the sacraments of God.”<sup>630</sup> “It is important to go beyond the reductive, modernistic view that sees the earth as an unthinking, material object . . . , the Earth is not simply a place where life exists but it is itself a living being, a super-organism-Gaia—wherein physical and chemical processes along with terrestrial and cosmic energies combine to produce and reproduce life.”<sup>631</sup> The greed and selfishness in man have rendered man so insensitive and blind to the beauty of the earth that man has “lost the experience of the sacrality of the universe, and in its place a profanity has insinuated itself that reduces the universe to an inert, mechanical, and mathematical reality and has turned the Earth into a mere department store of resources reserved for our human needs.”<sup>632</sup> The result of human insensitivity to the earth is the ecological crisis and environmental degradation turning our planet, our world into more of “a threat and burden rather than a gift”<sup>633</sup> received at the hands of the creator.

<sup>626</sup> J. Michael Beers, Matthew Lamb & Richard John Neuhaus, “The Catholic Church and Stewardship of Creation”, <https://acton.org/public-policy/environmental-stewardship/theology-e/catholic-church-and-stewardship-creation>, 13.03.2018.

<sup>627</sup> Willis Jenkins, *Ecologies of Grace: Environmental Ethics and Christian Theology*.

<sup>628</sup> Leonardo Boff, *Essential Care: An Ethics of Human Nature*, transl. Alexandre Guilherme, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2008, p. 5.

<sup>629</sup> J. Matthew Sleeth, *Serve God, Save the Planet—A Christian Call to Action*, Grand Rapids: Son-dervan, 2006, p. 35.

<sup>630</sup> Samuel Rayan, *The Earth is the Lord’s*, p. 142.

<sup>631</sup> Leonardo Boff, *Toward an Eco-Spirituality*, transl. Robert H. Hopke, The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2015, p. 39.

<sup>632</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>633</sup> Theodore Runyon, *Exploring the Range of Theology*, p. 121.

Earth belongs to everyone, to all people. Earth belongs to us. “Human beings do not merely live on Earth, but they are the Earth that lives in them.”<sup>634</sup> Earth is a living organism. Hence, the protection of this life – earth and its natural beauty, the protection and preservation of our common home – is to be the task of every human person on earth. According to John Zizioulas, an Eastern Orthodox bishop and theologian, human beings are called to be priests of creation, rather than being stewards of creation.<sup>635</sup> The world, the entire creation, is finite, and it is only by relating itself to God – the only infinite and immortal being – and by being in communion with God, that creation can overcome its natural finitude and mortality. Human beings are created by God in order to take on this function of uniting the creation with God.<sup>636</sup> Since human beings are priests and not stewards of creation, their role is not to manage the creation but to be a part of it: “As priests rather than stewards we *embrace* nature instead of managing it . . . its deeper meaning is . . . ontological, since this ‘embracing’ of nature amounts to our very being, to our existence.”<sup>637</sup>

### 3.3.4 Creation – an important part in God’s plan of salvation: Eucharistic Ecology

Pope Francis in his encyclical letter *Laudato Si’* says, “It is in Eucharist that all that has been created finds its greatest exaltation (*LS* 236).”<sup>638</sup> The Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist can be instrumental in shaping our ecological vision. Eucharist is “the celebration of both the holiness and wholeness of creation.”<sup>639</sup> The celebration of the Holy Eucharist brings human beings, nature and the creator into close contact with each other. “Creation appears as holy in that the earthly elements that sustain our lives and communication have such a central place in the Eucharistic gift. Unless creation was radically from God, it could not figure so largely god’s relationship to us.”<sup>640</sup> The matter used for the celebration of the Eucharist, namely, bread, wine and water, is a part of the creation of God. Bread and wine also speak of the work of human hands which has gone into the process of making the bread out of wheat and wine out of grapes. These gifts of the earth

<sup>634</sup> Leonardo Boff, *Toward an Eco-Spirituality*, pp. 32–33.

<sup>635</sup> Cf. John D. Zizioulas, *The Eucharistic Communion and the World*, Luke Ben Tallon (Ed.), London, New York: Bloomsbury T & T Clarke, 2011, pp. 137–138.

<sup>636</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*

<sup>637</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 140.

<sup>638</sup> Pope Francis, “Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si’* of the Holy Father Francis on Care for our common Home”, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150524\\_enciclica-laudato-si\\_en.pdf](http://w2.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si_en.pdf), 20.03.2018. Henceforth cited as *LS*.

<sup>639</sup> Tony Kelly, “Eucharistic Ecology”, <http://www.eapi.org.ph/resources/eapr/east-asian-pastoral-review-2000/volume-37--2000-number-1/eucharistic-ecology/>, 23.03.2018.

<sup>640</sup> *Ibid.*

are ultimately the sign of God's goodness and generosity to mankind. The Eucharist emphasises the goodness of God as the source of the matter used for the celebration, namely, bread, wine and water. Through the gifts of bread and wine in the Eucharist, the Christian community symbolically brings the whole creation to the altar, thereby, making Eucharist as an act of praise of God from the whole of creation.<sup>641</sup> "Receiving the bread and wine as products of divine creation reminds us of our duties of stewardship of the natural environment in a time when destruction and pollution imperil the earth, and unjust distribution of the planet's resources destroys the hopes and lives of millions."<sup>642</sup> Eucharistic renewal and environmental responsibility are not two separate concerns, rather, they are intrinsically linked. The Eucharist does not take us out of the world. It gives us an experience of a "co-belonging with one another: humanity with creation, and the whole of creation with God".<sup>643</sup> It connects us closely to the earth as the source of goodness of God and work to preserve and protect our planet. Our celebration of the Eucharist "touches the heart of what it means to live on this earth – as we yearn for a new heaven and a new earth, sharing in that future glory even now."<sup>644</sup> The inter-connectedness between Eucharist and the creation is beautifully brought out by Denis Edwards in his article, *Celebrating Eucharist in a Time of Global Climate Change*: "Even when, in the Eucharist, the focus of the memorial is on Christ's death and resurrection, this is not a memory that takes us away from creation. On the contrary, it involves us directly with creation. It connects us to Earth and all its creatures. When we remember Christ's death, we remember a creature of our universe, part of the inter-connected evolutionary history of our planet, freely handing his whole bodily and personal existence into the mystery of a loving God. When we remember the resurrection, we remember part of our universe and part of our evolutionary history being taken up in the Spirit into God. This is the beginning of the transformation of the whole creation in Christ."<sup>645</sup>

<sup>641</sup> Denis Edward, *Partaking of God: Trinity, Evolution and Ecology*, Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2014, p. 173.

<sup>642</sup> United Methodists, "This Holy Mystery: A United Methodist Understanding of Holy Communion", <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/this-holy-mystery-a-united-methodist-understanding-of-holy-communion>, 23.03.2018.

<sup>643</sup> Cf. Angel F. Mendez Montoya, *The Theology of Food: Eating and the Eucharist*, Malden: Wiley Blackwell, 2009, pp. 151–152.

<sup>644</sup> Timothy W. Whitaker & William S. Skylstad, "Heaven and Earth are full of your Glory: A United Methodist and Roman Catholic Statement on the Eucharist and Ecology", <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/ecumenical-and-interreligious/ecumenical/method/upload/Heaven-and-Earth-are-Full-of-Your-Glory-Methodist-Catholic-Dialogue-Agreed-Statement-Round-Seven.pdf>, 23.03.2018.

<sup>645</sup> Denis Edward, "Celebrating Eucharist in a Time of Global Climate Change", *Pacifica: Australian Theological Studies*, Vol. 19, no. 1, February 2006, p. 12.



Beatrice Bruteau perceives Earth as “a Eucharistic Planet, a Good Gift planet, which is structured as mutual feeding, as intimate self-sharing.”<sup>646</sup> “The world of mountains and rivers, of bread and wine, of friends and enemies, is all held and displayed in the universal monstrance, the Showing, the phenomenalization of the Absolute.”<sup>647</sup> The entire earth – the entire world as the “Real Presence” of the divine – is a single living body in which the various members freely give themselves as food to one-another. Such an understanding of earth is, according to her, necessary today in order to revere and protect our planet.<sup>648</sup>

### 3.3.5 Man’s Kinship with Creation: A Franciscan perspective

Since creation is God’s family, human beings who are also a part of this creation are not different from it but are brothers and sisters to the other created realities. Human beings are not crown of creation in the sense that they are totally apart from the rest of the earth, rather, they are its inseparable members – earth’s children. But human beings have failed to realise this fact, which has led to an attitude of indifference toward the earth and nature. “Our ecological crisis is the result of a misunderstanding and misrepresentation of our relationship with nature and the natural world, that is, with Creation itself. The environmental crisis calls us to re-examine our understanding of nature, and our place within, and relationship to, the natural world.”<sup>649</sup>

Leonardo Boff, in his book titled *Essential Care: An Ethics of Human Nature*, speaks of a need for “a new paradigm for living together”, a paradigm which “will be based on better relations with the Earth, which will inaugurate a new social pact between people, a social pact forged in respect and for the preservation of all that exists and is alive.”<sup>650</sup> Francis of Assisi, who is known as the “Patron of Ecology”,<sup>651</sup> has given us this paradigm. Francis’ creation-spirituality, his attempt to see God in the creation and seeing creatures as brothers and sisters, was aimed at replacing the “domination paradigm” with the “communion paradigm”.<sup>652</sup> He saw the entire world as related, in communion. His relation with nature is an example for the world to follow today. He cared for creation because he saw the

<sup>646</sup> Beatrice Bruteau, “Eucharistic Ecology and Ecological Spirituality”, *Cross Currents*, Vol. 40, no. 4, Winter 1990–91, p. 501.

<sup>647</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>648</sup> *Cf. Ibid.*, p. 502.

<sup>649</sup> Susan Baker & Robin Morrison, “Environmental Spirituality: Grounding Our Response to Climate Change”, *European Journal of Science and Theology*, Vol. 4, no. 2, June 2008, p. 36.

<sup>650</sup> Leonardo Boff, *Essential Care: An Ethics of Human Nature*, pp. 1–2.

<sup>651</sup> Considering his love for the earth, for creation and his reverence and care toward it, Pope John Paul II solemnly declared Francis of Assisi the founder of Franciscan orders, as the Patron Saint of Ecology on November 29, 1979.

<sup>652</sup> Beatrice Bruteau, *Eucharistic Ecology and Ecological Spirituality*, p. 508.

Creator Himself in the created reality. He realised that God, his heavenly Father, “is not only the Father of all human beings but also of all creatures. Therefore, the whole creation is filled not with creatures but with brothers and sisters.”<sup>653</sup> The creation was for him like a mirror reflecting the beauty and purity of the creator. He “saw the goodness of God in every created thing, and every created thing for him became an outward sign of hidden divinity.”<sup>654</sup>

Francis’ love for creation and his oneness with it reached its culmination in the “Canticle of Creatures” or “the Canticle of Brother Sun”, which he composed towards the end of his life. The Canticle expresses “a familial link to all creation.”<sup>655</sup> The Franciscan theologian Eric Doyle views the Canticle of Creatures as the work of the poet-mystic in Francis. The Canticle is not only a poetic expression of the praise and gratitude to God for the wonderful creation, but also an “expression of the authentic Christian attitude toward creation which is to accept and love the creatures as they are.”<sup>656</sup> As human beings created from the earth and going back to earth, “we are related to the Earth our mother, to each other, and to all our relations, all beings: the two-legged people, the four-legged people, the winged people, the finned people, the rooted people.”<sup>657</sup> Creatures are not objects, but they are active and living subjects. They are to be respected in their individuality because they have their inherent value by God. This is the message Francis has for the world of today which is disrespectful toward creation. Creation is holy, creation is positive and creation is God’s because Creation “bears God; it communicates God; it prompts human beings to journey into God; it praises God independently of human beings.”<sup>658</sup>

Francis’ love and care for creation was also a contra-sign to those who in his times saw the created world as something negative, evil and sinful and, hence, to

<sup>653</sup> Nithiya Sagayam, “St. Francis of Assisi: The Model for Ecological Concern”, Call to Evangelization: The Franciscan Response in the Socio-Ecological Context of India- Papers presented at the ICRF annual meeting held at Janampet (AP), Johnson J. Puthenpurackal (Ed.), Janampet: ICRF, 1997, p. 130.

<sup>654</sup> Mark Elvins, A Eucharistic Vision and the Spirituality of St. Francis of Assisi, Herefordshire: Gracewing Publishing, 2007, p. 10.

<sup>655</sup> Antony Kolencherry, “*Laudato Si: Francis Assisi’ Laudes Creaturarum* and the Theological Wisdom of the Indian Cultural Heritage”, Indian Theological Studies, 2016, 469.

<sup>656</sup> Eric Doyle, “*The Canticle of Brother Sun and the Value of Creation*” Franciscan Theology, Dawn M. Nothwehr (ed.), p. 158, cited in: Dawn M. Nothwehr, Ecological Footprints: An essential Franciscan Guide for Faith and Sustainable Living, Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2012, p. 90.

<sup>657</sup> Tom B. K. Goldtooth, *Respect for Mother Earth: Original Instructions and Indigenous Traditional Knowledge*.

<sup>658</sup> Dawn Nothwehr, “The Church’s Mission of Ecojustice: A Prophetic Dialogue Approach”, Mission on the Road to Emmaus – Constants, Context and Prophetic Dialogue, Cathy Ross & Stephen Bevans (Eds.), London: SCM Press, 2015, p. 93.

be avoided.<sup>659</sup> He is a perfect model for us at a time when creation and the entire earth is considered negative in the sense that earth and created things are seen as objects which are for the use of man. Francis of Assisi calls on the world today to become a contra-sign to such exploitative and inconsiderate and indifferent tendencies, through the cultivation of love, respect and care for the earth. He calls on the world today to participate in his project of universal brotherhood, which he initiated in his times – a project which will not only help humanity to repair and mend the relationships with other human beings and creation, but also to care and work for the growth and well-being of each other as members of the Family of God.<sup>660</sup> Earth and human beings are not created as perfect beings, rather both are to work toward and cooperate in mutual perfection and are to “grow and develop through mutual interaction”.<sup>661</sup>

### 3.3.6 India and the Ecological Challenge today

The ecological crisis is rampant in the world and particularly in India, where there is not only ecological imbalance, but also social imbalance. The powerful few are ruling the weak majority through the help of the corrupt and selfish politicians. The rich are misusing and exploiting the earth and the environment, and they are most of the time under the patronage of the government. The rich and powerful consume enormous amounts of the earth's resources and are living energy-hungry lives, while the poor are struggling to find food and water.<sup>662</sup> This can be no way ahead, if India wants to curb the ecological imbalance and at the same time achieve sustainable development. For a sustainable development in India, the consumption of earth's goods will have to be restrained. This calls on the government level for “a discontinuation of state sponsored subsidies benefiting the rich, a compulsion to take care of pollutants, and a democratic dispersion of powers to decide on the use of the country's resources.”<sup>663</sup> There is a need for ecojustice.

<sup>659</sup> Cf. Lawrence S. Cunningham, *Francis of Assisi-Performing the Gospel of Life*, Grand Rapids, Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004, p. 93.

<sup>660</sup> Indian traditions speak of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* – a term used to denote the unity of the created beings. Literally, the term means “the Earth or the World is a family”. According to this term, all the living and created beings of the earth belong to one family, one household, and are mutually dependent. This principle of fundamental unity and interconnectedness of all creatures, encoded in the Indian Scriptures, resonates with the idea of kinship with nature or the universal brotherhood, which Francis of Assisi wanted to establish during his lifetime.

<sup>661</sup> Michael Amaladoss, “A Spirituality of Creation according to Pope Francis”, *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection*, Vol 79, no. 8, August 2015, p. 566.

<sup>662</sup> Cf. Dave Bookless, *Planet Wise: Dare to care for God's World*, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2008, p. 11.

<sup>663</sup> Madhav Gadgil & Ramchandra Guha, *Ecology and Equity: the use and abuse of nature in contemporary India*, New York: Routledge, 2005, p. 130.

In the language of Pope Francis, Christian ecological consciousness today calls for an ecological conversion, “whereby the effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them” (LS 217). We need to undergo ecological conversion, a transformation which leads to “a new way of thinking, seeing, feeling, acting and living, each mutually related with all of the others.”<sup>664</sup> Such a conversion keeps us away from extreme anthropocentrism which “sees other creatures as existing only for human use and exploitation, understands human beings in individualistic terms, exults the spirit at the expense of matter and the body, and sees salvation as taken out of creation.”<sup>665</sup> The ecological conversion has three important elements: Firstly, human beings come to recognize other creatures as their own brothers and sisters, their own kin; secondly, we come to realise that each created reality and species has its own value and dignity before God; thirdly, this realisation leads us towards efforts to form one community of life on earth.<sup>666</sup>

Ecological conversion leads a person to an important step: ecological action. Ecological action is in favour of an earth that suffers exploitation and in favour of the poor who suffer the most from this exploitation of the earth. Ecological action is a twofold task of “discovering the divine within the nature and restoring to human beings their position as children of nature.”<sup>667</sup> “Christian commitment to the community of life on our planet will involve commitment to the liberation of human beings from poverty and oppression and commitment to the well-being of all the other species of earth.”<sup>668</sup> As Pope Francis says, justice for human beings and ecological justice cannot be separated from each other ((LS139). Rather, these two go hand-in-hand and are interconnected. In the same line of thought, Leonardo Boff speaks of ecology and liberation theology as having a common starting point: “they start from two bleeding wounds. The wound of poverty breaks the social fabric of millions and millions of poor people around the world. The other wound, systematic assault on the Earth, breaks down the balance of the planet, which is under threat from the plundering of development as practiced by contemporary global societies.”<sup>669</sup> Both issues are interconnected and, hence, need an equal attention.

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<sup>664</sup> Denis Edward, *Partaking of God: Trinity, Evolution and Ecology*, p. 174.

<sup>665</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>666</sup> *Cf. Ibid.*, p. 175.

<sup>667</sup> Sebastian Kappen, “Asian Search for a Liberative Theology”, *Bread and Breath: Essays in Honour of Samuel Rayan, SJ (On the occasion of his Seventieth Birth Anniversary)*, T. K. John (Ed.), Anand: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1991, p. 105.

<sup>668</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 178.

<sup>669</sup> Leonardo Boff, “Liberation Theology and ecology: Rivals or Partners”, *Religions and Environments: A Reader in Religion, Nature and Ecology*, Richard Bohannon (Ed.), London, New York: Bloomsbury, 2014, p. 319.

The Church is a sacrament of Christ in the world. It is a sacrament that belongs to the earth with all its other living communities (animals, plants). As a sacrament of the earth community, it is the Church's "essential vocation to be an ecological community that is called to be at the service of other communities through ecological praxis."<sup>670</sup> The challenge before the Indian Catholic Church is to cultivate, develop and spread an ecological consciousness: an ecological consciousness that sees the other beings (whether human beings or other created realities) as sacred, full of value and dignity and treats them with respect and cares for them. The Church needs to make efforts to care for nature as well as for the poor because every time nature is abused, the poor suffer too. There is a need for the Church to join the larger community who is already aware of the ecological crisis and is working to protect the environment. In the opinion of the theologian and ethicist Markus Vogt, the Church is the best place to address environmental issues and concerns, and not only the Church, but also all the religions of the world: "We all live on the same planet and saving the climate will only work if we manage to cooperate in a coordinated way. That's true not only on a political level but also on a cultural level. And cultural cooperation can be anchored in interreligious dialogue. The competition for the world's dwindling resources will only grow more intense. And because religions have often played a central role in starting or escalating conflicts, (I think) it's also those religions' duty to teach the world how to mediate conflicts and build bridges."<sup>671</sup> Ecological crisis is an issue affecting the entire world and the people of all religions. Hence, "Members of different religious communities must work alongside nonbelievers so that we may give effective responses to the many plagues in our world."<sup>672</sup> The Indian Catholic Church can make the care for the environment one of the most important and serious issues to be treated through the interreligious dialogue and the dialogue with Christian churches, so that the Indian society becomes more and more aware of the need to protect and preserve the environment before it is too late. Some of the possibilities could be establishing interreligious and ecumenical committees for justice, peace and ecology and organizing interreligious programmes in order to spread ecological awareness, etc.

I would like to conclude with a few essential lines from the *Earth Charter*, which gives us an idea of the importance of joining our hands together for the

<sup>670</sup> Matthew Jayanth, "Ecology", A Concise Encyclopaedia of Christianity in India, Errol D'Lima (Ed.), Pune: JDV & Mumbai: St Pauls, 2014, p. 365.

<sup>671</sup> Giana Grün "People are unaware of the church's influence on climate issues", <http://www.dw.com/en/people-are-unaware-of-the-churchs-influence-on-climate-issues/a-16714418>, 13.03.2018.

<sup>672</sup> Junno Arocho Esteves, "Religions must take lead in protecting creation, Pope says", <https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/eco-catholic/religions-must-take-lead-protecting-creation-pope-says>, 21.03.2018.

protection of our planet: “We stand at a critical moment in Earth’s history, a time when humanity must choose its future . . . To move forward we must recognize that in the midst of a magnificent diversity of cultures and life forms we are one human family and one Earth community with a common destiny. We must join together to bring forth a sustainable global society founded on respect for nature, universal human rights, economic justice, and a culture of peace. Towards this end, it is imperative that we, the peoples of Earth, declare our responsibility to one another, to the greater community of life, and to future generations . . . . The choice is ours: form a global partnership to care for Earth and one another or risk the destruction of ourselves and the diversity of life.”<sup>673</sup> We are surely at a point where we need to decide whether we are for life or death, whether we are for renewal and restoration or for destruction and degradation, whether we are for the well-being of all creation and through it for peace or for discord resulted from the selfishness of the few, whether we begin to recognize the Earth as our own and learn to love, respect and protect her for our own well-being or we continue to exploit, abuse and ill-treat her and cause the destruction of the entire world. The choice is ours and it is important to decide wisely.

#### 4 Conclusion

Indian society today faces a threefold crisis: religious, social and ecological. The newspapers and the news channels are full of news about the conflicts between religions, the conflicts between the rich and poor and the environmental degradation caused by human selfishness. The Indian Catholic Church cannot try to help uplift the misery of India by working like an NGO (affiliated to Rome) which works and acts according to the instructions received from the head office. Such way of practicing Christian faith and fulfilling the mission of Christ has made the Indian Catholic Church only more and more a foreign Church – a foreigner. The Indian Catholic Church has to become *Indian* if it wants to win the hearts of the Indian society and if it wants to become the soul of India. The Second Vatican Council rightly understood this fact. Therefore, the Council through its documents has set a challenge before the Catholic Church to become totally Indian, to become the believing community of India. This task can be fulfilled only when the Church plunges into the Indian context, which is marked by threefold realities: many religions, many cultures and immense poverty. By adapting itself to this context of India, by confrontation with these realities and through its radical praxis in the light of the teaching of Vatican II, the Indian Church will be able to overcome the challenges and to develop an ecclesiology in Indian context: an ecclesiology

<sup>673</sup> Earth Charter Initiative, “The Earth Charter Text, 2001”, <http://earthcharter.org/virtual-library/2/the-earth-charter-text/>, 14.03.2018.

which is prophetic, inculturated and dialogical. The realisation of this threefold dimension will take the Catholic Church a step closer to realizing the vision of the Second Vatican Council and to its mission of establishing the reign of God on earth.

## Appendix: A Serving Church: Authority as Service

Paul Avis in his book: *Authority, Leadership and Conflict in the Church*, describes the root meaning of the word authority as follows:

(The word ‘authority’ is) profoundly liberational and therapeutic. It stems from the Latin verb *augere*, to make increase, to cause to grow, to fertilize, to strengthen or enlarge. This gave the noun root *auctor*, a doer, causer, creator, founder, beginner or leader. The senses of enabling and nurturing are fundamental – *auctoritas* meaning weighty counsel: more than advice and less than command.<sup>674</sup>

In its positive understanding, the word ‘authority’ seems hardly significant for our world today, which understands authority totally negatively, as a tool to exercise power over others and to dictate terms to them. Such negative understanding of the word ‘authority’ has also prevailed over the Church in the last centuries. Instead of considering authority as a way to serve, it was considered as a weapon to rule, to command, to impose. Even today, the Church is not free from such an understanding of authority. The Bible says: “the son of man did not come to be served, but to serve, and give his life as a ransom for many” (Mt. 20, 28 & Mk. 10, 45). This one sentence summarises the entire life and mission of Jesus Christ on this earth. Service is one word which summarises the call of Jesus Christ – service in humility, service in love. Service is the word which must summarise the entire mission and activity of the Church of Christ on earth – service in love, service in humility. To be a serving the Church is a call that the Gospel of Christ gives to the Church today. The Catholic hierarchy has the obligation to live the ideal of service it received from Jesus Christ. In this connection, I would like to deal with the theme of *authority in the Church as service* in the following few pages. I would like to base my thoughts mainly on the book of Yves Congar: *Power and Poverty in the Church: The Renewal and Understanding of Service*.<sup>675</sup> The understanding of authority in the Church as service is not something new. This theme runs throughout the Christian tradition.<sup>676</sup>

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<sup>674</sup> Paul Avis, *Authority, Leadership and Conflict in the Church*, London: Mowbray, 1992, p. 19.

<sup>675</sup> Yves Congar, *Power and Poverty in the Church: The Renewal and Understanding of Service*, New York: Paulist Press, 2016.

<sup>676</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.



## 1 Authority as Service: Biblical Foundation and Historical development

Congar refers to different instances in the New Testament, in order to show how Jesus understood authority and emphasised its service aspect. True greatness as Jesus understands it is the one which comes from humility (Mt. 18, 4) and service (Jn. 13, 12–17) and not from ruling over others. Richard Foster sees in Jesus' radical idea of greatness, a total reversal of the contemporary idea of greatness: "Leadership is found in becoming the servant of all. Power is discovered in submission."<sup>677</sup> The greatness of Jesus as the Master and Lord, does not come from himself, rather, from his Heavenly Father from whom he has received his mission. The (Heavenly) Father alone is the principle without a source. The basis for Christ's service in humility lies in his realisation of the fact, that "all comes from him; all is called to return to him."<sup>678</sup> The greatness and worth a person has is imparted to him by God. In Congar's opinion the absolute authority that Jesus received from his heavenly Father (Jn 3, 35) with regard to the world and men has two important characteristics: The authority of Jesus "1) is wholly directed to their salvation, by the path of the deepest humiliation and 2) wholly received from the Father, depending on him, and constantly referred to him by Jesus' acknowledgement that he has nothing save from the Father: Jesus' doctrine is not *his* doctrine, *his* judgement is not his judgement (cf. John 7, 16; 5, 30; 12, 49)."<sup>679</sup>

The greatness and the recognition of apostles as teachers, as men of authority, is derived from Jesus. If the apostles are recognized as such, it is because of Jesus and His name, not because of themselves. Jesus makes service, not authority, to be the guiding principle of his disciples' mission and life.<sup>680</sup> Jesus came not to "domineer" not to exact service, but to serve. He expects the same attitude from those who want to follow him. A disciple is one who follows his master, imitates him and shares his life. Because the disciples of Jesus belong to him, because their life belongs wholly to him and for him, they can be true disciples only by following Jesus. They can "rise only by humbling themselves, only by following Christ on the downward path of self-giving and self-abnegation . . ."<sup>681</sup>

Congar refers to another important instance about service in the letter of St. Paul to Philippians, namely, to the beautiful hymn of kenosis, which speaks of the self-emptying of Christ (2, 6–11). Although Jesus was God, he emptied himself

<sup>677</sup> Richard Foster, "A Reversal of Meekness", *The Book of Jesus: A Treasury of the Greatest Stories and Writings about Christ*, Calvin Miller (Ed.), New York: Barnes & Noble, 2005, p. 458.

<sup>678</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>679</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>680</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>681</sup> *Ibid.*

of his eternal glory and became a servant – a slave of all. He became a servant. Robert Greenleaf describes a servant leader as follows:

The servant-leader is servant first . . . . It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. That person is sharply different from one who is leader first, perhaps because of the need to assuage an unusual power drive or to acquire material possessions.<sup>682</sup>

Jesus was a true servant leader. His leadership was marked by a strong sense of servanthood and service. Jesus became a slave in two senses: Firstly, he became the servant of God his Father, from whom he received his mission, power and authority; secondly, he also became a servant for humanity, at whose salvation his mission as servant of God was aimed.<sup>683</sup> This gives way to the Christian paradox that the true glory and greatness reveals itself in the moment of radical giving – the death of the Son of God.<sup>684</sup> In His death, God glorified Jesus. God exalted his humble and lowly servant to the heights of heaven and made Him great. All those who follow Christ need to follow his example of selflessness. Jesus was able to fulfil the mission given by God because of “who and whose he was, and his relationship with the Father gave him the power and security to love and serve others.”<sup>685</sup>

Congar connects this hymn of kenosis to the Pauline concept of Christ as the second or new Adam (Rom. 5, 12–21). Congar gives this Adam-Christ parallel a new face and understanding. The first Adam wanted to be God, to be the master and dominate the world, whereas the second Adam, Christ, was “not a man of domination, but a man of obedience, giving thanks, a man in communion with others, complying with others, or rather complying and communing God in them”.<sup>686</sup> The first Adam stood for destruction, the wasting of life through his tendency to domineer and to possess, whereas, the second Adam, Christ, restores the broken relationship, he restores the broken communion, lets God have the last word, lets God rule over and makes new life possible for all.<sup>687</sup> The cross of Jesus – a sign of weakness and powerlessness – made the reign of God possible and became a manifestation of the true glory and magnificence. “Jesus’ life was the cross – life of submission and service. Jesus’ death was the cross – death of conquest by suf-

<sup>682</sup> Robert Greenleaf, “The Servant as Leader”, [https://www.essr.net/~jafundo/mestrado\\_materia\\_l\\_itgjkhnld/IV/Lideranc{c}as/The%20Servant%20as%20Leader.pdf](https://www.essr.net/~jafundo/mestrado_materia_l_itgjkhnld/IV/Lideranc{c}as/The%20Servant%20as%20Leader.pdf), 30.04.2018.

<sup>683</sup> Cf. Peter Kohlgraf, *Nur Eine Dienende Kirche Dient der Welt – Yves Congars Beitrag für eine glaubwürdige Kirche*, Ostfildern: Matthias Grünwald Verlag, 2015, S. 82.

<sup>684</sup> Cf. Ibid.

<sup>685</sup> Kenneth Boa, *Conformed to His Image: Biblical and Practical Approaches to Spiritual Formation*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2001, p. 45.

<sup>686</sup> Yves Congar, *Power and Poverty in the Church*, p. 10.

<sup>687</sup> Cf. Peter Kohlgraf, *Nur Eine Dienende Kirche Dient der Welt*, p. 83.

fering.”<sup>688</sup> Jesus’ servanthood was a response to the in-breaking of the Kingdom of God, and he demonstrated that the way to God’s glory is in the total offering of self, even in pain and death.”<sup>689</sup>

The washing of the feet in the Gospel of St. John is another instance where we have Jesus’ idea of authority (Jn 13, 1–17). After washing the feet of his disciples, Jesus says to them, “For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you” (Jn 13, 15–16). In Congars opinion, the ordination of the apostles and their consecration is for service, an ordination in terms of service. Christ has all the authority in Heaven and on earth from his heavenly Father, yet his greatness consists in his humility and service to the humanity. His greatness consists in serving others till his death on the cross. “The way of Jesus is the way of humble service. The hands that washed the disciples’ feet would soon be nailed to a cross. This ultimate act of service and love cost Jesus his life. Our Lord was willing to get his hands dirty and bloody to show us what a true leader looks like.”<sup>690</sup> The call of Jesus is very clear to his apostles who would soon be the leaders of the Church and guide it: service – humble service is a key to greatness. It is *diakonia*, which would make the life and mission of the apostles meaningful and successful.

## 2 The Church of Christ is *a serving Church*

The Church of Christ, following in the footsteps of its founder, needs to become a serving Church. Only in following its master and Lord and imitating the legacy of loving service he left behind, can the Church become the true Church of Christ.

### 2.1 The Church of Apron, not a Church of *Stola*

The Church that the world today needs is a Church of the apron and not the Church of the mantle or even the Church of the stole. The idea was developed by Don Tonino Bello, according to whom, the apron is the only liturgical or priestly vestment recorded in the Gospel.<sup>691</sup> It is a custom to present a newly ordained priest

<sup>688</sup> Richard Foster, *A Reversal of Meekness*, p. 458.

<sup>689</sup> Robert M. Schwartz, *Servant Leaders of the People of God – An Ecclesial Spirituality for American Priests*, New York: Paulist Press, 1989, p. 152.

<sup>690</sup> Kevin Harney, *Leadership from the inside out: Examining the Inner Life of a Healthy Church Leader*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2007, p. 122.

<sup>691</sup> Pope Francis in his Homily, refers to Don (Fr.) Tonino, who speaks of the Church of the Apron. Pope Francis, “Address of His Holiness – Pastoral Visit of the holy Father Francis to Alessano (Lecce) and to Molfetta (Bari), on the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Death of H. E. Mesgr. Tonino Bello, 20 April 2018”, [https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2018/april/documents/papa-francesco\\_20180420\\_visita-alessano-fedeli.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2018/april/documents/papa-francesco_20180420_visita-alessano-fedeli.html), 30.04.2018.

with a chasuble and stole – a liturgical dress symbolic of the priestly ministry that he begins and of the ecclesiastical authority that a priest receives with his ordination. The Greek word *stole* and the Latin word *stola* were connected to power and dignity. The Church later included the stole in its liturgical use in connection to the priests to indicate the dignity and power of priests.<sup>692</sup> *Stola* or stole expected and demanded respect, reverence and veneration. This is the thought which rules the Church of *the stola*.<sup>693</sup> However, this is not the kind of church which Jesus intended; this is not the kind of church which the Gospel presents.

The Church that the gospel presents to us is clearly the Church of the apron. An apron is something which is not a part of the liturgical dressing; hence, one won't find the word even in the dictionaries of liturgy, not to mention that one finds no apron hanging together with the liturgical dresses in a church sacristy. Yet, it is the apron which is mentioned in the Gospel. The event of Jesus washing his disciples' feet (Jn13, 1–12) tells us that Jesus strips himself of his mantle and girds himself with an apron in order to wash his disciples' feet. Jesus in fact strips himself of his own Self, of his 'I', as a sign of his dedication to the service of the humanity. He knew the absolute authority he had received from his Heavenly Father over heaven and earth. Yet, his authority was not like the worldly kings and rulers' his authority was of love and service, of humility and relatedness. Unlike the earthly rulers who were served, Jesus was a King who clothed himself in a garb of humility and served. The challenge before the Church hierarchy today, is not to beautify itself with the *stola* as a sign of power and authority, but to gird itself with the apron symbolic of the service. The Church is challenged today to turn the *stola*, indicating power and authority, into an apron indicating powerlessness, humility and selflessness of Jesus. The Church of today, which is criticised for not adhering to the radicality of Jesus, is challenged to let its *stola* of pomp, pride and self-centeredness be replaced by the apron of humility, meekness, and service-mindedness. Let the Church remember, it is not the *stola* which makes a priest great and full of authority, rather, it is the mandate of service received from the Lord and the humility and readiness to fulfil this mandate, which makes him a man of God, filled with true authority.<sup>694</sup> The authority received through ordination or through the consecration by the priests, bishops, cardinals and the Pope is of course valid and lawful in the canonical sense. However, this authority will receive its true meaning and will become efficacious when its spiritual dimension will not be forgotten and lost. The spiritual dimension won't be forgotten when those having authority in the Church remember the command of Christ to serve and

<sup>692</sup> Cf. Engelbert Gross, "Die Kirche der Schürze", <https://www.herder.de/cig/geistesleben/2014/01--06--2014/priester-sein-die-kirche-der-schuerze/>, 29.04.2018.

<sup>693</sup> Cf. Ibid.

<sup>694</sup> Cf. Ibid.

make persistent efforts to do what Christ did, namely, serve in love and humility. In this connection, the Church today needs to heed the words of Pope Francis about true authority for the followers of Jesus, “Let us never forget this! For the disciples of Jesus, yesterday, today and always, the only authority is the authority of service, the only power is the power of the cross.”<sup>695</sup>

## 2.2 Church of Peter, not of Constantine

There was a time in the history of the Church when the Church was so much influenced by the worldliness and overwhelmed by worldly style of functioning and life, that the Church borrowed this style in its own life. The authority in the Church lost its spiritual value by succumbing to the enticements and lures of the worldly powers. The Church began to borrow titles and insignia from the worldly powers. It was during this time, that St. Bernard wrote to his former subordinate Pope Eugenius II (1145–53) saying, “When the pope, clad in silk, covered with gold and jewels, rides out on his white horse, escorted by soldiers and servants, he looks more like Constantine’s successor than St. Peter’s.”<sup>696</sup> The Church of Peter is described in the book of Acts of the Apostles. The Church of Acts is a community that is one in heart and mind, a community of sharing, a community of equals. The leadership of the early Church was animated and guided by the Holy Spirit. The early Christian Church had no institutions, no structure, no hierarchy; what they had was the example of Jesus, the willingness and the burning desire to follow his example, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Peter’s Church speaks of a church which was known for its closeness and oneness with the people, critical self-reflection and dependence on divine grace and provision.<sup>697</sup> The church of Constantine speaks of a church which was exactly opposite of Peter’s Church. The words of St. Bernard to Pope Eugenius may not fully apply to the Church of today. Yet, in the too juristic nature of authority, emphasis on the hierarchical structure and traces of Roman culture in the Church’s lifestyle, liturgy and functioning may still give indications that the Church even today has too much of a Constantine element and too little of a Peter element in it.<sup>698</sup>

The Church of Christ needs to rid itself of its image as the church of Constantine and move in the direction of becoming once again the Church of Peter. In the

<sup>695</sup> Pope Francis, “Address of His holiness Pope Francis on the commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the Institution of the Synod of Bishops, 17 October 2015”, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/october/documents/papa-francesco\\_20151017\\_50-anniversario-sinodo.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/october/documents/papa-francesco_20151017_50-anniversario-sinodo.html), 02.04.2018.

<sup>696</sup> “St. Bernard, *De Consideratione*, IV, 3, 6 (PL 182, 776 A)” cited in Congar, *Power and Poverty in the Church*, p. 69.

<sup>697</sup> Cf. Peter Kohlgraf, *Nur Eine Dienende Kirche Dient der Welt*, p. 70.

<sup>698</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*

words of Pope John XIII, the Church today needs “to shake off the imperial dust that has accumulated on the throne of St. Peter since the time of Constantine.”<sup>699</sup> It is time for the Church to give up imperial style of living and functioning and embrace Jesus’ style of relating and functioning. The secularized Church needs to be desecularized. The Church needs to embrace the “see-judge-act” formula to discover new ways which would make the Church once again the Church of St. Peter, a faith-community, a serving community and ultimately Christ’s community.<sup>700</sup> Above all, there is a need for the messengers of the Gospel to practice and live what they preach. As Congar says, the world today wants to see a Church which is characterized by true communion with God in prayer and communion and solidarity with humanity in love and service in obedience to the Gospel. The world does not want to marvel at the Church in its external appearance and greatness, rather, it wants to see the beauty, the truth and the goodness and the greatness of the Gospel reflected in the innermost being of the Church.<sup>701</sup>

### 3 Authority as Service: Implications for Indian Catholic Church

Felix Wilfred in his article titled: *Temptations of the Church in India Today* speaks of “the Lure of worldly standards and models”<sup>702</sup> as one of the few temptations faced by the Indian Church. He sees the Indian Church as easily falling prey to the tendency “to adopt the models of the world and function as an organization, a mini-government with power and money, forgetting that she is essentially a communion, a fellowship.”<sup>703</sup> Most areas of Indian society have suffered from poverty, the caste system and colonialism. The Christians living in this part are so much used to resignation, submission and subordination, that the Church leaders have an upper hand and are allowed to act as autocrats, justifying their exercise of authority in the name of God.<sup>704</sup> The Church leaders in these areas become everything-better-knowers. The Christian faithful are expected to follow the terms dictated by the clergy and obey. Another reason for the authoritarian attitude of Church leaders in India, in the opinion of Wilfred, is the large number of Christian institutions and vast number of Christian faithful entrusted to them: “The feeling of having so many Christians and institutions under him and the power, respect and

<sup>699</sup> Yves Congar, *My Journal of the Council*, transl. Mary John Ronayne & Mary Cecily Boulding, Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2012, p. 282.

<sup>700</sup> Cf. Peter Kohlgraf, *Nur Eine Dienende Kirche Dient der Welt*, p. 72.

<sup>701</sup> Congar, *Power and Poverty in the Church*, p. 72.

<sup>702</sup> Felix Wilfred, “Temptations of the Church in India Today”, *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection*, Vol. 47, no. 7, August 1983, p. 329.

<sup>703</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 330.

<sup>704</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*

influence he enjoys, can make a Church-leader too confident of himself, despotic in his dealings and defensive in his attitudes.”<sup>705</sup>

In the Indian Church, there is a tendency among the Church leaders to become managers of the community entrusted to them and give importance to the administrative work and neglect the pastoral dimension of their authority, namely, being with people, visiting them, speaking to them, listening to them, encouraging them in their Christian faith and commitment to the Gospel. For example, many bishops are always on the way – travelling all the times (not within the dioceses) – and are hardly in their diocese. Pope Francis reminds such bishops of their duty to care for the flock of God entrusted to them: “We are called and made Shepherds not by ourselves, but by the Lord, and not to serve ourselves, but rather to serve the flock entrusted to our care, to serve to the extent of offering our lives, like Christ, the Good Shepherd”.<sup>706</sup> He calls on the bishops to stay with the community to know them and not to become airport bishops: “I beg you, please, to stay among your people. Avoid the scandal of being ‘airport bishops!’”<sup>707</sup>

The authority of the Church leaders in the Indian Church is really questionable. There is a tendency among the leaders to seek power and authority and to work in order to gain it instead of working for the People of God. And once received, the power makes its way directly into the head. They let their heads rule the matters of faith, and not their hearts. Such authority-conscious leaders exist in the Indian Church at all the levels of administration in the Church in India – leaders who close themselves to the Spirit’s guidance and animation. Authority which is not open to the guidance of the Spirit “slowly estranges itself from the mainstream of life, while all the time it deludes itself into believing that, it is in contact with it.”<sup>708</sup> Such authority and power is one “that feeds on the distortion of human desire and is bent on domination, manipulation, and control,”<sup>709</sup> – a power that corrupts and is in no way better than the secular powers and authority. How can the authority received from Christ be meaningful in the Indian Church? By radically transforming the understanding of authority and seeing it in the light of the Gospel. The Church leaders are called “to transcend themselves and serve a greater mission than self-interest alone”<sup>710</sup>

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<sup>705</sup> Ibid.

<sup>706</sup> Ian Dunn, “Avoid the ‘Scandal of being Airport Bishops’, Pope advises”, <http://www.sconews.co.uk/news/31517/avoid-the-scandal-of-being-airport-bishops-pope-advises/>, 30.04.2018.

<sup>707</sup> Ibid.

<sup>708</sup> Felix Wilfred, *Temptations of the Church in India Today*, p. 330.

<sup>709</sup> Richard R. Gaillardetz, *By What Authority: Foundations for Understanding Authority in the Church*, Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2018, p. 5.

<sup>710</sup> Chris Lowney, *Pope Francis – Why he leads the Way He leads: Lessons from the First Jesuit Pope*, Chicago: Loyola Press, 2013, p. 41.

\* Servants not rulers: The Indian Catholic Church needs to focus its attention on Christ's vision of authority. As the disciples were arguing among themselves as to who among them is the greatest, Christ rebuked them saying, "You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all" (Mk 10, 42–44). Greatness, according to Jesus, lies in humility and meekness of a person. True authority in the Gospel sense, "is not about being over the people and bossing them around. It is about getting *under* the people and lifting them up. It is not about getting but about giving. It is not about being served; it is about serving and sacrifice."<sup>711</sup> True authority lies in the readiness to serve and not in the desire to rule over. Jesus tried to convey this truth about the authority to His disciples during the last supper. He taught them a new meaning of greatness. He taught them to look at the authority and the leadership in a new way. Joseph Mattam says, "Jesus' understanding of leadership was a consequence of the new outlook that he brought into the world: a new way of looking at and relating to people. His table fellowship was a way of telling us not to look at people on the basis of their possession, position, action, group, gender or appearance. He saw everyone from God's point of view and therefore saw everyone as brothers/sisters, not as high/low, pure/ impure. He envisaged a community of equals as brothers/sisters."<sup>712</sup>

\* We are Co-worker of Christ: St. Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians speaks of himself and of other apostles as servants of God – co-workers with Christ. In India, the lay people are treated as second-class citizens, subjects to be ruled and subordinated. In many places, the Church leaders act more as landlords, than pastors and shepherds. They don't see themselves as co-workers with Christ in his mission of building the Church, rather, they consider themselves as the Lords of the Church. The Church leaders in India need to give heed to what Paul means: He means, that our consecration or ordination does not make us rulers in the Church but servants. Our appointment in the Church office does not give us the power to rule but the responsibility to serve. The power and authority that I have in the Church has a spiritual dimension and does not belong to me. It is entrusted to me as a responsibility. In this sense, Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium* says: "When we speak of sacramental power we are in the realm of function, not that of dignity or holiness . . . our dignity derives from baptism, which is accessible

<sup>711</sup> Dave Early & Ben Gutierrez, *Ministry is . . . How to Serve Jesus with Passion and Confidence*, Nashville, Tennessee: B & H Publishing Group, 2010, p. 10.

<sup>712</sup> Joseph Mattam, "Priests or Servant Leaders", <http://www.eapi.org.ph/resources/eapr/east-asia-n-pastoral-review-2009/volume-46--2009-number-3/priests-or-servant-leaders/>, 30.04.2018.



to all . . . .In the church, functions do not favour the superiority of some via-a-vis the others. Indeed, a woman, Mary is more important than the bishops (EG 104).” The leadership in the Church is “for service as friends and equals (Jn 13:1–17) as Jesus’ life was, and all the gospels show in no unclear terms that Jesus’ life was one of service and that whoever wishes to follow him will have to be a servant of all. This service does not depend on the gender of the person, but on being a disciple of Jesus and is willing to serve the community. The focus is on building up the community.”<sup>713</sup>

\* The Church needs Prophets: Although there are in the Church many Church leaders who try to take the example of Christ in their responsibility as the leaders, there are also Church leaders who are weak, like David, Moses, Augustine, “and they need to be helped not only to exercise their authority in conformity with the Gospel, but also to be saved from falling into temptation”<sup>714</sup> of appropriating authority for selfish reasons. Hence, the Church needs prophets who are able to bring the Church in to the right direction in the exercise of its authority. The Church needs people like St. Paul or even like St. Bernard who had the courage and conviction to call a wrong and to correct it.

## 4 Conclusion

It is true that the notion of authority in the Church is gradually changing. It is an undeniable fact in the opinion of Congar, that “the exercise of authority in the Church today is marked by a predominance of pastoral care over rank, of tasks and responsibilities over the claiming of privileges.”<sup>715</sup> But the notion of authority still remains too juridical. As Congar says, “an ecclesiology that is still too juridical, too remote from spiritual anthropology, continues to give somewhat external character to the aims of authority, a character that is sometimes inclined to be sociological rather than interior and spiritual.”<sup>716</sup> In the same line of thought, Richard Gaillardetz says:

In the Catholic Church, we sometimes rely on a too exclusively juridical or legal understanding of power, the kind regulated by canon law. This kind of power does exist and indeed is necessary for any community to function, but it shouldn’t be our primary understanding of power. In Catholicism, without ignoring the role of juridical power, we must

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<sup>713</sup> Ibid.

<sup>714</sup> Felix Wilfred, *Temptations of the Church in India Today*, p. 331.

<sup>715</sup> Congar, *Power and Poverty in the Church*, p. 37.

<sup>716</sup> Ibid.

recover that more comprehensive dimension of ecclesial power that comes from baptism and is animated by the Spirit.<sup>717</sup>

Jesus came to exercise the power and authority which was life-giving and life-serving. His life and ministry “represented not the renunciation of power but its radical transformation.”<sup>718</sup> The Church is called to demonstrate a form of authority and power similar to that of Jesus. Authority is necessary in the Church, but the way it is exercised must undergo a radical change. Vatican II gave the Church a new understanding of authority as a shared responsibility in communion. *Lumen Gentium* speaks of the authority in the Church as meant “for the nurturing and constant growth of the People of God” (LG 18). Authority in this sense is meant for the good, for the service of all. It is a shared authority in dialogue. “The exercise of authority and the practice of obedience go hand in hand with the concept of communion which is a constitutive part of the exercise of authority in the Church (LG 22, 32).”<sup>719</sup> Since, the Church is a community of equals, it is important that the lay faithful are not overlooked in the exercise of the authority. A “due recognition must also be given in the Church to the variety of charisms and the co-responsibility and participation of the people in decision making process needs to be fostered.”<sup>720</sup> The Church’s understanding of the authority as service “necessarily involves the participation of the faithful in a common search for the will of God.”<sup>721</sup> This will bring out the true nature of the Church as a communion. The Church’s exercise of authority “must serve to deepen the bonds of communion through which individuals and groups grow into maturity and are enabled to involve themselves responsibly for the common good.”<sup>722</sup> Such an understanding of shared authority deepening the bond of communion among the People of God was one of the important aspects of the early Christian Church. Hence, if the Church of today wants to become a serving Church, it needs to go back to its traditions, to its roots. Congar puts it this way:

We must get back to the true vision of the Gospel: posts of authority in the Church do indeed exist; a real jurisdictional power does exist, which the shepherds of God’s people receive from Christ in conformity with the order that Christ willed and instituted (at least in its essential lines). This power however, exists only within the structure of the fundamental religious relationship of the Gospel, as an organizational element within the life

<sup>717</sup> Richard R. Gaillardetz, *By What Authority: Foundations for Understanding Authority in the Church*, p. 6.

<sup>718</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>719</sup> Elizabeth M. Cotter, *The General Chapter in a Religious Institute: With Particular Reference to IBVM Loreto Branch*, Bern: Peter Lang, 2008, p. 73.

<sup>720</sup> Felix Wilfred, *Temptations of the Church in India Today*, p. 331.

<sup>721</sup> Elizabeth M. Cotter, *The General Chapter in a Religious Institute*, p. 74.

<sup>722</sup> Felix Wilfred, *Temptations of the Church in India Today*, p. 331.

given to men by Christ, the one Lord and the one Head of his Body, for which each is accountable to all the rest according to the place and measure granted to him. So, there is never simply, a relationship of subordination or superiority, as in secular society, but always a loving obedience to Christ, shaping the life of each with all and for all, according to the position that the Lord has given him in the Body.<sup>723</sup>

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<sup>723</sup> Congar, *Power and Poverty in the Church*, pp. 51–52.2

## Conclusion

Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen a Finnish Lutheran theologian in his book titled: *An Introduction to the Theology of Religions: Biblical, Historical & Contemporary Perspectives*, makes a following observation about the Vatican Council II: “In the long history of the development of Catholic Theology, no other single event is of such transformative significance as the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965)”.<sup>724</sup> In the same line, Joseph Neuner, one of the Indian Jesuit theologians who also participated in the work of the preparation for the Council, declares: “Vatican II was the decisive event in the last century: a radical reflection on, and a re-orientation of the life and mission of the Church on the eve of a new millennium . . . . The Council, however, has not only tackled actual problems but opened a new vision of the Church and her mission in our world.”<sup>725</sup> As we have seen in the first chapter, Councils have always played an important role in the life of the Church. They have from time to time shaped the character of the Church. The Second Vatican Council, the most recent ecumenical Council, remains for the Catholic Church and the entire world a Council close to the heart. It was an extraordinary and a different Council because Vatican Council II had a totally different agenda. In a break with the councils of the past, the Vatican II Council wanted the Church to undergo a radical phase of renewal and let itself be guided by the Spirit of God. The motive that guided the Council was pastoral rather than dogmatic. The documents of the Council give us an idea that the vision of a renewed Church contained in them was really the work of the Spirit of God.

The Council came both as a blessing and a task for the Church in India. The Council’s reform programme had a clear direction in which even the Indian Church had to go. The Indian Catholic Church accepted this new ecclesiological vision of the Council and has been since then making efforts to develop a new understanding of its life and mission in the Indian context, grounded in the vision of the Council. The challenges that we have dealt with in the fourth chapter define also the mission of the Indian Catholic Church in Indian society. There are four marks of the Church: One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic. These are marks of the universal Church. This One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church needs to develop three further important features if it is to become truly an Indian or Asian

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<sup>724</sup> Veli Matti Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to the theology of Religions: Biblical, historical & Contemporary Perspectives*, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2003, p. 111.

<sup>725</sup> Joseph Neuner, “Inaugural Address”, *Vatican II – A Gift and A Task: International Colloquium to mark the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Vatican Council II*, Jacob Kavunkal, Errol D’Lima & Evelyn Monteiro (Eds.), Bandra: St. Pauls, 2006, p. 9.

Catholic Church, namely, prophetic, inculturated and dialoguing. These are the marks which are to describe the universal Church of Christ in India today, and not its power, institutions and attitudes of superiority, self-complacency and isolation. The Church will be able to fulfil its renewed missionary mandate successfully when it is fully Indian – in heart and in its entire structure. This is also the call of the Council, namely, to become an indigenous Church. Just as the water takes the form of a vessel into which it is poured, without losing its essence as water, the Church is called to take on the form of India where it functions and become fully Indian without losing its essence and identity as the part of the universal Church of Christ. It would be very unproductive and unchristian if the Indian Catholic Church isolates itself from the Indian context and has recourse to its dogmas, which perhaps do not have anything to do with Indian spirituality, traditions and context. As Saw Hlaing Bwa says: “It is very much unchristian for just trying to keep ourselves away from our context, observing our doctrines untainted by the Asian spirituality, and following the missionary mandates set by the Jesus of the mission compounds. We can be true Christians only by being Asian (*in our context Indian*) in all our realities in which Christ is liberating, healing, reconciling, being crucified and resurrected in the struggle of the people.”<sup>726</sup>

Joseph Komonchak in his article *The Significance of Vatican Council II for Ecclesiology* says: “The Church that the world needs is the Church that is most distinctively itself, and what distinguishes the Church is what most distinctively and immediately relates it to the world.”<sup>727</sup> The Indian Catholic Church is challenged to relate itself totally and identify itself totally to the Indian society. The Indian Church must develop a renewed understanding of its founder and master Jesus Christ, imitate his boundless human-friendly nature, and let itself be inspired, guided and animated by his Spirit. It must become a community full of love, hope and full of vision – a Church which will be accepted and loved by every Indian. The Indian Church has the ecclesiological vision of the Second Vatican Council as a model. It was an ecclesiology which envisioned a Church that is able to read the signs of times and go closer to the world in order to know it better. As Felix Wilfred says: “Being inspired by the Council for us . . . (*in India*) is to overcome the temptation of creating a self-centred Church, but to become truly a Church of the people, dialoguing continuously with peoples of other faiths and engaging oneself with those issues and questions that concern the lives of everyone across religious borders. . . . This spirit of universality practiced at the

<sup>726</sup> Saw Hlaing Bwa, *Together in Our Journey, Toward a Community of Peace for all*, p. 249. The addition in italics is mine.

<sup>727</sup> Joseph Komonchak, “The Significance of Vatican Council II for Ecclesiology”, *The Gift of the Church: A Textbook on Ecclesiology in Honor of Patrick Granfield*, Peter C. Phan (Ed.), Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2000, p. 91. 69–92

local level will enable the Asian (Indian) Church also to make its contribution for a better Asia (India).”<sup>728</sup>

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<sup>728</sup> Felix Wilfred, “Vatican II and the Agency of Asian Churches”, [https://www.google.ch/search?q=The+Significance+of+Vatican+II+in+Indian+Context&hl=de&source=lnms&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwj8vpHSiu7aAhUJSBQKHXYCB5AQ\\_AUICSgA&biw=1674&bih=996&dpr=1](https://www.google.ch/search?q=The+Significance+of+Vatican+II+in+Indian+Context&hl=de&source=lnms&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwj8vpHSiu7aAhUJSBQKHXYCB5AQ_AUICSgA&biw=1674&bih=996&dpr=1), 03.05.2018.

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### **Genossin in Christus. „Your fellow worker in Christ, D.D.“**

Eine ekklesiologische Studie zu Leben und Werk der amerikanischen Journalistin und Sozialaktivistin Dorothy Day (1897 – 1980)

Dorothy Day (1897 – 1980) ist eine wichtige Stimme in der katholischen Kirche Amerikas. Leben und Werk der Journalistin und Sozialaktivistin eröffnen Perspektiven für die Sendung und Praxis der Kirche in der modernen Gesellschaft. Die vorliegende ekklesiologische Studie würdigt Dorothy Days Zeugnis in der katholischen Arbeiterbewegung, ihre Auseinandersetzung mit dem Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzil und ihren Einsatz als kämpferische Pazifistin. In ihrem Engagement zeigt sich eine Vision der apostolischen Tätigkeit von Laien. Dorothy Days modernes Verständnis von Heiligkeit entdeckt die Lebendigkeit der Kirche mitten im Alltag.

Bd. 6, 2016, 622 S., 74,90 €, br., ISBN 978-3-643-80213-2

Peter Marti

### **Das Zusammenspiel von Wohlbefinden und Lebenssinn in der Entwicklung zum Alter**

Eine praktisch-theologische Studie

Das Älterwerden ist eine Herausforderung. Erst seit wenigen Jahren besteht in der Schweiz ein Forschungsinteresse an Religionsgerontologie. Welche Art von Glaube bzw. Spiritualität kann das Wohlbefinden eines Rentners fördern? Wie findet er oder sie Sinnerfüllung im Leben? Wie definiert sich der Mensch dann?

Dieses Buch untersucht den aktuellen Forschungsstand der Gerontologie interdisziplinär im Zusammenhang mit der christlichen Religion. Eine empirische Studie zeigt signifikante Unterschiede in der Beantwortung der Fragen je nach der geistlichen Ausrichtung der Interviewten. Ein Praxisteil bietet sowohl persönliche wie auch gemeinschaftliche Anleitungen zur Gestaltung eines erfüllenden Alters.

Bd. 5, 2014, 320 S., 25,90 €, br., ISBN 978-3-643-80173-9

Tina Maria Schweitzer

### **Autobiographisches Schreiben im 20. und 21. Jahrhundert**

Analyse autobiographischer Zeugnisse prominenter Personen im Bezug auf Glaube und Gottesvorstellung

Mit „Nun sag, wie hast du's mit der Religion?“ wird die Gretchenfrage an Dieter Bohlen, Horst Lichter, Zé Roberto, Jorginho und Nina Hagen gestellt.

Literatur, Theologie und Biografie(-forschung) treten immer wieder in einen Dialog miteinander, da sie sich alle um das Verstehen des menschlichen Wesens sowie seiner Erfahrungen und Probleme bemühen. Die Auseinandersetzung mit fremden Erfahrungen fördert zudem das Nachdenken über das eigene Leben. Deshalb hat die Autorin exemplarisch fünf Autobiographien medienpräsenter Vorbilder ausgewählt und analysiert, ob gemeinsame Strukturen in der Entwicklung von Glaube und Gottesvorstellung aufzuzeigen und daraus religionspädagogische Konsequenzen zu formulieren sind.

Bd. 4, 2012, 360 S., 34,90 €, br., ISBN 978-3-643-11690-1

**LIT** Verlag Berlin – Münster – Wien – Zürich – London

Auslieferung Deutschland / Österreich / Schweiz: siehe Impressumseite

Bernhard Lindner

**„Somos pueblo – somos iglesia“: Die Erfahrung der Südandenkirche Perus**

Erfahrungen von Menschen in den peruanischen Südanden stehen im Zentrum des Buches. Bernhard Lindner, Dr. theol. und Dipl. paed., lebte 1988 – 1995 in Peru. Seine qualitative empirische Untersuchung der Südandenkirche läßt die Verantwortlichen selbst zu Wort kommen. Eindrücklich geben sie Zeugnis von ihrem persönlichen und kirchlichen Weg der Nachfolge. Die Untersuchung nähert sich empirisch einer komplexen sozialen, kulturellen und religiösen Erfahrungswelt, stellt sie systematisch dar und reflektiert sie theologisch – Ausgangspunkt für ein Nachdenken über Kirche und Pastoral hierzulande.

Bd. 3, 2010, 528 S., 50,90 €, br., ISBN 978-3-643-80059-6

Manuela Wiedmaier

**Wenn sich Mädchen und Jungen Gott und die Welt ausmalen ...**

Feinanalysen filmisch dokumentierter Malprozesse

Was passiert, wenn Mädchen und Jungen miteinander Bilder über ihre Vorstellungen von Gott malen? Dieser Frage wird in der vorliegenden Untersuchung anhand detailgenauer Beobachtung und Interpretation von gefilmten Malprozessen mit Mädchen und Jungen im Alter von fünf bis acht Jahren nachgegangen. Im Mittelpunkt des Interesses stehen dabei weniger die fertigen Bilder als vielmehr ihre Entstehungsprozesse. Anhand der schrittweisen Interpretation der Bildentstehung, der Kommentare und der Gespräche der Kinder kommt das gemeinsame, oft spielerische „sich Ausmalen von Gott und der Welt“ als religiöser Bildungsprozess in den Blick.

Die Leserinnen und Leser können in der Deutung dieser Prozesse zu neuen Erkenntnissen zur Interaktion der Mädchen und Jungen, zur Kindertheologie und zur Auseinandersetzung mit religiösen Symbolen gelangen. Wer sich in unterschiedlichen Handlungsfeldern mit Kinderzeichnungen nicht nur zu religiösen Inhalten auseinandersetzt, kann durch dieses im Grenzbereich von Religionspädagogik und Kunst entstandene Buch für eine genauere Wahrnehmung und Deutung von Kinderzeichnungen in ihren Entstehungszusammenhängen sensibilisiert werden.

Bd. 2, 2008, 432 S., 34,90 €, br., ISBN 978-3-8258-1430-4

**LIT** Verlag Berlin – Münster – Wien – Zürich – London

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The Vatican II was an event of a new facelift for the entire edifice of the Catholic ecclesiology. It called for the renewal in the universal Catholic Church. This book deals with the question: How can the Catholic Church in India accept the council's challenge for renewal and become truly Indian in its being and essence? Undertaking a systematic examination of the post-conciliar ecclesiological development in the Indian Catholic Church, in its existential multi-religious and multi-cultural context, the author attempts to develop an ecclesiological reflection for the Indian context.

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