



KATHOLIEKE UNIVERSITEIT LEUVEN

FACULTY OF THEOLOGY

**EVANGELIZATION AS LIBERATION:
A PARADIGM FOR THE ACTIVE PARTICIPATION OF THE LAITY
IN THE PASTORAL SERVICE OF THE CHURCH IN
CENTRAL INDIA**

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fulfilment of the requirements for the
Doctor's Degree in Theology**

Promoter

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ABBREVIATIONS

AA	Apostolicam Actuositatem
AG	Ad Gentes
AN	Aetatis Novae
BCC	Basic Christian Communities
BCE	Before Common Era
CBCI	Catholic Bishops Conference of India
CCEO	Codex Canonicum Ecclesiarum Orientalium
CELAM	Conferencio Episcopal de Latino Americano
CG	Chhattisgarh
CIC	Codex Iuris Canonici
CL	Christifideles Laici
CRI	Catholic Religious of India
DPC	Diocesan Pastoral Council
DFC	Diocesan Finance Council
E D E	Ecclesia De Eucharistia
EN	Evangelii Nuntiandi
FABC	Federation of Asian Bishop's Conference
FC	Familiaris Consortio
FCC	Franciscan Clarist Congregation
GE	Gravissimum Educationis
IM	Inter Mirifica
LG	Lumen Gentium
ISPCK	Indian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge
ITA	Indian Theological Association
MD	Medellin Documents
MSFS	Missionaries of St. Francis De Sales
MP	Madhya Pradesh
NMI	Novo Millennio Ineunte
NBCLC	National Biblical Catechetical and Liturgical Centre
NGO	Non Governmental Organisations

PD	Puebla Documents
PFC	Parish Finance Council
PO	Presbyterorum Ordinis
PPC	Parish Pastoral Council
PRO	Public Relation Officer
RM	Redemptoris Missio
RSS	Rashtria Swayamsevk Sangh
SC	Sacrosanctum Concilium
SD	Salvifici Doloris
SRS	Sollicitudo Rei Socialis
SSLC	Senior Secondary Leaving Certificate
SVD	Society of Divine Word
TMA	Tertio Millennio Adveniente
VHP	Vishwa Hindu Parishet
WHO	World Health Organisations
YCCM	Young Catholic Children's Movement

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The word evangelization had a very restricted meaning before the Second Vatican Council, whereas, today it points to “the integral mission of the Church as a whole.” The Second Vatican Council has made it mandatory to the whole Church to be engaged in the evangelization programmes reaching out to all nations and peoples of various cultures bringing the good news of salvation and liberation offered by Jesus Christ to the entire humanity. This is one of the urgent tasks of the Church today, to be shared by all sections of the people of God, both the laity and the clergy, the religious and all members of the various institutes of apostolate.

As a priest who was working in the midst of a multi-religious community for about 14 years in various responsibilities in the Archdiocese of Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, India, I have come in contact with many Christians as well as followers of other religions who suffer oppression due to various evil structures of the society. I found the Church in central India facing numerous problems, and most often these problems are due to various factors like poverty, illiteracy, exploitation based on caste-discrimination, bonded labour and underdeveloped socio-economic systems. Christianity in India is as old as its own existence. However, it touched central India only by 16th century, i.e., after the arrival of missionaries from Europe.¹ I have also found that the Christian laity in the central Indian Church is not that very enthusiastic to challenge these exploiting structures of the society with a missionary zeal. Therefore my thesis is an attempt to formulate a new methodology for evangelization in the mission areas of central India.

1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

My research quest is whether we can develop an inspiring theology of Christian evangelization which will motivate all sections of the people of God, especially the Christian laity to face the challenges of the oppressive systems among the people and lead them to a liberated way of life assimilating the values of the Good news of Jesus Christ? This is one of the fundamental questions for which I was looking for an answer in my research study. Furthermore, Christians in India are proud to say that they are descendants of the Christians of the apostolic times of the first century of Christian history of Missions. Yet why then there are only a small minority of 2.5

¹ Robert Eric Frykenberg, "Christians in India: An Historical Overview of Their Complex Origins," in *Christians and Missionaries in India*, ed. Robert Eric Frykenberg (Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 34.

percentages of the total population of India, (nearing 1.3 billion, more exactly: 1,129,866,154 according to the census of July 2007) who have identified themselves as Christians? Why did the Christians take so long time to reach other parts of India? How can the Christian laity be effective evangelizers in the multi-religious context of India? These are also equally fundamental questions related to the one I mentioned above, for which I was seeking answers in my study.

2 THE STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION

This dissertation consists of five chapters. Chapter One: *Glimpses of the History of Christianity and the Place of the Laity in Central India*. The chapter is an introduction to the whole dissertation. In this chapter we survey critically the various traditions which speak about the emergence of Christianity in India. The beginning of Christianity in the Indian subcontinent was in the south, especially in Kerala. Though there was considerable improvement with regard to the place of laity in south Indian Churches, it was not the same situation in the mission dioceses of central India. We discuss also the contemporary situation of the Church in central India. In this connection it was necessary to have a survey of how the missionary work expanded to the tribal Christians of central India. In this survey I have also shown how the missionaries helped the poor tribal people to challenge the existing exploitation from the landlords, the caste-Hindus and the money lenders who controlled the economy of the people not to help them but to take undue advantage of their cheap labour in the farms as “bonded labourers” of the landlords. I have pointed out here with special attention to the Christian laity how their role as liberating labour leaders with their Christian value consciousness about justice and fair dealings can be effectively utilized for a liberation process of the exploited working class of the farms of central India.

The second chapter is entitled: *The Laity and their Mission According to the Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents of the Church*. Through this documentary study of the official teachings of the Church I have come across with the most fundamental truth of the Church, that is, for the Church to exist means to evangelize. Hence I elaborate in this chapter the mission, role and functions of the laity that facilitate them to be active evangelizers in the Church wherever they are in this world. The Second Vatican Council gave a new and broader understanding of the “Kingdom of God.” The existing situation of the world provoked the Church to

examine her reasons for existence in contemporary society. Hence we may rightly argue that the Council fathers felt the need to give a new thrust to the evangelizing task of the Church with fresh vitality by articulating new forms of evangelization as suitable to the various needs of the peoples, their concerns and problems in view of resuscitating the authentic spirit of the Church to start evangelizing peoples of various continents and nations without diminishing their identities in any way.

Besides the documents of the Second Vatican Council there are also some very significant encyclicals of recent Popes and other documents of various Councils of the post-Vatican times which were intended to activate the implementation of the teachings of Second Vatican Council. I have examined these documents also with great interest in searching for the most fundamental issues on evangelization which the Second Vatican Council had emphasised. Thus I have done a close scrutiny on the various Conciliar and post-conciliar documents to see how they encouraged the laity to be effective members of the Church sharing her mission of evangelization. Pope Paul VI, as well as John Paul II, visualised a Church where the laity have become very active in the field of evangelization. They are called to remain as the leaven in society.² The Council documents explained the mission and vision of the Church which is to reach out to every human being and to every corner of the world.

Again, international conventions like that of Medellin, Puebla as well as the Catholic Bishop's Conference of India have also opened up new windows to see her relationship with a world hungering for fresh thinking in all aspects of human enterprises including religious matters, substantial values of life, and ways for hopeful living in close collaboration with the believers of other religions. Hence I felt that an overall survey of these documents of the Church's official international meetings and assemblies of the Episcopal hierarchies explaining the specific roles of the laity in these areas of the ministry of the Church is necessary for the completion of the dissertation.

Chapter three is titled: "Christological Perspective of Liberative Evangelization and its Challenges in the Central Indian Church." I explored in this chapter how Jesus emerges as a liberator of the people of God of his time and offering his message of

² Ferdinand Klostermann, *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity*, ed. Herbert Vorgrimler, Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II, vol. 3 (New York: Burns and Oates, 1969), 310.

integral liberation for all peoples of all times and nations. I have argued in this chapter that true state of liberation of human beings is the fruit of effective Christian evangelization. In this exploration I have also tried to discover who is a real evangelizer. Furthermore, if liberation is the fruit of evangelization, what are the main characteristics of that liberation? So this third chapter exposes the main thrust of the dissertation.

In view of getting a comprehensive view of the theology of liberation based on the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ, I have further gone through the various interpretations of the western and eastern theologians about the mission and vision of Jesus Christ regarding his project of the “Kingdom of God” and its promises and demands. This study, therefore, is set in the context of the whole New Testament background of the “Salvation history” initiated in the Old Testament Prophetic times.

In this connection I have also emphasised the importance of the Christian community as a whole to share in some depth level the experience of Christ without which evangelization activities may not be sufficiently motivational and authentic. I am also convinced of the fact that evangelization becomes the preliminary responsibility of the whole Church consisting of the laity and clergy as well as of all other special categories of the dedicated people of God. Eventually I have also pointed out those factors that become hindrance to genuine evangelization if we don’t deepen our own faith dimensions in the working of the Holy Spirit in the process of Christian evangelization which is foundationally a transformative activity of the power of the Holy Spirit whom Jesus sent to be with his followers when they proclaim his message. Hence I have pointed out one of our prime convictions as the unavoidable role of the Holy Spirit in the process of any evangelization work which must be purified, transformed and leading to the real freedom of the human spirit in Jesus Christ.

The fourth chapter is designed to discuss the “Realisation of the Values of the ‘Kingdom of God’ as Evangelization” by the whole Christian community especially the laity who constitute the active involving agents of the evangelizing work of the Local Church. To illustrate these topics I have explored the realisation of the values of the “Kingdom of God” preached by Jesus Christ in the “Beatitudes” as narrated in the Sermon on the Mount. In actuality these values of the Kingdom of God as preached by Christ are truly powerful “liberative force-values” if they are brought to the life of

the common people, who are under exploitative situations. My argument here is that the Christian laity of the local Church of central India are the most proximate agents of this reaching out actualization of the values of the Kingdom of God among the exploited people.

We may see that the situation of the society in central India is similar to that of the situation of the time of Jesus. A contextual awareness of the situation of central India and that of the time of Jesus may motivate us to explore how Jesus encountered the situation in his own life-situations and how we may also try the same in the similar contexts of the human beings struggling in the central Indian discriminative and exploitative situations. Jesus' methodology to make the liberating values of life that he preached may also become a methodology of every Christian in central India to follow in his evangelization work. Hence it has become necessary for me to explore the values and life sustaining principles preached by Jesus through a study of the Beatitudes in some length. Therefore, the realisation of the values of the Kingdom of God preached by Jesus Christ offers for a Christian the best methodology of evangelization. We will explain in details the values that Jesus emphasised in the beatitudes as constitutive of the new way of living in this world of God's reign and loving providence, what is generally characterised as the "values of the Kingdom of God." We will examine how through the preaching of the beatitudes, Jesus gave a new understanding of human life and its agonies as well as the ways and means for facing them in deep trust and faith in God's loving care for his beloved children.

Finally, chapter five gives an articulation of the "*Pastoral Vision For a Liberative Evangelization in the Context of the Religious Pluralism of Central India*." This final chapter of this dissertation is a proposal for a pastoral plan or vision for a liberative evangelization in the context of the religiously pluralistic society of central India. We will have a discussion, initiated in this chapter regarding the approaches the Christian laity may have to follow respecting the religious sentiments of the various believers of other religions. This chapter specifically focuses on the integral pastoral involvement of the Christian laity in the evangelization process that is to be planned, visualised and worked in the central Indian context which is a multi-religious and as such very traditional and religiously vibrant context. Hence I have discussed in this chapter how Christians who constitute only a minority community in the central India, challenged by various struggles, can be a catalyst of a liberative process.

Furthermore, how the laity by dwelling in the midst of the followers of other religions can bring out unity, justice, peace and harmony, the great Christian values of the Kingdom of God shareable among all sections of the nation.

We will see how they can be open to the inspirations of the Spirit and lead a life that is expected of them as challenging witnesses of the message of Christ. For motivating and empowering them the whole Church has to foster the methods of dialogue which the Second Vatican Council and the subsequent teachings of the Popes' like dialogue of mission, proclamation and *Dominus Iesus* have proposed to apply in relating ourselves with the believers of other religions.

We will examine critically how to live among believers of other religions the methods of a dialogue of life, dialogue of action and dialogue of faith experience by prayer and action and a dialogue of theological interpretation and catechesis intelligible to the peoples of others faiths, who already have their own theologies of liberation and ultimate values of life teleologically set in God, as the Ultimate Truth which liberates all people. Critical discussion and evaluation of these documents helped me to draw a methodology for the Christian laity to follow in the mission areas of central India.

3 THE METHODOLOGY

The method of research I employed in this study is a descriptive, analytical and critical approach towards the issues challenging the Christian community in central India. The first chapter presents descriptively the *status quaestionis*, namely, the historical data about the Christian community in its existential context of struggles in central India. So the chapter is titled as "Historical Setting of the Church in Central India and the Place of the Laity. I have done a critical analysis of the *status quo* of the realities of the local Church, and proposed the central issue of conscientizing the whole Christian community, especially the laity for active involvement in evangelization.

The next three chapters present my critical study of the normative documents of the Second Vatican Council and those of the post-conciliar Councils and official Episcopal Conferences of the Catholic Church held in different parts of the world including India. My study of these official documents and their supporting Scriptural sources has been done in view of drawing valid conclusions which will in turn serve as basis for a pastoral plan of evangelization for the local Church in central India.

From these documents, I have drawn practical conclusions for a theology of liberative evangelization that empowers the laity for their committed mission in the Church as well as in their secular world at large.

I have pursued a critical method to the extent that I could evaluate in a complementary way the arguments and claims of both the western and the eastern theologians in interpreting the above mentioned documents. The findings are synthesised in a pastoral analytical and theological perspective. Hence the final chapter is a synthesis of the conclusions of my research, presented with a view towards enlightening the whole local Church especially the laity concerning their convictions and commitments for creative actions of evangelization in their challenging socio-religious context. Since my work is thematic in nature, I have done selective use of the sources relevant to the theme. However, I do not claim that I have incorporated all the known sources pertaining to my theme. The resources with which we engage in dialogue with our subject matter are satisfactorily examined in details as far as time and space warrant it.

CHAPTER ONE

GLIMPSES OF THE HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY AND THE PLACE OF THE LAITY IN CENTRAL INDIA

INTRODUCTION

This chapter is an attempt to understand the history of the growth of Christianity and the place of the laity in the central Indian Church today. Discussing about the emergence of Christianity in India, there are various traditions, which even bring convincing arguments that the history of Christianity in India can be traced back to A. D. 52 when St. Thomas the apostle came to India with the Gospel message.¹ The Christians, who are believed to have received baptism from St. Thomas, are generally known as Thomas Christians.² The beginning of Christianity in the Indian subcontinent was in the south, especially in Kerala.³ The laity did not enjoy much place in the Church till the period of Second Vatican Council. Though the place of laity in south Indian Churches has considerably improved their situation in the mission dioceses of central India has made little progress. In this chapter, we shall concentrate our discussion only on the expansion of Christianity to central India and its place in the central Indian Church. After surveying the history of the expansion of Christianity in central India, we shall discuss in detail the contemporary situation of the Church in central India. This survey will help us to understand the emergence of Christianity in India and the place of laity in fulfilling various apostolate/ministries in the context of central India in the field of evangelization.

1 A GENERAL OVERVIEW OF CHRISTIANITY IN INDIA

1.1 THE EMERGENCE OF THE PADROADO CHURCH IN INDIA

The history of Christianity in India as mentioned earlier can be traced back to A.D. 52. The expansion of Christianity to central India is believed to have taken place after the arrival of the Portuguese in western coast of India.⁴ The Portuguese missionaries came to India at the close of the 15th century, more precisely on 16th November 1497 when Vasco da Gama, a Portuguese merchant, landed in Goa, on the west coast of

¹ Robert Eric Frykenberg, "Christians in India: An Historical Overview of Their Complex Origins," in *Christians and Missionaries in India*, ed. Robert Eric Frykenberg (Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 34; cf. Klaus Koschorke, *A History of Christianity in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, 1450-1990*, ed. Frieder Ludwig *et al.* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2007), 1.

² Frykenberg, "Christians in India: An Historical Overview of Their Complex Origins," 34.

³ Samuel Hugh Moffett, *A History of Christianity in Asia*, vol.1 (San Francisco: Harper Collins Publishers, 1992), 25-39.

⁴ Portuguese missionaries reached first in Goa which is situated in the western coast of India.

India.⁵ He began to explore various places in India for his business and subsequent settlement. The Portuguese king conquered Goa in 1505.⁶ Henry the Navigator, the leader of the military, began his missionary work in the coast of Goa; consequently he received an honour from Pope Alexander VI for his adventurous missionary work. Pope Alexander VI had already handed over the Padroado (Portuguese patronage) power to the Portuguese king by the bull *Cum sicut magestas*⁷ on 25th March 1500, which decreed that the apostolic commissioner for the newly discovered lands be appointed by the Portuguese king independent of other ecclesiastical jurisdictions.⁸

A. Mathias Mundadan, an eminent Church historian on the Portuguese period in India concluded that since the king of Portugal was in-charge of the expansion work of Christianity in India, the “Ecclesiastical administration was very intimately connected with the civil in all the newly discovered lands.”⁹ In the beginning the Portuguese rulers invited the priests from Portugal and from other Catholic countries of Europe to look after the spiritual needs of the newly converted Christians and their personnel in India. During this time many Christian merchants too came to India for reasons of trade. The organisation of the Churches, and the pastoral needs of the faithful were also taken up by these people. There were Vicars General who were appointed by the king to guide the priests,¹⁰ and they were fully responsible to assign priests to look after the spiritual needs of the faithful. These Vicars General were accountable to the king of Portugal directly and they were to report to the king from time to time about their mission.

The first Vicar General was appointed to Goa in 1514 and there were six Vicars General within the period of six years. In 1517 a group of Franciscans inspired by the influence of the merchants, also came to look after the spiritual needs of the Portuguese soldiers.¹¹ They were led by Fr. Antonio De Louro, a Franciscan missionary.¹² Records regarding various correspondences between the Vicars General

⁵ A. Mathias Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India, From the Beginning up to the Middle of the Sixteenth Century*, vol.1 (Bangalore: Church History Association of India, 2001), 244.

⁶ A. Mathias Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India: From the Beginning up to the Middle of the Sixteenth Century*, 240.

⁷ It is the name of the bull where Pope Alexander VI gives the title of "Padroado" to the Portuguese king.

⁸ Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India: From the Beginning up to the Middle of the Sixteenth Century*, 241.

⁹ Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India*, vol.1, 241.

¹⁰ Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India*, vol.1, 513.

¹¹ Achilles Meersman, *The Franciscans in Mumbai* (Bangalore: St. Anthony's Friary, 1957), 47.

¹² Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India*, vol.1, 443.

of Goa and the provincials of Franciscans are traceable.¹³ In the year 1519 D. Martino was appointed as the titular bishop to India. At the same time he was also an auxiliary bishop of Funchal.¹⁴ The Franciscan missionaries not only looked after the spiritual needs of the Portuguese soldiers, but also preached the Gospel among the local people and converted many to Christianity. According to Mathias Mundadan they baptised 800 Hindus in Goa within a short period of time.¹⁵

Pope Paul III, in the year 1534, by the bull *Aequum reputamus* promulgated on 3rd of November, erected the diocese of Goa, and its patronage was given to the king of Portugal.¹⁶ The evangelization works in these areas of India from then onward were under the care of the Portuguese missionaries.¹⁷ In 1534, the bishop of Goa had jurisdiction over all actual and future discoveries from the Cape of Good Hope to China.¹⁸ The first bishop of Goa was a Franciscan, Juan de Albuquerque, who began to reside in Goa from the year 1539. The Franciscans who came to India had erected a friary in Bassein on 20th December 1542.¹⁹

There are also traditions, which confirm that Franciscan missionaries reached India even before Portuguese²⁰ and were working in the central part of India. Together with the Franciscans, Jesuits missionaries also came to India. According to Charles J. Borges, the missionaries who belong to the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) came to India in

¹³ Meersman, *The Franciscans in Mumbai*, 47.

¹⁴ Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India*, vol.1, 242.

¹⁵ Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India*, vol.1, 443.

¹⁶ George M. Moraes, "The Catholic Church under the Portuguese Patronage in the 19th and the 20th Century," in *Christianity in India*, ed. H. C. Perumalil (Alleppey: Prakasam Publications, 1972), 150.

¹⁷ In 1534 Paul III by the bull *Aequum reputamus* erected the diocese of Goa, the patronage of which was given to the Portuguese crown. In this bull the term 'Portuguese patronage' or 'Padroado' was clearly defined. This is generally called Padroado Mission. According to this definition "the right of presenting to the Pope a suitable candidate for the bishopric as well as the right of presenting to the bishop candidates for the four dignities, canonicates and benefices, was given to the king. The king on his part was bound to provide for the necessities of the diocese: payment of the ecclesiastical officials, building and repairing of Churches, chapels and monasteries, and providing them with the necessary articles for divine worship," Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India: From the Beginning up to the Middle of the Sixteenth Century*, vol.1, 241.

¹⁸ Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India*, vol.1, 459; Bento S. De Souza, *India's First Cardinal* (Mumbai: Examinar Press, 1971), 27.

¹⁹ Meersman, *The Franciscans in Mumbai*, 48.

²⁰ Koschorke, *A History of Christianity in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, 1450-1990*, 1-3; Meersman, *The Franciscans in Mumbai*, 49; Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India: From the Beginning up to the Middle of the Sixteenth Century*, vol.1, 120, 121.

1542.²¹ Borges points out that the members of the newly founded religious order, that is, the Society of Jesus (Jesuits), found their way to India (Goa) with the purpose of raising funds for the congregation²² which resulted in adding one more territory to their mother province.²³

Francis Xavier, a Jesuit missionary, with two others (one priest and a brother) came to Goa in 1542.²⁴ According to Mundadan, Goa was known as the 'Rome of the East.'²⁵ Goa was a Portuguese colony from 1510-1961.²⁶ According to Mundadan, Portuguese missionaries came to India when there existed a good relationship between the eastern and the western Christians. However Portuguese missionaries did not maintain the equal relationship with the Christians in India, especially with the St. Thomas Christians whom they considered as "inferior, even heretical."²⁷ More than that, they considered these eastern Christians as isolated from Rome.²⁸ Through the Apostolic Constitution *Esti Sancta et Immaculata* of February 1557, Goa was raised to the rank of a Metropolitan See with jurisdiction over two dioceses which were then established: Cochin and Malacca. These dioceses were under the Portuguese Patronage.²⁹ As the missionaries found the presence of Christians in south India already, they began to divert their attention to central India. Central India was ruled by many petty kings. Most of these petty kingdoms in central India were under the control of the Mogul kings. There were no Christians in central India other than a few Christian merchants who had some business contact with Muslim rulers.³⁰

The Portuguese missionaries began to influence, and tried to win the confidence of various Muslim rulers from central India. They were known as Mogul kingdoms. There were also several petty tribal kingdoms in central India besides Mogul

²¹ Charles J. Borges, *The Economics of the Goa Jesuits, 1542-1759* (New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 1994), 17.

²² Borges, *The Economics of the Goa Jesuits, 1542-1759*, 17.

²³ John Correia-Afonso, "A History of the Society of Jesus in India," in *Jesuit Presence in Indian History*, ed. Anand Amaladass (Madras: Satya Nilayam, 1988), 5.

²⁴ Borges, *The Economics of the Goa Jesuits, 1542-1759*, 18.

²⁵ Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India: From the Beginning up to the Middle of the Sixteenth Century*, vol.1, 429.

²⁶ Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India: From the Beginning up to the Middle of the Sixteenth Century*, vol.1, 429.

²⁷ Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India*, vol.1, 478.

²⁸ Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India*, vol.1, 478.

²⁹ Moraes, "The Catholic Church under the Portuguese Patronage in the 19th and the 20th Century," 150.

³⁰ Arnulf Camps, *Jerome Xavier S. J., and the Muslims of the Mogul Empire* (Suisse: Administration de la Nouvelle Revenue de Science Missionnaire Schoneck- Beckenried, 1957), 85.

kingdoms. Missionaries in the beginning began to concentrate on these Mogul kingdoms and have followed the missionary patterns of many European countries. We shall discuss in the sections following, the expansion of the Christianity to the Mogul kingdoms.

1.2 HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY IN CENTRAL INDIA

We have seen that the history of the Church in central India can be traced back to the time of the conquest of Goa by the Portuguese in the year 1505. In the year 1514 Pope Leo X issued another bull *Dum Fidei Constantiam* restoring all jurisdictions to the Order of Christ.³¹ But at the same time the Pope by another bull *Pro Excellenti Praeemanentia* erected the diocese of Funchal in the Madeira Islands near Morocco and to this were attached the mission regions of India and Brazil.³² Meersman, a historian, argues that Antonio do Padrao, a Franciscan missionary who came to India on 11th January 1547,³³ a native of Porto in Portugal, was the pioneer to come to central India.

1.2.1 Missionary Works in the Mogul Kingdom

The central states of India were already under the reign of the Muslim rulers when the Portuguese arrived in the western coast of India.³⁴ Among the Mogul emperors, king Akbar (1556-1605) was known for his religious tolerance. According to Charles J. Borges, he invited some learned priests from Goa to help him to translate Greek classics to Persian language.³⁵ His popularity brought him in contact with the European merchants too.³⁶

Akbar, then ruler of Mogul kingdom, also gave respect to the views of every other religion. Therefore later in the year 1575, he built *Ibadat-khana* (house of worship) and invited various religious leaders from all over the country for a religious discussion and thus to defend each one's views of religion.³⁷ The king Akbar also

³¹ This order is also known as religious congregation of the Society of Jesus, "the Jesuits." It is founded by Ignatius of Loyola. Their mission was to follow the decisions of the Pope and follow his orders.

³² Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India*, vol.1, 241.

³³ "...qua alem de hum nosso companheiro que juntamente com Miguel Vaz falleceo a nossa chagada"Letter of Antonio do Porto to the King dated Bassein, 7 October 1548, Silva Rego, IV, 60; Miguel Vaz died 11 January, 1547; Wicki, Doc. Ind. I, 163, [Http:// En. Wikipedia. Org /Wiki / British_East_India_Company#the_Foundation_Years](http://En.Wikipedia.Org/Wiki/British_East_India_Company#the_Foundation_Years) (accessed 13.12.2007).

³⁴ Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India*, vol.1, 216.

³⁵ Borges, *The Economics of the Goa Jesuits, 1542-1759*, 29.

³⁶ Joseph Thekkedath, *History of Christianity in India*, vol.2 (Bangalore: Church History Association of India, 2001), 424.

³⁷ Thekkedath, *History of Christianity in India*, vol.2, 427.

extended his invitation to Christians too. Consequently Fr. Gil Eanes Pereira who was in charge of Satgaon, presently situated in the west Bengal, reached the palace of Akbar on 5th June 1579.³⁸ King Akbar was very much pleased with his presence in the Mogul court. Later Fr. Gil Pereira suggested to the king to invite from Goa a few Jesuit priests who were known for their scholarly understanding of Scripture, and thus to enlighten him on the matters of faith.³⁹ Accordingly the king requested two priests from the Jesuit religious authorities in Goa and promised them that their representatives would be treated with full honour and respect. He promised the Jesuit superior in Goa that they would reach back safely as soon as their mission is accomplished.⁴⁰ Although there were reservations from the part of Portuguese viceroy, the Jesuit superior decided to send three priests from Goa to Akbar's Palace.

The names of those priests were Rudolph Acquaviva, Antony Monserrate, and Francis Henriques. They reached Akbar's court on 28th February 1580 at Fatehpur Sikri.⁴¹ Their duty was to guide the king regarding the religious matters as other religious leaders did.⁴² The king supported them in very many ways to defend their faith in the court. According to Jerome Xavier there were also other priests outside the court, who preached the Gospel.⁴³

The intention of the missionaries was to convert the king. Their dream was not accomplished, because according to Acquaviva, one of the pioneers, the king was a poor listener, unable to give up the practice of polygamy, and finally the king longed for a miracle to decide about his future religious position, which never took place.⁴⁴ More than that, when the missionaries realised that the king was more interested with his other Muslim friends, the missionaries lost their interest and thought of leaving the court. Therefore, they discontinued their mission from the Mogul court in the end of February 1583. Later in 1591, Akbar invited them again. According to J. Thekkedath, though they reached the court, they could not continue long. The reasons are not clear to us but one thing is clear that Akbar had no intention of becoming a Christian.

³⁸ Thekkedath, *History of Christianity in India*, vol.2, 427.

³⁹ Thekkedath, *History of Christianity in India*, vol.2, 428.

⁴⁰ Thekkedath, *History of Christianity in India*, vol.2, 428.

⁴¹ Xavier Koodapuzha, *Bharathasabhacharithram (Indian Church History)* (Kottayam: Oriental Institute of Religious Studies, 1980), 507.

⁴² Camps, *Jerome Xavier S. J., and the Muslims of the Mogul Empire*, 90.

⁴³ Camps, *Jerome Xavier S. J., and the Muslims of the Mogul Empire*, 90.

⁴⁴ Thekkedath, *History of Christianity in India*, vol.2, 429.

The king was dissatisfied with the decision of discontinuing the mission of the priests from the court. Therefore, again in 1594 the king requested the Jesuit provincial in Goa to send a few missionaries to assist him. The provincial had no more plan to continue the mission. However, a strong recommendation from the viceroy, who saw the possibilities of exploring the mission to the central part of India, motivated the provincial to send three Jesuit missionaries to Akber's court. The names of those missionaries were Fr. Jerome Xavier, Fr. Emmanuel Pinheiro, and Bro. Benedict de Goes. They reached in the Akbar's court at Lahore in May 1595. They once again began to explore the possibilities of establishing a good rapport with the king in Akbar's court as well as in the neighbouring areas.

This was the time 'East India Company' commenced its operation in India. It was on 31st December 1600 the Queen of England Elizabeth I granted an English Royal charter to the East India Company with an intention of favouring trade privileges in India.⁴⁵ Though the goal of the Company was to have trade with India, they also established a long term political domination in India.⁴⁶ They looked for an opportunity to venture their activities in India.⁴⁷

In 1601, Fr. Jerome Xavier could establish a centre at Agra which later became their religious headquarter at Agra.⁴⁸ In 1602, the missionaries succeeded to get something in writing, "a written order with royal seal" to continue their evangelization in his territory in central India.⁴⁹ Meanwhile, they started missionary work by opening various educational institutions, dispensaries etc. for the people. They also received some allowances from the king as their maintenance expenses. According to A. Camps there were also a few Christians who came from Portugal in search of jobs. Fr. Jerome Xavier gives us the testimony that these Portuguese immigrants were even willing to embrace Islam, but were prevented by the Christian missionaries.⁵⁰

After the death of king Akbar in 1605, his son Jahangir (1605-1627) became the king. In the beginning he was very much supportive to the missionaries. He even gave

⁴⁵ Alan Gledhill, *The Republic of India*, vol.6 (London: Stevens and Sons Limited, 1951), 5; David Ousiel, [Http:// En.Wikipedia. Org/Wiki/ British_East_India_Company#the_Foundation_Years](http://En.Wikipedia.Org/Wiki/British_East_India_Company#the_Foundation_Years) (Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopaedia, 2007, accessed 13.12.2007).

⁴⁶ Gledhill, *The Republic of India*, vol.5; Ousiel, [Http://En. Wikipedia. Org/Wiki/ British_East_India_Company#the_Foundation_Years](http://En.Wikipedia.Org/Wiki/British_East_India_Company#the_Foundation_Years) (accessed 13.12.2007).

⁴⁷ Ousiel, [Http://En.Wikipedia.Org/Wiki/British_East_India_Company#the_Foundation_Years](http://En.Wikipedia.Org/Wiki/British_East_India_Company#the_Foundation_Years) (accessed 13.12.2007).

⁴⁸ Koodapuzha, *Bharathasabhacharithram (Indian Church History)*, 508.

⁴⁹ Thekkedath, *History of Christianity in India*, vol.2, 430.

⁵⁰ Camps, *Jerome Xavier S. J., and the Muslims of the Mogul Empire*, 85.

permission to build a church at Ahmadabad and a cemetery at Lahore. According to J. Thekkedath, the faith formation classes and the classes to the Catechumens were given only in Portuguese language. However, the pastoral care of the Christians was taken care very responsibly by the missionaries. In the year 1604 Fr. Jerome Xavier wrote to his superior⁵¹ how the Christians celebrated Easter.⁵² It explains that during the reign of Moguls the missionaries did not face any difficulties. The letter that Fr. Jerome Xavier wrote on 6th September 1606 explains how various Christian feasts were celebrated. For example the feast of Corpus Christi was celebrated with great reverence and devotion. It states:

The fathers carried the Holy Sacrament through the streets, the Christians bore torches and candles and others played on pipes and sung. At a certain spot the procession made a halt and then a little child approached and worshipped the Holy Sacrament by kneeling down and declaring his faith in the real presence of Christ, where after he recited a story about the Sacrament. The procession then returned to the church, where Mass was sung and a sermon delivered by one of the fathers.⁵³

This is an example of how various pious practices were taught and practiced by the missionaries in the Christian communities. The laity's participation was very much encouraged in every celebration.

Fr. Jerome Xavier was well appreciated by both the Mogul rulers namely, Akbar as well as Jahangir. He had his own ways of getting the attention of the rulers and court officers.⁵⁴ It was clear from the letter of Fr. Castro that "Jerome Xavier used some inventions in the field of mathematical astronomy to come into contact with prominent noblemen and that he was therefore much esteemed by the rulers."

⁵¹ "Every Friday evening in Lent we have a sermon to the Christians: at the end we show them the crucifix which is placed, covered, on the altar, after which the litany is recited, and then as many men as the church can hold (for here in Agra it is very small) take the discipline, while the Father recites the Miserere. When they have finished, others take their place and so until all have taken their turn. They take the discipline across the back, according to our custom; so do nearly all the Christians, old and new. When we have a larger church there will be more room to conduct these exercises with greater ceremony. The offices for Holy Week are simply recited, but the other ceremonies are carried out with all solemnity. The washing of the feet is performed fully with great devotion and consolation. All go to confession during Lent, and on Maundy Thursday more than forty persons of both sexes who a few years ago were followers of Mohammed received the Holy Communion. The mystery of the Supreme Sacrament is preached to them individually and in general and the privilege of approaching to it is highly prized whenever we give them leave. May God keep and advance them in perfection every day. Amen."

⁵² Camps, *Jerome Xavier S. J., and the Muslims of the Mogul Empire*, 232, Edward Maclagan, "The Letter of Fr. Xavier," *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 65 (1896): 90; cf. Letter of September 6, 1604, Br. Mus., Add. Mss 9854, fol 7v; English trans. by Edward Maclagan.

⁵³ Camps, *Jerome Xavier S. J., and the Muslims of the Mogul Empire*, 234.

⁵⁴ Camps, *Jerome Xavier S. J., and the Muslims of the Mogul Empire*, 248.

Secondly, according to Arnulf Camps, Fr. Jerome Xavier was a scholar of Koran, the sacred book of the Muslims, and studied their language and other Islamic writings.⁵⁵

In 1610 king Jahangir requested the Jesuit fathers to give Christian instruction to three of his deceased brother Daniel's sons. Later they were baptised during a solemn celebration in their church at Agra.⁵⁶ It was in the year 1611, that a firm decision was taken to teach the Christian faith in Persian and in Hindustani. Fr. Bartholomew Ziegenbalg, who was working in the Danish Royal Mission felt the need of translating the prayers into the local language. Further it is he who felt the importance of the educational institutions attached to every church in India.⁵⁷ The classes in these schools were conducted only in verbal form, since most of the converts were illiterate.⁵⁸

There were mixed reactions and interpretation about the bold step taken by the king to permit the baptism of his three nephews. Nobody could imagine the ulterior motive of the king behind this gesture even when there were oppositions from his own court men. However, it did not last long. In the year 1613 the king compelled the princes to "apostasies." By the end of the same year war broke out between Moguls and the Portuguese and this led to the persecution of Christian Missionaries in central India.⁵⁹

The whole relationship that the missionaries maintained with the Mogul king had broken. The king and his court officials became the strongest enemies of the Christians.⁶⁰ In 1614 as part of the persecution the allowances that the missionaries enjoyed from the king were stopped and the church at Agra was closed. However this did not continue long; a normal situation was restored by the year 1615.⁶¹ Sir Thomas Roe, an ambassador from the embassy of king James I of England, visited Mogul court in the same year (1615).⁶² The ambassador was accompanied by a chaplain who

⁵⁵ Camps, *Jerome Xavier S. J., and the Muslims of the Mogul Empire*, 250.

⁵⁶ Camps, *Jerome Xavier S. J., and the Muslims of the Mogul Empire*, 217; Thekkedath, *History of Christianity in India*, vol.2, 432.

⁵⁷ Claude Alvares and Norma Alvares, "The Christian and the Wild," in *Discoveries, Missionary Expansion and Asian Cultures*, ed. Teotonio R. de Souza (New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 1994), 30.

⁵⁸ Thekkedath, *History of Christianity in India*, vol.2, 445.

⁵⁹ Thekkedath, *History of Christianity in India*, vol.2, 432.

⁶⁰ Camps, *Jerome Xavier S. J., and the Muslims of the Mogul Empire*, 86.

⁶¹ Ousiel, [Http://En.Wikipedia.Org/Wiki/British_East_India_Company#the_Foundation_Years](http://En.Wikipedia.Org/Wiki/British_East_India_Company#the_Foundation_Years) (accessed 13.12.2007).

⁶² Ousiel, [Http://En.Wikipedia.Org/Wiki/British_East_India_Company#the_Foundation_Years](http://En.Wikipedia.Org/Wiki/British_East_India_Company#the_Foundation_Years) (accessed 13.12.2007).

had some contact with the Jesuits missionaries in Goa. This visit helped to regain the relationship between king Jahangir and the Christian missionaries.⁶³

Meanwhile, various reports regarding the missionary works done by the Franciscans and Jesuits missionaries reached Rome. According to George M. Moraes, many of these reports concerning the missionary works in India were not very encouraging to the authorities in Rome. Pope Gregory XV by a papal Bull *Inscrutabile* of 22nd July 1622 established the Congregation of the Propaganda Fide.⁶⁴ Its purpose was “to centralise the organisation, direction and control of the propagation of faith in non-Catholic countries.”⁶⁵ Later a report was presented by the secretary, where the activities of Indian Padroado which was centralised from the Archdiocese of Goa, were very strongly criticised. The reason explained in the report was that the Padroado missionaries were not exploring interior part of the Mogul kingdom. To solve the problem, in 1637 an Indian convert from a Brahmin caste named Mathew de Castro, who was then Vicar Apostolic of Idalcan (Bijapur), was deputed with the powers as that of a diocesan bishop and was sent to Goa. When he reached Goa the Archbishop of Goa refused to accept him on the ground that he did not recommend anyone to be a bishop in his territory in accordance with the prevailing customs which began by the bull *Aequum Reputamus* promulgated by Pope Paul III in the year 1534.⁶⁶ Being disappointed, Mathew de Castro tried to spread wrong information regarding the Padroado missionaries all over central India even to the Mogul kings. This resulted in an increase of the anger of the Mogul king towards the missionaries and the king imprisoned many of the priests. In 1643 Mathew de Castro reached back Rome.⁶⁷ According to Stephan Neill, he was refused three times by the Archbishop of Goa.⁶⁸ This was the beginning of a tension between Portuguese Padroado and the Propaganda Fide from Rome.⁶⁹

Later, after the death of king Jahangir, his son Shah Jahan (1628-1658) became the emperor. He was a very orthodox Muslim and began to persecute the Christians and

⁶³ Maclagan, "The Letter of Fr. Xavier," 90.

⁶⁴ Moraes, "The Catholic Church under the Portuguese Patronage in the 19th and the 20th Century," 152.

⁶⁵ Moraes, "The Catholic Church under the Portuguese Patronage in the 19th and the 20th Century," 152.

⁶⁶ Stephen Neill, *A History of Christianity in India: The Beginnings to AD 1707* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 335-341.

⁶⁷ Moraes, "The Catholic Church under the Portuguese Patronage in the 19th and the 20th Century," 153-154.

⁶⁸ Neill, *A History of Christianity in India: The Beginnings to AD 1707*, 335-339.

⁶⁹ Neill, *A History of Christianity in India: The Beginnings to AD 1707*, 335-339.

prevented their undertakings. J. Thekkedath claims that Shah Jahan imprisoned four priests and later “ordered them to be taken ignominiously through the streets of Agra to the public square, where they were to be crushed to death by elephants before the whole court.”⁷⁰ Two of them were diocesans and the others were Augustinian priests.⁷¹ Many Jesuit missionaries too died due to severe persecution inflicted by the Mogul emperors. Besides all these, there was a great famine in 1649, which took the lives of thousands of people.⁷² During this famine the missionaries could support the local people who were affected by the famine.⁷³ The Franciscan missionaries too assisted the Jesuit missionaries in their relief undertaking.⁷⁴ According to J. Thekkedath, as the Jesuits missionaries were few in number, the superior could not replace the missionaries as other congregations did, for example the Augustinians could replace the personnel when it was needed.⁷⁵

However, they could restore their good relationship with the Mogul emperor only after the death of the king Shah Jahan in 1658. But the good relationship could not continue for long. Many rumours were spread against the missionaries and about their activities, which kept the king away from the missionaries.⁷⁶ According to George M. Moraes, emperor Aurangzeb (1658-1707), the successor of Shah Jahan, also could not maintain a good relationship with the Jesuit missionaries. The death of king Aurangzeb marked the decline of the Mogul reign in central India. This decline of Muslim power in central India and the increasing aggression of the European imperial powers against local kings disturbed each and every work of the missionaries greatly.⁷⁷

Meanwhile, in 1679 a certain Fr. Philip da Faria from Agra tried to make some contact with a tribal ruler at Nagpur. He could establish a friendly relationship with the king. The king received him with respect and permitted him to establish a

⁷⁰ Thekkedath, *History of Christianity in India*, 2, 463-464, on the wise representations of Asaf Khan, his (emperor's) father-in-law, who whispered into his ear the name of the viceroy of Goa and other grave words of warning, the emperor desisted. They were sent back to prison. The two diocesan priests, one of them was a Bengali from Sripur, died in Gaol. One of the Augustinians eventually escaped to Goa. But the other, Fr Antonio de Christo, had to remain in prison till 1641.

⁷¹ Thekkedath, *History of Christianity in India*, vol.2, 464.

⁷² Borges, *The Economics of the Goa Jesuits, 1542-1759*, 34.

⁷³ Borges, *The Economics of the Goa Jesuits, 1542-1759*, 34.

⁷⁴ Thekkedath, *History of Christianity in India*, vol.2, 432.

⁷⁵ Thekkedath, *History of Christianity in India*, vol.2, 465.

⁷⁶ Thekkedath, *History of Christianity in India*, vol.2, 435.

⁷⁷ Neill, *A History of Christianity in India: The Beginnings to AD 1707*, 357.

Christian community in his territory.⁷⁸ It is recorded that he could convert some fifty persons and could not work longer due to his ill health. Therefore, he was called back to Agra, leaving the Christian community without a spiritual leader.⁷⁹

In the eighteenth century the Mogul rulers shifted their capital from Agra to Delhi. However, the headquarters of Christians of central India still remained in Agra.⁸⁰ Often Dona Juliana Diaz Da Costa, a Portuguese lady, was very helpful to Christians.⁸¹ She was influential among the high officials of the royal court. This was indeed helpful to the missionaries as well as to the Christians at large. For example, she succeeded in exempting the Christians from the tax levied to all the non-Muslims by king Aurangazeb.⁸²

Meanwhile, Rome appointed various Vicars Apostolic who would look after the Christians of the Mogul kingdom. But the Archbishop of Goa did not accept them as bishops. In the year 1717, the authorities from Rome declared Mgr. Mauritius as the "true bishop and Vicar Apostolic of the Great Moguls."⁸³ But the Archbishop of Goa refused to accept him and the tension continued for years.

After the death of Aurangazeb in 1707, a stable ruler came only in 1719. His name was Mohammed Shah who reigned almost thirty years. There were many civil wars between small kingdoms in central India. Therefore, regular administration did not exist anywhere. There were repeated attacks from Afgan rulers to Delhi and Agra. It was also the time the East India Company which, formed in England, tried to conquer various petty kingdoms of central India.⁸⁴ Claude Alvares and Norma Alvares opine that the East India Company was not very much "interested in the evangelization of Indian people."⁸⁵ They concentrated mainly on trade from India to western countries. It is very evident from the survey of Alvares which stands as proof that there was only

⁷⁸ Thekkedath, *History of Christianity in India*, vol.2, 436.

⁷⁹ Thekkedath, *History of Christianity in India*, vol.2, 436.

⁸⁰ Neill, *A History of Christianity in India: The Beginnings to AD 1707*, 357.

⁸¹ She was a Portuguese or an Indo-Portuguese, was a widow and a member of the Mogul emperor's court for the greater part of her life. She was already there as an attendant of the wife of Aurangazeb, the mother of Murazzam Bahadur Shah.

⁸² Edward Rene Hambye, *History of Christianity in India*, vol.3, (Bangalore: The Church History Association of India, 1997), 412.

⁸³ Dominic C. D., "The Latin Missions under the Jurisdiction of Propaganda," in *Christianity in India*, ed. H. C. Perumalil (Alleppy: Prakasam Publications, 1972), 108.

⁸⁴ Hambye, *History of Christianity in India* vol.3, 423.

⁸⁵ Alvares, "The Christian and the Wild," 30.

“one baptism of an Indian by the Church of England recorded for the entire seventeenth century.”⁸⁶

In 1737 the Portugal dominion was considerably weakened by the invasion of Maratha's kingdom to India.⁸⁷ There was a decline of missionary personnel who were engaged in the missionary works under Padroado. The Jesuit missionaries were very much committed to preach and convert the Indians to Christianity.

Stephen Neill gives us the number of Jesuits in India from 1626 to 1749.⁸⁸

Year	Number of Jesuits Missionaries in India	Number of Jesuits Missionaries working under the Jurisdiction of Goa
1626	1010	820
1717	286	219
1749	197	150

This study explains that among the 1010 missionary personnel in 1626, 820 were working under the jurisdiction of Goa and the rest 190 were scattered in the south of India. In the same manner the other two years too 1717, 219 and 150 in 1749 were fully concentrating under the territory of Goa. This survey explains that a good number of missionaries were concentrated in central India. We have seen earlier that Pope Paul III by the Bull *Aequum Reputamus* erected the diocese of Goa, the patronage of which was given to the Portuguese crown, and entrusted the responsibility, the expansion and the evangelization work of Christianity in India to the Padroado.⁸⁹

There emerged tension between the powers of Propaganda and Padroado by the middle of the eighteenth century.⁹⁰ It was on 3rd September 1759 the king of Portugal

⁸⁶ Alvares, "The Christian and the Wild," 30.

⁸⁷ Stephen Neill, *A History of Christianity in India 1708-1858* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1985), 11.

⁸⁸ Neill, *A History of Christianity in India 1708-1858*, 72.

⁸⁹ Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India: From the Beginning up to the Middle of the Sixteenth Century*, vol.1, 241.

⁹⁰ Dominic, "The Latin Missions under the Jurisdiction of Propaganda," 108.

Jose I⁹¹ asked for the disbanding of all the Jesuit missionaries from the east.⁹² This unfortunate event took place when the central Indian Christianity was in its infancy.⁹³ The suppression of Jesuits in India came into effect in 1773.⁹⁴ Dr. George M. Moraes explains the reasons for the suppression of Jesuits from India. He claims the major reason for the suppression was that some of the Jesuits missionaries accepted the life styles of the local high caste Hindus in the Madura mission. The life styles of the missionaries were not in accordance with the understanding of the Padroado authorities in the field of evangelization.⁹⁵ The behaviour of the Jesuit missionaries was interpreted as immoral. The names of those missionaries who took leadership in such a local life styles which confused the Padroado authorities were De Nobili,⁹⁶ Beschi and John De Brito.⁹⁷

After this unfortunate event the responsibility of the central Indian mission was entrusted to the Tibet-Hindustan mission.⁹⁸ This Tibet-Hindustan mission was looked after by the Capuchin priests. Their missionary activities were directly guided by the Propaganda Congregation in Rome. This brought the responsibility of the missionary work in central India directly under the control of Rome.⁹⁹ Its local supervision was done by the Vicar Apostolic of the Great Mogul whose headquarter was in Mumbai. The bishop in-charge was a Carmelite monk.

⁹¹ The fatal blow was struck by a Royal Decree from Jose I, the king of Portugal, at the machinations of his powerful prime minister Sebastiao Jose Carvalho e Melo, on 3rd September 1759, the Jesuits from Portugal and its colonies were ordered to be imprisoned. On 27th September the Convent or Professed house of Bom Jesus was ransacked, the sacred tomb of St. Francis Xavier was desecrated, and about 228 Jesuits from the territory of Goa were rounded up- including 19 who were in Bom Jesus on that fateful day, and on 19th December 1760 they were all shipped to Lisbon there to be imprisoned again and await their end. Fr. Moreno de Souza Goa Province Erected The Examiner Vol.144 No.37 Mumbai, 11.

⁹² Borges, *The Economics of the Goa Jesuits, 1542-1759*, 127.

⁹³ Sebastian C. H. Kim, *In Search of Identity: Debates on Religious Conversion in India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), 121.

⁹⁴ Neill, *A History of Christianity in India 1708-1858*, 72.

⁹⁵ Moraes, "The Catholic Church under the Portuguese Patronage in the 19th and the 20th Century," 151.

⁹⁶ Vincent Cronin, *A Pearl to India: The Life of Robert De Nobili* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1959), 11-268.

⁹⁷ In India, the missionaries presented Christianity in terms of Hindu wisdom. Within a little over a hundred years, a large number of high castes Hindus accepted the Christian faith. At the time of the suppression of the Jesuits in 1758, the Christian population in Madura alone had gone up to 150000.

⁹⁸ Dominic C. D., "The Latin Missions under the Jurisdiction of Propaganda," 102.

⁹⁹ Dominic, "The Latin Missions under the Jurisdiction of Propaganda," 102.

According to Charles, 127 Jesuits had to go back to Portugal.¹⁰⁰ Only two Jesuits, J. Tieffenthaler, an Austrian, and Francis Xavier Wendel, a German did not go to Portugal.¹⁰¹ The strong relationship that the missionaries maintained with the rulers in the past two centuries helped these two missionaries to explore further possibilities, going even to the remotest areas of Mogul kingdom.¹⁰²

These two zealous Jesuit missionaries began to work with other diocesan priests, thus they came under the supervision of the Great Mogul Vicariate.¹⁰³ According to Edward Rene Hambye, the Rajput (a Hindu Caste) chief Raja Singh of Jaipur (presently in the state of Rajasthan) invited these two priests to assist him in his work of astronomy. They were to help the king to assist in the supervision of the newly built observatories in the main cities of his kingdom at Jaipur, Delhi, Mathura and Benaras.¹⁰⁴ The important point here for us is that these priests were allowed to look after the spiritual needs of the faithful who converted to Christianity in these areas. Though, the king did not appreciate or welcome the conversion of any new member to Christianity, he permitted the existing Christians to maintain their faith.¹⁰⁵ This is clear from the fact that the king himself met the expenses of building a church at Marwar, 65 km. south of Gwalior in Madhya Pradesh.¹⁰⁶ The king also met the expenses for the maintenance of these two priests.

According to Dominic C. D., the suppression of the Society of Jesus did serious harm to the local Church. The Propaganda Fide could not provide sufficient priests to look after the spiritual needs of the Indian Church especially in the central part of India. The Vicar Apostolic tried to organise the local clergy and in 1770 he began a formation house attached to the headquarters of the Vicariate.¹⁰⁷

Even though the Mogul Muslim rulers were not very supportive of the mission of the Christian missionaries, the Capuchin missionaries who were associated with the Jesuits could establish different missions¹⁰⁸ in various parts of the empire.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁰ Borges, *The Economics of the Goa Jesuits, 1542-1759*, 128.

¹⁰¹ Hambye, *History of Christianity in India* vol.3, 415.

¹⁰² Moraes, "The Catholic Church under the Portuguese Patronage in the 19th and the 20th Century," 152.

¹⁰³ Hambye, *History of Christianity in India* vol.3, 414.

¹⁰⁴ Hambye, *History of Christianity in India* vol.3, 420.

¹⁰⁵ Thomas Panackal, *Directory 2001-2002* (Bhopal: St.Mary's Offset Printing, 2000), 2-3.

¹⁰⁶ Augustine Kanjamala, "Future of the Mission in the Hindi Belt (North India)," *Verbum SVD* 34, no. 1 (1993): 48.

¹⁰⁷ Dominic, "The Latin Missions under the Jurisdiction of Propaganda," 110.

¹⁰⁸ Missions here would mean place for the missionary activities.

However, they could not continue the work due to the lack of priests from the year 1779.¹¹⁰ Their mission was also assisted by priests from the Carmelite order. The priests from the Carmelite order too were very few in number. They were affected by the French revolution of the eighteenth century.¹¹¹ Meanwhile the Vicar Apostolic, Charles of St. Conrad, obtained a permission from Rome to appoint two priests as delegates to administer the sacrament of confirmation in 1781. One of them was Gregory of the Presentation who established his headquarters in Delhi.

Anarchy and poverty were prevailing among the common people. To add to the difficulties in the life of Christians, there was a great famine in 1783-84 which struck the life of many Christians as well as non-Christians. There were no proper organised relief works and according to the study of Edward Rene Hambye, "in all the districts one-third to one-half of the population perished."¹¹² The life of the people had reached to an extent where slavery was the only resort to earn their daily bread. Edward Rene Hambye observed that in all these "evil days the few Christians hoped only for survival."¹¹³ He claims that during these years, there were no considerable improvements found in the life of Christians of central India. According to the writings of an Italian traveller there were around 1000 Christians living in Agra in 1784. Edward Rene Hambye concludes, "It remains true, however, that most of the Christian congregations scattered in the vast [areas] of central India could not be adequately cared for. The priests were too very few and too often overworked and they had to care for the wives and children of the Christian soldiers who were frequently absent."¹¹⁴ Therefore, the missionaries could not concentrate on the works of evangelization.

The evacuation of Padroado missionaries arose tension between the laity and the missionaries who were sent by the Propaganda of Rome. This tension resulted in introducing a double jurisdiction¹¹⁵ in some areas of India. However, due to the practical difficulties, the responsibilities of those areas, which had double jurisdictions were given back to the Archbishop of Goa in 1789. This compromise

¹⁰⁹ Camps, *Jerome Xavier S. J., and the Muslims of the Mogul Empire*, 86.

¹¹⁰ Kanjamala, "Future of the Mission in the Hindi Belt (North India)," 48.

¹¹¹ Hambye, *History of Christianity in India*, vol.3, 416.

¹¹² Hambye, *History of Christianity in India*, vol.3, 403.

¹¹³ Hambye, *History of Christianity in India*, vol.3, 406.

¹¹⁴ Hambye, *History of Christianity in India*, vol.3, 411.

¹¹⁵ Double jurisdiction would mean, one territory governed by two ecclesiastical authorities. For example some areas of Christian community in India came under the spiritual guidance of two authorities. That is authorities of Propaganda of Rome as well as Padroado, the king of Portugal.

also did not release the tension that prevailed among the laity as well as the clergy, as a result, after a few years the authorities had to revive the practice of double jurisdiction.¹¹⁶

Gregory of Presentation, one of the delegates by the Vicar apostolic to administer the sacrament of confirmation, was very active in the apostolate. He could baptise Begum Johana Sumroo of Sardhana in 1790. She founded a Christian community in her kingdom and later in 1826 she built a beautiful church for the Christians in Sardhana in Uttar Pradesh.¹¹⁷

According to Stephen Neill, the missionaries in central India during the eighteenth century could not do much because they were concentrating more on the local languages and cultures.¹¹⁸ For example:

One plunged deeply into the languages and cultures of India, believing that this too was a service to the Gospel, which they had come to proclaim. One (Desideri) produced the best and the most competent account of Tibetan Lamaism ever written. One acquired the first copy of the four Vedas ever to come into the hands of European. A third learnt to write the Tamil language better than almost any Tamil of his time. A fourth put forward views as to the interconnections between languages of the Indo-European family, anticipating the observations made later by scholars of the English race.¹¹⁹

According to Stephen Neill, many of these works did not receive any recognition till the twentieth century.

When Dom Emmanuel de Danto Galdino was the bishop of Goa, Fr. Peter de Alcantara was appointed as the Vicar Apostolic in 1796. There existed a cordial relationship and co-operation between them. He was in office from 1796 to 1840. It was a great achievement in the history of the Christianity in India. The tension that began in the seventeenth century with the arrival of Mathew de Castro to Goa and his rejection by the then Archbishop of Goa thus came to an end.¹²⁰

In the year 1800 there were only four Carmelites to help the Padroado, one was in Delhi, one in Karwar, one in Surat and the fourth one was in Mumbai. There were also two Capuchins and eleven diocesan priests to help him. Fr. Francis Xavier

¹¹⁶ Dominic, "The Latin Missions under the Jurisdiction of Propaganda," 109.

¹¹⁷ Dominic, "The Latin Missions under the Jurisdiction of Propaganda," 110.

¹¹⁸ Neill, *A History of Christianity in India 1708-1858*, 73.

¹¹⁹ Neill, *A History of Christianity in India 1708-1858*, 73.

¹²⁰ Moraes, "The Catholic Church under the Portuguese Patronage in the 19th and the 20th Century," 155.

Wendel (1751-1803) the zealous missionary, according to Edward Rene Hambye, was the first priest to build the Christian community at Agra. He died in Lucknow on 29th March 1803 and his body was brought back to Agra and buried there. According to Edward "his death marked the end of an era" and the Capuchin fathers took over the parishes and institutions of the central India.¹²¹

In 1829 Madhya Pradesh was officially made a part of Agra Vicariate.¹²² The bishop Hartmann ofm. Cap, was incharge of the Vicariate. It was he, who started forming Christian communities, especially in Hindi speaking region (Madhya Pradesh). Though there were a good number of Christians in different pockets, the number of priests was very less.¹²³ The missionary work developed in an extensive manner in the second half of the nineteenth century. Pope Gregory XVI, who was the prefect of Propaganda before his election as the pope, had a great vision for the missions of India and hence he invited more religious congregations to shoulder the responsibilities of the Church in India. Thus in 1832 he erected the Vicariate of Madras which took over a great part of Golconda. In 1832 the central, northern and western parts of the Great Mogul Vicariate was created with the title of the Vicariate of Mumbai. In 1834 the Vicariate of Bengal was constituted for the eastern part of the Great Mogul Vicariate, and of Ceylon, and in 1836 the Vicariate of Coromandel, comprising Pondicherry and Madras, was erected.

There was a great revival in the mission field when the Jesuit missionaries began to return to India. It was in the year 1836 the Jesuits missionaries returned to India and began to concentrate on the Madurai mission. The Franciscans and the Capuchins concentrated in various parts of central India.¹²⁴

Bishop Hartmann ofm. Cap, who initiated the modern organisation of the Church at Agra, became the bishop of Mumbai. The Vicariate of Mumbai has become important not only because Hartman became the bishop of Mumbai but also on 24th April 1838, the same Pope (Gregory XVI) issued "the brief, *Multa Praeclare*, limiting the jurisdiction of the Padroado only to the civil territory of Goa, and giving elsewhere exclusive jurisdiction to Vicars Apostolic."¹²⁵ There were mainly two administrative bodies who controlled the Latin Church in India. The Propaganda and the Padroado

¹²¹ Hambye, *History of Christianity in India* vol.3, 417.

¹²² Panackal, *Directory 2001-2002*, 2-3.

¹²³ Dominic, "The Latin Missions under the Jurisdiction of Propaganda," 110-111.

¹²⁴ Achilles Meersman, "The Catholic Church in India since the Mid-Nineteenth Century," 249.

¹²⁵ Dominic, "The Latin Missions under the Jurisdiction of Propaganda," 111-112.

and the promulgation of the Papal Bull *Multa Praeclare* was a directive for them.¹²⁶ However, according to Dominic OCD, this disciplinary measure was later modified. In 1854, part of it was taken out to form another Vicariate, of Pune.

Pope Leo XIII in 1884 extinguished the Padroado jurisdiction in the Indian dioceses of Calcutta, Dacca, and Hyderabad and in Sri Lankan provinces of Colombo and Jaffna.¹²⁷ Pope Leo XIII erected an apostolic delegation for India and Ceylon in 1884, and in the same year he abolished the Padroado jurisdiction in a number of other Vicariates too. The Padroado authorities rejected the decision of the Pope.

In 1886 the diocese of Allahabad was formed and part of the Hindi-speaking region was then attached to this new diocese. Pope Leo XIII respecting the views of both parties (Propaganda and Padroado) established new Hierarchy for the whole India on 1st September 1886 by his Apostolic letter *Humanae Salutis*.¹²⁸ Goa was re-erected as an archdiocese with Cochin, Mylapore and Damaun simultaneously created as its suffragans. The extent of its jurisdiction was determined and they continued under Padroado. Other six Vicariates were raised to the status of dioceses¹²⁹ and archdioceses which continued to depend on the Propaganda. They are given in the following chart.

S. No	Name of the Archdiocese	Suffragan Dioceses
1	Agra	Allahabad, Lahore
2	Mumbai	Poona
3	Calcutta	Krishnagar, Dacca
4	Madras	Hyderabad, Vishakapatnam, Mangalore, and Tiruchrapalli
5	Pondicheri	Coimbatore, Mysore

¹²⁶ Meersman, "The Catholic Church in India since the Mid-Nineteenth Century," 249.

¹²⁷ Meersman, "The Catholic Church in India since the Mid-Nineteenth Century," 251.

¹²⁸ Leo XIII, "Humanae Salutis," *Acta Leonis XIII*, no. 6 (1886): 164-179.

¹²⁹ James Cherian Mudakodil, "The CBCI and Evangelization in India" (Doctoral Dissertation, Katholieke Universiteit, Leuven, 2002), 6.

6	Verapoly	Quilon
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This settlement was the end of the conflict between the two powers of Padroado and Propaganda.¹³⁰ The Padroado was restricted to Portuguese enclaves only.¹³¹

1.2.2 The Church in Central India After the Portuguese

In 1862 the Belgian Jesuits were entrusted with the responsibility of the Calcutta Vicariate. It was in the second half of the nineteenth century that the first group of Jesuit missionaries reached Chotanagpur¹³² in central India, where they found a few Catholics who had come from other states (provinces) of India in search of job facilities. For example J. Thekkedath affirms that certain Christians who were holding high offices under the emperors Jahangir and Shah Jahan, were residing there.¹³³ The pioneering missionary of Chotanagpur¹³⁴ was Fr. Augustus Stockman,¹³⁵ who was a Jesuit missionary from Belgium. He took his residence in Chotanagpur in the headquarters of the Government administration in 1868.¹³⁶ The local people were adivasis (aborigines). They had "long centuries of oppression" from the landlords and Hindus.¹³⁷ In the year 1882 Fr. Constant Lievens s.j. from the Belgium province was entrusted with this mission.¹³⁸

Achilles Meersman points out that the report of the bishops Bonnard and Carbonneaux in 1858-62 reveals that there was not a single Indian priest in the Vicariates of Vishkapatanam, Hyderabad, Dacca, Calcutta, Patna and Agra Vicariates. This report motivated to begin a number of seminaries in India to train boys to

¹³⁰ Meersman, "The Catholic Church in India since the Mid-Nineteenth Century," 251.

¹³¹ Meersman, "The Catholic Church in India since the Mid-Nineteenth Century," 251. In continuation to his reformation, Pope Benedict XV abolished the Padroado jurisdiction of Burma in 1920, and Goa in 1923. Thus henceforth there would be only one representative from Rome (Holy See) to advice and encourage, investigate and report, p. 256.

¹³² This area contains the tribal communities of the provinces of Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Chhattisgarh. See Koodapuzha, *Bharathasabhacharithram (Indian Church History)*, 512.

¹³³ Thekkedath, *History of Christianity in India*, vol.2, 442.

¹³⁴ Chotanagpur consists of the southernmost districts of Bihar. It also includes some parts of the neighbouring states: Madhya Pradesh, Orisa, Bengal and Chhattisgarh.

¹³⁵ Koodapuzha, *Bharathasabhacharithram (Indian Church History)*, 511.

¹³⁶ P. Ponette, "Ranchi Mission: Before and After Lievens," *Indian Missiological Review* 7, no. 1 (1985): 32.

¹³⁷ Albert Van Exem, "Jesuit Impact on Chotanagpur," in *Jesuit Presence in Indian History*, ed. Anand Amaladass (Madras: Satya Nilayam, 1988), 78.

¹³⁸ Meersman, "The Catholic Church in India since the Mid-Nineteenth Century," 254.

become priests. This culminated in the establishment of a Papal seminary in Pune in the year 1894 by Leo XIII and he entrusted its responsibility to the Belgian Jesuits.¹³⁹

The land at Chotanagpur is known for its rich accumulation of mineral wealth in the soil.¹⁴⁰ Johnson Vadakumchery argues that one fourth of the total mining graphic area of the country is situated in the areas of Chotanagpur.¹⁴¹ This is the state where the *adivasis* /tribals (aborigines) are thickly populated. In the understanding of a tribe the land in which they live is the property of the community, not an individual's property. Therefore no one maintained its ownership and not even a proper document about their land. This land and its products have become the only source of common people's sustenance.¹⁴² For the cultivation of the land, the people take loan against the land from the rich money lenders. Eventually due to the failure of crops the poor farmers at the time of harvest, may not able to pay back the loan that they have taken. The money lenders forcefully vacate the people from the land and they become landless and migrate to other parts of the country. The court was very far, and even the lawyers belonged to the class of the exploiters, and supported the rich money lenders. As we have seen the tribals were illiterate and "had no documents to show [that they own their property further] no one knew their language."¹⁴³ Every village had its own spoken dialect and they did not communicate much with outsiders.

Fr. Constant Lievens stayed in a village named Torpa.¹⁴⁴ He took interest in studying in detail about the people, their language and customs. This experience of being with the people was an opportunity to know in detail the exploitations that prevailed among them. He believed that to save souls the only way would be to struggle for justice.¹⁴⁵ To fight for the right of the poor who were deprived of their land and wealth. The money lenders controlled the economy of the people.¹⁴⁶ Even the local government administration has acquired a lot of tribal land for the purpose of housing and establishing industries. Therefore he studied laws pertaining to the land tenure and began to defend the right of the people. People flocked to him in groups whose

¹³⁹ Meersman, "The Catholic Church in India since the Mid-Nineteenth Century," 257.

¹⁴⁰ Van Exem, "Jesuit Impact on Chotanagpur," 78.

¹⁴¹ Johnson Vadakumchery, "Jharkhand: A Movement from Ethnicity to Empowerment of Autonomy," *Journal of Dharma* 22, no. 1 (1997): 43.

¹⁴² VanExem, "Jesuit Impact on Chotanagpur," 80.

¹⁴³ Van Exem, "Jesuit Impact on Chotanagpur," 80.

¹⁴⁴ Van Exem, "Jesuit Impact on Chotanagpur," 85.

¹⁴⁵ Van Exem, "Jesuit Impact on Chotanagpur," 82.

¹⁴⁶ Meersman, "The Catholic Church in India since the Mid-Nineteenth Century," 254.

problems were settled by this young missionary.¹⁴⁷ As a result he could convert a good number of the tribals to Christianity.

Fr. Constant Lievens fulfilled the aspirations of a large number of the tribals. He took up their land cases and regained their land, which was confiscated by the rich.¹⁴⁸ In Chotanagpur Fr. Constant Lievens¹⁴⁹ converted seventy-five thousand people within a short period of seven years (1885-1893).¹⁵⁰ They belonged to the tribals like Mundas, Kharias and Oraon communities from 800 villages. These tribals had their own languages and customs. They followed some form of ancestral worship and were not influenced by the Hindu form of worship.¹⁵¹ Lievens after his dedicated work died at the age of 37 in 1893.¹⁵² It is noteworthy that due to his efforts 36,302 became Catholic and 36,961 catechumens counted at the time of his death.¹⁵³

In central India, on 11th March 1935, the mission territory of Indore was elevated to the status of an Apostolic Prefecture. This new mission territory was compiled by putting together the areas that have taken from the already existing dioceses of Ajmer, Nagpur and Allahabad.¹⁵⁴ Later, on 15th July 1935, Fr. P. T. Janser was appointed as the new Apostolic Prefect of Indore.¹⁵⁵ The territory of central part of Madhya Pradesh was separated from Allahabad diocese and attached to the diocese of Indore.¹⁵⁶ Thus the spirit of missionary activities began to reach every corner of India.¹⁵⁷

¹⁴⁷ Meersman, "The Catholic Church in India since the Mid-Nineteenth Century," 254.

¹⁴⁸ Vadakumchery, "Jharkhand: A Movement from Ethnicity to Empowerment of Autonomy," 42.

¹⁴⁹ Lode Monbaliu, *Constant Lievens: De Ridder Van Chota-Nagpur* (Roeselare: Huize Breughel, 1983), 349.

¹⁵⁰ Koodapuzha, *Bharathasabhacharithram (Indian Church History)*, 512.

¹⁵¹ Felix Alfred Plattner, *The Catholic Church in India* (Allahabad: St. Paul Publications, 1964), 87.

¹⁵² Monbaliu, *Constant Lievens: De Ridder Van Chota-Nagpur*, 288.

¹⁵³ Van Exem, "Jesuit Impact on Chotanagpur," 85.

¹⁵⁴ P Antony, "Erection of Indore Prefecture," *Verbum SVD* 30 (1989): 178.

¹⁵⁵ Antony, "Erection of Indore Prefecture," 179.

¹⁵⁶ Antony, "Erection of Indore Prefecture," 179.

¹⁵⁷ It was necessary to establish an administrative body in India and entrust the responsibility of evangelizing work to the people of India. As a first gesture of this dream, September 28, 1944 was an important date in the history of Christianity in India. On this day a "permanent association of the Catholic Hierarchy in India under the name Catholic Bishops' Conference of India" (CBCI) took its final shape. The Archbishop Kierkels, the Apostolic Delegate, officially announced this as "a landmark" in the history of the Church in India. The Apostolic delegate of India was considered ex-officio the president of the Conference. This state of affairs changed in 1960 when the Holy See preferred that the Apostolic Internuncio should not be the President of CBCI on the ground that it is the Conference of the Hierarchy and the Apostolic Internuncio has to be the link or liaison between the Hierarchy and the Holy See and not a member of the Conference. Moreover, in his capacity as

After the death of Fr. Lievens, the pioneer of Chotanagpur mission,¹⁵⁸ the Jesuits had to invite other religious orders to continue the activities which were begun by Fr. Lievens in Chotanagpur (Madhya Pradesh). In 1951 the Society of Divine Word (SVD) responded positively to help the mission in central India.¹⁵⁹ In 1951 certain areas were bifurcated from Ranchi diocese and constituted into the dioceses of Sambalpur, Raigarh and Ambikapur. Bishop Severin of Ranchi was transferred to Raigarh, Ambikapur and Ranchi received the first adivasi (tribal) bishop, Nicolas Kujur.¹⁶⁰ Due to various reasons, mainly political, since 1953-1954 the flow and works of foreign missionaries were restricted in central India. It helped the independent growth of the Indian Church on its own feet.

The State of Madhya Pradesh was established on 1st November 1956, under the provision of the States' Recognition Act of India.¹⁶¹ In 1958 the capital of the State of Madhya Pradesh was shifted from Nagpur to Bhopal and these changes in the civil state administration necessitated the creation of the new Archdiocese of Bhopal on 13th September 1963 by Pope Paul VI through an official papal document.¹⁶² The new archdiocese consisted of areas from the dioceses of Ajmer, Indore and Jabalpur.¹⁶³ Archbishop Eugene D'Souza, the then Archbishop of Nagpur, was transferred to Bhopal as its first Archbishop.¹⁶⁴

To summarise, the Christians in central India had come from three sources (1) the European Christians (includes merchants and some of the Padroado officials who settled in central India), (2) the native Christians who followed the eastern rites like Chaldeans, Syrians and Nestorians¹⁶⁵ and (3) the local Christians who were converted by the European missionaries.¹⁶⁶ According to Jerome Xavier, there was no forced conversion but many of the converts received various material helps. Moreover, many

Internuncio, it might be awkward at times if as President he had to contact certain matters with the Indian Government and run the risk of not being respected. Thus, it was considered better that the President of the CBCI be a member of the CBCI, and not the Apostolic Internuncio. cf. Mudakodil, "The CBCI and Evangelisation in India", 12.

¹⁵⁸ Meersman, "The Catholic Church in India since the Mid-Nineteenth Century," 255.

¹⁵⁹ Meersman, "The Catholic Church in India since the Mid-Nineteenth Century," 255.

¹⁶⁰ Meersman, "The Catholic Church in India since the Mid-Nineteenth Century," 255.

¹⁶¹ Francis Scaria, *History of the Archdiocese of Bhopal* (Bhopal: Archbishop's House, 1999), 8.

¹⁶² Panackal, *Directory 2001-2002*, 2, 3.

¹⁶³ Koodapuzha, *Bharathasabhacharithram (Indian Church History)*, 527.

¹⁶⁴ Scaria, *History of the Archdiocese of Bhopal*, 11.

¹⁶⁵ Camps, *Jerome Xavier S. J., and the Muslims of the Mogul Empire*, 86.

¹⁶⁶ Camps, *Jerome Xavier S. J., and the Muslims of the Mogul Empire*, 85.

of those who converted to Christianity were from economically poor classes.¹⁶⁷ Consequently, as some of the protestant writers like Withington, Roe, Terry and others remarked, people who are converted by the Jesuits did not practice faith; rather they remained Christians for the sake of money and various benefits.¹⁶⁸

We have seen the pioneers of the central Indian mission were Jesuits and Franciscans. These missionaries came to central India during different periods of Muslim¹⁶⁹ and Hindu rulers.¹⁷⁰ By the end of the nineteenth century the missionaries from the Society of St. Francis De Sales (MSFS) also began their missionary works in central India, together with Jesuits.¹⁷¹ They were inspired by the mass conversion movement by the Jesuits. Meanwhile, a group of French Capuchins began to work among the tribals, particularly among the Bils and Bilalas in Madhya Pradesh. Their works did not result in mass conversions but only of a few groups. The disappointed missionaries began to continue their work among the dalits¹⁷² and they succeeded in converting a good number of them. For instance, the two third of the Christians of the diocese of Khandwa in the region of Madhya Pradesh are from the Bhalai community.¹⁷³

¹⁶⁷ Camps, *Jerome Xavier S. J., and the Muslims of the Mogul Empire*, 89.

¹⁶⁸ Camps, *Jerome Xavier S. J., and the Muslims of the Mogul Empire*, 89; Walter Fernandes, "A Socio-Historical Perspective for Liberation Theology in India," in *Leave the Temple*, ed. Wilfred Felix (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1992), 15.

¹⁶⁹ Mugal emperor Akbar, in 1601 invited missionaries to central India. As the emperor shifted his capital to Delhi in 1648, the work of the Jesuit missionaries could continue in Delhi too. In 1620 the Governor of Patna who was a Muslim and had been an Ambassador of king Jahangir to Goa earlier, where he became a Christian in 1610 imitating the Akbar the Great, invited the Jesuit missionaries to Patna. Koodapuzha, *Bharathasabharithram (Indian Church History)*, 507.

¹⁷⁰ The Rajput chief Raja Singh of Jaipur (1619) who was keenly interested in astronomy invited missionaries (1740). His intention of inviting these missionaries was that he did not have specialised people in astronomy in his kingdom to help the king to supervise the functions of astronomy.

¹⁷¹ P Anto, "The History of the Catholic Church in Nimar Region," *Indian Missiological Review* 16 (1994): 53.

¹⁷² The term "Dalit" "in Sanskrit language is both noun and adjective." Its root form "'dal' means to crack, open, split etc." As a noun it means "trodden down, scattered, destroyed etc." James Massey, "Christian Dalits: A Historical Perspective," *Journal of Dharma* XVI (1991) 44-60, 44. Massey gives examples from Ex 23:3 (dal), Jdg 6:15 (h-dal), Jr 40:7 (um-dalot) etc. which "means low, weak, poor, helpless etc." In Hindi "dalit" is used "for the English expression 'oppressed.'" In the Hebrew and Hindi languages too the word "dalit" or its root "dal" is found with a similar meaning. The usage of the term dalit today comes from the great nineteenth century Marathi social reformer Mahatma Jotirao Phule to denote the "untouchables." See, Massey, "Christian Dalits," 44.

¹⁷³ Kanjamala, "Future of the Mission in the Hindi Belt (North India)," 51.

1.2.3 Contemporary Church in Madhya Pradesh

It is interesting to note the contemporary situation of the Church in central India. In this connection, it is good to make a survey of the general status of the activities of the Church in the Central Province (Madhya Pradesh) of India. If Christianity is a minority all over India, in the central and especially in the Central Province of India it is practically an insignificant minority. According to the 2001 census of India, there were 1,028,610,328¹⁷⁴ people in India.¹⁷⁵ Out of these, 84,326,240 people belonged to various 'Scheduled Tribes' alone. They would comprise around 8.2% of the total Indian population with 98% of them living in rural¹⁷⁶ areas.¹⁷⁷ In Madhya Pradesh alone there are 12,233,474 tribals.¹⁷⁸

It is noteworthy that the central Indian Church has expanded greatly today. The numbers of the dioceses have increased in central India. There are 14 dioceses in Madhya Pradesh region alone. We wish to place the details of the dioceses as they are on April 2006.

Statistics of the dioceses of Madhya Pradesh by Catholic Population as on April 2006

S.N	Diocese	Name of the Ordinary	Population	Catholics	Percentage Catholics	Year Erected	Area S.Kms
01	Archdiocese of Bhopal	Leo Cornelio	3,826,494	10,365	.3%	13/09/63	25000
02	Gwalior	Joseph Kaithathara	5,900,000	3,750	.1%	09/02/99	33583
03	Satna	Mathew Vaniakizha kel	9,503,562	2,707	.03%	29/07/68	45147

¹⁷⁴ According to the population updates there are 1.3 billion people in India. More exactly as in July 2007 there are 1,129,866,154 people in India.

¹⁷⁵ Sivadas Pande, (<http://www.indiserver.com/biz/indiapopulation.html>, accessed 25.03.2003).

¹⁷⁶ J. Dominic, "Mission among the Tribals: An Assessment," *Mission* 4 (2002): 301.

¹⁷⁷ India has a vast representation of tribal people. The names of some of the tribal groups are Mundas, Santal, Oraon, Ho, Gond, Mongoloid, Bhil and Bhilalas. The majority of them are found in central and north India, which include 80% of the Indian tribals. cf. Dominic, "Mission among the Tribals: An Assessment." 301.

¹⁷⁸ Xavier Pinto, *Tribal Population in India* (<http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/organisations/healthnet/SAsia/forums/Tribals/Tribals/Mo.,> 1991, accessed 12.04.2004).

04	Ujjain	Sebastian Vadakel	3,926,800	3,200	.08%	29/07/68	18225
05	Jabalpur	Gerald Almeida	8,450,000	25,292	.3%	18/07/32	52980
06	Khandwa	Adminsitrator	4,241,250	30,436	.7%	03/02/77	24000
07	Jhabua	Chacko Thottu- marrical	4,087,516	31,213	.7%	25/03/02	21366
08	Archdiocese of Raipur	Joseph Augustine	11,546,784	48,949	.4%	16/01/64	60819
09	Sagar	Anthony Chirayath	4,538,500	6,710	.1%	29/07/68	39020
10	Ambikapur	Patras Minj	2,600,000	80,029	3.1%	10/11/77	22337
11	Raigarh	Paul Toppo	1,265,084	56,640	4.5%	13/12/51	7,072
12	Indore	George Anathil	4,496,287	19,206	.4%	11/03/35	39386
13	Jagadapur	Simon Stock, P	2,673,651	6,345	.2%	23/03/72	39176
14	Jashpur	Victor Kindo	743,160	185,666	25.0%	23/03/06	6457

The Statistics of the Total Catholics in the Province of Archdiocese of Bhopal¹⁷⁹

Total Population	67,835,088
Total Catholics	5,10,508
Total Percent Catholics	.75%
Province	Bhopal
Suffragans	Thirteen dioceses

¹⁷⁹ Dominic Emmanuel, *Catholic Hierarchy* (<http://www.catholic-hierarchy.org/country/scin1.html>, 2003, accessed 11.04.2004).

Total Diocesan Priests	650
Total Religious Priests	558
Total Permanent Deacon	2
Total Male Religious	1034
Total Female Religious	3445
Total Number of Parishes	337

After steering the life of the Church in Madhya Pradesh region for 30 years through the Archdiocese of Bhopal, Archbishop Eugene D'Souza m.s.f.s., the first Archbishop of Bhopal, laid down his office and handed it over to Most. Rev. Dr. Pascal Topno s.j., of Ambikapur, who was promoted as the Archbishop of Bhopal on 20th May 1994. On 16th September 2007 Most. Rev. Dr. Topno s.j., handed over the office of the Archbishop to the Most. Rev. Dr. Leo Cornelio s.v.d., who was then promoted as the Archbishop of Bhopal from the diocese of Khandwa from the same region.

On 1st November 2000, India gave birth to a new state Chhattisgarh which came in the region of Madhya Pradesh. The new state, with an area of 135,194 square kilometres, has its Capital at Raipur (The Capital may be shifted later to Nandghat, about midway between Raipur and Bilaspur on the banks of the Shiven River). The changes in the civil state administration of Madhya Pradesh and newly erected state Chhattisgarh necessitated the creation of the new Archdiocese of Chhattisgarh on 18th March 2004 with the dioceses of Ambikapur, Jabalpur, Jagdalpur, Jaspur, Raigarh as its suffragan dioceses. Most Rev. Joseph A. Charanakunnel, the bishop of Raipur, was promoted as the first Archbishop.¹⁸⁰ Thus the Madhya Pradesh region was reduced into remaining seven dioceses.

¹⁸⁰ The reorganisation of the new civil state in central India, where the district head-quarters of Raipur was erected as the Administrative head (capital) of the new civil state and the erection of the new ecclesiastical province in central India where the diocese of Raipur as the new archdiocese took place almost simultaneously one after another. The initial administrative works of both ecclesiastical province as well as the civil state took some time to get themselves organised in the same town. All the initial transitory changes of the civil state (province) were very much affected in the smooth establishment of the ecclesiastical province at Raipur. All these changes were still going on even at the completion of my research work. Therefore, I wish to consider both ecclesiastical provinces of Bhopal and Raipur as one unit in my dissertation.

The priests, religious brothers and sisters are engaged in different pastoral activities in the remote villages. The missionaries are trying to build up Christian communities. Simultaneously they have also to take care of the existing Christian communities, and propagate the Christian message to the non-Christians as well. To carry out both these duties, for the uneducated and poor people, they need to become part of their societies.¹⁸¹ In such attempt, the missionaries have understood the importance of helping the ordinary people in their social and secular needs.¹⁸² Thus, in these underdeveloped areas missionary work and pastoral work have taken the shape of social work, especially in the field of education, health care and other social activities.

In mission areas, poverty is a great concern for every missionary. Many of the encyclicals like *Familiaris Consortio*, *Salvifici Doloris* have spoken about the option for the poor.¹⁸³ For a Hindu or a Muslim generosity and charity are limited only to their own caste or village, but for a Catholic missionary, there are no boundaries. As government organisations take it for granted that Christianity teaches universal brotherhood of men and women, they expect a missionary to be a generous giver. According to Dorr, this fact is very evident when the international community recognised the work of Mother Teresa and awarded her the Nobel Prize for the selfless service done to the marginalized and the poor.¹⁸⁴

2 THE ROLE OF THE LAITY IN THE FIELD OF EVANGELIZATION

The region of central India has established herself as a full-fledged unit in the field of evangelization. We have seen the emergence of fourteen dioceses with its administrative members. In following sections, we shall discuss about the actual place of the laity in the field of evangelization especially in the mission areas of central India. We need to see what role the laity plays in the context of the Church. We shall discuss the subject by analysing the term laity.

2.1 THE TERM “LAITY”

While we discuss about the laity and their role in the field of evangelization it is interesting to note the comment made by Abbot Christopher Butler in a symposium on the documents of Second Vatican Council. He states: “I should like to suggest that this question of the definition of the laity is a completely false problem. There is no

¹⁸¹ Mudakodil, “The CBCI and Evangelization in India,” 36.

¹⁸² Camps, *Jerome Xavier S. J., and the Muslims of the Mogul Empire*, 90.

¹⁸³ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio* (<http://www.papalencyclicals.net/jp02/index.htm>, 1981, accessed 25.03.2003).

¹⁸⁴ Donal Dorr, *Mission in Today's World* (Mayknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2000), 20.

definition of laity. There is a definition of a Christian. We have a definition of a priest or of a minister in holy orders. There is no third definition of the laity. A member of the laity is very simply a Christian.”¹⁸⁵ He holds the opinion that it is not necessary to have a definitive definition for laity.

The term laity which is derived from the Greek ὁ λαός which means ‘the people’ and *laikos* (λαϊκός) meaning ‘the mass of common people in contrast to their leaders.’¹⁸⁶ The Greek term λαός is the equivalent for the Hebrew word עַם which means ‘the people.’¹⁸⁷ In Septuagint the Greek word λαός is used to “distinguish the people from their rulers or leaders, such as prophets, princes, and priests” (Is 24:2; Jr 26:11). The term λαός is also used in Septuagint to designate “the election of Israel from among the nations as God’s chosen people”¹⁸⁸ (Ex 19:4-7; Dt 7:6-12). According to A. A. Hagstrom the term *laikos* was used for the “uneducated, people, as distinguished from the clergy, monastic, and religious of the Church.”¹⁸⁹

In the Second Vatican Council, the idea about the laity was changed considerably.¹⁹⁰ The fathers of the Second Vatican Council made it clear that the three functions (prophetic, priestly, and royal) are equally applicable to the clergy as well as to the laity.¹⁹¹ The fathers made it very clear that laity are not “second-class Christians, their office cannot be supplied by the clergy.”¹⁹² According to *Lumen Gentium*:

The term “laity” is ... understood all Christ’s faithful except those who are in sacred orders or are members of a religious state that is recognised by the Church; that is to say, the faithful who, since they have been incorporated into Christ by baptism, constitute the people of God and, in their own way made sharers in Christ’s priestly, prophetic and royal office, play their own

¹⁸⁵ John H. Miller, *Vatican II an Interfaith Appraisal* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966), 269.

¹⁸⁶ A. A. Hagstrom, "Laity, Theology of Term and Concept," *New Catholic Encyclopaedia, Second Edition* 8 (2003): 290-293, 290.

¹⁸⁷ Francis Brown, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), 766, 767, John Lust, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint Part II* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1996), 277.

¹⁸⁸ Lust, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint Part II*, 277.

¹⁸⁹ Hagstrom, "Laity, Theology of Term and Concept," 290.

¹⁹⁰ We have noted in the introduction that the place of the laity in the Church before the Second Vatican Council was practically insignificant. A detailed discussion of that pre-Vatican understanding and practice in the Church is impossible here due to the limited nature of this thesis and it is needless for our purpose here. Therefore we will be focusing only the vision of the Second Vatican Council in this thesis.

¹⁹¹ Jorge Medina Estevez, "The Constitution on the Church: *Lumen Gentium*," *Vatican Second an Interfaith Appraisal* (1966): 107.

¹⁹² Estevez, "The Constitution on the Church: *Lumen Gentium*," 107.

part in the mission of the whole Christian people in the Church and in the world (LG 31).¹⁹³

The Code of Canon Law defines the term 'lay persons' in two senses: "negative and positive." In the negative sense, "a lay person is not a priest or religious."¹⁹⁴ In the positive sense "a lay person is a baptised Christian faithful, a member of the people of God. As such, laypersons participate in the mission of the Church in their own proper manner. In contrast with religious, lay persons are in the world and related directly to the secularity of the world" (CIC 223).¹⁹⁵

The fathers of the Church described the lay person as "consecrated,"¹⁹⁶ who is set apart for the mission of Jesus. It would mean he has a mission to fulfil in the society. He is consecrated for something that is to proclaim the wonders of God.¹⁹⁷ The Canon Law holds the view that "by [the] divine institution there exist in the Church clergy distinct from laity."¹⁹⁸ It does not make a third distinction of the religious but holds that "they do have a distinct place [in the Church]."¹⁹⁹ The Catechism of the Catholic Church defines the term Christian faithful as:

Those who, inasmuch as they have been incorporated in Christ through baptism, have been constituted as the people of God; for this reason, since they have become sharers in Christ's priestly, prophetic, and royal office in their own manner, they are called to exercise the mission which God has entrusted to the Church to fulfil in the world, in accord with the condition proper to each one.²⁰⁰

The same document defines the term laity as:

All the faithful except those in Holy Orders and those who belong to a religious state approved by the Church. That is, the faithful, who by baptism are incorporated into Christ and integrated into the people of God, are made sharers in their particular way in the priestly, prophetic, and royal

¹⁹³ Norman P. Tanner, ed., *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, vol.2 (London: Sheed & Ward, 1990). Hereafter we will be giving references to the documents of the Second Vatican Council in the body text in brackets. The references will be the paragraph numbers of the decrees.

¹⁹⁴ James A. Coriden, ed., *The Code of Canon Law: A Text and Commentary*, ed. Thomas J. Green (Bangalore: Theological Publication in India, 1995), 159.

¹⁹⁵ Coriden, ed., *The Code of Canon Law: A Text and Commentary*, 159.

¹⁹⁶ Yves M. J. Congar, "The Laity," in *Vatican II an Interfaith Appraisal*, ed. John H. Miller (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966), 241.

¹⁹⁷ Congar, "The Laity," 241.

¹⁹⁸ Coriden, ed., *The Code of Canon Law: A Text and Commentary*, 159.

¹⁹⁹ Coriden, ed., *The Code of Canon Law: A Text and Commentary*, 159.

²⁰⁰ John Paul II, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, ed. Second (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997), 231.

office of Christ, and have their own part to play in the mission of the whole Christian people in the Church and in the world.²⁰¹

The laity are not the whole Church, the Second Vatican Council intended fully to recognise their dignity. If, from a ministerial and hierarchical standpoint, sacred Orders put the faithful receiving them in a particular position of authority by virtue of the role assigned them, the laity have full membership in the Church, as much as do sacred ministers or religious. In fact, according to the Council, "these faithful are by baptism made one body with Christ" (LG 30) and have received the indelible sign of their belonging to Christ by virtue of the baptismal character. They belong to the Mystical Body of Christ.

On the other hand, the initial consecration of the laity through baptism involves them in the mission of all God's people. "They are in their own way made sharers in the priestly, prophetic and royal functions of Christ" (LG 30). These functions which are reserved to men who are ordained as a priest, prophet and king also apply to the laity. They, together with the Church's members enjoying hierarchical functions and ministries, are called to develop their baptismal potential in communion with Christ the one head of the Mystical Body.

Yves Congar claims the laity are "*de iure*" coextensive with humanity. They exist in a concrete and visible form through a positive initiative of God. They can be truly people if they possess a certain structure. They are more than a collection of individuals without any links with one another. They are like a tree which is more than a certain quantity of wood cut and piled up: it has a structure, roots, a trunk, branches and leaves. A house is more than tons of stone heaped in a pile. It has a structure. Thus the laity too have a structure, united for the purpose of attaining the same good. Therefore, Congar concludes that they are:

to make men holy and save them not merely as individuals without any mutual bond, but by making them into a single people, a people which acknowledges Him in truth and serves Him in holiness.... That messianic people has for its head Christ The heritage of this people are the dignity and freedom of the sons of God, in whose hearts the Holy Spirit dwells as in His temple. Its law is the new commandment to love as Christ loved us. Its goal is the Kingdom of God.²⁰²

²⁰¹ John Paul II, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 237.

²⁰² Yves Congar, "The People of God," in *Vatican II an Interfaith Appraisal*, ed. John H. Miller (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966), 199.

Thus “lay” also means “belonging to the people.” In this respect it is a beautiful word. Unfortunately, a long historical development has caused the word “lay,” in secular and especially political usage, to acquire the meaning of being in opposition to religion and to the Church in particular. It thus expresses an attitude of separation and rejection, or at least, stated indifference. This development is certainly regrettable.

The fathers from the Second Vatican Council affirmed that “the laity are not simply in the Church, rather, together with us, they are the Church, its living, active members.”²⁰³ The Second Vatican Council emphasised that “the laity are not the public, material for evangelization; they are part of the theological structure of the Church. The Church is no more Church without the laity than it would be Church without pope and bishops.”²⁰⁴ Msgr. Gerard Philips commented that “it is not appropriate to call the layman the bridge between the Church and world: they are the Church in the world and it is in it, not outside it that they should serve as a leaven.”²⁰⁵ The laity may be or may not be a member of a religious order; in either case he is called to holiness, for all the baptised must understand and live the beatitudes preached by Christ.²⁰⁶

The Code of Canon Law after making a distinction between the laity and clergy adds that from both groups (clergy and laity) there are faithful consecrated to God in a special way by a canonically recognised profession of the evangelical counsels (*CIC* 207, 2). In accordance with the distinction mentioned above, a certain number of religious or consecrated persons who take vows but do not receive sacred Orders are included, in this respect, among the laity. However, because of their consecrated state, they have a special place in the Church and so are distinguished from other lay people. For its part, the Council preferred to discuss them separately and considered as lay people those who are neither clerics nor religious (*LG* 31). Without implying doctrinal complications or confusion, this further distinction is useful for simplifying and facilitating discussion of the various groups and categories in the Church's structure.

We also consider the threefold distinction of prophetic, priestly, and royal in treating lay people as members of God's People. They do not belong to the clergy therefore

²⁰³ Hanjo Sauer, “The Council Discovers the Laity,” in *History of Vatican II*, ed. Giuseppe Alberigo (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2003), 235.

²⁰⁴ Canon Charles Moeller, “History of Lumen Gentium's Structure and Ideas,” *Vatican Second an Interfaith Appraisal* (1966): 130.

²⁰⁵ Moeller, “History of Lumen Gentium's Structure and Ideas,” 135.

²⁰⁶ Moeller, “History of Lumen Gentium's Structure and Ideas,” 138.

are not committed to the religious state or the profession of the evangelical counsels (CL 9, and CCC 897). Further in the document *Christifideles Laici*, John Paul II means the same when he says, “the lay faithful, together with all the other members of the Church, are branches engrafted to Christ, the true vine, and from him derive their life and fruitfulness” (CL 9).²⁰⁷ In Christian usage, however, the “laity” are those belonging to the people of God. More particularly, they are those who do not have functions and ministries related to the sacrament of Orders and do not belong to the “clergy,” according to the traditional distinction between “clerics” and “lay people” (CIC 207, 1). Clerics are sacred ministers, that is, the pope, bishops, priests and deacons; the laity are the other *Christifideles*, who, together with the pastors and ministers, constitute the people of God.

If we are to foster the participation of the lay faithful in the life and mission of the Church, we have to realise that “laity” refers to persons who are very diverse from one another, who live in extremely different situations and contexts, whose Christian formation is at very different levels and whose commitments are highly diversified. We have also to realise that the laity can only be rightly understood in the light of an ecclesiology of communion and mission and with reference to the concrete situations existing in the world.

2.2 THE ACTUAL PLACE OF THE LAITY IN CENTRAL INDIA

We have analysed the term laity and their significant place in the field of evangelization. We shall now discuss the place of the laity in the central Indian Church. The members of the central Indian Church, irrespective of clergy and laity have great works to accomplish today. Missionary work is very challenging in the context of central India where the Christian faith is threatened by various fundamentalists groups.

Every baptised is commissioned with the message of evangelizing the people and bringing everyone to Christ as is clearly stated in the Gospel, “go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Mt 28:19). This mission has to be carried out by every baptised. It is an internal urge that compels every Christian to fulfil this task following the example of St. Paul who said “woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel” (1Cor 9:16).

We have noted that Christians in central India are a very small minority. Moreover they are all living scattered all over the vast areas of central India. These Christians

²⁰⁷ John Paul II, "Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*," *Origins* 18, no. 35 (1989): 566.

by accepting Christ as their Saviour have taken up the responsibility to preach the message of Christ. This mission can be accomplished only through active participation of laity in various apostolates or ministries of the Church in central India. Further, as they live in the midst of a multireligious community, they hold greater responsibility in the fields of evangelization. Their life becomes more demanding and challenging today.

It becomes even more difficult today with the understanding of salvation. The new understanding affirms that salvation is possible in one's own religion (*NA* 1; *AG* 2; *LG* 16; *GS* 22). This understanding is implied in the preaching of St. Paul. He is very explicit in explaining that all the believers are the members of the same body of Christ (1Cor 12:12). Therefore every baptised in the Church is responsible in fulfilling the task entrusted to them.²⁰⁸ All these members are accountable to the Church in fulfilling each one their responsibilities (1Cor 14:12).

In a Christian perspective Jesus Christ is the hope of humanity. In *Christifideles Laici*, the Apostolic Exhortation on the laity, Pope John Paul II explained that "the faithful have an essential and irreplaceable role in this announcement and in this testimony: Through them the Church of Christ is made present in the various sectors of the world as a sign and source of hope and of love" (*CL* 7).²⁰⁹ Thus laity in the central Indian Church have greater responsibility in the field of evangelization.

2.3 THE LAY PARTICIPATION IN VARIOUS MINISTRIES THAT LEAD TO EVANGELIZATION

Robert L. Kinast claims that Pope Pius XI while speaking to the members of the catholic action²¹⁰ invited the laity to "participate in the apostolate of the hierarchy."²¹¹ He emphasised the mission of spiritual formation of the laity, their moral and theological formation. Further, he destined them in spreading Christ's Kingdom throughout the world. Yves Congar, the great defender of the movement of the laity in the Church emphasised that:

God wills to make the world the temple of his power and his glory; he wills to make mankind his temple built of living stones, his body made of free persons, in a word, the temple of his fellowship. This is whither it all tends:

²⁰⁸ William J. Rademacher, *Lay Ministries: A Theological, Spiritual, and Pastoral Handbook* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1991), 85-87.

²⁰⁹ John Paul II, "Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*," 565.

²¹⁰ Robert L. Kinast, *Caring for Society: A Theological Interpretation of Lay Ministry* (Chicago: The Thomas More Press, 1985), 8.

²¹¹ Zeni Fox, "Laity, Ministry, and Secular Character," in *Ordering the Baptismal Priesthood*, ed. Susan K. Wood (Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2003), 124; Kinast, *Caring for Society: A Theological Interpretation of Lay Ministry*, 8.

that God wills to dwell and to be praised in mankind as in a single temple but the indwelling and the praise are spiritual, living: the indwelling is by communication of himself, the praise is in the relation of son-ship or the impulse by which a son returns wholly to his Father.²¹²

Jesus invites everyone to be his disciples. Thus this discipleship in Jesus motivates a Christian to be an evangelizer.²¹³

Discussing about various ministries in the Church, Congar emphasises that everyone, ordained and non-ordained, share equally the responsibilities of implementing the ministries. He gives importance to communitarian aspect of the Church.²¹⁴ Therefore he argues:

Jesus instituted a structured community, a community in its entirety holy, priestly, prophetic, missionary, and apostolic, with ministries at its interior: some freely aroused by the Spirit, others bound by the imposition of hands to the situation and mission of the Twelve. A liner diagram, then, must be replaced by one in which the community appears as the all-embracing reality within which the ministries, even those that are instituted and sacramental, take their position as services of precisely that which the community is called to be and to do.²¹⁵

Congar believes that the instituted ministries, episcopate and priesthood, are basic functions responding to the permanent needs of the Church. Further he emphasised that these functions must, however, be lived within the communities, not over them, and in full respect of the various charisms which they must lead to oneness in the same body.²¹⁶ Pope John Paul II further emphasised and instructed every bishop and priest and said, "you (bishops, priests) are servants of the people of God, servants of the faith, and administrators and witnesses of the love of Christ for mankind, a love for all that excludes no one, even though it is directed more particularly to the poorest."²¹⁷ It becomes clear that Pope John Paul II emphasised the responsibility of the ministers in the Church is to serve and not to be served.

²¹² Yves M. J. Congar, *Lay People in the Church*, Revised edition, trans. Donald Attwater (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1985), 59; Fox, "Laity, Ministry, and Secular Character," 124.

²¹³ Susan Blum Gerding, *Lay Ministers, Lay Disciples* (New York: Paulist Press, 1999), 22.

²¹⁴ Jacques Dupuis, "Lay People in Church and World," *Gregorianum* 68, no. 1-2 (1987): 375.

²¹⁵ Joseph Areepackal, *Spirit and Ministries* (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 1990), 66; Yves M. J. Congar, "My Path-Findings in the Theology of Laity and Ministries," *The Jurist* 32 (1972): 178; cf. Jacques Dupuis, "Lay People in Church and World," 35.

²¹⁶ Congar, "My Path-Findings in the Theology of Laity and Ministries," 178; Jacques Dupuis, "Lay People in Church and World," 372.

²¹⁷ John Paul II, "A Vision of the Priest's Role," *Origins* 8, no. 15 (1979): 548.

Regarding the understanding of the “Kingdom of God,” Congar claims the Kingdom as both having come and yet to be realised in its fullness. The Kingdom which is not yet realised is understood as the lack of co-operation of the members of the Church with Jesus. Congar believes that Christ’s power is universal and cosmic. The salvific work of Jesus is oriented towards the whole world. He believes that people in the world seek Kingdom cosmically.²¹⁸ “Church and world have the same ultimate end, serving the coming of the Kingdom. The Church participates directly and properly with Christ, making the whole world his temple and all persons his fellowship temple. The world strives to attain wholeness and reconciliation. It desires to overcome the tensions that cause suffering.”²¹⁹ Therefore everyone needs to understand that Kingdom on earth can be realised when one sees that all are created to enjoy the happiness that Kingdom provides. We will discuss in detail in the forthcoming chapters the aspect of Kingdom.

Discussing about the lay ministries the Second Vatican Council document *Apostolicam Actuositatem* acknowledges that “there are many apostolic initiatives in the Church constituted by the free choice of the lay people and regulated by their prudent judgement. ...the mission of the Church can be best fulfilled by such initiatives which are, for this reason, praised and recommended by the hierarchy” (AA 24). In the beginning of the institution of the Church and even today in many countries, like India, Christians face persecutions. Christians are persecuted by the members of the other fundamentalist groups. There are various religious groups which are aggressive and are hard to live with, and with whom even dialogue is impossible.²²⁰ The teaching of Christ encourages Christians to witness to their faith even in the midst of persecutions (Mk 10:30; I Cor 12:30). Thus it is clear that Christians are challenged with persecutions till the end of time. Therefore they are called to face these challenges with courage furthermore, “wherein extreme but always possible cases one’s personal identity can be maintained only by martyrdom.”²²¹ Therefore Christians are called to set apart in fulfilling their responsibilities on earth as effective evangelizers.

The apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* of Pope Paul VI states very clearly the importance of the laity in the Church, and how the responsibilities in the Church can

²¹⁸ Congar, *Lay People in the Church*, 59-108.

²¹⁹ Congar, *Lay People in the Church*, 59-108; Fox, “Laity, Ministry, and Secular Character,” 128.

²²⁰ Walter Kasper, *That They May All Be One* (Suite, New York: Burns and Oates, 2004), 181.

²²¹ Kasper, *That They May All Be One*, 182.

be accomplished through actively taking part in various ministries in the modern world (EN 24, 28). The Pope said:

These ministries, apparently new but closely tied up with the Church's living experience down the centuries such as catechists, directors of prayer and chant, Christians devoted to the service of God's Word or to assisting their brethren in need, the heads of small communities, or other persons charged with the responsibility of apostolic movements these ministries are valuable for the establishment, life, and growth of the Church, and for her capacity to influence her surroundings and to reach those who are remote from her. We owe also our special esteem to all the lay people who accept to consecrate a part of their time, their energies, and sometimes their entire lives, to the service of the missions (EN 73).

Participating actively in the ministries of the Church the lay people involve directly or indirectly in the processes of evangelization.

During the Second Vatican Council, Bishop Höffner argued about the responsibilities of the laity in the Church. He said whatever the laity can accomplish through his/her own initiatives should not be carried away by the clergy. He stressed that the lay apostolate is not just fulfilling the task entrusted to them by the hierarchy, but they have to live a life expected of them by Christ. They have to accept the responsibility to renew the temporal order in the world in accordance with the principle of justice and love.²²² Therefore, the laity are to be encouraged to fulfil their task defined by various fathers of the Second Vatican Council.

Arguing in line with bishop Höffner, Cardinal Léger stressed that it is not only those who take the vows but also all Christians "are called to perfection, to holiness and to the imitation of Christ by their very baptismal consecration."²²³ There are also Cardinals who hold difference of opinion about the role of the laity in the Church. Cardinal Ruffini argued that laity do not have a mission directly from Christ, but only through the hierarchy.²²⁴ Therefore they have to be subordinate to the works of the Church with the hierarchy.²²⁵ There are a few, who even warned that granting more freedom to the laity would endanger the freedom of the hierarchy to function

²²² Joseph Höeffner, "The Lay Apostolate and the Principle of Subsidiarity," in *Council Speeches of Vatican II*, ed. Yves Congar, Hans Kung, Daniel O'Hanlon (Glen Rock, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1964), 57.

²²³ Paul-Emile Léger, "Holiness of All in the Church," in *Council Speeches of Vatican II*, ed. Hans Kung, Yves Congar, and Daniel O' Hanlon (London: Sheed and Ward, 1964), 58, 59.

²²⁴ Robert McAfee Brown, *Observer in Rome: A Protestant Report on the Vatican Council* (New York: Doubleday and Company, INC, 1964), 76; Fox, "Laity, Ministry, and Secular Character," 131, 132.

²²⁵ Brown, *Observer in Rome: A Protestant Report on the Vatican Council*, 76.

properly.²²⁶ They fear that the priest and religious will lose their freedom to act if the laity get more power in the Church.²²⁷ It is understood and felt that the Church has to grow from below, beginning from the level of the laity. The Church should not be a monopoly of the hierarchy alone. Above everything one needs to understand that it is the Holy Spirit who converts the minds of the people. Thus the evangelizer becomes only a facilitator for the Spirit to work in the persons.²²⁸ Edward Schillebeeckx emphasises the great need to develop a ministry from the grassroots, which will be authentically of the people and work for the people.²²⁹

The conference of Puebla 1979 too acknowledged the need of lay participation in the field of evangelization. The fathers, during the conference of Puebla were inspired by the directions of the teachings of *Apostolicam Actuositatem* (Nos.19-21) which wished that the laity “help to build up the Church as a community of faith, prayer, and fraternal charity. They do this through catechesis, sacramental life, and aid to their fellows.”²³⁰ This will enable the laity to help to establish the Kingdom on earth.²³¹ The laity are called to live in the society with full commitment. They are to face the realities of the world. Through their faith, they are to discover the presence of the Lord in the reality. “In their mission, often riddled with conflict and tensions for their faith, they must strive to realise their Christian identity through contact with the Word of God, intimacy with Christ in the Eucharist, celebration of the other sacraments, and prayer.”²³² Further, living in the society as Jesus calls them to live.

Thomas O’ Meara explains “Christian ministry is the public activity of a baptised follower of Jesus Christ flowing from the Spirit’s charism and an individual personality on behalf of a Christian community to witness to, serve and realise the Kingdom of God.”²³³ The ministry is mainly based on six characteristics: 1) “doing

²²⁶ Brown, *Observer in Rome: A Protestant Report on the Vatican Council*, 76; Fox, "Laity, Ministry, and Secular Character," 132.

²²⁷ Robert McAfee Brown, an official Protestant observer at the council, said: "Cardinal Ruffini ... was ... dead set against giving the laity more power in the Church.... His presentation was well organised, well presented, and hopelessly out of date. He acknowledged that the laity exist, but he did not acknowledge that they have any such 'mission' as the schema implies. They do not share in the task Christ laid upon His apostles, for that task has been bequeathed to the hierarchy. The laity can help the priests, but only in a subordinate role." Brown, *Observer in Rome*, 76.

²²⁸ Gerding, *Lay Ministers, Lay Disciples*, 27.

²²⁹ Edward Schillebeeckx, *Ministry: Leadership in the Community of Jesus Christ* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1981), 77.

²³⁰ John Eagleson, ed., *Puebla and Beyond* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Book, 1980), 229.

²³¹ Eagleson, ed., *Puebla and Beyond*, 229.

²³² Eagleson, ed., *Puebla and Beyond*, 230.

²³³ Thomas O' Meara, *Theology of Ministry* (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 142.

something, 2) for the advent of the Kingdom, 3) in public, 4) on behalf of a Christian community, 5) which is a gift received in faith, baptism and ordination, and which is 6) an activity with its own limits and identity within a diversity of ministerial actions.”²³⁴ Thus a ministry begins from the day of baptism for a Christian and it continues till the end. The laity can play an active role in various developmental programmes of the diocese as well as the parish. We shall explain it in detail in our final chapter.

CONCLUSION

I have found in our survey that though Christianity reached India around 52 AD it reached to central India only by the 16th century, i.e., by the arrival of missionaries from Europe. We have also found some of the reasons why Christianity was not welcomed in India as she was welcomed in other countries. It was due to the strongly established religions of India. The missionaries too very often worked to improve the colonial systems rather than work involved in the apostolate of the evangelization. The failure of Christian missionaries to penetrate into the Indian people was due to existence of petty kingdoms in India, the diversity of cultures, languages, and habits.

I have noted how the laity can be actively involved in various ministries in central India. There are very few dioceses who have come forward to acknowledge and promote the role of the laity in the central Indian Church. The main reason behind this drawback is the lack of proper understanding of the teachings of the Church and various pastoral councils. We find the need to conscientise the members of the Church irrespective of their status in the Church. To attempt to help a deeper understanding of the theology of laity in the following chapter we shall discuss in detail the lay people and their mission in the Church.

²³⁴ Meara, *Theology of Ministry*, 136.

CHAPTER TWO

THE LAITY AND THEIR MISSION ACCORDING TO THE CONCILIAR AND POST-CONCILIAR DOCUMENTS

INTRODUCTION

The Second Vatican Council highlighted in many of its constitutions, decrees and declarations the most important perspectives of the Church as they relate to our times. Some of these perspectives are the Church's pastoral concerns relating to the secular culture of the world today, her task of continued evangelization and the revitalisation of the participation of the laity with greater responsibility in their respective roles in the mission of the people of God. Besides the documents of the Second Vatican Council there are also some very significant encyclicals of the recent Popes and other post-conciliar documents of various Church councils like Medellin and Puebla which also contributed towards the implementation of the teachings of the Second Vatican Council. An overall survey of these official documents of the Church explaining the specific roles of the laity in these areas of the ministry of the Church seems to be necessary for the completion of this thesis though we refer these documents in other chapters. Thus this chapter deals with these perspectives of the Church from the point of view of the laity's responsible participation in the integral missionary tasks of the people of God, as explained in the conciliar and post-conciliar documents.

It seems appropriate to agree with Eileen M. Fagan when she said that the Second Vatican Council was "a global pastoral Council that set a challenging agenda for an entire historical era as the Church opened its doors and windows and looked outward, beyond itself, to the entire world of humanity, especially the world of the poor, the oppressed, and marginalised cultures of our societies."¹ Similarly Canon Charles Moeller reports that once Pope John XXIII replied to a journalist who asked him what he expected of the Council: "I do not quite know." He said, and then he led the journalist to a window, opened it and said: "At least some fresh air."² The Pope acted as a prophet of the time.³ Today, we are well aware that the fresh air that was allowed to enter the Church has transformed her. One may even get surprised that by not allowing the windows of the Church to be opened for fresh air to enter, in the past leaders of the Church restricted for many years the work of the Holy Spirit in the

¹ Eileen M Fagan, *An Interpretation of Evangelization: Jon Sobrino's Christology and Ecclesiology in Dialogue* (San Francisco: Catholic Scholars Press, 1998), 1.

² Canon Charles Moeller, "History of *Lumen Gentium's* Structure and Ideas," *Vatican Second: An Interfaith Appraisal* ed. John H. Miller (Notre Dame: Indiana: Notre Dame University Press, 1966), 124.

³ Moeller, "History of *Lumen Gentium's* Structure and Ideas," 124.

Church. It was the Second Vatican Council that helped to evaluate the activities of the Church in its pastoral perceptive. The Church opened up new windows to see her relationship with a world hungering for fresh thinking in all aspects of human enterprises including religious matters, substantial values of life, and ways for hopeful living in close collaboration with the believers of other religions. These religions, which constitute a big section of the human family, are larger than the Catholics and even all Christian denominations added up. This was the Council that gave a new and broader understanding of the "Kingdom of God." The existing situation of the world provoked the Church to examine her reasons for existence in the contemporary society. The Council fathers felt the need to give emphasis to the mission of the Church and send her personnel to all cultures and nations in view of evangelizing them without in any way devaluing their historical and regional identities.

In this chapter, therefore, the focus of discussion is on the Church as the people of God which felt the new urgency of launching a global evangelization task with the fathers of the Second Vatican Council. We shall present an overview of various Council documents which explain the laity's role in evangelization. We shall examine how the teaching of the various documents of the Second Vatican Council and those of the post-conciliar declarations of the Church are implemented in the context of central India.

1 AN OVERVIEW OF THE CONCILIAR AND POST-CONCILIAR DOCUMENTS

Pope John XXIII, the architect of the Second Vatican Council, in his radio message on 11th September 1962, expressed his vision to be achieved through the Ecumenical Council as having a twofold mission, namely, the vitality of the Church:⁴ *ad intra*, relating to the internal structure, and *ad extra*,⁵ relating to the contemporary world.⁶

As every temporal organisation does periodical evaluation, corrections and transformation with regards to its purpose of existence, the Church too had to take such initiatives for the evaluation of her existence in the world. Pope John XXIII responded to this urgency of the timely renewal of the Church by his favourite phrase often repeated in his inaugural address to the Second Vatican Council, saying *Ecclesia*

⁴ Charles Moeller, "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World," in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Herbert Vorgrimler (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), 8.

⁵ Moeller, "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World," 8; cf. Jacob Kavunkal, "Gaudium et Spes and the Mission of Transforming Cultures," *Verbum SVD* 46, no. 4 (2005): 394.

⁶ Jacob Kavunkal, "Gaudium et Spes and the Mission of Transforming Cultures," *Verbum SVD* 46, no. 4 (2005): 394.

semper reformanda est- the Church should be constantly reformed. Hence this Council became very important and was acclaimed worldwide as an Ecumenical Council intended for radical reformation of the whole Church as she apparently experienced the corporate presence of the Triune God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit), who cooperated with the humans who are selfish, sinful and power-seeking.⁷ As a result, the fathers of the Council felt the urgent need for evangelization of the world.⁸ We shall see an overview of some of the Second Vatican Council documents regarding the mission of the laity.

1.1 AN OVERVIEW OF THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL DOCUMENTS REGARDING THE MISSION OF THE LAITY

When we speak about the mission of the laity visualised by the fathers of the Second Vatican Council as articulated in the Council documents, we can never separate the laity's role from the total mission of the Church. The laity are the constitutive part of the Church as the people of God. The mission of the laity, as well as the mission of the whole Church, are one and the same. They are mutually complementary between various missions of the ordained ministers. The Church exists because of the laity. In the same way the laity fulfil their mission to build up the body of Christ - the Church. The laity represent the different parts of the Church as mentioned by St. Paul (Rom 12: 4-5).

Pope John XXIII visualised appreciation for the truth that exists even outside the so called Church as a sign of the time.⁹ Furthermore, the reflections of theologians regarding the Church and her evangelical missions motivated Pope John XXIII to convoke such a pastorally oriented Ecumenical Council. The Pope in his opening address stressed that the whole human community is to be approached as a positive partner by the Church. He reminded the Council members how God is leading the

⁷ Fagan, *An Interpretation of Evangelization: Jon Sobrino's Christology and Ecclesiology in Dialogue*, 1.

⁸ In 1975, Pope Paul VI spoke of the essential mission of the Church as evangelization in his encyclical, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*. Beginning with the Puebla Conference in 1979, Pope John Paul II continually affirms Paul VI's theology of evangelization. Since 1983, Pope John Paul II, in addressing audiences in North and South America, Asia, Africa, and Europe, speaks of mission in terms of the themes: "new evangelization" and "re-evangelization". Both themes are spelled out in greater detail in his encyclical, *Redemptoris Missio*.

⁹ Norman Tanner, "The Church in the World," in *History of Vatican II*, ed. Giuseppe Alberigo (Leuven: Peeters, 2003), 271.

Church to a new social order of human relationships.¹⁰ He pointed out that the substance of the ancient teachings of faith is one thing, and the way it is presented today-another. Pope John XXIII was very clear when he spoke of the Church having faced in the past the drawback regarding her teachings. As the Church evolved in the history there were substantial changes that occurred with regards to the teachings of the Church. He added that the Church's magisterium has to become compassionate and pastoral, "more medicine of mercy" than disciplinary.¹¹ He urged the fathers of the Council that "the Church is to exist to evangelize" and to speak about the Gospel to every man/woman, irrespective of their cultures and nationality.

The fathers began to interpret the term 'evangelization' in the context of the developing society of the world. For some, it emphasised a religious dimension, which explained how to communicate a set of doctrines that was ultimately directed towards the Kingdom of God or the reign of God. For others, it was of secondary importance in comparison with the social realities of the individual. However, Pope Paul VI wished to "strengthen and renew zeal for extending God's Kingdom, because it viewed the whole Church in a missionary light and summoned all the faithful to missionary activity."¹² As a sign of his recognition, he gave a special greeting to all the fathers who had come for the Council from various mission territories.¹³

The increasing poverty and exploitation have become a hindrance to implementing the traditional understanding of evangelization. Poverty and exploitation began to increase in society due to the influence of colonisation and exploitation carried on by the rich persons of the society. This situation caused the people to remain in the state of poverty. The Church acknowledged responsibility for the poor people's suffering and recognised the need for the reform which would compel the Church to reorient her mission.¹⁴ The fathers of the Council identified the fulfilment of the missions as a "vital function of the Church."¹⁵ Therefore, evangelization is the key word for every

¹⁰ Otto Semmelroth, "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, Chapter II," in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Herbert Vorgrimler (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), 171.

¹¹ John XXIII, "Pope John's Opening Speech to the Council," in *The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Walter M. Abbott (New York: Guild Press, 1962), 712, 713.

¹² Suso Brechter, "Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity," in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Herbert Vorgrimler (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), 96.

¹³ Brechter, "Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity," 96.

¹⁴ Moeller, "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World," 8.

¹⁵ Brechter, "Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity," 92.

Christian all over the world.¹⁶ However, the role of the laity in the mission of the Church was not given its proper consideration in the field of evangelization in central India before the Second Vatican Council.

In response to an interview taken by Nihal Abeyasingha, Archbishop Leobard D' Souza of Nagpur, one of the active participants in the Second Vatican Council said "the most difficult teaching to implement meaningfully is the role of the laity in the Church."¹⁷ He felt the need for preparing the laity as well as the clergy to accept the changes proposed by the fathers of the Council. The Council stated that a Christian by baptism is called to participate in the triple dignified role in the Church: priestly, prophetic and royal. "Their whole life in the Spirit becomes a "spiritual offering" at the same time as a prophetic witness to the Lord; moreover, by participating in the royal dignity of the baptised, the layman, by his victory over sin, merits his liberty."¹⁸ They become an instrument in the hands of the Holy Spirit in the world to witness the faith that they have received.

Pope Paul VI visualised the Council body as two inescapable poles of reference: the laity and the hierarchy. "Your Council", he said, "must remain in an attitude of listening and dialogue, attentively discerning in the environments in which they (the laity) are living the needs and possibilities of salvation."¹⁹ He encouraged the Council "to gather from all horizons the echoes coming from life in all its aspects and from the ways in which lay Christians, in the various countries and continents, are organising to meet these appeals."²⁰ He said to the members and Consultors :

You are the direct witness, in your different countries, of these movements of thought and action, of their different manifestations, of the underlying sentiments by which they are inspired. You can appreciate the positive elements they comprise and bring us precious elements of judgment.... We also expect of you that your sense of the Church, your attachment to him who is her visible head today, will inspire you at the same time to become his interpreters among your brothers and sisters, and bring them the echo of

¹⁶ Avery Dulles, "John Paul II and the New Evangelization-What Does It Mean," in *John Paul II and the New Evangelization*, ed. Ralph Martin (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1995), 29.

¹⁷ Nihal Abeyasingha, "Archbishop Leobard D' Souza," in *Voice from the Council*, ed. Michael R. Prendergast and M. D. Ridge (Portland: Pastoral Press, 2004), 116.

¹⁸ Moeller, "History of *Lumen Gentium's* Structure and Ideas," 135.

¹⁹ Paul VI, *Insegnamenti di Paolo VI*, vol.8 (Vaticana: Tipografia Poliglotta Vaticana, 1970), 208.

²⁰ Paul VI, *Insegnamenti di Paolo VI*, vol.9 (Vaticana: Tipografia Poliglotta Vaticana, 1971), Vol.9, 1051.

his worries as a pastor; of his instructions, too, as indications it is incumbent on him to give for their apostolate.²¹

And on another occasion, he said: “The Council must be mindful and bear witness to the fact that zeal and devotion are not enough. There must also be reflection, meditation and constant confrontation with the Gospel and the Church's magisterium.”²² This shows the responsibility of the Council to promote “the interrelationship of the apostolate of the laity with that of the hierarchy: two forces, which it is impossible, in the constitution of the Church, to imagine divergent.”²³ The Council must help to bring about “a current” within the “living organism” of the Church, through which “the head and the members will be closely united in the same love for Christ the Saviour; where the children's concerns will be known to the Father and shared by him, while the Father's words will be heard by all his children, understood and put into practice.”²⁴ We shall analyse now the various Council documents which emphasised and promoted the work of the laity in the field of evangelization. We shall begin this by examining very closely the Constitution of the Church, *Lumen Gentium* itself.

1.1.1 *Lumen Gentium*

Lumen Gentium is the most important document of the Second Vatican Council in regard to which all other documents are developed and interpreted. It gave emphasis to Christ as the light of the nations. After a long period of debate and discussion on 21st November 1964 in the solemn session presided over by Pope Paul VI, the constitution *Lumen Gentium* entered into the heritage of the extraordinary acts of the magisterium of the Church.²⁵ The main discussion of *Lumen Gentium* was centred on four issues: the priority of baptism, the priesthood of the laity, the specific character of lay ministry, and the solidarity between laity and clergy. The baptised, as the ones coming from a time ancient Israel, are called the “people of God.”²⁶ It is emphasised that “the whole world may become Abraham’s children and share in the dignity of

²¹ Paul VI, *Insegnamenti di Paolo VI*, vol.7 (Vaticana: Tipografia Poliglotta Vaticana, 1969), 145.

²² Paul VI, *Insegnamenti di Paolo VI*, Vol.8, 208.

²³ Paul VI, *Insegnamenti di Paolo VI*, Vol.8, 208.

²⁴ Paul VI, *Insegnamenti di Paolo VI*, Vol.7, 145.

²⁵ Jorge Medina Estevez, “The Constitution on the Church: *Lumen Gentium*,” in *Vatican Second: An Interfaith Appraisal*, ed. John H. Miller (Notre Dame: Indiana: Notre Dame University Press, 1966), 120.

²⁶ Brechter, “Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity,” 116.

Israel,”²⁷ the new Israel of God.²⁸ Msgr. Canon Charles Moeller believes that this new Israel includes everyone in the world, baptised as well as non-baptised. However, the sacrament of baptism is considered to be the “royal gate.”²⁹ They enjoy the same privileges as that of the priesthood of Jesus. The document *Lumen Gentium* speaks about the nature of the Church in the world. The fathers of the Council recalled the words of Pius XII spoken in the year 1946 during a discourse to the New Cardinals, yet still famous: the laity “must have an ever clearer awareness of not only belonging to the Church, but of being the Church” (*AAS* 38, *CL* 9, and *CCC* 899). This is a memorable statement that marked a turning-point for creating a theology of the laity for evangelization. However, the word “evangelization” appears only once in this document, where it is defined as the preaching of the Gospel through word and testimony of life to all those who are unfamiliar to it (*LG* 35). Furthermore, this document explains the goal, the agents and the method of evangelization.³⁰ The fathers of the Council had discussed the document in detail before they voted on it. There were some observations made by the members of the Council.³¹ Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen finds an unbreakable bond between the Church and the mission.³² Whereas, the Council explains mission as following the command of Christ (Mt 28: 19ff; Mk 16:15).

In the general sessions of the Second Vatican Council the fathers discussed in detail the hierarchical nature of the Church. They discussed each level of the Church, starting with the “highest” and proceeding to the laity at the bottom of the pyramid. George A. Lindbeck holds the opinion that:

²⁷ John M. Oesterreicher, "Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions," in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Herbert Vorgrimler (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), 11.

²⁸ Oesterreicher, "Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions," 32.

²⁹ Moeller, "History of *Lumen Gentium*'s Structure and Ideas," 128.

³⁰ Brechter, "Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity," 116.

³¹ Brechter, "Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity," 99, Some hold the opinion that "a theological basis for the mission to be included in the schema was repeatedly expressed. It was not sufficient to say that the Constitution on the Church answered this purpose, it was urged. Someone seeking guidance on the missions would not refer to the Constitution on the Church. The doctrine contained in the latter on the universality of the Church, the collegiality of the bishops and the catholicity of the local Churches ought to be made explicit in the missionary schema. It was a unique experience to hear the brilliant rhetoric and glowing enthusiasm of Bishop Fulton Sheen addressing the fathers: "Church and mission are one...what God has joined together let no man put asunder." As interventions had to be notified to the Secretary General five days before the beginning of the debate, the moderators were in a position to arrange the sequence of speeches not only hierarchically, but also for effect. Cardinal Fringe's speech at all events could hardly have come at a better moment," 99.

³² Brechter, "Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity," 99.

the Kingdom of God and the body of Christ grows progressively through history. The Church will advance until it unifies all humanity and embraces all genuine values of other religions and of secular developments in the fullness of its catholicity. A major way in which this is accomplished is precisely through the participation of Christians in all kinds of secular activities. Thereby, they sanctify the world and saturate it with Christian values.³³

The Church accumulates all the goodness that exists in the world and accepts it as a reflection of the Holy Spirit who wishes to bring everyone under one God, the Creator.³⁴ To fulfil this task, the laity have a specific mission in the Church.³⁵ According to the teachings of this document *Lumen Gentium*, every Christian in the measure of his own strength, inasmuch as he belongs to the people of God, must fulfil this mission of salvation (*LG* 17, 31). It is well accepted that the Church is an instrument on which the Spirit moves and has its control of everything.³⁶

It is noteworthy that the fathers of the Second Vatican Council, after having discussed the role and function of the hierarchy, began to reflect on the laity. They began the topic by saying "everything that has been said of the people of God is addressed equally to laity, religious and clergy" (*LG* 30). The fathers insisted that there are

³³ George A. Lindbeck, *The Future of Roman Catholic Theology: Vatican II-Catalyst for Change* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970), 41, 42.

³⁴ Oesterreicher, "Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions," 31.

³⁵ Lindbeck, *The Future of Roman Catholic Theology: Vatican II-Catalyst for Change*, 41, 42. "The specifically secular task of the laity is to work for the sanctification of the world from within, permeate it by the spirit of Christ, penetrating and perfecting the temporal sphere of things so that the Church, by spreading the Kingdom of Christ everywhere...might bring all men to share in Christ's saving redemption, and that through them the whole world might in actual fact be brought into relation to Him.

The fullest single expression of the incarnationist tendency is in the Decree on Missions: Missionary activity is ...an epiphany of God's will.... Whatever truth and grace are to be found among nations, as a sort of secret presence of God, this activity frees from all taint of evil and restore to Christ its maker, who overthrows the devil's domain and wards off the manifold malice of vice. And so, whatever good is found to be sown in the hearts and minds of men, or in the rites and cultures peculiar to various peoples, is not lost. More than that, it is healed, ennobled, and perfected for the glory of God, the same of the demon, and the bliss of men. Thus, missionary activity tends toward the fulfilment which will come at the end of time. For by it the People of God advances toward that degree of growth and that time of completion which the Father has fixed in His power.

The incarnationism ...is not to be found in the suggestion that all genuine goods and values, whether inside or outside the explicitly Christian sphere, will enter in and find fulfilment in the consummation, but rather in the impression that this happens through the Church in such a way that the final manifestation of the Kingdom will come as the result of the progressive growth of the Church and Christianisation of the world. Many other briefer passages give this same impression of a visible growth towards, rather than a *sub contrario* preparation for, the consummation: e.g. the Church, or, in other words, the Kingdom of Christ...grows visibly in the world."

³⁶ Estevez, "The Constitution on the Church: *Lumen Gentium*," 106.

“certain things that pertain particularly to the laity, both men and women, the foundations of which must be more fully examined owing to the special circumstances of our time” (LG 30). As an advice to the pastors, the fathers said that they are not meant to shoulder the entire saving mission of the Church (LG 30). The laity are called to share, in their own way, in the threefold function or mission of Christ (LG 31, AA 2).³⁷ The threefold mission of Jesus Christ which the laity are called to equally share with the clergy are: priest, prophet and royal.³⁸ They have been made responsible for fulfilling these missions of the Church. As sharing in the priesthood of Christ, the laity bear witness to Christ, receive the sacraments and pray, and gives testimony by a holy life, self denial and active charity (LG 10). As sharing in the prophetic office of Christ, the laity participate in the obligation which “is imposed upon every disciple of Christ, according to his ability” (LG 17) “to spread the faith” (LG 12). As sharing in the royal office of Christ, the laity find themselves ordered in a hierarchical manner with a hierarchical ministry that serves within the Church as pastors and shepherds (LG 12ff). Thus, they share the mission of Christ as shared with the other ordained ministers of the Church.

The Church opted to remain “a kind of sacrament or sign of an intimate union with God and of the unity of all mankind” (LG 1). When the Church decided to take up this position of welcoming everyone,³⁹ the laity who remain members of the Church have also accepted this responsibility unconditionally of this Ark, “the Church.”⁴⁰ The recognition of lay people as full-fledged members of the Church excludes the identification of the latter with the hierarchy alone. Formerly the hierarchy alone was considered to be the Church; the role that the laity played in the Church was not very significant.⁴¹ It was realised that it would be too narrow a concept and even an anti-evangelical or anti-theological error to think of the Church exclusively as the hierarchical body, a Church without people!⁴² The Church is no more the Church without the laity than it would be the Church without the Pope and bishops.⁴³

³⁷ Moeller, "History of *Lumen Gentium's* Structure and Ideas," 128.

³⁸ Gerard Philips, "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church: History of the Constitution," in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Herbert Vorgrimler (New York: Burns and Oates, 1967), 121.

³⁹ Oesterreicher, "Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions," 31.

⁴⁰ Nihal Abeyasingha, "What Has the Ecclesiology of Communion of Vatican II Meant for India," *Jeevadhara* 9, no. 52 (1979): 286.

⁴¹ Estevez, "The Constitution on the Church: *Lumen Gentium*," 103.

⁴² Moeller, "History of *Lumen Gentium's* Structure and Ideas," 130.

⁴³ Hanjo Sauer, "The Council Discovers the Laity," in *History of Vatican II*, ed. Giuseppe Alberigo (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2003), 235.

According to the Gospel and Christian tradition, the Church is a community in which there is a hierarchy, indeed, but precisely because there is a people of “laity” who must be served and guided on the ways of the Lord. It is to be hoped that both clerics and lay people would be increasingly aware of this and never look at the Church from outside or regard her as an organisation imposed on them without being their “body,” their “soul.” The clergy and the laity, the hierarchy and the non-ordained faithful, are the one people of God, the one Church, the “communion” of Christ’s followers, since the Church belongs to each and everyone who is responsible for her life and growth. They journey together as an envoy, on a pilgrimage from the first coming of the Lord until His return.⁴⁴

Lumen Gentium emphasises that all the members who are baptised have the same essential responsibilities: to pray, to praise God, to offer themselves as a sacrifice, to bear witness to Christ, and to proclaim Christ “to everyone who asks a reason for the hope of an eternal life which is theirs” (LG 10). In virtue of their baptism and confirmation, all are given the power of the Holy Spirit, all are obliged to spread the faith by preaching the Word and through good deed, all take part in the Eucharistic celebration, all “offer the divine victim to God and themselves along with it,” and all play their own part in the liturgical action (LG 11). In virtue of baptism and confirmation, all share a common dignity, a common grace, and a common vocation to perfection. It is stated in Christ and the Church that “there is...no inequality arising from race or nationality, social condition or sex” (LG 32). When the fathers of the Second Vatican Council envisaged the communion of everyone to be the members of the Church, they visualised it to be fulfilled in two ways.⁴⁵ First and foremost, a vertical relationship, participation in the life of the Trinity, which transforms everyone to a new creation. Secondly, a horizontal one, which is a consequence of this participation and transformation, making everyone to be in one family, irrespective of their status and position in the world.⁴⁶

The Council recognises the priesthood of the laity as important as the ministerial priesthood in the Church. The Council fathers concluded that the priesthood of the laity is not a derivative of the ministerial priesthood. But it constitutes an essential part of Christ’s own priesthood. However, these are related to each other in virtue of the fact that they both share in the one priesthood of Christ. Secondly, the priestly

⁴⁴ Brechter, "Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity," 117.

⁴⁵ Oesterreicher, "Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions," 31.

⁴⁶ Abeyasingha, "What Has the Ecclesiology of Communion of Vatican II Meant for India," 287.

activity of the laity clearly overlaps with that of the ministerial priesthood. When the Council enumerates the roles of the laity “by virtue of their royal priesthood,” it produces a list to which ordained ministers are surely also obliged: “the reception of the sacraments, prayer and thanksgiving, the witness of a holy life, abnegation, and active charity” (*LG* 10). Third, the priesthood of the laity is not a vocation to which some laity are called and others are not. The priesthood of the laity is a common possession and a common responsibility of all the laity due to the virtue of their baptism and confirmation. The priesthood of the laity is not to bring God to the world, but rather to bring the world to God.⁴⁷ The vocation of the laity is “to make the Church present and fruitful in those places and circumstances where it is only through them that she can become the salt of the earth” (*LG* 33).

In the world where the laity are called to remain “the salt of the earth,” they can be called to “more immediate cooperation in the ministry of the hierarchy.” The laity possess “the capacity of being appointed by the hierarchy to some ecclesiastical offices with a view to a spiritual end” (*LG* 33). The document *Lumen Gentium* does not specify these special roles of the laity. However, they are not second-class Christians of the Church.⁴⁸ The fathers of the Council have observed that the conditions and circumstances under which the Church’s work is done are varied. Therefore, “the methods used and the kinds of activity employed must be modified and adapted to the particular situation in redemptive history.”⁴⁹ All the activities of the laity in the world, if “accomplished in the Spirit,” become sacrifice to be offered to God in union with the Eucharistic sacrifice. Thus, the document *Lumen Gentium* says “the laity consecrate the world itself to God” (*LG* 34). “As the Father has sent me, even so I send you” (Jn 20:21).

The fathers through *Lumen Gentium* gave emphasis to the laity who live in the world. They are directly involved in the day-to-day running of the society. They always have first hand information about its development thus they live in the world, that is, they are engaged in each and every work and business of the earth and in the ordinary circumstances of social and family life which, as it were, constitute their very existence.⁵⁰ There they are called by God that, being led by the spirit to the Gospel, they may contribute to the sanctification of the world, as from within like leaven (*LG* 31).

⁴⁷ Estevez, “The Constitution on the Church: *Lumen Gentium*,” 107.

⁴⁸ Estevez, “The Constitution on the Church: *Lumen Gentium*,” 107.

⁴⁹ Brechter, “Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity,” 117.

⁵⁰ Semmelroth, “Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, Chapter II,” 179.

Lumen Gentium, while discussing the mission of the Church with regards to the laity's missionary vocation, defines the term "mission" of the Church as "those particular undertakings by which the heralds of the Gospel are sent out by the Church and go forth into the whole world to carry out the task of preaching the Gospel and planting the Church among peoples or groups who do not believe in Christ."⁵¹ These words stress the importance of the universality of the Church's mission. It is an ardent necessity to preach to the world that Christ is the light of the universe. Furthermore, according to *Lumen Gentium*, the mission would mean the calling of the people to faith in God and in Jesus Christ in the Church. The realisation of the mission is fulfilling the will of the Father and obedience to the Son. The work of the Son is carried on by the Church and with the help of the Holy Spirit. Jesus has entrusted this mission to the Apostles (LG 17). The Church received the command to proclaim and establish among all peoples the Kingdom of Christ and God (LG 5). It is him, through whom the Church becomes the universal sacrament of salvation (LG 48). The Church is presented as the initial budding forth of the Kingdom of God (LG 5). This explains the eschatological Kingdom which is realised in the Church.

According to St. Paul, the Church symbolises the body of Christ. As the parts of a body fulfil different functions which unite the body as one, the laity fulfil different forms of the apostolate or "varieties of service" (cf. 1 Cor 12: 5) that help to build up the Mystical Body of Christ, which is the Church. The fathers of the Council have taught, by setting forth the traditional teaching of the Church on this matter in a new light,⁵² for the laity to:

live in the world, that is, in all and in each of the secular professions and occupations. They live in the ordinary conditions of life in the family and in society, from which the web of their existence is woven. They are called by God so that by exercising their proper role and being led by the spirit of the Gospel they can work for the sanctification of the world from within (*ad mundi sanctificationem*), in the manner of leaven. In this way, they can make Christ known to others, especially by the testimony of a life resplendent in faith, hope and charity (LG 31).

That would mean the laity have a twofold function by being in the world: 1) a duty to continue and complete the creation and 2) to be a member of the people of God which

⁵¹ Brechter, "Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity," 117.

⁵² Philips, "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church: History of the Constitution," 107.

raises the human calling to the level of the apostolate.⁵³ These two aspects, natural and supernatural, are inseparably connected.

The fathers also emphasised “a true equality with regard to the dignity and activity common to all the faithful” (*LG* 32). Every follower of Christ, no matter whether they are ordained or not, clergy or laity are members of the Christian faithful.⁵⁴ They share the common discipleship in Christ. The Church is called the “community of disciples.”⁵⁵

This conviction and trust that was placed on the laity by the fathers of the Council gave awareness to the pastors that the laity too are the part of the same mission (*LG* 30). However, everything was in continuity with the tradition going back to the earliest Christian times, especially to St. Paul’s exhortation quoted by the Council (*LG* 30), which requested solidarity of the entire community and called to mind the responsibility of working to build up the body of Christ (Eph 4:15-16). Finally, the mission was directed towards human beings and peoples, not primarily to countries and territories.⁵⁶

It is a matter of great satisfaction that countless lay people work in the Church and the world in accordance with the recommendations and the requests of their pastors. They are quite worthy of admiration! Alongside those lay people who have a high-profile role to play, many live according to their baptismal vocation without attracting attention. They spread throughout the Church the benefits of their charity. In silence their apostolate flourishes, being made effective and fruitful by the Spirit.

1.1.2 *Apostolicam Actuositatem*

It is said that it all started when the fathers of the Council felt the need to give greater emphasis to the laity in the Church, especially in regards to their active role in the field of evangelization. In view of the promotion of the laity, the fathers of the Council felt the need of promulgating a decree particularly on laity with the title *Apostolicam Actuositatem*. The decree was promulgated on 18th November 1965 by Pope Paul VI. The fathers of the Council interpreted this document as the sign of the time.⁵⁷ This document was oriented towards how the laity can become a better

⁵³ Sauer, "The Council Discovers the Laity," 241.

⁵⁴ Philips, "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church: History of the Constitution," 120.

⁵⁵ Richard R. Gaillardetz, "The Ecclesiological Foundations of Ministry within an Ordered Communion," in *Ordering the Baptismal Priesthood*, ed. Susan K. Wood (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2003), 27.

⁵⁶ Brechter, "Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity," 120.

⁵⁷ Tanner, "The Church in the World," 271.

evangelizer. This decree consists of six chapters: the Layman's Call to the Apostolate, The Goals to be Achieved, The Various Fields of the Apostolate, The Various Methods of the Apostolate, The Preservation of Good Order and Formation for the Apostolate. This document speaks exclusively about a methodology for the laity in the field of evangelization. However, observation was made that no lay people were members of this commission for laity, but various lay organisations were represented by clerics.⁵⁸

At the end of the first experimental period of five years, the Pope declared that through this Council the laity will have a privileged place within the Church.⁵⁹ The Council, in fact, is "evermore an irreplaceable and effective instrument for the promotion of the laity in the Church."⁶⁰ Moreover, the nature and purpose of the document emphasises the importance of laity in the Church. The decree can be considered the best "fruit of the Council,"⁶¹ especially the Pontifical Council for the laity can only be rightly understood as the sign of a renewed understanding of the Church as mystery of missionary communion and of the growing awareness of the dignity and responsible participation of the lay faithful.

Through this document *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, the fathers widened as well as opened up new horizons of the apostolate of the laity. Now the laity have "countless opportunities for exercising the apostolate of evangelization and sanctification" (AA 6). There are various fields for the laity to work in the world only. Lay persons who are trained in different fields of human sciences can respond to the needs of the society.⁶² They are to promote the reign of Christ on earth by their own exemplary life.⁶³ They are not crucial for the character formation of people in the society. In this situation the laity have a greater role to accomplish in the society.

It is also significant that the Second Vatican Council through *Apostolicam Actuositatem* characterised all ministries in the Church to be interpreted as different forms of charisms or gifts of the Holy Spirit. The Council interpreted these gifts as the ones to be used to build up the Church, the body of Christ, as explained by St.

⁵⁸ Joseph A. Komonchak, "The Struggle for the Council During the Preparation of Vatican II (1960-1962)," in *History of Vatican II*, ed. Giuseppe Alberigo (Leuven: Peeters, 1995), 197.

⁵⁹ Paul VI, *Insegnamenti di Paolo VI*, 1051.

⁶⁰ Paul VI, *Insegnamenti di Paolo VI*, 1031.

⁶¹ Paul VI, *Insegnamenti di Paolo VI*, vol.5 (Vaticana: Tipografia Poliglotta Vaticana, 1967), 160.

⁶² Ferdinand Klostermann, "Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity," ed. Herbert Vorgrimler, *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, vol.3 (New York: Burns and Oates, 1969), 291.

⁶³ Klostermann, "Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity," 278.

Paul (1 Cor 12:20).⁶⁴ The ordained ministerial priests are called to promote and encourage the laity to be actively involved and to use in a better way the gifts and charisms that they have received.⁶⁵ The laity are called to use their charisms not only to build up the Church, but also for the good of the members of the community.⁶⁶ The laity need to have an authentic lay spirituality which enables them to exercise these charisms.⁶⁷ Today, society is very self-oriented and individualistic, which makes it difficult to use these gifts for the good of the community. Therefore, even the Christians are to be motivated and strengthened by “the liturgy; grounded in faith, hope, and charity; follow Jesus’ way of poverty, humility, and endurance; and take Mary as their model.”⁶⁸ The only specific reference to the laity’s spiritual life is the comment that “the lay spirituality will take its particular character from the circumstances of one’s state in life...and from one’s professional role in society,” and implementing their professional competence and various virtues “without which there is no true Christian life” (AA 4).

Another field of activity is that of lay participation in the life of local Christian communities. This calls for a deep sense of belonging to the Church and for recognition within the people of God in regards to the diversity and complementarity of vocations, ministries and charisms, states of life and specific tasks. Such community participation is sustained above all by liturgical and sacramental life, as source of vocation and mission, and finds expression in the various fields of community life, charitable activity, catechetics, education and missionary outreach.

During the Council the fathers examined several documents relating to the particular position of the layman within the people of God. One of its special features was dedicated to the activity of the layman in the Church, a special decree which provided for the institution of an organism “for the service and promotion of the lay apostolate” (AA 26).

The present time clearly calls for a more earnest and more widespread apostolate on the part of the laity; indeed, “an indication of this manifold and pressing need is the evident work of the Holy Spirit in making the laity today evermore conscious of their

⁶⁴ Moeller, "History of *Lumen Gentium's* Structure and Ideas," 128.

⁶⁵ Klostermann, "Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity," 291.

⁶⁶ Klostermann, "Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity," 327.

⁶⁷ Klostermann, "Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity," 291.

⁶⁸ Paul Lakeland, *The Liberation of the Laity* (New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc, 2003), 96.

own responsibility and inspiring them everywhere to serve Christ and the Church” (AA 1).

The source of this apostolate or the right and the duty of this apostolate of the laity comes from the union with Christ and thus, it is through baptism and confirmation that the laity “are assigned to the apostolate by the Lord himself” (AA 3).⁶⁹ The fathers also emphasised the importance of the works of the Holy Spirit. They said that the Holy Spirit gives special gifts to the laity.⁷⁰ Richard R. Gaillardetz believes that taking active part in any ministries in the Church laity need to be empowered by the power of the Holy Spirit.⁷¹ The laity, by the reception of these gifts, “arise for each believer the right and duty to use them in the Church and in the world for the good of mankind and for the upbuilding of the Church” (AA 3). The Church expects through her members a new hierarchy of value system to be followed in the society by its members.⁷²

The Council identifies two ways in which the laity can be actively involved in the activities of the Church: 1) As an individual: It is also called individual apostolate. *Apostolicam Actuositatem* affirms that the individual apostolate “is the origin and the condition of the whole lay apostolate, even in its organised expression and admits of no substitutes” (AA 16). Furthermore, the fathers concluded that “regardless of circumstances, all lay persons...are called to this type of apostolate and obliged to engage in it” (AA 16). It presupposes the laity’s participation in the testimony of life, the apostolate of Word, the presentation of lofty motives for action, and the vivification of life with charity and works.

2) Community activities: People are called to be social beings. The social aspect of the human being is emphasised at the time of their baptism. The fathers believe that “the group apostolate of Christian believers happily corresponds to a human and Christian need” (AA 18). They encourage such forms of activities for the laity. These forms of activities lead the laity to work by being a member of an association. They are to be in co-relation to the Church authorities. Thus, “the laity have the right to find and run such associations and to join those already existing” (AA 19). All these associations work for the betterment of society. This practice of having organisations have existed since the beginning of the Church, the institution of the diaconate for the

⁶⁹ Klostermann, “Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity,” 316.

⁷⁰ Klostermann, “Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity,” 327.

⁷¹ Gaillardetz, “The Ecclesiological Foundations of Ministry within an Ordered Communion,” 40.

⁷² Abeyasingha, “What Has the Ecclesiology of Communion of Vatican II Meant for India,” 287.

fair distribution of the provisions for all people in an equitable manner being an example.

Giving more importance to the work of the laity in carrying out various ministries in the Church, the document insists that the laity may “take over as far as possible the work of priests” (AA 17) or may do work “more closely connected with the duties of pastors” (AA 24). In all ministries the members were initiated with some kind of religious initiation ceremonies. The study of the constitution concluded that in the early Church all ministries were subject to some kind of ordination or blessings by the leaders of the Church.⁷³

The document emphasises that evangelization belongs to the very essence of the Christian laity’s vocation. It is not a duty imposed on him from outside, but an obligation derived from the fact of being a Christian. There are many ministries for the laity, but only one mission that is of the Church. By fulfilling various ministries the laity participate in the evangelizing mission of the Church.⁷⁴ “For this the Church was founded: that by spreading the Kingdom of Christ everywhere for the glory of God the Father, she might bring all men to share in Christ’s saving redemption; and that through them the whole world might in actual fact be brought into relationship with him” (AA 2). It is interesting to note that this document on evangelization is very closely connected with the sanctification of the world (AA 19). Evangelization refers to preaching and belongs to the prophetic role of the laity. Whereas, sanctification is identified with divine cult, the exercise of the royal priesthood by the laity.

1.1.3 *Gaudium et Spes*

The pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* was promulgated on 7th December 1965. There had been challenging intervention taken by a number of fathers before it was promulgated as a Constitution. It dealt with the modality of the Church in the modern world. This Constitution entitled *Gaudium et Spes* itself meant “Joy and Hope” to the people in the world. This document explains in detail the lay apostolate that is open to the world. Lakeland addresses this document as the “Bible of the lay apostolate.”⁷⁵ *Gaudium et Spes* does not distinguish very sharply the lay and the clerical ministry. It explains in details the Church’s relationship with the secular world. The Church in the world, and the Church that is oriented beyond the world.⁷⁶ This document tries to

⁷³ Gaillardetz, "The Ecclesiological Foundations of Ministry within an Ordered Communion," 46.

⁷⁴ Klostermann, "Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity," 310.

⁷⁵ Lakeland, *The Liberation of the Laity*, 98.

⁷⁶ Lakeland, *The Liberation of the Laity*, 99.

inter-relate these two aspects of human life in the world and helps the humans to realise them together.⁷⁷ Therefore, the Church consists of both human reality and a divine mystery. The human reality is finally destined to reach the divine and that is the ultimate aim of life in this world.

The envisioned purpose of the document *Gaudium et Spes* was primarily to transform the world unto the values of the Gospel, and eventually, the world becomes the Church in its global vision. Secondly, the laity and the Church became part of the world and for the world with its own structures and activities.⁷⁸ The Council fathers emphasised more the mission of the Church as that of constructing a more human world, the world that brings peace to humanity.⁷⁹ The peace, that is properly called as “the effect of righteousness” (GS 78). There is a tendency among the people to look for assistance from abroad without looking at the potentialities that one is capable of. Thus, people are reminded of a great value that “progress is based, not only on foreign aid, but on the full exploitation of native resources and on the development of their own talents and traditions” (GS 86). It also gives a reminder to the people from the developed world of their obligation to help the developing world. They are called to be generous towards the developing world. The document states: “every branch of the human race possesses in itself and in its nobler traditions some part of the spiritual treasure which God has entrusted to men, even though many do not know the source of it.” The Council fathers also urged collaboration by Catholic experts in studies and research; it insists that it is the duty of the whole people of God, following the teaching and example of their bishops, to do their utmost to alleviate the sufferings of the modern age; and it affirms that “the Church ought to be present in the community of peoples” (GS 89). The laity are called to be heralds within the secular world.⁸⁰ A Christian who lives in the multi-religious and multi-cultural society, and develops a responsible dialogical relationship with his/her fellow citizens of every faith, becomes an evangelizer.⁸¹

The fathers of the Church through *Gaudium et Spes* tried to study people’s anguish, their problems of hunger and poverty. They tried to visualise a new hope for peace

⁷⁷ Paul J. Roy, "The Developing Sense of Community (*Gaudium et Spes*)," in *Vatican II: The Unfinished Agenda, a Look to the Future*, ed. Lucien Richard (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 191.

⁷⁸ Roy, "The Developing Sense of Community (*Gaudium et Spes*)," 195.

⁷⁹ Tanner, "The Church in the World," 323.

⁸⁰ Virginia Sullivan Finn, "Laity: Mission and Ministry," in *Vatican II: The Unfinished Agenda, a Look to the Future*, ed. Lucien Richard (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 146.

⁸¹ Lakeland, *The Liberation of the Laity*, 100.

and development.⁸² The comment made by the theologian Avery Dulles in this regard is noteworthy. He said the Church is highly institutional, sacramental, and hierarchical. The Church is more focused on the instruction and the pastoral care of its own members rather than on the spreading of faith.⁸³ The document *Gaudium et Spes* emphasised the respect for every culture in the world in the processes of evangelization. God is manifested in every culture, therefore the purpose of the Church is not to dominate any culture or group of people, on the contrary, its mission is to proclaim the Gospel to everyone (*GS* 40; *LG* 17; *AA* 5). Thus, the fathers insisted to respect the dignity of every person in any society (*GS* 41). This teaching of *Gaudium et Spes* fulfils the mission of Jesus to establish the Kingdom of God on earth (*GS* 45; *LG* 5). Virginia Sullivan Finn, referring to the study made for the national consultation on the vocation of the laity in the world, held in Chicago in September 1986, argues that:

the hope that Vatican II would herald a new age of the laity has not yet been fulfilled despite the great growth of lay ministries We have been accustomed to keeping our religion in Church, but we know from our faith and experience that God's grace and love are present in our world-in our work and our intimacies Our Church has paid too little attention to the religious nature and needs of our worldly vocation.⁸⁴

She says the Church initiatives have failed to accept the works of the Spirit outside the so called boundaries of the Church.

Gaudium et Spes makes it clear that the Christian laity can by no way avoid the world; mankind with its history and its destiny are intimately linked to the Church (*GS* 1). "She exists in the world, living and acting with it" (*GS* 40). The main mission of the Church is to evangelize all creatures (*GS* 42). The field of evangelization is not restricted to one nation or a particular people in the society.

It is noteworthy that the fathers of the Council have taken special care during the discussion on the subject not to repeat the same mistake that the missionaries made in the past, which we have discussed in our previous chapter. It was evident even before the Second Vatican Council through the Encyclical *Evangelii Praecones* that Pope Pius XII instructed the missionaries that they "should not introduce the Gospel into any new land to destroy or extinguish whatever its people possess that is naturally good, just or beautiful" (*EP* 56). Furthermore, he insisted that a missionary must

⁸² Tanner, "The Church in the World," 323.

⁸³ Dulles, "John Paul II and the New Evangelization-What Does It Mean," 33.

⁸⁴ Finn, "Laity: Mission and Ministry," 147.

“consider the country he is going to evangelize as a second fatherland and love it with due charity,” seeking no “earthly advantage for his own country or religious institute” (EP 20). For the Church, when it calls people to a higher culture and a better way of life, under the inspiration of the Christian religion, it does not act like one who recklessly cuts down and uproots a thriving forest.⁸⁵ One can learn from history that there were also Popes before the pre-Leonine period who preached the destruction of the local culture.⁸⁶ Thus, Michael Schuck reports that “the Popes stop referring to foreign non-Christians as ‘savages’ and ‘barbarians’ requiring introduction to civilised life.”⁸⁷ The teachings of *Gaudium et Spes* in the first two chapters do not speak about any division of humanity into ‘civilised’ and ‘uncivilised’ peoples; on the contrary it is addressed as ‘the community of [humankind],’ whose joys, hopes, grief, and anxieties are shared and carried by the Church in a spirit of solidarity (GS 1-2). The same document respects the pluralism of cultures (GS 92). It expresses the necessity of inculturation of the Gospel as the law of all evangelization (GS 44).

Though this document has highlighted in detail the relationship between the Church and the world and its collaboration, it is interesting to note the observation made by a South Asian theologian from Sri Lanka, Tissa Balasuriya, about the overall understanding of the fathers of the Council.⁸⁸ He says:

Vatican II’s inadequacy was due partly to its lack of an adequate social analysis of what was going on in the world at the time. It had no real sense of the struggles of the poor, the working class, of women, of oppressed racial groups. It did not deal seriously with racism and white supremacy, with sexism and male domination, with classism and capital exploitation. It did not come to terms with the Russian revolution or even consider seriously the Chinese and Cuban revolutions and the Vietnamese struggle. There was no deep dialogue with other religions, cultures, and ideologies as offering alternative analyses and worldviews to the white, western, capitalist, male mind-set that still dominated Catholicism. Some of the main theologians of the Council - Ratzinger, Congar, Rahner, and Kung - rendered valuable service as far as they went, but their experience was European and Church-centered. The Council had no clear vision of the type of world it envisioned as against the present exploitative world system with its assault on nature by the exhaustion of non-renewable resources and

⁸⁵ Michael J. Schuck, *That They Be One: The Social Teachings of the Papal Encyclicals 1740-1989* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1991), 72.

⁸⁶ Schuck, *That They Be One: The Social Teachings of the Papal Encyclicals 1740-1989*, 72.

⁸⁷ Schuck, *That They Be One: The Social Teachings of the Papal Encyclicals 1740-1989*, 72.

⁸⁸ Tissa Balasuriya, *Planetary Theology* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1984), 148; cf. Paul J. Roy, “The Developing Sense of Community (*Gaudium et Spes*),” in *Vatican II: The Unfinished Agenda, a Look to the Future*, ed. Lucien Richard (New York: Paulist Press, 1987) 193-94.

environmental pollution. Hence it did not propose relevant practical goals in the real world and strategies for transforming mentalities and structures. Its relationship to the world order and human development remained within the framework of “aid” to the poor by the rich.⁸⁹

It is clear from the above observation that the Council fathers were not aware of the existing situations of the common men/women in the society, especially from the developing countries.

On the other hand the Catholic Church, in her continuous effort for internal renewal and “*aggiornamento*” of her structures, in conformity with the times in which she lives, realises “how much she should continually mature in the light of experience, in her relations with the world” (GS 43), for whose salvation she is founded by Christ. Thus, the Church on earth is motivated by one aim: that God’s reign may be realised and the salvation of the human race may take effect (GS 44). In other words, the Church, by virtue of the Gospel committed to it, must proclaim the rights of humanity: human dignity and freedom for all God’s people (GS 41).

At the same time the Council, wanting to establish a dialogue with the modern world, gave due attention to some of the major aspirations of the contemporary world, such as the problems of development, promotion of justice among nations and the cause of peace, proposing the institution of an organism in the Church whose purpose should be to make the Catholic world more aware of these problems (GS 90). We shall now enter into another document, *Ad Gentes*.

1.1.4 *Ad Gentes*

The document *Ad Gentes* was promulgated on 7th December 1965. This document consists of six chapters: Principles of Doctrine, Mission Work Itself, Particular Churches, Missionaries, Planning Missionary Activity, and Cooperation. The fathers of the Council emphasised the Missionary character of the Church in this document (AD 1).⁹⁰ Jacob Kavunkal thinks that to understand this document well one needs to understand what *Gaudium et Spes* and *Lumen Gentium* have spoken about the mission of the Church.⁹¹ These documents explain that the Church shares the missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit. Thus, *Ad Gentes* expresses beautifully the idea of the

⁸⁹ Balasuriya, *Planetary Theology*, 148; cf. Paul J. Roy, “The Developing Sense of Community (Gaudium et Spes),” in *Vatican II: The Unfinished Agenda, a Look to the Future*, ed. Lucien Richard (New York: Paulist Press, 1987) 193-94.

⁹⁰ Ricardo Burigana and Giovanni Turbanti, “The Intersession: Preparing the Conclusion of the Council,” in *History of Vatican II*, ed. Giuseppe Alberigo (Leuven: Peeters, 2003), 574, 575.

⁹¹ Kavunkal, “*Gaudium et Spes* and the Mission of Transforming Cultures,” 398.

missionary activity: It “is nothing else and nothing less than a manifestation or epiphany of God’s will, and fulfilment of that will in the world and in history” (*AG* 9). The mission of the Church is much more than just obeying the command to teach and baptise. It is much more fundamental to cooperate in the divine plan to form all humanity into one people of God, one Body of Christ, one temple of the Holy Spirit. The Church is the universal sacrament of salvation (*AG* 1; *LG* 48). The “missionary activity is built into the very being of the Church.”⁹² The fathers of the Council explained very clearly that the “specific aim of the missionary activity is preaching the Gospel and planting the Church among the peoples and groups in which she has not yet taken root” (*AG* 6). David M. Powers states that “the Church exists by mission as fire exists by burning.”⁹³ If the Church were primarily a gathering of individuals where the Word of God is shared, then the mission would be primarily the evangelization by preaching and teaching, and personal testimony. Furthermore, David M. Powers argues that “if the Church means those believers in Jesus Christ who live sacramentally ordered lives in communion with the tradition of the apostles expressed in the bishop of Rome, then the mission will mean establishing a local Church with its own authorities, under the guidance of the Pope.”⁹⁴ The missionary activity does not mean being engaged in pastoral activities of the Church, in opposition, it is to reach to those persons and places where the message of Christ is not preached.⁹⁵

Ad Gentes, the decree on the mission of the Church, speaks about the collaboration of the missionary bishops and missionary religious institutions. Though the title “*Ad Gentes*” means “reaching out to the nations,” its meaning of evangelization is very much restricted.⁹⁶ *Ad Gentes* explains that the Church is missionary by her very nature because the Church participates in the mission of the Triune God (*AG* 2-4). The members of the Church are sent to the world to preach the good news to everyone, no matter whether they are rich or poor.⁹⁷ Therefore, the members of the Church need to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. It would mean that they have to walk

⁹² David M. Powers, “Foundations for an Ecumenical Definition of Mission,” in *Prospettive di Missiologia Oggi*, ed. Mariasusai Dhavamony (Roma: Universita Gregoriana Editrice, 1982), 137.

⁹³ Powers, “Foundations for an Ecumenical Definition of Mission,” 137.

⁹⁴ Powers, “Foundations for an Ecumenical Definition of Mission,” 138.

⁹⁵ Xavier Kochuparampil, *Evangelization in India* (Kottayam: Oriental Institute of Religious Studies India Publications, 1993), 51.

⁹⁶ Turbanti, “The Intersession: Preparing the Conclusion of the Council,” 575.

⁹⁷ Oesterreicher, “Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions,” 31.

on the road where there is poverty, where the people are obedient to the teachings of Christ and giving service to the humankind (*AG* 5).

The specificity of this document *Ad Gentes* is that it focuses on the Church's mission work among the believers in other religions rather than the people of de-Christianised lands who heard the Gospel but no longer believe or witness the faith.⁹⁸ This document calls such work among de-Christianised as pastoral activity,⁹⁹ therefore, evangelization is a missionary activity and not a pastoral activity.¹⁰⁰ The members of the Church are called to implant the Church wherever it has not taken the root (*AG* 15).

According to Suso Brechter, the decree *Ad Gentes* does not believe in the understanding of the work called "re-evangelization" and "new evangelization." He argues that this movement would weaken the missionary idea: proclamation of the Gospel in places where it has not been preached.¹⁰¹ *Ad Gentes* speaks about the need of inculturation of the Gospel. Further, it strengthens its idea and states that "the Gospel cannot be considered a stranger to anyone or to any place" (*AG* 8). Thomas F. Stransky interprets it beautifully as follows:

Ad Gentes imaged a particular Church as the local incarnation of whatever in the customs, traditions, wisdom, teachings, arts and sciences of the people could be used to praise the glory of the creator, manifest the grace of the Savior, or contribute to the right ordering of Christian life. They are called to share as many as responsibilities with the clergy in the Church. This work prominently includes teaching Christian doctrine, catechetics, and the encouragement to a living participation in the sacramental life of the Church (*AG* 21). To be faithful to this image of earthing the Church of the Gospel is to effect a profound inculturation in every sphere of ecclesial life: theology, ethics, primary evangelization, catechetics and preaching, religious life, formation of laity and clergy, liturgical worship, congregational life, ecumenical and interreligious relations, and canonical legislation (*AG* 19-22).¹⁰²

⁹⁸ Fagan, *An Interpretation of Evangelization: Jon Sobrino's Christology and Ecclesiology in Dialogue*, 18.

⁹⁹ Brechter, "Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity," 120.

¹⁰⁰ Thomas F. Stransky, "From Vatican II to *Redemptoris Missio*: A Development in the Theology of Mission," in *The Good News of the Kingdom: Mission Theology for the Third Millennium*, ed. Dean S. Gilliland Charles Van Engen (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1993), 144, 145.

¹⁰¹ Brechter, "Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity," 117-120.

¹⁰² Stransky, "From Vatican II to *Redemptoris Missio*: A Development in the Theology of Mission," 142.

The Church can “open up for all men and women a free and sure path to full participation in the mystery of Christ” (AG 5). To say yes to Christ is to say yes to God’s reign on earth, which confirms to be a member of his body the Church. The Church is the icon of Christ’s presence in the world, which is the eschatological Kingdom of God.¹⁰³ The Christians must also strike up dialogue with other people who belong to other religions.¹⁰⁴ In the context of India, the Council fathers urge to establish a good relationship with Hinduism.¹⁰⁵ It is a form of witnessing the Christian values. Christianity has to be lived rather than taught. The mere presence of the missionaries and the Christians could become a medium of diffusion of the Christian message. The fathers of the Council insisted that being “closely united with men in their life and work, Christ’s disciples hope to render to others true witness of Christ, and to work for their salvation, even where they are not able to proclaim Christ fully” (AG 12). It is another form of witnessing - witness through life. They are to engage themselves in dialogue in their work place too.

The laity have a great role to play in the mission of the Church “for the Gospel cannot be deeply imprinted on the talents, life, and work of many people without the active presence of the laity” (AG 21). *Ad Gentes* assigns a threefold mission to the laity. First and foremost, they give witness to Christ through their words and deeds. It can be done both in their families and the places of work. Second, they are called to be men of charity. They become an instrument of distributing their talents to the people they live with. They manifest God’s love in the midst of the people in their dwelling. They have to be an epiphany of God’s love in this world. Finally, they are called upon to preach and teach the Gospel and Christian doctrines. They have to be equipped with the doctrines of the Church so that they can challenge the world in all the circumstances.¹⁰⁶ Mission is the vital function of all the members of the Church, not only a hobby of a few (AG 21).

We also find diversity in the Churches, different Rites that exist in different parts of the world. Each has their own traditions and customs. All particular Churches have their own legitimate place in the community of the Catholic Church. It is noteworthy that the unity of the Church is not uniformity. Unity is maintained and preserved

¹⁰³ Stransky, "From Vatican II to *Redemptoris Missio*: A Development in the Theology of Mission," 141, 142.

¹⁰⁴ Cyril B. Papali, "Excursus on Hinduism," in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Herbert Vorgrimler (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), 137.

¹⁰⁵ Papali, "Excursus on Hinduism," 137.

¹⁰⁶ Philips, "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church: History of the Constitution," 108.

amidst diversity. The Decree warns all concerned that above all charity should prevail among Catholics of all Rites (AG 15). *Ad Gentes* 6, 12, 16, 19, and 36 teach an ecumenical spirit expected between the Churches in fulfilling the mission. It can also happen that more than one Catholic Rite may coexist in the same locality or country. The Council document insists that all of them have the same right and duty in the field of evangelization, as evangelization becomes the very essence of the Church.

The document specifically mentions “a divided Christendom cannot fruitfully present Christ among the non-Christians” (AG 15). There should be unity among the Churches for an effective evangelizer to exist. A divided Church can never preach Christ who has come to deliver everyone. It is very clear that a non-Christian can never differentiate between Churches. For him everyone is a follower of Christ. All speak about the most holy Trinity, Christ and the Church. Therefore the document insists: “let Christians work together especially for the sake of Christ, their common Lord. Let his name be the bond that unites them” (AG 15).

The decree also admits that there are positive values in other non-Christian religions: “truth and grace are to be found among them” (AG 9). In their national and religious traditions there lies hidden “seeds of the Word” (AG 11, 15). They, too, have seeds of asceticism and contemplation (AG 18). Yet they are not to be equated with Christianity. They are only the preparation for the Gospel. They need to be enlightened and purified (AG 3). This is the special mission of the Church and the missionaries. Avery Dulles and Edward Schillebeeckx agree with the universality of Christ and His Grace. They hold strongly that the other religions, too, are mediators of grace.¹⁰⁷ They hold the opinion that the Holy Spirit was at work in the world even before the glorification of the Son. So the religions of the world are grace-filled ways of salvation and are positively included in God’s plan of salvation.¹⁰⁸ Whereas, Samuel Rayan argues that the Council fathers do not say that the religions of the world are ways of salvation; he states that the Council only affirms that they stand within God’s universal plan of salvation and are under His grace.¹⁰⁹ Therefore, it is important because “very many men can hear of the Gospel and recognise Christ only by means of the laity who are their neighbours” (AG 21). This document insists that they should be one in mind and heart with everyone so that there exist a sincere charity in their dealings (AG 21).

¹⁰⁷ Avery Dulles, *Models of Revelation* (New York: Doubleday, 1983), 189-192.

¹⁰⁸ Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, vol.5 (London: Helicon Press, 1969), 121-130.

¹⁰⁹ Samuel Rayan, "Mission after Vatican II: Problems and Positions," *International Review of Missions* 59 (1970): 422.

Inculturation allows the Gospel to be the leaven of liberty and progress in human history (AG 8). This dialogical and dialectical quality of inculturation allows the Church to be completely at home among each people in the same manner as Jesus was at home in Nazareth.¹¹⁰ The mission of *Ad Gentes* is to evangelize the whole world, to carry out a total transformation of values that are existing in the world (AG 10). The liberation of the poor has become the central theme of the *Ad Gentes* or the mission of the Church.¹¹¹

Samuel Rayan gives emphasis to the missionary's commitment to the world. He is positive towards values of other religions and their struggle for development. This attitude of the missionaries opens up the way for dialogue with other religious faiths.¹¹² Thus, the Church yearns for unity and brotherhood among everyone in the society (AG 3, 21, 8). It is through the Word that everyone is invited to have an experience of the love of God and to become a member of the Church.¹¹³ The Church, perhaps, never before understood that her mission in the world is to see that the Word of God reaches to the centre of human situations.¹¹⁴ Thus, the mission today is feeling with God and looking at the world with the same perspective of God. The Church "must become contemporaneous with God, participating in God's concerns and God's plans for the world. God's reign, the realisation of the Kingdom of God, must become its only priority."¹¹⁵ According to *Ad Gentes* this is a great challenge, placed before the Church to fulfil her mission. The laity are commissioned to accomplish this mission of the Church imbued with the Spirit of Christ.

2 CONTRIBUTION OF POPE PAUL VI REGARDING THE MISSION OF THE LAITY

The fathers of the Second Vatican Council thought that the great vision of the evangelizing missionary thrust of Pope John XXIII will get dissolved with the emergence of the new successor to the Chair of St. Peter, Pope Paul VI. However, it surprised many fathers of the Second Vatican Council when the new Pope came forward with vigorous enthusiasm and courage with the same vision as that of its

¹¹⁰ Stransky, "From Vatican II to *Redemptoris Missio*: A Development in the Theology of Mission," 142.

¹¹¹ Robert Schreiter, "The Changed Context of Mission Forty Years after the Council," *Verbum SVD* 46, no. 1 (2005): 86.

¹¹² Rayan, "Mission after Vatican II: Problems and Positions," 415.

¹¹³ Rayan, "Mission after Vatican II: Problems and Positions," 416.

¹¹⁴ Kavunkal, "*Gaudium et Spes* and the Mission of Transforming Cultures," 397.

¹¹⁵ Kavunkal, "*Gaudium et Spes* and the Mission of Transforming Cultures," 397.

founder.¹¹⁶ Pope Paul VI said “venerable brethren, recall these facts of the greatest importance. Christ is our founder and head.”¹¹⁷ His vision for the future of the Church was found to be more pastoral than the one of his predecessor.

Pope Paul VI believed that the proclamation of the Gospel must enter into dialogue with every culture and religion of the world. He believed that it would mean not just initiating some doctrines alone, but also making them present in the world only through the medium of human persons and through his/her cultures. Therefore, it was felt necessary to have dialogue of the Gospel with the human realities. This point was very much emphasised when Pope Paul VI said the separation of the Gospel from culture has been the “drama of our time” (*EN* 20). To have a close encounter with the cultures of various societies the Christian laity need to accept and appreciate the living situations of the people in the society.¹¹⁸ We shall further discuss the encyclical letter of Pope Paul VI.

2.1 *POPULORUM PROGRESSIO*

Populorum Progressio is the encyclical letter of Pope Paul VI published on 26th March 1967, just sixteen months after the Second Vatican Council and one year before the Medellin Conference. This document consists of two chapters: Man’s Complete Development, and The Common Development of Mankind. The purpose of the promulgation of this document was in response to the Church of the poor.¹¹⁹ There are various reasons why Pope Paul VI took a special initiative to promulgate this document. First and foremost, after visiting countries like India, Africa, and Latin America and seeing the pitiful conditions of the people, Pope Paul VI felt the need to denounce the unjust practices of rich people in the society. Second, listening to the bishop’s, especially the ones from the third world countries, about their pastoral concerns of the society, he felt the need to write this encyclical addressed to the whole world. He was expressing his concerns about the needs of the poor in different parts of the world. He wanted to express his sympathy for the poor in the society due to the

¹¹⁶ Karl Rahner, “Towards a Fundamental Theological Interpretation of Vatican II,” in *Vatican II: The Unfinished Agenda*, ed. Lucien Richard *et al.* (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 20.

¹¹⁷ Pope Paul VI, “Christ the Beginning, Way, and Goal of the Council,” in *Council Speeches of Vatican II*, ed. Yves Conger Hans Kung, Daniel O’Hanlon (Glen Rock, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1964), 22.

¹¹⁸ Tanner, “The Church in the World,” 313.

¹¹⁹ Moeller, “Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World,” 8.

struggles that they undergo. He also found the significant place of the laity to re-establish a new social order.¹²⁰

In the encyclical *Populorum Progressio*, Pope Paul VI deals with some of the harsh realities of the poor in the world. He says: "people are striving to escape from hunger, misery, endemic diseases, and ignorance; [they] are looking for a wider share in the benefits of civilisation and a more active improvement of their human qualities; [they] are aiming purposefully at their complete fulfilment" (PP 1). Further, he insists that the Gospel challenges the Church to put herself at the service of all, especially the poor (PP 1).

Populorum Progressio also insists that the Kingdom of God includes everyone on earth. The Kingdom that Jesus is going to establish will be for everyone, irrespective of their nationality, caste, and colour. The Pope said: "It is...building a world where every person, no matter what one's race, religion, or nationality, can live a fully human life, freed from servitude imposed on one by other people or by natural forces over which one has not sufficient control; a world where freedom is not an empty word and where the poor man Lazarus can sit down at the same table with the rich person" (PP 47). Thus, the encyclical opened up hope for the poor and for the people whom the rich considered outcasts in the society.

By giving emphasis to the role of the laity, Pope Paul VI said that every individual needs to work for the development of the society. Everyone is invited to work hard in their own way and be responsible in the society so that there can be peace and an experience of God's reign on earth.¹²¹ He said that "development cannot be limited to mere economic growth. In order for it to be authentic, it must be complete: integral, that is, it has to promote the good of every person and of the whole person" (PP 14). Furthermore, he added: "In the design of God, every person is called to develop and fulfil oneself towards his/her vocation" (PP15). The follower of Christ cannot walk away without doing anything to help ease the wretchedness of the society.

Pope Paul VI invited everyone to help with "the transition from less human conditions to those which are more human" (PP 20). The encyclical promotes respect for the individuality of the persons in the society. The laity are called to establish a just society, where everyone is respected with his/her own status in the society.¹²² This fact was very clear when in February 1964 the American institute for Jewish-

¹²⁰ Moeller, "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World," 9.

¹²¹ Tanner, "The Church in the World," 323.

¹²² Oesterreicher, "Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions," 86.

Christian studies submitted a memorandum drawn up by Dr. Barry Ulanov of Columbia University, New York, to the secretariat to whom the responsibility to work for the unity of the Churches was entrusted. This memorandum recommended to the fathers of the Second Vatican Council that they should celebrate the variety as well as the essential unity of the inner experience of mankind.¹²³ By following the values of the Kingdom, the Christian laity are called to establish a just society on earth. This plea to accept every good thing in the world was recognised when Pope Paul VI attended the Eucharistic Congress organised in Mumbai, India. On 3rd December 1964 the Pope delivered a speech before the representatives of the non-Christian communities in Mumbai, where he exclaimed:

Your country ... is a country of an old civilisation, the cradle of great religions, the home of a nation which has sought God in constant desire, in deep meditation, in silence and in ardent hymns. Only rarely has this longing for God been expressed in words so full of the Advent spirit as those in your holy books written many centuries before Christ: 'From unreality lead me to reality, from darkness lead me to light, from death lead me to immortality!' (*Brihadaranyaka Upanishads*, 1). This prayer is relevant in our time. Today more than ever before it should ascend from every human heart. Mankind passes through profound changes; it is groping for principles and new forces which are to lead it into the world of the future.¹²⁴

We conclude our survey of *Populorum Progressio* here by quoting the concluding invitation to every Christian to proclaim and witness Gospel values that will renew the temporal order and restore human dignity (PP 81).

2.2 *EVANGELII NUNTIANDI*

Evangelii Nuntiandi is an apostolic exhortation given on 8th December 1975 by Pope Paul VI. In this exhortation the Pope gives in detail a wider concept of the Church's mission in the world. The exhortation has seven parts: From Christ the evangelizer to the evangelizing Church; What is evangelization?; The content of evangelization; The

¹²³ Oesterreicher, "Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions," 86. The memorandum mentions "the task of the Church gladly to praise every just deed, every just man, every loving deed and every loving man, every opening of a soul to God, every movement of the heart, however weak, which announces the goodness of God and the goodness of men towards each other. The recognition of religious experiences outside its own sphere does not mean that the Church does not realise the great difference between itself and those who do not believe in Christ. But by affirming the work of the Spirit who blows where it wills it can also deepen its own asceticism and piety, its own sympathy and its own incessant prayer. At the same time it shows itself as the faithful companion and intercessor for all those who seek permanent peace." 86.

¹²⁴ Oesterreicher, "Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions," 88.

methods of evangelization; The beneficiaries of evangelization; The workers of evangelization; and The spirit of evangelization. The Pope has reflected very seriously before publishing this exhortation about the need of evangelization in the modern world. He also emphasised the creative role of laity in this mission of evangelization. Through this exhortation Pope Paul VI defines evangelization as “bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new....The purpose of evangelization is therefore precisely this interior change...” (EN 18). To bring about this interior change in the society the cooperation of the laity is unavoidable. He said the evangelization is not restricted to foreign lands or to the missionary preaching alone. It concerns the entire world, which takes in all cultures and all spheres of human life (EN 19-20). The Pope found that the field of evangelization is not centered on one aspect or one field of human society, the works of evangelization also need to take into account both the personal and social life of an individual (EN 29). One may think that this is a secondary element for evangelization; however, it also has to deal with the areas of peace, justice and development, which results into the liberation of the whole individual (EN 29).¹²⁵ Since *Evangelii Nuntiandi* is the fruit of long and profound meditation, its reading even nourishes the spiritual life of every Christian.¹²⁶ This document does not deal directly with the laity. However, it speaks about the society and liberation of the people in the society, where the laity have a significant role to play.

Pope Paul VI finds some relation between the liberation of the individual and the works of evangelization. Hence these words:

Between evangelization and human advancement to development and liberation there are in fact profound links. These include links of an anthropological order, because the man who is to be evangelized is not an abstract being but is subject to social and economic questions. They also include links in the theological order, since one cannot dissociate the plan of creation from the plan of redemption. The latter plan touches the very concrete situations of injustice to be combated and of justice to be restored (EN 31).

He also added that if the mission of Jesus were to establish the Kingdom of God on earth, then even the Church must not be seen as an end in itself. The Church, where a praying community gathers in the name of Jesus, must seek God's Kingdom and work

¹²⁵ Semmelroth, "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, Chapter II," 179.

¹²⁶ James H. Kroeger, "To Live Is to Evangelize," *Verbum SVD* 45, no. 2 (2004): 192.

all the harder to build it up (EN 13). Working to establish the Kingdom of God is not a mere religious or spiritual activity, it also requires working to overcome poverty and oppression, which come from an unjust structure. It would mean that the Church cannot separate itself from justice and peace issues if authentic human development is to become a reality (EN 31). Pope Paul VI took freedom in claiming that action for justice is a constitutive aspect of the work of evangelization. This document has influenced the Church in many ways. It provided inspiration, emphasis, and methodology to place evangelization at the centre of the Church's mission.¹²⁷

Pope Paul VI reminds everyone that while the Church links human liberation and salvation, it does not equate them (EN 35). Temporal liberation is not sufficient in itself to constitute God's reign; all earthly liberation have seeds of failure. Unless liberation leads to a change of mind and a conversion of heart, then it is not salvation in Jesus Christ (EN 36). The integral human development or integral liberation must be one rooted in the Gospel. Pope Paul VI beautifully summarised his opinion on evangelization in these words: "As the kernel and centre of his good news, Christ proclaims salvation, this great gift of God which is liberation from everything that oppresses humanity but which is above all liberation from sin and evil one, in the joy of knowing God and being known by God" (EN 9). As we have reflected above, this document *Evangelii Nuntiandi* gave a wider perspective of Church's mission in the world. It touched not only the hearts of the individual, but also every sphere of the society and culture in the world. It provided a new enthusiasm for the laity to present the Gospel message in their own charismatic ways to people of their society.

3 DOCUMENTS OF MEDELLIN AND PUEBLA

It was three years after the Second Vatican Council in 1968 that the Latin American Episcopal conference (CELAM) was held in Medellin, Colombia. The purpose of this conference was to take necessary measures to implement the decisions taken by the Second Vatican Council, especially the one regarding the emphasis given to the works on evangelization.¹²⁸ It also gave importance to the works of laity in the field of evangelization. One even can say that the conference in Medellin was the turning point in the Church of Latin America in all perspectives.¹²⁹ This conference insisted

¹²⁷ Kroeger, "To Live Is to Evangelize," 193.

¹²⁸ Daniel H. Levine, "The Impact and Lasting Influence of Medellin and Puebla," in *Born of the Poor: The Latin American Church since Medellin*, ed. Edward L. Cleary (Notre Dame, London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), 65.

¹²⁹ Levine, "The Impact and Lasting Influence of Medellin and Puebla," 66.

on the development of the poor.¹³⁰ Many Churches from other developing countries, especially India, have adopted many guiding principles from the examples of the Church in Latin America, especially in the field of evangelization. The reflections of the Medellin conference also taught a lesson to the Indian Church as to how to face the situation of poverty in India. Therefore, the study of these documents has become unavoidable for our research. The above mentioned documents acknowledged that when one allows God to work in him/her, such a person begins to forget oneself and discover others and work for their liberation. Such people are to follow the examples given in the Gospel, where there are struggles faced by Jesus to defend the oppressed in Palestine.¹³¹

The bishops of the Medellin conference have strongly urged the members of the Church to be united to work for the deliverance of the people under exploitation. They emphasised that it is the mission of the Church in the midst of the poor. The Church as well as its members can never remain just observers in those situations of the society.¹³² The Medellin conference urged that “we wish the Latin American Church to be the evangelizer of the poor and one with them, a witness to the value of the riches of the Kingdom.... This [evangelization] has to be concretised in criticism of injustice and oppression” (MD 14:8, 10). It is noteworthy that evangelization and the work for justice go hand in hand. One even may supplement one by the other.

Medellin’s evangelization work does not aim at the individual’s betterment, on the contrary it is aimed at persons in their social and community relationship. It gives emphasis to the needs of the community, especially strengthening the existing basic Christian communities, in view of forming other new communities with Gospel values (MD 6:9, 13). These communities become witnessing members of the Church as they work among the poor (MD 7:13). They are called to be the centre of evangelization. The conference of Medellin states the Church’s importance as existing in “the Christian base community as the first and fundamental ecclesiastical nucleus, which on its own level must make itself responsible for the enrichment and expansion of the faith.... This community becomes the focus of evangelization and ...serves as the most important source of human advancement and development” (MD 15:10). These base Christian communities become the source of evangelization and

¹³⁰ Frances O’Gorman, “Medellin and Puebla: Turmoil and Hope at the Grassroots,” in *Born of the Poor*, ed. Edward L. Cleary (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), 104, 105.

¹³¹ O’Gorman, “Medellin and Puebla: Turmoil and Hope at the Grassroots,” 105.

¹³² O’Gorman, “Medellin and Puebla: Turmoil and Hope at the Grassroots,” 106.

movement for justice and liberation. Thus, Medellin initiated a 'new evangelization' which becomes the Church of the poor and the voice of the voiceless.

It is noteworthy that the cry of Pedro Pio da Silva, who was a landless farmer, made to the members of the conference reminding them about the need to get involved in the development of the poor did not fall into deaf ears. He was also a pastoral agent from the district of *Jaguare* pleading for the assistance against injustice done to the poor.¹³³ He urged the members of the conference:

Our people have a terrible life without land of their own. They live on the plantations of landowners who allow them only one or two days of work a week. The people go hungry. Our community work is difficult, because many people still cling to the oppressor and think he can give them life. They must realise that they have to break out of their bondage. But when the people begin to become aware of their oppression, the landowners tighten the fetters. They forbid the peasants to go to meetings. And when the workers grow more fully conscious of their rights -when they begin to have a strong consciousness and make a break with their condition, the landowners throw them out, and our responsibility increases. If the people were already wasting away from hunger when they were on the farm, their plight worsens when they leave. We must take their case to court and plead for their rights. The landowners' gunmen terrorise us. Still the ousted peasants never again find a piece of land. This is the situation of the poor.

Surely God cares. But many people tell us that this has nothing to do with the Church, that the church is where we go to pray. I wonder if Jesus Christ wanted things to be this way. The Church should become more concerned with the poor, because our situation is growing worse. The Church is powerful: if the Church supports us, we have more courage, we are not alone. Didn't the Church come from Jesus Christ? Our greatest example is Jesus Christ himself who gave his life for the weak. It's very strange that only a tiny part of the Church works towards the liberation of the marginalised poor, isn't it?¹³⁴

He emphasised the need of laity to get empowered to work against the unjust forms of the society. We find that situation similar to the one of Latin America still exist among the poor in central India. As the Christians are small minority, there is a great need to strengthen the laity and to deepen their faith in working for the poor.

Jesus has given importance to everyone equally. He did not distinguish between the poor and the rich in carrying out his mission. He was rather more concerned about the poor in the society. As Jon Sobrino argues:

¹³³ O'Gorman, "Medellin and Puebla: Turmoil and Hope at the Grassroots," 105.

¹³⁴ O'Gorman, "Medellin and Puebla: Turmoil and Hope at the Grassroots," 105.

The Church began to be not only the people of God but also the people of God's poor. It encouraged base-level communities, because they are at the roots of the people. It not only lent its voice to the poor but sought out their voice and let it sound out within the Churches. It decentralised and gave up its worldly character by establishing solidarity with the poor.... It succeeded in establishing an unfamiliar degree of unity between bishops, priests, religious men and women, and the laity. It set up new ministries, not just to fill a gap, but to find new and rich resources in pastoral agents, peasants, labourers, and indigenous people. It bravely faced up to persecution and martyrdom, seeing all of them as privileged signs of its truth.¹³⁵

Thus, the Church with her personnel should strive for the cause of the poor. That was the mission which Jesus came to establish on earth. The laity can never close their eyes before injustice done to the fellow individuals in the society.

We can find similar teaching as that of Medellin in the Puebla documents too.¹³⁶ The conference of Puebla 1979 has also acknowledged the need of lay participation in the Church. It acknowledges that the Church has the responsibility to evangelize the world. Thus, the Puebla documents insist that "the Church feels that it has the duty and right to be present in this area of reality. Christianity is supposed to evangelize the whole human life" (PD 515). The Church must act for the community to establish justice and peace and it must fight against all forms of domination, slavery, discrimination, and violence (PD 552). Puebla warned laity against the manipulation of the Church by politics and ideologies (PD 558-59). It exhorted all laity to assume their task in the mission of Justice (PD 562). The members of the Puebla conference insist on the presence of laity in the field of evangelization. They wish that the laity function as prophets and share the works of Christ in the Church (PD 786).¹³⁷ They live in the world and enjoy the membership in the Church, thus, they are loyal to Christ; they are responsible to establish the Kingdom of God on earth, its temporal dimension (PD 787).¹³⁸

In this connection the comment made by Jon Sobrino about the Puebla document is also significant. He said:

¹³⁵ Jon Sobrino, "The Significance of Puebla for the Catholic Church in Latin America," in *Puebla and Beyond: Documentation and Commentary*, ed. John Eagleson (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1980), 290.

¹³⁶ John Eagleson, ed., *Puebla and Beyond* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Book, 1980), 195.

¹³⁷ Eagleson, ed., *Puebla and Beyond*, 228.

¹³⁸ Eagleson, ed., *Puebla and Beyond*, 228.

The basic silence was due to the fact that these topics were broached in overly general and simplistic terms. As such, the remarks might be accepted or rejected, but they did not provide any authentic pastoral help. It is reality itself, not personal interests, that prevents us from drawing a clear-cut dividing line between the political and the ecclesial dimensions, between the activity of the laity and the clergy.¹³⁹

He said the Puebla documents do lack some concrete guidelines that could have encouraged immense changes in the political sectors of the society. It may be true that the document of Puebla failed to give some concrete guiding principles for the Church with regard to the field of evangelization. However, Penny Lernoux, a noted historian, in her article entitled "The Long Path to Puebla" sheds some light on these different viewpoints in her account of the Puebla document from its original to the final text.¹⁴⁰ In her arguments, she, highlights the comment made by one of the communities: "we have discovered the limits of this system.... We have experienced a new power which liberates us from the fear of dying."¹⁴¹ Furthermore, it is interesting to note that Puebla documents characterise two preferential options: for the poor and for the young (PD 1132). Puebla acknowledges not only the wretchedness of poverty that exists among the people, but also the lack of commitment on the part of some Church personnel in relating themselves with the work of the poor (PD 1135-40).

Evangelization of the poor, therefore, must be a priority for every member of the Church since it was for Jesus (PD 1141). When the laity become engaged in the works of the poor in solidarity and in service, we do what Christ taught us to do: liberate the poor from injustice and foster their integral advancement (PD 1145). When the Church evangelizes the poor, the Church becomes evangelized by its presence with the poor: "Commitment to the poor and oppressed and the rise of grassroots communities have helped the Church to discover the evangelizing potential of the poor. For the poor challenge the Church constantly, summoning it to conversion; and many of the poor incarnate in their lives the evangelical values of solidarity, service, simplicity, and openness to accepting the gift of God" (PD 1147). Puebla renewed its commitment to the poor by denouncing the system that suppresses them and encourages the poor to be artisans of their own destiny (PD 1159-65). We

¹³⁹ Sobrino, "The Significance of Puebla for the Catholic Church in Latin America," 299.

¹⁴⁰ Penny Lernoux, "The Long Path to Puebla," in *Puebla and Beyond*, ed. John Eagleson (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1980), 23, 24.

¹⁴¹ Lernoux, "The Long Path to Puebla," 24.

shall discuss now the contributions made by Pope John Paul II in the field of laity in the Church.

4 CONTRIBUTION OF POPE JOHN PAUL II REGARDING THE MISSION OF THE LAITY

After being elected as Pope and taking the name Pope John Paul II on 16th October 1978, Karol Jozef Wojtyla took up the challenge of focusing on evangelization as his main mission.¹⁴² It seems to me that Pope John Paul II contributed a great deal in promoting the laity's role in the field of the evangelizing mission of the Church. He insisted very much that this age must be the age of laity in the Church. He brought out in the Church a new strategy to be followed especially in the mission of evangelization. Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger observed that his approach to the administration of the universal Church as Pope was more pastoral and fatherly than of an administrator.¹⁴³ Pope John Paul II said that the Second Vatican Council has set the direction for his papacy. Thus, he agrees with the definition of the laity's role in the field of evangelization proposed by Pope Paul VI.¹⁴⁴ He has written various encyclical letters in view of promoting the role of the laity in evangelization. We shall discuss in brief some of them.

4.1 SOLLICITUDO REI SOCIALIS

Pope John Paul II published the encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* on 30th December 1987 in which he emphasised much the social concern of the Church directed towards an authentic development of human person and the society which would respect and promote all the dimensions of the human person. He said that evangelization is a process by which men/women develop an authentic human development and liberation (*SRS* 47). Pope gave emphasis to the initiatives that need to be taken by the laity in this human development towards liberation.

For Pope John Paul II the social doctrine of the Church is an essential instrument that guides the Church in its evangelization for justice, with preferential option for the poor. He said that the members of the Church, especially the laity, must remember that two actions are vital for evangelization: the condemnation of the society's evils and work against the injustices done to the poor. The works of laity in the field of evangelization in the society can also be considered the Church's prophetic role. But it should be made clear that proclamation is always more important than

¹⁴² Kroeger, "To Live Is to Evangelize," 194.

¹⁴³ Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, "John Paul II: Twenty Years in History," in *The Legacy of John Paul II, Images and Memories*, ed. Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 9-34.

¹⁴⁴ Kroeger, "To Live Is to Evangelize," 194.

condemnation, and the latter cannot ignore the former, which gives it true solidity and the force of higher motivation (*SRS* 41). Through this document Pope John Paul II insisted that the laity work for a just society. He also insisted on the freedom of the individual and self-respect, which Jesus insisted on in his own ministry.

4.2 *CHRISTIFIDELES LAICI*

Christifideles Laici is an apostolic exhortation of Pope John Paul II published on 30th December 1988. In this letter he has given a new dimension for the lay participation in the Church's ministry as well as in the field of evangelization. The purpose of this document was to highlight the "vocation and the mission of the lay faithful in the Church and the world."¹⁴⁵ Some even argued that it represented the state of Papal thinking on the question of the laity. Furthermore, the guidelines of the Post-Synodal apostolic exhortation, *Christifideles Laici*, has become today the main reference with regard to the vocation of lay people, their communion and participation in the life and mission of the Church. This document has had wide applications. Its value lies in having dealt together with three important objectives. In the first place, it provides an organic summary of the teachings of the Second Vatican Council on the laity in the light of the subsequent magisterium and practice of the Church. In the second place, in its approach to new movements and questions arising after, and as a result of the Council, it proceeds to a delicate and necessary discernment as regards experiences, trends and forms of lay participation that characterised the first post-council period. Thirdly, it gives new indications intended "to stir and promote a deeper awareness among all the faithful of the gift and responsibility they share... in the communion and mission of the Church" (*CL* 2, 26).

Pope John Paul II said the Church has a secular role to play in the world. All the members, including clergy and religious, "are sharers in this secular dimension but in different ways." Furthermore, for the laity this secular world is where they are called by God to fulfil His mission (*CL* 15). Thus, it is in the world where the laity fulfil their Christian vocation.¹⁴⁶ He said the laity are connected to the world by birth and by baptism they share in the priesthood of Christ. But he made the distinction: "just as the hierarchical priesthood is a priesthood different in kind and not just in degree from the priesthood of the laity, so the secularity of laypeople is a secularity different in kind from that of clergy and religious."¹⁴⁷ The laity can be actively involved in

¹⁴⁵ Lakeland, *The Liberation of the Laity*, 125.

¹⁴⁶ Lakeland, *The Liberation of the Laity*, 126.

¹⁴⁷ Lakeland, *The Liberation of the Laity*, 126.

both “*Ad Intra*” and “*Ad Extra*” functions of the Church. It would mean that the missions of the laity are those directly involved in the Church as well as those, directed to the world.

The answer to the clerical question: “What are we to do with the laity?” has always focused on their “being” rather than on their attributions; they are a new creation - new men and women - incorporated into Christ through the grace of baptism, called to grow in holiness. The necessity of the consistent and effective presence of lay Christians in sectors of vital importance for the society implies priority for the adequate formation and pastoral accompaniment for lay people who have posts of responsibility in the “secular city.” This function of the laity clearly pre-supposes the deep knowledge of the Church's social teaching. The pontifical Council for the laity therefore takes a particular interest in the programmes and initiatives directed towards the study, dissemination and concrete implementation of this teaching in political life, in work and industry, in trade unions, in the university, etc.

Pope John Paul II visualises some dangers that can threaten the stability of the Church with regard to evangelization. He particularly warns against the danger of the clericalization of the laity and the laicalization of the clergy in the Church. To safeguard the Church from these dangers, the Pope insisted on specifying the missions that are directly related to the laity. The laity are entrusted with some priestly activities that are not directly connected to ordination, but he insisted that they “must never be given titles like pastor, chaplain, coordinator, or moderator, which can confuse their role and that of the pastor” (*CL* 1.i). The Pope said about the preaching of the Word by the laity, that in very restrictive circumstances the non-ordained may be allowed to preach, but “never at the Eucharistic liturgy” (*CL* 2.iv). This prohibition is very strictly applicable to “priests or deacons who have lost the clerical state or have abandoned the sacred ministry” (*CL* 2.v). The council of priests may not have lay members (*CL* 5.i). The diocesan and parochial pastoral council or finance council are only consultative and may not become deliberative (*CL* 5.ii). Lay people may not preside or appear to preside at the liturgy and may not wear any kind of sacred vestment (*CL* 6.ii). Sunday celebrations in the absence of a priest may never involve the use of Eucharistic prayers (*CL* 7.ii). The extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion are to be reserved for cases of real necessity. Their habitual use is to be discouraged, and they may not receive Communion “apart from the other faithful as though concelebrants” (*CL* 8.ii). No one but a priest may administer the anointing of the sick (*CL* 9). No one but a priest or deacon, except in quite extraordinary circumstances, may be deputed to assist at a marriage (*CL* 10). There were many

objections that came from various corners of the world regarding these instructions given by Pope John Paul II. Lakeland claims that even Cardinal Ratzinger, who was representing the Christians from Europe, expressed his reaction against these directives of Pope John Paul II. However, all supported the need to avoid clericalization of the laity and the laicalization of the clergy.¹⁴⁸

In view of the importance of the parish where the lay people come together to share the Word and Eucharist for their growth in holiness and communion, the Pope is attentive to the initiatives, at this level, directed towards the deepening of Christian formation, towards renewed apostolic effort and fostering of a community life. Among these initiatives there are, for instance, small communities or ecclesial base communities, where many lay people give expression to their Christian commitment; also the traditional forms of popular piety (pilgrimages, etc.) which, among other things, express their attachment to the faith.¹⁴⁹ Other important moments which focus the attention of the Council are Catholic synods and national meetings. The aims of the “*Consilium de Laicis*” (the council of the laity) are to promote more and more lay participation in the Church activities. It also aims at the work for the service and promotion of the lay apostolate.

In particular it shall:

1. Promote the lay apostolate at the international level and provide for its coordination and increasing integration in the general apostolate of the Church. It is to maintain a close contact with the apostolate at the national level; act as a forum of meeting and dialogue in the Church between the hierarchy and the laity, and between the different forms of lay activity, in the spirit of the last pages of the encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam*. It is also to promote international Congresses for the lay apostolate; foster the faithful observance of the ecclesiastical laws concerning the laity.
2. Following the line of the teachings of *Apostolicam Actuositatem* the Pope insists that, with its advice the said document should assist the hierarchy and the laity in their apostolic work (*Apostolicam Actuositatem*, n. 26).
3. Promote studies for the further doctrinal clarification of questions concerning the laity, in particular, as regards to problems of the apostolate with special reference to the sharing of the laity in overall pastoral activity. Its studies on these matters may be published.

¹⁴⁸ Lakeland, *The Liberation of the Laity*, 129.

¹⁴⁹ Klostermann, “Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity,” 318.

4. In addition to receiving and giving information on problems of the lay apostolate, it should deal with establishing a documentation centre, providing material for guidance in the formation of the laity and rendering an important service to the Church. Richard R. Gaillardetz also claims that to be baptised means to be ordained for Jesus to fulfil his mission.¹⁵⁰ The term *Christifideles Laici* refers to all the baptised in the world. It is also referred to as the priesthood of all the believers. It states that before they were ordained they all were baptised and obtained a common fellowship with Christ.¹⁵¹

4.3 REDEMPTORIS MISSIO

The encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* was published on 7th December 1990 by Pope John Paul II. In this encyclical he emphasised the mission of the Church mainly in three fields: a) mission to non-Christians, b) pastoral care to Christians who are not strong in their faith life, and c) a new evangelization or a re-evangelization to baptised Christians who are weak in their faith commitments (*RM* 33). This point was much emphasised by the Second Vatican Council too.¹⁵² Through his encyclicals, Pope John Paul II, reminded everyone, especially the laity, their responsibility to preach the Word wherever they are. This document speaks repeatedly about the mission, evangelization and salvation in a holistic manner.¹⁵³ It states: "Jesus came to bring integral salvation, one which embraces the whole person" (*RM* 11). The "evangelical witness...is directed towards integral human development" (*RM* 42). Further, "action on behalf of integral development and liberation...is most urgently needed" (*RM* 58). Preaching the Kingdom of God and promoting its values has become the evangelizing mission of the Church (*RM* 20). The Kingdom of God cannot be visualised separately from Christ or from the Church.¹⁵⁴

In conclusion one may even say that the documents have redefined the Church in the light of the signs of the times and retrieved the Church's mission of evangelization from the margins back to the centre of its life.¹⁵⁵ By the emergence of the documents from the Second Vatican Council and later various other Church Council documents, a new relationship between the Church and the world was established. They all

¹⁵⁰ Gaillardetz, "The Ecclesiological Foundations of Ministry within an Ordered Communion," 35.

¹⁵¹ Gaillardetz, "The Ecclesiological Foundations of Ministry within an Ordered Communion," 27.

¹⁵² Klostermann, "Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity," 326.

¹⁵³ Kroeger, "To Live Is to Evangelize," 195.

¹⁵⁴ Kroeger, "To Live Is to Evangelize," 196.

¹⁵⁵ Tanner, "The Church in the World," 271.

emphasised the vital role of the laity in fulfilling the mission of the Church. The Church is no more in alliance with the powerful, but is now a participant in solidarity with the poor and the oppressed. A new vision to evangelize the world would mean to struggle for justice, which comprises cultural promotion and the development of all human beings.

5 CONTRIBUTION OF CBCI IN THE FIELD OF LAY PARTICIPATION IN EVANGELIZATION

India has been considered a mission area by the Churches of the West since the beginning of Christianity. We have seen in our previous chapter how the missionaries travelled to India from Brussels/Lisbon and other western Christian dominated centres to preach the Gospel. The Christian merchants from the west travelled along the coastal routes to arrive at India. The missionaries too usually followed the sea routes accompanying the merchants to reach India. In the early expeditions the missionaries were concentrating on the spiritual life of the Christians from the west, who have settled themselves in the European colonies in India. In the colonial beginnings the missionaries continued their work in India under the direct guidance of *Propaganda Fide* in Rome.

In 1858 the Church authorities in Rome decided to have an apostolic visitation of the missions under the *Propaganda Fide* in India, Burma, and Ceylon. After the visit this commission raised three issues that are to be taken care of immediately with regards to having an effective missionary work in these areas. They were: a) To constitute a permanent apostolic delegation in the East Indies; b) To constitute in Ceylon and India a hierarchy subject to the *Propaganda Fide*; and c) To hold a provincial Council.¹⁵⁶ Thus, in 1884 an apostolic delegation was established for these mission territories. On 1st September 1886, by his apostolic letter *Humanae Salutis Auctor*,¹⁵⁷ Pope Leo XIII established an episcopal hierarchy in India. He raised at the same time the six existing apostolic vicariates to the status of archdioceses and ten others to the status of dioceses. They continued their mission activities in these territories.

The year 1944 was an important year for the Christians of India. In September 1944 the members of the Catholic hierarchy met in Madras and decided to establish a permanent association of the Catholic hierarchy in India under the name "Catholic Bishop's Conference of India." Archbishop Leo P. Kierkels (1931-1952), the

¹⁵⁶ CBCI Evaluation Committee, *CBCI Evaluation Report: The Catholic Bishop's Conference of India: Retrospect and Prospects* (New Delhi: CBCI Centre, 1995), 35.

¹⁵⁷ Leo XIII, "*Humanae Salutis*," *Acta Leonis XIII*, no. 6 (1886): 164-179.

apostolic delegate, was the President of CBCI, which was a landmark in the history of the Church in India.¹⁵⁸

There were periodic meetings of the members of the CBCI in India. In their various sittings of the conference they reflected on the growth of the Church in India. The main concern of the conference was “the Church’s response to the challenges of contemporary society with special reference to the role of the laity.” This issue was further reflected on and it was the main theme of the general meeting of the CBCI convened at St. Charles Seminary in Nagpur from 31st January to 8th February 1984. In this meeting the conference discussed the various challenges that hinder in bringing out social justice and human liberation, giving special emphasis to the specific role of the laity. The bishops of India also found the need to help people to free themselves from their situation of poverty, inequality, and oppression.¹⁵⁹

Taking into account the socio-economic situations of India in the second half of the 20th century, in the independent India, immediately after the quitting of the colonial rule, the bishops of CBCI discussed and concluded: “if the Church is to cope with the challenges of poverty, the violation of human rights and communalism, it will be necessary to accept policies which will enable the entire people of God, through dialogue, participation and co-responsibility to commit themselves to the liberation of the poor from every situation of oppression and exploitation.”¹⁶⁰ The bishops found poverty and violation of the human rights the main challenges to the Indian Church. They found responsible coexistence and open dialogue the forms that can be followed as the methods of evangelization. Furthermore, they found an urgent need to generate more committed and dedicated lay leaders from the Indian Church.

The members of the conference appreciated the laity who dedicated their life to the parishes. The following statement of the CBCI makes it very explicit:

We appreciate and encourage our lay people who, imbued with the spirit of Vatican II, through life and activity have brought new vitality to the apostolate in collaboration with the pastor. But there are those who are not yet aware of their obligation to share in the mission of the Church. Some are reluctant while a section feels frustrated because it perceives no opportunities for dialogue, participation and co-responsibility. There is also the fallacy among some lay people that their involvement in the temporal

¹⁵⁸ Committee, *CBCI Evaluation Report: The Catholic Bishop's Conference of India: Retrospect and Prospects*, 36, 37.

¹⁵⁹ Statement of the CBCI, “*CBCI, Report of the General Meeting*,” CBCI, Nagpur, February (1984): 75.

¹⁶⁰ Statement of the CBCI, “*CBCI, Report of the General Meeting*,” 80.

sphere is unrelated to Christian witness and proclamation. Unless lay people truly participate in the life and work of the Church, the Church will continue to be identified with the hierarchy and the vast resources of the people of God remain untapped.¹⁶¹

However, the need to make the laity conscious of their responsibility for fulfilling the mission of Christ was also felt by the hierarchy of the Church. First and foremost, the clergy found it important to open up and accept the extending hands of the laity in the pastoral and the evangelical field. Furthermore, the members of the CBCI also sensed the need to give formation to the laity. This formation was oriented towards the spiritual growth of the laity in the beginning. The statement produced by the CBCI is significant:

High pastoral priority has to be given to the formation of lay men and women so as to reorient them from an individualistic spirituality to a faith-life infused with a dynamic concern for the Church and society, especially the poor and the oppressed. Lay men and women should be provided opportunities for a spiritual and theological formation with special emphasis on the social doctrine of the Church and conditions should be created at the parish and diocesan levels to enable them to grow in their faith commitment through their specific role in the family and the wider social, economic and political arena.¹⁶²

The training of the laity became very necessary for them to live with a convincing faith in the society with multi-religious and cultural context. The need for organising special faith formation lectures for the laity were found necessary to sustain their faith. It is noteworthy that this was the time when many of the western missionaries were expelled by the Indian government from their active mission areas in India. The method of the above mentioned missionaries in the field of evangelization was to give economic help to the families, especially the poor. Faith flourished and sustained as long as they received the monetary help. As soon as the western missionaries were asked to leave the country, especially in central India, many of the so-called practicing Catholics began to turn back to their former aboriginal religious practices. Therefore, creating a Christian community based on the conviction of faith was felt necessary to keep the tempo of the Indian Church.

It is worth noting here that during the general meeting of the CBCI in 1986, bishop Patrick D'Souza of Varanasi, then chairman of the Commission for Ecumenism and Dialogue, emphasised the need for formation for the laity. He argued:

¹⁶¹ Statement of the CBCI, "*CBCI, Report of the General Meeting*," 81.

¹⁶² Statement of the CBCI, "*CBCI, Report of the General Meeting*," 81, 82.

The goal of the formation of the laity should be the deepening of their Christian faith as well as developing the natural and evangelical potentialities which God and the Spirit have endowed them with, for the growth of Christian community and the society at large. It is regrettable [*sic*] to note that rarely is the high secular learning of the laity matched by corresponding knowledge in matters of faith, with the result that the laity are unable to act effectively as Christians in the world. Further, this lack of deep understanding of their faith and its consequences makes the laity unduly dependent on the clergy. It is not enough to be well-versed in the doctrines of faith as mere notional knowledge; it is important today that they acquire the habit of constantly reflecting on the actual events and experiences of life in the light of faith. Such reflection will help link faith and life more intimately.¹⁶³

He insisted that this formation programme should be conducted on the diocesan as well as on the parish level. Furthermore, this programme has to be made available not only to the elite of the society, but also to all the laity.¹⁶⁴ Regarding the formation of the laity, the National Consultation on Mission of 1994 stated: "The role in the Church cannot be realised without better formation and leadership training. A certain percentage of the parish and diocesan funds need to be set aside for such programmes. The Church resources for formation should be reasonably distributed for the formation of laity and not solely for the formation of seminaries and religious."¹⁶⁵ The need for promotion of the lay training was found equal to the need of the training the candidates for the priesthood.

The members of the CBCI conference did make special mention of the role of the women and youth in the mission of the Church. With regard to the women, the conference stated that women are to be freed from all forms of exploitation in the family and society. The CBCI conference gave emphasis to the need for having representation for women in Church organisations. The Church too felt the need to promote the dignity and status of the women in the society.¹⁶⁶

The general meeting of the CBCI of 1986 prepared 'the final communication to the synod of bishops 1987,' where the role of the laity was very clearly spelled out. This document states:

¹⁶³ Patrick D'Souza, "Vocation and Mission of the Laity in the Church and in India Today," in *CBCI, Report of the General Meeting of the CBCI*, ed. CBCI Centre (New Delhi: CBCI Centre, 1986), 57, 58.

¹⁶⁴ D'Souza, "Vocation and Mission of the Laity in the Church and in India Today," 60.

¹⁶⁵ CBCI Commission for Proclamation and Communication, *Paths of Mission in India Today: Statement of the National Consultation on Mission, 4-9 January, 1994* (Pune: Ishvani Kendra, 1994), 17.

¹⁶⁶ Statement of the CBCI, "CBCI, Report of the General Meeting," 82.

The role of the laity in India today has to be understood against the background of the problems and challenges of the present situation and in terms of the response called for. For the Word of God generates the Church in every place and among peoples and cultures only when it is interpreted and appropriated through the response of the believers to the concrete questions and problems. The role of the laity is an indispensable inner movement within the process of the birth of the Church as truly incarnate, inculturated and local. In other words, the mission of the Church sets also the context of the very understanding of what the laity are in India. These concrete challenges and the nature of the response they call for, will mark the distinctive characteristic of the Indian laity.¹⁶⁷

Through this communication the bishops of the CBCI conveyed to the Indian Church the concept of the specific role of the laity in the situations challenging the Church in India.

The CBCI also affirmed the teaching of the Second Vatican Council with regard to the role of the laity in the field of evangelization. The National Consultation on Mission of 1994 gave greater emphasis to the role of the laity based on the teachings of the Second Vatican Council documents, *Ad Gentes* and *Lumen Gentium* (AG 35; LG 12, 31). This establishment of the Indian Church leadership organisation under the name CBCI has brought about significant changes in the face of the Indian Church. The Church in India felt the need of a local Church in every aspect based on the principles laid down by the Second Vatican Council.

6 CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED IN THE FIELD OF EVANGELIZATION

After reflecting on the various documents of the Church, it is important to discuss some of the challenges encountered in the field of evangelization by the laity. In this connection what Edward Schillebeeckx accounted for regarding the definition of the laity given by the Second Vatican Council documents makes some special significance. He explained that:

‘Lay people’ are those believers who have, by baptism, been incorporated into the people of God, but who live in the world and are guided only by the general norms of Christian life. The synod has in mind especially those believers who are not called from the people of God either to the hierarchy of holy orders or to the religious state sanctioned by the Church, but who have to strive towards Christian holiness in honour of God in a special way also through activity in the world. They are involved in activities within the world but, led by the spirit of the Gospel, they courageously oppose the

¹⁶⁷ The Final Communication to the Synod of Bishops, *CBCI, Report of the General Meeting of the CBCI* (New Delhi: CBCI Centre, 1986), 69.

evils of this world and indeed, by virtue of their Christian vocation, they sanctify the world, as it were, from within.¹⁶⁸

This renewed understanding of the laity enables every Christian to be a responsible member of the Church in the field of evangelization. What Edward Schillebeeckx has in mind is the mature laity; the maturity with regard to faith and the courage to overcome the evil inclinations of the society. Karl Rahner, giving importance to daily activities of the laity, concludes that “the layman who in one way or another carries out a full-time apostolate specifically within the Church and in this way turns his back upon his ordinary lay activity ceases to be a layman.”¹⁶⁹ Rahner has visualised a greater responsibility for the laity. Laity remains ordinary people in the society by fulfilling their daily activities in it for the good of everyone.

The Christian laity have to be members of the Church. Being members of the Church they enjoy a number of advantages, but there are certain disadvantages in the secular society too. St. Robert Bellarmine, a Church reformist of the middle ages, perceived the Church as the perfect society which is fully visible in the world.¹⁷⁰ He emphasised the criteria for its membership, i.e. “the profession of faith, the reception of the sacraments, and submission to legitimate pastors.”¹⁷¹ All these characteristics are followed very closely by the members of the Church. Hence, the Church is a well-organised institution in the society and in the world. The powers and functions of the Church are understood as teaching, sanctifying, and governing. Whereas Avery Dulles argues that “the division of powers leads to further distinctions between the Church teaching and the Church taught, the Church sanctifying and the Church sanctified, the Church governing and the Church governed. In each, the Church as an institution is on the giving end...identifying the Church itself with the governing body or hierarchy.”¹⁷² Consequently, the laity were considered passive members of the Church. They had no specific role to play for the existence of the Church as an institution according to the definition of St. Bellarmine.

Cardinal Leon Joseph Suenens affirmed the co-responsibility of the laity. He said: “history will render glory to the Council for having beautifully defined the nature of

¹⁶⁸ Edward Schillebeeckx, *The Mission of the Church* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1973), 91.

¹⁶⁹ Schillebeeckx, *The Mission of the Church*, 110.

¹⁷⁰ Zeni Fox, “Laity, Ministry, and Secular Character,” in *Ordering the Baptismal Priesthood*, ed. Susan K. Wood (Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2003), 123.

¹⁷¹ Fox, “Laity, Ministry, and Secular Character,” 123.

¹⁷² Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1974), 34.

the Church, the people of God, and for having boldly sketched the place and role of the laity in the Church. History will no doubt also accuse us of not having sufficiently put into practice that which is so well defined -- the co-responsibility of the laity.”¹⁷³ Thus, he urged everyone to be actively involved in the field of evangelization.

It is noteworthy in later times that the realisation of the baptismal priesthood by the laity revived the importance of the laity in the Church. This revival was initiated by the Churches in the United States of America and France. These initiatives have been extended to the other parts of the world today.¹⁷⁴ The reasons behind these changes in the attitude of the laity were “their heightened sense of themselves as subjects...the increased level of education and wealth in society which empowered laity in new ways.”¹⁷⁵ Thus, there was a need to give importance to the place of the laity in the Church. The potential accessibility of the laity in fulfilling the mission of evangelization is better realised today. The Second Vatican Council and the later follow-up Councils have emphasised the importance of the laity in various apostolates of the Church.

It is worth a mention that the teaching of the document *Evangelii Nuntiandi* has influenced the Indian society strongly. It was found in the context of India that the individuals have often become victims of unjust structures of the society. Therefore, it was found necessary to strive to renew these structures with the new values of the Gospel to make a just society.¹⁷⁶ This move was made by the bishops of the Indian Church in accordance with the teachings of *Evangelii Nuntiandi*. The same document encouraged committed laymen/women to come forward into this field of social action where they can influence the change of the structures.¹⁷⁷ The bishops found that Christian justice does not get exhausted by giving just wages to the people, but it also calls to protect and secure the rights for the oppressed, denouncing an unjust society.¹⁷⁸

The hierarchy of the Church in India today regards the laity as having significant role to play in the life and mission of the Church. The clergy and the religious in central India are not able to exercise many of the evangelizing activities. There are many reasons: first and foremost the number of the clergy is small. They are not very

¹⁷³ Leon Joseph Suenens, *Coresponsibility in the Church* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), 187.

¹⁷⁴ Fox, "Laity, Ministry, and Secular Character," 124.

¹⁷⁵ Fox, "Laity, Ministry, and Secular Character," 124.

¹⁷⁶ Abeyasingha, "What Has the Ecclesiology of Communion of Vatican II Meant for India," 292.

¹⁷⁷ Abeyasingha, "What Has the Ecclesiology of Communion of Vatican II Meant for India," 292.

¹⁷⁸ Abeyasingha, "What Has the Ecclesiology of Communion of Vatican II Meant for India," 292.

familiar with the local customs and languages of the people as many priests and religious are non-local. They have no easy access to the people of the locality. Priests often are not welcomed by non-Christian communities. In some places their life is even threatened on account of mission work. Priests and religious are not able to move around freely as the early missionaries went about because they are watched with suspicion by the Hindu fundamentalist groups. The local fundamentalists believe that the ulterior motive behind every Christian missionary activity is to convert the people to Christianity. Therefore, even if they do some good to the society, very few come forward to acknowledge them. To be a missionary in central India is a challenge, whereas Christian laity can be an active member of the society to extend the Gospel values to others by living them in actual life.

The local people perceive a missionary as an agent of some foreign colonisers as this is what they were accustomed to in the early centuries. They believe that the British colonised India through the Christian missionaries. On top of all this, in the state assembly on 30th September 1955, the Government of Madhya Pradesh introduced a bill against the activities of the missionaries.¹⁷⁹ This bill is known as “anti-conversion bill” and has now become a law in this state. Similar bills are also passed in some other central and north Indian states. Such prohibitive laws encourage the fundamentalist groups to oppose every activity of Christian missionaries in central India.¹⁸⁰ These legislations brought out a substantial influence on the activities of the missionaries.¹⁸¹ Therefore, involving the laity in the missionary works in central India is the need of the time. All these are some of the challenges faced by the laity in India in the field of evangelization.

Thus, we may conclude that a member of ‘Christian laity’ would mean primarily “one who belongs to the Church as a member of the people of God. Secondly, he is a non-ordained and non-religious clerical member of the people of God. Thirdly, he is, in a Christian manner, involved in activities in the world.”¹⁸² The laity are looked down in many ways in the Church. Today, Christian preoccupation is not primarily with the right religion that leads to God, but the right channels through which God reaches humans. Therefore, Christians are called to be the right channels, furthermore, to recognise and accept other channels through which God can save humankind.

¹⁷⁹ Mudakodil, “The CBCI and Evangelization in India”, 75.

¹⁸⁰ Sebastian C. H. Kim, *In Search of Identity: Debates on Religious Conversion in India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), 38.

¹⁸¹ Kim, *In Search of Identity: Debates on Religious Conversion in India*, 68.

¹⁸² Schillebeeckx, *The Mission of the Church*, 92.

CONCLUSION

We have surveyed how various Council documents encouraged the laity to be an effective members of the Church sharing her mission of evangelization. Pope Paul VI as well as John Paul II visualised the Church with the laity becoming very active in the field of evangelization. Laity are called to remain the leaven in the society.¹⁸³ The Council documents explained the mission and vision of the Church, which is to reach out to every human being and to every corner of the world. This reaching out to the world is only possible if the laity are aware of their responsibilities as followers of Christ.

We also have seen how the Church in India tries to promote the Christian values by following the teachings and insights of the Second Vatican Council documents. The Church in India visualises promoting awareness among the laity by empowering them by providing various training programmes. The training that the laity receives is going to equip them to be committed, faith-filled, missionary oriented Christians. However, they have to fight against the injustice done to the poor and the exploited of the Indian society.

¹⁸³ Klostermann, Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, 310.

CHAPTER THREE

CHRISTOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE OF LIBERATIVE EVANGELIZATION AND ITS CHALLENGES IN THE CENTRAL INDIAN CHURCH

INTRODUCTION

We have analysed in our previous chapters a short summary of the Christianity in central India and the mission of laity in the Church. In this third chapter, we will concentrate on the question how evangelization can become the cause of liberation. We will have to explore in this chapter who is a real evangelizer. Furthermore, if liberation is the fruit of evangelization, what are the main characteristics of that liberation? This third chapter will discuss the theological interpretation of the theme of evangelization as liberation. In this chapter we will explore the main thrust of the dissertation. Furthermore, this chapter is divided into four sections. Each section has its own subsections for detailed discussion. The first section deals with the understanding of liberative evangelization, where we will discuss the meaning of evangelization and liberation. The second deals with the New Testament testimony of evangelization. The third section exposes the theme of Jesus' Mission as an act of empowerment of the poor, and in the final section we will discuss the theme of evangelization as the primary responsibility of the Church.

1 THE UNDERSTANDING OF LIBERATIVE EVANGELIZATION

Evangelization is liberative. It is the turning point in everyone's life. It is when a person accepts Jesus Christ as his/her leader and follows his statute attains salvation. When an individual is fully evangelized with the teachings of Christ, he/she becomes fully liberative. His life and works becomes the works of Christ. As St. Paul said he/she will share the full divinity of Christ (Col 2:10-19; 1Cor 12:4-26). The whole personality of an individual will become part of the same Body of Christ. Whatever the responsibilities that he/she fulfils in the society will be the works of Christ. He/she will be fully liberated from the bondages of society. He/she becomes fully dedicated to the service of the Lord. He/she will be even able to sacrifice the life for Christ alone. A total dedication and surrender to the will of God, the absolute reality. In the Indian context one can say that he/she has reached the *nirvana*, the absolute Bliss.¹ That is the fruit of evangelization, a totally liberation from the world and its passions. To understand better how an evangelized person becomes fully liberative

¹ Wikipedia, *Nirvana* [<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nirvana>] (Wikipedia, accessed 01.11.2007); Paul Chittinappilly too speak about the four noble truths in his thesis. cf. Paul Chittinappilly, *Reimagining Prophetic Alternatives: Towards a Historical Reconstruction of the Ancient Israelite Prophecy and the Early Jesus and Buddhist Movements* (Katholic University Leuven, 2002), 298-314.

we need to understand the meaning of evangelization in the context of Christ and his mission in the world

1.1 MEANING OF LIBERATIVE EVANGELIZATION

The word evangelization can be summarised as the preaching of the Word of God, and sharing one's own experience with others. Further living a life that is worthy of his/her calling. According to L. J. Luzbetak, the word evangelization would mean "all missionary actions having conversion to Christianity as a goal; in a more restricted sense, the second phase of missionary catechesis in which the Christian message is presented to the prospective Christians."² Etymologically, the term "evangelization," is traced to the concept of the "Gospel" from the Greek word εὐαγγέλιον, which is transliterated into *Evangelium* in Latin, reduced to its root 'evangel.' Therefore the word evangelization means the process of making the Gospel known. Max L. Stackhouse in *Encyclopaedia of Religion* explains that the word evangelization as giving information to individuals through which he/she gets benefits.³

The use of the term evangelization in the scriptures is also noteworthy in this context. The bible scholar G. Friedrich argues that the word evangelization is not used as such in the Scriptures, instead the word used is εὐαγγελίζομαι (*euaggelizomai*) to indicate "to proclaim from day to day his salvation, declare his glory among the nations, his wonderful acts among all nations Say among the nations, the Lord is king."⁴ He thinks that the coming of Jesus was to proclaim the Kingdom of God on earth, i.e., to evangelize everyone with the message from the Father.⁵

The Second Vatican Council has given great emphasis to the understanding of evangelization. The term "evangelization" appears thirty one times in the documents of Second Vatican Council. In the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium* (21 November, 1964) it appears twice. In the Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church, *Christus Dominus* (28 October, 1965) it appears once. In the Decree on the Apostolate of Laity, *Apostolicam Actuositatem* (18 November, 1965) it appears four times, and once in the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes* (7 December, 1965). In the decree, *Ad Gentes*

² L. J. Luzbetak, "Evangelization," in *Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Religion*, ed. Paul Kevin Meagher (Washington, DC: Corpus Publications, 1979), 1272.

³ Max L. Stackhouse, "Missionary Activity," in *The Encyclopaedia of Religion*, ed. Mircea Eliade (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987), 568.

⁴ G. Friedrich, "Euangelizomai," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel (Grand Rapids, Michigan: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), 709.

⁵ Friedrich, "Euangelizomai," 718.

Divinitus (7 December 1965), on Church's missionary activity, the term appears twenty-one times and in the Decree on the *Presbyterorum Ordinis* (7 December, 1965), on the Ministry and Life of Priests, it appears two times. In all these places, the term evangelization would mean the missionary preaching of the Gospel.

The term evangelization is understood in the context of the preaching of the Word of God or proclamation of the Gospel. Therefore, Luzbetak argues that evangelization does not engage in apologetic arguments but seeks to relate the person of Christ to the newly converted Christians.⁶ Later the term "evangelization" became very popular in relation to the activities of the missionaries and their gatherings. Though in the beginning the term was used in a broader sense, it later took a particular mission as the work of the Church by her personnel. The term evangelization was used very often to get a special significance in the missionary work of the Church when it was used very prominently by the Latin American bishop's general conference at Medellin, Colombia, in 1968.⁷

Pope John Paul II used the term "mission" to signify the same meaning of evangelization. He sees evangelization as part of the whole process of the mission.⁸ Further it was concluded, as Peter Nemeshegyi correctly explains in the book entitled *Evangelization*: "evangelization is the permanence of Christ's witness to the love of his Father and to the truth of man."⁹

The above mentioned survey shows the importance given to the term "evangelization" by the fathers of the Second Vatican Council as well as by the theologians using the term signifying a comprehensive meaning of all that is implied in the term "Mission." Liberating evangelization is understood in the Judeo-Christian tradition as a passage of people from a situation of captivity to a status of freedom. All the events narrated in the Old Testament related to the exodus of the people of Israel from the oppressive captivity of the Pharoehs of Egypt to a protected place of the desert of the Sinai peninsula led by the prophetic leadership of Moses are the vivid illustrations of a great historic liberation of a people.

⁶ Luzbetak, "Evangelization," 1272.

⁷ A. Dulles, "Evangelization, New," in *New Catholic Encyclopaedia*, ed. Berard L. Marthaler (Washington DC: The Catholic University of America, 2003), 477.

⁸ J. M. Van Engelen, "John Paul II and the Mission of the Church Today," *Pro Mundi Vita* 103, no. 1985/4 (1985): 7.

⁹ Peter Nemeshegyi, "Evangelization and Sacraments," in *Evangelization*, ed. Mariasusai Dhavamony (Rome: Universita Gregoriana Editrice, 1975), 137.

Joseph Constantine Manalel, the founding father of the Indian Theological Association (ITA), holds that the basis of liberative evangelization is our faith in Christ as well as our responsible existence in history.¹⁰ Therefore, according to him, liberative evangelization would mean a holistic aspect of human development. Yvon Ambroise, another member of ITA, expresses his theological view of liberative evangelization by interpreting the miracles worked by Jesus during his active ministry in a holistic liberative perspective. Ambroise tried to relate every miracle performed by Jesus as an act of liberation of a human being from a deteriorated state of life to a better state of life. He argued that “every miracle was an act of liberation of a person from physical disorders, psychological disabilities and moral disorientation.... Hence it is also the sign of hope as well as a transformation of the situation of a person.”¹¹ Furthermore, Ambroise holds that through these miracles, Christ wanted to show that God wants to transform every human person and society into a more ‘humane’ society through the means of empowerment.¹² He argues that the liberative works of Christ were oriented towards the empowerment of the people who were affected by the evil powers of the society. Evangelization finally takes its root for empowerment in the process of liberation.

Reflecting further on the same topic, many theologians too hold similar views. For example, Gustavo Gutierrez mentions that in the Bible, Christ is presented as the one who brings liberation. Christ makes humankind truly free.¹³ Through liberation, Christ wishes to bring a total transformation of the individual. Furthermore, he states that liberation is a gift given to us by Christ. By his death and resurrection, Christ has redeemed mankind. Quoting the words from the conference of Medellin, Gustavo Gutierrez claimed:

‘It is the same God who, in the fullness of time, sends his Son so that, in the flesh, he might come to liberate all men from all forms of slavery to which sin has subjected them: ignorance, hunger, misery, and oppression, in a word, that injustice and hatred which have their origin in human selfishness.’ ... Christian life is a Passover, a passage from sin to grace, from death to life, from injustice to justice, from the subhuman to the human.¹⁴

¹⁰ Joseph Constantine Manalel, "Towards an Indian Theology of Liberation," *Jeevadhara* 16, no. 93 (1986): 197.

¹¹ Yvon Ambroise, *Social Transformation - How Christ Went About It* (New Delhi: Caritas India, 1993), 46.

¹² Ambroise, *Social Transformation - How Christ Went About It*, 46.

¹³ James B. Nickoloff, ed., *Gustavo Gutierrez : Essential Writings* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996).

¹⁴ Nickoloff, ed., *Gustavo Gutierrez : Essential Writings*, 195.

It is Christ who introduces us by the gift of his Spirit into communion with God and with all human beings.¹⁵

It is obvious that liberation in the context of liberating evangelization cannot be underestimated as the liberation of one aspect of an individual's life. Rather it is a holistic transformation effected in an individual in relation to his social set-up. Thus through the processes of liberation every person in a society becomes totally new. He or she undergoes a holistic transformation of the mind and body in context of the society in which individuals survive. We shall discuss further the liberative evangelization as sharing of Christ experience with others.

1.2 LIBERATIVE EVANGELIZATION AS SHARING OF CHRIST-EXPERIENCE

While reflecting on the concept of liberative evangelization, there remains apparently certain vagueness regarding the sharing of Christ experience, especially in the context of the missionary activities of the Church. However, I feel that when we go through the various senses in which the term “evangelization” has been expanded by eminent missiologists like late Fr. D. S. Amalorpavadass, this apparent vagueness may be removed. Let me highlight here some of the significant insights of the concept of “evangelization” offered by Amalorpavadass in his inaugural key-note address delivered at the international theological conference on ‘Evangelization and Dialogue in Asia’ held in Nagpur, India, from 6th to 12th October 1971.

According to Amalorpavadass, evangelization is understood not as a mere theological or catechetical exposition about the proclamation and propagation of the message of Christ, or an apologetic discussion about Christianity, but it is a form of the sharing of the Christian experience, a testimony to the transforming interpersonal relationship brought about between mankind and God, and among humans and Jesus Christ.¹⁶ Amalorpavadass pinpointed that evangelization is to be understood as an invitation to a new relationship among people and with God in Jesus Christ. It necessarily calls for a conversion, a transformation of one's purpose in life as brought about by their encounter with the risen Lord.¹⁷ When an individual encounters the risen Lord, a total transformation takes place in the perception of his/her life.

Evangelization cannot be reduced to a mere title of a Church organisation but it remains as the charismatic activity of the Church. Theologian Marcos McGrath

¹⁵ Nickoloff, ed., *Gustavo Gutierrez : Essential Writings*, 195.

¹⁶ D. S. Amalorpavadass, *Theology of Evangelization in the Indian Context* (Bangalore: National Biblical Catechetical and Liturgical Centre, 1971), 22.

¹⁷ Amalorpavadass, *Theology of Evangelization in the Indian Context*, 23.

affirms that after the Second Vatican Council, the general conference of the Latin American Episcopate in Medellin, confirmed, “evangelization is the very mission of the Church.”¹⁸

In the light of these insights, we may well conclude that evangelization is a sharing of the God-experience among mankind by those who have it intensely in their communion with Jesus Christ. It is at the same time a sharing of the vision and mission of Jesus Christ by those who are deeply devoted to Christ with those who are aspiring towards such Christ-experience of God. Further, Amalorpavadass continues to say that this sharing of Christian experience brings about a “new light and inspiration, new vision and insights,” which a human person left to himself/herself cannot discover without the mediation of a Christian community.¹⁹ Hence, the term evangelization implies not only an individual’s experience of God in and through Jesus Christ and its sharing with other human beings, but it is also a sharing of the Christ-experience of a Christian community with other human communities among which it lives and witnesses to the vision of Christ. In other words, evangelization is a Christian community’s sharing of their Christ-experience with other fellow human beings.

Moreover, when it is a sharing of the God-experience of Jesus Christ with any human community, we shall not forget to recognise the inspirational and transforming powers of the Holy Spirit. Because it is deeply a spiritual power of God that is being transferred to the aspiring human individual or community. Therefore, it is correct to agree with Pope Paul VI, who pointed out that the Holy Spirit is the principal agent of evangelization (*EN 75*).²⁰ He has given a lot of importance to this term evangelization and even had chosen the theme for the Synod of Bishops in Rome in the year 1974 as “the evangelization of the modern world” (*EN 2*).²¹ He argues further that this trust of evangelization needs to be continued in the Church.

Enriching the vision of Pope Paul VI, Pope John Paul II argued that a “new evangelization” is to “start afresh by contemplating the features of Jesus and his central message as set forth in the Sacred Scripture. Evangelization ... proclaims Jesus Christ as its source and goal and fosters a deep personal relationship with

¹⁸ Marcos McGrath, “The Final Documents,” in *Puebla and Beyond: Documentation and Commentary*, ed. John Eagleson and Philip Scharper (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1980), 124.

¹⁹ Amalorpavadass, *Theology of Evangelization in the Indian Context*, 23.

²⁰ Cf. also Dulles, “Evangelization, New,” 478.

²¹ Cf. also Dulles, “Evangelization, New,” 478.

him.”²² He explained that by evangelization one shares the experience of Christ that he/she has received from the Scriptures. It is a personal experience of Christ that is shared to the community.

We were trying to explore the concept and meaning of evangelization. We found that it is the sharing of Christ-experience with the fellow human beings around. We have also understood that this evangelization is not a recent development in the Church but existed from the very beginning of the Church. In what follows we shall discuss the evangelization in the context of the Church.

1.3 LIBERATIVE EVANGELIZATION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE CHURCH

The study of liberative evangelization will not be conclusive if we do not analyse how it is applicable to the Church today. According to theologian James H. Kroeger, the evangelization of the Church includes the Gospel proclamation, catechesis, instruction in scripture and Church teaching, liturgical life and prayer-contemplation.²³ Furthermore, the primary task of the liberative evangelization is to build up a truly local Church.

Encyclicals of various Popes were guiding principles of the evangelization in the Church. The encyclical letter *Evangelii Nuntiandi* published by Pope Paul VI explains clearly that:

if it is well-oriented, above all by a pedagogy of evangelization, it is rich in values; ... one must be sensitive to it, know how to perceive its interior dimensions and undeniable values.... When it is well-oriented, this popular religiosity can be more and more for multitudes of our people a true encounter with God in Jesus Christ (*EN* 48).

Following the same line of thought, Pope John Paul II in his opening address to the third General Assembly of CELAM (*Conferencia Episcopal de Latino Americano*) in Puebla, said very clearly by quoting from the same encyclical *Evangelii Nuntiandi* :

From you, pastors, the faithful of your countries expect and demand first and foremost a careful and zealous transmission of the truth about Jesus Christ. This truth is at the core of evangelization and constitutes its essential content: ‘There is no authentic evangelization so long as one does not announce the name, teaching, the life, the promises, the Kingdom, the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God’ (*EN* 22).

²² John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio* (http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_07121990_redemptoris-missio_en.html, 1990, accessed 13.03.2004) no.33.

²³ James H. Kroeger, *Living Mission: Challenges in Evangelization Today* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1994), 66.

Thus Pope John Paul II emphasised the essential nature of evangelization in the Church as well as the responsibility of the Church personnel towards evangelization.²⁴ Further, the Pope affirms, “any form of silence, disregard, mutilation, or inadequate emphasis on the whole of the mystery of Jesus Christ that diverges from the Church’s faith cannot be the valid mode of evangelization” (Puebla, 28 January 1979).²⁵

The peak of evangelization is achieving salvation in Jesus Christ. Everyone who is drawn to Jesus obtains salvation. Therefore, it is worthy to mention that Pope John Paul II adopted ‘evangelization’ as the major theme of his pontificate. In his encyclical letter *Redemptoris Missio* he declared:

I sense that the moment has come to commit all of the Church’s energies to a new evangelization and to the mission *Ad Gentes*. No believer in Christ, no institution of the Church, can avoid this supreme duty: to proclaim Christ to all people (*RM* 3).

Further in the same encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* he distinguishes three phases of evangelization.²⁶ The first phase is when the Gospel is initially proclaimed to an individual. Secondly, through the pastoral care the faithful are invited to place their lives “under the influence of the Gospel.” Finally, the Church undertakes the re-evangelization of those who have fallen away or allowed their faith to grow cold.²⁷ Thus he wishes that the whole life of a Christian must be taken care of in the Spirit of Christ. When the Spirit of Christ comes He deals with the whole personality of the Individual. The total person is changed or formed into new. Thus the evangelization has a holistic transformation to the individual and the society at large. Similarly, Peter Nemeshegyi affirms that Christian moral judgements regarding the behaviour pattern of the individual are approved by the members of society. This is an important fruit of evangelization.²⁸

Some time liberative evangelization may lead to a practice of piety by the members of the Church. Speaking about the emergence of various pious practices in the Church, Kroeger suggests that it can be used as the tools of evangelization.²⁹ The pious practices that emerge from the Christian community can be considered as means of

²⁴ Engelen, "John Paul II and the Mission of the Church Today," 8.

²⁵ Engelen, "John Paul II and the Mission of the Church Today," 8.

²⁶ John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, no.33.

²⁷ Dulles, "Evangelization, New," 478.

²⁸ Nemeshegyi, "Evangelization and Sacraments," 139.

²⁹ Kroeger, *Living Mission: Challenges in Evangelization Today*, 69.

evangelization. These pious practices draw men/women from different states of society to follow the teachings of Christ more closely. Furthermore, evangelization also extends its field of activities to other spheres of human life like culture, social teaching, mass media of social communication etc. It also concerns other fields like justice, social liberation, development and peace.³⁰

Incidentally, one may observe that there has been an understanding among the faithful before the Second Vatican Council that the work of evangelization as the work of priests and religious alone.³¹ However, based on the documents of Second Vatican Council, Pope Paul VI and later, Pope John Paul II clarified that it is the whole “Church that received the commission to evangelize” (*EN* 15; *RM* 62, 71).³² Therefore, the development in the understanding of evangelization, from conversion to integral development of the human person through various media of conscientization is a very progressive movement in the Church. Hence, the responsibility of evangelization is now properly understood as a shared mission of the entire Church, having the laity sharing respectable as well as responsible roles in the programmes of evangelization.

2 NEW TESTAMENT TESTIMONY OF EVANGELIZATION

2.1 THE JEWISH EXPECTATION OF A LIBERATING MESSIAH

As we discuss the New Testament testimony of evangelization it is worth explain the Jewish expectation of a liberative Messiah. When we scan some of the relevant passages in the Old Testament, we find certain occasions of commissioning people for various missions by God. It began with Moses and continued right through the prophets, when certain men were chosen from the local people by God to be their leaders. They are sent with this commission: “I send you.” Most often this is the core of a prophetic call. Personal characteristics of the mission obtained from God are also essential features of this prophetic mission (Lev 11:44-45). This characteristic also helped to identify a true prophet against the false prophets (Ex 3:10; Ez 2:3f; 3:4f). Further, we could find in the Old Testament the very existence of the people of Israel as a missionary nation in view of the salvation of all the nations.

³⁰ Dulles, "Evangelization, New," 478.

³¹ Dulles, "Evangelization, New," 478.

³² Dulles, "Evangelization, New," 479; cf. W.R. Burrows, "Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples," in *New Catholic Encyclopaedia*, ed. Berard L. Marthaler (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America, 2003), 480.

It is interesting also to note in the same Old Testament texts, especially in the Deutero-Isaiah, the term “evangelization” getting a messianic meaning. The vision of evangelization has become an announcing of the victory of Yahweh and of a new age (Is 51:16; 52:7; 60:6; and 61:1). The people of Israel saw Yahweh as the one God as superior to any other gods. In Isaiah 42:6, we read the God of Israel becoming the light of the nations. As Fr. Mathew Vellanical, a renowned Bible scholar, says all the nations have come from Yahweh and He makes use of “evangelization” as means to conquer the people in the nations.³³ This conclusion will further lead us to establish a decisive basic feature of evangelization in the Old Testament, which finds its fulfilment in the New Testament.

The Jewish expectation of a messianic figure played an important role in the Hebrew Bible. The term “*Messiah*” is used in various senses. It is expedient to know the development of this concept down through the centuries in the Jewish culture and history. The Jewish scholar Mosses Butten Wiesser distinguishes five different applications of the term messiah in the Hebrew Bible.³⁴

1. The earliest use of this word is with yhwh (מֹשִׁיחוֹ יְהוָה) which means God’s anointed. Usually it was used to qualify kings who had a special relation with God and represent God’s rule in Israel (1Sam 2:10, 35; 12:3, 5; 16:6, 9, 11, 16, 23 2 Sam 1:14, 16; 19:23 etc.)
2. The term *Messiah* designate the anointed priests (הַמְשִׁיחַ הַכֹּהֵן - Lev 3:5; 6:5). In the post-exilic period, the high priest who assumed the place formerly occupied by the king was called messiah the ruler (מֹשִׁיחַ נָגִיד - Dan 9:25-26). Onias III is called מֹשִׁיחַ (the anointed one).
3. This term *Messiah* is used to designate Cyrus (כֹּהֵן מֹשִׁיחוֹ לְכֹרֶשׁ - Is 45:1), a gentile king.
4. The Psalmist uses this term *Messiah* for Patriarchs who enjoyed a special blessings from God (אַל־תִּנְעֹוּ בַּמְשִׁיחִי - Ps 105:15).
5. This term *Messiah* is used as a title for Israel (לְיֵשַׁע עַמּוֹךְ לְיֵשַׁע אֶת־מְשִׁיחָךְ - Hab 3:13 - cf. also Ps 24:8; 84:10).

³³ Mathew Vellanical, "Biblical Theology of Evangelization," in *Evangelization, Dialogue and Development*, ed. Mariasusai Dhavamony (Rome: Universita Gregoriana Editrice, 1972), 41.

³⁴ Wiesser Mosses Butten, "Messiah," in *The Jewish Encyclopaedia* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls co., 1904), 505.

The term *Messiah* used to denote the personal figure of *Meshiha* is not found in the prophetic literature except in Is 45:1 and Hab 3:13. In the much-disputed prophecy of Isaiah 7:14, the name of the royal child about to be born is mentioned as Emmanuel. It can be interpreted as God's continuing help for the house of David. Isaiah 9:1-6 illustrates the nature of this redemption. In Isaiah 11:1-9, a situation is illustrated in which David's dynasty has been reduced to a mere stump. Yet a branch will grow out of its roots. The spirit of the Lord will be on this descendent of David.

It is argued that the idea of the personal Messiah is the outcome of the prophetic future hope.³⁵ The prophets were proponents of future deliverance. This future deliverance is characterised as the Messianic age. But the redemption comes only after the days of sufferings; for, the people have to pay for their sinfulness. (Am 9:11-12; 5:16-17; Hos 3:4-5; Is 2:2-4; 11:1-6; 26:1-4; Mic 2:12; Zep 3:19-20). But For Jeremiah the nature of the Messianic age is more ethical than political. He emphasises the transformation of heart in the Messianic age (Jer 31:30). For Ezekiel the future redeemer will be from the dynasty of David (Eze 37:24-2). The second Isaiah had developed a different notion in the Messianic speculation. He portrays the Messiah as the suffering servant whose suffering is vicarious. Through his sufferings, mankind is said to be delivered (42:1-9; 49:1-7; 50:4-11; 52:13-15).³⁶ The book of Daniel which is believed to have been written in the second century BCE refers to one like the son of man who will be given dominion over all earth (Dan 7: 13-14). Here it is notable that the Messiah who comes is not the Son of man,³⁷ but only like him. There are scholars who interpret this text as an evidence for the pre-existence of the Messiah.³⁸

All these prophetic texts foretell of a future redemption, which will be brought about through an anointed agent of God. But an explicit affirmation of a saviour in the person of a Messiah is hardly found in these texts. Besides, we can notice a gradual shift from the messianic notion of political redemption to an ethical renewal. For instance, Isaiah 11:2-4 envisages a utopian world under a Davidic king. Parallel text Mic 4:4 speaks more of earthly happiness, i.e., every man dwelling under his fig tree and vine. In Jeremiah and Ezekiel, the emphasis is on the moral dimension (Jer 31:30; 32:36-44; Eze 2:4; 11:19; 18:31; 32:9; 36:26). In the future vision of Jeremiah, emphasis to "the kings and princes" (plural form) is noteworthy. According to V. H.

³⁵ Butten, "Messiah," 508.

³⁶ It is in fact the Christian interpretation of the text. The prophet does not mention the term Messiah. However, this could be considered as a shift in the messianic concept of the time.

³⁷ In fact this text forms the basis for the Jesuanic title, 'son of man' in the Gospels.

³⁸ Stanton V. H., "Messiah," in *Dictionary of Bible* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1900), 876.

Stanton, three messianic figures could be identified from the Hebrew Bible³⁹: Messiah the Prophet (Dt 18:15 - מְבִיאָה), Messiah the vicarious suffering Servant (42:1-9; 49:1-7; 50:4-11; 52:13-15 - עֶבֶד), Messiah the Son of Man (Dan 7:13 - בֶּן־אָדָם).

The book of Psalms also contains references to divine deliverance. But most often they undoubtedly imply the ruling kings. "I have anointed my king on Zion, my holy hill He said to me that you are my holy son today I have begotten you ..." (Ps 2:4-8). The idea of the enthronement of the king is found in Psalm 110: "The Lord says to my lord sit at my right hand till I make your enemies at our footstool (Ps 110:6)." Continuing this theme of kingly rule Psalm 21 declares that the king is God's beloved whom he has given long life, victory, glory and majesty (Ps 21:2-6). Psalm 132 narrates God's promise to David that the scion of his dynasty will always rule in Israel (Ps 132:13-14). All these make clear that these Psalms intended the ruling kings rather than a future Messianic figure. These Psalms, which continued to be sung long after there were any kings in Jerusalem, will have helped to shape the hope for an ideal Davidic king. So did the prophecies concerning a future king from David's family.⁴⁰

Thus we can come to the conclusion that the Old Testament people expected a Messianic figure whom they believed will deliver them from the socio-political and spiritual slavery. In other words, the Messianic figure according to the Jewish people is the personification of the redeeming will of Yahweh, who liberates the Israelites from bondage and leading them and raising them to a nation.⁴¹

This Old Testament understanding of the Messiah is presented as the paradigm for the hope of liberation for the oppressed. Norbert Lohfink argues that the people of Israel were looking for the Messiah about whom the Prophet Isaiah foretold "who brings good news to the poor, who heals the broken hearted, to announce release to captives and freedom to those in prison (Is 61:1ff)." Jesus on a Sabbath day in the synagogue at Nazareth, after reading the same passage announced that today these words have been fulfilled in your hearing (Lk 4: 13-21).⁴² He announced himself as the Messiah.

³⁹ Stanton V. H., "Messiah," 880.

⁴⁰ Marinus de Jonge, "Messiah," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Double Day, 1992), 781.

⁴¹ Philip Scharper, "Spirituality of Liberation," in *Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, ed. Gordon S. Wakefield (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1983), 247.

⁴² Norbert F. Lohfink, *Option for the Poor* (Berkeley, California: The Berkeley Institute of Bible, Archaeological and Law Press, 1987), 57.

We were trying to picture the different understandings of the Jews and their expectations regarding the Messiah, the coming redeemer. We have seen that there were two main streams in the messianic expectation of the Jews, that is, the Messiah as the political redeemer and the Messiah as the spiritual redeemer. In fact these two notions are reflected in the New Testament presentation of Jesus as the expected Messiah who would fulfil all the expectations of the Messianic times.

2.2 JESUS AS THE FIRST EVANGELIZER

While discussing the theme of the New Testament testimony of evangelization, the topic of prime importance is to analyse Jesus as the first evangelizer. Because the basis of Christianity is in and around the person of Jesus. Furthermore, when discussing about Jesus as the first evangelizer, we see him as the core message in the Gospel. Since, it was the plan of God that the liberation of the people has to be accomplished among the people of Israel. Thus, Jesus wins the credit as the first evangelizer. The mission of Jesus was to proclaim the reign of God to humanity.⁴³ It is Christ who brought first the good news to the poor, gave preference to the poor in his contact, denounced sin as well as oppression. It is he who first introduced and practiced the love towards the poor.⁴⁴ A similar argument can also be found by Mortimer Arias, who affirms that the “Kingdom evangelization is founded on Jesus who is the centre of the Gospel and the first evangelizer.”⁴⁵ Here we see the whole responsibility of the evangelization is entrusted to Jesus. The human being co-operates with Jesus to accomplish this plan of God.

The evangelization is also something a human being begins and is further accomplished by God.⁴⁶ Bob Bedard gives some special significance to the participation of the human being in the evangelization process. However, he does not deny the initiation that is taken by Jesus. Therefore, he concludes by saying that Jesus has first preached evangelization through announcing the reign of God on earth. Further, this evangelizing process has to be continued by the Church on earth.⁴⁷ Similarly, Jesus first preached the reign of God and further acted out through liberating deeds, being solidarity with the oppressed, sick and downtrodden of the

⁴³ Priscilla Pope-Levison, *Evangelization from a Liberation Perspective* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1991), 81.

⁴⁴ Pope-Levison, *Evangelization from a Liberation Perspective*, 81.

⁴⁵ Pope-Levison, *Evangelization from a Liberation Perspective*, 111.

⁴⁶ Bob Bedard, *Evangelization: A Challenge for the Catholic Church* (Santa Barbara: Queenship Publishing, 1994), 5.

⁴⁷ Bedard, *Evangelization: A Challenge for the Catholic Church*, 3.

society.⁴⁸ Jesus, by announcing the reign of God, denounced sin and its personal and structural forms. Jesus, through his action, made the reign of God a reality. Further he wished to be accomplished through his disciples.

It is interesting to observe that Jesus in his lifetime did not allow his disciples to preach about himself “beyond the borders of their own land.” But after his resurrection, proclamation and evangelization have become an eschatological event (Mk 13:10). Today, evangelization and the proclaiming of the Word has become the prime mission of the Church.⁴⁹

The ministry of Jesus is announced in Mark 1:14-15 where we read an invitation for everyone, “the time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the Gospel.” Jesus calls everyone for repentance and acceptance of himself by all to be saved. This was the first invitation received by the people. This was not a frightening one as that of any world conquerors but an invitation of love and service. This acceptance of Jesus’ invitation made them to realise the love of the Father. Joachim Jeremias argues this ministry was fully accomplished in Jesus. He adds further that the hour of fulfilment has come, that is the urgent note that sounds through all Gospels. Some of the signs of this messianic coming of the liberative evangelization are the following:

The strong man is disarmed, the forces of evil are in retreat, the physician has come to the sick, the lepers are cleansed, the heavy burden of guilt is removed, the lost sheep has been brought home, the door of the Father’s House stands open, the poor and the beggars are summoned to the banquet, a master whose grace is undeserved pays his wages in full, a great joy fills all hearts. God’s acceptable year has come.⁵⁰

All these testify about Jesus as the first evangelizer, and all need to follow his example to evangelize the world. Thus the evangelization of the reign (kingdom) of God will lead people to achieve some sort of a liberated state of life.

2.3 JESUS EVANGELIZES TO LIBERATE THE PERSON

According to Philip Scharper, the message of the New Testament is that Jesus Christ came to this world as an evangelizer to liberate, he preaches love (1Jn 4:20) and proclaims freedom (Jn 8:32).⁵¹ Jesus stood firm to bring the good news to the poor, to proclaim freedom to captives and to set the downtrodden free (Is 61:1). St. Paul

⁴⁸ Pope-Levison, *Evangelization from a Liberation Perspective*, 23.

⁴⁹ Friedrich, “Euangelizomai,” 729.

⁵⁰ Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus* (Bloomsbury Street, London: SCM Press, 1963), 230.

⁵¹ Scharper, “Spirituality of Liberation,” 247.

mentions correctly that when Christ frees us, he meant us to remain free (Gal 5:1). Thus the Church, which is instituted by Christ, becomes a sign of freedom to everyone in the world. Corroborating this conclusion, Ambroise argues that Jesus had a vision for his work. His vision was to establish the Kingdom on earth. For Jesus “the Kingdom of God” would mean a society based on justice, love, truth, peace, brotherhood and cooperation rooted in communion with God.⁵² Going one step further, Robert Faricy affirms that Christianity has been a religion of freedom even before the origin of the liberation movement mainly in India as well as in South America.⁵³ Furthermore, he believes that the life of the Christian community brings credibility to the society. This credibility of the Christian community itself is an evangelization to the world.⁵⁴ Thus Christ becomes a liberator to the individuals especially for those who are oppressed in society. He becomes the Messiah not only for the poor of the Jewish people in Palestine but for all suffering people of all times and of all places.

2.4 CHRIST AS A POLITICAL REDEEMER

There is an uncertainty prevail still among the theologians that whether Jesus has something to do with the politics as a political redeemer. Oscar Cullmann an eminent biblical scholar has “proved” that some of the close disciples of Jesus were Zealots or had some connection with the Zealots. He stresses that “one of the Twelve - Simon the Zealot - certainly belonged to the Zealots.”⁵⁵ While reflecting on the theme, ‘Christ as political redeemer’ Gutierrez states that Jesus and his disciples were in one way or other related to Zealots. They had even some close association with Zealots.⁵⁶ However, Andrew Kirk argues that in the Gospel there are three occasions when Jesus rejects for himself any direct political powers. First, regarding his relationship with the Zealot’s movements (Mk 8:15), then, with regard to his attitude to the religious and political leaders (Mt 23:13-28; Mk 12: 38-40; Lk 11:39-42, 44, 52; 20: 47), and finally at the time of his judgement before Pontius Pilate (Lk 23:3).⁵⁷

⁵² Ambroise, *Social Transformation - How Christ Went About It*, 5.

⁵³ Robert Faricy, "Evangelization and Spiritual Life," in *Evangelization*, ed. Mariasusai Dhavamony (Roma: Universita Gregoriana Editrice, 1975), 155.

⁵⁴ Faricy, "Evangelization and Spiritual Life," 157.

⁵⁵ Cullmann Oscar, *The State in the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1957), 17, cf. Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1977), 225-232, Nickoloff, ed., *Gustavo Gutierrez : Essential Writings*, 207.

⁵⁶ Nickoloff, ed., *Gustavo Gutierrez: Essential Writings*, 207.

⁵⁷ J. Andrew Kirk, *Liberation Theology* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1979), 127.

Jesus was also well aware of the power structures and power groups in his society. In Palestine there were so many, who were poor, who longed for some assistance from the rich and the high-class people of the society. The poverty and exploitations are purely man's creation and not planned by God. Philip Scharper explains that poverty and oppression are not 'God's will' but are of evil. It has to be removed by the joint actions of Yahweh and His people.⁵⁸ Whereas Gutierrez argues "Jesus was opposed to all politico-religious messianism which does not respect either the depth of the religious realm or the autonomy of political action."⁵⁹

Ambroise argues, however, that Christ worked in society as an insider knowing every feeling and struggle of every individual of society. According to him, Jesus right from his childhood was identified with the social groups that existed in society. Thus, the crowd pointed him out as "is he not the carpenter's son...?" (Mk 6:3). Jesus spoke to them as one who had authority over everything and one who had experienced everything (Mt 7:29). Since Jesus spoke always with authority, people recognised him as their leader.⁶⁰ He always looked for a long-term agenda in his strategies, and thus he encouraged the people to look ahead by introducing a new vision and a new value system for the people. Christ saw that there was no one to bring justice to the people.⁶¹ As Ambroise further explains, Jesus knew very closely the oppressed situations of everyone who lived in Palestine. The familiarity of faces of the people did help Jesus to move around among them very freely. Jesus found that the intervention of God in history was to liberate the oppressed from their bondage of slavery. Similarly, Andrew Kirk claims that Jesus and his influence over the people challenged the officials at that time.⁶²

Though Jesus and his disciples were not disregarding the political systems of the day, he evaluated them not very positively because of their negative attitude towards the poor people of society. Thus, Jesus was not interested in a political life and "his mission was purely religious."⁶³ From the Acts of the Apostles, we read how the Christian community continues to play the prophetic role of Christ (Ac 2: 17-18). Andrew Kirk argues that the Spirit of the prophetic mission of Christ began with a small minority of Jews and later turns into a powerful leaven to the transformation of

⁵⁸ Scharper, "Spirituality of Liberation," 247.

⁵⁹ Nickoloff, ed., *Gustavo Gutierrez : Essential Writings*, 208.

⁶⁰ Kirk, *Liberation Theology*, 128.

⁶¹ Kirk, *Liberation Theology*, 129.

⁶² Kirk, *Liberation Theology*, 129.

⁶³ Nickoloff, ed., *Gustavo Gutierrez : Essential Writings*, 206.

society.⁶⁴ This community was animated and guided by the powers of the Spirit which enabled them to challenge the existing value systems. The identity of the community was based on sharing and helping everyone who are in need.⁶⁵ The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith affirms that Jesus proclaimed the good news of the Kingdom of God and called people for conversion. The Instruction of the said Congregation further states that, Jesus quoting from the book of prophet Isaiah, manifested his messianic action in favour of those who searched for God's salvation "The poor have the good news preached to them" (Mt 11:5).⁶⁶

2.5 CHRIST AS A SPIRITUAL REDEEMER

We have seen that the mission of Jesus was not motivated by a political redemption of the people. At the same time, we can never conclude it was only spiritual too. His only mission was to share the love of his Father to the people especially among whom who were deprived of that. However, one may conclude his mission tends towards a spiritual transformation of the people first. Therefore, we can take for granted that he was primarily a spiritual redeemer. Many received fulfilment and satisfaction by just following him and listening to his preaching of the renewed ways of living with deep prayerful trust in the power of God, the Father, while never subjecting to the influences and temptations of the evil one (Mt 6: 9-13). Here one may rightly observe that the prayer that Jesus taught to his disciples consisted these hopeful values of right living. Since he was very much sympathetic to the needs of the common men, his masterly prayer expressed all such needs of ordinary human beings who have greater trust in the power of God rather than in the power of the mighty ones. Thus Jon Sobrino argues that it is not so much of Jesus' power as healer but his compassion to the poor and the weak attracted the people.⁶⁷ The act of every healing was the fruit of spiritual redemption that was obtained by the people. Therefore, one can confidently agree with Marcos McGrath who argues that it is testified by the disciples that Jesus is the first evangelizer and faithful witness (Ap 1:5); He evangelizes by bearing true witness to what he has seen in the Father's presence. He does what he sees the Father doing (Jn 5:19).⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Kirk, *Liberation Theology*, 126.

⁶⁵ Manalel, "Towards an Indian Theology of Liberation," 189-190.

⁶⁶ Congregation For the Doctrine of Faith, "Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation," *Origins* 15, no. 44 (1986): 720, no. 50.

⁶⁷ Eileen M Fagan, *An Interpretation of Evangelization: Jon Sobrino's Christology and Ecclesiology in Dialogue* (San Francisco: Catholic Scholars Press, 1998), 118.

⁶⁸ McGrath, "The Final Documents," 245-246.

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith instructs that in the New Testament, the 'poor of Yahweh' make up the first fruits of a 'people humble and lowly' who live in the hope of the liberation of the Israel.⁶⁹ The life and presence of Jesus was the hope of the people of Israel. This presence of Jesus among the people provided a spiritual liberation to the people who followed him. Therefore, Gutierrez argues "the liberation which Jesus offers is universal and integral; it transcends national boundaries, attacks the foundations of injustice and exploitation, and eliminates politico-religious confusions, without thereby being limited to a purely 'spiritual' plane."⁷⁰

Giving more light to the same argument, Cullmann argues that Jesus was "not interested" in the actions of this world, but he expected an imminent end of history. He was concerned only with the conversion of the individual and was not interested in a reform of the social structure.⁷¹ Going one step further, Gutierrez conforms the spiritual liberation which calls for a conversion, a conversion to the neighbour, the oppressed person, the exploited social class etc.⁷² This conversion is a process and cannot remain in a stable position. Therefore Gutierrez deems, "conversion is a permanent process in which very often the obstacles we meet make us lose all we had gained and start anew,⁷³ and the fruitfulness of our conversion depends on our openness to doing this, our spiritual childhood."⁷⁴ He argues that the spirituality of liberation must bring a sense of gratuitousness to the individual and to the society at large.⁷⁵

Jesus was well aware of the actual situation of the people and its implications in their lives. On the other hand, people observed credibility in all what Jesus spoke and performed. According to Ambroise, it was because Jesus knew very well the scripture, and lived according to its demands, which helped him to quote on several occasions against the religious leaders of the society who did not live to its expectations (Mk 12:38-40).⁷⁶ Jesus affirmed himself as a liberator. Jesus invited

⁶⁹ Joseph Ratzinger, "Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation," 720, no.48.

⁷⁰ Nickoloff, ed., *Gustavo Gutierrez : Essential Writings*, 208.

⁷¹ Nickoloff, ed., *Gustavo Gutierrez : Essential Writings*, 209.

⁷² Nickoloff, ed., *Gustavo Gutierrez : Essential Writings*, 288.

⁷³ Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 15th Anniversary Edition ed. (New York: Orbis Books, 1988), 118.

⁷⁴ Nickoloff, ed., *Gustavo Gutierrez : Essential Writings*, 288; cf. Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 118.

⁷⁵ Nickoloff, ed., *Gustavo Gutierrez : Essential Writings*, 289.

⁷⁶ Ambroise, *Social Transformation - How Christ Went About It*, 26-27.

everyone to share in that freedom that he received from the Father. Therefore Robert Faricy affirms that Christ wished to give everyone the internal freedom. This freedom is connected to social, economic and political freedom. However this freedom frees men from sin which is often found in the structures of human society as well as in the hearts of men.⁷⁷

To some extent as a human person, Jesus too was influenced by the attractions of society as an individual. Thus Jesus too felt the need of transformation from within, and therefore he accepted the baptism of John the Baptist (Mat 3:13-17; Mk 1:9-11; Lk 3:21-22). Furthermore, as Ambroise in his book, *Social Transformation*, argues the fasting of forty days helped Jesus to realise God's plan by overcoming his own ego and self-centeredness, he could work for the good of others. It also helped him to face the consequences of his involvement in the society. Christ became an ordinary person with ordinary people to fulfil the extraordinary works of his Father. Jesus had interaction not only with the poor but also with the rich, the powerful, religious and political powers, non-Jews and women etc. Christ expected a spiritual renewal for everyone who came to him.

2.6 THE MISSION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AND ANOINTING OF JESUS AS THE SPIRITUAL LIBERATOR

Our survey of the New Testament witnessing Jesus as a Spiritual Redeemer proves that he was having the anointing of the "Spirit of God" as prophesied by Isaiah (Is 61:1) which he claimed for himself as fulfilled (Lk 4: 21). He experienced in himself the power of the Holy Spirit, moving and guiding him to speak and do what the Spirit of God actually wanted. The power of the Holy Spirit, which was manifested in and through Jesus, becomes the true agent of evangelization. To some extent one can conclude that the Holy Spirit is the internal agent, guiding the efforts of the external agents of evangelization.⁷⁸

It is the Spirit alone who can change the hearts of the individual. Therefore, St. Paul announces that no one can profess "Jesus is Lord" unless he is guided by the power of the Holy Spirit (I Cor 12:3). Peter Nemeshegyi affirms that, it is the responsibility of the Holy Spirit to lead everyone to Christ. Thus everyone is led to a spiritual liberator

⁷⁷ Faricy, "Evangelization and Spiritual Life," 156.

⁷⁸ Kroeger, *Living Mission: Challenges in Evangelization Today*, 51.

in the plan of God.⁷⁹ This effort of the Holy Spirit guides the way of an evangelizer to adopt the true process of inculturation and dialogue as part of the evangelization.⁸⁰

Further, Peter Nemeshegyi argues that the Holy Spirit comes to the world from the paschal mystery of Christ. He is sent to us as a continuation of the messianic anointing of Christ.⁸¹ The Holy Spirit draws everyone to the Father (Jn 13:36; 14:12; 16:28 20:17). If one is able to understand the 'identity of this Jesus and this Christ,' one can also understand the wonderful task of evangelizing the world.⁸² The Holy Spirit is not only the breath of the Father but also the breath of Jesus. The wind of the Spirit blows wherever it wishes (Jn 3:8). It is breathed out by Jesus (Jn 20:22), and further always towards Jesus (1 Cor 1:12-16). The Holy Spirit draws everyone to an act of supernatural loving faith.

It is true that the Holy Spirit leads everyone to the Father. This same Spirit unites everyone in Christ. The Church is guided by the power of the Holy Spirit. Peter Nemeshegyi recollects the question asked by St. Paul and places the same before the Church:

how can they call on him, if they have not believed? And how can they believe, if they have not heard the message? And how can they hear, if the message is not preached? And how can the message be preached, if the messengers are not sent out? (Rom 10:14).

This is a challenging question placed before every follower of Christ.⁸³ It calls for the quest for the mission of the Church. It reminds the great responsibility that is expected from every baptised. The Church has to be aware of the great task entrusted to her by Christ to be a true evangelizer in the world. It calls to be an evangelizer in the midst of struggles and persecutions. This challenge invites to reflect on the mission of Jesus as an act of empowering the poor. Thus, evangelization becomes the proclamation as well as the re-enactment of the liberative mission of Jesus.

2.7 EVANGELIZATION THROUGH LIBERATION-PROCESS

The Gospel of St. John puts it very clearly that unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit (Jn 12:24). To get liberated, a person has to shed something of his/her own. John J. Carroll argues that in

⁷⁹ Nemeshegyi, "Evangelization and Sacraments," 117.

⁸⁰ Kroeger, *Living Mission: Challenges in Evangelization Today*, 51.

⁸¹ Nemeshegyi, "Evangelization and Sacraments," 117.

⁸² Nemeshegyi, "Evangelization and Sacraments," 118.

⁸³ Nemeshegyi, "Evangelization and Sacraments," 119.

the processes of liberation, which leads to development, all must die and be born again. The people who are evangelized and the evangelizers have to accept this reality. He continues, "those who are unwilling to enter into this process and accept the risks of change will have little to contribute" towards evangelization.⁸⁴

Furthermore, contributing to the same thought, theologian Clodovis Boff gives more importance to the participation of the laity in evangelization by the means of enlightened involvement. He affirms that whenever the laity take an active part in theological discussions and even undertake theological studies, they evangelize themselves through the liberative aspect of the theological programmes that they have participated.⁸⁵ Giving importance to the Word of God, Robert Faricy adds that evangelization should bring God's Word as an answer to all the questions related to violence, corruptions, misery and poverty etc.⁸⁶ He argues that all over the world people are searching for freedom and liberation.

There are several levels of concern with human dignity, rights, and freedom throughout the world. People seek freedom from the power of multi-national corporations. There is, in the face of so much contemporary violence against persons, an intense interest in the rights and freedom of the individual persons. There are, nearly everywhere, battles being fought for freedom. There are, for example, the movements in western countries for women's liberation and struggle for justice for all. All these mark an important sign of the times: man's search for freedom from all that oppresses him and keeps him down, freedom from ignorance, freedom from institutionalized violence, freedom to be truly human in keeping with man's intrinsic human dignity.⁸⁷

3 JESUS' MISSION: EMPOWERMENT OF THE POOR, A LIBERATING MISSION

We shall discuss in this section the empowering and the liberating mission of Jesus. We have seen in our previous discussion that Jesus was well accepted by the common Jews in Palestine. He was identified by the people as the son of a carpenter (Mk 2-5). In addition to this, the people knew that Jesus was a man with the power to work

⁸⁴ John J. Carroll, "Evangelization and Development," in *Evangelization*, ed. Mariasusai Dhavamony (Rome: Universita Gregoriana Editrice, 1975), 293.

⁸⁵ Clodovis Boff, "Epistemology and Method of the Theology of Liberation," in *Mysterium Liberations: Fundamental Concept of Liberation Theology*, ed. Ignacio Ellacuria and Jon Sobrino (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1990), 69.

⁸⁶ Faricy, "Evangelization and Spiritual Life," 150.

⁸⁷ Faricy, "Evangelization and Spiritual Life," 150.

miracles, to cure the sick, to cast out demons etc.⁸⁸ Daniel J. Harrington correctly puts it that these acts of Christ need to be seen in the light of his cross and suffering. Therefore, the scripture, especially the Gospel of John rightly portrays “Jesus as the authoritative interpreter of the Torah and one who reveals God’s will” by working miracles.⁸⁹

It is interesting to note how Jesus reacted against the injustice done to the people especially to the poor in society where he lived. Speaking about Jesus’ mission and the status of the society, Gutiérrez points out that Christ was deeply convinced of the fact that society or a nation did not fall from heaven nor was it decreed in heaven, but it is a political structure created largely to serve certain economic and social interests of vested groups in society.⁹⁰ In Palestine, Christ did work a number of miracles and most of them were related to the healing of diseases and physical disabilities. Yvon Ambroise emphasises that this attitude of Jesus, healing disease and physical disabilities, helped to manifest God’s power on earth. Thus, these miracles gave an effect of God’s liberating power to the people. Further, he claims that Christ made use of this liberating power of God to build up a basis of support among the people.⁹¹

Jesus presents himself as the eschatological Messiah (Lk 4:16-21; Mt 15:24) for the people. For a common Jew, the Jerusalem Temple and the activities that were around the Temple brought out a substantial development to the place. People looked to the Temple and its activities as basis for their socio political development. Thus one may conclude that Jerusalem Temple was the centre for everything for the people. Gilberto Da Silva Gorgulho argues “[Jesus] comes to deliver and reconstruct the life of a people dominated and deformed by the system of the temple and the law, in a context of the power and interests of the Roman Empire.”⁹² The mission of Jesus was interpreted as the liberation of the poor. Gilberto affirms further that the poor are to be liberated from the clutches of the law to the newness of the Spirit. Quoting from the Gospel of St. Matthew, he said that they are the vessels of Jesus’ liberating wisdom

⁸⁸ Daniel J. Harrington, "Early Christian Spirituality," in *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, ed. Michael Downey (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1993), 305.

⁸⁹ Harrington, "Early Christian Spirituality," 305.

⁹⁰ Gustavo Gutierrez, *The Emergent Gospel: Two Theological Perspectives* (New York: Orbis Books, 1969), 257; cf. P. Berger, *Sacred Canopy* (New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1969), 187-188.

⁹¹ Ambroise, *Social Transformation - How Christ Went About It*, 43, 44.

⁹² Gilberto Da Silva Gorgulho, "Biblical Hermeneutics," in *Mysterium Liberationis*, ed. Ignacio Ellacuria and Jon Sobrino (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1990), 139.

(Mt 11-12).⁹³ We shall see further that the mission of Jesus was explained in the scriptures and Jesus acknowledges them when he proclaimed it in the synagogue.

3.1 JESUS' ACCEPTANCE OF HIS MISSION FROM THE SCRIPTURE

The Gospel of St. Luke announces the mission of Jesus quoting from the text of Isaiah chapter 61: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour" (Lk 4:18-19). Commenting on this passage George Soares-Prabhu says:

for the manifesto which he makes his own (Lk 4:18-19) is formulated in language of astonishing earthiness and actuality. Jesus announces his task of 'evangelizing' (proclaiming the good news of liberation to) the poor, of heralding freedom to captives, sight to the blind, liberty to the oppressed; and so of inaugurating a time of salvation prefigured by the Jubilee Year of Old Testament legislation, when debts were to be remitted, ancestral property returned, and slaves set free (Lev 25:8-17,25-28). His is thus a social manifesto with little that is spiritual about it. Indeed its social thrust is intensified by the deliberate changes the Luken Jesus makes in the Old Testament text.⁹⁴

Thus the manifesto of Jesus, as a prophetic Messiah, was revealed to the people of his time, i.e., to work for the cause of the poor by being with them and empowering them. The empowerment of the people will be the result of evangelization. The effect of evangelization proceeds from the proclamation. At the same time, Jesus envisages liberation as a result of proclamation. For Jesus liberation was not just liberation of the people from hunger and thirst but a total holistic liberation from the unjust attitude of the people.⁹⁵ Further, the proclamation of the year of the Lord is the actualization of what Jesus read from scripture.

3.2 LIBERATION AS AN EXPERIENCE FROM WITHIN

We do not know well the details of Jesus as a Child. The little descriptions we have about his childhood may conclude that Jesus spent thirty years as a proletariat, a member of the working class before his public ministry.⁹⁶ The poor people were

⁹³ Gorgulho, "Biblical Hermeneutics," 145.

⁹⁴ George Soares-Prabhu, "Good News to the Poor. The Social Implications of the Message of Jesus," *Bible Bhashyam* 4, no. 3 (1978): 202, 203; cf. Kurien Kunnumpuram, "The Church at the Service of the People of India," *Jnanadeepa* 1, no. 1 (1998): 154.

⁹⁵ Gustavo Gutierrez, *The Power of the Poor in History* (Maryknoll, New York: SCM Press, 1983), 207.

⁹⁶ Ambroise, *Social Transformation - How Christ Went About It*, 23.

persecuted by the rich and the powerful. During this period, as Yvon Ambroise explains, Christ could experience the sufferings of the poor and the oppressed as he himself lived within their society. This experience from within his own society formed the kernel of his (evangelical) methodology.⁹⁷ Further, Gutiérrez also stresses this dimension and points out that “the starting point of the study of every structural injustice is to listen to the cries and anguish of the victims of the oppression from within.”⁹⁸ A time of intense preparation in which one has the possibility for knowing the sorrows and agonies of the poor from within, is inevitably essential for anyone who opt for social transformation.⁹⁹ Jesus was well aware that it is the structure that prevents people from being the free subjects or agents of their own history. S. Arokyaswamy rightly observes that “for human persons to become the subjects of their own history and destiny is an achievement of freedom and expression of their dignity as sons and daughters of God.”¹⁰⁰ Christ, in contrast to John the Baptist, appeared in the community as a simple and easily socialisable man, whom people could identify as one among them. However, when he began to teach, the people could not accept him. They asked among themselves about the identity of Jesus (Mk 6:3; Mt 13:55). His preaching was not like that of any other Jewish Rabbi; he taught them from the day-to-day examples of the life of the poor. His parables were of simple imagery, about the farmer who sows, the widow who lost the coin, the shepherd who lost the sheep, the woman who prepares the flour for fermentation, the woman denied of justice, the leper who got cured his ailment, the story of the rich man and Lazarus. All these are masterpieces of his parables.

Through the forty days of fasting and the desert experience of temptations, he revealed his determination to opt himself for the poor. This self-determination and the mastery over one's bodily and egoistic pleasures are important characteristics of an evangelizer. Otherwise he will easily withdraw when confronted with oppositions. It was an experience from within which helped Jesus to recognise the liberating power of the poor.

⁹⁷ Ambroise, *Social Transformation - How Christ Went About It*, 44.

⁹⁸ Gutiérrez, *The Emergent Gospel: Two Theological Perspectives*, 243.

⁹⁹ Sebastian Kappen, "Orientation for an Asian Theology," in *Asia's Struggle for Full Humanity: Towards a Relevant Theology*, ed. Virginia Fabella (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1979), 109.

¹⁰⁰ S. Arokiasamy, "Sinful Structures in the Theology of Sin, Conversion and Reconciliation," in *Liberation in Asia: Theological Perspective*, ed. S. Arokiasamy G. Gispert-Sauch (Anand: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1987), 98; cf. S. Arokyaswamy, "Sinful Structures in the Theology of Sin," *Vidyajyoti* 49 (1985): 494.

3.3 RECOGNITION OF THE LIBERATING POWER OF THE POOR

Jesus was well aware of the core message of Judaism, i.e., the Exodus-event, the liberation of the people from the slavery of Egypt. Jesus' very first act according to the Gospel of Luke is the proclamation in the synagogue at Nazareth (Lk 4:13-19), where his deliberate option for the blind, the captives, the down trodden, and the poor is unambiguously emphasised. He not only did proclaim his option for the poor but also carried out his mission through his words and deeds. The synoptic, as well as the Johannine description of miracles, concur at least in one aspect, i.e., Christ interpreted every miracle as effected exclusively by the power of faith of the afflicted.¹⁰¹ He never did claim that miracles are effected by his divine or magical power.¹⁰² In other words, Christ interpreted the inner faith that illumines every human person as the channelization of God's liberating power present in him/her. It is upon this inner faith, which always desires for the better, that Christ found the focal point for God's liberating power to act for social transformation.

This approach reveals another principle for social transformation: the impetus as well as the momentum of every social transformation must be from within the person or society that needs to be transformed. This momentum must be enlightened constantly by the new hope for the better future.

The cornerstone of empowerment rests on the participation of the people in every aspect of society.¹⁰³ The power of the person in empowerment would mean the power of getting things done not through domination or compulsion but of free will.¹⁰⁴ The power of the evangelizer is not just ability but the capacity of the person to get things done.¹⁰⁵

Through the empowerment, the individual accumulates power to arrive at the targets that are longed for. Cornel W. du Toit argues that empowerment does not mean to abolish the social system that exists, rather "exploit the system and survive within it."¹⁰⁶ Therefore, the empowerment of the people calls for their participation,

¹⁰¹ Ambroise, *Social Transformation - How Christ Went About It*, 44.

¹⁰² Kappen, "Orientation for an Asian Theology," 116.

¹⁰³ Jozef G. Denys, "The Religiosity Variable and Personal Empowerment in Pastoral Counseling," *The Journal of Pastoral Care* 51, no. 2 (1997): 173.

¹⁰⁴ C. R. Dickson, "Empowerment: A Theological Perspective," *Skrif En Kerk* 15, no. 2 (1994): 249.

¹⁰⁵ Dickson, "Empowerment: A Theological Perspective," 249.

¹⁰⁶ Du Toit, "Empowerment of the Poor," 299.

volunteerism (voluntarism) and collaboration.¹⁰⁷ The participation of the people would mean the people themselves define their problems according to their own priorities. Further, they are to work as one team united with one idea to achieve their goals. Commending on the same argument, Sharon Welch argues that participation is better understood as solidarity than consensus. Solidarity calls for a deeper form of commitment to society and to the individual.¹⁰⁸ Further, he concludes that, "from common work comes solidarity, and from solidarity, consensus."¹⁰⁹ Secondly, volunteerism would mean inviting a number of volunteers who are likeminded to stand to achieve the cause. This volunteerism can be considered as selfless service. Finally, collaboration would mean, every individual and organisation work together for achieving the common goal. To achieve these common goals all the members work together without any discrimination of the member's status in society and work out strategies that will help to achieve the goal.¹¹⁰ All these three elements participation, volunteerism and collaboration will help to empower the individual in society. The effect of empowerment will also help to fight against the discrimination of the people in society.

It is recognised that poverty and underdevelopment in central India are not due to lack of economic growth but due to the exploitation and oppression resulting from the unjust system existing in central India.¹¹¹ The poor are labelled as *harijans*¹¹² in the Indian society. Years ago in India the poor were honoured to be called as *hurijans*. The term *hurijan* is used today to denote all those who have no identity in society. When the identity of the people is recognised, the use of this label "*hurijan*" will

¹⁰⁷ David Oki Ahearn, "Urban Empowerment as Public Participation: The Atlanta Project and Jurgen Habermas' Theory of Communication Action," *Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics* 20 (2000): 350, 351.

¹⁰⁸ Sharon D. Welch, *A Feminist Ethic of Risk* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 130-136.

¹⁰⁹ Welch, *A Feminist Ethic of Risk*, 130-136; cf. Ahearn, "Urban Empowerment as Public Participation: The Atlanta Project and Jurgen Habermas' Theory of Communication Action," 358.

¹¹⁰ Ahearn, "Urban Empowerment as Public Participation: The Atlanta Project and Jurgen Habermas' Theory of Communication Action," 350, 351.

¹¹¹ M. Areeparampil, *Tribals of Jharkhand: Victims of Development* (Delhi: Indian Social Institute, 1995), 55.

¹¹² Mahatma Gandhi coined the term harijans to denote the poor. The meaning that he gave to this term was "people of God." He wanted to give due respect to every poor irrespective of any caste and class. Hindu fundamentalist began to identify the fourth caste in Hinduism as harijans, whereas the poor are found among every caste. Later, people have politicized the term and began to take advantage of it in various political fields. Therefore the word harijans has obtained very negative meaning. The poor in some areas do not even like to be called as harijans.

disappear from the minds of the people. That is what people like Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi who worked for the liberation of the poor in society longed for.¹¹³

3.4 NEW HOPE OFFERED TO THE POOR

Every individual is the manifestation of the Supreme Being. He dwells in his/her heart. Leonardo Boff observed that every individual is created in the image of God, therefore, "the mystery of the incarnation does not refer only to Jesus of Nazareth but to every individual."¹¹⁴ However, the incarnation of Christ will help every individual to experience the power of God within him/her.

There is an innermost longing for liberation within the heart of the poor. But their main problem is that they may not sustain it for long.¹¹⁵ The unjust social order puts an intense pressure on the powerless poor not to deviate from the social system that sustains the *status quo* of unjust social order.¹¹⁶ Just as any evangelizer who faces a challenging situation, Christ also confronted the question of how to help the people to sustain their dream and desire for change. His whole public life was an attempt to find a solution to this problem.

Christ was accepted by the poor as their leader (Mt 7:28-29) because he had a new vision of life to put forward, namely, the project of the Kingdom of God which aims at harmony and peace for people not only with God but also with one's fellow beings. He could convince his audience that his commitment for the poor is genuine and unselfish.¹¹⁷ So the whole community was with him (Jn 12:19). He brought hope to the poor by reassuring that God was on their side.¹¹⁸ So the establishment of one's identity and the recognition of that identity by the community, play a substantially significant role in every social transformation which brings a new hope to every poor.

It is more successful if the person who empowers lives with the community which is to be empowered. Thus, the leader experiences the struggle that the common people undergo. The deep relationships that are created between the empowering and the

¹¹³ Zelliot, *From Untouchable to Dalit*, 107.

¹¹⁴ Leonardo Boff, *Church Charism & Power* (Tottenham Road London: SCM Press, 1985), 17.

¹¹⁵ Ambroise, *Social Transformation - How Christ Went About It*, 30.

¹¹⁶ K. Mathew Kurian, "Socio-Economic and Political Reality in Asia," in *Asia's Struggle for Full Humanity : Towards a Relevant Theology*, ed. Virginia Fabella (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1979), 60.

¹¹⁷ Enrique Nardoni, "Justice, Work, and Poverty," in *The International Bible Commentary*, ed. Williams R. Farmer (Bangalore: Theological Publications In India, 2004), 332.

¹¹⁸ Ambroise, *Social Transformation - How Christ Went About It*, 52.

empowered becomes faster the process of empowerment.¹¹⁹ To empower the people who struggle for life was understood as, “the empowerment of the powerless as coming from God. The inability of the powerless are dealt with as they turn to God, the source of their empowerment. It is in looking to God, that the powerless find their empowerment.”¹²⁰ They surrender to the will of God that is manifested through their lives.

3.5 CHRIST’S ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE RICH

Christ’s attitude towards the rich is significantly noteworthy. His attitude seems to be one of anger towards the rich and kindness towards the poor. Yvon Ambroise, gives a convincing argument as answer to this:

God made the world for everyone to live as equals, to enjoy the earth’s resources, to live a life with dignity. When Christ saw that this will of God is thwarted by the greed of individuals leading to inequality and injustice, he has no other option but to condemn it. On this he could not make any compromise at all. The rich have the option to give up their riches. The poor however, do not have their option for their poverty though they desire to.¹²¹

In Christ’s view the rich are under the bondage of their possessions. They long for power and positions.¹²² This bondage makes them unable to be sensitive to life and to God.¹²³ Hence, they despise the dignity of their fellow beings. Being aware of this reality Christ did not hate the rich but rather tried to correct and convince them about the depth of their bondage and wanted to incorporate them too into the Kingdom of God.¹²⁴ However, he unambiguously denied the possibility of the rich entering the Kingdom without getting rid of the bondage of sin, i.e., the unwillingness to share their resources with the poor (Mk 10:25; Lk 18:25; Lk 16:19-31) who are oppressed.¹²⁵

¹¹⁹ Otto Maduro, "Church Empowerment, Liberation Theology and the Jewish Experience: A Latin American Catholic Perspective," *Christian Jewish Relations* 21, no. 1 (1988): 28, 29.

¹²⁰ Dickson, "Empowerment: A Theological Perspective," 250.

¹²¹ Ambroise, *Social Transformation - How Christ Went About It*, 76.

¹²² Kristiaan Depoortere, *A Different God* (Louvain: Peeters Press, 1995), 77.

¹²³ Ambroise, *Social Transformation - How Christ Went About It*, 76.

¹²⁴ Kurian, "Socio-Economic and Political Reality in Asia," 67.

¹²⁵ Kuncheria Pathil, *Indian Churches at the Crossroads* (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 1994), 127.

3.6 A RADICAL OPTION FOR THE POOR

It is rightly pointed out by Ambroise that society is structured in such a way that wealth and privilege grow upward.¹²⁶ Though the poor form the base and labour force of society, they are forced to survive with the barest of resources. The poor are deprived of the possibility of enjoying the resources of the world. The vested interest groups create certain ideologies, which mask the true nature of social reality and justify a social order that functions to the benefit of those who hold social power.¹²⁷ This is what we must call 'institutionalised injustice,' which causes death of the poor for the sake of the fewer rich. E. Ellacura explains this situation as both unjust and violent. It is unjust because it fails to respect what is most vital to every individual and most due to each; and violent because, (i) it destroys the life of the poor by denying the basic conditions necessary for the survival, and (ii) the controllers of the structure exercise repressive violence for the systematic and continuous oppression.¹²⁸ For Christ, any liberation process whose ends and means lead to overcoming this institutionalised violence is not only legitimate but also a positive turning point in the history of salvation.

Having perceived the sufferings of the poor from 'within,' Jesus radically opted for the poor. Besides, those who are materially poor, people who suffer from all sorts of physical, mental, social and spiritual oppressions were understood by Jesus as the poor. He was deeply convinced of the fact that human sinfulness has a social character.¹²⁹ The events such as the exoneration of the woman caught in adultery (Jn 7:53-8:11), the high estimation of the widow who offered merely two coins than the rich man who contributed from their abundance (Mk 12:41-44), appraisal of the humility of the tax collector against the arrogance of the publican (Lk 16:19-31), show clearly how Christ dealt with the poor. According to Sobrino:

[Jesus] expressed his belief and attitude in his association with publicans, tax collectors, and other sinners: Jesus eats with publicans (Mk 2: 15-17), he talks to a woman of ill reputed and even allows her to touch him in the Pharisee's house (Lk 7:36-50), he lodges in the publican Zacchaeus' house (Lk 19:1-10), and talks to the woman of Samaria who has had five husbands. However historical, each of these incidents may be, they

¹²⁶ Ambroise, *Social Transformation - How Christ Went About It*, 64.

¹²⁷ Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 137; cf. G. Baum, "Liberation Theology and Marxism," *The Ecumenist* 25 (1987): 22-26.

¹²⁸ I. Ellacura, "Violence and Non-Violence in the Struggle for Peace and Liberation," *Concilium* 195 (1988): 70.

¹²⁹ Gustavo Gutierrez, *We Drink from Our Own Wells: The Spiritual Journey of a People*, trans. Mathew J. O'Connel (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1984), 115.

demonstrate Jesus' approach as welcoming sinners not acting as a harsh judge.¹³⁰

For Jesus, sin is to refuse one's neighbour and therefore the Lord himself and one's relationship with God.¹³¹ To believe in God is more than simply to profess God's existence (Mt 7:21) but to enter into communion with God and one's fellow beings. It is on this basis that Jesus criticised and portrayed the rich man deprived of heaven in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Lk 16:19-31). The characteristics of the Kingdom of God, which marks the focal point of Jesus' method, are derived from Jesus' vision of the social structures. Pope John Paul II stresses this attitude of Jesus and said that it is not how the Church can be a Church for the poor, but how we can become a Church of the poor.¹³²

3.7 JESUS' CALL OF A TEAM OF DISCIPLES AND THEIR TRAINING FOR THE MISSION OF LIBERATION OF THE POOR AND THE OPPRESSED

Having set the ground for social reformation, Jesus selected a core group whom he called the disciples (Lk 6:12-13). Jesus was very particular in constituting this group with the poor and the marginalised.¹³³ Jesus loved the poor whose "only meaning of life is love. Love is challenged by the suffering [of the poor] and suffering challenges love."¹³⁴ We can deduce two reasons from Jesus' approach, (i) he wanted to have the social transformation to be guided and effected by those from within the marginalised group, (ii) it was easy for the poor to respond positively to his call and leave 'everything' that they have, which is an essential prerequisite for being the follower of Christ. They need to have an experience of God.¹³⁵ The members of the selected group were slow to grasp (Mk 4:10), selfish (Mk 10:37-41; Mt 20:20-23), ambitious (Lk 18:28), revengeful (Lk 9:52-55) and arrogant (Mt 20:24-26; Mk 10:43-44). Christ transformed these rough-minded men to be effective champions of his message through patient and constant training. This sort of core-group formation is central in any endeavour of social transformation. Before proceeding further, we must bear in mind the fact that Jesus was not inimical to the rich. They too needed liberation.

¹³⁰ Jon Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth*, trans. Paul Burns and Francis McDonagh (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1993), 95, 96; cf. Fagan, *An Interpretation of Evangelization: Jon Sobrino's Christology and Ecclesiology in Dialogue*, 118.

¹³¹ Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 24.

¹³² Engelen, "John Paul II and the Mission of the Church Today," 12.

¹³³ Ambroise, *Social Transformation - How Christ Went About It*, 56.

¹³⁴ Depoortere, *A Different God*, 71.

¹³⁵ Kappen, "Orientation for an Asian Theology," 109.

4 EVANGELIZATION AS THE PRELIMINARY RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CHURCH IN CENTRAL INDIA

The mission of the Church from its beginning is evangelization. Evangelizing the world was the motive behind every missionary who travelled to a mission land. The Second Vatican Council has placed the evangelization at the centre of the mission of the Church. Council document *Lumen Gentium* explains that the Church has received the mission to proclaim and establish among all peoples of the Kingdom of God (*LG* 5). Further, Pope Paul VI affirmed in his apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, “we wish to confirm once more that the task of evangelization of all peoples constitutes the essential mission of the Church. ... Evangelization is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize” (*EN* 14). For the Church to live is to evangelize.¹³⁶ Mission is not an optional contribution to the Church. Pope John Paul II affirms in *Redemptoris Missio* it is “the greatest and holiest duty of the Church” (*RM* 63). Pope John Paul II along with Paul VI affirms that the Church must experience a profound re-evangelization in order to become a truly evangelizing community (*EN* 13, 24; *RM* 47). The Second Vatican Council, the Synod of Bishops in Rome and the Bishops of Asia have all insisted on evangelization as the highest priority to the mission of the Church.¹³⁷

There was a time when the members of the Church thought that the Church has no proper mission in the secular world and the people in the world. As Pope Pius XI spoke to M. D. Roland Gosselin, “it is necessary never to lose sight of the fact that the objective of the Church is to evangelize, not to civilise. If it civilises, it is for the sake of evangelization.”¹³⁸ The Church needs to give more emphasis to evangelization in all her apostolate. Pope Paul VI explains in the encyclical *Evangelii Nuntiandi*:

Evangelization would not be complete if it did not take account of the unceasing interplay of the Gospel and of man’s concrete life, both personal and social. This is why evangelization involves an explicit message, adapted to the different situations constantly being realised, about the rights and duties of every human being, about family life without which personal growth and development is hardly possible, about life in society, about international life, peace, justice and development a message especially energetic today about liberation (*EN* 29).

¹³⁶ Kroeger, *Living Mission: Challenges in Evangelization Today*, 26.

¹³⁷ Gaudencio Rosales & C. G. Arevalo, ed., *For All the People of Asia*, Federation of Asian Bishop's Conferences Documents from 1970-1991 (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1992), 70.

¹³⁸ Norman P. Tanner, ed., *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, vol.2 (London: Sheed & Ward, 1990), As quoted in the text footnote no.7. page 1109.

Thus the act of evangelization enters every aspect of human lives. The members of the Church are called to be evangelizers irrespective of their place and status. Further, the fathers of the Second Vatican Council in their first session replaced the concept of an authoritarian Church with that of a service-oriented Church, especially towards the poor and the marginalised. The Church has become the people of God. The changes in the priorities made the Church to identify with the poor.¹³⁹ From then on it was understood in every discussion of the Church that “poverty as an essential component of Christian living.”¹⁴⁰

Faced with the poverty of the people of God, the world synod of Catholic Bishops, held in the year 1971 published a document entitled “*Justice in the World*.” The document observed that:

action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or, in other words, of the Church’s mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation.¹⁴¹

Christians are called to the rescue of the oppressed situations of the individual in society. Thus the mission of evangelization has become a challenge to the world. The Church has become from an authoritarian Church to a witnessing Church. Christians are called to give witness of their faith among the non-Christians. Jozsef Lukacs affirms “Christianity was a protest against the restricted self-satisfaction of the ancient world, and can also protest the stultification of the bourgeois world. It does not see the true goal of man as the possession of goods, as riches.”¹⁴² A true evangelization work stands beyond the human capacities of the world. They always search to give witness for Christ.

4.1 THE EVANGELIZING ROLE OF THE ASIAN CHURCHES

The core of evangelization is “salvation in Jesus Christ ... that had its beginning in this life and will come to total completion in eternity” (EN 27). Many of the Plenary Assemblies of the Bishops Conferences of Asian countries too have reflected on the same theme and brought out a number of documents and statements.

¹³⁹ Marie- Dominique Chenu, "Vatican II and the Church of the Poor," in *The Poor and the Church*, ed. Norbert Greinacher and Alois Muller, (New York: The Seabury Press, 1977), 58.

¹⁴⁰ Chenu, "Vatican II and the Church of the Poor," 59.

¹⁴¹ *Justice in the World*, no.6.

¹⁴² Jozsef Lukacs, "The Problem of Poverty and the Poor in Catholic Social Teaching," in *The Poor and the Church*, ed. Norbert Greinacher and Alois Muller (New York: The Seabury Press, 1977), 71.

One of them, the first Plenary Assembly of the Asian bishops held in Taipei, Taiwan on 27th April 1974, said that the effects of evangelization is the “building up of a truly local Church” in Asia.¹⁴³ Asia is considered to be the cradle of many religions. The members of the Assembly believed that the building up of the local Church can be achieved only through the media of dialogue. Through dialogue, one can discover in them “the seeds of Word of God” (*Ad Gentes* 1, 9). The members believed:

this dialogue will allow us to touch the expression and the reality of our peoples’ deepest selves, and enable us to find authentic ways of living and expressing our own Christian faith. It will reveal to us also riches of our own faith which we perhaps would not have perceived. Thus it can become a sharing in friendship of our quest for God and for brotherhood among His sons.¹⁴⁴

The spirit of dialogue will enable us to co-exist in a peaceful manner.

The members of the above mentioned assembly observed that the people all over the world are searching for God. They are searching for a deep spiritual experience from within. As world is dominated with industrialization which has its culmination in materialism, it can only give tension, worries and dissatisfaction in life. Therefore, they are searching for freedom and dignity that which is human. The members are convinced that this can be provided by the people of Asia only from their deep rooted spirituality. For a Christian in Asia, this spirituality would be the fruits of evangelization work. Thus, it is the responsibility of the Church in Asia to provide peace, happiness and brotherhood that which was preached by Christ to the whole humanity, especially to the poor in the world. The Church of Asia always takes pride in her deep rooted spirituality and announces “silver and gold we have none, but what we have we must bring to them: the riches of the Spirit, the message of Jesus Christ.”¹⁴⁵ Seeing the situation of the Church in different parts of the world the Church of Asia has to emerge as an evangelizing Church to the other parts of the world.

4.2 THE STRUGGLES OF THE EVANGELIZING MISSION OF THE CHURCH

In the process of evangelization, the Church as well as its members, undergoes various struggles. These struggles are based on various aspects of the individuals’ life in society. The commission for World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches, which met in Bangkok in 1973 from January 9-12 saw the mission of

¹⁴³ Arevalo, ed., *For All the People of Asia*, 14.

¹⁴⁴ Arevalo, ed., *For All the People of Asia*, 14, 15.

¹⁴⁵ Arevalo, ed., *For All the People of Asia*, 17.

the Churches in terms of a fourfold struggle: “1) economic justice against the exploitation, 2) human dignity against oppression, 3) solidarity against the alienation and, 4) hope against despair in personal life.”¹⁴⁶

1. Economic justice against the exploitation: Today in every sphere of society, exploitation has become a common phenomena. People who are weak are exploited in every way. Sometime one may feel that the strategy that is followed in society is the survival of the fittest. When the society is guided by the principle of the survival of the fittest there is a tendency to eliminate the weak and the poor from society. On the other hand, we always find weak and poor in society. Even Jesus acknowledged their presence in the community “for you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me” (Mt 26:11). Therefore, the Church needs to take all the steps to protect the people from the exploitation. One way that Church can take initiative is that by practicing economic justice to everyone in society.

2. “Human dignity” above all oppressions: We learn from the scriptures (Gen 1:26, 27) that “God said, let us make man in our image, So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” Thus Man is created in the image and likeness of God. The dignity and respect that one gives to the individual is given to God himself, their Creator. In the same manner, when man undergoes oppression, it is not man but God who faces them. Today when we see that the dignity of the person is not respected through our own behaviours what respect are we giving to him who created the human being. Therefore the Church needs to teach her members the dignity and worthness of men and protect them from all oppressions.

3. Solidarity against the alienation: Due to various evil practices and customs, many people are alienated from the community and society. Alienation of the human person is not a norm of the divine law. Men/women are called to live in a community loving one another and sharing with one another irrespective of their status in society. However, we see still, people alienated based on their colour, caste, educational and economic status in society.

The purpose of Jesus’ coming to this world was to deliver the people from these forms of alienation and bring everyone together as one flock under one shepherd.

¹⁴⁶ World Council of Churches, *Bangkok Assembly 1973: Minutes and Report of the Assembly of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, Publications Office, 1973), 89; cf. Peter C. Phan, *In Our Own Tongues* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2003), 20.

Thus we read in the Gospel of John “there shall be one flock, one shepherd” (John 10:16). This is the fulfilment of the prophecy of Jeremiah and Ezekiel. In the book of Jeremiah we read “hear the word of the Lord, O nations, and declare it in the coastlands afar off; say, He who scattered Israel will gather him, and will keep him as a shepherd keeps his flock” (Jer 31:10). Further similar words are found in the book of Ezekiel “as a shepherd seeks out his flock when some of his sheep have been scattered abroad, so will I seek out my sheep; and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness” (Ezek 34:12). Therefore, the responsibility of the Church is to protect the people from all forms of alienation in society.

4. Hope against despair in personal life: Jesus taught the message of love. People lose their hope and become despondent when personal grudges prevail among them. In the Gospel of Matthew, Christians are called to love even one’s own enemies and do good to them. “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Mt 5:44). Giving the people hope when they lose it and consoling them when they are in despair are the responsibilities of the Church today. The main interest of the Church should be to bring every individual to the truth and fullness of Christ.

All these four fold struggles will make us aware of the need to co-operate with everyone for the success of the evangelization. The members, irrespective of status in the Church, need to stand together to face these challenges. All the members should have only one mission that is Christ’s, to reach the Gospel to every corner of the world.

An urgent need in the Church today is that everyone who follows Jesus as their leader must be united in one heart and mind. This unity will bring fruits for the evangelization works and help to eradicate the poverty and corruption from society.¹⁴⁷ Therefore, for better evangelization work in India and especially in the missions of central India all the Christians have to come under one platform.

4.3 HINDRANCES TO EVANGELIZATION

There are various forms of hindrances that can come in the field of evangelization. Certain negative attitudes of Christians as well as of non-Christians can be hindrances to evangelization. The Christians and non-Christians live together in the same society. They are bound by the traditional rules of conduct of society in which they co-exist.

¹⁴⁷ Timothy C. Tennent, *Building Christianity on Indian Foundation* (Delhi: Indian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2000), 87.

In society, generally the poor become the victims of exploitation. They are deprived of their human equality in society. They are being neglected because of the social structures and the reign of sin that exists in the existing social structures.¹⁴⁸

The hindrance to evangelization can be explained in various forms. Therefore, we wish to explain this section under four headings: (i) Discrimination based on the caste system, (ii) Growing fundamentalism of the non-Christian religions, (iii) Existence of different Catholic and protestant denominations and (iv) Growing tendency of authoritarianism and routinism among the Church personnel.

4.3.1 Discrimination Based On the Caste

As the majority of Christians in central India belong to the lower strata of society, the practice of the caste system can be hindrance to evangelization. We have seen earlier that officially the evil practice of caste discrimination is abolished from India.¹⁴⁹ The above mentioned members of the Second Bishop's Institute for Missionary Apostolate too confirm that caste discrimination has been officially condemned both by the Government as well as by the Church authorities. However, the discrimination still prevails in many parts of India.¹⁵⁰

In this discriminatory practice, the high castes do not like the lower castes doing any job other than that prescribed to them by Manu, the law giver.¹⁵¹ The jobs that are prescribed to them are the menial jobs like doing the laundry, hair dressing, and cleaning of kitchen utensils in the family, etc. The people from the high class do not want the children from the lower classes to get educated. They are frightened of the effect education can have on the children from the lower classes.¹⁵² They fear that the low castes will get too enlightened. They believe only high caste Brahmins are supposed to be the enlightened people. One might even say that this could be one of the reasons why the Christian missionaries who are involved in the evangelization work in the rural areas are often persecuted by the fundamentalist groups.

The people do practice a rigid caste system which is also endogamous in nature. The people of the same caste live together. They do not welcome any member from other caste or religion to this particular group. Moreover, the member who embraces

¹⁴⁸ Fagan, *An Interpretation of Evangelization: Jon Sobrino's Christology and Ecclesiology in Dialogue*, 4, 5.

¹⁴⁹ De, *The Constitution of India*, 316.

¹⁵⁰ Kariyil, "India's Outcasts Doubly Alienated, if they are Christians" (accessed 29.01.2006).

¹⁵¹ Tennent, *Building Christianity on Indian Foundation*, 87.

¹⁵² Antony Copley, *Religions in Conflict* (Oxford: University Press, 1997), 177.

another caste or religion are punished severely. The missionaries in their evangelization proceedings emphasised that all those who are converted to Christianity have to forgo such endogamous group. The converts are forced to live separately from their caste. People could never imagine that they are announced as outcast from their community. Moreover, the missionaries emphasised that the persons who were converted had to forgo their earlier customs, habits¹⁵³ and live separately by practicing western habits.¹⁵⁴ This pattern of evangelization procedure was not appreciated by the local people.

4.3.2 Growing Fundamentalism of the Believers of Other Religions

India is called as the cradle of many world religions. We have seen that Hinduism is the dominant religion in India. In recent periods, there was a reformation in the Hindu religion. As a result, it began to show a very fundamentalist attitude towards other religions especially Christianity.¹⁵⁵

The Hindu religious revivalism and the growing fundamentalist attitude can be considered as another hindrance to the evangelization work of the Christians in India, especially in central India. The attitudes of the fundamentalist groups have become one of intolerance to members of other religious groups. Many incidences of violence and atrocities committed against the missionaries in central India were reported recently.¹⁵⁶ On 28th January 2006 there was a violent attack on a praying Christian community in Bhopal, the capital city of Madhya Pradesh.¹⁵⁷ Fr. Anand Muttungal, the PRO, explained in his report¹⁵⁸ how the fundamentalists tried to destroy a praying

¹⁵³ Copley, *Religions in Conflict*.186. "The kudumi or tuft of hair, should be cut off. ...explode all those Indian habits, as they saw them, of 'fostering bugs, of blowing the nose with the fingers, and wiping them on their clothes, of squatting most indecently around the town, of going half-naked...; those of eating not with the fingers but with a spoon and fork, of cleanliness in the person in the house, are to be encouraged.the habit of wearing earring and nose-ring and bangles on the wrist, the ankles and the toes."

¹⁵⁴ Copley, *Religions in Conflict*, 54.

¹⁵⁵ Tennent, *Building Christianity on Indian Foundation*, 150, 151.

¹⁵⁶ Arevalo, ed., *For All the People of Asia*, 181.

¹⁵⁷ Anand Muttungal, *Atrocities against Christians* (Bhopal: Christian Institutions, 2006), 1-2.

¹⁵⁸ Bhopal: The incident took place on 28th January 2006 under the Govindapura Police Station, a prayer meeting organised by Pastor Sam Francis, a pentacostal pastor of the Hallelua Church, was attacked at Bharati Nikethan, H. No 210, Govindapura, Bhopal. Around 9.30 am a group of youths shouting "Jai Shri Ram" entered the prayer hall without telling anything, began to beat them. They used iron rods, hockey sticks and lathis. There were around 27 boys and girls from different parts of Madhya Pradesh to attend the prayer meeting. A Pracharak named Mr. Ivan Parera was dragged from the prayer hall, which was in the first floor to the ground floor; he sustained fracture in one of his legs. A pastor Kishore Sadhwani's condition is said to be critical. Over a dozen participants were injured in the incident. The entire house was ransacked, glasses and furniture of the house were completely destroyed. The quails and a scooter that were used by the pastors were destroyed.

Christian community. The fundamentalists claim that members of the Christianity should not organise any prayer meetings in public. Though the non-believers stand in between as a hindrance for evangelization, the faithful need to recognise their responsibility for evangelization.

4.3.3 Existence of Different Catholic and Protestant Denominations

Jesus taught the message of love. He taught even to love one's own enemies (Mt 5:43-44). He wished that all his disciples remain as one community. It was true that in India there exist three different Rites of Catholics other than various Christian denominations. They are Syro-Malabar Catholics, Syro-Malankara Catholics, and the Latin-Rite Catholics. We do not find a unity and a common understanding among these various Christian groups in the field of evangelization.¹⁵⁹ All these Rites did not enjoy equal rights to preach the Word or to evangelize the world. Xavier Kochuparampil observed that the Latin Rite in India believed that only her has the right to preach the Word and to evangelize the community.¹⁶⁰ According to Kochuparampil's observation the Latin Roman Catholic Church did not permit¹⁶¹ the

The Archbishop Dr. Pascal Topno, after visiting the injured persons at the hospital, described the assault as a "barbaric act." It is a violation into the freedom of worship. He also sought immediate arrest and stringent action against the attackers and an impartial inquiry into this incident and all other incidents took place in Jabalpur and Indore.

The vice-chairman of the State Minority Commission, Maharashtra, Dr. Abraham Mathai came on the same evening to visit the injured persons of whom one of them named Pastor Kishore Sadwani is from Nagpur, Maharashtra. He said, "the fundamentalists have gained control over the administration and targeting the Christians in particular in the state. He said that the issue would be taken up with the newly formed ministry for minority affairs in the Union Government." Fr. Anand Muttungal, PRO & spokesman for Catholic Church M.P & C.G, after visiting the spot termed the incident a shame to the civilized society. It is clear from the incident that is a pre-planned attack; there was a lot of bloodstains in the prayer hall. According to Pastor Anil Martin the miscreants are from the fundamental organisation named Bajrngadal. He names Mr. Devendr Rawath as the leader of the group that attacked the prayer meeting. He says that after attacking they passed over his house, which is close to the house where incident took place, with lathis, iron rods etc. shouting slogans. But to support this statement there are no one who has seen the incident. He also has not revealed this to the police due to pressure from within the affected group.

The leaders who visited the injured persons have asked the government to initiate an impartial enquiry and arrest the culprits immediately.

PRO & Spokesperson

Catholic Church, Madhya Pradesh

¹⁵⁹ Tennent, *Building Christianity on Indian Foundation*, 83.

¹⁶⁰ Xavier Kochuparampil, *Evangelization in India* (Kottayam: Oriental Institute of Religious Studies India Publications, 1993), 88.

¹⁶¹ "We have to underline here the fact that the eastern Churches have the right and the obligation to preach the Gospel to the whole world; this right is quite normal, but in the past all missionary work among non-Christians was considered to be a privilege of the Latin Church. Still more, if an Oriental Catholic wished to follow his missionary vocation, he had to give up his Rite and become a Latin. The eastern Catholic Churches were forced to restrict their pastoral care to their own

missionaries from Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara Catholic Churches to work in the mission territories of India.¹⁶² Therefore, it is urgent to have an understanding between the individual Rites that have to share the same mission of the Church.

However, it is a fact that there exist different Christian denominations in the Indian Church. The different Churches work independently without co-operating with one another. The Bishop's Institute for Missionary Apostolate felt the need for co-operation among the Churches in the field of evangelization. Each individual Church is called to open the doors for the other Churches in the field of pastoral evangelization.¹⁶³ The members of the Missionary Apostolate urge that "a mutual openness and dialogue prevail between the Churches involved, so that an ecclesial communion may be fostered which, we hope, will eventually bring about corporate union."¹⁶⁴

The reason behind this ecumenical spirit to be maintained among the Churches is that they all have the same message to preach, i. e. the risen Christ who is the common Lord of all, and all have the common sacrament of baptism to give. It is expected that the whole Christian community in the non-Christian land will be missionary. Unity among the Christians must be a necessary environment for a united witnessing of the Christian message in India, where the Christians are a minority. They cannot witness to the Gospel if they are not united among themselves. St. Paul insists the need to respect the people of other faiths (1Cor 10:31-11:1). Therefore, the different Rites and the Christian denominations that exist can also be hindrance towards a united movement in the evangelization of peoples. This truth was recognised by the Second Bishop's Institute for Missionary Apostolate held in Trivandrum, Kerala, India on 30th November 1980. It stated that the division between the Catholic Churches in India and the Christen Churches are serious obstacles for the evangelization in India.¹⁶⁵ The

faithful within the limits of their own original territory and, with rather extended reservations, in the emigration. Now, they are allowed, under the direction of the Roman Pontiff, to fulfil their obligation entrusted to the whole Church by divine precept (Mk 16:15). This article has nothing to do with unsound proselytism among the faithful of other Christian Churches." Kochuparampil, *Evangelization in India*, 88.

¹⁶² J. Madey, "Orientalium Ecclesiarum: More Than Twenty Years After," *Oriental Institute of Religious Studies, India* 110 (1987): 33, 34; cf. "Vatican Council II's Decree on the Eastern Catholic Churches and its Ecumenical Importance", in *One in Christ*, 7, (1972): 222-251, 226-227.

¹⁶³ Arevalo, ed., *For All the People of Asia*, 98.

¹⁶⁴ Arevalo, ed., *For All the People of Asia*, 98.

¹⁶⁵ Arevalo, ed., *For All the People of Asia*, 98.

members even feel it as a “scandal” to the universal Church.¹⁶⁶ They even experience a competition between these Churches in matters of the works of evangelization.¹⁶⁷

Urging the need of unity among the Churches in central India Madhya Pradesh Public Relation Officer (PRO) circulated information on 12th December 2005, which he received from the diocese of Jabalpur. The diocese of Jabalpur is one of the dioceses in Madhya Pradesh region. The information was that one of the protestant denominations named “the members of the Church of central India” as having a protest march in front of their bishop’s house in Jabalpur. The demand raised by the members of the Church of central India is that they are to erect a new diocese in Chhattisgarh.¹⁶⁸ They also demanded to be independent from the diocese of Jabalpur.¹⁶⁹ The spokesperson Fr. Shaji Thomas from the diocese of Jabalpur argues that it is very difficult to witness the faith when we are divided.

It is found that it is a common phenomena that exists all over the world. Dr. Silvio Sergio Scatolini Apostolo¹⁷⁰ who studies and works in Egypt also agrees that the similar situation exists in the Church of Egypt¹⁷¹ too and it brings a counter witness to Christian faith.

4.3.4 Growing Tendency of Authoritarianism and Routinism Among the Church Personnel

Authoritarianism and routinism can be considered as traditionally handed over practices of the Church personnel that hamper the evangelization work. We find in some of the dioceses and parishes there still prevails a certain deadening type of “routinism” which does not encourage creativity, innovation and updating of the sacramental life.¹⁷² It is also noted that there is a “growing optimism” for better participation among the laity, which sometimes becomes a hindrance for clergy’s

¹⁶⁶ Arevalo, ed., *For All the People of Asia*, 98.

¹⁶⁷ Arevalo, ed., *For All the People of Asia*, 98.

¹⁶⁸ Chhattisgarh is the newly erected state of India.

¹⁶⁹ Muttungal, *Atrocities against Christians*, 1-2.

¹⁷⁰ Silvio Sergio Scatolini Apostolo, "Shall the Twain Ever Meet? Some Ponderings About the Egypt I Know," in *Liberation Theology Forum* (Leuven: Holy Spirit College: 2005).

¹⁷¹ Dr. Silvio Sergio Scatolini Apostolo who study and work in Egypt gave a lecture in one of the conference organised by the Forum of Liberation Theology in the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven on 8th December, 2005. The theme of the discussion was "Shall the Twin ever Meet? Some ponderings about the Egypt I know." Silvio explained in detail that in Egypt there are about 10% of the total population are Christians and they all belong to different denominations. He argued that these denominations neither work together nor support each other in each others apostolate of evangelization. These attitudes of the Christians bring a counter effect of Christian values among other religious.

¹⁷² McGrath, "The Final Documents," 211.

works of evangelization. This is because the curiosity and eagerness that emerges in the attitude of the laity becomes a challenge to the clergy. Thus, there can be a tendency to resist the initiatives taken by the laity from the side of the clergy. It can even stand as a hurdle for the lay person's commitment towards the missions of the Church. To some extent, this situation was created due to the Church documents that emerged after the Second Vatican Council.

The Second Vatican Council, in the documents like *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, *Ad Gentes Divinitus*, *Nostra Aetate*, *Gaudium et Spes*, emphasised the need of more lay participation in the Church. Similarly, we can say that the growing effectiveness of the laity is blocked by certain clerical mentality among many pastoral agents. Our observation is that clergy, as well as the laity, have not learned the documents well or they misunderstood the real thrust of the Council documents. Marcos McGrath claims that, "these social and ecclesial contexts have posed obstacles to the active, responsible participation of the laity in such important fields as politics, social, and cultural activity, particularly among labourers and peasants."¹⁷³

Keeping in mind the existing situation of the Church in India and referring to the General Assembly of the Conference of Religious in India (CRI), Samuel Rayan argued that the members of the conference must reflect forgoing their past status of power and authority and they need to work for the good of the people further:

commit ... themselves profoundly to the liberation of the masses, to solidarity with the poor and to liberation theology with its new methodology of its participating in the struggles of the oppressed and listening to their groans through which the spirit speaks and the message of the Crucified Lord is heard.¹⁷⁴

Thus, the Christians will be able to learn the lessons of the Word more profoundly.

We may conclude this section by saying the evangelization works that truly liberate the people are not easily acceptable today as they were in the past. We can say that there is a need for adequate training of the missionary personnel. Late Fr. Amalorpavadass, director of NBCLC Bangalore once argued that the evangelization

¹⁷³ McGrath, "The Final Documents," 228.

¹⁷⁴ Samuel Rayan, "A Brief Meditation on the CRI 1986 Statement on Commitment to Liberation," *Jeevadhara* 16, no. 93 (1986): 211; Samuel Rayan, "Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation," in *Liberation in Asia*, ed. S. Arokiasamy (Anand: Gujarath Sahithya Prakash, 1987), 228.

of the people requires that the priests, religious and laity be backed with proper training so that their works of evangelization becomes truly liberative.¹⁷⁵

Archbishop Marcos McGrath argues that in areas of evangelizing works:

the importance of the laity will be emphasised, not only when they engage in ministries in and for the Church, but also when they carry out the mission that is specifically theirs, that is, when they are sent out into the very midst of life in the world as the Church's vanguard, in order to remodel social, economic, and political structures in accordance with God's plan.¹⁷⁶

He continues saying that what the Church needs today is "more clerical openness to the activity of the laity and the overcoming of pastoral individualism and self-sufficiency."¹⁷⁷

To some extent, the leaders of the Indian Church need to acquire a right attitude to the liberative aspect of evangelization. They should not be carried out by liberation in its negative aspect.¹⁷⁸ This situation is very true with regard to the mission areas of central India, where the majority of the population are from a non-Christian context. Moreover, they are against the activities of the missionaries. Therefore, every field of actions, which can bring good to the people must be encouraged. It follows that we need to emphasise the role of the leaders in the Church.

4.4 THE AWAKENING OF THE CHURCH PERSONNEL FOR ENLIGHTENED¹⁷⁹ SERVICE

The Church personnel have to be awakened to new forms of service for the people of God. Sometime it may be a process of achieving an interior liberation from the attractions of the world. They are to be fully motivated for the service of the poor alone. Ricardo Antoncich argues:

if the Reign of God is a reign of freedom, then that Reign must be the point of reference for the theology of liberation. And if the Church is the servant

¹⁷⁵ Amalorpavadas, *Theology of Evangelization in the Indian Context*, 37.

¹⁷⁶ McGrath, "The Final Documents," 141.

¹⁷⁷ McGrath, "The Final Documents," 211.

¹⁷⁸ Liberation in the negative aspect would mean liberation that questions the position of the hierarchy of the Church. This wrong understanding of the word liberation will cause harm to the Church.

¹⁷⁹ The word enlightened has a spiritual connotation in the Indian context. It would mean that the persons who are relieved of their human desire, bodily passion, and worldly attachments. They are always in the search and work for the good of their soul. They wish to be in union with the absolute Being the Supreme God.

of this Reign, as its sacrament, then the teaching of the Church must be a Christian practice of liberation.¹⁸⁰

The personnel have to be fully committed to the service of the people forgoing their individual benefits and personal gains from the service they do for the people.

An Asian theologian Peter C. Phan believes that the responsibility of the Church in the liberation includes liberation from all forms of socio-political oppressions and promotion of economic well-being.¹⁸¹ People should be liberated from the clutches of evil society. On the other hand, Michael Amaladoss gives emphasis to more of a personalized liberation. He calls it the transformation of the individuals in every perceptive of their life.¹⁸²

The Church announces to the people the message from the Gospel. This message cannot be realistic unless and until it is accompanied by justice. The message and the actions that follow after are related. Therefore, Boff argues that the message of love in the Gospel and justice done to the people are inseparable.¹⁸³ The justice reaches its fullness in love expressed to the needy. Further, the recognition of the Church specially, for the poor will enable "the new and emerging historical subject which will carry on the Christian project in the world. They are the group with a historical strength, a capacity for change, and a potential for evangelization."¹⁸⁴

Second Vatican Council affirms that it is the task of the Church to help the human person to recognise his/her meaning in life:

Since it has been entrusted to the Church to reveal the mystery of God, who is the ultimate goal of man, she opens up to man at the same time the meaning of his own existence, that is, the innermost truth about himself. The Church truly knows that only God, whom she serves, meets the deepest longings of the human heart, which is never fully satisfied by what this world has to offer (GS 41).

Church's mission for the redemption of the human race includes liberation from every oppressive situation in the society. The Church personnel need to take notice of every changing situation. In every age, the needs of the people are different. Therefore

¹⁸⁰ Ricardo Antoncich, "Liberation Theology and the Social Teaching of the Church," in *Mysterium Liberationis: Fundamental Concepts of Liberation Theology*, ed. Ignacio Ellacuria and Jon Sobrino (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1990), 105.

¹⁸¹ Phan, *In Our Own Tongues*, 20.

¹⁸² Michael Amaladoss, "Institute of Dialogue with Cultures and Religion," in *Liberation Theology Forum* (Leuven: Maria Theresa College: 2005), 1-5.

¹⁸³ Boff, *Church Charism & Power*, 24.

¹⁸⁴ Boff, *Church Charism & Power*, 9, 10.

Church to be an effective evangelizer has to be vigilant with her eyes and ears wide open. Accordingly, she has to change the strategies of evangelization.

The Church is to announce the salvation of everyone through Jesus Christ. Explaining the stand of Pope Paul VI, Peter C. Phan says that Pope Paul VI gives three reasons why evangelization and human development have to go hand in hand. First, they are connected in the order of anthropology because humans are not abstract beings but subject to economic and social factors of the society. Everything that affects society can affect individuals too. Secondly, there is a closer relation in the order of theology because God's plan of creation is very much connected with His plan of redemption which invites eradication of injustice and establishment of the order of justice. Finally, there is a close relation in the order of charity, because, the good news cannot be proclaimed unless and until it promotes justice and peace.¹⁸⁵

Similarly Robert Faricy affirms that the Church needs to find a solution for the people who are suffering. He confirms that Christianity alone possess the ultimate answer to contemporary questions of mankind.¹⁸⁶ The Church must explain to the people "the paschal mystery, the mystery of the death and resurrection of Jesus."¹⁸⁷ Therefore, the ultimate motivation of the Church is to serve mankind.

4.5 THE CHURCH IN THE SERVICE OF FREEDOM

The mission of Jesus to the world was to announce the free gift of freedom to mankind. Jesus wants to make everyone free. This freedom is well explained in the teachings of the Church too. She expects the members of the Church to take up this freedom to her members. The individuals are free to think and act for the good of the Church.

The Second Vatican Council document *Gaudium et Spes* affirms the responsibility of the Church to serve:

Pursuing the saving purpose which is proper to her, the Church not only communicate divine life to men, but in some way caste the reflected light of that life over the entire earth. This she does most of all by her healing and elevating impact on the dignity of the person, by the way in which she strengthens the dreams of human society and imbues the everyday activity of men with a deeper meaning and importance. Thus, through her individual members and her whole community, the Church believes she can

¹⁸⁵ Phan, *In Our Own Tongues*, 21.

¹⁸⁶ Faricy, "Evangelization and Spiritual Life," 152.

¹⁸⁷ Faricy, "Evangelization and Spiritual Life," 152, 153.

contribute greatly toward making the family of man and its history more human (GS 40).

A community where the members are free and work for the well-being of its members is the dream of the Church. The Church is situated in the world. But the Church and her activities cannot be identified with any political parties of the state. The Church in the world does not interfere with the arena of politics in the world. She interferes in the politics of the state only to fulfil her objective dimension of the Kingdom. Therefore, the evangelizing role of the Church is to defend the ethical status of the individual in the society.¹⁸⁸ In society, she has to hold on to an ethical status for the betterment of the people.¹⁸⁹ The responsibility of the Church in the world and the role of the Church in the public spheres of the world would bring a human future to humanity. The Church must make the life of the poor the real pattern of her daily praxis.¹⁹⁰ The members of the Missionary Apostolate about whom we mentioned in the previous section concluded that in order to fulfil the responsibility of evangelization by the Church, she has to be “authentic in her (their) very existence.” The members argued in order for the Church to be authentic, she needs to have the following characteristics:

They must project the image of communion within themselves and among themselves; they must have the legitimate autonomy that will enable them to express their life of faith and worship within their specific human context; they must have the opportunity to share their faith-experience with their fellowmen. Also essential to the authenticity of Churches is that their mission becomes the corporate responsibility of the people of God in all its various sections, laity, religious and clergy. We refer especially to integral human development and witnessing to justice, as well as to inter-religious dialogue.¹⁹¹

Further, the members of the above mentioned Missionary Apostolate felt that the Church has to become not only the Church *for* the poor but also *of* the poor in India.¹⁹² Today, Indian as well as western theologians believe that she has to become of the poor. Enjoying the small victories of the members and fulfilling the needs of the people introducing new ministries according to the situation of the time and place. Thus the Church has to share the joys of the resurrected Christ to the modern world.¹⁹³

¹⁸⁸ Boff, *Church Charism & Power*, 5.

¹⁸⁹ Boff, *Church Charism & Power*, 5.

¹⁹⁰ Arevalo, ed., *For All the People of Asia*, 60.

¹⁹¹ Arevalo, ed., *For All the People of Asia*, 98.

¹⁹² Arevalo, ed., *For All the People of Asia*, 100.

¹⁹³ Boff, *Church Charism & Power*, 62.

Christ himself preached the mission of the Church which is to preach the good news to the poor (Lk 4:18). Thus Michel Mollat affirms:

the initiative must be taken to go to the poor, and it is a service. Taken together with Christ's description of the works of mercy, the service of the poor becomes a duty of liberation; and, most paradoxical of all, as the tradition of history also notes, helping the poor, liberating them from suffering and oppression is helping and liberating Christ, whose image they are.¹⁹⁴

Thus, the Church invites everyone to move ahead with that freedom shown by Jesus through his life, death and resurrection. The proclamation is made irrespective of the poor and the rich in society.

CONCLUSION

We have discovered in this chapter Jesus emerging as a liberator of the people of God of his times and offering his message of integral liberation for all peoples of all times and nations. Going very closely through various interpretations of the theologians about the mission of Jesus against the background of the "Salvation history" initiated in the Old Testament times, we can see how Jesus emerged as a liberating Messiah to the establishment of the Kingdom of God, when He himself realised his time has come for that. (Lk 4: 16-19). L. J. Luzbetak argues that evangelization does not engage in apologetic arguments but seeks to relate the person of Christ to new human communities with a deep sense of being authentic Christians.¹⁹⁵ Therefore, according to him, liberative evangelization would mean a holistic growth of human beings unto Christ and share his vision of a liberated life Divine. Yvon Ambroise, also shares this theological view of liberative evangelization by interpreting the miracles worked by Jesus during his active ministry in a holistic liberative perspective. He argued that "every miracle was an act of liberation of a person from physical disorders, psychological disabilities and moral disorientation.... Hence it is also the sign of hope as well as a transformation of the situation of a person."¹⁹⁶

Evangelization finally takes its root for empowerment in the process of liberation. Speaking about the attitude of Jesus towards the rich, Ambroise argued that "the rich have the option to give up their riches. The poor however, do not have their option for their poverty though they desire to."¹⁹⁷ Here it is intended to explain the whole of Jesus' mission as an attempt for the empowerment of the poor. We have found the

¹⁹⁴ Michel Mollat, "Poverty and the Service of the Poor in the History of the Church," in *The Poor and the Church*, ed. Norbert Greinacher and Alois Muller (New York: The Seabury Press, 1977), 46.

¹⁹⁵ Luzbetak, "Evangelization," 1272.

¹⁹⁶ Ambroise, *Social Transformation - How Christ Went About It*, 46.

¹⁹⁷ Ambroise, *Social Transformation - How Christ Went About It*, 76.

evangelization as the preliminary responsibility of the whole Church consisting of the laity and clergy.

We also have found the unavoidable role of the Holy Spirit in the field of evangelization. It is the Holy Spirit who becomes an effective power in the field of evangelization. Often the attitudes of so called Christians have become a hindrance to the power of the Spirit to work on earth. It is true that the Holy Spirit wishes to fulfil the mission that began by Jesus. This same Spirit unites everyone in Christ. The Church is guided by the power of the Holy Spirit. It reminds the great responsibility that is expected from every baptised.

CHAPTER FOUR

REALIZATION OF THE VALUES OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD AS EVANGELIZATION BY THE LAITY IN THE CENTRAL INDIAN CHURCH

INTRODUCTION

We have discussed in the previous chapters and found that the liberative evangelization is one of the essential tasks of the total mission of the Church. In this fourth chapter we will explore the realisation of the values of the “Kingdom of God” preached by Jesus Christ as the best methodology for evangelization. We shall explain in detail the values that Jesus emphasised in his “Sermon on the Mount” as a constitutive element of the new way of living in this world of God’s reign and loving providence, which is generally characterised as the “Kingdom of God.” The research studies and exegesis made over the Sermon on the Mount brought to light that the discourse of Jesus on the values of the Kingdom of God is oriented towards an integrally liberated way of life and its witnessing to it by his listeners. It seems that Jesus wanted his immediate listeners to get evangelized or liberated in the new values of his new vision of life first, and then in turn to become the agents of liberation for others, enabling them to live in a new vision of his Kingdom values.

The liberative mission of Jesus is expressed in the beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount. Through the preaching of the beatitudes, Jesus gave a new understanding of human life and its agonies and ecstasies as well as the ways and means of facing them in deep trust and faith in God’s loving care for his beloved children. In the society of Jesus’ own time there were poor people who were depressed, frustrated and have lost hope due to the injustice inflicted on them by the wealthier ones. Some of those poor people were also meek and taking the inflicts in the society coolly and quietly without resorting to violence. There were also people who were eagerly waiting for righteousness which is truly a gift from God but which they were deprived of by unjust systems and their unjust operators, like the government tax collectors of the time. Jesus could read the signs of grief from the faces of the people who gathered around him in the valley of the mountain from where he addressed his beatitudes. He realised that his people lacked mercy and kindness. He found the need to encourage his people who longed to enjoy a situation of peace and good order of justice. He felt the need for giving moral support to those who suffered persecution for the sake of righteousness. Thus, the beatitudes of Jesus gave his people a new hope of survival to everyone who were treated mercilessly and even persecuted when they craved for their due justice. Through the preaching of the beatitudes, Jesus manifested a new social order for human beings to live with some sense of human dignity. He found the

need to empower the people. He also found that if the people were empowered, they could be an instrument of transformation of the whole society.

In India, especially in central India, poor people in the rural areas have become the victims of exploitation by the rich of the society as that of the people of Jesus' time. The gap between the poor and the rich widens, and the people are deprived of their basic necessities for their just living. In the context of such exploitation in central India the beatitudes of Jesus have real significance and evangelizing application to be carried out by the Christians, especially the laity who live in their midst. In the latter part of this chapter we shall also focus on how this preaching of the beatitudes become the reason for the empowerment of the Christian laity and the realisation of the new values of the Kingdom of God in the context of central India. The Christian laity become instruments of evangelization for the rest of the society.

1 THE LIBERATIVE VALUES OF THE BEATITUDES

The Church is the manifestation of the earthly "Kingdom of God." We have chosen the preaching of beatitudes and its message given by Jesus as a model for everyone to get empowered, liberated and be enabled to live the values of the Kingdom of God in this world. Mark A. Matson argues that the visible Church is the realisation of the eschatological fullness of the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth. Furthermore, if a Christian man/woman is able to realise this eschatological fulfilment of the Church as the Kingdom of God on earth, the mission of Jesus will be fulfilled.¹ The mission of the Church, then, is to fulfil this vision of Jesus, namely, to cooperate to establish his eschatological Kingdom on earth.

It is noteworthy that Yaakov Ariel believed that the Jews were called to be the people of God, the Israel. Later the emergence of Jesus as the Messiah has caused a change in this understanding of the people of Israel.² In the light of the New Testament, Christians are considered to be the people of the new Israel.³ Ariel believes that Christians are the new Israel, and that Jesus has opened the door for everyone to be the sons and daughters of the one Father, the Creator of the whole universe.⁴ In the

¹ Mark A. Matson, "Luke's Rewritings of the Sermon on the Mount," *Society of Biblical Literature 2000 Seminar Papers* (2000): 640.

² Yaakov Ariel, *Evangelizing the Chosen People* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 10.

³ John M. Oesterreicher, "Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions," in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Herbert Vorgrimler (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), 124.

⁴ Ariel, *Evangelizing the Chosen People*, 15.

new dispensation, 'to be the people of God' is to belong to the people of the *ekklesia*.⁵ Jesus has also opened the possibility for the 'pagans' to be his followers and thus, to be the members of the new Kingdom visualised by Jesus. Furthermore, Jesus has given a new understanding of all the embracing love of God including every human being to be a member of his Kingdom. In order to accomplish this vision, Jesus has introduced a new norm to be followed by all human beings to be the members of his "new Kingdom of God." He wishes for everyone to be a member of the "new Israel" and accept him as the true Messiah. To achieve this goal, he gave a new vision for his followers to be followed in the society. It is in this wider sense of the new people of God that the Christian community everywhere in the world is endowed with an evangelizing mission, which consists in the integral liberative process of the whole human community, and the Christian community must constitute the most dynamic catalytic agent in a vibrating local Church.

Further, to realise this goal the members of the Church need to be prepared to live according to the new values of the new people of God as visualised by Jesus in his beatitudes. First and foremost they are to be evangelized to become the agents of the liberative evangelizing mission of the Church. We have seen in our previous discussions the importance of the evangelizing mission today in the modern world. We also saw that evangelization leads to the empowerment of the lay people. This state of empowerment is an experience of the power of the Holy Spirit working among the members of the Church. We have seen that in central India the priests and religious are not welcomed and looked at with suspicion by others. Thus, the Christian laity who live in the midst of the members of the other religions can work as a better evangelizer if they are motivated by the new values of the Kingdom. The Christian laity will begin to work like the first Christians who were filled with the Holy Spirit on the day of the Pentecost. We read in the book of Acts that "they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Ac 2:4). They were courageous to preach and witness to the faith. This type of empowerment of the laity in the Indian Church is the need of the time.

The first Christians got enriched by the teachings of Christ, especially the messages from the beatitudes formed them in a new way of living. On account of the convincing testimony of the Christians of the apostolic antiquity, many people who were otherwise following their traditional and tribal religions of their ancestors were

⁵ Carlos Bravo Gallardo, "Matthew: Good News for the Persecuted Poor," in *Subversive Scriptures*, ed. Leif E. Vaage (Valley Forge, Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 1997), 181.

inspired to join the followers of Christ, and they were all called for the first time “Christians at Antioch” (Ac 11:26). More than that, all what they had, their wealth and the possessions were brought to the disciples to be distributed to the poor (Ac 2:45; 4:34-37). They were all inspired by the Words of the beatitudes. This attitude of sharing of the early Christians itself is one of the foundational aspects of the liberative missions. Such selfless and communitarian sense of the people to share their wealth with all other members, especially the poor, was a powerful witnessing sign of the values of the new Kingdom of God preached by Jesus all the more powerfully. Seeing such selfless service (*diakonia*) of the early Christian followers, many other people were also added to strengthen their witnessing life. Thus, from the very apostolic times the Christian community had a deep sense of the liberative mission, one of such liberative activities was the concern for the poor and the less privileged in the society.

In the Indian Church of today, this service mindedness of the rich has to be resuscitated, and thus, it should motivate them to share their wealth, their social positions and political influence for the good of all their fellow human beings, especially the marginalised of the community. Just like the people of the early Christian community changed their attitude towards wealth and other matters of worldly enjoyments from accumulative tendency to a sharing one, a similar transformation of life among the lay people must be part of the liberative evangelization in the Church of India to establish the Kingdom on earth.

1.1 THE BEATITUDES AS BLESSINGS OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

The preaching of the beatitudes can be considered the central theme of Jesus’ preaching. By this teaching Jesus wishes to establish a new value system to be lived by his followers. The narratives of the Gospels, especially of St. Matthew, use the term ‘beatitudes’ as a proper noun to denote a collection of eight ‘*dominical logia*’ at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount. Edward Schweizer argues that the term ‘beatitude’ is derived from the Latin word ‘*beati*’ which means ‘blessed’ or ‘happy.’ He also argues that the preaching of the beatitudes can be interpreted as the ethics of discipleship.⁶ Thus, we can find similar forms of preaching in the Old Testament, especially in the Wisdom literature (Ecclus 25: 7-10) as well as Psalms (Ps 84: 5-6, 12; 128:1). Whereas, Raymond F. Collins believes that such usages as the ones in the Egyptian and Greek literature are technically called ‘macarisms.’⁷

⁶ Eduard Schweitzer, *The Good News According to Matthew* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1975), 78.

⁷ Raymond F. Collins, “Beatitudes,” in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 629.

Collins further claims that these beatitudes that are found in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke can be traced back to the proclamation of the historical Jesus.⁸ These beatitudes represent "salvation" in the form of an eschatological reversal of conditions for the disposed. The Kingdom of God is an eschatological concept which is established even in the helplessness of the people.⁹ They constitute an unconditional promise of salvation through the initiation of Jesus. God has acted as the King who will represent the poor. Arguing one step further, John R. W. Stott states that the whole teaching of beatitudes presupposes the acceptance of the Gospel and which will follow a new birth in Christ.¹⁰ Whereas, Schweitzer argues that the first two beatitudes are considered to be the fulfilment of the prophetic promises made by prophet Isaiah in Jesus.¹¹ It is noteworthy that the characteristic feature of the beatitudes is that they always begin with the declaration 'happy' or 'blessed' 'ashre (אַשְׁרֵי)¹² which is usually followed by some individual worthy of praise in Egyptian and Greek traditions. In the same manner, in the New Testament too the beatitudes begin with the similar adjective *makarios* (μακάριος), 'blessed' or 'happy,' followed by a substantive adjective, or a relative clause, indicating the type of persons considered blessed, and frequently included a clause beginning with *hoti* (ὅτι) ('because').¹³

Jesus explained the Kingdom of God very clearly through the beatitudes. He offered a new hope and a new meaning to all categories of people, especially the poor and the

⁸ Collins, "Beatitudes," 630.

⁹ Collins, "Beatitudes," 630.

¹⁰ John R. W. Stott, *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1978), 37.

¹¹ Schweitzer, *The Good News According to Matthew*, 82.

¹² 'ashre, "blessed; happy." Basically, this word connotes the state of "prosperity" or "happiness" that comes when a superior bestows his favor (blessing) on one. In most passages, the one bestowing favor is God Himself: "Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord" Deut 33:29. The state that the blessed one enjoys does not always appear to be "happy": "Behold, blessed ("happy") is the man whom God correcteth: therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty: for he maketh sore, and bindeth up..." Job 5:17-18. Eliphaz was not describing Job's condition as a happy one; it was "blessed," however, inasmuch as God was concerned about him. Because it was a blessed state and the outcome would be good, Job was expected to laugh at his adversity (Job 5:22).

God is not always the one who makes one "blessed." At least, the Queen of Sheba flatteringly told Solomon that this was the case 1 Kings 10:8. One's status before God (being "blessed") is not always expressed in terms of the individual or social conditions that bring what moderns normally consider to be "happiness." So although it is appropriate to render 'ashre as "blessed," the rendering of "happiness" does not always convey its emphasis to modern readers. cf. *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1985), 45.

¹³ L. Mowry, "Beatitudes," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. George Arthur Buttrick (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), 370.

marginalised of the society. In this context it is noteworthy that the apostles as well as the early Christians believed and hoped for an immediate establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth. Thus, St. Peter announced to the Christians: "now the end of all things is near; therefore, be clear-headed and disciplined for prayer" (1 Pt 4:7; Phil 4:4-6; Heb 10:23-27; Jam 5:5-9). We can also find similar expressions of ideas in the book of Revelation (Rev 1:3; 22:9-12).¹⁴ All these were invitations for the early Christians to prepare themselves for the reception of the second coming of Jesus very soon.

Carl G. Vaught argues that the main purpose of the preaching of the beatitudes seems to be intended to illustrate those blessings which Christians are going to receive when they are in the new Kingdom. These teachings of Jesus gave a new hope and renewed promise to everyone.¹⁵ Jesus has promised the blessings of the Kingdom of God to every believer. St. Paul explains the hope of the promises of the Kingdom being fulfilled as a matter of vigilant expectancy. He writes:

Not that I have already obtained it, or have already become perfect, but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus (Phil 3:12-14).

¹⁴ "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your graciousness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Don't worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanks giving, let your requests be made known to God" (Php 4: 4-6). "Let us hold on to the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us be concerned about one another in order to promote love and good works, not staying away from our meetings, as some habitually do, but encouraging each other, and all the more as you see the day drawing near. For if we deliberately sin after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a terrifying expectation of judgment, and the fury of a fire about to consume the adversaries" (Heb 10:23-27). "You have lived luxuriously on the land and have indulged yourselves. You have fattened your hearts for the day of slaughter. You have condemned--you have murdered--the righteous man; he does not resist you. Therefore, brothers, be patient until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth and is patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains. You also must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, because the Lord's coming is near. Brothers, do not complain about one another, so that you will not be judged. Look, the judge stands at the door" (James 5:5-9). "Blessed is the one who reads and blessed are those who hear the words of this prophecy and keep what is written in it, because the time is near" (Rev.1:3). "But he said to me, "Don't do that! I am a fellow slave with you, your brothers the prophets, and those who keep the words of this book. Worship God." He also said to me, "Don't seal the prophetic words of this book, because the time is near. Let the unrighteous go on in unrighteousness; let the filthy go on being made filthy; let the righteous go on in righteousness; and let the holy go on being made holy." "Look! I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me to repay each person according to what he has done" (Rev 22:9-12).

¹⁵ Carl G. Vaught, *The Sermon on the Mount: A Theological Interpretation* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1986), 11.

Thus St. Paul believed in the unworthiness of attaining it, but trusting in the providence he lived for Christ alone. This statement of St. Paul makes it clear to everyone that Jesus expects the same response from his followers.¹⁶

Through the words of the beatitudes Jesus gives emphasis to the reign of God's will in the hearts of the believers. They will sooner or later understand the will of God towards them while they are on earth and follow this will in every act of their social interactions. He emphasises that the poor and the exploited are the privileged persons to enter first into the blessed state of affairs in God's Kingdom. Thus, this preaching of beatitudes gives more consolation and strength to the people who are oppressed in the society. They suffer not because of their own fault, but the corruptions of the society make the innocents suffer.

Hans Dieter Betz believes that these teachings of Jesus on the beatitudes brought out a hope of the heavenly bliss and an experience of the eschatological Kingdom on earth. Furthermore, he affirms that the teachings of Jesus on the beatitudes "is not law to be obeyed, but theology to be intellectually appropriated and internalised, in order then to be creatively developed and implemented in concrete situations of life."¹⁷ Whereas, George M. Soares-Prabhu, an illustrious Indian biblical scholar, believes that the teachings of the beatitudes are to be seen as the basic Christian attitude of obedience and radical concern for the neighbour.¹⁸ When one is able to do so he/she will certainly experience that Kingdom which is promised by Jesus. Through the preaching of the beatitudes Jesus was more concerned about the basic attitudes of the people and their actions. Prabhu concludes that these two, people's 'attitude' and their 'actions' as Christians, are neither separable nor dispensable.¹⁹ Hence this teaching of Christ on the beatitudes has become more meaningful to the exploited and marginalised of the central Indian society as well. Jesus explained that the poor in the society are blessed by God; they will be comforted and are eligible to enjoy the promises of God in a new order of a just society, where the values of the Kingdom of God are offered as the real goals of a welfare society. A just welfare society can do good if it is governed by the just values. We find the observation made by P. S. Sangal interesting, it is that Dr. B. R. Ambedkar was vice to formulate the Indian

¹⁶ Vaught, *The Sermon on the Mount: A Theological Interpretation*, 11.

¹⁷ Hans Dieter Betz, *Essays on the Sermon on the Mount*, trans. L. L. Welborn (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 16.

¹⁸ George M. Soares-Prabhu, *Theology of Liberation: An Indian Biblical Perspective*, ed. Francis X. D'Sa (Pune: Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, 2001), 161.

¹⁹ Allan M. Parrent, "The Sermon on the Mount, International Politics, and a Theology of Reconciliation," *Sewanee Theological Review* 42, no. 2 (1999): 181.

Constitution²⁰ in which he found the need to make opportunity to establish a just society in India.²¹ This motivated him to formulate the Constitution of the Democratic Federal Republic of India in such a way that everyone in India has a chance to be a member of a just society.²² However, the message of Jesus will be very applicable to the poor, the marginalised, and the people who are exploited in India by the traditional landlordism and bonded labour, caste discrimination, etc.²³ But the question that still remains is who will convey these new values of the Kingdom of God preached by Jesus through the beatitudes. I suggest that the answer is to be given by the motivated and empowered Christians of the Church in India.

This teaching of Jesus also gives an invitation to the rich and to those who exploit the poor in the society to turn away from their evil attitudes towards the less privileged humans. They are invited to respect everyone. Share the extra goods that they have with those who do not possess anything. Jesus invites everyone to take an active part in establishing God's reign on earth. Thus, Jesus challenges the society to turn away from their evil ways and see the compassionate presence of God in everyone. By accepting this invitation of Jesus, a man/woman in the society should offer himself/herself to live in the society like a brother and sister with concerns for everybody's welfare. This is very much applicable to the people in multi-religious, multi-cultural, and multi-linguistic contexts of central India.

Soares-Prabhu believes that the beatitudes have inspired many great leaders of the world, irrespective of their religion. For example, Mahatma Gandhi, the father of independent India, was delighted by the beatitudes. He once said the Sermon on the Mount "went straight to my heart."²⁴ Mahatma Gandhi believed that these teachings of Christ are the "essence of Christianity."²⁵ The Sermon on the Mount reminded him of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, a spiritual classic of the Hindus, a poem of seven hundred

²⁰ Alan Gledhill, *The Republic of India*, vol. 6 (London: Stevens and Sons Limited, 1951), 11. Special committees were appointed to consider and report on particular parts of the Constitution.... On 29th July 1947 a drafting committee, under the chairmanship of Dr. Ambedkar, was appointed to scrutinise and revise the Draft Constitution prepared by the constitution adviser, Sir B. N. Rau. The committee presented its report on 21st February 1948. Members then tabled amendments, which were debated and voted upon as the Constitution was enacted clause by clause. The Constitution was finally passed on 26th November 1949, and came into force on 26th January 1950.

²¹ P.S. Sangal, "Dr. B. R. Ambedkar : Father of the Indian Constitution," in *Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Social Justice and the Indian Constitution*, ed. K. L. Bhatia (New Delhi: Deep and Deep Publications, 1995), 49.

²² Sangal, "Dr. B. R. Ambedkar : Father of the Indian Constitution," 48.

²³ Gledhill, *The Republic of India*, 44-50.

²⁴ Soares-Prabhu, *Theology of Liberation: An Indian Biblical Perspective*, 155.

²⁵ Soares-Prabhu, *Theology of Liberation: An Indian Biblical Perspective*, 155.

stanzas written between the 5th and 2nd century BCE.²⁶ Furthermore, many writers both Christian and non-Christian have received inspiration from these words of Jesus about a new order of the world, when people have faith submitted to God's reign in their hearts and minds, the "Kingdom of God within the heart of human beings." K. Grayston claims that Jesus, through the preaching of beatitudes, availed himself of "familiar proverbial wisdom and simple rabbinic teachings devices in order to convey a primarily prophetic message." It is drawn into an understanding of the proclamation of the Kingdom.²⁷ The beatitudes can be understood as something very closely related to the fulfilment of the prophecy made by Isaiah (Is 61: 1-2).²⁸ We shall examine individually each beatitude and see how that promulgates new liberative values for the followers of Jesus which eventually help to establish the Kingdom on earth.

1.2 KINGDOM OF GOD FOR THE POOR

People who belong to the category of the poor are found everywhere. It seems that the preaching of Jesus on the beatitudes was mainly addressed to the poor. Jesus gave a new hope and a new meaning of existence to the poor in the society. He explained that the poor are not the curse of God, but they are the specially blessed ones among God's people because they place their trust in God and look upon God alone as their support for their survival.

J. David Pleins, while speaking about the poor in the beatitudes, argues that there are various words used to indicate the word 'poor' in the Hebrew New Testament texts. For example *dal* (דל) one who is low, *dallah* (דלה) poorest or lowest, *machsôr* (מחסור) need or poverty, *miskēn* (מסכן) poor man or needy, *miskēnûth* (מסכנות) scarcity or sparseness, *rāš* (ראש) poor, etc.²⁹ All these different usages from the Hebrew texts indicate the diverging notions about poverty and the poor explained in the biblical text. Whereas, C. U. Wolf holds another view that the Greek word *penēs* (πένης) means 'poor from the lowest economic class.'³⁰ This word *penēs* is linked with *ponos* (πόνος) which means 'trouble,' 'burden.' It refers to the man/woman who cannot cope

²⁶ Herman Hendrickx, *The Sermon on the Mount* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1984), ix.

²⁷ K. Grayston, "Sermon on the Mount," in *The Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. George Arthur Buttrick (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), 283.

²⁸ The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn etc.

²⁹ J. David Pleins, "Poor, Poverty," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 403.

³⁰ C. U. Wolf, "Poor," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. George Arthur Buttrick (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), 843.

with his/her poverty to live in the society. Thus, the word *penēs* is not like *ptōchos* (πτωχός) who is poor enough to be a beggar and needs help. The root cause of moral offences is considered to be due to *penēs*.³¹ Furthermore, the word *penēs* is also normally used for the economically and legally oppressed. Thus, we find a constant use of this term in the book of Amos (Am 2:6; 4:1; 5:12; 8:4,6). Going one step further, H. H. Esser argues that in Greek the word *penēs* is also used for the one who is forced into manual work or who has limited means in life. He claims that the word *penēs* is derived from the root *ptē* (πτῆ) which means 'crouched together.' It explains the utter dependence of a person on the society. As an adjective it also means 'begging,' 'dependent on the help of strangers,' 'poor as a beggar,' or 'poor.'³² Michel Moller argues that the word "poor" can also be understood as "someone so destitute that he has to beg, but could also be someone who, for various reasons, cannot get along without help."³³ Whereas, L. Coenen argues that the word *ptōchos* is used for the one who needs alms. It is understood that poverty is created due to unrighteous activities that prevail in the society. It would mean failure of the community and disobedience to the will of God.³⁴ However, in the early Greek text the term poverty did not have any religious significance.³⁵ Esser argues that there was no public concern for the poor. It is only in the later Greek that poverty was regarded as a favourable precondition for virtue.³⁶ According to Esser, "the highest goal of life was to live virtuously in all material conditions including poverty."³⁷ He concludes that Yahweh will protect the poor (Ex 23:6ff). In the New Testament *ptōchos* is used to symbolize a man's/woman's position before God, not so much his/her position before the society.³⁸ It would mean he/she has nothing to bring before God. Hamm argues that when Jesus spoke about the poor he meant people standing before God as their only consolation, and considered God as their last source of assistance in life.³⁹ In the

³¹ L. Coenen, "Poor," in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown (Wuppertal: The Paternoster Press, 1976), 820.

³² H. H. Esser, "Poor," in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown (Wuppertal: The Paternoster Press, 1976), 821.

³³ Michel Mollat, "Poverty and the Service of the Poor in the History of the Church," in *The Poor and the Church*, ed. Norbert Greinacher and Alois Muller, Concilium (New York: The Seabury Press, 1977), 47.

³⁴ Coenen, "Poor," 820.

³⁵ Esser, "Poor," 821.

³⁶ Esser, "Poor," 821.

³⁷ Esser, "Poor," 821.

³⁸ Coenen, "Poor," 821.

³⁹ Dennis Hamm, *The Beatitudes in Context* (Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1990), 81.

same line of thought, the Church all over the world has opted for the “preferential option for the poor.” It would mean to speak for the voiceless, to defend the defenceless, to assess life styles, policies, and social institutions in terms of their impact on the poor. This option for the poor does not mean putting one group against another, but rather strengthening the whole community by assisting those who are most vulnerable.⁴⁰

When Jesus said that the Kingdom of God belonged to the poor, he referred to the prophecy of Isaiah 61:1: “the spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good tidings to the poor.” He mentioned that those who are poor will be evangelized not enriched (Is 61:1). Grayston argues that to understand the poor we need to understand their place among the people of Israel. The explanation given by Carlos Bravo Gallardo, concerning understanding the poor in the context of Palestine is noteworthy: the poor felt that they were worth nothing in society.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Hamm, *The Beatitudes in Context*, 81.

⁴¹ Gallardo, "Matthew: Good News for the Persecuted Poor," 182, 183; It is very probable that real poor people are historically meant and that, at another level, it is the Christians who were persecuted by the synagogue of Jamnia and constituted the Matthean community. Both terms ought to be interpreted in the same sense. If one speaks here of a real, historical, socio-religious and political persecution of a concrete group of men and women, as the community of Syro-Palestine was persecuted and marginalised by the synagogue of Jamnia (in the *Sitz im Leben* of Matthew's community), their poverty could not be of any other sort, e.g., purely internal or referring to mere intentions. To what reality, then, does the term "spirit" refer? We know that the Hebrew mind-set would have understood such a reference in a way very different from the western world's dichotomous way of thinking. "Spirit" refers to the totality of the human being characterised by a style of existence that was guided by the spirit and not by the flesh. It has nothing, therefore, to do with a hypothetical "intentional internal detachment" from love of money, which could coexist with the possession of enormous wealth. At least, it does not seem that this could have been good news for any one in Matthew's community, which was essentially a group of persecuted poor persons. Perhaps the most complete translation of the term *ptochoi* to *pneumati* would have to be a gloss that contained all of the following elements: (a) the root *ptak* makes reference to the poor person's "trembling with fear" in the face of their threatened existence due to the lack of what is needed for life; (b) the full existential dimension of the term *pneuma* (spirit) which refers to the vital force and activity at the centre of one's relations and actions, whence a style of existence is established and a way of being in the world and in history is begun; (c) the *theocentric* dimension that is implicit in the correlative Old Testament concept *anaw*, i.e., the one who is socio-economically and religiously poor and marginalised and is conscious of his or her marginal social situation, of not counting or being worth anything in society, but of being worth something to God, in whose saving action confidence is placed. Exactly who the "poor in spirit" are is made explicit later on in Mat 6:19-34, when one speaks of the attitude, coherent with the new justice of the kingdom, that one should have vis-a-vis earthly goods; (d) the dimension of religious fidelity to God and not to money: the poor person who breaks with the god Money to accept exclusively the reign of God; (e) the fidelity that the "poor in spirit" are declared to have implies the satisfaction of existential needs, which are mentioned in the subsequent beatitudes. All this provides content for God's action in the world on their behalf: God already intervenes in history, transforming it on behalf of the poor; (f) the double dimension of the present and the future of the kingdom, which appears in the verbal forms of the text, should remain clear, including the clearly and the not yet, history and eschatological, task and gift.

However, they were happy to feel that God took care of them. According to Herman Hendrickx, the poor are those who possess no means of living and no power.⁴² Hendrickx refers to the ancient Near East and also to Israel where the poor were promised special protection by their kings.⁴³ Jesus promises similar protection by God in the state of poverty. Schweitzer argues that the mark of poverty was to accept the difficult situations and face challenges in life.⁴⁴ Later the term began to be used distinctly from upper classes in the society. Poverty is not considered to be a virtue, but an honour. The poor should not be despised by the rich.⁴⁵ Furthermore, he claims that at the time of Jesus, the term 'poor' is never used in a merely figurative sense, independent of social class.⁴⁶ Neil J. McEleney argues that the Kingdom should be understood as the community of believers in the world.⁴⁷ Thus, he concludes it is an eschatological fulfilment of God's promise on earth.⁴⁸ Hence, he believes that the Kingdom of God consists of the poor.

It is observed that the poor usually remain silent doers of the laws inflicted on them by the majority. Therefore, J. David Pleins argues that the legal, prophetic, wisdom, and liturgical traditions explain poverty as a matter of significance to the community.⁴⁹ Whereas, Thomas D. Hanks argues that "the word 'poor' cannot be defined exhaustively and statically, but generally designates persons and groups lacking the necessities of life: food, drink, clothing, shelter, health, land/employment, freedom, dignity, and honour."⁵⁰ Thus, he concludes that many who are regarded as poor orphans and widows, workers and harvesters, naked or lacking in daily food, etc. are considered to be poor.⁵¹

H. H. Esser argues that the people of Israel were aware of the guiding principles about their wealth in the society, though they seldom followed them. However, the common understandings that are supposed to have been followed by the people are: a) When

⁴² Hendrickx, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 14.

⁴³ Hendrickx, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 15.

⁴⁴ Schweitzer, *The Good News According to Matthew*, 86.

⁴⁵ Schweitzer, *The Good News According to Matthew*, 88.

⁴⁶ Schweitzer, *The Good News According to Matthew*, 86.

⁴⁷ Neil J. McEleney, "The Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount/Plain," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 43, no. 1 (1981): 7.

⁴⁸ McEleney, "The Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount/Plain," 7.

⁴⁹ Pleins, "Poor, Poverty," 413.

⁵⁰ Thomas D. Hanks, "Poor, Poverty," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 415.

⁵¹ Hanks, "Poor, Poverty," 415.

the Israelite has a Hebrew servant, he is to serve for six years. But in the seventh year he shall go free, without paying anything (Ex 21:2). b) In the sabbatical year, when the ground was allowed to lie fallow, its produce belonged to the poor (Ex 23:10f). c) It was forbidden to exploit or oppress the poor (Ex 22:22-27). d) The law may not be perverted against the poor (Ex 23:27b). e) The people were reminded how they had been freed from Egypt, ending thus their position of dependence there (Ex 22:21; 23:9).⁵² The poor has the rights to the sabbatical fruits (Ex 23:11; Lev 25:25). The poverty of the person was not the criteria to be excluded from the joy of the festival in the Jewish community (Deu 16:11-12). The poor were expected to be true to the covenant with God.⁵³ Whether one is rich or poor, the God fearing man/woman will be blessed despite his/her poverty.⁵⁴ The rich who were responsible for evil practices in the society were threatened with the judgment of God (Am 2:7; 4:1; 5:11; 8:4; Is 3:14f; 5:8f; 10:2; Mic 2:2; 3:2ff). He/she has become poor because the others have despised God's law. Thus, he/she turns to God in prayer. God is praised as the protector of the poor (Ps 72:2, 4, 12ff; 132:15).

It is doubtful, according to Esser, whether the saying of Matthew 5:3 was taken from this Jewish tradition or not.⁵⁵ However, it is certain that Jesus did not come to eliminate poverty and make everyone rich (Mk 14:7). The early Christian community following his example was concerned about the poor (Ac 2:45; 4:34; 11:29; Gal 2:10). Wolf believed that to have pity on the poor was considered to be meritorious. It gave blessings to the family and individuals.⁵⁶ It was the duty of the rich to help the poor, of the strong to protect the weak.⁵⁷ However, Hanks claims that the attitude of oppression is one of the reasons of poverty.⁵⁸

According to Jan Lambrecht, the term "poor in spirit" mentioned in Matthew's narrative of the chapter 5:3 is to be understood in three ways. 1) "The people who are actually poor and interiorly detached, or the people who are interiorly detached whatever their material situation." 2) It has a religious explanation, that is: "the people of the earth." People are poor in the aspect of their spiritual matters. They are disdained because they do not know the Law. 3) The phrase "poor in spirit" occurs in

⁵² Esser, "Poor," 822.

⁵³ Wolf, "Poor," 843.

⁵⁴ Wolf, "Poor," 843.

⁵⁵ Esser, "Poor," 824.

⁵⁶ Wolf, "Poor," 844.

⁵⁷ Wolf, "Poor," 844.

⁵⁸ Hanks, "Poor, Poverty," 422.

Qumran where it would mean “humble, faithful to the Law, obedient to God.” Therefore, humility was the mark of the people who were poor.⁵⁹ Whereas, for Grayston, the ‘poor in spirit’ would mean “poor man of firm and simple piety who maintained the faith against pagan enticements.”⁶⁰ However, it is true that the poor are humble in many ways. While explaining these words of Jesus, one needs to understand what St. Matthew meant by the ‘poor in spirit’: the person who is well aware that his/her status in the society means nothing, but in front of God they are worth something.

Aquinata Bockmann believes that Jesus addresses himself directly to the poor and promises to give an experience of the Kingdom.⁶¹ Hendrickx argues that “they are called blessed not because of their poverty, of course, but because of the fact that through God’s justice their condition is going to change with the dawning of the Kingdom of God.”⁶² The people, especially the poor, believe that Yahweh is the defender of the poor.

According to Stott, the word *anawim* (עֲנָוִים) is also used to denote ‘the poor,’ which means “those who are both afflicted and unable to save themselves and hence look to God for salvation, while recognising that they have no claim upon Him.”⁶³ It is a total surrender of oneself to the absolute benevolence of God, the Supreme Being. Furthermore, the poor are recognised by everyone in the society. Poverty was the irreplaceable reality of the society. Thus, poverty of the people was an accepted fact among the contemporaries of Jesus; therefore we read: “For you always have the poor with you” (Mk 14:7, Mt 26:11, Jn 12:8). Thus, one needs to concentrate on how he/she can overcome this situation of poverty in the society.

It is generally understood that during the time of Jesus in his own society certain rich people looked down upon the poor people, considering them the ones good for nothing. This experience of the poor of being worth nothing before the rich gave them the alternative form of consolation and strength from their dependence on God. They had a close relationship with God. This relationship can be considered a child-like experience with God as their loving and compassionate Father. Jesus spoke to his

⁵⁹ Jan Lambrecht, *The Sermon on the Mount* (Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1985), 64, 65.

⁶⁰ Grayston, “Sermon on the Mount,” 284.

⁶¹ Aquinata Bockmann, “What Does the New Testament Say About the Church’s Attitude to the Poor,” in *The Poor and the Church*, ed. Norbert Greinacher and Alois Muller (New York: The Seabury Press, 1977), 37.

⁶² Hendrickx, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 15.

⁶³ Stott, *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount*, 39.

heavenly Father with child-like trust and intimacy. Joachim Jeremias argues: "If [one does] not learn to say *Abba*, ... [one] cannot enter the Kingdom of God."⁶⁴ The poor people normally have this experience of being cared and loved by God as their *Abba*. Jesus, when he addressed them and offered the blessing of the Kingdom of God primarily to them in his Sermon on the Mount, seemed to have meant this special liking of God to the poor. As Soares-Prabhu, an Indian biblical scholar says, in his elucidation of the Sermon on the Mount, in the "Kingdom of God" inaugurated by Jesus "there will be neither rich nor poor, for there men and women transformed by their experience of God's love will live together in a free, fraternal, non-exploitative community, as children of the Father in heaven."⁶⁵ This seems to be the real state of affairs visualised by Jesus about his "Kingdom of God" on earth.

The Jewish priests in Jerusalem did maintain their religion as the means of power and economic profit. The Pharisees, on the other hand, practiced a puritan religion that excluded most of the people as sinners. It is interesting to note that the stand which Jesus took was in between them.

He did not side with any of the existing dominant groups: the politicians like Herod, the High Priests, the Pharisees, or the Zealots. He did not retire peacefully into the desert like the Essenes or even like John the Baptist. He took as his point of reference the poor and the marginalised and he prophetically challenged everyone to conversion. He did not seek to bring peace by somehow adjusting to the situation, trying to please everyone, give something to everyone, balance things out, search for a new equilibrium, etc. He does not suggest that the rich and the powerful are overthrown and the poor and the oppressed will take over and there will be peace. He is proposing a radical transformation of society, based on a different set of values-the values of the Kingdom of God, namely justice and fellowship, freedom and humility, love and service.⁶⁶

Jesus remains always the person knowing everything, but not attached to or supporting of any-thing evil. His isolation from the evil practices might have been one of the reasons of his death on the cross.

Trying to understand Jesus' own view of the poor, as Michael Amaladoss warns, one may misunderstand Jesus as a revolutionary who opted to be on the side of the poor and the oppressed in the society. Amaladoss affirms that the understanding is correct

⁶⁴ Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus* (London: SCM Press, 1963), 191.

⁶⁵ Soares-Prabhu, *Theology of Liberation: An Indian Biblical Perspective*, 186.

⁶⁶ Michael Amaladoss, "Listen to the Spirit: Blessed Are the Peacemaker," *Vidyajyoti* 65, no. 12 (2001): 919.

but with a difference, that is, “Jesus did not opt for the poor against the rich.”⁶⁷ Furthermore, he wanted everyone to belong to the Kingdom of God. Therefore, he called for the conversion of people of all walks of life. His goal was not to make the rich poor and the poor rich, but to create a new society of equals. He expected a transformation of the unjust and unequal structures of the existing social order. Jesus, by his preaching of the beatitudes, also shows that he wanted to do away with the structures of poverty. So he used later very powerfully inspiring parables, like the parable of the “rich man and Lazarus” (Lk 16:19-31) and the parable of the “rich fool” (Lk 12:16-21) who had stored his bumper crop in a new barn without being concerned about the poor or the possible loss of it when God deprived him of life at high midnight! Referring to the rich young man desiring to follow Jesus but unwilling to part with his wealth and share it with the poor (Lk 18:18-25), Jesus exclaimed that it was very difficult for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God. In this way Jesus really wanted to conscientise the rich about the futility of the wealth if not shared with the poor, and thus to make everyone worthy to enter the Kingdom.

1.3 THE PEOPLE WHO MOURN WILL BE COMFORTED

Jesus calls the people who mourn ‘blessed,’ not because of their mourning, but because of the fact that ‘they shall be comforted’ by the coming of the Kingdom (cf. Rev 21:4). The people who mourn will experience the blessings of the Kingdom. The comfort of the Kingdom will be the result of the mourning. However, there are also people who mourn due to their sins. They feel an unworthiness to enter the Kingdom. Jesus promises a new hope to the people who mourn for no fault of their own on earth. They will be comforted at the establishment of the Kingdom.

E. May argues that there were many forms of mourning among the people of Israel. The mourning can also be the result of oppression (1Macc 1:25-27; 2:24, 39). The expression of grief involved a conscious neglect of one’s outward appearance.⁶⁸ Isaiah foretold that those who mourn were comforted (Is 61:1-2). According to Dennis Hamm, those who mourn are another description of Israel who is in need of God’s help.⁶⁹ In the Old Testament the Greek word ‘*pentheo*’ (πενθέω) is used to denote the term ‘mourning for the dead.’ Furthermore, the word ‘mourning’ has also the meaning ‘weep.’ It was customary among the people of the Hebrew tradition to

⁶⁷ Amaladoss, “Listen to the Spirit: Blessed Are the Peacemaker,” 919.

⁶⁸ E. May, “Mourning,” in *Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Religion*, ed. Paul Kevin Meagher (Philadelphia: Corpus Publications, 1979), 2452.

⁶⁹ Hamm, *The Beatitudes in Context*, 84.

mourn especially after the death of a dear one. To die unmourned and unburied was considered to be a calamity among the Hebrews (Job 27:15; Jer 16:4-6). It was said the Hebrews mourned their dead according to a definite ritual.⁷⁰ There were also professional mourners in the community, who were mostly women (2 Chr 35:25; Jer 9:17-18). E. May concludes that the mourner would usually tear his/her garment or wear a sackcloth; he/she also throws dust on his/her head or rolls in ashes (Ez 27:30; Is 61:3). It is noteworthy that fasting also formed part of the ritual (1 Sam 31:13; Jdt 8:6). The Mosaic Law forbade self-mutilation as a sign of grief (Lev 19:28; Dt 14:1). However, the mourning generally lasted seven days (1 Sam 31:13; Sir 22:12).⁷¹

Those who mourn are often not comforted. Schweitzer argues that the Messiah was even called a comforter, with invitation to hope that Jesus will comfort.⁷² Those who suffer from various difficulties will receive a reward with the establishment of the Kingdom.⁷³ We read in the Gospel of Mark: "can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them" (Mk 2:19). However, the evangelist Matthew means that it is suffering caused by the bodily absence of Jesus (Mt 9:15).

Stott argues that the people who mourn in the world are due to "lose their innocence, ... their self respect."⁷⁴ These qualities are taken away from the poor by force. The rich and the powerful are not aware of what Yves Congar speaks of: "the world simply follows its instinct to live, it is not aware that God's wisdom is the wisdom of the Cross."⁷⁵ When the people lose all their status in the society, they feel deprived of everything.

Jesus has come as the fulfilment of prophet Isaiah's prophecy: the people who are in the dark have seen the light. Furthermore, "to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour...to comfort all who mourn" Is 61:2. The people mourn due to their poverty and the wretchedness of the situation. As it is mentioned in Isaiah 60:20, "your days of mourning shall be ended." Jesus has come to put an end to this mourning of the people with a new hope. Further, Isaiah 66:10 reads: "rejoice with Jerusalem ... rejoice with her, all you who mourn over her." The people who mourn will have a

⁷⁰ May, "Mourning," 2452.

⁷¹ May, "Mourning," 2453.

⁷² Schweitzer, *The Good News According to Matthew*, 89.

⁷³ Schweitzer, *The Good News According to Matthew*, 89.

⁷⁴ Stott, *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount*, 40, 41.

⁷⁵ Yves M. J. Congar, *Lay People in the Church* (Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1967), 100.

special place in the Kingdom of God. Jesus has come to console their days of mourning and fill them with a new hope and courage of the new Kingdom.

1.4 THE MEEK WILL INHERIT THE EARTH

We have seen in our previous discussion that, according to Stott, the word *anawim* is used to denote 'poor.'⁷⁶ Whereas, according to C. J. Cook, the same Hebrew word *anawim* is also used for 'the meek,' and 'the gentle.'⁷⁷ The adjective 'meek' is the translation of (ʿānāw) אָנָו the primary meaning of which is 'humility,' 'poor' or 'needy.'⁷⁸ Later the idea of "weak," "oppressed by the rich and powerful" developed from this word (Am 2:7). He believed the word was also used to express the attitude of the truly religious person, as opposed to the rich and arrogant one. The meaning of 'meekness' is the opposite of 'pride.'⁷⁹ Stott claims that the Greek word *praus* (πραῦς) is used to express the quality of meekness in the Gospel. The adjective *praus* means 'gentle,' 'humble,' 'considerate,' 'courteous' and thus calls for self control which helps to cultivate these qualities in men/women.⁸⁰ It also would mean 'oppressed' (Ps 76:9), 'downtrodden' (Ps 147:6). The word is used in the Old Testament to describe primarily the proper attitude of complete dependence upon God, and secondarily the attitude shown towards others by one who is meek towards God. Whereas, Schweitzer argues that in Greek meekness also symbolises the humility of wise men and rulers.⁸¹

It is noteworthy that the word '*praus*' is used three more times, other than described in beatitudes in the New Testament. In the Gospel of Matthew: (Mt 11:29) "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle (meek) and humble in heart"; (Mt 21:5) "behold, your king is coming to you, gentle (meek), and mounted on an ass"; and (1Pet 3:4) "but let it be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable jewel of a gentle (meek) and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious." Some scholars, like Cook, holds the opinion that the word 'meekness' *prautēs* (πραῦτης) means one's 'inner attitude,' and 'gentleness in dealing with others.'⁸²

St. Matthew in his Gospel uses the word 'meek' which would mean 'humble' (Mt 5:5) and 'gentle' (Mt 11:29) in relation to the Old Testament background. It comes directly

⁷⁶ Stott, *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount*, 39.

⁷⁷ E. J. Cook, "Meekness," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. George Arthur Buttrick (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), 334.

⁷⁸ Cook, "Meekness," 334.

⁷⁹ Cook, "Meekness," 334.

⁸⁰ Stott, *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount*, 42.

⁸¹ Schweitzer, *The Good News According to Matthew*, 89.

⁸² Cook, "Meekness," 335.

from Psalm 37:11. In contrast to those who rebel against God and are insolent towards a man, and whom the Lord will destroy, the meek are those who take a proper understanding of themselves in relation to God. They are those who shall possess the Kingdom of God. The meek are those who humble themselves before God and a man.

According to T. C. O'Brien, meekness differs from clemency which moderates actual punishing, being concerned with the inner surge towards revenge.⁸³ Jesus expected his followers to pursue the same meekness as that of his (Mt 11:29). Thus, he said that they were going to be blessed among others. Brien also argues that the meek are mostly those who rely on the Father's will, remain tranquil in the face of the wrongs done to them.⁸⁴ Further, the people who are meek obtain consolation too. Therefore, Isaiah 61 explains that the meek are privileged people in the society. They shall eat the wealth of the nations (Is 61:6) and they shall not hunger and thirst (Is 49:10). God provides them with everything. The people of Israel believed that the land was considered to be the property of Yahweh and it will be given to the meek. It was His choice to take away or distribute the land to the people. Furthermore, the man/woman who is meek will be truly amazed when he/she obtains the land from God as a gift.⁸⁵ Their reward of inheriting the land means their security and stability in the possession of the eternal good, in contrast with the ephemeral victories of those who resort to violence.⁸⁶ This gift from God makes him/her gentle, humble, sensitive, and patient in all his/her dealings with others. Thus, the meek will be blessed by God and shall possess the land as a gift from God. To possess the land was the primary hope of the people of Israel, who were basically a nomadic people. The possession of the land was the first promise made by God to Israel when they were in Egypt.

Bockman believes that the way of Christ is different from the way of the world and every Christian, even if he/she, like Paul, in having nothing can yet describe himself/herself as the one possessing everything (2Cor 6:10). They are to be confident that violence does not lead to the land which God promises. The early Christian community is the symbol of the new messianic people of God in its totality.⁸⁷ They were meek, gentle, and humble searching only to please their leader,

⁸³ T. C. O'Brien, "Meekness," in *Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Religion*, ed. Paul Kevin Meagher (Philadelphia: Corpus Publications, 1979), 2323.

⁸⁴ Brien, "Meekness," 2323.

⁸⁵ Stott, *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount*, 43.

⁸⁶ Brien, "Meekness," 2323.

⁸⁷ Bockmann, "What Does the New Testament Say About the Church's Attitude to the Poor," 41.

Jesus. Finally, the meek will attain everything at the time of fulfilment of the establishment of the Kingdom.

1.5 THE PEOPLE WHO HUNGER AND THIRST FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS WILL BE SATISFIED

According to John Reumann, the word 'righteousness' in the scripture originates in the root *šedeq* (שֶׁדֶק) in the west Semitic language. This word would mean 'right' or 'just.'⁸⁸ We do find the use of 'righteousness' in the Old Testament as well (Lev 19:15; Dt 9:4, 5, 6). *Šedeq* occurs 523 times in the Old Testament: verbal forms-41 times, the nouns *šedeq*-119 times, and *šēdāqā* (שֶׁדָּאָה) 157 times, the adjective-substantive *šaddīq* (שֶׁדִּיק) 206 times. Further, *šedeq* means 'right order,' it is an action directed towards the right order of the community according to its well-being. He claims that the word *šēdāqā* is used for 'human well-being' or 'right behaviour.' It is that which puts everyone in order before God. It is Yahweh's action towards Israel, the individual in distress, saving and liberating order.⁸⁹

H. Seebass argues that the word *dikaïos* (δικαίος) would mean 'righteous man'; its noun form *dikaïosynē* (δικαιοσύνη) would mean 'the quality of a righteous man/woman.'⁹⁰ Whereas, Hamm believes 'righteousness' can be considered a 'divine attribute.' Furthermore, *dikaïosynē* has more than one meaning in English: it can also mean 'justice,' 'uprightness,' 'goodness,' 'holiness,' 'what is right,' and also 'to do what is required.'⁹¹ We see in the Old Testament how strongly prophet Amos attacks those who oppress the just one, *šaddīq* (Am 2:6; 5:12). He says that the people have turned down justice, the proper order. He insists that Yahweh does not want a merely formalised ritual, but rather a proper order in every area of life (Am 5:21-23). In the proverb, a king's throne is based on *šēdāqā*, the proper order (Pr 16:12). Further, it is explained in the Old Testament that the one who speaks what is proper is a joy to the king (Pr 16:13). *šēdāqā* guarantees life (Pr 12:28; 21:21), prosperity to a nation (Pr 14:34), and to the old (Pr 16:31). Whereas, E. R. Achtemeier claims that "the

⁸⁸ John Reumann, "Righteousness," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 725.

⁸⁹ Reumann, "Righteousness," 726.

⁹⁰ H. Seebass, "Righteousness," in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown (Wuppertal: The Paternoster Press, 1978), 354.

⁹¹ Hamm, *The Beatitudes in Context*, 92.

fulfilment of the law does not constitute righteousness, but he who is righteous fulfils the law because he accepts it in faith as God's gracious guidance of him."⁹²

Reumann further claims that the word 'righteousness' is derived from the old English '*riht*,' which would mean 'right' and its noun form is 'righteousness.' These expressions would mean a 'quality, state of being righteous,' 'upright,' 'in the right,' or 'just.' It also would mean that which is in conformity with a standard or in a state of acceptability to God.⁹³ There is also another meaning derived from the Latin root *Iustus*, which would mean 'just, upright.'⁹⁴ Thus, those who translate Biblical or other passages from the Hebrew root *šdq* (צדק) or the Greek *dikaion* (δικαίουν) could employ either 'just, justice/justification, justify' from the Latin, or 'right, righteous,' and the Anglo-Saxon verb 'right-wise.'⁹⁵ In German, *recht*, *Gerechtigkeit*, *Rechtfertigung*, *rechtfertigen*; and in French *juste*, *justice*, *justification*, *justifier* are used to denote the same meaning.⁹⁶ This phrase was great strongly influenced by the use of different languages. In addition, it is believed that the use of *dikai* (δικαι) originated in the New Testament times.⁹⁷

The word 'righteousness' also would mean 'victorious,' 'triumphal,' and saving acts of God in favour of his people, or the acts of the people in conformity with God's order. It is very explicit in some of the Old Testament books (Jdg 5:11; 1 Sm 12:7). Reumann has argued that Yahweh's righteousness was a continuous event directed towards Israel and consequently a subject of proclamation. Furthermore, he claims that it is like a sphere, or power-charged area, into which men were incorporated and thereby empowered to do special deeds.⁹⁸ On the other hand, Joseph A. Fitzmyer argues that the term 'righteousness' was used very sparingly in all the Gospels, therefore, one cannot conclude that righteousness was the major theme of Jesus at all.⁹⁹ However, in the Gospel of St. Matthew, Jesus seems to demand God's righteousness as something to be preferred to everything else, as something more fundamental, when he advises his disciples to seek first God's Kingdom and His

⁹² E. R. Achtemeier, "Righteousness," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. George Arthur Buttrick (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), 82.

⁹³ John Reumann, *Righteousness in New Testament*, ed. David Noel Freedman, The Anchor Bible Dictionary, vol.5 (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 746.

⁹⁴ Reumann, *Righteousness in New Testament*, 746.

⁹⁵ Reumann, *Righteousness in New Testament*, 746.

⁹⁶ Reumann, *Righteousness in New Testament*, 746.

⁹⁷ Reumann, *Righteousness in New Testament*, 746.

⁹⁸ Reumann, *Righteousness in New Testament*, 748.

⁹⁹ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Pauline Theology: A Brief Sketch* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1982), 367.

righteousness, while promising to them all other things as provisionally accruing to them in due course (Mt 6:33).

Every human being is called to search for righteousness all through his/her life. It is very clearly seen in what St. Matthew wrote: “therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘what shall we eat?’ or ‘what shall we drink?’ or ‘what shall we wear?’ Therefore seek first his Kingdom and his *dikaiosynē* (δικαιοσύνη), and all these things shall be yours as well” (Mt 6:33). Hamm believes that only the gentiles seek for the earthly things. But it should be different for Jesus’ disciples. Thus, Jesus said that their righteousness had to be greater than that of Pharisees and Scribes to be worthy of entering the Kingdom of God.¹⁰⁰ Robert Horton Gundry goes one step further and claims that St. Matthew gives emphasis to righteousness by saying “unless your righteousness exceeds that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the Kingdom of heaven” (Mt 5:20). He further argues that the beatitudes of feeling hungry and thirsty after righteousness would mean ‘right conduct on the part of God as well.’¹⁰¹ Whereas, Seebass argues that righteousness is not the standard imposed upon the world by God, but something immanent, inherent in the very nature of being, and related to persons living together in the society.¹⁰² It can be understood as redemption and salvation (Is 45:21; 51:5f). He who longs for redemption calls upon God’s righteousness. Seebass further claims that God alone can pronounce a man righteous or unrighteous.¹⁰³ Whereas, Hamm believes that God is faithful to the covenant relationship with a man. By giving the importance to the efforts of the individual, the author of the book of Baruch believed that only souls that hunger would enjoy God’s glory and righteousness (Baruch 2:18).

It is noteworthy that the righteousness can be seen in three ways: legal, moral, and social. Righteousness in the legal point of view would mean justification and a right relationship with God. Moral righteousness is the righteousness of character and conduct which pleases God. Thus, it is more than a private and personal affair, it includes social righteousness as well. Finally, social righteousness is concerned with seeking a man/woman’s liberation from oppression, together with the promotion of civil rights, justice in the law courts, integrity in business dealings and honour in home and family affairs. Through this blessing, Jesus refers to the people who suffer

¹⁰⁰ Hamm, *The Beatitudes in Context*, 94.94.

¹⁰¹ Robert Horton Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: W. B. Eerdmans, 1983), 70.

¹⁰² Seebass, "Righteousness," 353.

¹⁰³ Seebass, "Righteousness," 356.

for righteousness or the cause of justice in the society. Jesus speaks about those people who suffer from hunger and thirst not for their personal gain but for the sake of others' righteousness. They will be satisfied. Furthermore, the people who long for the good of the others will be satisfied. Christians are called "to seek primarily the Kingdom of God and His righteousness" (Mt 6:33). In this connection, Gustavo Gutierrez's argument seems to be very significant:

If the Church wants to be faithful to the God of Jesus Christ, it has to rethink itself from below, from the position of the poor of this world, the exploited classes, the despised races, the marginal cultures. It must descend into the world's hells and commune with poverty, injustice, the struggles and hopes of the dispossessed because of them is the Kingdom of Heaven.¹⁰⁴

Stott argues that the Christians are called to feel hunger and thirst for the righteousness in the whole human community as something pleasing to righteous God.¹⁰⁵

We can find in the book of Psalms that "many are the afflictions of the righteous; but the Lord delivers him out of them all" (Ps 34: 19). We can see in the Book of Wisdom how the righteous are afflicted. Thus, we read: "Let us oppress the righteous Let us lie in wait for the righteous man.... Let us test him with insult and torture that we may find out how gentle he is, and make trial of his forbearance. Let us condemn him to a shameful death, for, according to what he says, he will be protected" (Wis 2:10-20).

On the other hand, C. Brown highlights how St. Peter explains the benefits of being a person of righteousness.¹⁰⁶ He explains beautifully that the Kingdom of God is where one experiences righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom 14:17).¹⁰⁷ It is in the sense of establishing righteous harmony among men/women. Whereas,

¹⁰⁴ Gustavo Gutierrez, "The Poor in the Church," in *The Poor and the Church*, ed. Norbert Greinacher and Alois Muller (New York: The Seabury Press, 1977), 13.

¹⁰⁵ Stott, *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount*, 44, 45.

¹⁰⁶ C. Brown, "Righteousness," in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown (Wuppertal: The Paternoster Press, 1978), 371. A righteous person is a member of the righteous community. Righteousness takes its character from God himself (1 Pet 2:23) and salvation is grounded in righteousness (1 Pet 3: 18), which finds its expression in right behaviour (1 Pet 2:24; 3:12; 4:18). He who is called to suffer for righteousness' sake is blessed (1 Pet 3:14), and in so doing lives out the righteousness of Christ. Thus, the Christian faith and way of life can be called "the way of righteousness (2 Pet 2:11) and the goal of life can be described in terms of righteousness (2 Pet 3:13).

¹⁰⁷ C. Brown, "Peace," in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown (Wuppertal: The Paternoster Press, 1976), 781.

Schweitzer claims that the disciples of Jesus are called to exhibit righteousness higher than Pharisees, which may invite rejections or tensions from other religious communities.¹⁰⁸ P. J. Achtemeier argues that God alone decides the fate of the covenantal relationship, and therefore He alone is the source of righteousness.¹⁰⁹ Christ has become both the proof of God's righteousness, and the hope of man's righteousness. Thus, the New Testament righteousness is centred on Christ.¹¹⁰ Righteousness was possible for a man only through the death of Christ (Gal 2:21; 1 Pet 2:24). A man becomes righteous when he or she relates through God's act to Christ.¹¹¹

The Jews found the teachings of Jesus are different in comparison to the ones of other Jewish Rabbis. He taught with authority (Mt 7:29), which brought credibility in his teachings. Russell B. Sisson believes that this credibility finally leads to his righteousness. Furthermore, for Sisson righteousness and the entrance of the people into the Kingdom were the main themes of Jesus' teaching.¹¹² Whereas, Hendrickx claims that Christians should live for the sake of Christ and for the sake of his righteousness. Which would mean that "Christians dedicate their lives to justice should be the same as to give their lives to Jesus and to accept persecution for his sake.... Ultimately a Christian suffers not for something but for somebody."¹¹³ Thus, everyone who imbibed with the Spirit of Christ will live in the righteousness to realise splendid by the Kingdom of God which will be established on earth by the followers of Jesus.

1.6 THE MERCIFUL SHALL OBTAIN MERCY

In this beatitude Jesus emphasises the merciful attitude of a person towards another. According to E. R. Achtemeier, the noun form *rachum* (רַחֻם) 'mercy' or 'compassion,' derived from the term *racham* (רָחַם), meaning 'womb.' Its original meaning was 'brotherly' or 'motherly feeling.' The word would also mean the love among brothers or the love of the mother towards her child.¹¹⁴ Furthermore, in Hebrew, the most

¹⁰⁸ Schweitzer, *The Good News According to Matthew*, 79.

¹⁰⁹ P. J. Achtemeier, "Righteousness in the New Testament," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. George Arthur Buttrick (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), 94.

¹¹⁰ Achtemeier, "Righteousness in the New Testament," 95.

¹¹¹ Achtemeier, "Righteousness in the New Testament," 95.

¹¹² Russell B. Sisson, "Voice of Authority in the Sermon on the Mount," *Society of Biblical Literature 1997 Seminar Papers* (1997): 557.

¹¹³ Hendrickx, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 34, 35.

¹¹⁴ E. R. Achtemeier, "Mercy," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. George Arthur Buttrick (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), 352.

frequently used verb form is *rahm* (רחם), which means 'to have compassion.' Its noun form is *rechum*, which also mean 'compassion,' and its adjective *rachmani* (רַחֲמָנִי) 'compassionate or merciful' However, the word *chānan* (חָנַן), is used to show favour.¹¹⁵ Thus, the word represents Yahweh's love towards the people which is interpreted as that of a mother's towards her child (Is 63: 15-16; Jr 31:20). The argument placed by Hesser is noteworthy: the Greek word *oiktirmos* (οἰκτιρμός) would mean also 'compassion.' The feelings of compassion and pity are opposite to the feeling of envy at another's good fortune. It also may be connected to fear of suffering the same situation.¹¹⁶

Yahweh is considered to be God of mercy. It was understood that out of pity He freed the Israelites from the Egyptians (Ex 3:7). Achtemeier further argues that Yahweh reveals himself as different persons on Mount Sinai. For example, Yahweh as the merciful one (Ex 34:6). Yahweh is also seen as the father to Israel (Ex 4:22-23; Jer 2:2; Hos 11:1), as the mother (Is 49:15), as the husband (Hos 1-3). Thus, Yahweh reveals Himself as the merciful one. The Lord welcomes His sinful people with love and forgiveness.¹¹⁷ Achtemeier claims that the meaning of the word 'mercy' varies in Scripture.¹¹⁸ It can be the inner feelings of sympathy of an individual towards the other, or a consideration shown outwardly towards the attitudes of another man.¹¹⁹ It can be affection or yearning similar to that of a parent for his/her child. It can also signify forgiveness.¹²⁰ He further believes that the practice of mercy was very much prevalent in a Hebrew community between the members of the family. He found where mercy was lacking the family relations were also disturbed.¹²¹ The Prophet Hosea reminds the people of the character of their God (Hos 11:8). The Jewish text *Sifre Deut* 13:18 states that "as long as you are merciful to man, heaven will show mercy to you." It is noteworthy that the word *eleos* (ἐλεος) 'mercy' in Greek means 'compassion' and 'pity.' The *eleos* of Yahweh is understood as a gracious gift to mankind. Often we find the use of the term *eleos* as mercy received from God, but St.

¹¹⁵ Achtemeier, "Mercy," 352.

¹¹⁶ H. H. Hesser, "Mercy," in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown (Wuppertal: The Paternoster Press, 1976), 594.

¹¹⁷ Achtemeier, "Mercy," 352.

¹¹⁸ Achtemeier, "Mercy," 352.

¹¹⁹ Achtemeier, "Mercy," 352.

¹²⁰ Achtemeier, "Mercy," 352.

¹²¹ Achtemeier, "Mercy," 353.

Matthew uses two times *eleeō* (ἐλεέω) (Mt 5:7; 18:33). He uses this to indicate mercy shown by a man towards the other.¹²²

Achtemeier further argues that it can also generally denote the divine love, manifested in the saving acts of grace, which God holds for His covenant people.¹²³ Thus, it represents the love of God towards His covenant children. God is merciful to his people. On the other hand, He expects the conversion of the sinners. Attributing the same qualities of God to Jesus, Schweizer argued that the core of Jesus' message was mercy. It means the fulfilment of the law.¹²⁴ This mercy will lead everyone to be generous to others.

Herman Hendrickx cites St. Matthew's mentions about the mercy of God: "and should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you" (Mt 18:33), and "I desire mercy, and not sacrifice" (Mt 9:13; 12:7). Here we find a continuity of the theme from the Old Testament to the New Testament. Hendrickx has concluded that St. Matthew borrowed this notion from the Old Testament, especially from the book of Hosea, "for I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God, rather than burnt offerings" (Hos 6:6).¹²⁵ Whereas, V. Duclos argues that the Son of God takes the form of the ordinary man to share the misery of humans and to rescue them from it. Jesus is depicted as the merciful and faithful high priest (Heb 2:17). His responsibility is to reveal this characteristic of the mercy that Father has for mankind.¹²⁶ Jesus goes one step further from the Old Testament understanding of mercy and explains it as the divine quality in which a man must share. Thus, a man is called to be merciful as the Father is merciful (Lk 6:36). They will be judged according to their mercifulness toward the other (Mt 25: 31-46). V. Duclos concludes by saying that the most common works of mercy can be found in two series of seven, "one comprising spiritual and the other corporal works. The corporal works are to feed the hungry, to give drink to the thirsty, to clothe the naked, to harbour the stranger, to visit the sick, to minister to prisoners, and to bury the dead. The spiritual works are to convert the sinner, to instruct the ignorant, to counsel the doubtful, to comfort the sorrowful, to bear wrongs patiently, to forgive injuries, and to pray for the

¹²² Hesser, "Mercy," 595.

¹²³ Achtemeier, "Mercy," 352.

¹²⁴ Schweitzer, *The Good News According to Matthew*, 92.

¹²⁵ Hendrickx, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 28.

¹²⁶ V. Duclos, "Mercy," in *Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Religion*, ed. Paul Kevin Meagher (Philadelphia: Corpus Publications, 1979), 2340.

living and the dead.”¹²⁷ Jesus spoke very clearly of the attitude of his followers towards the other. He explained that we should treat the other in the way we expect them to treat us: “so whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them” (Mt 7:12). In his Gospel St. Matthew once again explains the need for mercy, which says: if you forgive man of his trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you (Mt 6:14). Therefore, if one needs to obtain mercy, he/she has to be merciful to others. Jesus does not specify the categories of people that he has in mind to whom the Christians have to be merciful.¹²⁸

To forgive and to be forgiven is to show mercy and to receive mercy: these belong indissolubly together, as Jesus illustrated in the parable of the unmerciful servant (Mt 18:21-35). Jesus asks of all Christians that their attitude or ethics of life is formulated according to the demands of the Gospel.¹²⁹ Jesus tells his followers to do even more than what they are asked for (Mt 5:40-41). If they are willing to show mercy to others, they can too receive the same from them. He gives emphasis to one's own attitude towards the other. Therefore, every follower of Christ is invited to show mercy towards the other. They are to love others as Jesus loved them so that they can receive the love from others. This disposition of mind has become a criterion to enjoy the happiness of the new Kingdom.

1.7 THE PURE IN HEART SHALL SEE GOD

H. Baltensweiler argues that the study of religion confirms that the world is divided into pure and impure as well as sacred (holy) and profane. The purity enjoys the blessings of God and the impurity is affected by the influence of unclean powers, like demons. It is influenced by the sins of the individual.¹³⁰

H. Baltensweiler further argues that in Greek two adjectives signify the word purity: *hagnos* (ἁγνός) and *katharos* (καθαρός). The adjective *hagnos* is originally connected with a root meaning ‘holy’; it signifies a qualitative holiness or purity belonging to the deity and the associated things or persons. The word *katharos* would indicate cultic or ethical purity as well as physical or moral cleanliness in persons and things.¹³¹ The Greek word *hagnos*, an adjective, ‘pure,’ ‘holy’ derives from the verb

¹²⁷ Duclos, "Mercy," 2340.

¹²⁸ Stott, *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount*, 47.

¹²⁹ Hendrickx, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 27.

¹³⁰ H. Baltensweiler, "Pure," in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown (Wuppertal: The Paternoster Press, 1971), 100.

¹³¹ Baltensweiler, "Pure," 100.

hazomai, (ἁλομαι) which is in turn derived from *hagiomai* (ἁγιομαι) meaning ‘to stand in awe of someone,’ which originally means ‘that which inspires awe.’ In the religious language it is primarily an attribute of deity; then it refers to things having a certain relation to the deity. Thus, it would mean ‘holy,’ ‘pure.’ It can also be ‘purity of mind’ or for example, avoidance of blood-guilt, touching corpse. Thus, this term *hagnos* transfers to the sphere of morality. From *hagnos* derived the verb *hagnizo* which means ‘ritual purification.’ Thus, it would mean the expiatory rites of cultic purity, chastity and purity of mind. Another noun that derived from *hagnos* is *hagnotēs* which means purity and moral blamelessness. Whereas, J. Schattenmann argues that there is another Greek word *katharos* (καθαρός) which would also mean ‘clean,’ ‘pure,’ etc. It symbolises the realms of cultic and ethical purity. The compound verb *ekkathairo* (ἐκκαθαίρω) expresses an intensification of the primary meaning: ‘to sweep out,’ ‘clean thoroughly.’ For example, a woman after childbirth, and also her child, are unclean. Likewise, those who touch the dead body must therefore undergo purification, which will remove the uncleanness that came from without. A person who shed blood had to be cleansed. The blood of an animal was poured over the hands of the person who had become unclean to be cleaned, so banishes death by death.¹³² The result of impurity is guilt and sin (Jer 33:8; Ez 39:24; Ps 51). However, Christ is often referred to as *hagnos*, ‘pure,’ that is without sin (1 Jn 3:3). He is pure and those who belong to him need to be pure too. It is more than merely a ritual purity. On the other hand, Baltensweiler claims that purity and integrity are not merely human virtues, they rather indicate the relationship of a person with God.¹³³

Stott argues that it was very clear when king David prayed to God to teach him wisdom and create in him a clean heart (Ps 24:3, 4; 51:6; Ps 73:1). David asked from God an internal purity. In the same manner Stott argues that when Jesus preached the purity of heart, it would mean an internal purity rather than an external one.¹³⁴ Thus, it was understood that no one could ascend the Lord’s hill or stand in His holy place unless he had clean hands and a pure heart.¹³⁵ As expressed by the Psalmist, “who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart” (Ps 24: 3-4) will stand in the holy place. In the sight of

¹³² J. Schattenmann, "Pure," in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown (Wuppertal: The Paternoster Press, 1971), 103.

¹³³ Baltensweiler, "Pure," 101.

¹³⁴ Stott, *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount*, 48.

¹³⁵ Stott, *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount*, 48.

God, greater importance is placed on the purity of heart. Schweitzer, on the other hand, argues that in the beatitudes the heart is considered to be the seat of emotions, and a person's innermost being, which forms his/her entire life.¹³⁶ Thus, it counts on the personal responsibility of the individual to keep one's heart pure from all the corruptions of the world.

In the later stages of Jewish religiosity they misinterpreted the need of internal purity and gave more importance to the external purity. They were very particular about the external cleanliness rather than internal. Therefore, Jesus questions and challenges their wrong interpretations of the law. He accuses the Pharisees who cleanse the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of extortion and wickedness (Mt 23:27, 29). They are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness (Lk 11:39; Mt 23:25-28).

In the New Testament purity is brought into relation with the saving death of Jesus. It is said: "the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 Jn 1:7, 9). The washing of the disciples' feet also shows that those who allow themselves to be served by Jesus are clean (Jn 13: 10). Therefore, it seems that the idea of being pure in the context of the narration of the beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount is not only an ethical quality which a man must work out to improve his/her integrity before God, but also a perfection of some social acceptability and respect in one's own society. Therefore, J. Schattenmann concludes that in the writings of St. John as well as St. Paul, the purity would also mean self-denial in the face of a sinful world as pure and undefiled religion. It also symbolises the liberating character of Christ.¹³⁷ The pure in heart would also mean the single minded who are free from the tyranny of a divided self (Ps 86:11, 12). Whereas, Stott believes the pure in heart are also sincere. Their whole life, public and private, is transparent before God and a man. Their very heart which includes their thought and motives needs to be pure, unmixed with anything devious, ulterior, or base.¹³⁸ They are invited to be people without guile.

On the other hand, Bockmann argues that Jesus appreciates and demands the purity of heart from every Christian. This purity can be easily understood as a child-like character. Therefore, Jesus invites children to come to him (Mk 10:13-16) and also praises the qualities of a child (Lk 18:16-17, Mt 18:2-5). One has to be like a child

¹³⁶ Schweitzer, *The Good News According to Matthew*, 93.

¹³⁷ Schattenmann, "Pure," 107.

¹³⁸ Stott, *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount*, 49.

who does not search for his/her position and status in the society (Mk 10:31, Mt 20:16, Lk 13:30), Further, we should be selfless in our attitude towards the other. Thus, Jesus acknowledges that all such initiatives of actions that produce a liberating effect in the human person will lead to the Kingdom.¹³⁹ Such an attitude of the individual gives a satisfaction of life from within one's own self and proceeds to others. Jesus expects every Christian to be with this understanding of the purity in their heart. It explains, therefore, "the sum total of what the faithful experience in terms of peace and joy, of help and strength, of protection and intimacy."¹⁴⁰ To see God would mean to have an intimate experience of God's presence in one's life. This purity of heart will lead everyone to enter the Kingdom of God.

1.8 THE PEACE MAKERS SHALL BE CALLED SONS OF GOD

E. M. Good argues the Aramaic word *šlm* (שלם) means 'peace.' It is a denominative verb from *šalom* (שלום) is *šlm* (שלם), 'to make or be at peace.'¹⁴¹ He explains that the root meaning of the word *šlm* is 'completeness,' 'wholeness.'¹⁴² The verb *šlm* would mean 'to be at rest' (Job 12:6), and its derivative noun *šalom* (Dan 8:25) is used for 'peaceable' or 'time of peace.'¹⁴³ Whereas D. J. Bourke argues that the Hebrew word for peace is (שָׁלוֹם) *šalom*, which means 'to be whole,' 'healthy,' 'undamaged.'¹⁴⁴ The term (שָׁלוֹם) *shalōm* is derived from the root which means 'complete,' 'intact,' 'to be in the process of being fulfilled.'¹⁴⁵ It is the sum total of all that make people contented and feel good. It is also the result of living in complete harmony with oneself and with others.¹⁴⁶ Joseph P. Healey believes that the root of this word can be found in many Semitic languages. For example, in Akkadian, *salāmū* is said to have come close to the core meaning of the root of *shalōm*, which would mean 'to be hale,' 'whole,' 'complete.'¹⁴⁷ Whereas, the Greek word (εἰρήνη) *eirēnē* would mean 'absence of war.' In Greek there are three words that can be translated to give the meaning of 'peace.' a) *galēnē* (γαλήνη) which would mean 'calm the nature,' b)

¹³⁹ Bockmann, "What Does the New Testament Say About the Church's Attitude to the Poor," 39.

¹⁴⁰ Hendrickx, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 30.

¹⁴¹ E. M. Good, "Peace," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. George Arthur Buttrick (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), 705.

¹⁴² Good, "Peace," 705.

¹⁴³ Good, "Peace," 705.

¹⁴⁴ D. J. Bourke, "Peace," in *Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Religion*, ed. Paul Kevin Meagher (Philadelphia: Corpus Publications, 1979), 2709.

¹⁴⁵ Hendrickx, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 31.

¹⁴⁶ Hendrickx, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 31.

¹⁴⁷ Joseph P. Healey, "Peace," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 206.

homonoia (ὁμονομία) the quality of community life where people think alike or agree, and c) *eirēnē*, (εἰρήνη) which is most commonly used for 'profound peace.'¹⁴⁸ According to C. Brown, *eirēnē* is that state of law and order which gives rise to the blessings of prosperity.¹⁴⁹

Whereas, Healey argues that prophet Isaiah explained an establishment of a peaceful Kingdom where a lion and a lamb shall dwell together (Is 11:9). This is depicted as an eschatological event which is going to be established at the end of time.¹⁵⁰ Peace is considered to be the order of creation.¹⁵¹ Peace also symbolises health and good life. It is the time of God's protection (Jdg 18:6). Restoration to health is also restoration to peace (Is 38:17). The eschatological Kingdom which is to be established will be in peace (Is 9:5, 6). Peace would also mean economic security (I Chr 4:40; 22:9; Is 54:13; 66:12; Zech 8:12). Whereas, Good claims that all forms of peace are attributed to God (Is 45:7), and the conditions of peace are the presence of God (Nu 6:26; I Chr 23:25).¹⁵² The man who returns in safety from a battle has preserved his health and is at peace (Jos 10:21). The individual's peace is synonymous with his good life, for it involves his/her healthful sleep.¹⁵³ Brown argues that the blessings of Yahweh that are described in the book of Numbers result in peace (Nu 6:24). He cites: "Let the Lord bless you and keep you: The Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you: The Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace" (Nu 6:24ff). Thus, peace also would mean withholding of judgment that is sparing the offender out of compassion.¹⁵⁴ It would also mean an inward peace as being victory over temptation and lust (Jos 57). Eschatological peace is the sign of God's new creation. Peace is the order established by God as the God of peace.¹⁵⁵ Whereas, Good argues that another term translated as peace is '*asuw- 'ity b'raakaah* (עָשׂוּ אֶתִּי בְרָכָה)' which would mean 'to make blessings' (II Kings 18:31).¹⁵⁶ On the other hand, Bourke claims that the peace signifies a state of ordered and harmonious well-being. This order is "established by God's blessing or, in matters of human decision, by the right

¹⁴⁸ Williams Klassen, "Peace," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 207.

¹⁴⁹ Brown, "Peace," 776.

¹⁵⁰ Healey, "Peace," 206.

¹⁵¹ Healey, "Peace," 206.

¹⁵² Good, "Peace," 705.

¹⁵³ Good, "Peace," 705.

¹⁵⁴ Brown, "Peace," 779.

¹⁵⁵ Brown, "Peace," 780.

¹⁵⁶ Good, "Peace," 705.

ordering of man's will as expressed in conformity to the covenant laws." We also find the prophets speak against the proclamation of false peace (Jer 6:14; 14:13; Ez 13:16). Therefore, peace is also understood as the eschatological hope.¹⁵⁷ This would mean a "state of paradisaal harmony embracing beasts as well as man and bringing miraculous fertility (Is 11:6-8; 35: 9; Ez 40:7)." As a result, peace among the nations will be established (Is 2:2-4; 19:23-25; Zch 8:23). Jeremiah explains that from the least to the greatest of them, everyone is greedy for unjust gain; and from a prophet to a priest, everyone deals falsely. "They have healed the wounds of my people lightly, saying, 'peace, peace,' when there is no peace" (Jer 6: 13-14).

E. M. Good further argues that in the New Testament peace is used for the restoration of a right relationship between God and man.¹⁵⁸ Thus, C. Brown believes in the beatitudes, "Blessed are the peace makers," the word *eirēnopoios* (εἰρηνοποιός) has an adjective meaning that is 'making peace.' However, it is used in the New Testament as a noun, 'peace maker.'¹⁵⁹ Furthermore, we need to understand the "peace" with the background of Romans 15:13, where peace is to be understood as a power which, together with joy, can pervade the whole person.¹⁶⁰ In the New Testament peace is also used as much more than merely covenantal salvation. The peace returned to him who had offered it (Mt 10:13); Lk 10:5-6). The Gospel of John insists that this peace should differ not only quantitatively, but also qualitatively from that of the word peace in John 16:33, for him it is the gift of Christ. Christ is the mediator of peace. Jesus in his missionary discourses announces that his disciples are to pass the peace to others. If it is refused by those to whom it is offered, then it returns to the disciples (Lk 10:5 ff; Mt 10:13). There is no room for the false peace.¹⁶¹ We read in the book of Revelation as well as Hebrews that peace comes from Him who is, who was, and who is to come (Rev 1:4; Heb 7:2). St. Paul too uses the term very often in his letters (Gal 1:3; Eph 1:2). It is also described as the peace of God (Phil 4:7; Col 3:15), God himself is the 'God of Peace' (Rom 15:33; II Cor 13:11; Phil 4:9). For God's peace comes to a man. Jesus has made peace through the blood of the cross (Col 1:20). Thus, it is the work of Christ (Eph 2:15). The word 'peace' also means peace of mind or serenity. Peace is one of the seven fruits of the Holy Spirit. Peace also means an immediate outcome of the union with God the Father in

¹⁵⁷ Bourke, "Peace," 2710.

¹⁵⁸ Good, "Peace," 706.

¹⁵⁹ Brown, "Peace," 782.

¹⁶⁰ Brown, "Peace," 783.

¹⁶¹ Brown, "Peace," 781.

and through Christ. The peace of Jesus brings the defining characteristic of the messianic age of salvation in the world (Lk 1:79; 2:14; Mk 5:34).

It is noteworthy that T. C. O'Brien defines the word 'peace' as "the harmonious union of affection and desires brought about by charity."¹⁶² Thus, "the charity would mean a preferential love of God as the Father to be loved above all, it is a union of wills with him, and thus the exclusion of any conflicting wish or desire. Charity thus brings all interests, all desires, and all values into their proper place under the rule of its totality of love for the Father."¹⁶³ The process of salvation is a process of growth in the reign of charity, which diminishes, but never, until it is completed, totally suppresses the resistance of "flesh against spirit."¹⁶⁴ Further, as the love of God begets the love of the neighbour, there is a deep relationship among those who share the love for the neighbour and for the Father. Therefore, the peace that comes from charity is *Pax Christi*. In human terms, peace means physical health (Is 57:18; Jer 6:14). In the Bible peace also means rain, plentiful crops, power to pursue and conquer enemies, and security and prosperity in all spheres of life (Lev 26:3-13). Above all, this peace would mean the protecting presence of the covenant of God in the midst of His people. It is a blessing to the people.¹⁶⁵ It is the peace that is brought about after the sacrifice of Christ.¹⁶⁶ This sacrifice of Jesus on the cross brought about the basis for the reconciliation and genuine concord that unites everyone to the Father.¹⁶⁷ The greeting of peace by resurrected Jesus is the ground for the unity and peace.¹⁶⁸

Carlos Bravo Gallardo argues that the peacemakers *eirēnopoioi* (εἰρηνοποιοί) are those who stand for peace in the community at all costs and maintain an atmosphere of reconciliation between opposing and fighting groups.¹⁶⁹ To establish peace on earth has been the plan of God. But peace cannot be established unless people follow the right relationship with God, with other fellow beings, with the world, and even with themselves in terms of justice and following of the law. Therefore, all those who work for it will be rewarded as His sons and daughters.¹⁷⁰ However, it is important to note

¹⁶² T. C. O'Brien, "Peace," in *Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Religion*, ed. Paul Kevin Meagher (Philadelphia: Corpus Publications, 1979), 2709.

¹⁶³ O'Brien, "Peace," 2709.

¹⁶⁴ O'Brien, "Peace," 2709.

¹⁶⁵ Bourke, "Peace," 2710.

¹⁶⁶ O'Brien, "Peace," 2709.

¹⁶⁷ O'Brien, "Peace," 2709.

¹⁶⁸ O'Brien, "Peace," 2709.

¹⁶⁹ Gallardo, "Matthew: Good News for the Persecuted Poor," 185.

¹⁷⁰ Gallardo, "Matthew: Good News for the Persecuted Poor," 185.

that peace cannot be achieved without justice. The Christian laity are called to strive to bring about at all costs peace in the society. They are to work for the elimination of the oppression in the society. G. Gutierrez explains the stand taken by St. Paul:

Christian love must necessarily and inevitably lead to the elimination of slavery and every other form of oppression, but love must go further than that. The call for gratuitousness is not added on to an already existing Christian life that is, built on an almost exclusive basis of duties and rewards; rather it is at the heart of the behaviour of a follower of Jesus. It is not an addition but the foundation. In Paul's view, Christianity must daily "invent" their life of love and commitment.¹⁷¹

Therefore, the love of the Christian laity towards the other should be a liberative for him/her and lead to have an experience of the Kingdom. We have seen in our previous discussions that Jesus was aware of the easy ways of living which people preferred in the society of his time. They mostly followed the ways that disturbed the peace of their neighbours. But he challenged his disciples to follow a different path other than the one followed by the rest of the people in the society. They were complimented by the Lord in his sermon for being peacemakers both in their own fellowship as well as in the larger community of their society. Jesus foresee a natural tension between his followers and those who do not follow his paths (Mt 10:34-36). Therefore, he said the life of every Christian has been considered to be a challenging one. If we are to be called worthy followers of Jesus, we have to love him and give priority to his vision of human relationship even above our nearest and dearest relatives (Mt 10-37).

Carl G. Vaught argues that the Christians, to be authentic followers of Christ, should never seek conflict among people, but always work for peace, understanding, and reconciliation among their fellow humans in the society.¹⁷² They are to pursue peace and strive for peace with all people and as far as possible they are to live peacefully with all (1 Cor 7:15; 1Pet 3:11; Heb 12:14; Rom 12:18). Vaught further argues that the peacemaking role of Christian disciples would also imply the act of reconciliation.¹⁷³ Furthermore, working for peace is a divine initiative and its accomplishment is people's cooperation with the divine plan. Whereas, for Stott peace always means reconciliation.¹⁷⁴ St. Paul's exhortations to the Colossians as well as to the Ephesians are very exemplary in this respect: "It was mentioned to reconcile

¹⁷¹ Gustavo Gutierrez, *The God of Life* (London: SCM Press, 1991), 135, 136.

¹⁷² Vaught, *The Sermon on the Mount: A Theological Interpretation*, 39.

¹⁷³ Vaught, *The Sermon on the Mount: A Theological Interpretation*, 32.

¹⁷⁴ Stott, *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount*, 50.

to himself all things ... making peace by the blood of his cross. And Christ's purpose was to create in himself one new man in place of the two (Jew and Gentile), by making peace" (Col 1:20; Eph 2:15). The privileges given to them are that they are called the sons/daughters of God. Therefore, they are doing what the Father wishes them to do (Mt 5:44, 45). The mission of liberative evangelization by the Christians can be called working for peace among the people who for various reasons are at conflicting fronts in a given society. This peace mission of the Christians will constantly help them to rededicate themselves to Christ and become the members of the Kingdom.¹⁷⁵

Furthermore, this peace making mission of the disciples was consecrated when Jesus prayed for the unity of his disciples in his Last Supper discourse (Jn 17). Jesus prayed for the unity of all people who would believe in him after his disciples' preaching of his new commandment of love. But in view of making this mission of his disciples really effective in the world at large, Jesus prayed for them to be united in the model of his own union with the Father (Jn 17:11). This was all the more urged while giving them his own peace, not like the peace the world offers on certain bargaining terms (Jn 17:12-26). Bockmann argues that Jesus' offering of his peace to his disciples and through them to all those who believed in him was the offering of great magnanimity, generosity, and sincerity. His teaching was never fanatical in character, he was rather open to the realities of the world.¹⁷⁶ Thus, he was aware of the tensions that could emerge from different strata of the society.

Michael Amaladoss argues that Jesus himself was a symbol of peace. He was the symbol of peace in relation to love shown in service.¹⁷⁷ Further, he illustrates it with a few examples from the New Testament. For instance, we read from the letters of St. Paul that "we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand" (Rom 5:1-2). Jesus stands as a mediator in the human effort of making peace with God. Furthermore, in the letter to Ephesians, we read that, "he is our peace; in his flesh he is, the hostility between us" (Eph 2:14). To promote peace among the people is to give glory to God. Here peace and glory are interconnected.

It is noteworthy that Jesus trained his disciples for the new Kingdom of God, not for a band of guerrillas. But his life was so challenging to his opponents due to its moral

¹⁷⁵ Stott, *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount*, 51.

¹⁷⁶ Bockmann, "What Does the New Testament Say About the Church's Attitude to the Poor," 40.

¹⁷⁷ Amaladoss, "Listen to the Spirit: Blessed Are the Peacemaker," 918.

demands that the rich and the powerful were afraid of him so much that they wanted to remove him from the society. His initiatives of establishing peace gifted him with a cross. That was the way of the sinful world. But his peace making process did not end with his death. It was a process which began on earth but is extended to the eschatological Kingdom,¹⁷⁸ having consequences of life-death and resurrection. Thus, he said that “the Kingdom for which he dies is not of this world” (Jn 18:36). It is a process that stretches out to an unending horizon. This horizon will be historical as well as trans-historical, existential as well as eschatological. The peace of the Kingdom is like a seed buried in the ground but sprouting to the heavens even when we do not notice it (Mt 4:26-27).

Thus, Robert A. Guelich argues that the peacemakers are called “sons of God.” They are to be the sons of God, which would mean also to be accepted in the peace and friendship of God, thus, to be close to God. The phrase ‘sons of God,’ when it comes in the New Testament, becomes a typical description of the eschatological gift. For example, we read: “so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven” (Mt 5:45); cf also Lk 6:35; 20:36; Rom 8:14; 9:26; 2 Cor 6:18; Gal 3:26, where these teachings can be found. Thus, we can conclude that the peacemakers are those who show concern even to their enemies. They learn to love everyone the way that Jesus loved. This act of love is similar to the redeeming love expressed by Christ. Therefore they are called something much more than only a passive suffering to maintain peace or even bridge-building or reconciling alienated parties.¹⁷⁹ They live to provide peace at any cost and consequently to establish the Kingdom.

1.9 THE KINGDOM OF GOD AS THE REALITY RESERVED TO THOSE WHO ARE PERSECUTED FOR THE SAKE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Robert A. Guelich argues that the word ‘persecution’ coming from the Greek *diōkō* (διώκω) means “suffering inflicted upon an individual or group for fidelity to a faith, usually with the object of inducing apostasy or of destroying the faith itself by killing its adherents and intimidating prospective converts.”¹⁸⁰ Furthermore, the Greek word *diōkō* would also mean ‘run after,’ ‘persecute,’ ‘drive away,’ ‘persecute severely.’ Therefore, ‘persecution for the sake of righteousness’ would mean suffering in the sense of true honouring of God. G. Ebel reminds us that Jesus warns his disciples that

¹⁷⁸ Amaladoss, "Listen to the Spirit: Blessed Are the Peacemaker," 920.

¹⁷⁹ Robert A. Guelich, *The Sermon on the Mount* (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1982), 92.

¹⁸⁰ F. W. Beare, "Persecution," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. George Aethur Buttrick (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), 735.

if he has been persecuted, they will be persecuted too. St. Paul was an example of a persecutor (1 Cor 15 :9; Gal 1:13, 23; Phil 3:6; 1 Tim 1:13), as well as of the persecuted (Gal 5:11; 2 Tim 3: 11) for the sake of Christ and his Kingdom. Thus, it is concluded that being a Christian would always be linked with (some) persecution.¹⁸¹ G. Ebel claims that Yahweh distinguishes between those who are in the right and those who are in the wrong at the time of final judgment.¹⁸² But one needs to correspond positively to the invitation of Yahweh.

E. P. Sanders argues that the pattern of religion which the follower of Jesus has to go after is very explicit in the letters of St. Paul. He invites everyone to follow Christ by suffering persecutions and taking up challenges in life. Thus, he/she places full trust in the Lord. This understanding of St. Paul was “an essentially different type of religiousness from any found in Palestinian Jewish literature.”¹⁸³

The Church is built up in peace, and in the joy of the Holy Spirit (Rom 14:17, 19). The peace to which the Church is called (1 Cor 7:15) is the gift of God (1 Pet 1:2) who fills a man/woman with it (Rom 15:13). It is God who causes it to rule in the human hearts and reign in the Christian community (Col 3:15), and manifest itself as the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22).¹⁸⁴ Ebel argues that persecution is caused by the world's hatred of God and His revelation in Christ (Mt 10:22; Mk 13:13; Lk 21:17; Rev 12:13). Persecution may be the sign that one is on God's side. Thus, Jesus calls them blessed. There are also all the chances to corrupt this message in order to avoid persecution (Gal 6:12). Christians are called to maintain their faith even during persecution.¹⁸⁵ They are to meet the hatred of their persecutions by the word of blessings (Rom 12:14; Mt 5:44). Thus, Christians are called to rejoice in their sufferings as this suffering brings endurance (Rom 5: 3; Jas 1:2ff).¹⁸⁶

F. W. Beare argues that it is true that persecution can be inflicted by civil authorities as well as religious persons. In the Old Testament we see that all the prophets suffered persecution from the hands of their own people.¹⁸⁷ Jesus himself was persecuted and it was the continuation of the Old Testament prophets' persecution. Even the early

¹⁸¹ G. Ebel, "Persecution," in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown (Wuppertal: The Paternoster Press, 1976), 806.

¹⁸² Brown, "Righteousness," 356.

¹⁸³ E.P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (Philadelphia: SCM, 1977), 543.

¹⁸⁴ Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 543.

¹⁸⁵ Ebel, "Persecution," 806.

¹⁸⁶ Reumann, *Righteousness in New Testament*, 767, 768.

¹⁸⁷ Beare, "Persecution," 735.

Church Christians faced persecution from the Jewish community. Thus, we see in the Acts of the Apostles the Sanhedrin prohibiting the apostles from preaching publicly (Ac 4: 17-18) and persecuting them for violating such prohibitive orders of the Sanhedrin.

Whereas, Achtemeier claims that Christ himself is an obedient son by the supreme sacrifice of his own body on the cross, which made him to renew the covenantal relationship between God and man.¹⁸⁸ Whereas, Gallardo states: “to experience the happiness of the Kingdom of God and God’s justice implies, therefore, and bears in its train the assumption of poverty and persecution, not because of a necessity imposed by God but because of the logic imposed by the same history of oppression of human beings by human beings.”¹⁸⁹ Thus, he concludes that in the eyes of the first Christians persecution was looked upon as the fulfilment of Christ’s prophecy (Mt 10:17-23).

The people of Israel rejected God by disobeying Him or killing the messengers whom He sent to explain His plans among them. The similar situation of rejection of those who work for the good of the society and people exists even today. Mark A. Matson claims that Jesus, who is identified as the new Moses,¹⁹⁰ established a new order in the society. Thus, Jesus reminds the Christians that the people of Israel treated the prophets very badly. We read: “for you build the tombs of the prophets whom your fathers killed. So you are witnesses and consent to the deeds of your fathers; for they killed them, and you build their tombs” (Lk 11: 47-48). Do not lose courage. They were hated because they had come to establish the peace on earth. With these words Jesus consoles them as the persecutions are awaited for them. Christians are called to renew the understanding of salvation and the service to mankind. Whereas, Gallardo argues the new order that Jesus came to establish is “reordering relationship with God, with man and woman, with the world, and with oneself.”¹⁹¹ Thus, Jesus wishes to establish something greater than what Moses tried to establish, thus, he says: “you have heard it said...but I say to you...” (Mt 5:21). Jesus wishes to bring a new order to the society by introducing new values of life for everyone to follow. The significant element in this connection is that these new values for life were based on the old ones, and that was a challenge.

¹⁸⁸ Achtemeier, "Righteousness in the New Testament," 95.

¹⁸⁹ Gallardo, "Matthew: Good News for the Persecuted Poor," 186.

¹⁹⁰ Matson, "Luke's Rewritings of the Sermon on the Mount," 634.

¹⁹¹ Gallardo, "Matthew: Good News for the Persecuted Poor," 188.

Furthermore, the new order established by Jesus was where he invited his disciples to rejoice and be glad at the time of persecution. They are called to rejoice and even to leap for joy (Lk 6:23) because their reward is great in heaven. "Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven" (Lk 6:23a). Jesus considers persecutions the signs of genuineness, a certificate of Christian authenticity. Thus, Christians are called to accept happily the martyrdom for the sake of their faith. Bockmann claimed that it was explicit from the life of St. Paul that he was not concerned about the structures of the society and the poor and the slaves outside the Christian community (1 Cor 7:29-31). It was because, as we have seen, the end of the world was expected anytime during their life time.¹⁹²

Whereas, Stott argues that today the Christian laity need to rejoice because they suffer on account of Jesus.¹⁹³ The apostles were well aware of this fact of having been beaten and threatened by the Sanhedrin; they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonour for the name (Ac 5:41). Suffering is called a badge of true discipleship. Following Christ means *passio passive*, suffering, because we have to suffer.¹⁹⁴ Thus, every Christian laity can expect opposition in the community from the believers of other creeds and other ideologies which are not Christian.

However, the Church invites every Christian to join the sufferings and the persecutions of Christ assuring them final victory over the persecutors. For this we often invoke the examples from the various sources of revelation of both the Old and the New Testaments. It is interesting to note that Herman Hendrickx does not rule out the probability that the "Church too is not completely secure against the possibility of making use of power politics and various forms of terror."¹⁹⁵ Further, he even claims that sometimes the Church too can be included in the list of persecutors. Lambrecht claims that the first three beatitudes: the poor, the hungry, and those who mourn are associated with persecution. They are so due to oppression on account of the Son of Man.¹⁹⁶

It is noteworthy that one of the Church fathers, St. Augustine, confirmed that the Sermon on the Mount, especially the beatitudes, formulated "a perfect standard of the

¹⁹² Bockmann, "What Does the New Testament Say About the Church's Attitude to the Poor," 44.

¹⁹³ Stott, *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount*, 52.

¹⁹⁴ Stott, *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount*, 53.

¹⁹⁵ Hendrickx, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 35.

¹⁹⁶ Lambrecht, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 59.

Christian life.”¹⁹⁷ He acknowledged that the Sermon on the Mount was the main pillar of Jesus’ teaching. Robert A. Guelich too holds the same opinion as that of St. Augustine and supports it by saying: “Augustine viewed the Sermon on the Mount to be ‘the perfect measure of the Christian life’ and ‘filled with all the precepts by which the Christian life is formed.’ For him the Sermon on the Mount applied to all Christians and was without question applicable to life.”¹⁹⁸ Furthermore, the Sermon portrayed Jesus as the Messiah and the presence of the age of salvation when God’s will would be revealed to all nations (Mt 4:12-17).

It is very clear that the message of Jesus is different from that of any world leaders. It has to be spelled out not in terms of the existing world order, but in terms of a new world order that Jesus called the “Kingdom of God.” This new world order also characterises the kind of “power”/“force” that can bring it about. It was the force of truth, love, and forgiveness to the enemy that Jesus offered as the powerful antidote to the evils of the time, not “an eye for an eye, or a tooth for tooth” as was taught in the old world order (Mt 5:42). We shall discuss further the new dimensions of the Kingdom of God in the light of the beatitudes.

2 THE NEW DIMENSIONS OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD IN THE LIGHT OF THE BEATITUDES

We have seen in our above discussion that Jesus’ life and preaching gave a new understanding of the Kingdom of God. The beatitudes which we reflected have explained in details the values that are to be followed by the Christians to enter the Kingdom of God. Guelich argues that the “‘ethics of the Sermon on the Mount is [*sic*] interim ethics’ that ‘make one meet for the Kingdom of God.’”¹⁹⁹ For him, the evangelist St. Matthew claims that for both, the Jews and the Gentiles, the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount implies as the new people of God without any distinction (Mt 28:18-20). Whereas, Parrent claims that the beatitudes play a central role in the formation of the ethical character of every Christian.²⁰⁰ It is quite evident from the exposition of the meaning of the beatitudes that Jesus had visualised an integrated community of both the Jews and the Gentiles living together, though with different life styles, but with mutually acceptable value systems, until they were threatened by any external legalistic controls. In that event, Jesus’ teachings of the beatitudes

¹⁹⁷ Parrent, "The Sermon on the Mount, International Politics, and a Theology of Reconciliation," 177.

¹⁹⁸ Guelich, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 15.

¹⁹⁹ Guelich, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 19; cf. A. Schweitzer, *The Mystery of the Kingdom of God* (New York: Dodd and Mead, 1914), 97.

²⁰⁰ Parrent, "The Sermon on the Mount, International Politics, and a Theology of Reconciliation," 177.

become the ultimate criterion.²⁰¹ It gives a totally different meaning of the Kingdom. For Jesus and his followers, the Kingdom of God does not mean any earthly glory but something beyond that. It was very clear when Jesus spoke to the two sons of Zebedee: “you will drink my cup, but to sit at my right hand and at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father” (Mt 20:23). Later, Jesus said to Pilate: “my kingship is not of this world; if my kingship were of this world, my servants would fight, that I might not be handed over to the Jews; but my kingship is not from the world” (Jn 18:36). However, there is great hope for every Christian to be his disciple. He gives a new hope to all Christians to take up their daily struggles for the sake of the Kingdom of God and its sustainable growth in the life of all people. This hope gives encouragement to everyone to be primarily concerned with the values of the Kingdom of God which are outlined in the beatitudes. Jesus shares his own “Abba-experience” with the people through the preaching of the beatitudes. His sharing of his life and vision with the people like the table-fellowship he had at the last supper confirms the proclamation of the Kingdom of God,²⁰² a new way for different people to live together in mutual respect, justice-consciousness and terms of peace under the common umbrella of the loving care of his heavenly Father, which Jesus described as the new “Kingdom of God.”

So it is very clear that “the true people of God, (the new Kingdom of God) exclude no one. It includes everyone, but it also places conditions.”²⁰³ It calls for a change of the attitude; The change of one’s perception from within. Further, it calls for a new modality of life. These modalities and conditions are not new but already foretold by the prophet Isaiah and which was reminded by Jesus through the preaching of the set of beatitudes. “Then the wolf shall live with the lamb and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the lion and the bull-calf will graze together, shepherded by a child; the cow shall pasture with the bear, their young shall live together, the lion will eat straw like the ox.... They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain, for the land will be full of the knowledge of the Lord” (Is 11:6-9). This is the vision and mission of Jesus that which was foretold by God through the mouth of the prophet Isaiah.

To realise this vision and mission one needs to understand the real meaning of the prophesy of Isaiah’s in depth, as Gallardo interprets:

²⁰¹ Guelich, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 29.

²⁰² Soares-Prabhu, *Theology of Liberation: An Indian Biblical Perspective*, 163.

²⁰³ Gallardo, “Matthew: Good News for the Persecuted Poor,” 191.

not any wolf will live with the lamb, only the one that gives up eating lamb. The lion that enters this new world will be the one that agrees to eat straw like the ox. It is a world constructed in terms of the least of ...[the world]. This is the kingdom that has been promised to the persecuted poor. And it ought to be constructed in this world, so that the history of salvation might be-or begin to be-salvation in history. The powerful who do not agree to order their lives in keeping with the life of ...[the poor] and do not consider the needs of their smaller brothers and sisters will distance themselves to such a degree from God that, in the end, he will not recognise anything of his own in them.²⁰⁴

This is a free choice to be made by each and every individual in the new way of living together. The Christian laity have to decide out of their own free choice whether to be a member of this new Kingdom. The norm of living has already been set before all as a challenge. However, it is the option of each person, who will make his or her choice of following the way of life according to His expectations at the right time.²⁰⁵

It is the choice offered to every Christian to be a member of the Kingdom. It is to be noted here that Jesus' proclamation to end poverty does not call for "the universalisation/(globalisation) of consumerism. Rather, the love of God which Jesus proclaims empowers humankind to free itself both from the structure of exploitation and oppression that give rise to societal poverty, as well as from the inner compulsions of greed and power which contribute to the operation of these structures."²⁰⁶ His teaching challenges us to strive towards the end of oppressive poverty. He calls for a change of heart. Soares-Prabhu argues that a change of structure without a change of heart will lead to a new form of oppression. Furthermore, "A change of heart without a change of structure will leave the present crushing forms of oppression intact. Attitudinal and structural changes are both necessary, because ultimately attitudes and structures are dialectically related."²⁰⁷ It calls not only for the change of heart but also of the structure that exploits the poor and the weak in the society. Jesus does not reject the traditions of the Jew, but he gave a reinterpretation to the traditions to envisage everyone to that tradition.²⁰⁸ He provided a hope of salvation to the Jews as well as to the non-Jews. Jesus emerges as the new Moses to give a new meaning to the law preached by the old Moses.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁴ Gallardo, "Matthew: Good News for the Persecuted Poor," 191.

²⁰⁵ Parrent, "The Sermon on the Mount, International Politics, and a Theology of Reconciliation," 177.

²⁰⁶ Soares-Prabhu, *Theology of Liberation: An Indian Biblical Perspective*, 192.

²⁰⁷ Soares-Prabhu, *Theology of Liberation: An Indian Biblical Perspective*, 192, 193.

²⁰⁸ Sisson, "Voice of Authority in the Sermon on the Mount," 565.

²⁰⁹ Matson, "Luke's Rewritings of the Sermon on the Mount," 634.

3 THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH TO CONTINUE THE VISION OF CHRIST

Today, the Kingdom of God has to be realised in the Church because she continues the works of Christ. It is made very clear by the Second Vatican Council documents where the Fathers acknowledged the prime responsibility of the Church on earth to establish this mission of Christ. This establishing of the new Kingdom of God on earth will also institute a new ethical value system to be followed by everyone. This is also very clear in *Lumen Gentium* which states:

Since Christ carried out his work of redemption in poverty and persecution, the Church too is called to enter upon that path, in order to pass on to men/[women] the fruits of salvation. Christ Jesus, 'though he was in the form of God, ... emptied himself, taking the form of a servant' (Phil 2:6-7), and for our sake 'though he was rich, yet ... became poor' (2 Cor 8:9). So the Church, though needing human resources to fulfil its mission, was not instituted to seek the glory of this world, but to preach humility and abnegation and be an example of both. Thus Christ was sent by his Father 'to preach good news to the poor... to set at liberty those who are oppressed' (Lk 4:18), 'to seek and serve to save the lost' (Lk 19:10). Similarly the Church encompasses with its love all those who are bowed under the weight of human weakness; more than this, it sees in the poor and the suffering the images of its poor and suffering founder, and it hastens to ease their suffering, wishing to serve Christ in them (*LG* 8).

Jesus preached this Kingdom to the poor and it is the responsibility of the Church and her members to carry on the same mission.

The Church finds various ways of implementing this mission on earth. According to Marie-Dominique Chenu, this teachings of the Church can be understood in two ways:

first, poverty as a way of life is an obligation laid on the Church, against all the allurements of power, as a witness to the poverty of Christ: this is 'the Church that is poor'; then, the fact that the Church's first concern must be for the poor, to whom she must preach the Good News and bring the liberation of the Messiah. He 'came not to be served but to serve' (Mt 20:28), the Church must be a service first of all, not an authority.²¹⁰

The members of the Church are called to bear witness to the poverty of Christ further. Remaining in the poverty, Church is called to establish the liberative mission of

²¹⁰ Marie- Dominique Chenu, "Vatican II and the Church of the Poor," in *The Poor and the Church*, ed. Norbert Greinacher and Alois Muller (New York: The Seabury Press, 1977), 60.

Christ. Jesus blesses the poor but not poverty and condemns richness and not the people who are rich.²¹¹

In this connection the words of Gutierrez are very appropriate. He claims that

the poor constitute a world of their own. Commitment to the poor means entering, and in some cases remaining in, that universe with a much clearer awareness; it means being one of its inhabitants, looking upon it as a place of residence and not simply of work. It does not mean going into that world by the hour to bear witness to the Gospel, but rather emerging from within it each morning in order to proclaim the good news to every human being.²¹²

He calls for an emergence of the Christian laity with the poor of the world which will make the Church to fulfil the vision of Christ. The poor are at the disposition of the Lord. For Gutierrez, spiritual poverty is represented by “the person who accepts the gift of divine filiations and responds to it by building fellowship.”²¹³ Along with this challenge of the theologian Gutierrez, there was a tremendous change that came in the Church regarding her liberative role. It is noteworthy that theologians, like Leonardo Boff, restate that a lot of creative attitudes of the Christian laity were present in the primitive Church up to the fourth century. Some of his restatements in his own words are quoted below:

The primitive Church was prophetic; it joyfully suffered torture and courageously gave its life through martyrdom. It did not care about survival because it believed in the Lord’s promise that guaranteed it would not fail. Success or failure, survival or extinction, was not a problem for the Church; it was a problem for God. The later Church was opportunistic; that it would not fail was a question of prudence and compromise that allowed it to survive in the midst of totalitarian regimes, at the expense of Gospel demands.²¹⁴

The members of the early Church considered every thing that happened to them the providence and something destined by God, though the members of the later times longed for success of their mission for which they used their prudence to do any compromise.

²¹¹ Soares-Prabhu, *Theology of Liberation: An Indian Biblical Perspective*, 194.

²¹² Gustavo Gutierrez, *We Drink from Our Own Wells: The Spiritual Journey of a People*, trans. Matthew J. O’Connell (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1984), 125.

²¹³ Gutierrez, *We Drink from Our Own Wells: The Spiritual Journey of a People*, 127.

²¹⁴ Leonardo Boff, *Church Charism & Power* (London: SCM Press, 1985), 54, 55.

Theologians, like Yves Congar, thought of an action-oriented Church. He argued that the Kingdom of God would also mean “the quest for this triumph of good over evil, truth over falsehood, justice over injustice, life over death.”²¹⁵ The Church which is concentrated on the truth and justice in the society, the work is also oriented towards upliftment of the society, especially the poor masses of the community. The Christian laity began to concentrate on the main theme of Jesus’ preaching which was centred on the Kingdom of God. Congar has even shown it through the symbolic actions, like Jesus’ table fellowship with publicans and prostitutes (Mk 2:15-17). His miracles too were signs of the advent of the Kingdom (Lk 11:20). When Jesus announces the Kingdom of God, his hearers understand that their hope is being definitively fulfilled.

Considering the preaching and the life followed by Jesus, Guelich concludes that the prophecy of Isaiah 61:1 is fulfilled in the beatitudes (Mt 5:3-12).²¹⁶ Jesus gave recognition to the poor in the society. Poverty was considered a problem to the society. As we have seen above, Fernando Bastos de Avila claims that the poor can not be taken away from the society. They are an inevitable element of the society. Therefore, they are not a problem; on the other hand, they are deprived of their status in the society. Thus, they are persecuted. The attitude of the rich and the powerful can be a problem. Thus, Bastos sees it not as a problem but as a scandal because “to solve a problem, imagination mobilised by reason is necessary; a scandal requires the exercise of an impassioned imagination, of shame, for its elimination.”²¹⁷

Furthermore, the age old spirituality of India mentions that to be ‘pure in heart’ would mean to be in union with the *Atman*, the Supreme Spirit. When a person is open to the Spirit of God, he/she establishes a close relation with God. It can also mean to strive for peace with all fellow human beings (Heb 12:14). Therefore, pure in heart would mean internal purity as well as a purity of relationship with others. It deals with the very nature of relationship with God. It calls for honesty, transparency before God, regarding all human dealings to all human beings on earth.²¹⁸ Jesus expects from every Christian this disposition of mind and heart when he invites everyone to the new Kingdom. Furthermore, a total consecration and surrender towards the demands of the holiness and purity of God. It becomes all the more necessary when Christians live in the midst of the multi-religious context, as that of India. It calls for a deeper

²¹⁵ Congar, *Lay People in the Church*, 98, 99.

²¹⁶ Guelich, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 71.

²¹⁷ Fernando Bastos de Avila, "The Church and World Hunger," in *The Poor and the Church*, ed. Norbert Greinacher and Alois Muller (New York: The Seabury Press, 1977), 1.

²¹⁸ Guelich, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 106.

experience or understanding of God in one's own life. So the Christians in central India too are called to be with single hearted dedication for God and His fellow human beings, knowing Jesus fully and living for his cause alone. Although we find sometimes that the Christians are double minded. They only look for the benefits of being a Christian. They even abandon Christian faith if they do not obtain benefits from the Church.

Moreover, the Church has the prophetic mission to denounce the evil practices that exist in the society.²¹⁹ This prophetic function of the Church places her "at the point of no return and gives it no chance of retracting. Such an act would be one of voluntary shedding of worldly goods, which would also have a symbolic value and place the Church firmly in a position of commitment to those who suffer injustice."²²⁰ The Church becomes truly for the poor. The members will begin to experience the Kingdom with the people who are suffering in the society. Thus, the Church will become truly the Kingdom of God that Christ has come to establish on earth. The members of the Church are called to stand by the sufferings of the poor in the society. They are even invited to sacrifice their lives for the cause of the poor. The fulfilment of Christ's vision expects them to do so. He consoles them by his promise to be with them till the end of the world.

4 CONSCIENTISING THE CHRISTIAN LAITY IN CENTRAL INDIA WITH THE VALUES OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

We have discussed above various insights of the beatitudes regarding the new understanding of the "Kingdom of God." Also we have discussed their relevance in the world today in the Church. We shall discuss further how these values of the Kingdom-project of Jesus can be applicable to the context of central India. We shall inquire how the laity in the Indian Church can be empowered by conscientising them with the same values of the "Kingdom-project" of the Gospels as the ones visualised by Jesus. The "experience of the Father's love empowered Jesus to love his fellow human beings with the same unconditional love with which his Father loves, so that just as he experienced God as the Father, he experiences his fellow human beings as his 'brothers and sisters.'"²²¹ This attitude of Jesus is to see everyone equally and condemn any form of racial or caste discrimination which might imply that one group is intrinsically inferior to another. It also does not tolerate a massive economic

²¹⁹ Avila, "The Church and World Hunger," 7.

²²⁰ Avila, "The Church and World Hunger," 7, 8.

²²¹ Soares-Prabhu, *Theology of Liberation: An Indian Biblical Perspective*, 193.

disparity in the society. Jesus considers this disparity “a serious and unjust violation of human existence.”²²² This disparity between the human beings creates distinction between the poor and the rich. The poor Christians of central India are to know that “the Church of the poor is the true Church of Jesus, constituted by the people who are poor and the pastors who have identified with their fate. God and God’s Kingdom are their inheritance, the property that they already own.”²²³

Today the trend of persecution has become a common phenomenon in the central Indian society. The people who are powerful persecute the powerless. The rich persecute the poor. Bockmann believes that through the means of persecution the powerful try to dominate over the powerless. The powerless claim, that they have lost everything in the world. Therefore, Christ came to this world to show the people how one can be happy even without power. Furthermore, the powerless and persecuted will find it easier to find the presence of God through the signs of weakness, foolishness, and the cross.²²⁴ By choosing to remain by the side of the weak the value system of the society is reversed. The humble are elevated, and the elevated are humbled. All human marks of distinction are suppressed by means of just civil legislations of democratic governments, like India. But it is the Christian laity’s task to make these legislations, for bringing about justice and peace in the society, a reality to be enjoyed by the poor and the marginalised.

There are various ways in which one can identify with the Kingdom project of Jesus explained in the beatitudes. It is noteworthy that according to Jan Lambrecht, the word Kingdom is identified in two ways. 1) “Kingdom as an area, the royal domain, 2) Kingdom as kingship, the royal power, the exercise of sovereignty, dominion.” Further, it appears that the more abstract expression “the Kingdom of God shall be revealed” was often chosen in preference to the direct ‘God rules.’²²⁵ It would mean the reign of God over His subjects. In the New Testament, we see Jesus’ mention about the tragic death of the prophet who announced the Kingdom among the people of Israel (Mt 23:29-39; Ac 7:52). Therefore, there is a need to understand the true meaning of the Kingdom of God by the followers of Jesus, especially in India.

The episcopal leadership of the Church in India too visualises that the Christian laity in the various Christian local Churches need to be empowered with deep awareness of

²²² Soares-Prabhu, *Theology of Liberation: An Indian Biblical Perspective*, 193.

²²³ Gallardo, "Matthew: Good News for the Persecuted Poor," 190.

²²⁴ Bockmann, "What Does the New Testament Say About the Church's Attitude to the Poor," 42.

²²⁵ Lambrecht, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 137.

the values of the Kingdom of God, as intended by the Lord as something meaningful for the whole mankind transcending the geographical and national boundaries of humankind. The leaders of the Church insist that it should be in accordance to the beatitudes preached by Jesus. They hope that such value-based empowerment of the laity would bring out the fruits of the Kingdom of God, namely “justice, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom.14:17) reachable to all human beings. They are deprived of their right wages after a day’s work. They are discriminated by the rest of the society. Many parents mourn when they see that their children do not get the right education and are forced to work, to make their ends meet. To them all Jesus gives the message that they will be comforted. In all these situations the empowered Christian laity can be a consolation to them through their daily life of perseverance in their struggles.²²⁶

It is very applicable to the central Indian context, where there are very few who follow the teachings of Christ. The people in India, especially in central India are not well aware of the mission of Jesus. Therefore, we even find a decline of the social and ethical values that prevailed in the society. There are situations where one fails to see the other as a human being. Exploitation of women and child labour are still prevailing in an alarming degree. Women are treated as objects of pleasure. Common men are deprived of their basic needs in the family as well as in the society. In such a situation an empowered laity can become an effective evangelizer in the context of central India. Hence, we will highlight some of the prevailing inhuman value systems of the central Indian society in a few more details.

4.1 THE UNCHRISTIAN VALUES IN THE SOCIAL STRUCTURES OF CENTRAL INDIA

We have seen the majority of the central Indian population belong to the Hindu religion, and the members who have accepted Christianity are mostly from the scheduled castes and the scheduled tribes or members from any other lower strata of the society. Speaking about the religion of Hinduism, Babasaheb Ambedkar states that *Rig Veda* supports violence. His own words are: “unlike the Scriptures of many other religions the Hindu Scriptures glorify violence and trickery and unethical ways of achieving one’s objectives. The gods themselves incarnate to wage war and kill people of the earth.”²²⁷ The followers of the fundamentalist trends among the Hindus hold the view that everyone in India is in one way or another connected to Hindu

²²⁶ C. John McCloskey, *Good News, Bad News* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2007), 58.

²²⁷ M. C. Raj, *Dalitology: The Book of the Dalit People* (Tumkur: Ambedkar Resource Centre, 2001), 709.

religion. Vivekananda, one of the Hindu reformists of the twentieth century, in one of his speeches asserts that “all other religions are included in Hinduism.”²²⁸ According to him, Hinduism is a “universal religion.”²²⁹ Spiritual leaders like him claim that all those who are born in India are born to be a Hindu.²³⁰ It includes everyone who is born in India as Hindu.

The Hindu society consists of people from different castes. The scheduled caste is known as one of the lowest among them. Further, the members of the drafting committee of the Indian Constitution explained their identity in the Constitution under the section pertaining to the scheduled caste²³¹ (Order No. 19 of 1950): “No person who professes a religion different from the Hindu religion shall be deemed to be a member of a scheduled caste.”²³² This clause compels the poor who belong to the scheduled caste to remain in Hindu religion. It does not permit the individuals to get converted to Christianity to improve their status of life even through their own efforts. They are even deprived of various privileges offered by the Indian Government periodically for the development of the scheduled castes and the scheduled tribes in India.

However, the Indian society is a pluralistic society, as mentioned above, with the multi-religious and multi linguistic character. The research seminar organised by the National Biblical, Catechetical and Liturgical Centre Bangalore, India in June 1976 affirmed that other religions were active in India. Therefore, “the growth of Christian consciousness leads the Church to see and understand these religious traditions under a new light inasmuch as Christ and his grace is at work in them.”²³³ This understanding will lead the Church to have a value system for everyone to uphold.²³⁴ Christians will be able to unite everyone with the values that are preached by Jesus. One may conclude that the poor people in India are bound in such a way that their liberation becomes the most pressing need of liberative evangelization. The poor people in India are bound in every way so that they are unable to liberate themselves

²²⁸ Raj, *Dalitology: The Book of the Dalit People*, 701.

²²⁹ Raj, *Dalitology: The Book of the Dalit People*, 701.

²³⁰ Raj, *Dalitology: The Book of the Dalit People*, 701.

²³¹ D. J. De, *The Constitution of India*, vol. 2 (Hyderabad: S. P. Gogia, 2002), 2379-2387.

²³² Matthew N. Schmalz, "Dalit Catholic Tactics of Marginality at a North Indian Mission," *History of Religions* 44, no. 3 (2005): 239; John C. B. Webster, *The Dalit Christians: A History* (Delhi: The Indian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge [ISPCK], 1994), 138; cf. De, *The Constitution of India*, 2379-2387.

²³³ D. S. Amalorpavadass, *Ministries in the Church in India* (New Delhi: CBCI. Centre, 1976), 698.

²³⁴ Michael Amaladoss, "The Future of the Church's Mission in India," *Jeevadhara* 27 (1987): 381.

from the bondages of the upper caste social controlling. They are to be initiated to the liberation processes because the negative values that prevail in India restrict them from coming forward to enjoy the benefits of the process of evangelization, by which their human dignity and rights are restored.

4.2 THE INHUMAN AND DISCRIMINATIVE VALUE SYSTEMS PREVAILING IN THE ECONOMIC STRUCTURES OF THE INDIAN LANDLORDISM AND BONDED LABOUR

“Landlordism” is a system of employment scheme which was in force from the very ancient times in the Indian society. In this system, the landlord owns hundreds of acres of land. Under him/her there are hundreds of people, who are also poor, to work. These poor people do not own any single piece of land as their own. In some places, the workers are paid in non-monetary wages by the landlords.²³⁵ It would mean that the people are provided with material goods but they are kept under the control of the landlords. They are not free to express their opinions or do what they want. The poor workers are deprived of proper clothing, good food, freedom in the family and no opportunity for any social entertainment. It is a system which does not respect others. Only the rich and the powerful have a something to say in the community.

According to the prevailing socio-economic systems in central India, one can identify a sense of discrimination in every sphere of social life. There is a practice of untouchability that is still executed in some of the States, especially in the remote areas of the villages. Though, a few leaders of the nation tried to demolish the practice of untouchability from the society, they failed in realising it.²³⁶ In 1998, Mrs. Maneka Gandhi, then the Minister of the Central Cabinet, acknowledged in the Parliament: “Despite the Constitutional mandate, untouchability is prevalent in 12 States -- Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Karnataka, Gujarat, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orisa, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and Pondichery.”²³⁷ This information given by Maneka Gandhi explains how even in modern times discrimination against castes is still prevalent in India, especially in the backward societies of these states.

²³⁵ Sunita Zalpuri, "Constitutional Right against Exploitation and the System of Bonded Labour in India," in *Dr. B. R. Justice and the Indian Constitution*, ed. K. L. Bhatia (New Delhi: Deep and Deep Publications, 1995), 228.

²³⁶ Barbara R. Joshi, *Democracy in Search of Equality: Untouchable Politics and Indian Social Change* (Delhi: Hindustan Publishing Corporation, 1982), 98.

²³⁷ Raj, *Dalitology: The Book of the Dalit People*, 715, 716.

The poor who live mostly in the underdeveloped villages are deprived of their basic amenities. There are many who come forward to work against these social systems. Further, there are also many conferences and seminars which are organised among the theologians and elites of India to highlight this evil character of the Indian society. Samuel Rayan who attended such a theological seminar had to live with seven other participants in a slum of a major town. The experience of living with the slum dwellers taught him that the poor who live in the slums are really deprived, even from their basic needs like drinking water and latrine facilities. He experienced that the poor are really victims of exploitation. Reflecting on his experience of living with the slum dwellers he suggests that such experiences can be justified only by creating "a theology of the poor and the struggle of the poor, till the day dawns when we can celebrate their victory over all that oppresses people, over all principalities, power, thrones, and dominations. That is a project with which we must keep faith. That faith will coincide with the faith we should keep with the people we have met in the villages and slums."²³⁸

The people in the rural areas are exploited by the rich money lenders. During the season of cultivation, the poor peasants approach the rich money lenders for help. This includes financial loans for preparing their land for cultivation against which high rates of interest are collected by the money lenders.²³⁹ The debtors are generally illiterate and may not understand the amount entered and interest charged in agreement.²⁴⁰ Even if the poor know the exploiting situation, they have no power to raise their voice against it because the entire power structure of the society supports the creditor. Thus, they are compelled to pay a huge amount as the interest alone. There are even incidents where the peasants have to sell their property to pay back the loans. There are also a few who could not do so and opted to commit suicide. In such situations, the message of Christ and the experiences of the Christian laity become consolation for the people. They can function as leaven in the society (Mt 13:33). It is the mission of every follower of Christ to liberate the exploited from these inhuman practices.

²³⁸ Samuel Rayan, "Reflections on a Live-in Experience: Slumdwellers," in *Asia's Struggle for Full Humanity*, ed. Virginia Fabella (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1980), 50-58.

²³⁹ Zalpuri, "Constitutional Right against Exploitation and the System of Bonded Labour in India," 226.

²⁴⁰ Zalpuri, "Constitutional Right against Exploitation and the System of Bonded Labour in India," 226.

It is sad to mention that even today in some parts of India there exists the practice of “bonded labour.” Article 23 of the Constitution of India prohibits this form of labour,²⁴¹ by which one man along with his wife and children are forced to work for the rich landlords.²⁴² This form of work can be considered a form of slavery, almost like that of the people of Israel in Egypt. The poverty of the people compels them to approach the landlords and money lenders to borrow the money.²⁴³

Amedkar, a reformer of the underprivileged, believed that a good and efficient state of affairs would be that “which is aimed at the prevention of injustice, tyranny and oppression.” Further, the state becomes fully developed when members of the state begin “to maintain the right of every subject to life, liberty and pursuit of happiness and to free-speech and free-exercise of religion.”²⁴⁴ It is observed here that in spite of various legal enactments against the evil powers of India, there are still various forms of the bonded labour system practised in the rural areas of central India.²⁴⁵ Sunita Zalpuri explains that these contractors bring people as bonded labourers from different parts of the country.²⁴⁶ She explains it with an incident where a contractor brought the bonded labourers from south India to Madhya Pradesh in central India to work in the mines.²⁴⁷ To some extent one may conclude that the poor people in India, especially those who live in the central parts of India, totally depend on the kindness of the landlords and contractors. We have seen above that for everything they have to get instructions from these landlords. They live and work in the fields that belong to the landlords.²⁴⁸

²⁴¹ De, *The Constitution of India*, 1028.

²⁴² Raj, *Dalitology: The Book of the Dalit People*, 704.

²⁴³ Gledhill, *The Republic of India*, 262-265; Zalpuri, “Constitutional Right against Exploitation and the System of Bonded Labour in India,” 226.

²⁴⁴ B. C. Nirmal, “Some Reflections on Ambedkar’s Concept of Social Justice and Constitutional Vision,” in *Dr. B. R. Ambedkar*, ed. K. L. Bhatia (New Delhi: Deep and Deep Publications, 1995), 177.

²⁴⁵ Zalpuri, “Constitutional Right against Exploitation and the System of Bonded Labour in India,” 233.

²⁴⁶ Zalpuri, “Constitutional Right against Exploitation and the System of Bonded Labour in India,” 234.

²⁴⁷ Zalpuri, “Constitutional Right against Exploitation and the System of Bonded Labour in India,” 234. Mukesh Advani “the sordid state of bonded labourers working in stone quarries at Raisen in Madhya Pradesh. In a blood curdling report it was revealed that these labourers were brought from Tamil Nadu and once brought to the mines by the contractors, they were subjected to permanent bondage with no housing, no Medicare and no leisure and meagre wages just to survive in unhealthy conditions of the 16th Century wintage.”

²⁴⁸ Raj, *Dalitology: The Book of the Dalit People*, 704, 705.

The poor who work as bonded labourers under the landlords and contractors do not even get enough wages for their daily living.²⁴⁹ The Constitution of India grants everyone the “right to adequate living wage and better standard of living in the list of fundamental rights.”²⁵⁰ However, people are not free to choose the job of their own interest once they work under the landlords. Even if the bonded labourer desired to leave his/her master, he/she could not do so because he/she could not get work elsewhere nor would he/she be accepted as a bonded labourer by others. He/she and his/her family will not even be able to move to another place.²⁵¹ They are not free to express anything against the form of work or even the wages that they receive at the end of the day. No one will come forward to support them in such a situation. Moreover, “their possessions would be misappropriated by their masters (landlords) under the pretext of recovering debts, and yet debtors would not be relieved of their bondage. Their poverty is the outcome of exploitation inbuilt in the system that rewards ownership rather than work.”²⁵²

On the other hand, the landlord and the contractors enjoy all the benefits that are available in the society. They can have all the entertainment programmes at the expense of these poor people. They mostly belong to the rich members of the society. They are also mostly from the Hindu communities. They are experts in interpreting the Hindu religious values for their advantages and conveniences. It must be mentioned here that although the Hindu religion preaches *ahimsa* (non-violence), one can still find ideas which promote violence in some of the interpretations of the Hindu scriptures.²⁵³ The promoters of such ideas use it as a liberative process for the people. It liberated the people from the struggle for independence and thus, the people of India revolted against the exploitation of the foreign colonisers. Bal Gangadhar Tilak, one of the well known freedom fighters of India, convinced the devoted Hindus that “such a struggle for righteousness and freedom is in tune with the spirituality of *Bhagavadgita*, provided it is done with the spirit of *nishkamakarma* (selfless

²⁴⁹ Gledhill, *The Republic of India*, 44-50.

²⁵⁰ De, *The Constitution of India*, 134-1202, S. K. Sharma, "Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's Social Justice and Constitutional Vision: An Overview," in *Dr. B. R. Ambedkar: Social Justice and the Indian Constitution*, ed. K. L. Bhatia (New Delhi: Deep and Deep Publications, 1995), 57.

²⁵¹ Zalpuri, "Constitutional Right against Exploitation and the System of Bonded Labour in India," 226, 227.

²⁵² Zalpuri, "Constitutional Right against Exploitation and the System of Bonded Labour in India," 227.

²⁵³ V. F. Vineeth, "The Classical Vs Liberative Approach to Indian Christian Spirituality," *Jeevadhara* 23, no. 136 (1993): 291-300.

action).”²⁵⁴ His masterly work, *Gitarahasya*, is a profound study of the *Bhagavad Gita* as an instrument to liberate the minds of the people of India to revolt against the foreign rule of the British. Thus, they justify the struggles that the poor confront in the society as part of their vocation. They are called to struggle for the comfort of the high caste people in the society. To some extent the poor who are under exploitation are bound to maintain the same status of life, as they do not have an opportunity to improve their living conditions. They are forced to live hand to mouth. They do not even have time to think about a better world. The reason is that these people are kept under such a mental as well as psychological tension that they are not free to think about anything of their own. Thus, they become totally dependent on the landlords and the rich people of the society.²⁵⁵

Like Bal Gangadhrā Tilak, the Christian laity too can learn to inspire the people by the powerful inspirations of the teachings of Jesus in the beatitudes and motivate and empower them to face the challenges of human discriminations, oppression, slavery, and bonded labour. By empowering themselves by the vision of Jesus about the dignity of the human person, rich or poor, they can be instruments for liberating others. The Christian laity have to make the poor aware that a man/woman, irrespective of caste or class, was created in the images of God and is called to live for Him alone.

4.3 THE ROLE OF THE EVANGELIZERS TO COUNTERACT THE UNJUST STRUCTURES

We have seen the inhuman and discriminative value system that is practised in central India. This includes the practice of bonded labour, where, as we have seen, one individual along with the whole family become slaves to the landlords.²⁵⁶ In the midst of these evil practices the presence of an empowered Christian laity can work miracles in delivering them from these sympathetic situations. The empowered laity can be consoling in the crisis of the discriminated people.²⁵⁷ Certainly, the presence of Christian laity who are empowered will be a threat to the evil doers in the society. Their life itself will be a challenge in the community as was with the life of Jesus, and his teachings of the beatitudes which they followed very closely. Jesus was free from internal constraints, like greed, lust, hatred, fear, attachments, and from external impositions, like legalism and ritualism. He was a totally free person, thus, he could

²⁵⁴ Vineeth, "The Classical Vs Liberative Approach to Indian Christian Spirituality," 299.

²⁵⁵ S. Arokiasamy, "Traditional Theology and People's Theology: Task and Prospects," *Jeevadhara* 23, no. 136 (1993): 312, 313.

²⁵⁶ Gledhill, *The Republic of India*, 44-50.

²⁵⁷ McCloskey, *Good News, Bad News*, 56-60.

love everyone equally. His table-fellowship and reaching out to everyone was the symbol of “breaking down the walls of separation in society.”²⁵⁸ Following the example of Jesus, every baptised person is called to be another Christ.

The Christian laity are called to work against the existing system of landlordism. In the Indian Constitution Article 23 speaks very clearly against landlordism and supports the poor from the clutches of this system.²⁵⁹ The same Article 23 embodies two declarations: “i) Traffic in human beings and begar and other forms of forced labour are prohibited, ii) Any contravention of the prohibition shall be an offence in accordance of law.”²⁶⁰ Inspired by this constitution the Christian laity are called to take part in the liberating action of the Word. The interpretation of the Word has to be seen as the “reflection on God’s redemptive word and deed in the history of people. It calls for discernment of God’s grace and judgement at work in history.”²⁶¹ They are to work against the injustice done to the poor. The life of Jesus too invites every Christian to work against such social systems. The Christians are called to follow this example given by Jesus in all their activities in the society.

The Christian laity are motivated and strengthened by the teachings of Jesus. Therefore, they are to work for a just society for everyone.²⁶² We find that in the recent history various Popes through their encyclical letters have condemned the act of social injustice done to the people all over the world. Pope Paul VI, as the boldest Pope, took a very brave step against injustice that is being practised in the society against the poor. Pope Paul VI made it very clear to the Church that “liberation means only redemption from ‘sin’ and ‘death.’”²⁶³ “He openly dissociated himself and the Church from the use of the term ‘liberation’ as a synonym for the process of social emancipation; instead, he is said to have selected deliberately such words as ‘true liberty,’ ‘authentic justice,’ ‘social involvement,’ etc. to describe that human activity which is directed towards a change of sinful structures of society.”²⁶⁴

²⁵⁸ Joseph Mattam, "Jesus Source and Model of Evangelization," *Vidyajyoti* 69, no. 8 (2005): 586.

²⁵⁹ De, *The Constitution of India*, 1035.

²⁶⁰ Zalpuri, "Constitutional Right against Exploitation and the System of Bonded Labour in India," 228.

²⁶¹ Arokiasamy, "Traditional Theology and People's Theology: Task and Prospects," 314, 315.

²⁶² Felix Podimattam, "Structural Violence, Human Rights and the Right to Protest," *Jeevadhara* 20, no. 120 (1990): 495.

²⁶³ Aloysius Pieris, "A Theology of Liberation in Asian Churches," in *Liberation in Asia: Theological Perspective*, ed. S. Arokiaswamy (Gujarat: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1987), 23.

²⁶⁴ Pieris, "A Theology of Liberation in Asian Churches," 23.

Today the Christian laity should concentrate on the liberation of every other human being. The salvation is not limited to any boundaries that are made by a man. It is beyond the understanding of human knowledge. Therefore, Christian laity should be motivated to establish a just society for everyone.²⁶⁵ The presence of Christian laity who are empowered with the spirit of Christian social justice and other evangelical values will be able to encounter the evil doers in the society. Sometimes the Christian's life itself will be challenged by the members of other religious communities. However, the Christian laity are called upon to take part in the liberating action which Jesus initiated in the world. In addition, the Christian laity should concentrate on the services needed for everyone in the society and should not be concerned with his or her own individual gains. Various services are given by the Christian laity and are always an inspiration and source of power for other people to follow the same example to make the society better.

When we speak about human liberation and its various dimensions it is interesting to note the words of Archbishop Marcos McGrath. According to him, the basic levels of ecclesial communities are acting as leaders and organisers of their communities, as catechists, and as missionaries.²⁶⁶ We have surveyed earlier that the theology of liberation has to come from the poor, specifically from the liberated consciousness of the poor.²⁶⁷ Arokiasamy, in the FABC meeting held in the year 1998, strongly criticised the current trends of the government for the globalisation of the market force and its further implications of dividing the rich from the poor. The bishops in the synod acknowledged that the Spirit of the Lord insisted that the Church of Asia to be a Church of the poor.²⁶⁸ The establishment of a mutual relationship between the rich and the poor has become the responsibility of the society.

Considering formation of the laity as a powerful means of social conscientisation of right human values, the Christian laity can do very significant transformative work. The Christian formatters have to understand that there are mainly two types of formation for the laity according to the understanding of the Church. They are grouped into two categories: i) the spiritual and ecclesial formation and ii) the

²⁶⁵ Podimattam, "Structural Violence, Human Rights and the Right to Protest," 495.

²⁶⁶ Marcos McGrath, "The Final Documents," in *Puebla and Beyond: Documentation and Commentary*, ed. John Eagleson and Philip Scharper (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1980), 136.

²⁶⁷ Virginia Fabella, *Asia's Struggle for Full Humanity: Towards a Relevant Theology* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1979), 157.

²⁶⁸ Thomas C. Fox, *Pentecost in Asia: A New Way of Being Church* (Quezon City, Philippines: Claretian Publications, 2003), 175.

formation/specialization of the laity in all possible secular fields.²⁶⁹ According to Ferdinand Klostermann, the former is specific to the vocation of the laity within the Church and the later is needed for them to be informed and to be efficient members of the human society.²⁷⁰ Hence, the Second Vatican Council encourages these two types of formation for the laity (and, of course, for the clergy too). Concerning the formation of the members of the Church, the document, *Gravissimum Educationis*, lays out the vision of the Council very clearly.

According to Michael S. Northcott, everyone in the society has to remember that this world is a gift of God and every living being is called to be stewards and caretakers of the society and its created facilities.²⁷¹ Therefore, Amaladoss suggests that in order to eliminate the poverty and illiteracy of the people, one has to opt to be poor. More than that, they need to learn to limit excessive consumption of goods and share with others.²⁷²

4.4 THE CHRISTIAN LAITY AS PROMOTERS OF THE VALUES OF THE GOSPEL

It is the plain truth that the Constitution of India is embedded with some of the finest values of the Christian vision as derived from the Gospels. This Constitution in its Preamble itself articulates the great values of justice, freedom, equality, and fraternity as the goals to be achieved for every citizen of India, and it offers to promote every citizen of the country to enjoy them as their birth right.²⁷³ It strongly condemns all the forces that work against these values of the citizens. There are various provisions made in the constitution of the country in achieving this set of values. These provisions that are in the Indian Constitution demand that the Christian laity be more open-minded and welcoming of these values in their own life and in the life of their fellow citizens. William Ernest Hockings along with the commission of the Appraisal of the Indian Constitution conclude that the function of the missionary was to present Christianity not as a fixed and finished system of doctrines or as an unalterable type

²⁶⁹ Ferdinand Klostermann, *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity*, ed. Herbert Vorgrimler, *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, vol.3 (New York: Burns and Oates, 1969), 328.

²⁷⁰ Klostermann, *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity*, 397.

²⁷¹ Michael S. Northcott, *The Environment and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: University Press, 1996), 180.

²⁷² Michael Amaladoss, *Life in Freedom* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1997), 144.

²⁷³ De, *The Constitution of India*, 100.

of institution, but as a set of vital principles and truths, and to let this direct spiritual impact upon the people produce its special type of organisation and corporate form.²⁷⁴

The Church with its various liberative works of evangelization acknowledges that Christ is present among the hungry human beings (Mt.25:35), as he is present in the Eucharist (1 Cor. 12: 23-36). As Pedro Aruppe mentions,

in the Eucharist we receive Christ hungering in the world. He comes to us, not alone, but with the poor, the oppressed, the starving for the faith. Through him, they are looking at the [Church] for help, for justice, for love expressed in action. Therefore, we cannot properly receive the bread of Life, unless at the same time we give bread for life to those in need wherever and whoever they may be.²⁷⁵

In the Eucharist Christ explains to us how He lived and worked among the poor and sacrificed His life for everyone. This initiative of Jesus challenges every Christian to dedicate themselves to the cause of the poor and the afflicted.

CONCLUSION

We have seen in this chapter the introduction of the Kingdom of God and its liberative values for human life. Jesus introduces the Kingdom of God through the preaching of the beatitudes. He promises to the poor, the exploited, and the rejected a new hope and strength in their lives. Through the teachings of beatitudes, Jesus emphasised the need for the empowerment for every follower. Jesus clearly indicates that God is with them, especially with those who are poor, exploited, and persecuted. God is with them in all their struggles. These unprivileged are worthy to inherit the Kingdom. He assures them that the difficulties that the poor and unprivileged in the society face are temporary. Jesus assures them that such are the people who are going to enjoy the happiness of the new Kingdom, for which Jesus came into this world. He emphasised the need to get empowered by his teachings of the beatitudes. Furthermore, through his teaching of beatitudes, he conveyed new values of life for his followers to pursue.

Jesus wishes the Church on earth to carry on the work which he had began. He welcomes everyone to be members of the “Communion of Love and Service” called the Church. This membership in the Church welcomes people to enjoy the happiness of the values of the “Kingdom” of God. He even invites the rich who are considered to be the oppressors of the poor to change their ways so that they may be turned to be

²⁷⁴ William Ernest Hocking, *Re-Thinking Missions: A Laymen's Inquiry after One Hundred Years* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1932), 82, 83.

²⁷⁵ Podimattam, "Structural Violence, Human Rights and the Right to Protest," 494, 495.

the benefactors of the poor. The Church that Jesus gathered together into a communion of loving and mutually serving people is a fellowship of all human beings where everyone can be a member, irrespective of their status in the society. They need to be empowered with the social values thought by Jesus. Later, they become an instrument to empower others who are deprived in the society. This invitation of Jesus is open to the poor and the rich alike, exploited and exploiters as well, powerless and powerful, irrespective of caste and class. They only need to follow what he teaches them through the Church, and in this context the Christian laity in India can be inspiring and enthusiastic messengers of the values of the Kingdom of God to the people of India in general, and to the central Indian people in particular.

CHAPTER FIVE

PASTORAL VISION OF A LIBERATIVE EVANGELIZATION IN THE CONTEXT OF RELIGIOUS PLURALISM OF CENTRAL INDIA

INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapters we have seen how Jesus lived and evangelized his people by bringing to their attention the project of God's Kingdom and its values as relevant to the people of his time. As part of his method of people-oriented evangelization, he lived among his people as one who shared their lives and problems while identifying with them in everything except sin (Heb 4:15). Jesus, by remaining with the people, empowered them and challenged them to get themselves liberated from the existing oppressive and enslaving situation of their lives in their society. He came to fulfil the covenantal promises of his Father communicated through the patriarchs and the prophets (Is 7:14-17). He "came not to abolish them, but to fulfil them" (Mt 5:17). Thus, neither Jesus Christ nor his Church can be understood from outside this framework of God's plan for an integral liberation of His people, not only from the slavery of sin, but also from all oppressive and enslaving bondages.¹

From the day of Pentecost, the Church embraced both Jews and Gentiles alike with a single bond of the love of the Father taught by Christ. Therefore, in the Christian tradition of evangelization, we cannot keep any boundary lines segregating people from the unifying love of Jesus Christ. St. Paul explains that Christ - our peace - broke the barriers between people embracing both Jews and Gentiles with one and the same love of his Father and he made the two into one people of God. The Church rejoices at the union of these two into one body (Eph 2:14-16). Sharing this vision of St. Paul concerning the unification of people into the same body of Christ, called the Church, we will discuss in this chapter how Christians who constitute only a minority community in central India faced various struggles, can be a catalyst of a liberative process among the believers of other religions.

In the follow-up of the previous chapters discussions on the specific roles of the laity by dwelling in the midst of the followers of other religions, in this chapter we will focus mainly on the specific evangelization process to be initiated by the Christian laity. Their task would be living and witnessing in their non-Christian contexts to their Christian faith commitment by means of inter-religious dialogical methods which the Second Vatican Council and the post-conciliar Councils have offered to apply. Finally, it is our hope that the liberative evangelization process of the Christian

¹ Harold Coward, *Pluralism Challenge to World Religions* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1985), 24, 25.

laity in all its aspects of a fuller involvement among the believers of other religions bring out significant transformative effect for the integral liberation of all human beings. Among them a Christian is a dialogical partner who should speak for the oppressed sections of his people in terms of bringing out justice, freedom, equality and all noble values of human solidarity and unity.

1 EVANGELIZATION IN THE RELIGIOUSLY PLURALISTIC CONTEXT

Although the Church has to be missionary by her vocation (*AG* 2) and every Christian disciple is called to preach the message of Christ (Mk 16:15), the methods and approaches of evangelization must be adapted to the actual religious situation of the people. India is enriched with well established religious traditions, spiritual heritages, sustaining moral systems, supported by a philosophy of life and values which most of the orthodox Hindus believe and practice very conscientiously. The local Church and her missionaries including the lay evangelizers should take into account this deep religious, spiritual and philosophy of life of the majority community among whom the Christian minority community live and witness to their faith. Hence, we, Christians, must cooperate with the working of the Holy Spirit who has been guiding the destiny of the people in the long history of the salvation which God has been working out from the beginning of this world.

The Second Vatican Council document *Gaudium et Spes* is very clear when it says “we must believe that the Holy Spirit offers to everyone the possibility of being associated with the paschal mystery” (*GS* 22). Karl Rahner elucidates this theological insight by further stating that the “very success of missionary efforts depends on the presence of such people among those to whom the Gospel is being preached, on the grounds that it is those who are already positively responding to God’s self-communication in grace who will be the best disposed to respond to the message of the Gospel.”² Rahner explains further that “being a member of the Church does not guarantee a person’s salvation, nor make it “easier,” but it does provide the opportunity to realise a greater fullness of life in Christ than would be available to “anonymous Christians.”³ He believes in a salvation for everyone who follows his/her conscience and is a member of the religious systems in which someone is born and brought up in the values of the culture which are also part of God’s one divine

² Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, vol.12 (New York: The Seabury Press, 1974); cf. Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, vol.14 (New York: The Seabury Press, 1976), 280-294; cf. also Francis A. Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church?* (New York: Paulist Press, 1992), 145.

³ Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, 161-180; Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, 283-287; Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church?*, 174.

universal economy of salvation. This theology of Karl Rahner opens to us a clearer understanding of what the salvation of God offers in and through the Church to the believers of other religions.

... when a non-Christian attains salvation through faith, hope and love, the non-Christian religions cannot be understood in such a way that they do not play a role, or play only a negative role in the attainment of justification and salvation. This proposition is not concerned about making a very definite Christian interpretation and judgment about a concrete non-Christian religion. Nor is there any question of making such a religion equal to Christian faith in its salvific significance, nor of denying its depravity or its provisional character in the history of salvation, nor of denying that such a concrete religion can also have negative effects on the event of salvation in a particular non-Christian. But presupposing all of this, we still have to say: if a non-Christian religion could not or may not have any positive influence at all on the supernatural event of salvation in an individual person who is a non-Christian, then we would be understanding this event of salvation in this person in a completely ahistorical and asocial way. But this contradicts in a fundamental way the historical and social nature of Christianity itself, that is, its ecclesial nature.⁴

The conversion of a non-believer into the faith in Christ is possible at any time in one's life subject to the personal response somebody gives to the touch of grace offered by God to all. A Christian's presence in fellowship living and constant dialogue with his non-Christian neighbour can be an instrument in his neighbour's response to God's grace working in all human beings. An individual can be influenced by the power of the Spirit and become a believer of Christ at any time in his/her life provided that he/she is given sufficient inspirational ways of dialogical promptings by his Christian neighbour. This is the focus of our presentation in this chapter.

The Second Vatican Council document *Lumen Gentium* explains beautifully the role of God's grace that works in the plan of salvation. It states:

Finally, those who have not yet accepted the Gospel are related to the people of God in various ways. In the first place, there is that people to whom the testaments and promises were given and from whom Christ was born according to the flesh (Rom 9:4-5), a people according to their election most dear because of their ancestors: for God never goes back on

⁴ Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*, trans. William V. Dych (New York: The Seabury Press, 1978), 314; cf. Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, trans. Margaret Kohl, vol.17 (New York: Crossroads, 1981), 41.

his gifts and his calling (Rom 11:28-29). But the plan of salvation also embraces those who acknowledge the Creator, ... (LG 16).

In the first place, everyone who holds the faith of Abraham also adores the one and merciful God, who on the last day will judge mankind. God is not God far away from those who seek the unknown God, for it is He who gives to all men/women life and breath and all things, (Ac 17: 25-28) and it is the God whose will is that all men/women be saved (1 Tim 2:4). Furthermore, the Second Vatican Council document affirms:

There are those who without any fault do not know anything about Christ or his Church, yet who search for God with a sincere heart and, under the influence of grace, try to put into effect the will of God as known to them through the dictate of conscience: these too can obtain eternal salvation. Nor does divine Providence deny the helps that are necessary for salvation to those who, through no fault of their own, have not yet attained to the express recognition of God yet who strive, not without divine grace, to lead an upright life. For whatever goodness and truth is found in them is considered by the Church as a preparation for the Gospel and bestowed by him who enlightens everyone that they may in the end have life. More often, however, deceived by the evil one, people have gone astray in their thinking and exchanged the truth about God for a lie and served the creature rather than the creator (Rom 1: 21, 25), or living and dying in this world without God they are exposed to the extreme of despair. For this reason, to promote the glory of God and the salvation of all these people, the Church is mindful of the Lord's command when he said: "Preach the Gospel to the whole creation," (Mk 16: 16) and so it sedulously encourage the missions (LG 16).

Thus, everyone who seeks the truth will be saved. However, it is the responsibility of every Christian to preach the Gospel to everyone by a number of ways which also include the method of inter-religious dialogue taught by the Church.

1.1 INTER-RELIGIOUS CONCERNS OF EVANGELIZATION IN THE RELIGIOUS PLURALISTIC CONTEXT

The people of central India are influenced by various religions and systems of thought. We can find a village where Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Parsies, and Jains live together. We can also find a peaceful coexistence of the people, irrespective of their differences of religious beliefs/systems and practices or place in the caste or class.⁵ We need to see how a Christian can live in this social context and at the same

⁵ Mathias Mundadan, "Inter-Faith Approaches: A Survey of Contemporary Indian Christian Literature," in *Meeting of Religions*, ed. Thomas A. Aykara (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 1978), 90, 91.

time preach the Gospel values of Christ among this well-organised religious and philosophical systems around them.

To learn from certain models from the Old Testament, we find that Abraham was blessed by God “to be the father of many nations” irrespective of people’s languages, cultures or nationalities. This great blessing given to the father of all believers in God the Creator is not merely confined to those who belong to the Mosaic covenantal people, the Jews, but also offered and extended to all peoples of all nations and ages. “I have made you the ancestor of many nations” (Gen 17: 2-27). This universal extension of the “benediction” showered on Abraham is further explained by St. Paul in his Letter to the Romans. St. Paul is very eloquent in his commentary and application of the “benediction of God to Abraham” extended to both the Jews and the nations of the world. According to St. Paul Abraham is the father of many nations. It is the Spirit who brings everyone together. It is Jesus who gave us guiding principles to follow and these principles are to be reached to the ends of the earth through the witnessing life of the followers of Jesus. However, they are being guided by the power of the Spirit. Therefore, Jesus gives everyone the choice to reject or accept the Word (Rom 4:13, 16-18). However, Jesus does not give the freedom to speak against the power of the Spirit (Lk 12:10b). The Spirit which was from the beginning of creation controls and unifies. Everyone who acknowledges the power of the Spirit is guided by the inspirations of the Spirit.

The Second Vatican Council document *Ad Gentes* explains that “though God in ways known to Himself can lead those inculpably ignorant of the Gospel to that faith without which it is impossible to please Him (Heb 11:60), yet a necessity lies upon the Church and at the same time a sacred duty, to preach the Gospel” (*AG* 7). God has His own ways to bring everyone to know the truth.

1.2 GENERATING MUTUAL RESPECT AMONG THE BELIEVERS OF OTHER RELIGIONS

It has become very necessary to establish a mutual respect among the people of different religions in the society. The coexistence of people who profess different religions can be understood as the situation in a garden, where different colours of roses exist among flowers. A garden where different colours of the flowers exist is more beautiful than the one where one colour of flowers exists. Thus, God created everyone different in the world. One creation is not identical with another. Therefore, even God accepts unity in diversity and non-uniformity in creation.

The people of India are accommodative to their multi-religious experience of God. The official census lists six major religious communities: The Hindus, Muslims,

Christians, Sikhs, Buddhist and the Jains.⁶ But there is also a big number of people added to the national census from the tribal belts, a large number of people who follow their tribally inherited religious practices which cannot be conjoined to the major religions and their doctrines, beliefs, practices, ethically or ritualistically.⁷

The Second Vatican Council documents repeatedly give inspirational guidelines for working out ways and means for peaceful co-existence of Christians among the believers of other religions. *Lumen Gentium* teaches that “it has pleased God to make men holy and save them not merely as individuals without any mutual bonds, but by making them into a single people, a people which acknowledges Him in truth and serve Him in holiness” (LG 9). Furthermore, the same document gives emphasis to the fact that the Church, which is the people of God, “although it does not actually include all men, is nonetheless a lasting and sure sign of unity, hope and salvation for the whole human race” (LG 9). Because “all men are called to salvation by the grace of God” (LG 13). Hence, we have to understand that God is the creator of everyone, irrespective of one’s colour or nationality or race. The love of God is manifested over every creation in the world (Mt 6: 25-34). Everyone is saved in and through the mercies of the Father. Thus, it is understood that a supernatural revelation is everywhere in the world (GS 2; 10; 22). Karl Rahner explains it as the love of God towards His creation.⁸ It is the divine will since the fall of first man that all men should be saved.⁹ If the non-Christians can have redeeming faith, which can be made possible on a wider scale, such faith is made possible and sustained by the supernatural grace of the Holy Spirit.¹⁰ Amalorpavadass observes that, “the Church in India thus tries to co-operate towards the accomplishment of the universal brotherhood of all men and women across all barriers which separate and alienate men from one another.”¹¹

The non-Christian religions are not merely the work of human efforts. It is the power of God working in history. Therefore, “whatever elements of truth and grace are to be found among the nations” are described as “a sort of secret presence of God” (AG 9).

⁶ Vennugopal Iyar, *Census Commission of India* (<http://www.censusindia.gov.in/>, 2001, accessed 11.12.2007); Xavier Kochuparampil, *Evangelization in India* (Kottayam: Oriental Institute of Religious Studies India Publications, 1993), 211.

⁷ D. J. De, *The Constitution of India*, vol.1 (Hyderabad: S. P. Gogia, 2002), 1054.

⁸ Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, 40.

⁹ Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, 43.

¹⁰ Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, 44.

¹¹ D. S. Amalorpavadass, *Theology of Evangelizations: In the Indian Context* (Bangalore: National, Biblical, Catechetical and Liturgical Centre, 1971), 33.

Thus, Christians are instructed to know the religious traditions of other religions with an open mind. They are “gladly and gracefully to uncover the seeds of the Word which lie hidden in those traditions” (AG 11).

The day after the apostolic exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia* in New Delhi, India, Pope John Paul II spoke to a group of non-Christian leaders. He said: “Our encounter requires that we strive to discern and welcome whatever is good and holy in one another, so that together we can acknowledge, preserve and promote the spiritual and moral truths which alone guarantee the world’s future” (EA 3).¹² He welcomed everyone to acknowledge and promote all the good that is in every religion. Furthermore, Pope John Paul II insisted that the Church acknowledge everything that is true and holy in other religions. He is “the way and the truth and the life’.... The fact that the followers of other religions can receive God’s grace and be saved by Christ, apart from the ordinary means which he has established, does not thereby cancel the call to faith and baptism which God desires for all people” (EA 31).

1.3 ENCOURAGING THE BELIEVERS OF OTHER RELIGIONS TO UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER’S RELIGIOSITY, SPIRITUALITY AND SOCIO-CULTURAL VALUES

The Christians, Muslims and the Jews do believe and worship according to their monotheistic religions. Though in ancient times the Hindus did believe in a polytheistic religion, it had a monotheistic beginning.¹³ Prof. Thomas Manikkam in his comparative critical study on the concepts of *Dharma* and *Sedaqa* found in Manusmriti and Pentateuch respectively observes that Hinduism which accepts the Vedas as their foundational revelation had clear articulations of a monotheistic understanding of God. They also worship one Ultimate Reality as the Supreme God with numerous nomenclatures.¹⁴ *Ekam sat vipra bahudha vadanti* (Rgveda I: 164, 46) “One is the Reality in numerous names as spoken by wise men.” This is the most fundamental revelation of the Vedas and that is the foundational doctrine of Hinduism. It is noteworthy that the fathers of the Second Vatican Council have also acknowledged this truth.¹⁵

¹² John Paul II, "Two Addresses of Pope John Paul II in Delhi," *Vidyajyoti* 63, no. 12 (1999): 885.

¹³ T. M. Manikkam, *Dharma According to Manu and Moses* (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 1977), 65.

¹⁴ Manikkam, *Dharma According to Manu and Moses*, 65.

¹⁵ Cyril B. Papali, "Excursus on Hinduism," in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Herbert Vorgrimler (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), 138.

Sabatino Moscati affirms a “naturalistic” character of all the ancient religions. The basis of these religions’ origin is in fear.¹⁶ Fear of cosmic powers that exist in the human world. This understanding is very clear when these believers attributed divine power even to the stars in the sky. One even finds that gods make mistakes in their actions and behaviour. They have emotions like love and hatred.¹⁶ Manikkam observes further that there is a similarity in the understanding of the Supreme God as Brāhman in Hinduism and Yahweh in the Old Testament.¹⁷ If this argument is correct, we can easily conclude that the living value systems of people professing various religions east and west are drawn from the same monotheistic concept of God,¹⁸ whom the Hindus call Brahman, the Muslims Allaha, and the Jews Yahweh.¹⁹ Thus, the monotheistic concept of God in these religious traditions became the basic theological requirement for understanding the meaning of righteousness (*dharma/sedaqa*) as God’s award of justification to people who follow in their conscience the commandments of God revealed to them.²⁰ This righteousness has become primarily a saving act of God’s benevolence to all those who follow God’s will in their faith filled with practical moral life. Furthermore, it often appears to be synonymous with liberation and salvation.²¹

The Hindu tradition believes also in the descent (*avatar*)²² of God on earth whenever the righteousness of people deteriorates beyond reparation by human efforts.²³ This understanding of the Hindus is well explained by Manikkam in an article entitled “The Idea of Liberation in Ramayana” published in *Journal of Dharma*.²⁴ All the descents (*avatars*) of Vishnu are understood to restore the lost righteousness (*dharma*) to its expected state of perfection which would liberate the humankind from

¹⁶ Sabatino Moscati, *The Face of the Ancient Orient* (Garden City, New York: A Double Day Anchor Book, 1962), 314.

¹⁷ Manikkam, *Dharma According to Manu and Moses*, 99-102.

¹⁸ Theodore de Bary, *Source of Indian Tradition*, ed. Stephen N. Hay *et al.* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), 296, 297; cf. F.N 20, The concept of the Supreme Spirit over and above matter and the individual spirit or soul is known to the original Sankhya. It reflects the monistic Vedanta concept of the highest Brahman (the Supreme Self) and thus facilitates a kind of synthesis between Vedanta monism and Sankya dualism. For another, the Supreme Spirit is identified with the all-god of devotional religion.

¹⁹ Manikkam, *Dharma According to Manu and Moses*, 83-94.

²⁰ Manikkam, *Dharma According to Manu and Moses*, 95.

²¹ Manikkam, *Dharma According to Manu and Moses*, 95.

²² There are ten descents (*Avatars*) in Hindum: *Matsya kurma varahasca narasimhasca vamanah, Ramo ramasca ramasca Krishna kalkir janardanah*

²³ De Bary, *Source of Indian Tradition*, 293.

²⁴ Thomas Manikkam, "The Idea of Liberation in Ramayana," *Journal of Dharma* 22, no. 2 (1997): 155-164.

destruction.²⁵ This restoration of the integrity of creation as well as the moral rectitude of humanity by the descent of God in long strides of time (*yuga*) is stated in the Holy Book of *Bhagavad Gita*.²⁶

In spite of having such enlightened ideas about God's restoration in creation as those believed by the Hindus, the Christian missionaries of the west considered them as "idol worshipers." In 1938 in the last week of December, one of the American missionaries, who was very much involved with various missionary works in India, asked Mahatma Gandhi about his opinion regarding the activities of the missionaries. Gandhi's answer was:

up till now they have come as teachers and preachers with queer notions about India and India's great religion. We have been described as a nation of superstitious heathens, knowing nothing, denying God.²⁷We welcomed the missionaries as fellow-helpers and fellow-seekers, but we warned them if they come as preachers of the true Gospel to a people who are wandering in darkness, so far as I am concerned you can have no place. You may impose yourselves upon us.²⁸

It may be fairly observed that during the colonial and western imperial times in India, the missionaries were not able to understand the hidden power of God that worked in the Indian religions. Furthermore, Gandhi also blamed the Christians for preaching "too much the cross of Christ who died two thousand years ago, forgetting their duty to bear their own cross today."²⁹ He insisted that every Christian be another Christ bearing witness to Christ by taking up their daily crosses in their lives. He said Jesus became the righteous one who gave justice to every creature. Hence, His righteousness is not to be measured by human standards but human standards are to be measured by Him.³⁰

Today the Christian laity have a great task to fulfil in the religiously pluralistic society of India. "The Christian community must appear among the people as a prophetic critic and effective sign of a new brotherhood, a brotherhood rooted in the experience

²⁵ Manikkam, "The Idea of Liberation in Ramayana," 159.

²⁶ R. C. Zaehner, *The Bhagavad Gita* (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1972), 184.

²⁷ M. K. Gandhi, *Christian Missions: Their Place in India* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Press, 1941), 288.

²⁸ Gandhi, *Christian Missions: Their Place in India*, 288; cf. Teotonio R. De Souza, "The Christian Missions in the Aftermath of Discoveries: Tools for Shaping the Colonial Other," in *Discoveries, Missionary Expansion and Asian Cultures*, ed. Teotonio R. De Souza (New Delhi: Concept Publications Company, 1994), 34.

²⁹ Souza, "The Christian Missions in the Aftermath of Discoveries: Tools for Shaping the Colonial Other," 35.

³⁰ Manikkam, *Dharma According to Manu and Moses*, 95, 96.

of the universal fatherhood of the God of Jesus Christ.”³¹ This is a great challenge placed before every follower of Jesus Christ. To fulfil this responsibility it has to emerge from within. It cannot be imposed from external forces.³² They are to receive the energy by the re-reading of the Gospel to their context. The values that the members of the Church need to practice can be summarised mainly into ‘brotherhood and hope.’³³ Today the Church remains in the centre of the creation because Christ works mysteriously through every human person.

2 DIRECTIVES OF THE CHURCH DOCUMENTS REGARDING THE NON-CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS

It was the Second Vatican Council that appreciated for the first time the goodness hidden in other religions. They have appreciated the goodness in other religions by propagating one full document entitled *Nostra Aetate* dealing with the attitude of the Church to non-Christian religions.³⁴ In this declaration the fathers clearly articulated some of the positive attitudes of the Church towards the followers of other religions, making a special mention of Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and “likewise all other religions” (NA 2). Quoting St. Paul who called his own patriarchal people, the Jews, “God’s dear people” related to God with His covenant, and called the good olive tree onto which the Gentiles, as branches of a wild olive, were grafted (Rom 11: 17-21), firstly, the Council Fathers considered the Jews the people who have the knowledge of God based on divine revelation. Secondly, Muslims are next among the semitic people who acknowledged the Creator and who adore God as a merciful judge. Thirdly, the fathers of the Second Vatican Council, speaking about the “people,” stated, “those who in shadows and images seek the unknown God.” They are called “people” because they “sincerely seek God,” “those who, without blame on their part, have not yet arrived at an explicit knowledge of God.”³⁵ The fathers added that God wished everyone to be saved (Jn 3:17).

In the same sequence of compliments *Nostra Aetate* makes very clear affirmations about the positive spiritual elements found in Hinduism and Buddhism respectively, such as “prayer, fasting, contemplation and loving trusting flight to God” (Hinduism), and “awareness of the shifting and flashy nature of this world, and a sincere search

³¹ Ronaldo Munoz, "The Function of the Poor in the Church," in *The Poor and the Church*, ed. Norbert Greinacher and Alois Muller (New York: The Seabury Press, 1977), 85.

³² Munoz, "The Function of the Poor in the Church," 86.

³³ Munoz, "The Function of the Poor in the Church," 86.

³⁴ Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church?*, 164.

³⁵ Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church?*, 154.

for the enlightenment of Truth by higher assistance" (Buddhism).³⁶ This being the mind of the Church expressed in the official teachings of the Second Vatican Council, the missionaries, both local and foreign, clergy and laity, have to feel united with the official teaching of the Church and adapt their missionary approaches to the believers of other religions accordingly, and take these people into confidence and respect them as brothers in our common search for the realisation of God's Kingdom on earth as fellow pilgrims moving together to the same heavenly Father's home.³⁷

Along with the promulgation of the document *Nostra Aetate*, Pope Paul VI emphasised that an attitude of dialogue with other religions is to be the central mission of the Church.³⁸ The same document acknowledges the search for the ultimate truth by all races and peoples, and honours the truth and holiness found in other religions as the work of the one living God.³⁹ Thus, the fathers of the Second Vatican Council publicly recognised the universal presence of the grace and its role in the salvation history of God.⁴⁰

Karl Rahner also acknowledged that the Second Vatican Council document *Nostra Aetate* "recognises what is 'true' and 'holy' in the different religions and that the concrete forms and doctrines of these religions are to be regarded with straightforward seriousness. The declaration sees the ultimate root of these religions in the quest for an answer to the unsolved riddle of human existence and in a certain perception and acknowledgement of that hidden power which is present in the course of the world and in the events of human life."⁴¹ Furthermore, he adds "God's grace is always and everywhere active for man's salvation and its salvific power, although obscurely and imperfectly, also manifested in the non-Christian religions, making them ways of salvation by which human beings approach God and his Christ."⁴² The

³⁶ Heinrich Dumoulin, "Excursus on Buddhism," in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Herbert Vorgrimler (New York: Herder and Herder New York, 1968), 148, 148.

³⁷ Robert S. Rivers, *From Maintenance to Mission: Evangelization and the Revitalization of the Parish* (New York: Paulist Press, 2005), 30, 31.

³⁸ Guiseppe Alberigo, "Transition to a New Age," in *History of Vatican II*, ed. Giuseppe Alberigo (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 589.

³⁹ John M. Oesterreicher, "Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions," in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Herbert Vorgrimler (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), 1.

⁴⁰ Oesterreicher, "Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions," 1.

⁴¹ Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, trans. Edward Quinn, vol.18 (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1983), 289.

⁴² Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, 295.

observation of Rahner confirms the power of God manifested in every time, place and religion. Thus, everyone is invited to realise the love of God in different forms of life.

The document *Nostra Aetate* speaks of a common human vocation. All human beings form a single community whose origin and goal is one loving God. It states "His providence, His manifestations of goodness and His saving designs extend to all men" (NA 1). The document goes one step further to explain that "The Catholic Church rejects nothing which is true and holy in these religions" (NA 2).⁴³ "The Church therefore has to respect everything in other religions prudently and lovingly" (NA 2).⁴⁴ The Council speaks courageously and acknowledges "the divine origin of some elements" in other religions.⁴⁵ These positive elements in other religions can be recognised as the preparation for the Gospel to be preached in their midst as St. Paul made use of the altar at Athens preserved for the unknown God and worshiped by the pagans (Ac 17:23-28).

It was very clear when the fathers said religious traditions outside the Church had their place in God's saving design, with values that are intimately related to the divine mystery (NA 2). The norms of human living are inspired to every man who seeks it with an open heart. This generosity of the creator is seen in the life of Buddha as well as in the lives of many other sages of Indian religions.⁴⁶ They were all inspired by the same Holy Spirit who was instrumental in inspiring the prophets of the Old Testament.

Thus, the spirit of the dialogical approach should permeate our approaches of evangelization. A Christian must oppose every form of discrimination based on creed, gender and race (NA 5). Enriched with an authentic sense of justice and love, the

⁴³ This paragraph presents an understanding that is traditional in the Catholic Church. One recalls, for example, Justin Martyr in the early Church attributing all the truths in non-Christian religions to the Word of God who enlightens every man who enters into this world—a concept found at the beginning of the Gospel according to John. Through the centuries, however, missionaries often adopted the attitude that non-Christian religions were simply the work of Satan and the missionaries' task was to convert from error to knowledge of the truth. This Declaration marks an authoritative change in approach. Now, for the first time, there is recognition of other religions as entities with which the Church can and should enter into dialogue.

⁴⁴ The Declaration gives a good example of prudence in putting aside, for the moment, element in non-Christian religions that are repugnant to Christians (idolatry, etc.) to focus on the spiritual and moral goods. Also, there is here no undignified breastbeating, no protestation that Catholics were not responsible for unfortunate episodes in history, no exaggerated emotionalism all of which would not have provided a good basis for persevering in dialogue.

⁴⁵ Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church?*, 167.

⁴⁶ Mundadan, "Inter-Faith Approaches: A Survey of Contemporary Indian Christian Literature," 90, 91.

Christians are called to be open to all forms of dialogue, and engage in a common search for moral and spiritual enrichment (NA 2, 3, 5). It is true that one or another way, the whole mankind is related to the Church.⁴⁷ Thus, the document *Nostra Aetate* correctly notes, “all people comprise a single community” (NA 1). The Church, through her works, acts as a leaven of unity with the mission to build in every man and woman a deeper consciousness of their supernatural unity in Christ and through him give glory to the Father, the Creator of the whole creation.⁴⁸ Considering the attitude of the Church toward other religions, Pope Paul VI said “the dialogue represented an attitude of openness but not necessarily of agreement in everything that the Church believes and professes.”⁴⁹ When Jesus prayed to the Father he prayed for the oneness of the Jews and the Gentiles (Jn 11:52). In God’s plan, Jews and Gentiles are seen as one.⁵⁰ With the birth of the Church this unity is actualised and the great design of the Lord has taken an actual form and the Jews and the Gentiles have become one in Christ in the Church.

The fathers of the Second Vatican Council advised all Christians to maintain good conduct among the people of all nations as advised by St. Peter to the Christian faithful of his time (1 Pet 2:12). They are expected to live peacefully with all people, as apostle Paul also advised the Christians in Rome. (Rom 12:18). There are various post-Council documents which promote a peaceful co existence of Christians with people of other faith.

The “All India Seminar on the Church in India Today” convened by the Catholic hierarchy of India at Bangalore in 1969 observed that:

the Church veils the face of Christ, because the Church is imperfect and always fails to respond fully to the Spirit animating her. That is the reason why “she exhorts her sons to purify and renew themselves so that the sign of Christ may shine more brightly over the face of the earth” (LG 15).... Both in the individual consciousness of Christians and in the collective consciousness of the people of God, there is a deep sense of inadequacy, which is the voice of the Spirit calling the whole Church to a more perfect charity.⁵¹

⁴⁷ Mundadan, "Inter-Faith Approaches: A Survey of Contemporary Indian Christian Literature," 96.

⁴⁸ Valerian Gracias, "Orientation Papers," in *All India Seminar on the Church in India Today* (Bangalore: The Organising Committee, CBCI Centre, 1969), 205.

⁴⁹ Alberigo, "Transition to a New Age," 590.

⁵⁰ Oesterreicher, "Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions," 52.

⁵¹ Gracias, "Orientation Papers," 207.

Today there is a great need to understand the meaning of conversion. The word conversion is to be understood not as “a mere passage from one group to another.” If we understand that today salvation is deserved only to one group or sect of religion, we are narrowing down the abundant mercies of God manifested in Jesus. We are cornering the desire of God who wishes everyone to be saved. Furthermore, we have failed to understand the universal salvation of every human. We cannot be called ambassadors of God who came to save everyone unconditionally. We have failed to see the “eschatological consummation which is beyond time and space and have been unable to perceive the providential contributions which other religions are called to offer.”⁵²

In this context of the National Seminar, Bede Griffiths made the following observation:

the goal of the Christian mission cannot be placed in space and time. It would be quite wrong to think that we look forward to the establishment of a universal Church in which all other religions will be absorbed. The fulfilment of the mission of the Church will only come at the end of time, when the full meaning of the divine plan will be revealed. It is only then that we shall be able to see what is the relation of Hinduism or Buddhism or Islam or any other religion to this plan.⁵³

It is a Christological truth that all authentic values of all the religions belong to Christ, the unifier of all that is human with his Father's one economy of salvation.

Hence, in the religious pluralistic context of India the Christian laity should learn to respect the noble spiritual and moral values of other religions with whose followers they are living in constant dialogical relationship. In short, the Christian laity have to implement the directives of the teachings of the Church regarding this dialogical ministry among the believers of other religions so pointedly taught in the challenging “Declaration of the Church's relationship with the believers of other religions,” known as *Nostra Aetate*. In this declaration, there is clearly stated that, “The Catholic Church rejects nothing which is true and holy in these religions” (NA 2).⁵⁴

Then as a conclusion to art.2 of *Nostra Aetate* there is this exhortation: “The Church, therefore, has this exhortation for her sons: prudently and lovingly, through dialogue and collaboration with the followers of other religions, and in witness of Christian

⁵² Valerian Gracias, "Orientation Papers," in *All India Seminar on the Church in India Today Bangalore, May 15-25, 1969* (New Delhi: The Organising Committee, CBCI Centre, 1969), 202.

⁵³ Bede Griffiths, "Further Towards a Hindu-Christian Dialogue," *The Clergy Monthly* 32, no. 5 (1968): 220.

⁵⁴ Cf. footnote no. 43.

faith and life, acknowledge, preserve, and promote the spiritual and moral goods found among these men, as well as the values in their society and culture” (NA 2).

The Council speaks in this declaration very courageously and acknowledges “the divine origin of some elements” in other religions.⁵⁵ These positive elements in other religions can be recognised as the preparation for the Gospel as the ancient Fathers of the Church like Justine the Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, and St. Augustine so convincingly expounded in their theological expositions, for which they received inspiration from St. Paul himself from his speech at Areopagus in which he quotes Philosopher Epimenidus and Poet Aratus to support his theology of the closeness of God to all “children of God” (Ac 17:28).

It is the Holy Spirit who alone accomplishes the work of Jesus through the instrumental help of the human person.⁵⁶ The same document explains how the Holy Spirit inspires in the hearts of man his worthiness in the world. It illustrates that “She [the Church] knows that man is constantly worked upon by God’s Spirit, and hence can never be altogether indifferent to the problems of religion. The experience of past ages proves this, as do numerous indications in our own times. For man will always yearn to know, at least in an obscure way, what is the meaning of his life, of his activity, of his death” (GS 41). It is the power of the Spirit who leads every man to know the truth.

2.1 APPLYING THE GUIDELINES OF POST-CONCILIAR DOCUMENTS EXPLAINING “MISSION, EVANGELIZATION, DIALOGUE AND PROCLAMATION” AS THEIR SPECIFIC GOALS AND MUTUAL COMPLEMENTARITY

In his Easter message of 29th March 1964 Pope Paul VI mentioned that every religion contains a ray of the light. We must neither despise nor extinguish them. Every religion raises the human soul to the “transcendent Being.” “Every religion is a dawn of faith, and we await its full realisation in the light of noon, in the splendour of Christian wisdom.”⁵⁷ It is noteworthy that the first encyclical of Pope Paul VI, *Ecclesiam Suam*, explained the importance of giving respect to those who worship one Supreme Being. He said:

Then we see another circle around us. This, too, is vast in its extent, yet it is not so far away from us. It is made up of the men who above all adore the one, Supreme God whom we too adore. We refer to the children, worthy of

⁵⁵ Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church?*, 167.

⁵⁶ Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church?*, 163.

⁵⁷ Oesterreicher, "Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions," 87.

our affection and respect, of the Hebrew people, faithful to the religion which we call that of the Old Testament. Then to the adorers of God according to the conception of Monotheism, the Muslim religion especially, deserving of our admiration for all that is true and good in their worship of God. And also to the followers of the great Afro-Asiatic religions (*ES* 107).

In the same encyclical Pope Paul VI explained the need for promoting and defending common ideals. He said:

But we do, nevertheless, recognise and respect the moral and spiritual values of the various non-Christian religions, and we desire to join with them in promoting and defending common ideals of religious liberty, human brotherhood, good culture, social welfare and civil order. For our part, we are ready to enter into discussion on these common ideals, and will not fail to take the initiative where our offer of discussion in genuine, mutual respect, would be well received (*ES* 108).

“The Church has been sent by God to all nations that she might be the universal sacrament of salvation” (*AG* 1). Thus, Pope found the need to establish a healthy dialogue between Christians and non-Christian religions. He said that everyone was created in the images of one Creator therefore we should not be divided in fighting against the social evils in the society. Pope Paul VI acknowledged the good life sustaining values that prevailed in the Indian society and that were drawn from the traditional Indian religions.⁵⁸ We have seen in our second chapter how he, knowing the situation of a vast majority of the people of India exploited by the discriminating upper castes, welcomed everyone to stand together to fight against injustice done to mankind. No religious barriers should prevent anyone from obtaining justice in the society.

2.1.1 Dialogue and Mission

The document *Dialogue and Mission* was approved and promulgated by Pope John Paul II during the plenary assembly at Grottaferrata organised from 27th February to 3rd March 1984.⁵⁹ It states that during dialogue: “A person discovers that he does not possess the truth in a perfect and total way but can walk together with others towards that goal. Mutual affirmation, reciprocal correction, and fraternal exchange lead the partners in dialogue to an ever greater maturity which in turn generates interpersonal communion.”⁶⁰ We are called to be united in love and fellowship to meet God in each other. This document further explains the attitude of the Church towards the followers

⁵⁸ Oesterreicher, "Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions," 88.

⁵⁹ John Paul II, "Dialogue and Mission," *Bulletin* 56, no. 19/2 (1984): 126-141.

⁶⁰ John Paul II, "Dialogue and Mission," 133, no. 21.

of other religions. It is the same Spirit that is active in the Church and outside too. The aim of the Spirit is to establish the Kingdom of God on earth. Thus, Pope John Paul II said the reign of God had to be final motivation of every individual.⁶¹ He emphasised through the document 'Dialogue and Mission' that evangelization does not compel anyone for conversion to Christianity but it is the freedom of conscience that invites the individual to embrace the Christian faith.⁶² Pope insisted that Christian must respect every human person.⁶³ The act of dialogue is a platform to share the values of the Gospel.⁶⁴ It aims at a spiritual conversion and helps to rediscover oneself in others. Furthermore, we enter into dialogue with God who loves a human.⁶⁵ However, the Church as a universal sacrament of salvation cannot impose on any religion or value systems of life of other people anything that can be oppressive, as it may diminish the freedom of conscience of all persons.⁶⁶ The Christian may wonder how the Church and her personnel can get in touch with those persons who have no way of contact with Christ and his Church. It is the responsibility of the baptised, who are anointed by the power of the Holy Spirit, to be an instrument in the hands of the Spirit to preach the Gospel to the non-Christians.⁶⁷

2.1.2 Dialogue and Proclamation

The idea of interreligious dialogue was further strengthened when Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples jointly prepared a document entitled *Dialogue and Proclamation* and approved by Pope John Paul II in 1991.⁶⁸ Pope said the proclamation of the Gospel would be undertaken through several activities of the Christians.⁶⁹ A positive attitude about the other religion is necessary for an effective interreligious dialogue. He said we found the work of the Spirit in other religions. He recalled that:

(the) writers of the second century and the first part of the third century such as Justin, Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria, either explicitly or in an equivalent way, speak about the "seeds" sown by the Word of God in

⁶¹ John Paul II, "Dialogue and Mission," 135, no. 25.

⁶² John Paul II, "Dialogue and Mission," 132, no. 18.

⁶³ John Paul II, "Dialogue and Mission," 132, no. 18.

⁶⁴ John Paul II, "Dialogue and Mission," 138, no. 35.

⁶⁵ John Paul II, "Dialogue and Mission," 139-140, nos. 37, 41.

⁶⁶ John Paul II, "Dialogue and Mission," 128, nos. 8-11.

⁶⁷ John Paul II, "Dialogue and Mission," 140.

⁶⁸ John Paul II, "Dialogue and Proclamation," in *Redemption and Dialogue*, ed. William R. Burrows (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1991), 93-118.

⁶⁹ John Paul II, "Dialogue and Proclamation," 96, no. 8.

the nations.⁷⁰ Thus it can be said that for them, prior to and outside the Christian dispensation, God has already, in an incomplete way, manifested himself. This manifestation of the *Logos* is an adumbration of the full revelation in Jesus Christ to which it points. This document motivates every Christian to prepare others irrespective of their faith prepare them to call God as "One True God."⁷¹

The Church on earth is considered to be a group of pilgrims. She knows that "her members are not perfect; they bear the mark of their human limitations."⁷² The members of the Church are called to purify constantly while they are on earth. The dialogue is an exploration of the religious commitment to God. Pope said the whole salvation history is a dialogue between God and man. Therefore, Church is found to continue this dialogue. Hence, dialogue is rather more theological than anthropological.⁷³ The proclamation is the seed of the beginning of the Kingdom.

Since Kingdom is essentially related to Church, all those who follow their conscience will be mysteriously saved by Christ in the Church.⁷⁴ Commenting on this statement Jacques Dupuis observed that this is the weightiest statement in the whole document. We have never found before in official documents such theological expressions. It means, in effect, that the members of other religions are not saved by Christ in spite of, or beside, their own tradition, but in it and in some mysterious way, known to God, through it. If it further elaborated theologically, this statement would be seen to imply some hidden presence - no matter how imperfect - of the mystery of Jesus Christ in these religious traditions in which salvation reaches their adherents.⁷⁵

The Church, "insofar as she is an institution of men here on earth, and not only her members, is constantly in need of renewal and reform."⁷⁶ Dialogue is in itself an authentic form of evangelization, yet remains oriented toward proclamation.⁷⁷ The

⁷⁰ Justin speaks about the "seed" sown by the Logos in the religious traditions. Through the Incarnation the manifestation of the Logos becomes complete (1 Apol. 46:1-4; 2Apol. 8:1; 10:1-3; 13:4-6). For Irenaeus, the Son, the visible manifestation of the Father, has revealed himself to mankind "from the beginning"; yet the Incarnate brings about something entirely new (Adv. Haer. 4, 6:5-7; 4,7, 2; 4,20:6-7). Clement of Alexandria explains that "philosophy" was given to the Greeks by God as a "covenant," as a "stepping stone to the philosophy which is according to Christ," as a "schoolmaster" bringing the Hellenistic mind to him (Stromata, 5; 6,8; 7,2).

⁷¹ John Paul II, "Dialogue and Proclamation," 99, no. 19.

⁷² John Paul II, "Dialogue and Proclamation," 103, no. 36.

⁷³ John Paul II, "Dialogue and Proclamation," 103, no. 38.

⁷⁴ John Paul II, "Dialogue and Proclamation," 103, no. 35.

⁷⁵ Jacques Dupuis, "A Theological Commentary: Dialogue and Proclamation," in *Redemption and Dialogue*, ed. Williams R. Burrows (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1993), 137.

⁷⁶ John Paul II, "Dialogue and Proclamation," 103, no. 36.

⁷⁷ Dupuis, "A Theological Commentary: Dialogue and Proclamation," 147.

evangelizer has to be possessed by the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit who strengthens and who bears witness to the Word. Furthermore, it is not an optional task but the duty of the Church entrusted by Christ.⁷⁸ The dialogue and proclamation are interrelated but are not interchangeable.⁷⁹ They are two ways of the same mission.⁸⁰ Dupuis claims that dialogue is “distinct from proclamation, each having its specific finality, though the witness of life is presupposed in both. The single but complex and articulated reality of evangelization comprises both.”⁸¹ The Church by bearing witness to the Word through her life raises questions to other religions.⁸² The Church has to be the sign of unity among the nations. The other religious traditions are viewed in it as “positive elements in the economy of God’s design of salvation.” The bishops from various dioceses enquired: “How then, can we not give them reverence and honour?”⁸³

2.1.3 *Dominus Iesus*

It was made clear further through the promulgation of the document *Dominus Iesus* by Pope John Paul II on 5th September 2000 that everyone is saved through Jesus Christ.⁸⁴ The document *Dominus Iesus* basically dealt with two questions: 1) what is the distinctiveness of Christianity?, 2) what is the relationship of Christianity to other religions? The document says that the Christian life contains three specific characteristics of Christ. First of all Christianity holds a particular story of Christ, secondly she has a distinctive spirituality, and finally she has a specific ethics of life. The document addresses the basic issue of the uniqueness of Jesus Christ.

Church encountered some world religions which have more profound religious systems and found that they existed even before the existence of Christianity. At the same time the members of the Church found the necessity (*de facto*) to preach the Gospel to everyone. It is not by divine right (*de iure*) to preach the Gospel. Further it was also found that in the pluralistic society every religion has a limited knowledge of God. So it must be supplemented with the knowledge of other religions. No religion can claim absolute truth and every religion must strive for promoting justice and well

⁷⁸ John Paul II, "Dialogue and Proclamation," 110, nos. 64-76.

⁷⁹ Dupuis, "A Theological Commentary: Dialogue and Proclamation," 147.

⁸⁰ John Paul II, "Dialogue and Proclamation," 116, no. 82.

⁸¹ Dupuis, "A Theological Commentary: Dialogue and Proclamation," 131.

⁸² John Paul II, "Dialogue and Proclamation," 115, nos. 79, 80.

⁸³ Gaudencio B. Rosales, ed., *For All the Peoples of Asia* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1992), 14, 15.

⁸⁴ John Paul II, "*Dominus Iesus*," *Origins* 30, no. 14 (2000): 210-218.

being of the humanity. *Dominus Iesus* insists that interreligious dialogue never be separated from proclamation or evangelization.⁸⁵ The document states that there is only one salvific economy of the One and Triune God, realised in the mystery of the incarnation, death, and resurrection of the Son of God. It is actualised with the cooperation of the Holy Spirit, and extended in its salvific value to all humanity and to the entire universe.⁸⁶ Jesus Christ is not simply the expression of God's will to save us. He is also the concrete realisation of that will in history. The document insists on the twofold meaning of Christian faith "a dual adherence: to God who reveals and to the truth which He reveals."⁸⁷ This document condemns any attempt to divide the salvation plan into the work of the Spirit and the work of Christ. Incarnation is concretisation of one salvific plan in history. In other words, Jesus is the sacramental presence of God's salvific will. The invisible form of God's salvific will is realised in Incarnation. Therefore, Christ is the foundational sacrament. The Church being continuation of Christ perpetuates the sacramental presence of Christ. The Eucharistic celebration is the realisation of the salvific grace. The document teaches that even if there is salvific value in non-Christian religions, they are derived from Christ through "participated mediation."⁸⁸

However, Pope affirmed that the Catholic Church rejected nothing of what was true and holy in other religions.⁸⁹ This document is very apologetic in affirming the fullness of revelation in and through Jesus Christ.⁹⁰ It states:

It is necessary above all to reassert the definitive and complete character of the revelation of Jesus Christ. In fact, it must be firmly believed that, in the mystery of Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God, who is "the way, the truth and life" (Jn 14:6), the full revelation of divine truth is given: "No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him" (Mt 11:27); "no one has ever seen God; God the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, has revealed him" (Jn 1:18); "for in Christ the whole fullness of divinity dwells in bodily form" (Col 2:9, 10).... By this revelation then, the deepest truth about God and the salvation of man shines forth in Christ, who is at the same time the mediator and the fullness of all revelation.... For this reason, Jesus perfected revelation by fulfilling it through his whole work of making himself present and manifesting himself: Through his

⁸⁵ John Paul II, "*Dominus Iesus*," 211, no. 2.

⁸⁶ John Paul II, "*Dominus Iesus*," 214, 215, no. 12.

⁸⁷ John Paul II, "*Dominus Iesus*," 213, no. 7.

⁸⁸ John Paul II, "*Dominus Iesus*," 215, no. 14.

⁸⁹ John Paul II, "*Dominus Iesus*," 211, no. 2.

⁹⁰ John Paul II, "*Dominus Iesus*," 212, no. 5.

words and deeds, his signs and wonders, but especially through his death and glorious resurrection from the dead and finally with the sending of the Spirit of truth, he completed and perfected revelation and confirmed it with divine testimony.... The Christian dispensation, therefore, as the new and definitive covenant, will never pass away, and we now await no further new public revelation before the glorious manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ.⁹¹

The document further states:

the limited, incomplete or imperfect character of the revelation of Jesus Christ, which would be complementary to that found in other religions, is contrary to the Church's faith.... There are also those who propose the hypothesis of an economy of the Holy Spirit with a more universal breath than that of the incarnate Word, crucified and risen. This position also is contrary to the Catholic faith, which on the contrary considers the salvific incarnation of the Word as a Trinitarian event.⁹²

The document *Dominus Iesus* claims that the Church cannot be separated from Kingdom. She is the seed, sign and instrument to the Kingdom.⁹³ The document makes it clear that "it would be contrary to the faith to consider the Church as one way of salvation alongside those constituted by the other religions, seen as complementary to the Church or substantially equivalent to her, even if these are said to be converging with the Church towards the eschatological Kingdom of God."⁹⁴ The document strongly teaches that, "no one, therefore, can enter into communion with God except through Christ, by the working of the Holy Spirit."⁹⁵ The document affirms that inter-religious dialogue is desirable but must be linked to the responsibility to proclaim the Gospel.⁹⁶

The explanation given by the document *Dominus Iesus* regarding the "unicity and salvific universality" of the mystery of Jesus Christ called for much tension in the universal as well as the Indian Church. Francis George from Chicago comments that "there is no new teaching in the declaration *Dominus Iesus*." He said basically the declaration opposes religious relativism.⁹⁷ According to William Levada the document explains that "as if the old saw 'one religion is as good as another' has now

⁹¹ John Paul II, "*Dominus Iesus*," 212, no. 5.

⁹² John Paul II, "*Dominus Iesus*," 212-215, nos. 6, 12.

⁹³ John Paul II, "Dialogue and Proclamation," 102, no. 34; cf. John Paul II, "*Dominus Iesus*," 217, no. 18.

⁹⁴ John Paul II, "*Dominus Iesus*," 218, no. 21.

⁹⁵ John Paul II, "*Dominus Iesus*," 215, no. 12.

⁹⁶ John Paul II, "*Dominus Iesus*," 209-211, nos. 1-2.

⁹⁷ Francis George, "Opposing Religious Relativism," *Origins* 30, no. 15 (2000): 228.

got to be 'no religion is as good as another.'⁹⁸ Furthermore, Theodore McCarrick says: "what nonsense, especially in the light of our Holy Father's constant outreach to other faiths and other religious leaders, We do not claim that only Catholics can be saved or that only Catholic can be holy."⁹⁹ Alexander Brunet, a consultant to the U.S. bishop's committee for ecumenical and interreligious affairs, argues that, "the declaration itself does not seem to be needed by those who have been engaged in official dialogue. Dialogue partners usually understand that there is much give and take, and that one should come to the table with a clear understanding of their own religious convictions and ecclesial identity. From that perspective, this declaration does not add much to the process nor does it further the cause of mutual understanding and respect."¹⁰⁰

Theologian Emeritus Prof. J. Neuner claims that the document overstates the doctrinal rather than the personal aspect of revelation and faith.¹⁰¹ *Dominus Iesus* rejects the suggestion that the concern for social justice, in and of itself, is equivalent to the concern for the Kingdom of God.¹⁰² Neuner adds that in the document the "fullness and definitiveness" of the revelation in Christ are forcefully asserted. In doing this the declaration tends to overstate what *Dei Verbum* very cautiously taught on divine revelation. Thus, the document is seen as "an obstacle to the ecumenical movement among Christian communities and in particular in the dialogue with the other religions."¹⁰³ S. Arul Pragasam claims that in the multi-religious context "Jesus Christ and his saving mystery no longer stand at the centre of God's saving design for humanity. It is God and God alone who is at the centre and God, who 'shows no partiality' (Ac 10:34), has manifested and revealed himself in various ways to different peoples in different cultures."¹⁰⁴ However, the affirmation of the central role of Christ in salvific plan does not reject the possibility of serving other religions in dialogue and love.¹⁰⁵ The Kingdom cannot be separated from Jesus who, in turn,

⁹⁸ William Levada, "The Place of Religious Discourse in American Democracy," *Origins* 30, no. 15 (2000): 231-233.

⁹⁹ Theodore McCarrick, "Ways of Misunderstanding This Document," *Origins* 30, no. 15 (2000): 233, 234.

¹⁰⁰ Alexander Brunett, "Understanding This Document's Context and Intent," *Origins* 30, no. 15 (2000): 234.

¹⁰¹ J. Neuner, "The Fullness of Revelation: Reflection on the Declaration *Dominus Iesus*," *Vidyajyoti* 65, no. 1 (2001): 7.

¹⁰² John Paul II, "*Dominus Iesus*," 217, no. 18.

¹⁰³ Neuner, "The Fullness of Revelation: Reflection on the Declaration *Dominus Iesus*," 7.

¹⁰⁴ S. Arul Pragasam, "*Dominus Iesus* and Its Invitation to Theology," *Vidyajyoti* 65, no. 8 (2001): 585.

¹⁰⁵ John Paul II, "*Dominus Iesus*," 213-218, nos. 8, 14, 17, 21.

cannot be separated from the Church. The document acknowledges that these three - Jesus, the Kingdom, and the Church - are not identical with one another, but it categorically refuses to speak of one without the others.¹⁰⁶

The document *Dominus Iesus* brings the question: "Is Jesus the only Saviour?"¹⁰⁷ John Hick explains that the religious pluralism cautions us that the particular "God-figures" of the various traditions, as concrete historical realities, must be understood as distinct from the God at the centre and are not purely and simply identical with the one God.¹⁰⁸ He explains that the members of every religion hold on to the God who saves them. They all have different ideas of God but share one and the same reality.¹⁰⁹ Thus, Wilfred Cantwell Smith explains that: "Christians He has saved through Christ's death and resurrection...; Buddhists He has saved through the teachings of the Buddha...; Jews He has saved through the Torah...; Hindus He has saved, inspired, encouraged, made creative through the poetry of the Gita...; God has participated more richly in human affairs, man has participated more diversely in God."¹¹⁰

It is self explanatory that the document had to face opposition from various corners of the world. However, one needs to understand that only a person who is convinced of his/her faith can make such a strong apologetic statement about one's own convictions. It is the privilege of those leaders who are convinced of their faith to be courageous to make such defending statements about their own religion. In the midst of these great oppositions I feel that every religious head has the right to make apologetically convincing statement to defend his/her religious doctrinal claims and values. So respecting this freedom of every religious head, one may argue that the

¹⁰⁶ John Paul II, "*Dominus Iesus*," 217, no. 18.

¹⁰⁷ John Burleigh, *Augustine: Earlier Writings* (London: SCM Press, 1953), 259, Pragasam, "*Dominus Iesus* and Its Invitation to Theology," 582. "In the Christian theological discussions, we encounter the fourth-century Gregory of Nyssa who says that 'the simplicity of the true faith assumes God to be that which He is, namely, incapable of being grasped by any term or any idea, or any other device of our apprehension, remaining beyond the reach not only of the human but of the angelic and all supramundane intelligence, unthinkable, above all expression in words, having but one name that can represent his proper nature, the single name being 'Above every name.'"

¹⁰⁸ John Hick, *God and the Universe of Faiths* (London: The Macmillian Press, 1988), 140.

¹⁰⁹ Hick, *God and the Universe of Faiths*, 140. Hick uses a parable said to have been told by Buddha. A group of blind men, who never encountered an elephant, touched some parts of the animal. Each individual claimed that his own account of the animal was true and that therefore all others were false. In fact, all of them were true, each referred only to one aspect of the reality.

¹¹⁰ Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *Towards a World Theology* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1989), 171, 172.

document "*Dominus Iesus*" has defended the correct teachings of the Church doctrines in her historical consciousness.

However, by working for other fellow citizens, the Christian laity should do everything possible towards building a just society. Thus, their life and witnessing activities should bring commendable results for the benefits of the members of their fellow beings in the society, irrespective of their religious affiliations, traditions and practices. The Church and her members must be indicative of the great commandment of love seasoned with service to humanity demonstrated by Jesus himself, setting himself as an example for his followers to imitate. Jesus said: "I have come not to be served but to serve" (Mt 23: 10, 11; Mk 9:35, 36; Mk 10:43). In short, the Church must be a loving servant for all human children of God, irrespective of their joining the Church explicitly by receiving the sacrament of baptism or not. It is now an accepted fact that where there is love and service rendered to people in the real Christian spirit, people of all walks of life, irrespective of their religious affiliations, recognise the real spirit of Christ, and people honour such missionaries of love.

2.2 INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE AS PART OF THE INTEGRAL MISSION OF THE CHURCH

Though the mission of Jesus was first directed to the Jews, Jesus never excluded anyone from his care and compassion. He acknowledged the faith of people other than the Jews whenever and wherever he found it, and he gave his blessings to all those who expressed their faith in his divine power. He also instructed his disciples to understand that "whoever is not against us is for us" (Mk 9: 39-40). The blessings of the Kingdom of God are open to all, and everyone is called to be its beneficiaries.¹¹¹ The early Church too was aware of this universality of Jesus' message.¹¹² Therefore St. Paul said: "God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to Him" (Ac 10: 34-35).

The stand taken by the theologian Michael Amaladoss is noteworthy:

when the Church's mission is set in the context of God's mission, the obvious tendency is to subordinate the Church to God. The Kingdom of God is the sphere of God's action. Therefore it is seen as the goal of God's mission. The Church is sent into the world, not to build itself up in opposition to the Kingdom, but to be at the service of building up the

¹¹¹ John Paul II, "Dialogue and Proclamation," 100, no. 23; cf. John Paul II, "*Dominus Iesus*," 213, no. 8.

¹¹² John Paul II, "Dialogue and Proclamation," 100, no. 23.

Kingdom. The Church then is seen as the symbol and servant of the Kingdom.¹¹³

It is the responsibility of the Church to establish the Kingdom of God. It will be successful if the Christians follow the way of dialogue as the methodology of relating to people of other faiths appreciating their basic faith in God “who is not far away from any one of us,” as we have seen earlier when St. Paul explained at Areopagus in Athens quoting their philosopher Epimenides: “In fact it is in him we live, move and have our being” (Ac 17:28).

It is important to understand the wider dimensions of the Kingdom of God while we speak about inter-religious dialogue as part of Church’s methodology of liberative evangelization.¹¹⁴ Pope John Paul II gave us an extensive discussion on the Kingdom of God in two full chapters of his encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* (RM 12-20). Amaladoss explains Pope’s teachings of the Kingdom of God in three ways, first:

Traditionally simply identifying the Church with the Kingdom in history. The second way is more nuanced: it distinguishes the Church from the Kingdom, seeing it as the Kingdom’s beginnings and first fruits. The Kingdom then becomes the future of the Church. The Church grows through history into the Kingdom, which is eschatological, not to say other-worldly. A third way of looking at the Kingdom is to see it as a human community of justice and fellowship, and freedom that we have to build up here and now in history.¹¹⁵

It would mean that the Kingdom embraces the whole universe including the whole humanity. This understanding of the Kingdom is historical as well as eschatological in nature. It also includes all the religions of the world. It is a human community of freedom, fellowship, justice, and love. One does not speak about the development of a particular religion. It even includes the people who do not belong to a particular religion, but who are of good will, contribute to the building up of the Kingdom and its members.¹¹⁶ The Church is assigned to be the symbol and servant of the Kingdom.¹¹⁷ Interpreting the same document *Redemptoris Missio*, Cardinal Julian Darmaatmadj comments that the third model of the Kingdom: “as a human

¹¹³ Michael Amaladoss, “Mission in Asia: A Reflection on Ecclesia in Asia,” in *The Asian Synod: Text and Commentaries*, ed. Peter C. Phan (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2002), 228, 229.

¹¹⁴ John Paul II, “Dialogue and Proclamation,” 94, no. 3.

¹¹⁵ Michael Amaladoss, *Making All Things New: Dialogue, Pluralism and Evangelization in Asia* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1990), 229; cf. Amaladoss, “Mission in Asia: A Reflection on Ecclesia in Asia,” 103-120.

¹¹⁶ Amaladoss, “Mission in Asia: A Reflection on Ecclesia in Asia,” 229.

¹¹⁷ Amaladoss, “Mission in Asia: A Reflection on Ecclesia in Asia,” 229.

community of justice and fellowship and freedom that we have to build up”; is the place where the Christian laity can play an active role.¹¹⁸ They can remain the light and leaven in the society inviting or attracting everyone to know Christ who sacrificed his life for the humankind.

We have seen above that the Church is depicted as the “sacrament” of God’s Kingdom. Amaladoss claims that “sacraments are not exclusive means of grace. Nor is the Church an exclusive “sacrament” of the Kingdom, simply because God-Father, Son and Spirit- continue to act also outside the Church, through other religions and even through people of no religion.”¹¹⁹ We have seen the Church work as the symbol of the Kingdom and promote the values of the Kingdom.¹²⁰ The Church proclaims the mission of Jesus and welcomes people who feel called to become disciples of Christ and to join the community of the Church in its mission.¹²¹ Thus, the goal of the Church’s mission can be understood as the building up of the Kingdom of God and of the Church as its symbol and servant of God.¹²² However, the Church can never claim to be God’s exclusive representative in the world.¹²³ Furthermore, the Church does not have an exclusive boundary, it can rather be understood as a visible human community.¹²⁴

The Church as the human community for all the children of God has to relate herself with believers of God in the model of Christ who was doing the same in his life time.¹²⁵ His life was centred on the love of humanity, and in that all embracing love for all humans he tried to be a friend of all, and he showed to his disciples how to be in dialogue with all God’s children wherever and in whatever condition of belief systems they are found, like the “lost sheep in the wilderness” (Mt 10:6f; Lk 15:4f). In the model of the “Good Shepherd” (Jn 10:11f), Jesus went out to reach the lost one and having found it he takes it with utmost love and joy. This is the self-sacrificing love Jesus showed to people that we have to emulate and apply in our dialogical

¹¹⁸ Julius Darmaatmadja, "A New Way of Being Church in Asia," *Vidyajyoti* 63, no. 12 (1999): 889.

¹¹⁹ Amaladoss, "Mission in Asia: A Reflection on Ecclesia in Asia," 229.

¹²⁰ John Paul II, "Dialogue and Proclamation," 102, no. 34.

¹²¹ Amaladoss, "Mission in Asia: A Reflection on Ecclesia in Asia," 230.

¹²² John Paul II, "*Dominus Iesus*," 217, no. 18.

¹²³ Amaladoss, "Mission in Asia: A Reflection on Ecclesia in Asia," 230; John Paul II, "Dialogue and Proclamation," 111, no. 68.

¹²⁴ John Paul II, "Dialogue and Proclamation," 111, no. 68; cf. John Paul II, "*Dominus Iesus*," 217, no. 19, 20.

¹²⁵ John Paul II, "*Dominus Iesus*," 217, 18.

approach to the people of other religions.¹²⁶ He opted freely to be with the poor struggling with them to obtain justice. He challenged the rich and powerful. Furthermore, he was “challenging the rich and the powerful to conversion, and building up a group of people who could be models of a new human community.”¹²⁷ This is to end the exploitation of the poor. Jesus expects his disciples to struggle for justice, to serve the poor and the oppressed, and to spread the message of love and peace to all people who are struggling to find God’s ways of justice and peace.¹²⁸

2.2.1 “Acknowledge, Preserve and Promote the Spiritual and Moral Values” Found in Other Religious Traditions

This subtitle is taken from the exhortation of the Second Vatican Council document *Nostra Aetate* Article 3. The full exhortation begins with the clear and direct advice in the words:

The Church exhorts her sons through dialogue and collaboration with believers of other religions, acknowledge, preserve and promote the spiritual and moral values as well as the socio-cultural values found in all religion...The sacred Council now pleads with all to forget the past, and urges that a sincere efforts be made to achieve mutual understanding; for the benefits of all men, let them together preserve and promote peace, liberty, social justice and moral values (*NA* 2, 3).

Since this is the official mandate of the Church given in the Second Vatican Council declaration of the Church’s relationship with the believers of other religions, the missionaries have to follow it up as part of their methodology and approaches of the programme of evangelization.¹²⁹ We can see that the same theme is reflected by Joseph Ratzinger.¹³⁰ The laity have to be thoroughly conscientised about this mandate of the Church, especially when it is to be implemented in the central India multi-religious context.¹³¹

There is an urgent need for all the religions of India to think together in a dialogical spirit and friendship with their respective religious norms and values of life, bringing about basically agreeable common principles for all believers of India.¹³² It is to find

¹²⁶ Papali, "Excursus on Hinduism," 137.

¹²⁷ Amaladoss, "Mission in Asia: A Reflection on Ecclesia in Asia," 230.

¹²⁸ Amaladoss, "Mission in Asia: A Reflection on Ecclesia in Asia," 230.

¹²⁹ Oesterreicher, "Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions," 7.

¹³⁰ John Paul II, "*Dominus Iesus*," 217, no. 19.

¹³¹ Oesterreicher, "Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions," 32.

¹³² T. K. John, "Theology of Liberation and Gandhian Praxis," in *Leave the Temple*, ed. Felix Wilfred (New York: Orbis Books, 1992), 96.

out mutually acceptable *modus vivendi* with the principles of co-existence, tolerance, mutually respecting each person's and community's fundamental faith experience in God, and this can be achieved only by sincere "dialogue and collaboration," as the document *Nostra Aetate* and later Church documents envisage, and the same mandates are further clarified by the post-conciliar instructions given by the Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue.¹³³

2.2.2 To Foster Peace and Harmony Among the Believers of Other Religions

The purpose of every religion is to lead its followers to that ultimate reality of the Supreme God. In some points one can find that this ultimate reality which is reflected in every religion can be converged to a common teleological terminal. This is the concern of all sincere seekers who involve with the inter-religious dialogue. Therefore everyone's strive should not be to widen the gaps of differences based on particular doctrines and practices but to find a common destination for all to hold on. As religion should not be a dividing factor of the society but rather a unifying force by which the human beings experience and have their union with the Supernatural Being.¹³⁴ The concern of every religion should be searching for truth which leads to peace, unity, tolerance, co-existence and good fellowship among all believers in One and the same God, Father of all human beings.¹³⁵

It is very relevant to quote the words of Mahatma Gandhi who preached and promoted unity among the religions of India. He said:

My Hinduism is not sectarianism. It includes all that I know to be best in Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, and Zoroastrianism.... Truth is my religion and ahimsa is the only way of its realisation. I have rejected once and for all the doctrine of the sword. The secret stabbings of innocent persons, and the speeches I read in the papers, are hardly the thing leading to peace or an honourable settlement.... I may not leave a single stone unturned to achieve Hindu-Muslim unity. God fulfils Himself in strange ways. He may, in a manner least known to us, both fulfil Himself through the interview and

¹³³ John Boreli, "An Overview: Christian-Muslim Relations in a Post-9/11 World," *Origins* 32, no. 36 (2003): 616; cf. John B. Chettimattam, "Atman and Vishnu: Hindu Insight for Interfaith Dialogue," in *Meeting of Religions*, ed. Thomas A. Aykara (Bangalore: Centre for Indian and Interreligious Studies Rome, 1978), 150-155; cf. Coward, *Pluralism Challenge to World Religions*, 22-39; cf. also Michael L. Fitzgerald, "Pope John Paul II and Interreligious Dialogue: A Catholic Assessment," in *John Paul II and Interreligious Dialogue*, ed. Byron L. Sherwin (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1999), 212, 213.

¹³⁴ Dumoulin, "Excursus on Buddhism," 149, 150.

¹³⁵ John Paul II, "Dialogue and Proclamation," 103, 104, no.39; cf. John Paul II, "*Dominus Iesus*," 217, no. 20; cf. Oesterreicher, "Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions," 11, 12.

open a way to an honourable understanding between the two communities.... We are friends, not strangers.¹³⁶

Mahatma Gandhi found unity and harmony in every religion. He believed that every religion taught peace and love among the human beings which led to absolute bliss and happiness. Every religion is a door to knowing the truth, and every individual understands the truth in his/her disposition of mind. Therefore, Gandhi insisted on an open mind towards every religion and truth that we come across.

Pope John Paul II in his encyclical *Redemptor Hominis* said that the Spirit is working “outside the visible confines of the Mystical Body” (RH 32). Furthermore, through the apostolic exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*, Pope John Paul II said that the different images of Jesus welcomed by the people of Asia were: “the teacher of wisdom, the healer, the liberator, the spiritual guide, the enlightened one, the compassionate friend of the poor,” (EA 20). Thus, Jesus, the truth of Christianity, is understood or called by different people in different ways. All their articulations are in some way pointing to the truth of Jesus as the peace-maker among all people.

2.2.3 To Promote the Life Sustaining Against the Forces of Destructions

There is an urgent need to promote the life sustaining values against the forces of the evil that are working in the society. Everyone needs to accept that the values of the Kingdom are the same.¹³⁷ It is possible that the Church has recognised some of them and developed them. Michael Amaladoss claims that there are also others who have recognised some more values and developed them in different ways.¹³⁸

If all the religions lead to one destination and all the religions begin from one absolute Being, then we are invited to live together as brothers and sisters of the same family.¹³⁹ One needs to help the other to fight against the injustice done to the humanity, especially the oppression that dehumanised the humankind. One religion does not dehumanise the values of the other. However, it was found that in India Christianity remained always an agent of foreign colonisation.¹⁴⁰

Through the apostolic exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*, Pope John Paul II said: “despite her centuries-long presence and her many apostolic endeavours, the Church in many

¹³⁶ Bary, *Source of Indian Tradition*, 824, 825.

¹³⁷ John Paul II, "Dialogue and Mission," 135, no. 25.

¹³⁸ Amaladoss, "Mission in Asia: A Reflection on Ecclesia in Asia," 230.

¹³⁹ John Paul II, "*Dominus Iesus*," 218, no. 23.

¹⁴⁰ Arun Shourie, *Missionaries in India: Continuities, Changes, Dilemmas* (New Delhi: ASA Publications, 1994), 21.

places was still considered as foreign to Asia and indeed was often associated in people's minds with the colonial powers" (EA 9).¹⁴¹ The people in many parts of Asia still believe that these colonial powers are influencing the Churches and its administrations.¹⁴² The Pope invites the people of India to come out of their inhibitions about the Christianity in India. He invites everyone to understand the teachings of Jesus with an open heart. This openness has to be created through the witnessing life experience of every Christian in India especially in the context of central India.

The final statement of the seminar organised towards "The Indian Church in the Struggle for a New Society" explains that "the Church must witness; of this she must be a sign and instrument. Her mission requires that she herself embodies in her own life and structures the Kingdom values of freedom, fellowship and justice. It also requires that she contributes to the promotion of these values in the ordering of human society. The struggle for a new society is therefore a constitutive element of Christ's evangelizing mission."¹⁴³ It is a great responsibility entrusted to the Christians of India to struggle for this new society visualised by Christ. The Christians are called to promote the values which promote human living in a peaceful manner. The culmination of all these human values destined to reach finally to the Kingdom of God. Furthermore, the Kingdom of God is always "seen as one of righteousness where good has triumphed over evil, ushering in an area of peace and prosperity, justice and brotherhood. Righteousness or *Dharma* indicates all the values necessary for the harmonious life of the person in the community."¹⁴⁴

In the ancient religious traditions of India we too find where the sages visualise this absolute happiness which the human being will experience in its fullness. Gandhi often spoke about the Kingdom as the establishment of *Ram Rajya*. Furthermore, the sages of India believed, as we have already mentioned earlier, that whenever these human values of righteousness (*dharma*) diminish in the society, Vishnu, the god of righteousness, appears to reinstall righteousness on earth. This understanding of the reestablishment of righteousness in the society is stated by Krishna, the divine

¹⁴¹ Peter C. Phan, "Ecclesia in Asia: Challenges for Asian Christianity," in *The Asian Synod: Texts and Commentaries*, ed. Peter C. Phan (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2002), 251.

¹⁴² Phan, "Ecclesia in Asia: Challenges for Asian Christianity," 251.

¹⁴³ D. S. Amalorpavadass, "Final Statement," in *The Indian Church in the Struggle for a New Society*, ed. D. S. Amalorpavadass (Bangalore: National, Biblical, Catechetical and Liturgical Centre, 1981), 62.

¹⁴⁴ Amalorpavadass, "Final Statement," 58.

incarnation of Vishnu, to Arjuna during the great war of righteousness described in *Mahabharata* in the section on *Bhagvadgita* as follows:

yadā yadā hi dharmasya glānir bhavati, Bhārata,

abhyutthānam adharmasya tadā 'tmānam srjāmyaham.

Paritrāṇāya sādḥūnām vināśāya ca duskṛtām

dharma-samsthāpan 'ārthāya sambhavāmi yuge yuge (Gita 4: 7,8).

“For whenever righteousness diminishes and lawlessness arises, then do I come into being age after age for the protection of the good, for the destruction of evildoers, and for the setting up of the law of righteousness.”¹⁴⁵

This means that whenever righteousness, the central principle of harmony of the society or the order of the rhythm of the universe dwindles, God appears to re-establish it. This notion of the restoration of the right order of things by God himself goes well in tune with the Christian idea of redemption achieved by the descent of God in Jesus Christ, and this as well as many other views of the divine intervention in the universe for the good of the human family are meaningful points of contact for the meaningful dialogue with the believers of Hinduism.¹⁴⁶ But Christians, both clergy and laity, should have a fairly good idea about such bridging points of dialogue with Hindu believers. For the dialogue to be sincere as well as fruitfully communicative and enriching for the partners in the dialogue, those who engage in the inter-religious dialogue should learn and understand without prejudices the basic beliefs of the partners in the dialogue. That is why it is essential for the Christian laity, if they are daring to get involved in the integral evangelization programme, to learn and update their knowledge about the faith content of the religion of other people, and in the case of central India - the religious tenets of the orthodox Hindus.¹⁴⁷

The people as well as the society in which they live are responsible for the destruction of righteousness which regulates all other values of life. The Kingdom explained by Jesus Christ promises and provides primarily “justice, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” to all who seek after it beyond the material concerns of “eating and drinking” (Rom.14:17). This vision of the Kingdom of God explained by St. Paul leads people to a new liberating relationship with God as well as envisages a new liberating

¹⁴⁵ Zaehner, *The Bhagavad Gita*, 184, cf. FN. 35.

¹⁴⁶ Papali, "Excursus on Hinduism," 139.

¹⁴⁷ Chettimattam, "Atman and Vishnu: Hindu Insight for Interfaith Dialogue," 150-155.

structure of the society. Furthermore, the Kingdom calls for a change of heart and structure, which we have discussed in our previous chapter.¹⁴⁸

Jesus does not define clearly the Kingdom of God which he often addressed to his listeners. However, it always remained a great vision of Jesus, a summons rather than a plan, an inspiration more than a programme of action. However, it becomes clear when Jesus speaks about a new society, especially in the antitheses of the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5: 21-48) where we read about the new society in which violence is eradicated at its roots (vv. 21-26), where women are no longer treated as sex objects and discriminated against by men (vv. 27-32), where simplicity of speech and the transparency of inter-human relationship makes external guarantees unnecessary (vv. 33-37), where order is maintained not through the fear of retaliation but through the concern of love (vv. 38-42), and where men and women accept each other, across all barriers of class, caste, race and culture, as the children of the one Father in heaven (vv. 43-48).

Christians have to be signs for others to find salvation in Jesus Christ through their loving service to them.¹⁴⁹ Francis A. Sullivan claims that the Church has to work in the society as a sign of salvation for everyone.¹⁵⁰ In the context of central India where Christians are a minority there is always a question that arises in the minds of the people: "how could the Church be a sign?" As a sacrament is a visible sign of invisible grace, the Church has to become a visible sign of the work of grace that the Holy Spirit is doing in the hearts of all the human beings.¹⁵¹ Hence, it is very clear that the disposition to receive baptism on the part of a non-Christian and thereby visibly join the Christian community is the grace of the Holy Spirit and it is not the result of any strategy followed by the Christian missionary. So this understanding of the active role of the Spirit in the Church overrules the accusation of "forced conversion" of the Christian missionaries as many critics of Christianity raises as objection.¹⁵² All these explain the satisfaction of the fundamental needs of many rather than a few. In all these, the domination of a few is replaced by the attitude of

¹⁴⁸ George M. Soares-Prabhu, "The Kingdom of God: Jesus' Vision of a New Society," in *The Indian Church in the Struggle for a New Society*, ed. D. S. Amalorpavadass (Bangalore: National, Biblical, Catechetical and Liturgical Centre, 1981), 605.

¹⁴⁹ Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church?*, 157.

¹⁵⁰ Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church?*, 157.

¹⁵¹ Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church?*, 157.

¹⁵² Arun Shourie, *Harvesting Our Souls: Missionaries, Their Design, Their Claims* (New Delhi: ASA Publications, 2000), 42.

service where human beings are more important than money and position.¹⁵³ In all these, the Christian laity have a great role to play to establish these values of the Kingdom on earth as it was visualised by Jesus.

2.3 CHRISTIAN MISSION FOR PROMOTING SINCERE RESPECT TOWARDS THE RELIGIOUS HERITAGE OF THE VARIOUS PEOPLES OF THE NATION

We have seen earlier in our discussion that God works mysteriously in the human society. His ways are not known to men. His wisdom is incomprehensible to the human intellect (Is 55:9; Hb 3:10). Realisation of the values of the Kingdom of God is the mission of every member in the Church. Therefore, St. Paul explains God's intention as "the gathering up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth" (Eph 1:10); "to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven" (Col 1:20) so that finally God "will be all in all" (1Cor 12:28). This unification is certainly achieved by God in Christ through the Spirit (Rom 8:19-23). This understanding will take us to visualise the whole world as the Church, a multi-religious and multicultural society. The Church is called to work towards this unity. This unity can be achieved in a visible manner through dialogue and collaboration.¹⁵⁴

The Christians are "called and sent to go everywhere in the world to be actively at the service of the divine plan of unification...not as the rescuing of individual souls from hell, but as the historical-eschatological project of building up the Kingdom of God as a community of all human beings and of the whole universe."¹⁵⁵ This is the commission entrusted to every Christian to preach the Gospel through their witnessing values.¹⁵⁶ So in view of achieving the unity of all the religions, the Asian Bishops' Conferences have also taken various significant measures for the Church of Asia. It is worth mentioning the statement and recommendations of the first Plenary Assembly, where bishops-delegates from 14 episcopal conferences and 18 countries gathered in Taipei, Taiwan on 27th April 1974.¹⁵⁷ During the Plenary gathering, the fathers have recognised that it is in the universal salvific will of God that the other religions are not to be seen as evil or as merely human, but somehow mediating the action of the Spirit of God. Thus, the Asian Bishop's Conference affirmed that:

¹⁵³ Soares-Prabhu, "The Kingdom of God: Jesus' Vision of a New Society," 607.

¹⁵⁴ Amaladoss, "Mission in Asia: A Reflection on Ecclesia in Asia," 231.

¹⁵⁵ Amaladoss, "Mission in Asia: A Reflection on Ecclesia in Asia," 231.

¹⁵⁶ John Paul II, "Dialogue and Proclamation," 108, 109, nos.57, 59.

¹⁵⁷ Rosales, ed., *For All the Peoples of Asia*, 11-26.

We accept them as significant and positive elements in the economy of God's design of salvation. In them we recognise and respect profound spiritual and ethical meaning and values. Over many centuries they have been the treasury of the religious experience of our ancestors, from which our contemporaries do not cease to draw light and strength. They have been (and continue to be) the authentic expression of the noblest longings of their hearts, and the home of their contemplation and prayer.... How then can we not give them reverence and honour? And how can we not acknowledge that God has drawn our peoples to Himself through them?¹⁵⁸

This truth was further recognised by later Church documents "Dialogue and Mission," "Dialogue and Proclamation," and finally "*Dominus Iesus*."¹⁵⁹ It is a positive note given to the Christians of the central India to give due respect to other scriptural values because the Asian bishops' as well as Church documents have acknowledged the revelation of God in the hearts of the sages of other religions.¹⁶⁰ It is the Spirit who in the beginning inspired human hearts to prepare the way of Christ and to accept and acknowledge him as the master and the Lord.

3 EVANGELIZATION THROUGH INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

From the beginning the three monotheistic religions were considered the manifestations of God's power: Judaism as the religion of hope, Christianity as the religion of love, and Islam as the religion of faith.¹⁶¹ Today, we are well aware of the mysterious works of God in these religions which promote cooperation and mutual respect among people. They live in a society in a dialogical spirit. There are ways of understanding different forms of dialogue that can be followed by various religious communities. It is noteworthy that "All India Seminar on the Church in India Today" organised in Bangalore from 15th to 25th May 1969 defined dialogue as "means not only for living together, and working together, and suffering together, but also and above all praying together."¹⁶² Thus, Christians, as they live in the midst of non-Christians, learn to pray together irrespective of their religious differences.¹⁶³ With an open mind, different religious communities come together and they are even able to relate themselves to God the creator of everyone.

¹⁵⁸ Rosales, ed., *For All the Peoples of Asia*, 14.

¹⁵⁹ John Paul II, "Dialogue and Mission," 111, no. 68; John Paul II, "Dialogue and Proclamation," 132, no. 19; John Paul II, "*Dominus Iesus*," 218, no. 21.

¹⁶⁰ John Paul II, "Dialogue and Proclamation," 98, no. 17.

¹⁶¹ Georges C. Anawati, "Excursus on Islam," in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Herbert Vorgrimler (London: Burns and Oates Limited, 1968), 152.

¹⁶² Gracias, "Orientation Papers," 116.

¹⁶³ Gracias, "Orientation Papers," 116.

It was furthermore emphasised by Pope John Paul II and the apostolic exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia* that dialogue is “an essential part of the Church’s mission because it has its origin in the Father’s loving dialogue of salvation with humanity through the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit” (EA 29). He explained the form of dialogue which began through Jesus Christ has accomplished through the power of the Holy Spirit. The manifestation of the love of the Father through Jesus Christ which manifested in the power of the Holy Spirit is the model of every Christian to follow. Christians are called to be open-minded in dealing with other members of society. They need to see in the economy of creation and redemption that other religions also have the ways of salvation. It is “God who saves, not the religions. But all religions are seen to mediate or facilitate God’s saving action.”¹⁶⁴ One needs to have that open mind to see the presence of God in every religion as it was visualised by the fathers of the Second Vatican Council and the subsequent meetings. It is God who decides who be saved. People are called to prepare in a worthy manner to receive the master to enter into that Kingdom of God. Everyone who recognises the truth will be attracted to the Son Jesus Christ through the power of the Spirit who is working in the world in all human enterprises, especially in religious activities which are meant for gathering up all children of God back to the loving embrace of the heavenly Father.¹⁶⁵

Cardinal Julian Darmaatmadja, Archbishop of Jakarta, from Indonesia, responding to the apostolic exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia* given by Pope John Paul II in New Delhi said, “Yes, it is true that there is no authentic evangelization without announcing Jesus Christ, Savior of the whole human race. But for Asia, there will be no complete evangelization unless there is dialogue with other religions and cultures.”¹⁶⁶ After giving due respect to these revelations of God in various Indian religions, he said that “we find Jesus present in the world. He has always been present and working in the world, including the world of Asia.”¹⁶⁷ In many parts of the nation, the Church may be new and not so nicely welcomed by the people, but not Jesus Christ. Cardinal acknowledged that we had failed to present Jesus in a proper manner to Asia.¹⁶⁸

There are various approaches of dialogue that one can find today in the world.¹⁶⁹ They all differ from country to country and context to context. Often the method of

¹⁶⁴ Amaladoss, "Mission in Asia: A Reflection on *Ecclesia in Asia*," 228.

¹⁶⁵ John Paul II, "Dialogue and Proclamation," 98. no. 17.

¹⁶⁶ Darmaatmadja, "A New Way of Being Church in Asia," 891.

¹⁶⁷ Darmaatmadja, "A New Way of Being Church in Asia," 888.

¹⁶⁸ Darmaatmadja, "A New Way of Being Church in Asia," 889.

¹⁶⁹ John Paul II, "Dialogue and Proclamation," 104, no. 42.

dialogue implemented in the west may not be applicable to the particular situations of India. In the relation of multi-religious context, we propose three forms of dialogue which are very applicable to the multi-religious context of central India. They are the dialogue of life, the dialogue of action, and the dialogue of theological exchange by experts.¹⁷⁰ One does not supersede the other but compliments the other.

3.1 THE DIALOGUE OF LIFE

An exemplary life of a Christian can preach many chapters of the Gospel. To accept others as they are and to share in their struggles in life is more representative of the society today in regards to preaching. We have seen in our earlier discourse the situation of Christians in central India. They are very few in number. They have to be really and truly the leaven in the society (Mt 13:33; Lk 13:21). They are not called to be an “old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1Cor 5:8). They live in the midst of other people who belong to other religious faith. The prime responsibility of every Christian is to evangelize the other.¹⁷¹ This evangelization can be easily possible when they live in the midst of others who are non-Christians. The Asian bishop’s affirmed that the dialogue of life would mean “a genuine experience and understanding of the poverty, deprivation and oppression of so many of our people. It demands working, not for them merely, but with them, to learn from them their real needs and aspirations, as they are enabled to identify and articulate these, and so strive for their fulfilment, by transforming those structures and situations which keep them in that deprivation and powerlessness.”¹⁷² It is the ability to understand others as they are, irrespective of their social, economical, and religious barriers. It is an experience of the living God in every faith. The dialogue of life does not overpower or suppress the other but it attracts the other with an attitude of love and service. The laity can exercise a full dedication out of love in the society. A peaceful co-existence of Christian laity among the believers of other religions itself is a form of the dialogue of life. The Church is called to be truly the leaven of the people around and

¹⁷⁰ John Paul II, "Dialogue and Proclamation," 104, no. 42.

¹⁷¹ Jack Stanton, "The Personal Life of the Witness: Coming Alive in Christ and Introducing Him to Others," in *Evangelization for a Changing World*, ed. Timothy Beougher (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 1995), 156.

¹⁷² Rosales, ed., *For All the Peoples of Asia*, 15.

witness to the values of authentic Christian life to others. The Christian laity have to be engaged in an active manner in the dialogue of life.¹⁷³

3.2 THE DIALOGUE OF ACTION

Christians are called to be more doers of the Word than mere preachers. There was a time when the Christians could preach and others would listen. But in the contemporary society, especially where every activity of Christians is watched suspiciously, it is not so much preaching as the witnessing actions that believers of other religions appreciate. Doing the works of the Lord has greater influence on people than just preaching and not practicing it. St. James was correct when he insisted on the work influenced by faith in Jesus (Jas 2: 14-24). The work of Mother Teresa is an appropriate example of the dialogue of action. She said "the poor need deeds, not words."¹⁷⁴ Her method of preaching the Gospel was through the action. The unconditional service rendered for the people of God. She and her sisters were very courageous in doing the works of selfless love. It is recorded in their constitution that: "We shall not impose our Catholic faith on anyone, but have a profound respect for all religions.... We shall not be afraid to proclaim the name of Jesus, nor be ashamed of being his disciple."¹⁷⁵ She was really and truly the doer of the Word. The other example would be the works of Sr. Rani Maria in central India.¹⁷⁶ A religious sister,

¹⁷³ Peter C. Phan, "Ecclesia in Asia: Challenges for Asian Christianity," *East Asian Pastoral Review* 37 no. 3 (2000): 255.

¹⁷⁴ Omer Tanghe, "...For the Least of My Brothers" (New York: Alba House, 1989), 30.

¹⁷⁵ Thomas Plathottathil, *'Being Poor and Being for the Poor' Its Actualization in the Life and Mission of Mother Teresa and Its Pastoral Relevance* (Rome: Salesian Pontifical University Faculty of Theology, 2005), 48; Mother Teresa, *Constitution of Missionaries of Charity* (Calcutta: Missionaries of Charity, 1988), 108.

¹⁷⁶ The sensational murder of Franciscan Clarist Sister Rani Maria in central India

Sister Rani Maria FCC, a member of Franciscan Clarist congregation was pulled out from a bus on February 25, 1995 and stabbed 44 times by Dharmendra, with the assistance from Jeevan Singh, and Sumandar Singh as the nun was on the way to catch the train for her vacation trip to Kerala, India.

Bishop George Anathil SVD the bishop of the diocese of Indore, said that Sister Maria, who worked among tribal communities, fell victim to the pro-Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) anti-Christian stance. During the December 1994 village election, Jeevan Singh-a local BJP leader-wanted the approximately 20 Christian families of the area to support the BJP candidate. But, the Christians refused and the BJP candidate lost the elections. This led to clashes between BJP men and Christians, in which some Christians were injured. Christians later retaliated by attacking Jeevan Singh who was hospitalised. The Christians involved in the attack were arrested. Bishop summed up the sequence that led to the gory murder. "As a committed social worker in one of the mission stations named Udayanagar, of the diocese of Indore (for the tribals), Sister Maria helped the arrested tribal Catholics secure bail. This made Jeevan Singh want to take revenge by plotting the nun's murder. The driver was asked to stop the bus at a deserted area after he had boarded the bus along with his associates. The tragedy shook the Catholic religious workers in interior rural

who belongs to the religious order of the Franciscan Clarists, who was working in one of the remote villages of central India in the diocese of Indore, Madhya Pradesh. She was stabbed to death on 25th February 1995. She was accused of working for the poor in the remotest villages of central India. The Catholic Bishop's Conference of India observed that the Christian proclamation of the Word would follow the deed. Proclamation without deeds stands empty; and the deed without the Word is ambiguous.¹⁷⁷ Pope John Paul II addressed 250 leaders of other religions in Madras during his trip to India of February 1-10, 1986. He said:

By dialogue we let God be present in our midst; for as we open ourselves in dialogue to one another, we also open ourselves to God ... As followers of different religions, we should join together in promoting and defending common ideals in the spheres of religious liberty, human brotherhood, education, culture, social welfare and civic order.¹⁷⁸

Later the same theme was developed by the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue. It was explained in the document entitled "Dialogue and Proclamation."¹⁷⁹ The document expressed that, "Christian witness does not correspond to belief; there is a gap between word and deed, between the Christian message and the way Christians live it."¹⁸⁰ The dialogue of action promotes working for rectifying the injustice done to the poor in society. The love of Jesus which is manifested in the dialogue of works welcomes every like-minded person to come together to establish a just society. The dialogue of work promotes to think beyond the narrow-mindedness of petty religiosity. The dialogue of works supersedes every barrier that blocks peace in the society.

In the society where everyone experiences the unity of heart and mind people will never bother about the external ritualistic celebrations. They work together for the cause of social development. Therefore Robert Faricy believes that "evangelization presupposes God's action in men's hearts and works in it. Dialogue, therefore, is the beginning of evangelization."¹⁸¹ When the hearts of people of different religions meet together, they work for the cause of the human society. Christian laity have greater

areas that are so isolated, that the Gospel is unheard of and where at times, young men, ignorant of the faith, even propose to nuns.

¹⁷⁷ Peter C. Phan, "Response of the Asian Episcopal Conferences to the *Lineamenta*," in *The Asian Synod: Text and Commentaries*, ed. Peter C. Phan (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2002), 22.

¹⁷⁸ John Paul II, "Address to Non-Christian Leaders," *Origins* 15, no. 36 (1986): 598.

¹⁷⁹ John Paul II, "Dialogue and Proclamation," 113, no. 73.

¹⁸⁰ John Paul II, "Dialogue and Proclamation," 113, no. 73a.

¹⁸¹ Robert Faricy, "Evangelization and Spiritual Life," in *Evangelization*, ed. Mariasusai Dhavamony (Roma: Universita Gregoriana Editrice, 1975), 159.

role to play today in the central Indian context in the field of the dialogue of action. When the hearts are united they are ready to work against any social evil that endangers the human existence in the society.

Therefore the dialogue of action is the best area where the Christian laity can work and experience the saving power of God. The dialogue of action promotes to accept Jesus who died for the cause of every human being. It will help every Christian to manifest the love of Jesus who sacrificed his life not for his sins but for the sins of all humans. The dialogue of action invites every Christian to be a liberator as Jesus was a liberator of the souls. The dialogue of action invites every Christian to be an evangelizer through the liberative methodology followed by Jesus.

3.3 THE DIALOGUE OF THEOLOGICAL EXCHANGE BY EXPERTS

The dialogue of theological exchange by the experts respects every religious value that promotes peace in society. They do not boast of their religious superiority over others, but rather find the common truth in every religion and respect it. The Catholic Bishop's Conference of India found that "Christology is never a finished product but always in process, even while admitting the normative characteristic of the liturgical, biblical, patristic and conciliar Christologies."¹⁸² This understanding of the bishops of India welcomes every moral value as the continuation of Gospel values which was revealed to them by the power of the Spirit in the course of the history.¹⁸³

Pope John Paul II told the truth when he said in his apostolic exhortation in New Delhi:

Empowered by the Spirit to accomplish Christ's salvation on earth, the Church is the seed of the Kingdom of God, and she looks eagerly for its final coming. Her identity and mission are inseparable from the Kingdom of God.... The Spirit reminds the Church that she is not an end unto herself: In all that she is and all that she does, she exists to serve Christ and the salvation of the world (*EA* 17).

Pope John Paul II invites the soil of other religions to be the fertile land where the Word of Christ will germinate as this soil was well prepared by the Holy Spirit even before the arrival of Christ. Peter C. Phan explains that the "Christians must not be ecclesiocentric but regnocentric. Their mission is not to expand the Church and its structures (*plantatio ecclesiae*) in order to enlarge the sphere of influence of the Church but to be a transparent sign and effective instrument of the saving presence of

¹⁸² Phan, "Response of the Asian Episcopal Conferences to the *Lineamenta*," 22.

¹⁸³ John Paul II, "*Dominus Iesus*," 215, no.12.

the reign of God, the reign of justice, peace, and love, of which the Church is a seed.”¹⁸⁴ Every Christian should strive to find Christ in every religion so that the values preached by Christ will grow in them.

Interpreting the exhortation of Pope John Paul II, Peter C. Phan draws four characteristics for the theologians of the Asian Church to be observed in the process of their dialogue: In the first characteristic, the Church of Asia is seen as the communion of communities; It would mean where laity, religious, and clergy recognise and accept each other as sisters and brothers providing mutual understanding and giving respect to every member of the Church. The members of the Church recognise and respect equality among themselves as disciples of Christ irrespective of their hierarchical statuses in the Church. However, one thing should be made clear that the Church has to be united; only then can she preach about the values of unity of heart to everyone. The Church cannot fulfil her mission without her communion in ideals and practice. Thus, the apostolic exhortation, *Ecclesia in Asia* explains that “communion and mission go hand in hand” (EA 24). The unity of Christians, as it was emphasised by the document *Dominus Iesus*, is indispensable to effective evangelization.¹⁸⁵

Secondly, the Asian Church has to be participatory and collaborative in nature of all the ministries in the Church: “It is a participatory Church where the gifts that the Holy Spirit gives to all the faithful - lay, religious, and cleric alike - are recognised and activated, so that the Church may be built up and its mission realised.”¹⁸⁶ This participatory model of the Church respects the Papal primacy as well. It was very clear in the apostolic exhortation of Pope John Paul II: “It is in fact within the perspective of ecclesial communion that the universal authority of the successor of Peter shines forth more clearly, not primarily as juridical power over the local Churches, but above all as a pastoral primacy at the service of the unity of faith and life of the whole people of God” (EA 25). It is an undeniable truth that Jesus entrusted the responsibilities of shepherding the Church to Peter (Mt 16: 19; 18:18; Jn 20:23).¹⁸⁷ All these texts explain the desire of Jesus to have a leader while Jesus is

¹⁸⁴ Phan, "Ecclesia in Asia: Challenges for Asian Christianity," 253.

¹⁸⁵ John Paul II, "*Dominus Iesus*," 216, no. 17.

¹⁸⁶ Rosales, ed., *For All the Peoples of Asia*, 287.

¹⁸⁷ "I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Mt 16:19). Furthermore, "Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Mt 18:18), "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained" (Jn 20:23).

physically away from the Church. The idea of pastoral primacy proposed by Pope John Paul II highlights the idea of fostering co-responsibility and participation of all the Churches in the triple ministry of teaching, sanctification, and service to the world.

The third characteristic of the new way of Church in Asia is the dialogical spirit of the members. It explains that “built in the hearts of people, it is a Church that faithfully and lovingly witnesses to the Risen Lord Jesus and reaches out to people of other faiths and persuasions in a dialogue of life towards the integral liberation of all.”¹⁸⁸ Peter C. Phan explains that ever since the first plenary assembly in Taipei, Taiwan, 1974, about which we have mentioned above, the FABC has acknowledged that the primary responsibility of the Church is the “proclamation of the Gospel.”¹⁸⁹ To realise this mission of the Church, Pope John Paul II said “Interreligious relations are best developed in a context of openness to other believers, a willingness to listen and the desire to respect and understand others in their differences. For all this, love of others is indispensable. This should result in collaboration, harmony and mutual enrichment” (EA 31).

Finally, in the last characteristic, the Church of Asia has to be prophetic: The Church has to work as “a leaven of transformation in this world and serves as a prophetic sign, daring to point beyond this world to the ineffable Kingdom that is yet fully to come.”¹⁹⁰ The Church in Asia where the Christians are called to remain “small remnant,” the responsibility entrusted to the members of the Christians in central India is much greater than in any other states of India. The Christians must journey with adherents of other religions towards the eschatological Kingdom of God. The primary task of the Christian members in society has to be a credible prophetic sign of the coming of the reign of God.¹⁹¹ They are called to be another Christ in their lives, actions and dialogical approach.

4 THE DIALOGUE OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE AND SHARING THE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT

The Christians, in the process of dialogue, need not worry about what they speak but have to be open to the Spirit who is working in and through them, which will enable

¹⁸⁸ Rosales, ed., *For All the Peoples of Asia*, 287, 288.

¹⁸⁹ John Paul II, “Dialogue and Proclamation,” 111, no. 66; cf. also Phan, “Ecclesia in Asia: Challenges for Asian Christianity,” 255.

¹⁹⁰ Rosales, ed., *For All the Peoples of Asia*, 288.

¹⁹¹ Phan, “Ecclesia in Asia: Challenges for Asian Christianity,” 253-257.

them to testify to the truth of their partners in the dialogue (Mt 10:19,20; Mk 13:11). This is the assurance and promise of Jesus to his disciples. The Catholic Bishop's Conference of India felt that to be a member of the interreligious dialogue, the partnership would mean to create a relationship with other members of religions "through sharing and listening to the Spirit in others." Thus, the dialogue can become "an experience of God's Kingdom."¹⁹² This dialogical model of the Church is considered to be the new Asian way of being Church, promoting mutual understanding, harmony and collaboration.¹⁹³ The Catholic Bishop's Conference of India found that the Church in India could learn a lot of religious values from the tribals of central India too, mainly love and reverence for nature and the environment. Furthermore, the Christians also can learn from other religions in India about the growth in the prayer life, asceticism and spirituality.¹⁹⁴

Pope John Paul II explains further that there can be no true evangelization without the explicit proclamation of Jesus as the Savior (*EA* 19). But this proclamation has to be done not through the word of mouth but through the life and action of every Christian. Further, it "is prompted not by sectarian impulse, nor the spirit of proselytism, nor by any sense of superiority" but "in obedience to Christ's Command" (*EA* 20). It is all the more clear that the process of inter-religious dialogue becomes meaningless if it does not lead to the collaboration and promotion of human spiritual values leading in turn towards the integral liberation of the human.¹⁹⁵

5 THE CHRISTIAN LAITY'S SPECIFIC OPPORTUNITIES TO EVANGELIZE IN THE RELIGIOUS PLURALISTIC CONTEXT OF CENTRAL INDIA

We will also present here the specific opportunities that the Christian laity have in exercising and promoting Gospel values in the multi-religious context of central India. To a Christian missionary who tried to influence Gandhi regarding the Christian mission and the achievements in various areas of the society, he said:

let your life speak to us, even as the rose needs no speech but simply spreads its perfume. Even the blind who do not see the rose perceive its fragrance. That is the secret of the gospel of the rose. But the Gospel that

¹⁹² Phan, "Response of the Asian Episcopal Conferences to the *Lineamenta*," 21.

¹⁹³ Phan, "Response of the Asian Episcopal Conferences to the *Lineamenta*," 21.

¹⁹⁴ Phan, "Response of the Asian Episcopal Conferences to the *Lineamenta*," 21.

¹⁹⁵ Amaladoss, *Making All Things New: Dialogue, Pluralism and Evangelization in Asia*, 108.

Jesus preached is more subtle and fragrant than the gospel of the rose. If the rose needs no agent, much less does the Gospel of Christ need any agent.¹⁹⁶

Gandhi did not welcome mere preachers of the Word without any action of life. Furthermore, he added, "all I want them to do is to live Christian lives, not to annotate them. I have come to this view after a laborious and prayerful search."¹⁹⁷ It becomes all the more harder for a Christian to give witness to the values of Christ in India if he does not live what he/she wishes to share with his fellow Indians who follow other religions.

Today, it has become all the more difficult in the nation building activities among religions due to Christians not being patriotic enough in their commitment.¹⁹⁸ For some time, it has been observed that they do not have sincere love for their motherland.¹⁹⁹ This attitude, if there is any truth in this allegation against Christians, will promote a general hateful attitude towards the Christians in India. Therefore, the above mentioned "All India seminar on the Church in India Today" observed that Christians should devote themselves to the promotion of love for the land of India.²⁰⁰ This renewed attitude of Christians will bring more brotherhood between Christians and non-Christians. Thus, it has become more challenging for a Christian to be a true bearer of truth as they are suspected by others in many ways. However, they have to be open to the movement of the Spirit. There are various ways that the Christian laity can cooperate with the inspirations of the Spirit and promulgate the values of the Kingdom preached by Christ.

5.1 THE WITNESS OF CHRISTIAN IDEALS IN FAMILY LIFE

The family is the smallest unit of society where the members are born and nurtured with love. If the family is good and exemplary, the society will be good. If the societies are good, the nation will be good. In the matters of religion too, the individuals receive their faith first from their family and from their parents.²⁰¹ The family is considered to be "the domestic sanctuary of the Church through the mutual

¹⁹⁶ The Publication Division Director, *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol.65 (New Delhi: The Publication Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1976), 80.

¹⁹⁷ Publication Division Director *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol.71 (New Delhi: The Publication Division Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1978), 81.

¹⁹⁸ Thomas Dabre, "The Influence of Christianity in the Transformation of the Indian Society," in *Christian Contribution to Nation Building: A Third Millennium Enquiry*, ed. Selvester Ponnumuthan (Cochin: Pastoral Orientation Centre, 2004), 295.

¹⁹⁹ Dabre, "The Influence of Christianity in the Transformation of the Indian Society," 295.

²⁰⁰ Gracias, "Orientation Papers," 133.

²⁰¹ Jack O. Balswick, *The Family: A Christian Perspective on the Contemporary Home* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House Company, 1989), 28.

affection of its members and the common prayer they offer to God.”²⁰² This can only be achieved when “the whole family is involved in the liturgical worship of the Church, and if it provides active hospitality towards guests and those who need justice and other good works; it must be a sanctuary, a holy place for meeting, love and sacrifice, union with God, and a selfless openness towards others.”²⁰³

The Second Vatican Council gave emphasis for the formation of the members of the family. They said “one has to learn how to live for others, how to assist others in marital and spiritual needs, both the younger members of the family as well as the older and perhaps infirm members of the household.”²⁰⁴ The Constitution of the Church *Lumen Gentium* gives a substantial articulation of the witnessing character of the Christian family:

Married couples and Christian parents should follow their own proper path (to holiness) by faithful love. They should sustain one another in grace throughout the entire length of their lives. They should imbue their offspring, lovingly welcomed as God's gift, with Christian doctrine and the evangelical virtues. In this manner, they offer all men an example of unwavering and generous love; in this way they build up the brotherhood of charity; in so doing, they stand as the witnesses and co-operators in the fruitfulness of Holy Mother Church; by such lives, they are a sign and a participation in that very love, with which Christ loved His Bride and for which He delivered Himself up for her (*LG* 41).

The Christian families are called to witness their Christian faith to families of other religious communities.²⁰⁵ It was found necessary to strengthen the unity of the society to promote responsible parenthood for every family.²⁰⁶ On 9th February 1986, in Mumbai, during his homily Pope John Paul II, said:

the family today is under great stress due to certain trends of modern society.... Parents experience difficulty in passing on authentic values to their children.... The well-known opposition of the Church to the moral evils that affect the family and married life is due to her profound conviction that such evils are contrary to God's plan for humanity and they violate the sacredness of marriage and the values of human life.²⁰⁷

²⁰² Ferdinand Klostermann, “Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity,” ed. Herbert Vorgrimler, *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, vol.3 (New York: Burns and Oates, 1969), 340.

²⁰³ Klostermann, “Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity,” 340.

²⁰⁴ Klostermann, “Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity,” 398.

²⁰⁵ Phan, “Response of the Asian Episcopal Conferences to the *Lineamenta*,” 20.

²⁰⁶ Gracias, “Orientation Papers,” 67.

²⁰⁷ John Paul II, “The Family: A Community of Peace,” *Origins* 15, no. 36 (1986): 600.

The Christians have the responsibility to protect these human values in the family. Thus, "the whole of humanity also makes up a family. This is the great family of man, with all its variety."²⁰⁸ Christians are called to bear witness to Jesus' Gospel of fraternal love.²⁰⁹

The day after the promulgation of the document *Ecclesia in Asia* in New Delhi, Pope John Paul II said:

It is a sign of hope that the religions of the world are becoming more aware of their shared responsibility for the well-being of the human family. This is a crucial part of the globalisation of solidarity which must come if the future of the world is to be secure. This sense of shared responsibility increases as we discover more of what we have in common as religious men and women. Which of us does not grapple with the mystery of suffering and death? Which of us does not hold life, truth, peace, freedom and justice to be supremely important values? Which of us is not convinced that moral goodness is soundly rooted in the individual's belief that the way to God requires prayer, silence, asceticism, sacrifice and humility? Which of us is not concerned that scientific and technical progress should be accompanied by spiritual and moral awareness? And which of us does not believe that the challenges now facing society can only be met by building a civilization of love founded on the universal values of peace, solidarity, justice and liberty? And how can we do this, except through encounter, mutual understanding and cooperation? The path before us is demanding, and there is always the temptation to choose instead the path of isolation and division, which leads to conflict. This in turn unleashes the forces which make religion an excuse for violence, as we see too often around the world.²¹⁰

In central India among the Hindus there exists a natural bond between the members of the family. The family is considered to be the heart of Hinduism.²¹¹ In the Indian society, especially in the Hindu society, marriage is considered to be the second most important sacrament as the first is reserved to initiation of every individual to Hinduism through Vedic studies.²¹² These rituals are very strictly followed even today.

In India, where the family bond is very strong, it is easier to witness to them our own Christian vision of the sacredness of family bonds. It can be possible by living

²⁰⁸ John Paul II, "The Family: A Community of Peace," 600.

²⁰⁹ John Paul II, "The Family: A Community of Peace," 600.

²¹⁰ John Paul II, "Two Addresses of H.H. Pope John Paul II in Delhi," 885, 886.

²¹¹ Alan Gledhill, *The Republic of India*, vol.6 (London: Stevens and Sons Limited, 1951), 210, 211.

²¹² Papali, "Excursus on Hinduism," 144.

authentically the values of Christian family life. The whole Christian families of the laity can be effective evangelizers by following their sacred values.²¹³

The mutually dedicated faithful life of the Christian couples will become a witnessing value to their neighbours who belong to different religious pursuits. Pope John Paul II indicates:

Take a Christian or a handful of Christians who in the midst of their own community show their capacity for understanding and acceptance, their sharing of life and destiny with other people, their solidarity with the efforts of all for whatever is noble and good. Let us suppose that, in addition, they radiate in an altogether simple and unaffected way their faith in values that go beyond current values, and their hope in something that is not seen and that one would not dare to imagine. Through this wordless witness these Christians stir up irresistible questions in the hearts of those who see how they live: Why are they like this? Why do they live in this way? What or Who is it that inspires them? Why are they in our midst? Such a witness is already a silent proclamation of the good news and a very powerful and effective one (*EN 21*).²¹⁴

It is very true that when a family lives together by sharing their sorrows and joys in trustful confidence in the loving care of God, their life is the best way of conveying the message of love in family life in the midst of others. One of the basic aspects that come in this area of marriage and family life is the constitution of their own apostolate.²¹⁵ In all the difficult circumstances, the Christian faith should enable the family members to gain strength, and the Christian families should never forget that they have the duty to support the other family/families that are in crisis.²¹⁶

On October 1st 2007 Pope Benedict XVI said to the Cardinal Alfonso López Trujillo, the president of the Pontifical Council for the Family that:

In these times in which it is notable that there is a frequent contradiction between what is professed as belief and concrete ways of living and acting, the next World Meeting of Families proposes to encourage Christian households in the formation of a right moral conscience that, strengthened by the grace of God, helps in the faithful following of His will, which He

²¹³ William Lori, "One Family in Faith: What a Diocese Is," *Origins* 32, no. 45 (2003): 749.

²¹⁴ John Paul II, "The Laity, Their Life and Mission," *Origins* 28, no. 5 (1998): 79.

²¹⁵ Yves M. J. Congar, "My Path-Findings in the Theology of Laity and Ministries," *The Jurist* 32 (1972): 176.

²¹⁶ Friedrich Wulf, "The Call of the Whole Church to Holiness," in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Herbert Vorgrimler (New York: Burns and Oates, 1967), 262.

has revealed to us through Jesus Christ and which He has sowed in the depths of the heart of each person.²¹⁷

Pope Benedict XVI also affirmed that families, as the “domestic churches,” are called to form a new generation of human and Christian values so that “orienting their lives according to the model of Christ, they forge in themselves harmonious personalities.” Thus, the members of Christian families may remain a model for everyone to follow.

In central India, faith formation of the Christian families is most important even for the existence of the Church there. The credible Christian families are a great asset for the Church to be a witnessing sign of the values of the Gospel.²¹⁸ This is very applicable in the context of central India where there are only very few Christians to give witnessing living models to believers of other religions. Since they live in the midst of the followers of other religions, they should have depth in their faith experience and expression. The Church in central India needs strong and committed Christian families. Because members of the family who are faith-filled alone can face the challenges of the society in India growing more secular today.

The Christian couples can also organise various programmes like marriage weekend programmes, marriage reunions, marriage enrichment for couples, and periodical instructions about the strengthening of the serenity of the members of the family.²¹⁹ It has become very important today in the modern context where the Christian marital bonds are threatened. As the globalisation and various international relations have captured the attention of the society, these programmes have become inevitable for the couples. If such programmes are given to substantiate their faith experience, the lay leaders and especially the model couples of the parish community can do wonderful witnessing and dialogical work by being with their neighbours of other religious believers. This kind of sharing of faith experience can bring better fruits than ordained ministers giving instructions about the importance of the family life.²²⁰

Christian couples need to be equipped with the healthy value systems of the society so that they can prepare their children accordingly. Therefore, parents are to be given opportunities to understand properly the concerns of the Church regarding parental

²¹⁷ Benedict XVI, "Pontifical Council for the Family," *Zenit*, no. 16, October (2007): 3.

²¹⁸ Paul Gilbert, "Family Values and the Nation-State," in *Changing Family Values*, ed. Gill Jagger (London: Routledge, 1999), 140.

²¹⁹ Susan Blum Gerding, *Lay Ministers, Lay Disciples* (New York: Paulist Press, 1999), 21.

²²⁰ D. S. Amalorpavadass, "Statement of Recommendations by the Pastoral Consultation on Ministries in the Church," in *Ministries in the Church in India*, ed. D. S. Amalorpavadass (New Delhi: CBCI Centre, 1976), 700, 701.

responsibilities.²²¹ If the Church fails to do so, the future of the Church can be even dangerous in India. Therefore, the apostolate of family is very important ministry in the Christian community.

5.1.1 Empowerment of Women To Form a Better Society

We may note here that in the Vedic period of the Hindu society women enjoyed noble status in the Indian society. In later ages, there was a gradual decline in the status of women in India due to various reasons. According to Virginia Saldana, women today are considered to be “economically dependent, politically powerless, excluded from religious leadership, victims of various forms of violence, voiceless, used and abused at the whim of men for pleasure and economic gain.”²²² Kurien Kunnumpuram claims that women in the society are persecuted. Further, in every aspect of life they are considered:

second class citizens in this country. From the cradle to the grave women suffer varieties of injustice and oppression. Female foeticide, the killing of the baby girl, neglect of the girl child, female illiteracy, male domination, discrimination against women in family and society, sex slavery, assault, rape, murder- these are some of the ways in which women are oppressed in our country today.²²³

Women in India suffer from issues of dowry, wife-beating, low wages, etc.²²⁴ However, through the influence of Christianity in India, considerable changes have taken place towards the status of women in the Indian society. Christianity in India tries to give equal status to women as that of men. Saldana believes that through the power of the Spirit many men have helped women to find a voice and a platform to make their voice heard.²²⁵ The opportunities given to women in the field of education helped them to get empowered.²²⁶ There is a well-known saying “liberate a woman

²²¹ George M. Anathil, *Paths of Mission in India Today* (1994), 15.

²²² Virginia Saldanha, "Towards the Empowerment of Women in India," in *Christian Contribution to Nation Building: A Third Millennium Enquiry*, ed. Selvister Ponnunmuthan (Cochin: Pastoral Orientation Centre, 2004), 320.

²²³ Kurien Kunnumpuram, "The Church at the Service of the People of India," *Jnanadeepa* 1, no. 1 (1998): 151.

²²⁴ Jessie B. Tellis-Nayak, "Women Development Workers," in *The Emerging Christian Women*, ed. Stella Faria (Indore: Satprakashan Sanchar Kendra, 1984), 219.

²²⁵ Saldanha, "Towards the Empowerment of Women in India," 320.

²²⁶ Saldanha, "Towards the Empowerment of Women in India," 321.

and you will liberate a family"; liberating a family would mean liberating a society. Thus, it is through women that the new society is going to be established.²²⁷

In the Indian society, women are not only gradually obtaining higher education in secular subjects but they are also becoming experts in the theological studies.²²⁸ The Second Vatican Council was instrumental in promoting women to take an active role in theological studies.²²⁹ Though formal academic education did provide a certain degree of empowerment to women, culturally they continue to remain socially devalued and subject to men. However, different women's moments in the society have helped to get empowered.²³⁰ Women are taught self-employment skills which have helped to create some degree of economic independence for them.²³¹ A Christian vision of women and their liberation would help to work for justice and motivate other women in the society to join in this strive of liberation from the oppressive society.²³²

The Second Vatican Council was encouraging women to take an active role in empowering the women of the rural areas.²³³ The official declaration of the document *Mulieris Dignitatem*, offered women a new way of emerging with their full potentialities as free human beings.²³⁴ Pope John Paul II emphasised the need to give proper dignity for women in the society.²³⁵ He also recognised the dedication and commitment that women have for building a just society.²³⁶ J. Velamkunnel acknowledges the contribution made by the women in the central Indian Church to bring a social awareness among the women in India.²³⁷

We find in the later times many institutions that have emerged to give a new awakening for women in the society. It is a study and action group which began in the

²²⁷ M. Carol, "Women Religious and the New Society," in *The Emerging Christian Women*, ed. Stella Faria (Indore: Satprakashan Sanchar Kendra, 1984), 208.

²²⁸ Saldanha, "Towards the Empowerment of Women in India," 325.

²²⁹ Klostermann, "Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity," 329.

²³⁰ Saldanha, "Towards the Empowerment of Women in India," 325.

²³¹ Engelbert Seidler, *Women in India and in the Church* (Pune: Ishvani Kendra, 1978), 67.

²³² J. Velamkunnel, "Religious Women in North India: Formative Influence and Apostolic Opportunities," in *The Emerging Christian Women*, ed. Stella Faria (Indore: Satprakashan Sanchar Kendra, 1984), 201.

²³³ John, "New Wine in New Skins: Secular Institute," 185.

²³⁴ John Paul II, "*Mulieris Dignitatem*," *Origins* 18, no. 11 (1988): 165-170.

²³⁵ John Paul II, "*Mulieris Dignitatem*," 168.

²³⁶ John, "New Wine in New Skins: Secular Institute," 185.

²³⁷ Velamkunnel, "Religious Women in North India: Formative Influence and Apostolic Opportunities," 189.

year 1982 to give a social awareness among the women. They have published various books regarding the awakening of women in India. These institutions began to organise developmental works and educational programmes for groups of girls/women.²³⁸

In 1992 the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India started a women's desk in the commission of laity. Later it was developed into an independent forum for women in India. The Catholic Bishop's Conference of India, held in Pune in January 1992, made these conclusions in support of women of India: "Discrimination against women seems to be embedded in the structure of our society.... Violence (physical, sexual, psychological) that is practised against women is the result of inhuman ...attitudes. With a sense of sorrow we must admit that women feel discriminated even within the Church."²³⁹

There were various religious institutions for women that emerged to protect the rights of women in the rural areas. The emergence of the secular institute for women has provided a new way of consecrated living to women who sought to serve the society outside the confines of institutionalised religious life.²⁴⁰ The secular institute of women came forward, engaging in all kinds of works of which they are capable, sharing the risks and toils of everyday life, and promoting justice, love, and the common good to everyone.²⁴¹ These associations, which are very active in the different states of central India, empower the women in the rural areas.²⁴²

For a long time Jessie Tellis Nayak was responsible for organising various programmes in central India. Jessie worked for the Indian social institute, New Delhi. Her efforts concentrated on providing training, consultancy and publication of materials on women. She organised workshops, meetings on women's issues and development courses for female workers which included income generating schemes for women, understanding women's issues and teacher training for the *grihini*.²⁴³

²³⁸ Jessie B. Tellis Nayak, *Programme for Women's Development, Indian Womanhood: Then and Now* (Indore: Satprakashan Sanchar Kendra, 1983), 50.

²³⁹ Eugene D'Sousa, *Guidelines for the Working of the CBCI Commission for Women, 1997* (New Delhi: CBCI Commission for Women, 1997), 8.

²⁴⁰ Crescy John, "New Wine in New Skins: Secular Institute," in *The Emerging Christian Women*, ed. Stella Faria (Indore: Satprakashan Sanchar Kendra, 1984), 181.

²⁴¹ John, "New Wine in New Skins: Secular Institute," 183.

²⁴² Saldanha, "Towards the Empowerment of Women in India," 327.

²⁴³ Grihini training, though it is meant for illiterate girls on the threshold of marriage, could be adapted to any group. It is related to family and community life and hence is very practical. It prepares them for various roles in the family, work in the fields and leadership in the community. The girls are highly motivated, so they learn quickly after the initial challenge is accepted. Different methods are

programme.²⁴⁴ She initiated a full-time one year training course to prepare new *grihini* teachers at the Holy Cross Vocational Training Institute at Hazaribagh, Bihar. She experimented with animating local women to organise *Mahila Sanghas*.²⁴⁵ Various women organisations that began in India took initiatives in the activities of conscientisation and empowering women of India, both urban and rural women.²⁴⁶

In view of empowering and conscientising the women in central India, the archbishop of Bhopal started a training centre on the Ashanikethan premises of Bhopal. Initially it was begun with the hope that the religious members who are pioneers would come from south India to get equipped with various community developmental programmes.²⁴⁷ Further, they would become instrumental in empowering other women of the society.

5.1.2 Christian Youth Ministries and Their Effective Liberative Roles in the Multireligious Context

The apostolate among the youth is one of the most important areas of evangelization to be undertaken by the lay Christian leaders of the Church. The future of the local Church very much depends upon the formation and guidance given to the youth of the Church. The members of the fourth Plenary Assembly held in Tokyo, Japan, from 16th to 25th September 1986 observed that the youth is not given sufficient faith formation to withstand the challenges of the society. Further, the members claimed that the youth in Asia has not received adequate support and encouragement from the Church. Many of them are living under wretched conditions due to poverty and needs of the materialistic society around. They are caught up in the bondages of ignorance and illiteracy.²⁴⁸ This is the situation of Asia at large and in particular the situation of Indian Youth. They are to receive adequate training and support from the Church in India. The above referred seminar "The National seminar on Church in India Today" rightly observed that one of the greatest obstacles to India's social and economic

used to make learning easy. The course is residential, so that girls from far-flung villages can participate. There is a prescribed syllabus but it is adapted for girls from different regions. Girls from extremely poor families are provided with a stipend. cf. Jessie B. Tellis Nayak, *Programme for Women's Development, Indian Womanhood: Then and Now* (Indore: Satprahashan Sanchar Kenda, 1983). 50.

²⁴⁴ Tellis-Nayak, "Women Development Workers," 218.

²⁴⁵ Nayak, *Programme for Women's Development, Indian Womanhood: Then and Now*, 87.

²⁴⁶ Saldanha, "Towards the Empowerment of Women in India," 330.

²⁴⁷ Gracías, "Orientation Papers," 318.

²⁴⁸ Gaudencio Rosales & C. G. Arevalo, ed., *For All the People of Asia*, Federation of Asian Bishop's Conferences Documents from 1970-1991 (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1992), 181.

progress is “the apathy and lack of a sense of purpose displayed by her youth. They seem to have lost faith in the country and its future.”²⁴⁹

Pope John Paul II said today’s youth is the future Church.²⁵⁰ They have an active role to play in the society. They are to be prepared in a worthy manner to face the challenges of the society. It was repeated by Pope Benedict XVI in one of the recent youth meetings organised in Köln.²⁵¹ Therefore, the young generation is to be prepared with a purpose-oriented vision in their life.

Joe Arimpoor believes that nearly eighty percent of the Indian youth live in the rural areas. They do not get proper practical skills and knowledge for effective participation in rural and agricultural development.²⁵² It is observed that today the youth in India receives neither life-oriented nor job-oriented educational training.²⁵³ There are a number of youth movements that exist in the Indian Church such as The Little Flower Mission *league*, St. Vincent De Paul Society and the Don Bosco Youth Academies, which are very prominent among them.²⁵⁴ A responsible lay leader can be an animator in every parish to give training and guidance to the youth of the parish.²⁵⁵

The youth has to be guided according to the Christian values. The society and the works of media today are trying to take the society in a materialistic direction. There is every chance that the youth of today can fall into a materialistic direction if they are failed to be guided and directed properly. Religion and religious values get less importance in the materialistically motivated society and this is applicable to the Indian society as well. This growing tendency of people influence the younger generation even to reject some of the noble living principles from their values system which are very necessary for a peaceful co-existence in the community. It is in this context that the Christian lay leaders can play significant formative roles among the youth.

²⁴⁹ Gracias, "Orientation Papers," 187.

²⁵⁰ George Weigel, *Witness to Hope: The Biography of Pope John Paul II* (New York: Harper Collins, 1999), 493, 494.

²⁵¹ Benedict XVI, "20th World Youth Day," *L'osservatore Romano*, 10-17 August 2005, 5, 6.

²⁵² Joe Arimpoor, "A Better Tomorrow: The Youth Animation," in *Christian Contribution to Nation Building: A Third Millennium Enquiry*, ed. Selvister Ponnunmuthan (Cochin: Pastoral Orientation Centre, 2004), 239, 240.

²⁵³ Arimpoor, "A Better Tomorrow: The Youth Animation," 240.

²⁵⁴ Arimpoor, "A Better Tomorrow: The Youth Animation," 242-245.

²⁵⁵ Arimpoor, "A Better Tomorrow: The Youth Animation," 245.

Even in the traditional Christian families in India having turned a certain age, the children wish to be independent. Thus, the parents lose their control over their children. This is the role model often followed by youngsters who are charmed by the western cultural patterns, which are fast swaying over the Indian cities and suburbs. In this situation, a well accepted Christian lay leadership can be very influential in guiding the youth.²⁵⁶ As the youth is equipped with the modern information gadgets from the society in which they have their schooling and social interactions, the laity can be very instrumental in guiding them in the proper channels. The well formed youth can lead other young people to follow the same examples.

5.2 AREAS OF SERVICE TO VARIOUS WEAKER SECTIONS OF THE SOCIETY

Christian laity have the responsibility to assist the weaker sections of the society. Truly that was the mission of Jesus in the world. They have to strengthen this mission of the Church. The life of Christians is to be prepared to challenge any difficulty in the society. Their life has to be a model for everyone. The above mentioned "All India seminar on the Church in India Today" observed that Catholic leaders need "to organise the training of workers for leadership in labour organisations so that labourers may find their own leaders from within itself and not be obliged to look for leaders outside who may be more political than industrial in their work."²⁵⁷ The purpose of this training is to empower the weaker sections to protect their own privileges. Selection and acceptance of Christian values are not by any force or compulsion but truly with freedom of mind.

5.2.1 Organising the Labour Class

There are also laity who engaged in the ministry for the labour class in central India. They can too play a greater role of responsibility in the society. A good percentage of the Indian population falls into this category of labour class. The axiom 'united we stand and divided we fall' is very much applicable to the labour classes of India. There are also categories of labour groups which are not organised. They need to be organised. These forms of unorganised labour groups are situated especially in the rural areas of central India.

We have discussed earlier how the landlords exploit the poor peasants in the rural areas. The government of India introduced various developmental schemes for the

²⁵⁶ Amalorpavadass, "Statement of Recommendations by the Pastoral Consultation on Ministries in the Church," 701.

²⁵⁷ Gracias, "Orientation Papers," 132.

upliftment of the poor labourers in the society.²⁵⁸ If they are organised, they will be able to channel these benefits from the governments. But we have seen that people are not organised, and furthermore they are fully dependent on their landlords for their daily living. These peasants are mostly illiterate and whether they get themselves organised depends upon the assistance from outside agencies.

Dedicated and committed laity can be an effective instrument in organising these labour groups because they often need assistance from outside sources. The person who is imbued with the Spirit of the Lord can challenge the landlord and exploiting groups. If Christians live and work with the messages from the Lord, then their life and presence can be an inspiration for the unorganised members of the labour classes.²⁵⁹ The presence of Christians can be very helpful in organising these members of the labour classes, irrespective of their statuses in the society. The Christian laity can work as facilitator in getting justice done to the members of the labour class. These members of the labour classes are considered poor and marginalised in the society. The sharing of the Christian love with these people can bring hope and consolation to this section of the people.

5.2.2 Assistance Given to Migrant Workers

We can also find a lot of migrant people coming to India. As the world is heading towards globalisation, people travel from one state to another or one country to another for various needs. The Christian laity can be very helpful to the people who have migrated to their country or state in search of jobs. They can be of much help in assisting migrants in obtaining necessary work residency permits, finding housing, and health care; teaching basic survival skills in an adopted culture, such as shopping, finding transportation, learning the language etc.

5.2.3 Organising the Street Children

The increase of migrants will further lead to increase in the number of undisciplined children in the streets. Furthermore, today as the number of single parents is increasing, there is a tendency for the children to run away from home. The poverty of the family also compels the children to leave their homes. When the children do not get adequate love and affection from their parents at home, there is also a tendency for them to leave home and become wanderers in the street. This situation is very much applicable to many of the Asian countries, especially many states of India.

²⁵⁸ De, *The Constitution of India*, 1028-1038.

²⁵⁹ Amalorpavadass, "Statement of Recommendations by the Pastoral Consultation on Ministries in the Church," 701.

Committed laity can be very competent in caring for these children and giving them correct values for life.

5.3 BUILDING UP TRUST AND CONFIDENCE AMONG PEOPLE OF OTHER RELIGIONS

It was found necessary that the minority Christians should develop trust and confidence among non-Christians with whom they live in central India. Christians, who are branded as agents of western culture, need to make efforts to identify with the people of their locality. Arun Shourie, a strong supporter of Hindu fundamentalism and a critic of Christian missionary work, holds strongly that all religions lead to God. In his book entitled *Harvesting Our Souls*, he explains the records of some forced conversions implemented by the missionaries in India, especially among the poor tribals of central India.²⁶⁰ To some extent, I agree with the arguments proposed by Shourie. However, one needs to understand that all the incidents mentioned by Arun Shourie in his book had taken place before the Second Vatican Council. After the Second Vatican Council, there were tremendous changes in the missionary approaches of the Church in India.

It is correct to mention the words of Mother Teresa, published in a bulletin named “India Today” on 31st May 1983 and recorded by Shourie in his book that “conversion means changing of heart by love. Conversion by force or bribery is a shameful thing. It is a terrible humiliation for anyone to give up their religion for a plate of rice.”²⁶¹ The Second Vatican Council explained that conversion would mean a change of heart. It is a changed perspective of human hearts from those value systems that endangers the other’s existence. Therefore, there is no need for a change of religion from Hinduism to Christianity.²⁶² One can even remain as he/she is but still can become a follower of Jesus. We have mentioned a couple of times that the conversion and motivation for people to receive baptism as the external sign of membership into the Church is not the responsibility of a Christian but of the Spirit who wishes to lead everyone to the truth.²⁶³

Arun Shourie criticised the methods used by the missionaries to raise funds from the western countries in the name of development for the rural people of India. He illustrated in his argument, quoting a text from Swami Vivekananda, who criticised

²⁶⁰ Shourie, *Missionaries in India: Continuities, Changes, Dilemmas*, 8.

²⁶¹ Shourie, *Harvesting Our Souls: Missionaries, Their Design, Their Claims*, 57.

²⁶² Shourie, *Harvesting Our Souls: Missionaries, Their Design, Their Claims*, 59.

²⁶³ Arevalo, ed., *For All the People of Asia*, 98, no. 17.

the missionaries for the same issue of propagating in India.²⁶⁴ All these examples given by Arun Shourie are eye openers for every Christian missionary to change the methodology of action in the field of evangelization.

Arun Shourie even acknowledged the Missionary sisters of Mother Teresa and her methods of missionary work as the symbol of service and compassion.²⁶⁵ He explains furthermore that "her compassion and care encompass all: not for a moment does she wait to learn the religion, race or caste of the one in need. Her humility, her nobility, her service are of a saintly order."²⁶⁶ The approaches of the Missionary sisters of Mother Teresa of Calcutta are well accepted in central India. Thomas Plathottathil acknowledges that "Mother Teresa who dedicated her life for the 'poorest of the poor' can be a model" in the central Indian mission.²⁶⁷ She said once "Jesus, the Son of a loving God who expresses on the cross His thirst for the love of all men, ... From the heart of this reality we approach others."²⁶⁸ These sisters approach everyone, irrespective of the people's position in the society or their economic status. The sisters love the hidden divineness of man, they do not consider any external symbols or attractions of the human person.²⁶⁹

Mother Teresa once said, the:

²⁶⁴ Shourie, *Harvesting Our Souls: Missionaries, Their Design, Their Claims*, 46, 47. "If all India stands up," Swami Vivekananda told the Christians in America about this propaganda, "and takes all the mud that is at the bottom of the Indian Ocean and throws it up against the western countries, it will not be doing an infinitesimal part of that which you are doing to us ..." "It is equally untrue that I am hostile to the Christian missionaries in India. But I protest against certain of their methods of raising money in America. What is meant by those pictures in the school-books for children where the Hindu mother is painted as throwing her children to the crocodiles in the Ganga? The mother is black, but the baby is painted white, to arouse more sympathy, and get more money. What is meant by those pictures which paint a man burning his wife at a stake with his own hands, so that she may become a ghost and torment the husband's enemy? What is meant by the pictures of huge cars crushing over human beings? The other day a book was published for children in this country (America), where one of these gentlemen tells a narrative of his visit to Calcutta. He says he saw a car running over fanatics in the streets of Calcutta. I have heard one of these gentlemen preach in Memphis that in every village of India there is a pond full of the bones of little babies. What have the Hindus done to these disciples of Christ that every Christian child is taught to call the Hindus 'vile', and 'wretches', and the most horrible devils on earth? Part of the Sunday School education for children here consists in teaching them to hate everybody who is not a Christian, and the Hindus especially, so that, from their very childhood they may subscribe their pennies to the missions.... Look again at the books published in Madras against the Hindu religion. If a Hindu writes one such line against the Christian religion, the missionaries will cry fire and vengeance."

²⁶⁵ Shourie, *Missionaries in India: Continuities, Changes, Dilemmas*, 8.

²⁶⁶ Shourie, *Missionaries in India: Continuities, Changes, Dilemmas*, 8.

²⁶⁷ Plathottathil, 'Being Poor and Being for the Poor' *Its Actualization in the Life and Mission of Mother Teresa and Its Pastoral Relevance*, 27.

²⁶⁸ Tanghe, "....For the Least of My Brothers," 125, 126.

²⁶⁹ Tanghe, "....For the Least of My Brothers," 27.

vocation supposes a true service to the poorest of the poor by feeding the hungry not only with food, but also with Word of God; by giving the thirsty not only water to drink, but also knowledge, truth, peace, justice and love; by clothing the naked not only with garments, but also with human dignity; by giving the homeless shelter not only by finding them homes, but also by showing them a heart that understands them, that protects them, that loves them; by caring for the sick and the dying and by attending to them not only physically, but also spiritually; by announcing the Gospel to them through our presence and our works of charity.²⁷⁰

Therefore the Missionary sisters of Mother Teresa are well accepted in India as well as abroad. She and her sisters never excluded other people from their love, compassion or service.²⁷¹

5.3.1 Laity's Witnessing Roles In the Educational Field

Education is one of the main apostolates of Christians in India today. The ministry of education can be another big area of the apostolate for the laity to win the confidence of the people. Many priests, religious and laity are very actively involved in this apostolate. Educational institutions are the formative nurseries for the character formation of students. The total development and the normative ways of life of the people of a country depend very much on the quality of the educational institutions of a country. India is not an exception to this general rule.²⁷²

Everyone begin to realise that illiteracy is the root cause of every social evil, whereas education provides formation for a human person and helps him/her to live in the society²⁷³ more creatively and meaningfully. Therefore, the Church wishes to take an active part in this field of education. According to the latest census records of 2001, only 65.38% (566,714,995) of the total population is literate in India. The literacy rate of the male population is 75.85% (339,969,048), whereas only 54.16% (226,745,947) of women are literate.²⁷⁴ The situation of illiteracy is a grave problem in central India. For example, the state of Madhya Pradesh, has 60,385,118 people according to 2001 census, of which 31,456,873 are male and 28,928,245 are female, of these only 64.11% (31,1906,109) are literate, which is 76.80% (19,932,013) males and 50.28%

²⁷⁰ Tanghe, "...For the Least of My Brothers," 31.

²⁷¹ Plathottathil, '*Being Poor and Being for the Poor*' Its Actualization in the Life and Mission of Mother Teresa and Its Pastoral Relevance, 28.

²⁷² Zenon Grocholewski, "Consecrated Persons and Their Mission in Schools: Reflections and Guidelines," *Origins* 32 (2003): 529, 530.

²⁷³ S. Arokiasamy, "Theology of Education and Human Liberation," *Indian Theological Studies* 21, no. 2 (1984): 123.

²⁷⁴ Registrar General, *Indian Census* (<http://www.censusindia.net/results/resultsmain.html>, 2001, accessed 26.03.2004).

(11,974,096) females.²⁷⁵ The Indian Christian community which has education as one of the pastoral priorities, can reasonably be proud of many educational institutions through which a big number of lay people engage in the building up of an enlightened Indian society. Every major town in India has at least a couple of Christian educational institutions. Parents, Christians as well as those of other religious beliefs, first seek a Christian institution in their town for their child's education. These institutions contribute to a big share for the building up of the nation.²⁷⁶

The Second Vatican Council has taken sufficient care to encourage the field of education in all mission territories of the Church. There were mixed opinions about the apostolate of education. Evangelista Villanova explains that some fathers during the Second Vatican Council regarded the apostolate of education "as an essential means of evangelization, others as a tool of privilege and power; according to some of the latter, the schools should never existed at all."²⁷⁷ However, Council directed the Catholic schools to follow Christian value systems in the Christian educational institutions. It states: "natural that Catholic schools as well as other Catholic institutions for the formation and education should be schools for the apostolate, in which one can learn to think and to act in a 'Catholic' and apostolic way."²⁷⁸ Further, it is found that "there is a true need for educated Catholic leaders today to get well-acquainted with this world of lasting and eternal truths and to make it their own ever more deeply, as well as all the riches of our faith."²⁷⁹ As the fathers of the Second Vatican Council put it, "a true education aims at the formation of the human person with respect to his/[her] ultimate goal, and simultaneously with respect to the good of those societies of which, as a man/woman, is a member, and in whose responsibilities, as an adult, he/[she] will share."²⁸⁰

Education envisages a very deep relationship between the students and the teacher. In the pastoral activities of the Church, the field of education occupies a very credible position in the Church (*Ecclesia in Asia* 37). Pope John Paul II insists that our educational system should encourage "human promotion providing an environment where students receive not only the formal elements of schooling but, more broadly,

²⁷⁵ Registrar General, *Indian Census* (accessed 26.03.2004).

²⁷⁶ George Koonthanam, "Option for the Poor and Its Challenges to the Present: Ecclesial Structures and Praxis," *Jeevadhara* 23, no. 136 (1993): 322.

²⁷⁷ Evangelista Vilanova, "The Intersession," in *History of Vatican II*, ed. Giuseppe Alberigo (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 397.

²⁷⁸ Klostermann, "Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity," 399.

²⁷⁹ Klostermann, "Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity," 401.

²⁸⁰ Walter M. Abbott, ed., *The Documents of Vatican II* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1966), 639.

an integral human formation based upon the teachings of Christ” (*Ecclesia in Asia* 37). We have learned that education not only helps a person get liberated but also makes him/her liberate others. The field of education brings about the liberative values of the beatitudes which we have analysed in our previous chapter. This liberative aspect of education helps one to become a better citizen in the society and the country at large. All these ideals are very urgently needed for personal growth but can only be attained gradually. As we have noted many times, educated and trained lay people are the central figures in carrying out the role of the liberative aspect of evangelization.²⁸¹

Archbishop Marcos McGrath affirms that providing education is an integral part of the evangelizing mission of the Church. The field of education is understood as a continuing mission of Christ as the teacher.²⁸² Christian educational system aims at the total liberation of the human person.²⁸³ As Dr. Kuncheria Pathil, a contemporary Indian ecclesialogist, explains from the pastoral point of view, education has taken an understanding that it “is not simply an information process but a transformation process which aims at the integral formation of the students. A teacher or a guru is one who has realised himself or herself, and only such a person can lead or guide the students so that they also may realise the meaning of their life.”²⁸⁴

The Christian educational institutions are known for their commitment and dedication based on imparting life-oriented principles and values. This was emphasised very much by the recent Catholic bishop’s conference held in Bangalore.²⁸⁵ This seminar advised the authorities of the Christian educational institutions that they should “contribute to the total formation of the human person in the perspective of the ultimate goal of human life and at the same time with the vision of the welfare of the societies of which he/she is a member.”²⁸⁶

²⁸¹ Thomas Menamparampil, "Asia through Asian Eyes," in *The Future of the Asian Churches*, ed. James H. Kroege and Peter C. Phan (Quezon: Cleretian Publications, 2002), 32.

²⁸² Marcos McGrath, "The Final Documents," in *Puebla and Beyond: Documentation and Commentary*, ed. John Eagleson and Philip Scharper (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1980), 250.

²⁸³ Arokiasamy, "Theology of Education and Human Liberation," 124.

²⁸⁴ Kuncheria Pathil, *Indian Churches at the Crossroads* (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 1994), 139.

²⁸⁵ Anand Muttungal, *The Final Statement of the 27th General Body Meeting of the Catholic Bishop's Conference of India* (New Delhi: Catholic Bishop's Conference of India, 2006), 1, 2.

²⁸⁶ Gracias, "Orientation Papers," 179.

The 27th General assembly of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI) held at St. Peter's Pontifical Seminary, Bangalore, from 8th to 15th February 2006 has given a new understanding to the Church educational policies in India.²⁸⁷ The bishops of India insisted on the aspect of faith formation through these educational institutions. They also gave more emphasis to the children from the weaker and the marginalised sections of the society. One decision from the bishops of India is extremely noteworthy. It states that "every Catholic educational institution has concern for the marginalised, especially children who are girls. Those who are disadvantaged socially, physically or intellectually will specially be assisted even if our academic results suffer. We deplore all attempts to commercialise education. We will not accept capitation fees."²⁸⁸ To some extent, the educational system had become like any business institution in the Indian society. The educational institution was catering the needs of the rich only. The Bishops' mentioned above said decisions caused this evil practice to come to an end.

Children from various walks of life are admitted to an educational institution. These children fulfil the dreams of the Church envisioned by Pope John Paul II: "Catholic schools should continue to be places where the faith can be freely proposed and received." The Christian children in the schools have a great opportunity to interact with children of other faiths. A Christian child in the school has an opportunity to share his/her faith with others who are his/her friends. In this process of the exchange of faith, children have a great opportunity to evangelize other children of different faiths. Therefore, William Larousse concludes that schools and educational institutions play a vital role in the liberative aspects of evangelization.²⁸⁹ The fruit of education can be experienced by the children especially when they develop more self-confidence in their undertakings.²⁹⁰ Catholic educational institutions are opening up more and more centres in many parts of the society in view of spreading the values of the liberative evangelization.²⁹¹

²⁸⁷ Muttungal, *The Final Statement of the 27th General Body Meeting of the Catholic Bishop's Conference of India*, 1, 2.

²⁸⁸ Muttungal, *The Final Statement of the 27th General Body Meeting of the Catholic Bishop's Conference of India*, 1.

²⁸⁹ William Larousse, *Walking Together Seeking Peace* (Quezon City, Philippines: Claretian Publications, 2001), 229.

²⁹⁰ Nirmal Minz, "Religion, Culture and Education in the Context of Tribal Aspirations in India," *Journal of Dharma* 24, no. 4 (1999): 408.

²⁹¹ McGrath, "The Final Documents," 137.

During the above mentioned seminar members from the Madhya Pradesh region, specifically participants from the diocese of Indore, suggested that:

our schools were vital for the education of our Catholics and hence to be continued even in the face of opposition. Besides this we would have a great opportunity to influence others who are our students at present as well as those who were our former students. Besides this we will have served the country by educating some of its people. This is a service that the Church should not feel reluctant to render.... The service rendered by the Church of Madhya Pradesh is mostly by means of her schools, hospitals and other institutions which are patronized by the public...and this is a fertile field of witness to the Gospel and leads men to appreciate our principles.²⁹²

There is an urgent need to extent this apostolate of education even to the rural areas in central India. Education brings enlightenment which helps to eradicate the social evils like exploitation of the poor and the weak; caste system; class discrimination; practises like unjust wage to the labours; not giving equal respect to women in the society; giving and getting nominal prices for the products of farmers in villages; child labour; child marriage, etc. Such evil practises are still practised in the rural areas of India even today.²⁹³ Well trained and committed laity can be instrumental in eradicating these forms of evil practises from society through their educational involvement in the society.

There are mainly three categories of pupils in the society who wish to get educated. The first are those who are looking for academic excellence, the subjects are taught according to the requirements of the syllabus with little or no reference to real-life world. These students look towards scientific objectivity rather than value orientation. The second category is where "the students are encouraged to take the initiatives, to examine issues critically, to show interests in current needs and problems, to form judgements, to learn group living and to develop social concern." This group is very much oriented towards the real life situations of people in the society. Finally, there is a group of students who are unsupervised and who always look for the world of leisure and entertainment. "They discuss the latest fashions, plan strikes, debate the causes of student unrest, criticise their elders, indulge in politics, plan outings, parties and picnics, and seek contacts with the other sex."²⁹⁴ The Christian institutions should aim towards more of the second category of the educational systems for the students.

²⁹² Gracias, "Orientation Papers," 179, 180.

²⁹³ Amalorpavadass, "Statement of Recommendations by the Pastoral Consultation on Ministries in the Church," 701.

²⁹⁴ Gracias, "Orientation Papers," 197, 198.

The Christian educational institution should aim at the integration of the total man. Therefore, the educator should learn how to integrate these three categories into one.

The Christian educational institutions began to concentrate on the overall development of the students in the educational institutions.²⁹⁵ However, Antony Raj observed that in one of the southern states of India, the Christians were mostly from lower class families. It is prohibited for the children from these families to seek admission in educational institutions run by the Church personnel.²⁹⁶ The reason for such dehumanising practice is the caste and class-based discrimination of people. However, through the pastoral field of education, the Christian teachers as well as the Christian children have an opportunity to interact with other members of the society where they encounter others with the fruits of liberation. Through educational conscientisation, the process of humanisation takes place. Humanisation is the basic and radical step towards liberation. Further, we shall discuss another important field based on education where the Christian laity can take active part in the liberative evangelization imbued with the spirit of the values of the beatitudes.

5.3.2 In the Field of Health Care

The ministry of healing is another area where the laity can be involved very actively. Today medical aid has become a very challenging mission of the Christian community where the secular society welcomes and encourages the practice of euthanasia, artificial birth control, etc. The healing ministry can bring more meaning and solace to its patients. Many of the physical sicknesses found are due to reasons of various family tensions and individual's personal irregularities. A practitioner of medicine who is a Christian can give respect to every patient. He/she begins to love them unconditionally. He/she sees in the patients the presence of Christ. This unconditional love that is bestowed upon the patient gives more comfort and confidence in the process of healing to the patient. The medical practitioner can become a good evangelizer in the hospital in the midst of the patients who have various complications.²⁹⁷ The psychology of every patient is to approach those practitioners with whom he/she feels at home in the hospital. The patient who sees that he/she receives special love and concern from a Christian medical practitioner begins to experience the love lost from their family members. Thus, the medical practitioner shares the love that he/she received from the love of Christ.

²⁹⁵ Anto Karokaran, *Evangelization and Diakonia* (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 1978), 72, 73.

²⁹⁶ Antony Raj, "The Dalit Christians Reality in Tamilnadu," *Jeevadhara* 23, no. 128 (1992): 99-107.

²⁹⁷ John Vlazny, "A Vision for a Healing Church," *Origins* 33, no. 40 (2004): 700.

In India, the hospitals in the major cities are managed by the Christian institutions are well accepted by everyone in the society. People flock to Christian hospitals because of the dedicated and committed service that the patients receive from such institutions. There is a need to reach this ministry in the rural areas of India too. There is a need to train more committed lay people to be involved in the ministry of healing. Sufficient remunerations should be given to the persons who volunteer for such apostolate in the rural areas. This ministry can be very effective among the handicapped and aged in the society.²⁹⁸ These categories of people are mostly rejected by the society. Therefore, the apostolate of the health ministry is very appropriate in the field of evangelization.

5.3.3 The Field of Media Helping Conscientisation and Transmission of Christian Values

The ministry of mass media communication is another field where the laity can be involved very actively. People spend today a lot of time before the television programmes. Internet and televisions have become essential commodities in the growing society. The media can form, as well as deform, the members of the society. People are seldom interested in the social gatherings of families today.

A very extensive discussion was organised by the fathers of the Second Vatican Council on the subject matter of role of media in the field of evangelization from 14th to 26th November 1963. They observed that the media can play an important role in the field of evangelization.²⁹⁹ The media can play a vital role in the field of social awareness. The images that are played through the various media programmes, especially the animated images, and even more, the images coupled with music and the spoken word, can express many things to people in the society. It is the total language of communication. The media can influence everyone in the society, irrespective of their social status. The media plays a greater role in the society when communicating a value system for the people. In India, it is the press media that takes up the major part in influencing the old as well as the young people of society. A number of Christian laity are employed in the journalistic departments of the print media. Hence, opportunities for the Christian laity to actively participate in the field of media and communication are significant and they can work in view of empowering the weaker sections of the society.

²⁹⁸ Amalorpavadass, "Statement of Recommendations by the Pastoral Consultation on Ministries in the Church," 701.

²⁹⁹ Joseph Fameree, "Bishop and Dioceses and the Communications Media," in *History of Vatican II*, ed. Giuseppe Alberigo (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 175.

The Second Vatican Council has introduced a document on the communication media and how it has changed the traditional attitude of the Church towards the work of media.³⁰⁰ The document *Aetatis Novae* brought in the concept of pastoral communication in a major way, and it suggested to the bishops to take initiative to promote various Audio-Visual programmes in their respective dioceses. The document stresses, “we therefore strongly recommend that dioceses and episcopal conferences or assemblies include a communications component in every pastoral plan” (AN 21).³⁰¹ The contribution of Catholic Journals like *La cité catholique* and *Communio et Progressio* have promoted the works of the media.³⁰² The document *Inter Mirifica* commented: “It would be shameful if by their inactivity Catholics allowed the Word of God to be silenced or obstructed by the technical difficulties which these media present and by their admittedly enormous cost” (IM 17). Furthermore, Pope Paul VI said: “the Church would find herself guilty, if she did not utilise every opportunity provided by the modern means of communications to proclaim the Word of God” (EN 45). Thus, we find today the Church media is competing with the media programmes of the secular world.³⁰³ However, the Church in India has not shown a keen interest in this field of evangelization through the help of the various media.³⁰⁴ Hence, it is also a felt need of the Church in central India to give media education to the laity for their active involvement in this apostolate.³⁰⁵ This media can promote the public relationship of the Church with the followers of other religions.³⁰⁶ Even Arun Shourie, a critique of Christian Missions acknowledges that the media can play a vital role in the field of evangelization.³⁰⁷ He says “only a programme prepared after careful audience research will produce good results.”³⁰⁸

The various communication programmes that exist in the community can become a means of intellectual growth and study. They can provide valuable norms for the people to live in the society. Today, various communication programmes have

³⁰⁰ Jacob Srampickal, "Service to the Nation through Communication Media," in *Christian Contribution to Nation Building: A Third Millennium Enquiry*, ed. Selvister Ponnunmuthan (Cochin: Pastoral Orientation Centre, 2004), 222.

³⁰¹ Harvey Cox, *The Secular City* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), iii.

³⁰² Fameree, "Bishop and Dioceses and the Communications Media," 174.

³⁰³ Srampickal, "Service to the Nation through Communication Media," 222.

³⁰⁴ Srampickal, "Service to the Nation through Communication Media," 223.

³⁰⁵ Srampickal, "Service to the Nation through Communication Media," 232.

³⁰⁶ Srampickal, "Service to the Nation through Communication Media," 237.

³⁰⁷ Shourie, *Harvesting Our Souls: Missionaries, Their Design, Their Claims*, 61.

³⁰⁸ Shourie, *Harvesting Our Souls: Missionaries, Their Design, Their Claims*, 61.

become inevitable for the individual's day-to-day living.³⁰⁹ A well organised programme in the communication channel will attract many in the society. It can convey a lot of moral values and strategies for individuals, irrespective of religion in the society. Through the media, people can be reached very easily with Christian spiritual values and the life examples of great religious leaders.³¹⁰

The Christians of India in the recent past have contributed a great deal towards the propagation of Christian values through the audio-visual programme.³¹¹ Jacob Srampickal claims that the audio visual aids existed from the time memorial and in the later period it has taken more attractive technology.³¹² It was said in the Church circles that the modern media was "denounced as more of an evil than good and hence controlled and censored."³¹³ The above mentioned "All India Seminar on the Church in India Today" organised in Bangalore in May 1969 observed that Christians actively involved in journalism could help people to make aware of their rights and responsibilities in the society and how to obtain them.³¹⁴

As we have seen above, in many states of India today direct proclamation is prohibited by the state law. The communication programme can work as an alternative to convey the Christian messages to the common men/women in the society. The growing trend among the people is that they are very much attracted and inspired by the modern communication programmes. A well organised Christian channel in the television network can be attracted by everyone, irrespective of caste and creed.

However, the modern trend and the attraction to the media programme can make an individual a self-centred person and furthermore an individualist in the society. If it is not well organised, it can take away the good ancient living principles of love, respect and tolerance from the family which is the smallest unit of the society. The persons who are involved in various communication programmes need to be committed to the welfare of the society.

The laity who are dedicated and committed to the welfare of the individual can do marvels in the field of communication. They can become direct evangelizers in the

³⁰⁹ Augustine Kanjamala, "Emerging Mission Trends in India," *Verbum SVD* 41, no. 3 (2000): 459.

³¹⁰ Amalorpavadass, "Statement of Recommendations by the Pastoral Consultation on Ministries in the Church," 701.

³¹¹ Srampickal, "Service to the Nation through Communication Media," 221.

³¹² Srampickal, "Service to the Nation through Communication Media," 222.

³¹³ Srampickal, "Service to the Nation through Communication Media," 222.

³¹⁴ Gracias, "Orientation Papers," 130.

community by providing meaningful and intelligent programmes through various communication media. They can work as 'catalysts' in bringing justice to the people in the society. Their dedicated service to the humanity will be remembered by everyone.

5.3.4 Laity Playing Vital Role in Promoting Values of Social Upliftment in Community

Today, modern society is influenced by the materialistic character of the society. The Christian principles and living norms are being challenged by the secularist forces of the society. The teachings of Jesus and his values of life have been forgotten by many. Today it is a challenge for a person to be a social activist in the society. Sometimes, one may even think that the poor have no place in the society.³¹⁵ Thus, it has become a challenge to be a follower of Christ.³¹⁶

In India, Christians and Christian principles of life are watched very critically by others who follow secularist ideologies and other religions. Further, the activities of Christians which are having social concerns are looked upon suspiciously by others. The Christians are cornered as foreigners. Thus, the poor Christians are deprived of their social privileges from the side of the government. In this context, the laity have a great role to play in the society. The Christian laity who live among the common people in villages can do wonderful work for social upliftment. They can concentrate mainly on three areas i) upliftment of the poor and the downtrodden, ii) developmental work, and iii) the struggle for a just order of the society.³¹⁷ In the rural areas of central India where there has not been much developmental works, dedicated and committed laity can be effective.

The Christian laity can play a more active part than the clergy in the field of social, economic and political matters of the society.³¹⁸ The poor and the weaker sections of the community can also take an active role in the field of evangelization. Gustavo Gutierrez concludes that through these social upliftment programmes the preaching of the Gospel will be truly liberating when the poor themselves are the preachers.³¹⁹

³¹⁵ Anathil, *Paths of Mission in India Today*, 15.

³¹⁶ Jacques Dupuis, "Lay People in Church and World," *Gregorianum* 68, no. 1-2 (1987): 371.

³¹⁷ Amalorpavadass, "Statement of Recommendations by the Pastoral Consultation on Ministries in the Church," 701.

³¹⁸ Joseph Ratzinger, "Doctrinal Note on Some Questions Regarding the Participation of Catholics in Political Life," *Origins* 32, no. 33 (2003): 542.

³¹⁹ Gustavo Gutierrez, "The Poor in the Church," in *The Poor and the Church*, ed. Norbert Greinacher and Alois Muller (New York: The Seabury Press, 1977), 15.

5.4 EMPOWERING PEOPLE TO FORM CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP VALUES

In central India the people of the scheduled castes and tribals are kept away from every field of development because they “pollute others.”³²⁰ The Church in central India tries to empower them by liberating them from their poverty and oppression and enabling them to enjoy the Indian Constitutional values of equality, justice and fraternity.³²¹ These people are landless, economically poor, politically weak and socially treated as out-casts. Similarly, the *dalit* Christians also suffer manifold discriminations: discrimination by the government, caste Hindus, certain upper class Christian families, fellow Hindu *dalits*, and by the subgroups of *dalit* Christians themselves.³²² T. K. John claims:

Deprived of resources, uprooted from their socio-cultural and economic roots, there begins the silent exodus of the ‘losers’ to big cities. It is this unnumbered, devalued ‘losers’ in the game that was justifiably termed human garbage. The slums of our cities, symbol of an unfair game, are the resorts of most of these disinherited, dispossessed and ‘pushed out’ people of India. These slums are home, explicit symbols of ‘injustice.’ Human issues point to this and similar tragedies of varying intensity and callousness in other areas of life in society.³²³

In his apostolic exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia* Pope John Paul II insisted that missionaries witness powerfully to the Gospel through life of prayer, eternal search for God, zealous service, exemplary conduct and life of communion with the Spirit which will help to empower people (EA 43, 44). The followers of Jesus must witness to the values of the Kingdom of God as a community that embodies and lives those values, as it was promised by Jesus Christ. The Church is such a community embodying the values of the Kingdom of God. So the members of the Church have to be both “light and salt” to the world (Mt 5: 13-16).

In the pastoral letter addressed to all the dioceses of India, on the eve of *Yesu Krist Jeyanti* celebration – 2000th Anniversary of Jesus Christ’s birth in Bangalore, the Catholic Bishop’s Conference of India states: “we reaffirm our faith in the risen Christ who overcame the power of evil and injustice. In deep solidarity with all our

³²⁰ L. Stanislaus, "Empowering the Oppressed in Society," in *Christian Contribution to Nation Building: A Third Millennium Enquiry*, ed. Selvester Ponnuthan (Cochin: Pastoral Orientation Centre, 2004), 271.

³²¹ Stanislaus, "Empowering the Oppressed in Society," 271.

³²² Stanislaus, "Empowering the Oppressed in Society," 273.

³²³ T. K. John, "Justice and Social Issues in Mission Today," in *Breaking New Ground in Mission*, ed. Paul Vadakumpadan (Shillong: Vendrame Institute Publications, 2002), 34; cf. Stanislaus, "Empowering the Oppressed in Society," 273.

brothers and sisters in this country we commit ourselves to join in their struggle for the transformation of society. We believe that the Spirit of Christ has been operating in this nation in a variety of ways. We join with all people of good will in a spirit of collaboration in response to the call of the Spirit.”³²⁴ The bishops thus invited everyone to join to empower the exploited and marginalised in the society.

The Church in India stands for the empowerment of the poor and the oppressed by not remaining above them but rather being with them in their struggles. The presence of the members of the Church with the oppressed will make them regain their strength to seek justice from the exploiters of the society. The statement issued by the chairman of the Catholic bishop’s conference of India in 2002 is also very significant here. It states:

The dalits and tribals are politically exploited, educationally most backward, and socially discriminated against. The Church should be in solidarity with the poor and make a preferential option for them. In the situation of appalling poverty of the vast majority of the people in India, the Church has to become not just a Church for the poor but the Church of the poor. This would mean, being with the poor in their daily experience of poverty and oppression, and being with them in their efforts to liberate themselves for a fuller human life. To realise this objective, the Church should join other people of good will and work towards the dismantling of structures like caste and class that cause and perpetuate poverty and oppression.³²⁵

The Church is making an impact among the marginalised mass of central India and gives credible witness to all people that Christian mission is for all the people. The Church’s mission is to reach out to everyone without any distinction of caste, creed, gender, social status, etc. Empowering the poor is a practical way of doing something towards establishing a just society. Hence, the involvement of the Church through her Christian witnesses both lay and religious is crucial and her role has to be prophetic.³²⁶ The challenge of the Church is to be proactive and interactive in society. The silence and the neutral position of the Church in personal and structural violence will be a betrayal of Jesus.

³²⁴ Chairman, "Pastoral Letter, 2000," p. 5; cf, *Jesu Krist Jayanti* 2000, Chennai; Stanislaus, "Empowering the Oppressed in Society," 275.

³²⁵ Chairman, "CBCI Statement, 2002," p. 4, *The Church in Dialogue*, Jalandar; Stanislaus, "Empowering the Oppressed in Society," 276.

³²⁶ Stanislaus, "Empowering the Oppressed in Society," 289.

5.4.1 Conscientising People for Creative Catholic Action in Civic Life

The Catholic action movement is very effective in conscientising the people against various social evils. Today, its service has also been extended to many parts of India. The National Seminar of “Church in India” (1969) already mentioned earlier in this dissertation observed:

it is high time that laymen and laywomen took to social work and service in large numbers. Vincent de Paul Societies must go beyond the Catholic poor. Hospital visiting must attract more and more laymen. Catholic schools and colleges must allow their classrooms to be used by Catholic laymen and women who would undertake teaching in adult literacy classes in towns and villages. In the rural parts, community development projects offer Catholic priests and Catholic leaders in villages opportunities for social work and service.... There is all the less excuse for Catholics to lag behind their fellow citizens in the use of these social service organisation promoted by government as the finances for these organisations are supplied by government.³²⁷

This catholic action moment inspired even the poor and the exploited to work against the exploitation. It is a floor for the laity to empower members of the society to be their own. It also looks after the social needs of the society members. The Christian laity remain the source of inspiration and moral support.

5.4.2 Conscientising for better Participation in Politics in the National Building Process

The pastoral constitution on the Church in the modern world, *Gaudium et Spes*, included Christians with highly responsible positions (at national and international level) in political life and civil institutions, in industry and trade unions as well as in academic, scientific and artistic fields. They contributed valuable reflection on matters treated in the second part of the pastoral constitution (marriage and family, education and culture, work and economics, political life and human rights, peace and collaboration between peoples) as well as on concrete possibilities of making a Christian’s voice heard in these fields.

Gaudium et Spes affirms that party politics is the realm of the laity (GS 43). It is reconfirmed by the bishops in the final documents in Puebla.³²⁸ Furthermore, the bishops during the Puebla meeting affirm that the religious should encourage the laity in every way by taking active participation in politics.³²⁹ In the final documents of the

³²⁷ Gracias, "Orientation Papers," 131.

³²⁸ John Eagleson, ed., *Puebla and Beyond* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Book, 1980), 196.

³²⁹ Eagleson, ed., *Puebla and Beyond*, 196.

Puebla, the bishops affirm that “the Church’s presence in the political arena flows from the very core of the Christian faith.”³³⁰

Jacob Kavunkal claims that *Gaudium et Spes* offers a challenging vision on the human person irrespective of race, gender, religion, etc and expresses the relationship of Christians with the rest of humanity.³³¹ The Church is placed at the service of the human family as opposed to projecting itself as the perfect society standing against the human family. He claims that through the document *Gaudium et Spes* the Council says that the mission of the Church is not a political one or of the economic order, but a religious one, based on the experience of Christ.³³²

However, Mahatma Gandhi, the father of free India, has a different understanding of religion. He opines that:

to see the universal and all pervading spirit of truth face to face one must be able to love the meanest of creation as oneself. And a man who aspires after that cannot afford to keep out of any field of life. That is why my devotion to truth has drawn me into the field of politics; and I can say without the slightest hesitation and yet in all humility that those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means.³³³

It expresses Gandhi’s understanding of Catholicism in relation to Jesus. No wonder Gandhi summed up expressly: “I love Christ but not Christians.” However, the Council document concluded by saying: “this religious mission has repercussions in the building up of the temporal order.”³³⁴ Jacob Kavunkal claims that through the document *Gaudium et Spes* the fathers of the Council wished to communicate that “Christians should not see themselves primarily as members of a separate religion, but as the community of the followers of Jesus Christ, gripped by a sense of journeying with others, with a radical lifestyle known for its love, compassion and all inclusiveness. It has to become “the little flock” within cultures, transforming them from within.”³³⁵

The Constitution of India (Article 14) provides privileges to her citizens to elect democratically their own representatives to the legislatures of the nation.³³⁶ Christians

³³⁰ Eagleson, ed., *Puebla and Beyond*, 195.

³³¹ Kavunkal, “*Gaudium et Spes* and the Mission of Transforming Cultures,” 395.

³³² Kavunkal, “*Gaudium et Spes* and the Mission of Transforming Cultures,” 396, 397.

³³³ M. A. Amaladoss, “Gandhian Spirituality,” *Clergy Monthly* 33 (1969): 201; cf. Abeyasingha, “What Has the Ecclesiology of Communion of Vatican II Meant for India.” 297.

³³⁴ Kavunkal, “*Gaudium et Spes* and the Mission of Transforming Cultures,” 396.

³³⁵ Kavunkal, “*Gaudium et Spes* and the Mission of Transforming Cultures,” 396, 397.

³³⁶ De, *The Constitution of India*, 213.

are called to take active role in the election process in regards to electing representatives to govern the nation. They should stand up against corrupt practices³³⁷ that are prevailing in the processes of the existing general elections.³³⁸ The lay leaders must guide the poor and ignorant voters in regards to the proper use of the vote. It is not only the Christians that take part in exercising their franchise, but also that they come forward as candidates for election at all levels.

Theologian Boff believes that politics has to deal with the Kingdom of God where justice is to be established. Furthermore, he believes that involvement in the political process of a country would mean sharing the struggle of people for the justice for all.³³⁹ Over 50% of the Indian people are illiterate and are not competent to judge the merits of the policies and programmes of the political parties and candidates. Often they cast their votes not out of political convictions but on considerations of caste, community, language, region or money.³⁴⁰ Christians are called to educate the people the importance of choosing right candidate to rule the country.³⁴¹ Organising a Christian union at the regional and all-India level will help to educate and develop the creation of the right civic and political consciousness among the members of the community as well as guidance and counselling.³⁴²

Jacob Kavunkal claims that a real concern and genuine care for the weak, the poor, and the oppressed cannot be achieved fully without being associated with the political life. The empowerment of the weak and dispossessed cannot be attained without political collaboration. Therefore, to some extent, the Church and the laity need to follow the examples shown by Ghandhiji.³⁴³ He encourages or welcomes the laity to

³³⁷ Cardinal Valerian Gracias Chair of the Organizing Committee, "Orientation Papers," in *All India Seminar on the Church in India Today Bangalore, May 15-25, 1969* (New Delhi: The Organizing Committee, CBCI Centre, 1969), 128; cf. The participants of the "All India seminar on the Church in India Today" organised in Bangalore from the 15th to 25th of the May 1969 observed that "elections in India, on account of the poverty, the illiteracy, the social dependence of the majority of the voters on the higher castes, have acquired an evil reputation. Voters are bought and sold. Money is freely used by certain political parties, with a plentiful supply of it, to influence the course of elections. The ruling caste or castes in the village or district in the electoral constituency try to influence, with threats or with inducements, the poorer class of voters to vote for their candidates. Landlords browbeat their tenants or their labourers to vote for them or their side. Against all these evil and corrupting influences Catholic voters must set their faces."

³³⁸ Gracias, "Orientation Papers," 128.

³³⁹ Leonardo Boff, *Church Charism & Power* (London: SCM Press, 1985), 26.

³⁴⁰ Gracias, "Orientation Papers," 339.

³⁴¹ Ratzinger, "Doctrinal Note on Some Questions Regarding the Participation of Catholics in Political Life," 541, 542.

³⁴² Gracias, "Orientation Papers," 343.

³⁴³ Kavunkal, "*Gaudium et Spes* and the Mission of Transforming Cultures," 398.

play an active role in the field of politics, even though today the Indian civil politicians are considered to be influenced by corruption and exploitation of the poor by the rich in the society.

5.5 SHARING LITURGICAL RESPONSIBILITIES AND SHARING THE ROLE OF A SPIRITUAL ANIMATOR

It is understood that officiating at the liturgical celebration is the prerogative of the ministerial priest. However, by affirming their baptismal priesthood the laity share the ministerial priesthood of the clergy in the celebration of the liturgy.³⁴⁴ It is noteworthy that there is a tendency to understand that the laity are deprived of something in the Church because they are not ordained.³⁴⁵ The priesthood of the laity is publicly consecrated to God in the religious life.³⁴⁶ It may be the laity themselves who are the celebrants of the liturgy by actively participating in the liturgy. In other words, by highlighting the idea of the common priesthood of the laity, Klostermann affirms that the ministerial priest is the main celebrant and all the baptised faithful who participate in the liturgy are co-celebrants.³⁴⁷ The laity are called to take part in the celebration of the Eucharist with full devotion and sincerity.³⁴⁸ It is through the celebration of the Eucharist that the faith of the community is publicly and solemnly proclaimed and internally and communally strengthened.³⁴⁹ Every member, while taking part in the celebration of the Eucharist in the community, expresses externally that the Church as one body bears witness to the faith experience of the community.³⁵⁰ The liturgy will not be a celebration of life and faith unless the experience of the community is open

³⁴⁴ Klostermann, "Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity," 244.

³⁴⁵ Moeller, "History of *Lumen Gentium's* Structure and Ideas," 137.

³⁴⁶ Moeller, "History of *Lumen Gentium's* Structure and Ideas," 137. The question raised by the nonclerical, male religious orders is very important. Integration of Eastern tradition on this point—according to which the monk is consecrated to God in an evangelical perspective that does not imply the priesthood—may clarify the question. To simplify it one could say that the West gradually "ecclesiasticized" nearly all forms of religious life in such way that a nonordained religious seems to be an exception difficult to place. On the other hand, the Orient gradually "monasticized" a series of ecclesial institutions, even the priesthood, since in Orthodoxy the bishop must be a monk; in this situation it is the addition of the priesthood to the monastic life that causes the problem. By speaking of "religious" in a context that goes beyond the "tripartite" division, the Constitution helps us to achieve a doctrine of "monastic," or "religious" life as being a structure in the Church, independently of whether or not a religious is a priest. 150; cf. footnote no. 71.

³⁴⁷ Klostermann, "Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity," 329.

³⁴⁸ John Macquarrie, *The Faith of the People of God* (London: SCM, 1972), 81.

³⁴⁹ Ferdinand Klostermann, ed., *The Laity*, ed. Herbert Vorgrimler, *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, vol. 1 (New York: Burns and Oates, 1967), 244.

³⁵⁰ Reiner Kaczynski, "Toward the Reform of the Liturgy," in *History of Vatican II*, ed. Giuseppe Alberigo (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 230.

to the world.³⁵¹ The celebration of the Eucharist is a symbolic expression of the actual life, which is to be lived in the society by the laity. The celebration of the Eucharist is the source and summit of all evangelization of the laity (PO 5).

Lindbeck argues that the liturgical unification is abandoned. It is replaced by the constant adaptation to the changing historical and cultural situations of the society. Furthermore, he adds:

the Church as the body of Christ is understood not as the Kingdom itself but as a sign pointing towards the Kingdom. Its worship and sacraments are not the sole or primary means of God's redemptive action, but rather the way men and women become members of that band of witnesses who consciously rejoice in the glorious news of where the universe is heading. Thus liturgy is summit and source, not of the grace-filled life in general but of the Christian testimony to grace.³⁵²

The participation in the liturgy binds everyone as one body of Christ. The active participation in the liturgy strengthens its members with enthusiasm and commitment and it empowers them to fulfil the mission of Christ.³⁵³ The fathers of the Second Vatican Council initiated the necessary changes for the liturgy. Further, they believed that "the twentieth century will be the century of the Church."³⁵⁴

It is very clear that Yves Congar spoke of the active participation of the laity in the Eucharist. He said: "all faithful are celebrants in the worship of the ecclesial community, but the hierarchical priest is the normal minister, not in the sense of minister of Christ, but of the Church."³⁵⁵ It is noteworthy that in the meeting held in October 1966 in India, the bishops of the Catholic Bishops Conference of India, made "the pastoral policy of the Church in India to place the liturgical and catechetical apostolate at the very centre of its activities, giving them prime importance in its cares and pre-occupations."³⁵⁶

There are various ways by which the laity can take active role in the liturgical service of the Church which is the symbol of unity, communion and faith experience which empowers all believers for service in the society. The liturgical celebrations are the

³⁵¹ Mariasusai Dhavamony, *Christian Theology of Inculturation* (Roma: Pontificia Universita Gregoriana, 1997), 113.

³⁵² Lindbeck, *The Future of Roman Catholic Theology: Vatican II-Catalyst for Change*, 59.

³⁵³ Klostermann, "Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity," 336.

³⁵⁴ Moeller, "History of Lumen Gentium's Structure and Ideas," 123.

³⁵⁵ Congar, *Lay People in the Church*, 209.

³⁵⁶ D.S. Amalorpavadass, *Post-Vatican Liturgical Renewal in India* (Bangalore: National Biblical Catechetical and Liturgical Centre, 1968), 5.

centre of every Christian community.³⁵⁷ The members receive graces empowering them for actively involving in the service (*diakonia*) of the Christian Community as well as in the civic society wherein they live and share the destiny of their fellow beings.

Theologian Edward Schillebeeckx explains that “liturgical celebrations are more the obvious *kairoi*, privileged moments, in the forming of groups and communities, and no longer to be understood as an obligation to fulfil; in fact they are spontaneous and intrinsically necessary celebrations of the Lord’s day, the day of men and women setting themselves free in the Lord.”³⁵⁸ Hence, all liturgical celebrations are divided into two main parts: breaking of the Word and breaking of the Bread. Both these parts are equally important for every liturgical celebration. During the breaking of the Word, the Gospel is read meaningfully and explained to the people with its meaning and implications in the context of the Christian community. The faithful are nourished by the strength of the Word. By the breaking of the bread, the members are being nourished by the Body and Blood of Christ. By actively taking part in the breaking of the Body and Blood, every baptised person is strengthened to be a courageous witness of faith in Christ as to be able to share his/her faith by means of loving service to his/her fellow human beings, both Christians and others.

The lay leaders are responsible in organising the liturgy meaningfully. The liturgy can be further divided into different parts for the better participation of the laity. They are the entrance rite, proclamation of the Word, Prayer of the faithful, Eucharistic prayers, Communion service and the dismissal or concluding service. The minister of liturgy is responsible for coordinating the people with different responsibilities in these parts of the liturgy. The members who are responsible for conducting various parts of the liturgy are invited to prepare in advance according to the Gospel message of the day and the needs of the community.

There should not be any distinction on the basis of gender regarding taking up the responsibilities in the active participation of the liturgy.³⁵⁹ The Second Vatican Council insists that “each person who has an office to perform, should carry out all and only those parts which pertain to his office by the nature of the rite and the norms

³⁵⁷ Edward Schillebeeckx, *Ministry: Leadership in the Community of Jesus Christ* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1981), 78.

³⁵⁸ Schillebeeckx, *Ministry: Leadership in the Community of Jesus Christ*, 137.

³⁵⁹ Reiner Kaczynski, "Toward the Reform of the Liturgy," in *History of Vatican II*, ed. Giuseppe Alberigo (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 231.

of the liturgy.”³⁶⁰ In order for the liturgy to be meaningful, every participant has to play an active role; further, one has to play only the role assigned to them. The celebration of the liturgy together with the members of the Christian community binds everyone together as the members of one family. In the Eucharistic celebration, the members remain without any distinction of caste or gender, colour or any other social stigmas. This is the place where the powerful and powerless in the society come together to share love, peace and forgiveness and realise reconciliation with one another. They have only one identity, that is, they are all brothers and sisters of one risen Lord.

5.5.1 As Catechists in the Rural Community

The active participation of the liturgy further leads to taking care of the faithful who are far out in the villages. This apostolate of laity lead to the work of a catechist, which make the laity to be the leaders of the basic Christian community. Speaking about the need for catechists Pope John Paul II said: “they are to speak at the human level, that is, it should be loving, compassionate and understanding.”³⁶¹ Thus, the laity are entrusted with this apostolate mainly in the rural areas in central India. The catechists, especially trained one or more laity representatives, can be in-charge of the village communities. They are directly responsible for the spiritual needs of the faithful in the villages.³⁶² Sometimes they also work as intermediary between the parish Church and the village Church. The responsibility of the catechist is to inform the day-to-day activities of the village Church to the parish priest or the responsible person in the main Church.

They are to communicate to the faithful the ongoing programmes of the parish Church. The catechists are responsible for selecting and recommending members from the community to take part various training programmes.³⁶³ They are to recruit dedicated and committed members for various activities of the parish Church. The catechists are to know in detail every individual as well as the names of the families of the villages. In the absence of the priest, the catechist also organises the communion service for the faithful in the Christian community.

³⁶⁰ Kaczynski, "Toward the Reform of the Liturgy," 231, 232.

³⁶¹ John Paul II, "Dimensions of Catechesis," *Origins* 8, no. 39 (1979): 609.

³⁶² Amalorpavadass, "Statement of Recommendations by the Pastoral Consultation on Ministries in the Church," 700.

³⁶³ Michael J. Byron, "A Biblical Model for Catechists," *Origins* 33, no. 3 (2003): 37.

5.5.2 As Animators of Prayer

The Church is understood as the place where the faithful gather to pray and worship the Lord.³⁶⁴ The Church described in the New Testament as 'the people of God' (1 Pet 2:10) is also called 'the temple of God's Spirit' (1 Cor 3: 16; 2 Cor 6: 16). In the parishes as well as among Christian communities in the villages, periodical prayer services are organised. These prayers are conducted under the able guidance of the trained laity. It is the responsibility of lay animators to get different people to conduct various prayers during the prayer sessions. These lay animators in advance make aware of the responsibility of every individual in the Christian community.³⁶⁵ They will guide them in formulating such prayers in advance.

The lay leader's function is that of a facilitator in the group. They plan in advance the theme of the prayer and the prayer of intentions that are to be brought out by the participants during the prayer sessions. These animators will be competent to understand the needs of the community in preparing and assigning various prayers to the members. This animation of prayer can be more appropriate when it is conducted in a small community. Therefore, prayer sessions are organised in a small Christian community.³⁶⁶ Generally these groups are small in numbers. Further, the members will have a very close contact with the other members of the group.³⁶⁷

These forms of small Christian communities are also meant to fulfil various social responsibilities of the Church. They have become very effective in working not for the animation of the prayer alone, but also for the social action. They are organised to get things done for the good of the society. They also work against the injustice done to the individual by various exploited groups or individuals.

Evangelista Vilanova explains that laity, along with their apostolate, remain the mystical body of Christ. She explains that "lay apostolate was thus understood as a response to the Christian requirement of obedience to the commandment of charity, an obedience to which all the members of the body are called. The lay apostolate, which is at once a right and duty, has its origin in the sacraments of baptism and

³⁶⁴ Kaczynski, "Toward the Reform of the Liturgy," 231.

³⁶⁵ Amalorpavadas, "Statement of Recommendations by the Pastoral Consultation on Ministries in the Church," 700.

³⁶⁶ Jacques Dupuis, "Lay People in Church and World," 371.

³⁶⁷ Kanjamala, "Emerging Mission Trends in India," 466.

confirmation and is nourished by the Eucharist.”³⁶⁸ Thus, the active participation of the laity in the affairs of the Church are indispensable.

5.5.3 As Evangelists Among the Ones Who have Lost Hope in Life

Being an evangelist is one of the important apostolates for the laity in the Church. It helps the laity in spreading the Gospel message to everyone. Schillebeeckx claims that the prime responsibility of every baptised person is to be an evangelist. He/she needs to preach the message that he/she is convinced of.³⁶⁹ He/she is to be prepared to give an account of hope that is in them, as we read “always be prepared to make a defence to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you. Yet do it with gentleness and reverence” (1Peter 3:15). This convinces us that every baptised person has the responsibility to be an evangelizer in sharing his/her faith to others, especially to those who have lost their hope in life.

Every Christian first needs to seek the Kingdom of God and its righteousness in everything. Thus, he/she is called to work for the upliftment of the people. He/she has to work to fulfil the demands of the Kingdom.³⁷⁰ Thus, the lay people as evangelizers are called to speak to others the love of Christ which he/she experiences as a Christian.³⁷¹ It is a challenging responsibility as many of the states in India have prohibited the preaching of Christ and baptising people publicly. Only a convinced, committed, and God fearing Christian can fulfil this responsibility in the Indian Church today.³⁷² The Christian laity in central India, living in the midst of the people who are non-Christians, will be better evangelizers by fulfilling their daily responsibilities as Christians.

5.6 CONSCIENTISING LAITY TO SHARE THE MANAGEMENT OF CHURCH AFFAIRS

The laity have to be motivated to be responsible managers of the temporalities and related administrative services of the Church. The Church is a community of human beings having some organisational and service providing operational systems. Everything of such a socially organised body needs not to be handled and managed by the clerics. All community service activities can be effectively shared and managed for the common good and orderly functioning of the community. Hence, a

³⁶⁸ Vilanova, "The Intercession," 388.

³⁶⁹ Avery Dulles, *The Priestly Office* (New York: Paulist Press, 1997), 29.

³⁷⁰ Schillebeeckx, *Ministry: Leadership in the Community of Jesus Christ*, 137.

³⁷¹ Amalorpavadass, "Statement of Recommendations by the Pastoral Consultation on Ministries in the Church," 700.

³⁷² George M. Anathil, *Paths of Mission in India Today: Statement of the National Consultation on Mission 4-9 January, 1994* (Pune: Ishvani Kendra, 1994), 14.

considerable amount of community service-responsibilities could be entrusted to the lay leaders who are prudent and competent to do such services, which often need managerial expertise and honest accountability, especially in financial matters. Hence, this is another witnessing activity of the laity in the Church for which they have to be taken into confidence by the clergy. They are to be motivated and even trained as to how to take responsible shares of such services of the community in a witnessing way.

5.6.1 The Place of Laity in the Diocesan Synod/ Eparchial Assembly

The code of Canon law, irrespective of Churches of east and west, permits the laity to be an active member in every aspect of the decision making in the Church. Canon (CIC) 228 §2 explains: "Lay persons who excel in necessary knowledge, prudence and integrity are qualified to assist the pastors of the Church as experts and advisors in councils according to the norm of law." The parallel canon in the eastern Code (CCEO) is more explicit and forcefully states that "lay persons who excel in the necessary knowledge, experience and integrity, should be heard as experts or consultants by ecclesiastical authority, whether individually or as members of various councils and assemblies, whether parochial, eparchial or patriarchal" CIC.408, § 1. The purpose of a diocesan synod is to assist the bishop to fulfil the pastoral needs of the people of God. The body of the synod is consultative, and therefore, the "bishop remains free to accept or not the recommendations made by the members of the synod."³⁷³ John Paul II, through his apostolic exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, emphasised these structures explained by the Canon saying that the laity who were actively involved "could contribute to Church communion and to the mission of the particular Church, both in its own surroundings and in relation to the other particular Churches of the ecclesiastical province or Episcopal conference" (CFL 25).³⁷⁴ Thus, the Pope supported the active role of the laity in the synods of the dioceses.

On 19th March 1997, the Congregation for the Bishops and for the Evangelization of the People, the competent authorities for what pertains the exercise of Episcopal ministry in the Latin Church, jointly issued an instruction on diocesan synods. It contains several directives and procedures to foster a proper celebration of the diocesan synods. CIC. 460 explains that the 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 for the good of the whole diocesan community."

³⁷³ Bernardin Gantin, "Instruction on Diocesan Synods," *L'Osservatore Romano*, 23 Nov. 1997, 5.

³⁷⁴ John Paul II, "Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*," *Origins* 18, no. 35 (1989): 573.

The prologue of the instruction on diocesan synods states that “diocesan synods, always regarded as important instruments in effecting conciliar renewal, have been or are about to be celebrated in a growing number of dioceses especially since promulgation of the Code of Canon Law.... In recent times it is noted that expressions of diocesan communion have also adopted other forms, sometimes described as ‘diocesan assemblies.’”³⁷⁵ It is interesting to note that such assemblies³⁷⁶ often include elements of diocesan synod, they do, however, lack a precise canonical character. To assure the validity of the lay persons contribution, the fathers of the Congregation for Bishops - Congregation for the Evangelization of People state that “the lay faithful taking part in the synod should be chosen from amongst those distinguished by their ‘firm faith, good morals and prudence’ (*CIC* 512 §3). It is an indispensable requisite that these members of the lay faithful be in a canonically regular situation in order to take part in the Synod.”³⁷⁷ These observations are true as far as India is concerned. However, there are synods that exist in many dioceses where there is no representation of the laity.

The documents of the Second Vatican Council, especially the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*) and the Decree on the Apostolate of the laity (*Apostolicam Actuositatem*) give importance to the representation of the laity and state: “as sharers in the role of the Christ as Priest, the Prophet and the King, the laity have an active part to play in the life and activity of the Church. Their activity is so necessary within Church communities that without it the apostolate of the pastors is generally unable to achieve its full effectiveness” (*AA* 10). Thus, the synod provides the bishops to involve the priests, laity, and religious in the matters of the governance of the diocese. All these members co-operate with the bishop in fulfilling his responsibility of governing the people of God in their respective dioceses. This form of governance can be called in building up the Body of Christ (*CIC* 463, § 1, 2). Thus, the membership of the laity in the diocesan synod has become absolutely necessary. They have also an active role in the administration of the diocese as the people of God, responsible leaders in the Church.

5.6.2 The Role of the Laity in the Diocesan/Eparchial Finance Council

The proper management of the finance of the diocese can be done only by well-trained, dedicated individuals of the diocese. The management of the finance is very

³⁷⁵ Gantin, "Instruction on Diocesan Synods," 5.

³⁷⁶ The usage of the word "assembly" by CCEO ("eparchial assembly," "patriarchal assembly") should not be misunderstood here.

³⁷⁷ Gantin, "Instruction on Diocesan Synods," 5.

sensitive and it calls for extra care. Therefore, Canon *CIC* 492, 493; and *CCEO* 263 explain very clearly the need for finance council in the diocese. It is to administer smoothly the finances of the diocese. It is essential to have in every diocese a body of the diocesan finance council (*DFC*) and an office of the diocesan financial administrator. These two bodies are very necessary in every diocese in accordance with the Canon *CIC* 127; and *CCEO* 934. The Canon (*CIC*) 492 § 1 permits the diocesan bishop to freely choose at least three laity to become members of the diocesan finance council. The laity very often are experts in managing finances. In addition, they know various methods that are used by the civil society. This selection of the laity to the finance council is in accordance with the document of Second Vatican Council “To the laity belong properly, though not exclusively, secular offices and activities...” (*GS* 43). Thus, in the finance council, laity are also called to share in its responsibilities.

5.6.3 The Role of the Laity in the Diocesan/Eparchial Pastoral Council

The diocesan pastoral council is where the pastoral needs of the dioceses are taken care of. *CIC* 511-514 and *CCEO* 272-275 advise every diocese to institute a pastoral council. In accordance to this teaching of the Canon, the CBCI commission for the laity circulated in 1984 a guidebook on pastoral councils and strongly recommended the establishment of these bodies in every diocese.³⁷⁸

The guideline strongly recommended the members of the DPC are to be selected from all categories of the Christian faithful in the diocese. They are to be in full communion with the Church. They are to be in accordance with the Canon (*CIC* 512 § 3) and are to be outstanding in firm faith, good morals, and prudence. The congregation for the clergy in its circular letter published in 1973 stressed that “the majority (*perché la comunità diocesana è costituita in massima parte dai fedeli laici*) of the members should be lay persons.”³⁷⁹

The members of the CBCI took it for granted that these bodies were instituted in every diocese in India and adequate training measures were taken for its smooth functioning. However, in 2000, Sebasti Raj made a study entitled “the Impact of Vatican II on the Church in India” which was published in the book entitled “National Assembly of the Church in India, Jesu Krist Jayanti 2000.” His findings are

³⁷⁸ CBCI Commission for the Laity, *Pastoral Council in Dioceses and Parishes* (New Delhi: CBCI Centre, 1984), 84.

³⁷⁹ Congregation for the Clergy, *Omnes Christifideles* (Rome: Congregation for the Clergy, 1973), no. 7.

noteworthy: "only a limited number of dioceses have there DPCs, and even where these exist, a large number of people and even some priests and religious are not aware of their existence. The functioning of the DPCs is satisfactory only to a limited extent or only in some diocese."³⁸⁰ The diocesan pastoral council deals with the matter concerning pastoral works in the diocese. After studying these under the authority of the bishop, the council may propose practical conclusions. These instructions are not followed by many dioceses in India, especially in central India. However, it is noteworthy that the dioceses of Tamilnadu have insisted that there should be at least fifty percent of the laity participation in the diocesan pastoral council.³⁸¹

It is noteworthy that there are various preliminary consultations organised among priest's diocesan counsellors and consulters regarding the appointment of a pastor to the parish. However, K. T. Sebastian, as a lay person and a member of the Indian theological association, observes that in spite of all these instructions and guidance given by the documents of Second Vatican Council and various research seminars organised locally, still "the laity is denied any role in the choice of their pastors."³⁸² A wider consultation in matters of various appointments will help the better functioning of the ministries in the Church. We shall discuss further the role of laity at the parish administrative level.

5.6.4 The Role of the Laity in the Parish Pastoral Council

In the parishes of every diocese, it is understood to have a parish pastoral council. The *CIC* 536 and *CCEO* 295 give instruction that the laity must have an active role in the parish pastoral council (PPC). The parish pastoral council looks after the needs of the parish at the local level. In some dioceses, they are called parish councils. The members of this pastoral council are elected by the local community under the leadership of the pastor. They are responsible for discerning the needs of the parish.³⁸³ The formation of this body at the diocesan, regional, and national level has become the pastoral priority of the Church in central India. In the bishop's meeting held in Trivandrum the members of the CBCI affirmed:

³⁸⁰ Sebastia Raj, "The Impact of Vatican II on the Church in India," in *National Assembly of the Church in India*, ed. Jesu Krist Jeyanti 2000 (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2000), 63.

³⁸¹ Tamil Nadu Regional Commission for the Laity, *Participatory Structures in the Local Church* (Trichy: Diocesan Commissions, 1995), 9.

³⁸² K. T. Sebastian, "The Asian Laity's Expectation from the Synod on the Laity," *Vidyajyoti* 51, no. 8 (1987): 353.

³⁸³ William J. Rademacher, *Lay Ministries: A Theological, Spiritual, and Pastoral Handbook* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1991), 101.

we reflected on the need for greater lay participation in the Church through parish pastoral councils, basic Christian and human communities, lay ministries and finance committees. In the process we saw that the pastoral role of parish council needs greater emphasis. Parish councillors must be changed to care for people (Mt 4:18-25) and to build up the communities in their constituencies. Training in team ministry and other related skills are very necessary for councillors to function effectively. ... Parish councillors are best chosen from among the animators of small Christian communities. We reaffirm our resolution made as a conference in Pune 1992, to develop this form of Church life all over the country.³⁸⁴

The bishop's conference of India felt the need for having a parish council in every parish. They also felt the need for organising training for these members of the parish council.

The bishop's counsel also identified the suitable place, where these training could be organised initially. The counsel found National Biblical Catechetical Liturgical Centre (NBCLC) situated in Bangalore as an ideal place to organise such programmes for the laity. The training for the members of the parish council was organised in two phases in NBCLC in 2000. The first phase of the training was given to those members who were newly elected. The second phase of the training was given to those members who already had some experience as the members of the parish council and those who had undergone the first phase of the training. Looking for various states from where the members participated in various training programmes organised in NBCLC, Karambai S. Sebastian found that in 2000 the members who attended the first phase of the trainings were from central India. Whereas the members attending the training in the second phase were from southern India.³⁸⁵ This observation made by Sebastian confirms that the Churches in central India are still in the process of forming and giving training to the laity for the parish council members.

5.6.5 The Place of the Laity in the Parish Finance Council

As we have seen above, the formation of finance council was found necessary in every diocese. In the same manner, in every parish the formation of the finance council became a felt need too. As the diocesan finance council is obligatory for the diocese, the parish finance council is also obligatory for the parish. The *CIC* 537 promulgates to establish the parish finance council (PFC). The CBCI meeting held in Trivandrum in 1996 affirms that "Parish finance committees need to be constituted in

³⁸⁴ Augustine Kanjamala, *Statement on Lay Participation* (Trivandrum: CBCI Commissions, 1996), 19.

³⁸⁵ Karambai S. Sebastian, "Participation of the Laity in the Decision Making Structures of the Local Church," *Vidyajyoti* 66 (2002): 59.

parishes and through their effective functioning ensure that our stewardship of material goods becomes more and more transparent, accountable and detached (Mt 6:24).”³⁸⁶ Regarding the membership, the Canon (CIC 537) clearly states that “Christian faithful are to be selected according to universal law and norms issued by the diocesan bishop.” The bishops in India recommend a similar finance council including the lay participation in every institution of the parishes and dioceses.

However, sometimes all these bodies remain the only guidelines in the records. Therefore, Sebasti Raj concludes: “while the lay people seem to have better opportunities to express their views on matters related to the spiritual and pastoral aspects, they have less to say and opportunities to express their views or play any role in matters related to institutions where there is power and money.”³⁸⁷ Wilfred Felix observes that laity have not received or been entrusted with the adequate responsibilities in the Church.³⁸⁸ This is very much true in the context of central Indian parishes.

CONCLUSION

India has been a cradle of many world religions and there existed a philosophical system for everyone to follow. India had even witnessed a great civilisation which attracted many great world conquerors like Alexander. The Christian missionaries who came to India had to encounter a great religious value system that prevailed in the Indian society. Even today people are moved by the ancient Indian spirituality and philosophical systems of India.

The study of Indian spirituality and philosophical systems prove that the *Logos* was working in the minds of many Indian sages even before the Incarnation of Jesus, the Son of God. The Spirit was preparing a great nation to accept the incarnation of the *Logos* that would take place in its appropriate time. The hospitality, tolerance and love for nature that Indians are capable of were well appreciated and welcomed by people from every corner of the world.

We have seen that the approach and methodology brought by foreign missionaries were not all commendable. Because in one way or another they tried to suppress the great value systems predominant in the Indian society. On the one hand, the foreign missionaries to some extent failed to understand the strong traditional religious and

³⁸⁶ Kanjamala, *Statement on Lay Participation*, 20.

³⁸⁷ Raj, "The Impact of Vatican II on the Church in India," 63.

³⁸⁸ Wilfred Felix, "Three Nodal Points in the Theology of the Laity Today," *Vidyajyoti* 50, no. 10 (1986): 512.

philosophical systems that prevailed in the minds of the sages of India. On the other hand, the Indian people gradually observed the emergence of new western religious systems and thoughts as a threat to the Indian society. Thus, they labelled them as colonisers of the west who had come to India to exploit and rob the great riches prevailing in India.

Today the life of a Christian has become more challenging as he/she is watched suspiciously by the followers of other religions in India. As the missionaries have succeeded in counter-witnessing the great life-giving values promulgated by Jesus, it has become all the more difficult for the peaceful co-existence of the Christians in India. Today, the Christian laity are called to be truly the leaven in the multi-religious society of India. They are called to be the light that removes the darkness by self-emptying service to all people. The Christian laity are called to be doers of the Word rather than just preachers of the Word. This responsibility has become all the more difficult as the society is heading towards more materialistic affairs in its blind imitation of the western cultural values, seeking pleasures and luxuries in life even at the cost of justice due to the poor. Because of this wave of the west under the new banners of market economy and globalisation the people are losing their own moral values of meaningful living. We have seen many of the Indian thinkers blaming to some extent Christians as those who were responsible for the destruction of these life-giving value systems in the Indian society.

Because of all this today the evangelization work has become more challenging and demanding than fifty years ago. First and foremost, the Christian laity have to rewrite from the minds of the people the bitter experience that was created by the preachers of the Word during the colonial times. They have to respect the power of God that works in every human being, irrespective of their understanding of God and status in the society. They have a great task to be accomplished. They have to be open to the inspirations of the Spirit and lead a life that is expected from them as authentic witnesses of the teachings of Christ. A dialogue of life, dialogue of action, a dialogue of theological interpretation, as well as dialogue of interreligious spiritual experience are very much expected from every Christian. As the great spirituality of India existed in India even before the incarnation of the Word in Bethlehem, the Christians have to be patient to discern the work of the Spirit. Christians of India have to keep in mind that they are called to be the servants of the Word of God and not the masters of it. Their mission is to remain servants empowering others and giving inspiration to others to fight against the injustice done to them by the rich and the colonisers.

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1. Now let me come to some of the general inferences from my survey of the historical, socio-cultural, and religiously pluralistic situation of the central India region which is the context of this research study which is geared towards developing a pastorally relevant theology of evangelization with specific application to the role of the Christian laity.
2. The present Christian communities in central India trace their origin to three main missionary tracts: (1) The Christians who were converted by the European missionaries who followed the missionary explorations of the Portuguese of the 16th century, and these Christians follow the Latin Rite liturgy and Canonical regulations in their Church life; (2) The Christians who followed the eastern rites like the Catholic Syrian Christians who migrated from the St. Thomas Apostolic Church of Kerala both as missionaries and as immigrants for job opportunities, and (3) the local Christians who were converted by the local missionaries of the Latin Christian local Churches as well as by the Oriental Catholic missionaries from South India. The Christian laity of these mixed inter-ritual Christian Communities were not entrusted with any responsibilities of their respective Churches either as lay-evangelizers or as responsible partners in the administration of the various offices of the Churches.
3. Though the Second Vatican Council highlighted the role of the Christian laity in relation to the great ministry of evangelization, the local Churches in central India have not yet implemented much of directives and insights of the teachings of the Council. The laity are not sufficiently conscientized regarding their significant responsibilities together with their pastors and the priests in the Church regarding their common mission of evangelization. However, their specific roles as evangelizers become more significant as they live in the midst of a multireligious local community and share their common existential problems and struggles. Their life becomes more demanding and challenging.
4. Christians are often persecuted by the fundamentalist groups of the Hindu majority in central India. There are a number of religious militant groups which are aggressive and hard to live with and even enter into any meaningful dialogue. It is in such contexts the teaching of Christ encourages Christians to witness to their faith even in the midst of persecutions (Mk 10:30; I Cor 12:30). Therefore, they are called to face these challenges with courage and commitment to their faith. Therefore the Christians are called to set apart themselves in fulfilling their responsibilities on earth as an effective evangelizer even at the cost of their life. These are in brief some important inferences from the first chapter of my dissertation.

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5. In the *second* chapter an analysis of the mission of the laity according to the Conciliar and post-Conciliar documents is done. Pope John XXIII had visualised a two-fold goal to be realised by the Second Vatican Council. One of the two goals was addressed to the internal transformation (*ad intra*) of the structures of the Church, and the other was addressed to the wider opening (*ad extra*) of the Church's vision and mission to the contemporary world. In the second orientation the Pope anticipated a lot of appreciation for the dimensions of truth that exist even outside the visible structures of the Church.

6. During the Second Vatican Council Archbishop Leobard D'Souza of Nagpur, an important city in central India, made an important intervention stating that "the most difficult teaching to implement meaningfully is the role of the laity in the Church."¹ He felt the need for preparing the laity as well as the clergy to accept the changes proposed by the fathers of the Council. The Second Vatican Council made it very clear that the laity not only belong to the Church but they are the Church (*AAS* 38; *CL* 9; *CCC* 899). The priesthood of the laity is not to bring God to the world, but rather to bring the world to God. Every follower of Christ, no matter whether they were ordained clergy or laity, are members of the one people of God, the Church, conjoined into one communion of faith in Jesus Christ called upon to share the message of salvation in Christ to their fellow human beings all over the world, and thus bring the world friendly to accept Jesus as the one saviour of mankind.

7. Through the decree on the "Apostolate of Laity" (*Apostolicam Actuositatem*) the fathers of the Second Vatican Council opened up as well as widened new horizons of the apostolate of the laity. They have pointed out that only a person who has trained himself in a variety of human sciences can respond to the needs of the contemporary society anywhere in the world. Such areas of learning also include a thorough knowledge about Christ and his message to all human beings; and this is known in catechetical language as the "Christian Education in Christian faith and practice." Without such conscientization in Christian faith and morals and their roles of Christian witnessing in the secular world the Christian laity may not be committed to witness and thereby proclaim the salutary message of Christ effectively to their fellow human beings. The fathers of the Council also emphasised the importance of the work

¹ Nihal Abeyasingha, "Archbishop Leobard D' Souza," in *Voice from the Council*, ed. Michael R. Prendergast and M. D. Ridge (Portland: Pastoral Press, 2004), 116.

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of the Holy Spirit backing up the evangelization work of the faithful people. They are to be empowered and are to follow a new hierarchy of value systems in their society.

8. The purpose of the Council document *Gaudium et Spes* was primarily to transform the world into the values of the Gospel. The laity are called to be heralds within the secular world. A Christian who lives in the multi-religious and multi-cultural society, is responsible to develop a dialogical relationship with his/her fellow citizens of every faith. Thus he/she becomes an evangelizer. The document emphasised to give respect for every culture in the world in the processes of evangelization. The Church on earth is motivated by one aim: that God's reign may be realised and the salvation of the human race may take effect. The members of the Church are to proclaim the rights of humanity, human dignity and freedom for all God's people.

9. Through the document *Ad Gentes* the missionary character of the Church is emphasised. The whole missionary activity of the Church is a process of the manifestation or epiphany of God's will, and fulfilment of that will in the world and history. It is more of a co-operation of the Christian faithful to the divine plan to form all humanity into one people of God, one Body of Christ, one temple of the Holy Spirit. Thus the Church becomes the universal sacrament of salvation. It is understood that the Church exists with a mission as fire exists with its function of burning anything around it. *Ad Gentes* focuses on the Church's mission among the believers in other religions rather than on the people of de-Christianised lands who heard the Gospel but no longer believe or witness the faith in their life and actions.

10. We find the existence of different Churches and Rites in India. They all have their own legitimate place in the community. The unity of the Church is not uniformity. Unity is maintained and preserved amidst diversity. A divided Church can never preach Christ who came to gather and unite all humans into one people of God. Pope Paul VI believed that the proclamation of the Gospel must enter into dialogue with every culture and religion of the world. He believed that it would mean not just initiating some doctrine alone but also making them present in the world only through the medium of human persons and through his/her cultures. His encyclical *Populorum Progressio* insists that the Kingdom of God includes everyone irrespective of their nationality, caste, and colour. Through this encyclical he opened up a hope for the poor and for the people whom the rich considered outcast in the society. He insisted that every Christian should strive to achieve this goal in life and to establish a just society.

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11. Through the apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* Pope Paul VI emphasised the creative role of laity in the mission of evangelization of the Church. Thus evangelization would mean to have an interior change of the society, where the laity have a significant role to play. The Pope said if the mission of Jesus were to establish the Kingdom of God on earth, then even the Church must not be seen as an end in itself.

12. The conference held in Medellin was to take necessary measures to implement the decisions taken by the Second Vatican Council, especially the one regarding the emphasis given to the works on evangelization. The bishops of the Medellin conference have strongly urged the members of the Church to be united to work for the deliverance of the people under exploitation. The members of the Church can never remain just observers in those situations of the society. The Medellin conference found that evangelization and the work for justice go hand in hand. One even may supplement the other. We also find similar teachings in the Puebla documents. It also has acknowledged the need of lay participation in the Church. The conference of Puebla said that the Church has the responsibility to evangelize the world. The Church must act for the community to establish justice and peace and it must fight against all forms of domination, slavery, discrimination, and violence (*PD* 552). The conference of Puebla too acknowledged the need of lay participation in the field of evangelization. As the Christians are small minority in central India, there is a great need to strengthen the laity and to deepen their faith in working for the poor. The laity can never close their eyes before injustice done to the fellow citizens in the society.

13. Pope John Paul II took up the challenge of focusing on evangelization as his main mission. He also insisted that this age must be the age of the laity in the Church. He said that two actions are vital for evangelization: the condemnation of the society's evils and work against the injustice done to the poor. He said the works of laity in the field of evangelization in the society can also be considered as the Church's prophetic role. Pope John Paul II said the Church has a secular role to play in the world. All the members including clergy and the laity share in this secular dimension but in different ways. For the laity this secular world is where they are called by God to fulfil the mission of Jesus. Thus, it is in the world where the laity fulfil their Christian vocation. The laity are connected to the world by birth and by baptism they share in the priesthood of Christ. But he made the distinction: "just as the hierarchical priesthood

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is a priesthood different in kind and not just in degree from the priesthood of the laity, so the secularity of lay people is a secularity different in kind from that of clergy and religious.”² Thus, the mission of the laity are those directly involved in the Church as well as those directed to the world. He visualises some dangers that can threaten the stability of the Church with regard to evangelization. He particularly warns against the danger of the clericalization of the laity and the laicalization of the clergy in the Church. To safeguard the Church from these dangers, the Pope insisted on specifying the missions that are directly related to the laity and clergy.

14. The Catholic Bishop’s Conference of India was more concerned about the Church’s response to the challenges of contemporary society with special reference to the role of the laity. The bishops found poverty and violation of the human rights are the main challenges to the Indian Church, especially in regions of central India. Furthermore, they found an urgent need to generate more committed and dedicated lay leaders in the Indian Church. The training of the laity has become very necessary for them to live with a convincing faith in the society in the multi-religious context. They decided to use a certain percentage of the parish and diocesan funds to be set apart for such training programmes for the laity.

15. In this connection it was also observed that in India evangelization under the colonial powers was not a liberating experience of the values of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, but rather a strategy for establishing an oppressive western Christendom.³ Hence, the Church failed to communicate to the people under the colonial rules the sacrament of salvation or the message of liberation offered by God in Jesus Christ to all peoples. Therefore, the laity’s obligation to preach the message of salvation is even more compelling in those circumstances in which only through them the people can hear the Gospel and know Christ (*CIC* 225). In this situation they are called to preach through the witness of their lives.

16. The evangelization in the central Indian context has to be properly conceived and executed. The laity are called not primarily to work for the expansion of the western brand of Church structurally and organisationally. The laity’s role is not to be agents

² Paul Lakeland, *The Liberation of the Laity* (Lexington Avenue, New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc, 2003), 126.

³ Avery Dulles, "John Paul II and the New Evangelization-What Does It Mean," in *John Paul II and the New Evangelization*, ed. Ralph Martin (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1995), 26.

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of certain organizational work of Christian charities offered from abroad. But they are called to become liberating persons among the poor and oppressed.

17. The Church officially recognises the elements of truth in other religions as stated in the decree on *Nostra Aetate*. Therefore, the Church should encourage every Christian and every missionary to be a partner in dialogue with his or her neighbour who may be a believer in another religion through which he or she adores the same God, the creator and provider of all human beings. Today, our Christian preoccupation in theology is not primarily to identify the true religion that leads to God, but the right channels through which God reaches humans. Therefore, the Christians are called to be the right channels for the believers in other religions helping them to recognise and accept the authentic channels through which God can save humankind in and through Jesus, the One saviour of mankind.

18. The Christian laity are called to share the liberating work of the Church. The liberation of man is not of his soul alone but of the whole person, including his economic and socio-political freedom. This understanding of salvation motivates the Christian laity to work against the exploitation and discrimination of the people from the society, especially in central India. The Christian laity are called to give more importance to the Gospel values taught by Jesus. We see the people of central India, especially those of the lower classes and castes who had faced oppression down through the centuries. These oppressions were carried on by various groups that belong to the high caste, the colonisers, the ruling class, the landlords and the money lenders who charge excessive interests from the poor who have taken loans from them for their farming and other small businesses.

19. Passing on to the *third* chapter of my thesis, which is an exploration on the method and message of the evangelization of Jesus Christ, the first evangelizer of the prophetic mission-project of the “Kingdom of God.” According to my study of the content of the Mission of Jesus, as a programme of fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah 61:1-3 as restated as accomplished in Luke 4:18-19, consists in bringing the fruits and promises of the “Kingdom of God” to people. Hence “Good news proclamation” or evangelization does not engage in apologetic arguments but seeks to relate the person of Christ and his message of salvation and liberation to the people who are waiting to listen and receive Jesus and his message into their heart.

20. A liberative evangelization would mean a holistic proclamation and follow up of the message of the liberator Jesus. Christ wanted to show that God, his Father, wants

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to transform every human person and society into a more humane society through the realization of the values of God's reign among people, "bringing justice, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom.14:17). The liberative works of Christ were oriented towards the empowerment of the people who were denied justice and peace by the evil powers of the society.

21. Hence true evangelization is a sharing of God's gifts of justice, peace and joy among all human brethren by the Christians, who have it intensely in their communion with Jesus Christ. Furthermore this sharing of Christian experience of justice, peace and joy brings about a new way living in an atmosphere of freedom, equality, fraternity and mutually acceptable fellowship in community living in the context of a multi-religious social setup as that of central India, about which I am more concerned here. Thus the whole life of a Christian must be taken care of in the Spirit of Christ. When the Spirit of Christ comes he deals with the whole personality of the individual, heals him/her and perfects God's gifts in everyone.

22. The mission of Jesus was to proclaim the reign of God to humanity. It was Jesus who first introduced and practiced the love towards the poor, the oppressed, to the persecutors, even to the enemies. He wished that his disciples continue this liberating mission of loving everybody and serving them. For Jesus the "Kingdom of God" would mean a society based on justice, love, truth, peace, brotherhood and cooperation of all members of the society rooted in being honest to God and being equally honest to one's neighbour and fulfilling the most fundamental commands of God- Loving God above everything and loving our neighbours as ourselves. Thus Christ becomes a liberator of human beings by creating among humans the bond of love, freedom, justice and peace. His value based method of evangelization is the ideal for all of us and valid for all times and climes. Jesus always looked for a long-term agenda in his strategies, and thus he encouraged the people to look ahead by introducing a new vision and a new value system for the people. For Jesus' liberation was not just providing for people means to quench physical hunger and thirst but a total holistic liberation from the unjust attitude of the people. Jesus realised that the poor, if they are left alone, will have no courage to speak without the power of empowerment as free human beings. One needs to see how this new energy of empowerment can be instilled in the minds of the people especially in the context of central India.

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23. The cornerstone of empowerment rests on the participation of the people in every aspect of the wellbeing of the society. Getting empowered does not mean to abolish the social system that exists and create chaotic emptiness, rather transform the system enabling the people to survive within it. Thus empowerment of the people calls for their participation, volunteerism and collaboration. It is found that poverty and underdevelopment in central India are not due to lack of economic growth but due to the exploitation and oppression resulting from the unjust systems existing in the society. There is an innermost longing for liberation within the heart of the poor. But the unjust social order puts an intense pressure on the powerless poor not to deviate from the social system that sustains the *status quo* of unjust social order. Jesus' whole public life was an attempt to find a solution to this problem.

24. The vision of Jesus and his Kingdom of God project is well appreciated by the people of India, because it aims at achieving harmony and peace for the people not only with God alone but also with one's fellow beings. Jesus brought hope to the poor by reassuring that God was on their side. Christ did not hate the people who are rich but he hated the attitude of the rich and hence challenged them to reconsider their attitude to wealth and power and gear their life towards better value-based perspectives of managing wealth for the benefit of the poor as well.

25. The responsibility of the Church in the liberation includes liberation from all forms of socio-political oppressions and promotion of economic well-being. The message of the Gospel of love proclaimed by the Church has to be accompanied by actions of justice in her service to all human beings. The message of love in the Gospel and the service of justice to the oppressed are inseparable. A community where the members are free and work for the well-being of its members is the dream of the Church. But this dream can be actualised by the evangelizing role of the Church only if the ethical status of the individual as a free being with equal recognition in the society is rightly defended and guaranteed. This can be better achieved by the Christian laity who are fully conscious of this sequence of love and justice to be brought to people as a gift of the Christian message to the oppressed people.

26. The Christian Message has to be offered as an actualisation of the values of human life visualised in the "Project of the Kingdom of God" by Jesus Christ. Therefore it was found necessary to have a discussion on the values of the Kingdom of God preached by Jesus in the *fourth* chapter of my dissertation. Therefore I felt

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the need of exploring in some detail the values preached by Jesus as the beatitudes of the Kingdom of God in his Sermon on the Mount. The life sustaining values given by Jesus through the preaching of beatitudes has become an inspiration for everyone to get empowered, liberated and enabled to live in the society expecting the eschatological promises of the Kingdom of God somewhat anticipated in this world. The mission of Jesus will be fulfilled if the Christians are able to live according to these values of God's kingdom in the Church and in the world at large. The mission of the Church, then is to fulfil this vision of Jesus, namely, to cooperate with Jesus to establish his eschatological Kingdom on earth. In order to accomplish this vision of Jesus the Christian community must constitute itself as the most dynamic catalytic agent in a vibrating local Church.

27. The beatitudes can also be interpreted as the new ethics of authentic discipleship of following the vision and mission of Jesus to bring out the promises of the Kingdom of God realisable by the various categories of people who do something in line with justice, peace and the freedom of all people. The preaching of the beatitudes seems to be intended to illustrate those blessings which Christians are going to receive when they are in the new Kingdom. These teachings may give a new hope and renewed impetus to all those who are of good will to do something good to liberate people from their wretched conditions of life. Thus, the preaching of beatitudes gives more consolation and strength to the people who are oppressed in the society.

28. Jesus invites everyone to take an active part in establishing God's reign on earth. Thus, Jesus challenges the society to turn away from their evil ways and see the compassionate presence of God in everyone. This invitation of Jesus is very relevant to the people living in the multi-religious and multi-linguistic context of central India. The teachings of the beatitudes have inspired many great leaders of India like Mahatma Gandhi, Rajaram Mohanroy, Swami Vivekanda and many others. Thus a ground is already prepared for receiving the values of the Kingdom of God in the general socio-political context of India, provided the Christian disciples are enthusiastic to reach them to the hearts of the waiting people.

29. Jesus advises his disciples to seek first God's Kingdom and His righteousness, while promising to them all other things as provisionally accruing to them in due course. Jesus insists that the disciples' righteousness has to be greater than that of Pharisees and Scribes to be worthy of entering the Kingdom of God. God alone can pronounce a man righteous or unrighteous. The Kingdom of God is where one

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experiences righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. Christ has become both the proof of God's righteousness, and the hope of man's righteousness.

30. When Jesus preached the purity of heart, it would mean not only an internal purity but also an external one. In the sight of God greater importance is placed on the purity of heart. Pure in heart would also mean sincerity and transparency of our heart before God and other fellow humans. Jesus acknowledges that all such initiatives of actions that produce a liberating effect in the human person will lead to the Kingdom of God. Jesus expects every Christian to be with this understanding of the purity in their heart while working for the oppressed people.

31. Peace is that state of life situation which gives rise to the blessings of prosperity. It also symbolises health and good life, time of protection from God. In the New Testament peace is used for the restoration of a right relationship between God and humankind. Jesus in his missionary discourses instructs his disciples to pass first and foremost peace to people whom they visit. The peace of Jesus brings the defining characteristic of the messianic age of salvation in the world. The greeting of 'peace' by the resurrected Jesus is the ground for the unity and peace. To establish peace on earth has been the plan of God. But peace cannot be established unless people follow the right relationship with God, with other fellow beings of the world, and even with themselves in terms of justice and good fellowship with people of all walks of life. The Christian laity are to strive to bring about at all costs peace in the society. They are to work for the elimination of the oppression in the society. The love of the Christian laity towards other oppressed people should be liberative for him/her as well as to have an experience of the Kingdom of God in himself or herself.

32. The liberative evangelization by the Christians can be called working for peace among the people who for various reasons are at confrontational fronts in a given society. This peace mission of the Christians will constantly help them to rededicate themselves to Christ and become the messengers of the Kingdom of God. His peace making process did not end with his death. It was a process which began on earth but it is extended to the eschatological Kingdom. It is a process that stretches out to an unending horizon. This horizon is historical as well as trans-historical, existential as well as eschatological.

33. In this mission of bringing justice, freedom and peace to the waiting people, Jesus also anticipated that his immediate disciples and later the Christians at large may be persecuted for the same causes of which they are the messengers, because the world

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hatred God and His revelation in Christ. According to Christ's mind "persecution for righteousness sake" is the sign that one is on God's side. Persecution is the part of Christian tradition of proclamation. The prophets, Christ, and early Christians were all persecuted. The similar situation of rejection of those who work for the good of the society and people exists even today, and India is no exception to this. Hence every Christian laity can expect opposition in the community from the believers of other creed and other ideologies which are not Christian.

34. This rejection of Christian laity by the believers of other creed and other ideologies are the vision of Jesus about the values of the Kingdom of God offered to all people of good will. The Christian community as a whole and its backbone the laity have to decide out of their own free choice whether to be disciples of this new Kingdom of God and messengers thereof or to be indifferent to this challenge of Jesus Christ. However, it is the option of each person, who will make his or her choice of following the way of life according to the call of Jesus offered to willing disciples. His teaching challenges us to take a chance to end the situations of poverty and suffering among people. This challenge calls not only for the change of heart but also of the structure that exploits the poor and the weak in the society.

35. Since the Church continues the mission of Christ, she should find various ways of implementing his mission on earth. This can be implemented in two ways. First, the Church herself has to stand for the poor, and her very reason of existence has to be explicitly to serve the people and not to be served by the poor people. This is the true spirit of Christ which she has to implement in letter and spirit. In short the Church in no way should be favouring the exploiters and their vested interests to perpetuate the status quo of the exploiting systems that perpetuate the miserable conditions of the poor and the discriminated on any ground.

36. Secondly, the Church has to be a spiritual source of God experience and God's love sharing for the spiritually thirsty people of India, and never to be a dominating agency of any foreign organizational systems. This is in tune with the age old spirituality of India which explains that to be pure in heart would mean to be union with the *Atman*, the Supreme Spirit. When a person is open to the Spirit of God, he/she establishes a close relation with God and God's presence and divine love made available to people who still can hope and trust in the providing, caring and loving God in spite of their sufferings.

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37. This second way calls for radical honesty, responsibility and transparency before God, regarding all human dealings to all human beings on earth. The members of the Church will begin to experience the Kingdom with the people who are suffering in their socio-economic cultural setup of society. Thus, the Church will become truly a sacramental sign of the Kingdom of God that Christ has brought to establish on earth.

38. The leaders of the Church in India hope that such value-based empowerment of the laity would bring out the fruits of the Kingdom of God, namely justice, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. In the crisis of a decline of the socio-cultural, ethical and religious values in the present society of central India due to the onslaught of the western consumerist fads of life, a spiritually empowered Christian community through its majority members, the laity, can become an effective evangelizer in central India.

39. The poor people in central India are in such precarious situation of exploitation that their liberation becomes the most pressing need of liberative evangelization. Even if the poor know the exploiting situation, they have no power to raise their voice against it because the entire power structure of the society supports either the high caste Hindus or the money lenders. In such situations, the message of Christ and the involvement of the Christian laity for pleading the right cause of the poor before the courts of justice may give some strength and consolation for the poor people. They can function as leaven in the society. The Christian laity should concentrate today on the liberation of every other human being by all means at their disposal.

40. Our discussion further leads to the concluding chapter *five* in view of formulating a pastoral vision of a liberative evangelization in the existing context of religious pluralism of central India. India is enriched with great religious traditions, spiritual heritages, sustaining moral systems, supported by a philosophy of life and values which most of the orthodox Hindus believe and practice very conscientiously. The local Church and her personnel should take into account the deep religiosity of the Indian culture and the people. Hence the Christian minority should cooperate with the working of the Holy Spirit, who has been guiding the destiny of this people in the history of the salvation which God has been working out from the beginning of the world in God's own mysterious ways.

41. It is the Spirit of God who from the beginning of creation controls and unifies the creation. Everyone who acknowledges the power of the Spirit is being guided by the inspirations of the Spirit. God accepts unity and not a uniformity of creation. God

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wishes everyone to be saved. It is true that all authentic values of all the religions belong to Christ. Hence every Christian should learn to respect all other religious values in the world. There is only one mission of Christ, that is to gather together all people to the one communion with God as father of all, and there are many ways to bring different people to this communion of the love of God and His all embracing providence over everyone.

42. The Second Vatican Council document *Nostra Aetate* affirms that there are positive elements in other religions. Thus the fathers recognised the universal presence of the grace and its role in the salvation history of God.⁴ The Church has to respect the positive elements that are found in other religions. They can be recognised as real values opening the ways towards understanding the Gospel values which have to be preached to them for their free acceptance and integration of them into the life of the believers of other religions.

43. We can learn this method of evangelization from St. Paul who referred to the 'altar at Athens dedicated to the unknown God,' as a starting point to present the God who is already living in them and embracing them in one holy divine presence whom they worshiped in a not-yet known manner. (Ac 17:23-28). The Pauline openness to the appreciation of the already existing faith of the believers of other religions is a model for all of us who are engaged in active proclamation and evangelization. The Christian community in India has to learn this art of evangelization, which still remains an unexplored area of the study of the methods of evangelization to the multi-religious contexts as that of central India.

44. In view of promoting a dialogical relationship with the believers of other religions Pope John Paul II approved a document entitled "Dialogue and Proclamation" as a post-conciliar guideline for inter-religious dialogue while not minimising the importance of evangelization by actual proclamation of the Gospel message published by the Congregation for the Propagation of Faith (1991). In this document the Holy Father stated that it is the same Spirit that is active in the Church and outside too. Thus he insisted that the Reign of God has to be the final motivation of every individual. The act of dialogue is a platform to share the values of the Gospel. Pope said the whole salvation history is a dialogue between God and man. Therefore, a

⁴ John M. Oesterreicher, "Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions," in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Herbert Vorgrimler (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), 1.

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positive attitude about the other religions is necessary for an effective interreligious dialogue which is part of a wider evangelization programme especially addressed to multi-religious contexts as that of India.

45. The Church while sojourning on earth is considered to be a pilgrim community moving to the eternal home of their father's home, the heavenly abode of God, the father of all human children. She knows that "her members are not perfect; they bear the mark of their human limitations."⁵ Therefore the Church calls for constant renewal and reform.⁶ In view of deepening this sense of constant renewal needed for the pilgrim people, Pope John Paul II promulgated yet another document entitled *Dominus Iesus*.

46. This document strongly reaffirms that everyone is saved through Christ only, the one Saviour. It mainly explains two issues. Firstly, what is the distinctiveness of Christianity? Secondly, what is the relationship of Christianity to other religions? The Pope states that according to the pluralistic society every religion has a limited knowledge of God. So it must be supplemented with the knowledge of other religions. The document states that there is only one salvific economy of the One Triune God, realised in the mystery of the incarnation, death, and resurrection of the Son of God. Jesus Christ is not simply the expression of God's will to save us. He is also the concrete realisation of that will in history. Although the Pope John Paul II apparently makes some apologetic statement about Church and her doctrine in this document, he affirms in unambiguous language that the Church rejects nothing of what was true and holy in other religions. At the same time he claims that the Church cannot be separated from the one Kingdom of God. She is the seed, sign and the one sacrament representing the reality of the values of the Kingdom of God on earth.

47. Since the main interest of every religion should be searching for truth which leads to peace, unity, tolerance, co-existence and good fellowship among all believers in one and the same God, all religions lead their followers to the same destination as all the religions begin from one Supreme Being. Hence we are invited to live together as brothers and sisters of the same human family of God on earth without denying anybody's God given gifts and graces for existence and survival. One needs to help

⁵ John Paul II, "Dialogue and Proclamation," in *Redemption and Dialogue*, ed. William R. Burrows (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1991), 103, no. 36.

⁶ John Paul II, "Dialogue and Proclamation," 103, no. 36.

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the other to fight against the injustice done to the humanity, especially the oppressed and dehumanised of the human family.

48. The Christians are called upon to promote the values which foster human living in a peaceful manner. The culmination of all these human values is destined to realise the integral values of one Kingdom of God which encompasses all creation and all human beings. In central India, where people of different religions live together, inter-religious dialogue is an essential part of the mission of the Church. The Christians are expected to be open-minded to appreciate the religious, social, moral and spiritual values which are basically common with those the Christians themselves live and share with other believers. Further they have to be just and fair while dealing with all human issues in their society, whether they are economical, social or even political. They need to apply the Christian principles of justice and fairness in a witnessing way to get them accepted in their society as mediators of the values of the Kingdom of God.

49. There are various approaches of dialogue. In relation to the multi-religious context of central India, we find the dialogue of life, dialogue of action, and the dialogue of theological exchange can be very significant. One must not attempt to assert his religious superiority over others, but rather find the common truth in every religion. Every moral value as the continuation of Gospel values which was revealed to them by the power of the Spirit in the course of history. Pope John Paul II sees the soil of other religions to be the fertile land where the Word of Christ will germinate as this soil was well prepared by the Holy Spirit even before the arrival of Christ.

50. There are various ways that the Christian laity can cooperate with the inspirations of the Spirit and promulgate the values of the Kingdom preached by Christ. An exemplary life in the family can be one way to witness Christian values to people of other religions if their family values are not integrative for a wholistic growth of the members of their families. Only a family which is faith-filled can face the challenges of the growing secularising society in central India.

51. The status of women in the society has to be respected. They can become instrumental in establishing the new society. The ministry of mass media communication can be another field where the laity can be involved very actively. It can play a vital role in the field of social awareness. The educational institutions are the formative nurseries for the character formation of the students. We have found in the rural areas some of the evil practises are still prevalent. Well trained and

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committed laity can be instrumental in eradicating these forms of evil practises from the society through their educational involvement in society. The ministry of health care is another area where the laity can be involved very actively.

52. The apostolate among the youth is one of the most important areas of evangelization to be undertaken by the lay Christian leaders of the Church. Giving right cultural and disciplinary formation to the youths has been reckoned as very important for the future of the Church as well as for the society. A well accepted Christian lay leadership can be very influential in guiding the youth of our country.

53. Christian laity are called to take active role in the election process of the democratic representations to govern the nation in the universally accepted values of life which are foundationally Gospel values, for example the vision statement of the Preamble of our Indian Constitution. The lay leaders must guide the poor and ignorant voters regarding the proper use of their fundamental right of adult franchise. Besides this guidance the Christian lay leaders are expected to come forward as candidates for election at all levels so that they can effectively exercise their Christian faith-actions in a witnessing way on the national fronts.

54. The Christian lay leaders can also take active role in the management of the Church affairs on various levels. They are welcomed to be members of the diocesan synod. The laity are welcomed to be the members of the diocesan finance council. There is place for the laity in the pastoral council of the diocese. The diocesan pastoral council is where the pastoral needs of the dioceses are taken care. As the laity are welcomed to various administrative bodies of the diocese they are also welcomed to the parish bodies as well.

55. There are also many other ways where the laity can take active role. They can take active role in the liturgical service of the Church. The liturgical celebrations are the centre of every Christian community. The laity can in a true sense be “co-celebrants” in Eucharistic assemblies taking active part in their respective roles. The active participation of the liturgy further leads to taking care of the faithful who are far out in the villages.

56. The apostolate of laity lead to the work of catechist which make the laity to be the leader of basic Christian community. They are directly responsible for the spiritual needs of the Christians in the villages. The laity are also welcomed to work as evangelist and to be the animators of prayer. The lay apostolate was thus understood

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as a response to the Christian requirement of obedience to the commandment of charity, an obedience to which all the members of the body are called. Thus, the active participation of the laity in the affairs of the Church are indispensable and thereby they can build new basic communities of Christian witnessing as models for believers of other religions as well.

These are some of the highlights of my dissertation in which I attempted to outline a certain vision of a liberative evangelization process which the Christian community as a whole, and the laity in a larger measure, can participate and thereby the Gospel values of the Kingdom of God preached by Jesus Christ effectively proclaimed and realised in the life of the Christians themselves and offered as salutary values to all people of good will of their multi-religious social setting.