

TANGAZA COLLEGE

**CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY
OF
EASTERN AFRICA**

**HUMAN DIGNITY
AND
THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES
THE CHURCH AS A PROPHETIC WITNESS**

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the material used herein has not been submitted for Academic Credit to any other Institution: All sources have been cited in full.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. D'Souza', is positioned above the printed name.

JOSEPH D'SOUZA OCD.

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INTRODUCTION

Today the human person is viewed more in terms of freedom than in terms of reason. Indeed freedom is the loftiest of all the gifts the human person is endowed with, as the Vatican Council II humbly but courageously proclaimed: "The people of our time prize freedom very highly and strive eagerly for it. In this they are right."¹ It is only in freedom that humans can turn themselves towards what is good. "Human dignity therefore requires them to act out of a conscious and free choice, as moved and drawn in a personal way from within, and not by blind impulses in themselves or by mere external constraint. Humans gain such dignity when they press forward towards their goal by freely choosing what is good, and, by their diligence and skill, effectively secure for themselves the means suited to this end."² In other words, we are unfinished products, and by virtue of freedom we determine to be humans. This is the point I have attempted to make in the first chapter.

Humans can choose good only from what is basically good. The Scripture reveals that God created everything good (cf. Gen 1:31), and entrusted all things to the benefit and care of human beings. The good creation is believed to acquire "an added dignity from its relation with the human person, for whose use it has been created. And then, too, God has willed to gather together all that was natural, all that was supernatural, into a single whole in Christ, 'so that in everything he would have the primacy' (Col 1:18). Far from depriving the temporal order of its autonomy, of its specific ends, of its own laws and resources, or its importance for human well-being, this design, on the contrary, increases its energy and excellence, raising it at the same time to the level of the human person's integral vocation here below."³ This theme will bridge the first and the second chapters.

The dignity of human persons is based on their creation in the image of God. They are unique among all other creatures because of their freedom, but an accountable and responsible freedom. Through freedom we are invited to grow and become like God himself. "For God willed that humans should be left in the hands of their own counsel, so that they might of their own accord seek their creator and freely attain their full and blessed perfection by cleaving to him."⁴ That is to say, we work out our salvation by the faculties we are endowed with.

One of the areas in which humans have exercised their freedom, and shown their creativity is in the field of technology and science. The Church acknowledges that "By the work of their hands and with the aid of technical means humans till the earth to bring forth fruit and to make it a dwelling place fit for all mankind; . . . in so doing they are realizing the design, which God revealed at the beginning of time, to subdue the earth, and perfect the work of creation, and at the same time they are improving their own person: they are also observing the command of Christ to devote themselves to the service of their fellow humans."⁵ By this it is implied that for all our creativities Jesus is our guide and model.

Strangely and painfully, a lopsided exercise of this mandate to dominate has distorted the very purpose of our creation. Instead of transforming the face of the earth, and restoring the original purpose of creation, humans have managed to widened the gap between one another. Plainly put, due to manipulative technological advancement, there is a deterioration of human dignity. Science and technology have totally abandoned the spiritual dimension of the universe. It is easy to discern this reality if we consider attentively the world of today, which is so busy with politics and controversies in the economic order that it does not find time to attend to the care of spiritual reality. The human person has become a victim of materialistic ideology. As the signs of the times disclose, human beings have almost become machines, and machines have become gods to humans. There is less worship of God, as humans have begun worshipping wealth and riches. God created humans in his image, but humans have created God in the image of machines. The golden calf is back but now in the form of computers, complicated machines, jet fighters and nuclear weapons, threatening the existence of humanity, and questioning the relevance of God for the modern world. Hopefully, this will be clear at the end of the second chapter.

The earth was given as a gratuitous gift offered for the use of all. But today it is no more a gift. Instead, it is misused and abused, and treated like private property by some people. Earth's resources have been used as a means to dominate others. Human beings have been treated as objects everywhere. The freedom of some has forced others into bondage. Despite the material advancement there are widespread discriminations spreading everywhere. The progress in some places does not mean the same in other

places. You will discover some of these aspects in the third chapter. However, I have focussed on just three predominant areas of injustices and harm the modern progress has done to humanity and the rest of God's creation. These are the urgent issues that make the headlines of the story - "The Signs of the Times". There are many signs of the times which I have not included in my survey, but I hope, the listed ones will give incentive to the readers to include their own, as these signs keep on varying depending on situations and circumstances.

At this juncture the Church reminds humans that "the future is here in the urgent appeal to the peoples of the world for more justice, in their will for peace, in their conscious or unconscious thirst for a higher life, that life precisely which the Church of Christ can and wishes to give them."⁶ The Church of Christ seems to read the signs of the times and voice concern for God's creation, for we belong to God and all creation belongs to God, and to God alone! This is the message of the fourth chapter. I have only attempted to present the teaching of the Church on some justice and peace issues of a particular time. However, today we are encircled by the 'structures of sin', which make any simplistic remedy unworkable. For Christians the mission is vast and wide. As you go through the pages, discern for yourselves if you too can come up with some resolutions!

NOTES

1 . *Gaudium et Spes* 17, In: Austin Flannery (ed), **Vatican Council II**, The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents, Vol. 1, (New York: Costello Publishing Company, 1988). NB: Unless mentioned otherwise, all further references to Vatican II documents will be taken from the above mentioned edition and will be cited by their Latin abbreviations as found on pages xiii-xiv. For the sake of gender sensitivity, singular male connotations have been made plural wherever possible, without any acknowledgment.

2 . Ibid.

3 . A. A. 7

4 . G. S. 17

5 . G.S. 57

6 . *Closing messages of the Council*, in: Walter M. Abbott (ed), **The Documents of Vatican II**, (New York: The America Press, 1966), p. 728

CH: 1 THE HUMAN PERSON

1.1 VALUE OF HUMAN LIFE

"God created *human beings* in the image of himself,
in the image of God he created *them*,¹
male and female he created them" (Gen 1:27).

"Yahweh God shaped human beings from the soil of the ground
and blew the breath of life into their nostrils, and humans
became living beings" (Gen 2:7).²

Bible - Not Scientific Information:

Today we say that our understanding of the Bible has changed because of the scientific study of the scriptures. However, the Bible, or any other scriptures, can not be analyzed like other literature as they were not written for scientific information, but to convey a religious message. Even in the case of the Genesis accounts the authors of the text were not preoccupied with the message as to *how* human beings were created but simply, *who* created them.

The creation stories in biblical traditions are primarily concerned with the truth that God *formed* the universe and made it *orderly*,³ and after creating humans he entrusted it to them. Thus the human person is the climax of God's creation and hence, holds the central place in his created world. On the one hand the creation story narrates the outpouring surge of God's love manifested in our highly differentiated universe with its numerous galaxies, vast interstellar space, the solar system and the profusion of life on earth, all finally tuned into one living community; and on the other hand the invitation to care for his universe is the ultimate responsibility humans have received from God.

The Human Person - Resemblance of God:

God created the human person in his 'image'⁴(Gen 1:7) which indicates the close association of God and humans. In fact, it affirms the like nature of God and humans. God 'blew his breath'(Gen 2:5) to human nostrils which affirms the source of our life. This is the theological basis of the supremacy of human life over all other living

and non-organic beings. The injunction to the human person to tend the rest of his creation follows from the supremacy of humans, and the unique vocation proper to their being. This is the essence of the creation accounts in Genesis.

The traditional interpretation of the biblical texts is insufficient, if not totally irrelevant, as it is not an easy task to analyze the nature of the human person. The human person is not simply a biological organism like any other living being. The recent developments in biology, psychology, sociology, philosophy and other allied sciences⁵ would seem to oppose any simplistic understanding of the human person. They are all different approaches in our quest to understand the human person. Neither can we understand human beings without adequate consideration of biological, environmental, demographic and technological conditions of the life of humans which act as an interrelated series of determinants of forms and functions in human cultures and social systems.⁶

Evolution Theories and the Human Person:

The evolution theories⁷ too have made it highly probable that human beings have evolved from a lower species which is additional evidence that human beings are the crown of creation. So, the scientific theories and the theological accounts of the Bible are complementary as both of them lead to human origins, which is a further proof of human dignity.

Some scientists now suggest that there are concrete proofs of human beings having evolved from a lower species but almost faster than the human mind can possibly grasp.⁸ Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, a Jesuit priest and paleontologist, argued that the scientific theories are sacred as they have religious significance. According to him, scientific hypotheses are a proof of creation attaining self consciousness, and therefore, an invitation for humans to change and transformation, hence part of the process of liberation and salvation.⁹ Amidst all theories to understand the nature of the human person we need to closely analyze the human person's 'role' and 'place' within the entire creation of God.¹⁰ In other words no amount of information can be as useful as the creation accounts and the divine injunction to the human person to be relational to his own creation.

So, the ultimate answer to understand the human person is the theological basis of human origins. To know the human person is to work for our own destiny¹¹ and to work for salvation is to live in freedom as an individual and as a community. In other words, our dignity and destiny lie in our search for the well-being of individuals, institutions, society at large, the world community and the planet we inhabit.¹² This is an ongoing search which includes past events, the present state, and the correct placing of both, in relation to a projection of the future.¹³ So then, the concepts of *place*, *role*, and *destiny* finally suggest that we are in constant search for our identity, with an active creative realization of our image as God has created us. The acceptance of the fact by the Church that the human person is an ever continuous evolutionary being is a challenge for a new endeavour of analysis and synthesis.¹⁴

Christ and the Human Person:

Christ's own resurrection and the New Testament teaching have further enhanced human dignity. Even though God's image in humanity was distorted by human weakness, Christ restored the divine likeness of humans.¹⁵ Therefore, God's Spirit, Paul affirms, enables us to realize our common origin calling "Abba Father" (Gal 4:6-7). This adds the new concept of human destiny as the basis of human life.¹⁶ Salvation in this case is nothing other than the process of the realization of our dignity and destiny, which is also our origin.

1.2 VALUE OF THE REST OF CREATION

Mythologies convey religious messages more forcefully than any rational sciences. Most of the creation stories in ancient mythologies convey the message that God created everything good. In the biblical narratives the difference between human beings and other creatures in no way lessens the value of creatures but upholds the dignity of humans. The Genesis account too repeatedly affirms the goodness of God's creation prior to his entrusting it to humans (cf. Gen 1:4,10,13,18,21,30). Human beings and all creatures have their origin in God, hence creation does not depend on humans for its existence or goodness. Each creature has its own intrinsic value because God created them. God takes care of all his creation as much as he does human beings (cf. Mt 6:26).

Intrinsic Value of Creation:

The conventional argument that the value of creatures depends on their usefulness to the human person is ridiculous and no longer tenable. Creation is a gratuitous free good gift to humans from the Creator, which demands a grateful answer from all human beings, by responsible care for it. Some religions even have a mandate to love and care for creation¹⁷ as it is a divine manifestation.

Creation and Redemption:

The restoration of creation in Christ is a new dimension of the Christian understanding of material nature.¹⁸ St. Paul repeatedly affirms that Christ renewed the whole of creation (cf. Rom 8:20-23; Eph 1:10-11; Col 1:17,20). Christian saints like St. Francis of Assisi was a convincing model of our right relationship with the material universe.¹⁹

1.3 DIVINE COMMISSION - TEND THE GARDEN

From human dignity follows the most important but mostly forgotten commandment of God - the responsibility to tend the garden. There has been a lopsided emphasis on the mandate to *subdue* (cf. Gen 1:28) and to become *masters* of creatures which leads to domination and the despoiling of the natural resources of the earth. As a result the earth appears to have become a hostile power to humanity. This hostility is not the curse of God, but humans reaping the fruits of their own progress.²⁰ This is mere exploitation of the God given treasure and a distortion of the beauty of God's creation.

‘Tend the earth’ means grasp it, have control over it, shape it, develop it, increasingly and in a more active fashion stamp it with our own nature. In other words increasingly ‘humanize’ it.²¹ Because humans have potential to know the mystery of God's creation, they are capable of humanizing creation. In other words, by tending the garden we develop our own personality, that is by conquering the bounds of given reality, and by overpowering the limitations, and transforming nature into human culture.

Responsible Stewardship:

The earth's resources belong to all, therefore there is expected from all a sense of shared responsibility to preserve and hand over the treasure of the universe to the next generations. This is the meaning of stewardship. This principle rightly understood will have no room to breed economic injustice.²² God is no more the overseer of his creation but humans, the viceroys of God, are trusted and entrusted with the responsibility to care for the earth with justice and honesty. Stewardship necessarily demands harmony with nature, and means giving an account to the gardener, who is the original and the ultimate owner of his property. Therefore, the basic principle of stewardship of the earth is a just and fair sharing of the earth's resources and living always in unity and solidarity with nature and with all humans.²³ Some would also argue that the realization of our being depends on how we relate with the universe and our fellow humans. God has given us creation to realize God's beauty and our own dignity and identity. This principle then solely rests on a relationship basis. Thinking only about ourselves, forgetting the inter-relatedness of all creatures, is to rob nature of its own intrinsic value.²⁴

Another factor we overlook on tending the earth is the interrelatedness of creatures themselves. As a result, there is a reckless disregard of nature and abuse of natural resources. Similarly, propagating an anthropocentric theory can easily lead to a hostile attitude by depriving the creatures of their value and rights. Also the overinsistence on otherworldliness and an exilic attitude dissociates people from caring for the material world.²⁵

1.4 HUMAN DIGNITY - EQUALITY AND SOLIDARITY

Human dignity rests on the truth of our divine origin. We are products of divine love and the point at which creation is able to acknowledge gratefully the divine self giving. We can respond to such a gift only by giving ourselves in return. We are able to acknowledge this truth because of our self transcendence. Each day our self transcendence reaches a higher stage, as it were becoming more and more divine, at the same time more human. This is the subtlety of the evolution theory.

Since it is the very life of God that we share, human life is the most precious of all life.²⁶ Besides, since we are created in the image of God we don't need any external assertion to claim our dignity. By the very fact of being humans we have a duty to live in solidarity with each other as the earth is the property of all.

The realization of the fact that we are all equal irrespective of the diversity of our cultures, creed, religion or race has given rise to many international organizations, prior to any religious motivation or connotation, to defend and spread the message of equality and solidarity among peoples and nations.

Awareness of Human Rights:

The modern world is typically new in its awareness of the history of human dignity. A tremendous longing for freedom characterizes the quest of today's humanity. Freedom being the essence of our being there is need to safeguard the same from any external aggression. A growing awareness of human rights gave birth to the United Nation's Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948.²⁷

There is a long history behind such a declaration. The earliest roots of awareness of human dignity can be traced in a series of independent declarations such as the 'Magna Carta' (1215), the 'English Bill of Rights' (1689), the 'American Declaration of Independence' of 1776, the 'Constitution of the United States' (1789), 'The Bill of Rights' (1791). Similarly, there are some that followed after the model of the UN Declaration of Human Rights such as 'Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany' (1949), U S Congress of Civil Rights of 1964,²⁸ all expressing the basic fact that all human beings are equal in dignity and rights, and being endowed with reason and conscience they should act and live in solidarity. This document is firmly based on the principles of Liberty, Equality, and Solidarity which summarize the characteristics of the human person.

1.5 UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Human existence is possible only when values which serve life and survival are upheld and defended. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is remarkable

because it has been suggested to be the measuring stick of modern achievements,²⁹ and despite the inconvenience it continues to cause to many countries, its continued existence is one of the highest expressions of human conscience of our time.

The implicit foundation of the Declaration is the theological foundation of human origins. Consequently, "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights",³⁰ therefore, 'the dignity and worth of the human person' and 'the equal right of men and women' are inalienable aspects of Human Rights. Consequently, the "recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world"³¹

Fundamental Rights:

The Universal Declaration maintains that the fundamental rights such as adequate living standards, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, together with the right to education needed for free and full development of the human personality are integral aspects of human rights,³² and any one can enjoy these rights everywhere "without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinions, national or social origin, property, birth or other status."³³

Civil Rights:

Because humans are born free, it asserts that "freedom of thought and conscience and religion"³⁴ are to be respected at all times. Economic justice includes obtaining favorable conditions of work, and equal pay for equal work without discrimination.³⁵ In order to safeguard these rights everyone has the prerogative to participate in the organization of social and political institutions, with a right of equal access to public services.³⁶

Personal freedom is always linked to the inherent dignity of all members of the human family. In other words, individual freedom is absolute only when it upholds the universal freedom of all peoples, which is the foundation of universal solidarity, the

principle on which the transformation of the entire economic and social structure of a society rests.³⁷ But the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is still inadequate as regards the protection of the sovereignty and liberty of individual nations. This fact is obviously noticed in our modern world where poor individual nations are enslaved by the mighty economic giants of the developed industrial countries. This is the root of human degradation which will be dealt with at length in chapter 3.2.

1.6 THE HUMAN PERSON: CO-CREATOR

With the creation of humans God has given us a mandate and the power to transform the earth. Particularly, at this moment of history we are becoming more and more aware that much of the guidance is now in the hands of humans. This consciousness is a guide to the modern human persons to enable them to stop arbitrary manipulation of the earth and its resources.

By divine mandate we are caretakers and co-creators of the universe in our capacity as humans. It is a privilege for humans to exercise our freedom to determine our identity. For our *role*, *place* and even *destiny* are not a finished product. All our creative work and experiments are not transformation of the world for its own sake but for our sake in our pursuit to search for the realization of our own being. So, the essence of our being consists in the active creative works of our hands.³⁸ Here we can notice a blend of scientific evolution theories and theological narratives. Accordingly, if we accept that subtle evolution continues even today, it means that we have not realized our divine image yet. Consequently, it is an ongoing evolution, that continuously reveals the mysteries of the human person. This is best expressed in our creative transformation of the universe, as we shall find in the next chapter.

NOTES

1. Note on Gen 1:26(l) in *The New Jerusalem Bible* suggests a collective noun, hence plural; see also Mk 10:6. (Unless otherwise stated, all Scripture references are taken from *THE NEW JERUSALEM BIBLE, Standard Edition*, (Kinshasa: Verbum Bible, 1990).

2. I have used the plural in order to emphasize that both man and woman shared the divine breath, and not woman from man. Cf. Mk 10:6

3. My emphasis on *formed* and *orderly* is to show (chapter 3.3) how we have distorted the finite order of the universe by our reckless manipulation of natural resources.
4. *Image* implies a physical resemblance as well as a general similarity of nature, namely: intellect, will, and authority. Cf.. note on Gen 1:26(m)
5. Cf. Paul C. Viz, *Empirical Sciences and Personhood: From an Old Consensus to a New Realism*, In: Albert Moraczewski, et. al. (eds), **Technological Power and the Person**, (Missouri: The Pope John Centre, 1983), pp. 189-208
6. Cf. *Human ecology*, In: **The New Encyclopedia Britannica**, Vol 6, P. 136
7. Cf. Sean P. Kealy, *Science and the Bible*, (Dublin: The Columba Press, 1987), pp. 48-55
8. Cf. J. Madelein Nash, *When Life Exploded*, *Time*, Vol. 146, 4 December 1995, pp.66-74
10. Cf. Sean McDonagh, *To care for the Earth*, (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1986), pp. 78-82
10. Cf. Anna-Teresa, *The Human Person and the Human Significance of Life*, In: Albert Moraczewski, et. al. (eds), op. cit., p. 213
11. The term *destiny* refers to elements that are under our control and for which we bear responsibility and also those elements that are not under our control. Therefore destiny is not a passive state but an active creative achievement of responsible freedom, which is proper to humans.
12. Cf. Philip J. Rossi. *Conflict, community, and Human destiny*, In: Joseph Runzo (ed), **Ethics, Religion, and the Good Society**, (Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), p. 118
13. Ibid., p. 120
14. Cf. G. S. 5
15. Adam and Jesus seemed to have shared the same divine image but Adam used illegitimate means to become like God. Jesus showed the right way of realization of divine likeness in us. Cf. Phil 2:6-7
16. Cf. John Paul II, *The Gospel of Life (Evangelium Vitae)* 2 &3, (New York: Random House, Inc., 1995). (All further references will be cited as *Evangelium Vitae* ...)
17. Hinduism, one of the ancient religions of India, claims a multiplicity of deities caring for all elements of creation. Christians would argue that God alone deserves our worship and honour. Cf. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, *Tending the Garden*, (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987), pp. 84-96
18. Cf. Col 1:20 and read the poem **I See His Blood upon the Rose**, in Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, *Tending the Garden*, (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), p.96. This theme will be further developed in chapter 4.7 - Ecology and Theology.
19. St. Francis of Assisi's fellowship with all creation is well reflected in his **The Canticle of Brother Sun**, in Sean McDonagh, *The Greening of the Church*, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1990), p. 172
20. Cf. Chapter 3.3 - *Ecology and Future Generations*.
21. Cf. Joseph Fuchs, *Human Value and Christian Morality*, (Dublin: Gill and Macmillian Ltd., 1970), p. 182
22. Cf. Nicholas Lohkamp, *The Commandments and the New Morality*, (New York: St. Anthony Press, 1974), pp. 160-165

23. Cf. Chapter 3.2 - *Economic Slavery*.

24. Cf. Anton Houtepen, *People of God*, (New York: Orbis Books, 1984), p. 41

25. Ibid. p. 40

26. *Evangelium Vitae* 2

27. Cf. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, In: Joseph J. Fahey and Richard Armstrong (eds), **A peace Reader**, (New York: Paulist Press, 1992), pp.333-338. (NB: All further references to this declaration will be cited as U D of H R ...)

28. Cf. J. M. Connolly, *Human Rights*, In: **New Catholic Encyclopedia**, Vol. VII, pp. 210-215

29. Cf. U D of H R, *Preamble*

30. Ibid., art. 1

31. Ibid., *Preamble*

32. Cf. ibid., articles 25-26

33. Ibid. art. 2

34. Cf. ibid., art. 18

35. Cf. ibid. art. 23

36. Cf. ibid. articles 21& 13

37. Cf. Evans A. Robert & Frazer Alice, *Human Rights*, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1983), p. 9

38. My own interpretation of (Gen 3:17-18) the loss of the beatific vision and the need to work for our own salvation.

CH: 2 The HUMAN PERSON - A CREATIVE AGENT

Human beings have been commissioned to shape the earth through the work of their hands. Therefore, creativity is proper to human beings and fitting to human dignity. One of the areas where human beings have been more creative is the field of science and technology. Pope John Paul II maintains that the "development of industry and of the various sectors connected with it, even the most modern technology, especially in the fields of miniaturization, communications and tele-communications and so fourth, shows how vast is the role of technology, that ally of work that human thought has produced, in the interaction between the subject and object of work . . ."¹

The creativity associated with high science and technology is part of the process of self transformation and self transcendence. However, creativity is positive if directed to transform the world and to transcend the given nature; or destructive, when the human intelligence is misused to destructive purposes. An Orthodox theologian remarked that "Technological invention and change is a gift from God and should thus be welcomed and supported in every way, although because of people who shape it, technology has a demonic potential as well."² Human dynamism gives room for development of God-given capabilities. Since the Bible advocates creativity, it is also the duty of the faith community to evaluate and regulate the progress made in the name of the creative dynamism of the human person.

2.1 PROGRESS IN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Human beings are endowed with a noble gift of intelligence so that we may use it at the service of human beings and the rest of creation. It needs a generous response from us. The greater the gift the higher the responsibility.

Technology - a Gift from the Creator:

Many recent discoveries have brought undeniable benefits to humanity. Human creativity demonstrates the nobility of the human person as it is a sharing in God's creative action. Acknowledging the elevated gift of technological inventions, Pope John Paul II remarked that "The process of technological progress is irreversible. This is a fact we must recognize without indulging in useless regrets. Rather the believer is grateful to God who has given humankind not only the ability, but also the

responsibility, of developing the resources of creation. The activities associated with high technology are part of human work and therefore be vested with the same dignity.”³ Science and technology are a wonderful product of God-given gift of human creativity, since they have provided us with wonderful possibilities and we all benefit from them.

Technology and Salvation:

It is absolutely not proper to evaluate scientific discoveries with reference to Biblical texts but the Church has a mandate to guide the use of science and technological progress in the right direction. It is part of the mission of the Church to see the possibility of an active influence in guiding the technological power as God's saving act is concerned with both spiritual and concrete material welfare of all peoples. Some are of the opinion that Church's involvement in science and technology is its indispensable mission. If we do not see any possibility of Church's responsibility in directing the development of science, they say, it is the deficiency in our mission and is our fault.⁴ The reason being the end of science and technology is to serve life and enable us to live a full, dignified human life - physically, emotionally, mentally, socially and spiritually.

2.2 TECHNOLOGY AT THE SERVICE OF HUMAN PERSON

Having appreciated the rightfulness of human creativity in science and technology and the Church's legitimate mission in guiding this progress, we need to critically evaluate the contribution of technology in enhancing the dignity of the human person.

Technology - Promotion of Life:

Creativity reflects God's creative power working in the loving actions of humans. It is a reflection of the nobility of human vocation to participate in God's creative action in the world.⁵ The change brought about by the technological revolution can contribute to a better world. A responsible use of technology as a means of producing food, a tool for health and a combating of sickness is part of human civilization. Development in medical science has succeeded in alleviating much needless suffering. Infant mortality

is on the decrease, the human life span expanding, many diseases have been eliminated, various organs are replaceable, and pre-natal defects are curable. Human life, in short, is under the control of human capacity to handle like a machine.

Science has done more than an ordinary human can grasp. The recent biotechnology and genetic engineering have almost promised the possibility of creating a new human person through manipulation of the genetic code.⁶ The advance in genetic science has also challenged some of our conventional approaches to certain pastoral problems.⁷

Science - Means to Purify Faith and Doctrine:

The development of science and technology is a blessing. It acts as a complement to our faith. As technology revolutionizes human experience, we must expect our faith to undergo a necessary revolution. Our age old beliefs and creeds at times are mixture ignorance and superstitions. Science can give new light that we change our traditions that contradict the human reason⁸. However, it should not be understood that religion is built on science. Science and religion are two sides of the same coin, one needs the other for its complete growth. As Science removes superstitions from religion, religion can purify science from idolatry and false absolutes. We need both of them to become what we are called to be.⁹ To understand technological progress from scripture is impossible, while to apply science to all our beliefs is absurd. Both should be left alone to coexist.

Technology - Global Village:

Geographically the world is no more than a global village due to the tremendous amount of advancement in communication and news media. The world has access to the events in any corner of the globe as they occur. As information travels faster people too move more often from a remote village to intercontinental airports. Travel has helped the development of nations economically by facilitating trade between nations. Most of the natural disasters have been successfully handled through immediate relief services. Pest control is no more a dream,¹⁰ even though the use of some of them is harmful for all forms of life in the long run.

Politically we have grown as science has managed to change oppressive ethic. Culturally, we are in an enlightened era. Age old blind traditions are no more tenable.

World wide access to education, education through mass media communication, has reached the remotest of villages. Numerous international organizations have managed to keep a close eye on the earth to guide its future. Sociological and anthropological discoveries about the human race have facilitated its future growth. Science has revealed that the resources of the earth are not endless. The Universe is no more subject to our superstitions, as most of the events can now be explained scientifically with rational answers. To sum up, technology has become part and parcel of life in the modern world and without it life is almost impossible.

2.3 DEHUMANIZING TECHNOLOGY

The Christian claim for humans to have a mandate to have dominion over creatures should accept the credit of modern evils under the banner of triumph of science¹¹ and as responsible human agents we should critically analyze our attitude towards technology, its purposes and consequences lest we should be the victims of our own machines.

The Human Person - Resemblance of Machine:

God has created humans in his own image and likeness, but technology has created humans after its own image and likeness. It has filled the shallow needs and forgotten our deeper ones. The present generation is de-linking itself from the socio-cultural traditions of the past.

Due to massive advertisements we no more decide but the media decides for us. The massive hypnosis of advertising has created grossly exaggerated needs with artificial and superficial wants and has presented a whole new set of false values and sham language -

- Minimum effort maximum comfort
- More better than less
- Now is better than later
- sound better than silence
- more control than less
- care for self is better than concern for others
- faster better than slower
- newer better than older
- pleasure over true happiness.¹²

Progress is confused with production. Modern society believes too much in being *productive*. In our world of consumer values those who do not produce tend to be almost regarded as non-people: children, the old, the handicapped, the unemployed, street people, the poor, house wives - all treated as though they are of little consequence among us.¹³ Today we value ourselves and others in terms of what we produce in concrete terms.

As increased tension, tiredness and restlessness continue to be the byproducts of technology, misleading jargons like 'control and consume' have given rise to ecological disasters. Under the banner of creating a new world village we have ruined the balance of nature by material consumerism.

Today we see unlimited growth and endless progress, but no one seem to know in which direction. We see -

Science, but not wisdom

Technology, but no spirituality

Industry, but no ecology

Wealth, but no work

Politics, but no principles

Democracy, but no morality

Might, but not right¹⁴- all this we don't choose, but someone, somewhere decides for us.

Human Persons - Lifeless Existence:

Family life is considered an outdated structure. Relationships between friends and kinsmen are fast deteriorating. Science has answers for everything and God has no place in our world. As Bertrand Russell rightly said "Fishermen in sailing boats believe more easily in God than fishermen in motor boats."¹⁵ Prayer and meditation is more a means to lower blood pressure than to give intimacy with the divine.

Technological progress has "obscured the sun and the stars, and it has made the cities unlivable. It chews up the great forests and drinks whole lakes and rivers, and it consumes men's religions and the traditions and makes nonsense of their notions of the aims of education. It periodically slays heap of men in war, and it daily mangles the spirits of millions of others in meaningless labour."¹⁶ Most serious of all, the

indiscriminate application of advances in science and technology has produced harmful long term effects on the natural world.¹⁷ Pope John Paul II cautions - "Unfortunately, it is now clear that the application of these discoveries in the fields of industry and agriculture have produced harmful long-term effects. This has led to the painful realization that we cannot in one area of the ecosystem without paying due attention both to the consequences of such interference in other areas and to the well-being of future generations."¹⁸ This is a warning to scientists to know not only the purposes but also the consequences of some of the discoveries prior to their inventions.

Another painful reality is the enormous employment of technologies in arms and ammunition which have destroyed the purpose of creation. Using air-space for purposes of war ultimately questions where the technology is heading to. This is true, for progress and creativity today are exclusively associated with doing something extraordinary, rather than development in human qualities like service, kindness and forgiveness.

2.4 CHURCH'S PROPHETIC STANCE

Even though the development of science and technology succeeded in improving the standard of living of most people, it has surely given rise to possibility of total destruction of creation. There is a possibility of total annihilation of the past, present and the future of human history and of the world. Again the voice of pope John Paul II entreates - " Ladies and Gentlemen, the future of man and of the world is threatened, radically threatened, in spite of the intentions, certainly noble ones, of men of learning, men of science. It is threatened because the marvelous results of their researches and discoveries, especially in the field of sciences of nature, have been and continue to be exploited . . . for the purposes that have nothing to do with the requirements of science, and even for the purposes of destruction and death, and that to a degree never known hitherto, causing really unimaginable damage. Whereas science is called to be in the service of man's life, it is too often a fact that it is subjected to purposes that destroy the real dignity of man and of human life. That is the case when scientific research itself is directed towards these purposes or when its results are applied to purposes contrary to the good of human kind. That happens in

the field of genetic manipulations and biological experimentations as well as in that of chemical, bacteriological or nuclear armaments."¹⁹

It is time to act. The Church should not remain a lifeless spectator in the face of these events, but should follow step by step the evolution of peoples, scientific progress, and social revolution. It has to oppose decisively the materialistic ideologies which deny faith.²⁰ Our obligation to become stewards of the earth should be based on accountability, and our desire to achieve perfection and superiority should be guided by some ethical norms. Our vocation to become fully human consists in real progress in qualities like kindness, compassion, sympathy, mercy, love, beauty, nobility and loyalty, which are a higher manifestation of truth.²¹

Amidst the most complicated development of science and technology the Church should appreciate whatever good science brings, because it is believed that nature, machine and human beings are a closely linked complex reality, forming one single living organism, 'humanized' in Christ.²² However, the Church's mission is to be vigilant always lest it risks betraying the Church, whole humanity and its civilization.

NOTES

1. Pope John Paul II, *On Human Work*, (Boston: Daughters of St. Paul, 1981), p. 14
2. David M. Gill (ed), *From Here to Where?*, (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1970), p. 81
3. Quoted in Desmond O'Donnell, *To Stay A Believer*, (Dublin: The Columba Press, 1990), p. 15
4. Cf. David M. Gill (ed), op. cit., p. 81
5. Cf. Pope John Paul II, *Peace with God the Creator, Peace with all of Creation* (Message for the World Day of Peace, 1 January 1990), (Nairobi: St. Paul Publications - Africa, 1990), p. 6
6. Cf. Thomas A. Shannon, *What are they saying about genetic engineering?*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), p. 55
7. Cf. Christopher Herdon, 'Gay gene' Forces a rethink on homosexuality, *The Tablet*, 24 July, 1993, p. 958-9. (Even though this article does not bear the name of the writer, all such articles that carry no name of their authors will be attributed to *Church in the World* (section in *The Tablet*) writer Christopher Herdon).
8. The need of reinterpreting the 'deposit of faith' according to the signs of the times is explained in chapter 4.1 - *The Church in Dialogue with the World*.
9. Cf. Desmond O'Donnell, op. cit., p. 29

10. Cf. Ibid., pp. 17-29
11. Cf. Robert Murray, *The Cosmic Covenant*, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1992), p. 163
12. Cf. Desmond O'Donnell, op. cit., p. 10
13. Cf. Roberta C. Bondi, *To Pray & to Love*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), p. 53
14. Cf. Kung Hans, *Global Responsibility*, (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1992), p. 16
15. Quoted in Desmond O'Donnell, op. cit., p. 25
16. Edward Guinan (ed), *Peace and Nonviolence*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1973), p. 43
17. For some direct and indirect effects of technological progress see chapter 3.3 - *Ecology and Future Generations*.
18. Pope John Paul II, *Peace with God the Creator, Peace with all of Creation*, op. cit., p. 6
19. Pope John Paul II, *Address to UNESCO*, In: **Peace and Disarmament**, (Geneva: The Commission of the Churches on International Affairs & Pontifical Commission "Iustitia et Pax", 1982), p. 227
20. Cf. *Pope John Convoles the Council*, In: Walter M. Abbott (ed), op. cit., p. 704
21. Cf. O'Donnell, op. cit., p. 13
22. Cf. David M. Gill (ed), op. cit., p. 84.

CH: 3 THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES

Today we witness a revolution in all spheres of life. Human creativity and progress have already succeeded in changing the course of human history. We can observe an enormous temporal welfare taking place in many parts of the globe. However, it is regrettable to notice that there is no proportional spiritual improvement corresponding to material prosperity. In some countries there is blatant violation of human rights and in some other places there are gross injustices as regards sharing of natural resources. Amidst all these circumstances the Church's role in the modern world is to be vigilant and to be critical about a society that encourages injustices and structures that are contradictory to human dignity and endanger civilization. The visual signs of the modern world are degradation of human dignity, unjust trade arrangements and inhuman economic manipulations of developing countries, and an accelerated ecological destruction.¹

3.1 DEGRADATION OF HUMAN DIGNITY

Even though there are violations of human rights at all stages and in all places, the more serious issues the Church should urgently address are the discrimination and increasing violence on women at all levels, and racism manifested in subtle or blatant forms throughout the world.

3.1 A) DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

Worldwide Feminist movements is one of the proofs of awareness of human rights among women today. Ever since the first international instrument to establish principle of equality for men and women was founded in 1945, there have been eighteen United Nations' commissions, conventions and declarations.² The most recent one is the 'Fourth World Conference on Women' in Beijing, which created a greater awareness of infringement of women rights worldwide. Despite all these international movements women continue to be marginalized at all levels. It appears that there is still a long way to go to implement most of the resolutions. The critical areas women are facing today which require a new platforms for action are: violence, poverty, education,

health, armed and other conflicts, economic participation, power-sharing, decision making, human rights, mass media, etc.

Baby Girls - not wanted:

Judging from what is happening around the world today women appear to be no more than a subspecies. Cruelty to baby girls and women is manifested in different forms throughout the world, such as scanning and abortion of female fetuses,³ starving thousands of baby girls to death by deliberately depriving them of food and medical attention, or by mercilessly crushing them to death.⁴ In some countries baby girls have been mercilessly suffocated or brutally chopped into pieces.⁵ And moreover, the fact is that more than 1 million babies would not have died each year from malnutrition, neglect and abuse, if they had not been born girls. Sources indicate that 500,000 women die each year because of complications from pregnancy, which could have been resolved, if so desired.⁶ Still worse, in some cases the greatest crime of women, who are subjected to verbal and physical abuse from their husbands, is their failure to bear male offspring.⁷ These are concrete cases of grave crimes against humanity, and a confirmation of gender discrimination, and as such violation of human dignity.

Women - No Place to Rest:

Violence against women is degrading as it has been estimated that one woman is physically abused every eight seconds and one raped every six minutes.⁸ Evidently, "in the USA 1 in 5 adult women has been raped; in Peru 70 per cent of all crimes reported to the police are of women beaten by their husbands; in Thailand in the biggest slum in Bangkok, 50 percent of married women are beaten regularly; and in Norway 25 per cent of female gynecological patients have been sexually abused by their parents."⁹ The great dilemma is to trace the sources of this violence.

In Kenya, it is said, many women suffer, but only a few have the courage to speak out, and even fewer still report their cases to the appropriate authorities. The reason being, when the cases were reported no action was being taken against the offenders as the law observers inclined to consider the incidents to be normal. In some

instances, when women were given shelter by UNICEF they were soon demolished by administrative officials themselves who were employed by the government. A woman victim of tribal clashes confessed that one day the administrative officials took their young girls and chased all men and women away, and no one seem to know the whereabouts those girls to date. As usual, the woman narrated, "Police kept coming to rape the women. At one time, three women died, two after being raped by seven men."¹⁰ In general, it is believed that domestic violence against women in Kenya is on the increase because women have remained silent for a long time, thus the society has not come up with answers on how to curb gender violence."¹¹ As increasing number of human rights violations come to light, violation of women rights seem not to concern many.

Women - Victims of Sexual Abuse:

There is no one single reason for most of the sexual abuses of women in our times. The statistics indicate that one million Asian girls are forced into prostitution while over 100 million girls are genitally mutilated. Unexaggerated figures indicate that 1\3 of the women in Canada, Netherlands, and Norway report childhood or teenage sexual abuse; 4 million German women suffer domestic violence every year; more than half the murders of women in many countries are by former partners.¹² Assuming the world-wide report that approximately one in six college women are being attacked every year, it can be deduced that "at least 50 per cent of female students will have been sexually assaulted by the time they reach graduation - and for those daring enough to go all the way through master's programmes, the rate would be close to 100 per cent."¹³

Women - Lenient Laws:

A few countries like Sri Lanka have introduced tough new laws against offenses of sexual abuse like mandatory prison terms for all sexual assaults. According to a survey, 6 per cent of Kenyan women interviewed disclosed that they too had been subjected to sexual violence by their own husbands. Similarly, 8 per cent of the women working in public suffer some form of sexual harassment by their men colleagues.¹⁴ Very little about all these incidents is known to the public. Even if known to all, there

isn't much justice women can expect as lenient laws of the land truly favour men. The Malawian president cautioned that his country will soon introduce the death penalty for rapists.¹⁵ Most of the observed instances turn women to be sexual objects. The international community had the goodwill to listen to women by hosting eighteen international commissions and conferences to ensure equality of women with men, but many wonder if there is any hope of relief for women from being considered as second rate humans!

Women - Discriminated in Health and Education:

Many are not convinced that women are human, because out of 130 million *children* not attending primary school, 70 per cent are girls; and out of 960 million illiterate adults, again more than 70 per cent are women; 60 per cent of 1 billion rural poor are women. The statistics reveal that approximately 100 million women are being discriminated against in health and general well-being, thus violating their basic human rights. "The unjust social and political and cultural order defined by patriarchal structures deny women control even over their own bodies as women are forced to use drugs without enough precaution and adequate information on how they work".¹⁶ These practices are a violation of the basic human rights enshrined in the Universal declaration of Human Rights of 1948. Many know that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights asserts the enjoyment of the highest attainable standards of health as one the fundamental rights of every human being without discrimination of race, religion, political affiliation, economic or social conditions.¹⁷ But when it comes to women these rights are still to be exercised in most of the countries.

It is believed that the International Community needs just \$6 billion to provide every girl with adequate education, while it spends \$ 800 billion on arms and ammunition.¹⁸ The beginning of upliftment of women consists in education, but if women have been deprived of education there is little hope of women progressing in society. The tradition of women being subjected to decisions of men is probably the root cause underlying this discrimination. Does human creativity and progress apply to getting rid of most of our conventional discriminatory customs against women, especially in the developing countries?

Women - Socio-economic Discrimination:

Another area in which women have been deprived of their rights is the prerogative to own private property. Evidently women own only 1 per cent of the world's land even though they do about two-thirds of the world's work, and that too with a credit of just 10 per cent of the world's income.¹⁹ There are no cultural or national barriers to this sort of injustice. In an economically developed and industrialized country like Japan the situation is not any better. Even though Japanese women today have achieved legal equality with men, gender discrimination persists. They constitute more than 40.6 per cent of the total national work force but less than 10 per cent of the nation's managers, engineers, certified public accountants and licensed tax accountants. Laws to govern equality in employment, education and training, welfare benefits, mandatory retirement and dismissal are explicit but little has been implemented, as decision makers on top positions appear to be men. Despite strict legislation against gender discrimination, women seem to receive only 50 per cent of the salary of men. Jargons like 'equal pay for equal work' exists; nevertheless, many public and private enterprises are accused of implementing double standards of promotion, salary increment and other benefits.²⁰

The Church very highly appreciates the role of women in the family. It is very essential but it is not enough. It should join the present debate on 'equal pay for equal work' as it is a crucial issue. The facts reveal that, worldwide women are paid 30 - 40 per cent less than men for doing the same. It has been calculated that if women's unpaid work in the household was given economic value, it would be worth US \$ 11 trillion, and add 70 per cent to global output. Does the exalted role of women in the family restrict them from becoming equally prominent in socio-political and economic professions. As the situation stands today, women are forced to consider themselves to be less competent to serve the nation in public affairs. Consequently, the statistics prove that women's share of seats in the world's parliaments in 1995 was 11 per cent compared with that of 15 per cent in 1988.²¹

Women in Africa:

According to the reports of 'The National Crime Record Forum of the Ministry of Home Affairs for 1991', women in Africa generally receive less education and are

often forced into early marriages. Frequently they are victims of genital mutilation and of rape. Usually, they have no control over their health and reproduction rights, and there is an alarming increase in crimes against women.²²

The practices differ from country to country and from place to place. Almost 50 per cent of African women are married before the age of eighteen. Over 60 per cent of the girls in Ethiopia and Rwanda are married off before the age of twenty. In some parts of Nigeria, 79 per cent of the girls between the age of nine and fifteen are married, and 36 per cent of Gambian wives interviewed confessed that they were never asked for their consent before marriage.²³ It is common in these days to hear that school girls are forcibly given in marriage. The public is aware but men involved in such cases are either village leaders or tribal chiefs.²⁴ Apparently, money and power seem to buy women for sexual gratification.

Future of Women in the World:

Women are becoming increasingly aware of their rights and duties. There are World Feminist movements that fight for equality in political and economic power as a means to attain equal dignity. According to them men should not determine how women should live. Their focus is on the struggle against structural, sexual and economic discrimination against women.

It should be noted that women have begun to appear on the public scene and in national and international bodies. Even in Africa, Uganda has a woman prime minister. The new Tanzanian president appointed five women to his cabinet, whereas Kenya still has its first and only cabinet minister. Despite the success women had in Beijing, women need greater courage to fight against all sorts of discrimination. Religions should also join the fight to win greater justice for women, which is an essential element of fighting for human dignity.

The Church expressed satisfaction that women have started gaining greater prominence. Pope Paul VI remarked that "In the realm of the family the position of the women is brought into prominence and is also rapidly changed, in that there lie open to her new fields of activity in the classroom, the hospitals and in the various forms of political and administrative life of modern state. The reason for this development is to be sought in the Christian teaching and spirit. Hence, the Church is proud to have

glorified and liberated woman, and in the course of centuries, in diversity of characters, to have brought into relief her basic equality with men'.²⁵ There is no doubt that women have been highly esteemed by the Church for their role in the families and hospitals, but it has maintained its own traditional bias against women. Many faithful are not content with the negligible role women play in ministries of the institutional Church. They claim that this attitude still perpetrates discrimination against women, which we shall see in the following chapter.

Challenge to Women:

Women can understand their own problems better than any one else. Presuming the world survey and report on discrimination and violence against women to be reliable, we need to listen to what women feel about the whole intricacy. Some acknowledge today that despite the criticisms of the feminist movements, men cannot be held responsible for all violence against women. Recently, a young feminist Rene Denfeld has criticized the older feminist analysis of violence against women and has come up with a more objective evaluation of the whole situation,²⁶ and seems to suggest that the blame should be shared equally by both men and women.

3.1 B) RACIAL STRIFES AND ETHNIC CONFLICTS

A careful look around the world reveals that humanity has lost a sense of human dignity. The human species is becoming more and more inhuman to its own kind. This is manifested in exclusion, intolerance and extremism at national, regional and international level. Most of this suffering is caused by politically motivated racial, and ethnic strife. During this century alone, the records indicate that between 1989 and 1994, there have been 90 armed conflicts, mainly due to political and ethnic reasons, out of which 87 were domestic and 3 regional. The cost of human lives was 120 million,²⁷ and contributed 19 million refugees to the care of The United Nations High Commissioner For Refugees.

The supposed ethnic superiority of some tribes has led to systematic suppression and evacuation of peoples that did not belong to the same tribe or group. Even though there is racial tension in many countries around the world, only a few cases drew international attention, such as the brutal and indiscriminate conflicts and

immoral cynical purposes of the 'brilliantly successful ethnic cleansing' of non-Serbs by Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina.²⁸ A Vatican observer confessed that the massacres were combined with religious intolerance, ethnic hatred, and political motivation resulting in the systematic expulsion and cleansing of all non-Serbs from their homes. He narrated, "'There are no words to describe what is going on there' . . . a 'merciless war of attrition' . . . the systematic way in which 'everything that had anything to do with human decency and culture' was being eradicated."²⁹ But the international peace keepers seem to hesitate to bring justice, as those indicted for war crimes are leaders of the governments. Peace prevails when justice is abundant, but when peace is restored justice is sidelined.³⁰ Whereas the acts of harassment and brutality against the minority in Bhutan,³¹ and the flow of refugees due to the oppression of the Tibetans by the Chinese occupiers³² are either considered to be less important or just ignored.

African Continent Today:

Africa as it stands today, is torn apart by ongoing tribal clashes and ethnic strife. At present more than half of 52 countries are experiencing the ravages of ethnic clashes.³³ The large number of migrants are often forced to leave their country and meet discriminatory attitudes and inhuman treatment and insecurity of life in the places of their immigration. The world cannot forget the senseless human massacre in Rwanda which had begun in 1994 only to continue in a hidden manner even today. Tribal bloodshed and political rivalry turned the country into an unimaginable hell of killers. An observer narrates: "The killers were not trained militiamen but ordinary people who were one day tending their fields, the next day butchering their neighbour . . . their hearts are like animals."³⁴ As a result, now there are 2.26 million Rwandese who have sought asylum in Zaire, Tanzania and Burundi.³⁵ There is greater risk of a civil war in Burundi if the political uncertainty continues. This reveals the irrational aspect of human nature!

The fifty-two year old on-going war in Sudan does not seem to end. The Hutu-Tutsi tribalism in Rwanda and Burundi has already produced millions of refugees.³⁶ Tribal clashes in Kenya ignited and perpetrated by its own leaders, are potentially plunging the country into civil war. The discrimination against Ogoni and Ibo tribes

in Nigeria; the Kasai problem in Zaire; the Bantu-Nilot tension in East Africa,³⁷ and the Zulu faction in South African politics need immediate attention. The tribal affiliation and the political ambitions of the chiefs of Natal province has distorted the purpose of the lifelong struggle for freedom of South Africa.³⁸ At present the the UN is providing for every need of 300,000 refugees from Angola, 1.2 million from Liberia and Sierra Leone, 1.5 million from Rwanda, 389,200 from Burundi, 546,000 from Somalia, 422,000 from Eritrea, 398,000 from Sudan, 283,900 from Angola, 234,500 from Mozambique, 188,000 from Ethiopia, and 211,900 from Chad.³⁹ The UNHCR says that growing number of refugees in Africa contributes additional problems to the ecological crisis.⁴⁰ Over and above this, in some countries the communication system continues to spread violence, immorality, crime and falsehood, often beguiling youth and children. As one goes through these statistics one may wonder how can some of the tribes of 'notoriously religious' Africa be so insensitive to the members of their fellow tribes! This gives rise to the further question whether the Church can do anything about it! The Synod of Bishops had warned in 1971 about the danger of possible genocide in some countries where ethnic affiliation was too predominant. Did this not include the African continent as well? What role does the Church play in these situations? Hopefully, chapter 4 (4.3 & 4.4) will shed some light on the Church's role in fighting against these injustices.

The Future of Africa:

Much of the future depends on the African concept of leadership and service. On the one hand Africa is heading towards political pluralism and on the other hand its leaders seem to exercise authority in a form of absolute autocracy, resulting in a sharp increase of refugees and migrants. African politicians never fail to reflect back all their problems, tribal clashes and extra constitutional ethnic strife to the colonial era. Instead of relying on the strong affinity of African heritage, leaders themselves are often responsible for most of the tribal animosity which often ends up in agony and sorrow causing self-destruction.⁴¹ The only option is either to transcend narrow tribalism or continue to glory in the good old days while each day we keep on adding dead bodies to the already existing pools of blood,⁴² the scenes that would haunt the rest of our life.

3.2 ECONOMIC SLAVERY

One of the greatest injustices that endangers the dignity of the human person in our modern world is the increasing gap between the rich and poor countries. The connotation used in the terms 'the First World' and 'the Third World'⁴³ to segregate the poor countries from the rich and economically powerful nations is itself oppressive.

3.2 A) LAWLESS WORLD ECONOMY

The modern world economy is a great paradox. It is a contemporary and very serious evil that badly needs a lasting cure. Under the pretext of economic assistance to the South, the North has adopted certain economic policies that are a means and a manifestation of bondage of the developing nations. What they are after is 'domesticating the third world' so that it can be a permanent slave of the industrialized world. Economic assistance, often perpetrated and perpetuated under the banner of 'New World Order' and 'Globalization' is an instrument of 'taming Africa'.

The North has presented a distorted theory of economic assistance or economic aid on which we need to cast serious doubts. Their policies are a scandalous indignity to the third world. In fact the results of economic aid have manifested to be a downplay of underdevelopment.

The supposed meaning of Economic Assistance is the transfer of natural and human resources from the North to the South, on more concessional terms than loans obtainable in the world's capital market. It is a sharing by the economically *haves* with the economically *have nots*. Under the pretext of the transfer of resources, the North has subdued the South which is obvious from the facts and figures available now.

3.2 B) MASSIVE DEBT INCREASE:

The debt of the developing countries is on the increase. By mid- 1989 the developing countries owed to the international financial institutions US \$ 1.3 trillion, but none were prepared to write off the debt. The developing countries complain that they were lured to a slippery road with false promises by creditors.⁴⁴ It has been predicted that unless there is a goodwill to adopt policies of 'partnership in development' the debt will go on increase.

As it has been observed, there is an alarming situation in Africa over the growing International debt which is practically half of the world's debt. According to the statistics, the debt increased from US \$ 56 billion in 1980 to almost US \$200 billion in 1995. In 1986 alone Africa received aid up to US \$20. 8 billion, whereas the same year Africa repaid \$ 39.5 billion.⁴⁵ Besides, sub-Saharan countries have already spent more than US \$139 billion in loan repayment⁴⁶ to the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Transnational Corporation, and the African Development Bank. There is no hope in reduction of debt in the near future unless there is a change in policies of lending, and the manner in which the borrowing countries utilize the loans.

The debt burden which has assumed such proportions that it is believed that many countries are unable to make repayment. This situation forces African countries to over exploit their fertile soils on cash crops, which will turn the land into desert, thus debt problem gets linked to environmental crisis. Therefore some ecologists argue that it is meaningless to try to solve environmental problems without placing them in a broader global perspective and in relation to international economic differences.⁴⁷

The economic assistance is a complex issue. It is horrifying to note that every individual of the developing world has a debt of US \$ 327.00. A citizen of sub-Saharan Africa has a still greater debt.⁴⁸ Even one who does not know anything about foreign aid is indirectly burdened with repayment of loans. Certainly, this situation calls for more responsibility on the part of political leaders of the developing countries, and demands transparency and accountability from the international financial agencies. If the South has already paid more than what it had borrowed there is no reason why there should be an increasing debt! Besides, it is a contradiction of the purpose of economic assistance if the resources flow predominantly from Africa to the industrialized countries.

Poverty and "Financial Holocaust":

The United Nations declared that 1996 will be dedicated to the eradication of poverty, but it will remain a nightmare, as the UNICEF says the African region continues to suffer a "Financial Holocaust",⁴⁹ a disaster caused by the high sounding development policies of IMF and World Bank. Africa is in monetary slavery, encountered even at the grass roots as there is a dramatic decline in wages at all

levels. Immediately what follows is the decrease in per capita income, and a sharp decline in living standards. As the debt situation is worsening, non-payment leads to the accumulation of enormous arrears. At this stage progress becomes impossible. Instead, the developing countries are left with no other option than over-taxation and direct tariff increases which at last leave the country economically permanently crippled.

The development policies suggested by the industrialized countries have not been always positive. The forced exchange rate devaluation and liberalization of the economy, having no price control, lead to export promotion and the inviting foreign investments which make the country perennially dependent on industrialized countries. Over dependence on imports for all essential goods naturally shoots up the cost of all the commodities. Food prices rise, and consequently, the poor go hungry. This is mortgaging the nation to repay the debt. This brings environmental imbalance, unjust income distribution, and a deteriorating quality of life. Being aware of all these consequences, many economists argue that justice, poverty elimination and human survival, can be guaranteed only by redistribution of resources and wealth.

3.2 C) MYTHS OF DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

Despite the massive flow of economic assistance to Africa from the World Bank and other financial institutions of developed countries, it is believed that there is no proportionate development in Africa. When the North perceives that African countries don't make much progress, the World Bank and the IMF, both controlled and dominated by the North, force the South to restructure their socio-political organization so as to make the progress more visible. The greatest set-back with these institutions is that "they do not share information readily, nor welcome community participation easily."⁵⁰ This has serious negative effects on domestic economy as it will be clear from the following facts.

Unjust Conditions of Structural Adjustment Policies:

Once a country accepts a loan from a foreign country it has to adhere to the conditions and policies of the creditor. The observation goes on that policies such as export promotion and reduction in public expenditure ensure that developing countries are able to service their debts and thus uphold the profit of Western lenders.⁵¹

It is time to analyze critically the manner in which the donors colour their conception of the development process. Apparently development process had begun without concrete development policies. There was not a sincere evaluation of the goals achieved either. Some say that the need that motivates the borrowing is immaculately clean but the lending strategies are cunning.⁵² It is most obvious from the present day situation that the South, especially Africa, has been subjugated into dehumanizing poverty, which has been further perpetuated by the so called developed world.

Global Economy - Free Market:

One of the 'adjustments' is the introduction of the 'Neutral International Economy System' (Free Market), for a just distribution of resources and production. This has proved a distortion of purpose as it is evident that on the international scene less than 1 per cent of global trade is from sub-Saharan Africa,⁵³ whereas African countries are totally saturated with foreign products.

The Free Market vision promoted by the IMF and the WB is demonic. Africa has not experienced any economic growth. Instead, there is a massive flow of resources, predominantly from Africa, to the industrialized countries. Besides, there is a drastic decline in African raw materials and in commodity prices on the world market. For instance, Zambia paid 3.5 kgs of copper for a barrel of oil in 1972, but in 1982 it paid 22 kgs, while Tanzania had to pay 38 tons of Sisal to buy a truck in 1972 but was forced to pay 134 tons of Sisal for the same truck in 1982.⁵⁴ The truck is the same but strategies of the creditors changed.

It is not surprising to observe that the developing countries are taming and domesticating the third world to make them render harmless interest. This is true because the development projects are undertaken without a concrete development policy. Have the Western countries ever evaluated the economic progress of the developing countries? What follows is a need for privatization.

Compelled Political Restructuring:

The characteristics and the 'constitutive elements' of foreign aid, in the simplest terms, are - reduced public expenditure; a reduced role for the state in the economy through privatization; liberalization of the economy by removing price controls; exchange rate devaluation; export promotion and openness to foreign investment⁵⁵ which are considered as preliminary requirements of transition to democracy and Human development.

Reduction in Public Expenditure:

According to SAP there should be a reduction of public expenditure in education, health, food subsidy, national projects etc. It is quite appropriate to ask what is the purpose of any aid if a nation is restricted to exercise its freedom to subsidize national food supply, educational institutions, public hospitals, and other public utility projects. In Africa, it is believed that 90 per cent of the family income is spent on food alone and very little on education.⁵⁶ A critical examination proves that on the one hand these conditions are the proof of denial of access to African countries in decision making; and on the other hand, it is a clear manifestation of the closed door policies of the industrial countries, through the World Bank, the IMF, and the TNC,s reflecting their determination to enslave Africa. The Church has repeatedly called on the financial institutes of the developing countries to spare developing countries from economic slavery,⁵⁷ but how much religious appeal will bear fruit is yet to be seen.

Default Leadership:

One of the reasons for the lack of progress despite enormous aid is default leadership in Africa. It is said that some leaders in Africa can pay the debt of their country from their private accounts. So, the individual leaders are richer than the whole nation, it seems. Where do they get that wealth from? Financial institutions of the West have provision to exploit the poor of African nations through their leaders. In other words, those granting foreign aid make sure their money comes back to them to be invested in their banks from leaders of developing countries! Besides, there is no

room for questioning the leadership in some of the countries. Many of the African countries are badly and sadly lacking good and visionary leaders.⁵⁸ Politicians are always after their own profit in accepting loan on certain projects that are least important at a particular time. Some believe that most of the projects are simply an created and imposed need by the donors!

Neo-colonialism?

If we are to focus on developments, we find many schools and educational institutions being built and medical facilities provided, because of foreign aid. We also see the improvements in transport and communication system developed from monetary assistance. What we lament is that developing nations have not become self sufficient due to inefficiency on their own part, on the one hand, and because of the hidden agenda of the Western countries, on the other. Many countries in fact continue to borrow in order to repay the previous debt. This situation has led to a vicious circle of fatalism, whereby one cannot come out of the arena of injustice and slavery.⁵⁹ There are more far reaching consequences than the mere increase of the debt of the nation. Under the umbrella of Globalization, the imposition of the free market and free trade secures a firm place for Western investments. The conditions imposed clearly manifest the interest of the donor countries. Truly it is a "Mechanism for re-colonialism".⁶⁰ These non-sensible policies are imposed on the developing world to make the country suitable and favourable to the interests of Western business.

Aid - Mechanism for Taming Africa:

Foreign aid is a net work of deliberate restrictions to maintain and expand the gap between the rich and the poor and inhibits them from self-development.⁶¹ Perhaps the prophet Isaiah's words are most appropriate "Woe to those who enact unjust laws, who compose oppressive legislation to deny justice to the weal and cheat the humblest of nations of fair judgement" (Isa. 10:1).

The consequences of the aid mechanism are that, nearly 2 billion people live below the poverty line, about 1 billion have perhaps 1 meal A day; about 1 billion 2

meals a day and about 1 billion 3 meals a day. A farmer gets only 2 per cent of the income, while 18 per cent goes to the land owner, 10 per cent to the middle men and 70 per cent to people in rich countries. The income of the rich countries goes for their luxury.⁶²

The concentration and manipulation of two thirds of the world's wealth and resources by the one third greedy population has swallowed all human ventures. It is highly doubtful if the developed countries really try to uplift the poor nations. The dream of creating a better world has always been interrupted by the ruthlessness of power seeking nations and individuals. It is hard to predict when the slogan of global justice will be realized.

Sour Grapes:

The crisis of debt is great. Poor nations have been continuing to borrow just to repay the loan. The poor masses of the developing nations have not benefitted in any way from such assistance. According to the World Health Organization, the world produces more than enough food to satisfy the needs of its 5.6 billion inhabitants - but many still go to bed hungry as they do not have the means to buy food.⁶³ The ambition of some of the so called developed countries seems to be the exploitation and subjugation of the poor nations so as to maintain a higher living standard in their countries! Is there a way out? First and foremost there is a need to restructure the political set-up of a country. Probably, people have to be educated and conscientized to understand the real crisis of their land. Perhaps, the local Churches can be a powerful influence on fighting for a more suitable political edifice.

There is a slogan that no two bottles labeled 'new treasure' have the same content. The implementation of a policy in one country may not work the same way in another. What is considered to be medicine in one country is considered deadly poison next door. Evidently, on the one hand we see progress with complicated theories in the United Kingdom and other Western countries, on the other hand the Japanese do not seem to have any economic theory at all.⁶⁴ They swing back and forth from ultraconservative to ultra radical, all the time using whatever seems to work whenever the situation seems to call for it. It is time Africa invents solutions to its own problems rather than blindly borrowing formulas made in some other continents.

3.2 D) THE ARMS TRADE AND VIOLENCE

No one can dispute the need of obtaining foreign monetary assistance to establish infrastructure for socio-economic development. The development should necessarily emphasize the extension of basic human welfare services such as water, health care, improvement of education, transportation, communication systems, agriculture and manufacturing industries etc. However, this type of aid is given for economic progress and welfare under the conditions that the resources can never be used for military purposes. There is a lot of misuse and diversion of funds mostly to acquire arms and ammunition which are to eliminate human life. This fact being very evident in Africa, there should be a growing transparency and accountability for foreign aid. There is a greater flow of arms and ammunition to every corner of the village. This is evident from what is going on in most of the African nations. Aid given for humanitarian upliftment has constantly been misused to prove supremacy in arms exhibitions. What is the difference between humanitarian aid and military aid? One promotes life and the other destroys life. Often we chose the latter which is obviously noticeable in many of our countries to this day, which is a clear indication that humans are really unique for their ability to engage in intospecies killing.

Injustice to Human Dignity:

Global trade has political, economic and social implications. The mechanisms used to exploit and degrade poor nations is a manifestation of a crisis in universal solidarity. Half of the population in the poorer countries do not have enough to eat, while technologically advanced countries destroy or misuse surplus food, and supply arms to developing nations.⁶⁵ This does not promote human rights and human dignity. The resources of the world belong to all and there is a greater need to accept the principle of solidarity among the peoples, based on the principle of equal human dignity of all. Insofar as there is gross violation of the dignity of individuals and nations by the system of economic aid, we need to treat this issue as a problem of justice and peace.

3.3 ECOLOGY AND FUTURE GENERATIONS

The Greek word *eikos* means home. Ecology means 'the study of organisms 'at home'.⁶⁶ Ecology, therefore, attempts to understand the complex relationships and interconnectedness of all elements of the universe. Consequently, it is required from all humans to mind our common house that accommodates all creatures both animate and inanimate. The study so far on the ecosystem is alarmingly dangerous because of irresponsible management, manipulation and destruction of the resources of the universe. This is gross mismanagement of the common treasure by the mighty of the world.

3.3 A) RECKLESS INDUSTRIALIZATION

One of the dangers of modern concept of progress is the lopsided emphasis on industrialization. Development in the modern world is confused with reckless industrialization. Life is impossible without chemicals and gasses. This has eaten up the resources of the whole earth, especially of the developing nations. Modernization, with all its demands for comforts, is causing a tremendous amount of harm to the ecosystem. "The earth does not belong to humans, humans belong to the earth ... if they spit on the ground, they spit on themselves."⁶⁷ We do exactly what we are not supposed to do, all in the name of being creative and progressive

Pollution of the Air and Changing Atmosphere:

The modern world enjoys so much on luxuries living that most of which have become too common to our daily life. The use of Chloroflourocarbon (CFC) gases,⁶⁸ has become the foundation of many conveniences and comforts of today's life. It has been found out that the use of these gasses by a minute fraction of the world's population can create a tremendous damage to the whole world. Highly industrialized countries contribute most to the disaster of the whole of the atmosphere. According to the recent survey 29 per cent of CFC gases are produced by USA; 41 per cent by countries like Japan, UK, Italy and other Industrialized countries of Western Europe; 14 per cent by Russia and Eastern Europe; and 16 per cent by developing countries.⁶⁹

human health. The most inhuman part of it is that the industrial countries have exported such chemicals to the developing nations after knowing of the implicit destruction.⁷³

Poisoning the water is alarming too. Most of the industrial wastes, refuse produced by human beings, and animals, directly end up in the rivers, lakes, and the oceans. The most widespread and serious sources of pollution are sewage disposal and sedimentation from land clearing and erosion. Most of the world's wastes are dumped into coastal areas containing fishing waters. The reports for the UN say that chemical poisoning and pollution of the oceans are detectable all the way from the Antarctic to the Arctic Oceans.⁷⁴

3.3 B) MASSIVE DEFORESTATION

Deforestation is one of the chief characteristics of modern progress. It follows due to the increasing fervour of industrialization to the extent that more than half of the world's tropical forests were already destroyed by 1950. Recent studies show that rain forest the size of New Zealand is destroyed each year. The Sahara Forest had 46 per cent left in 1978 and 10 per cent in 1987. It has been estimated that if this rate of destruction continues all the rain forests will disappear in 30-40 years.⁷⁵

The reasons for deforestation are closely interconnected with the economic policy of the governments. Besides, some countries seriously lack adequate reforestation scheme. As a result every year the situation goes from bad to worst. The consequences are manifold: the production of oxygen is reduced drastically; there is reduction in the absorption of carbon monoxide; millions of people lose their livelihood base and are forced into nomadic existence; the disappearance of species both animate and plant; soil erosion, loss of knowledge of animal and plant life; change of climate; uncertainty of seasons; air pollution, etc.

Species Disappearing:

Forests are natural habitat for millions of species of plants, beetle, insects, butterfly, birds and animals. Whereas, we are aware of the status of only about 1 per cent of all species.⁷⁶ So, our ignorance leads to the disappearance of the largely unknown species of creatures for ever. We should therefore, accept the blame, or at least partial responsibility for the 10-30 million plant and animal species living in the

vast forests that disappear. It is believed that up to 80 per cent of the species live in the forests. If they are destroyed, the great wealth of the forest is lost. Indigenous people disappear, people lose their livelihood, and with them the vast amount of valuable information about plants and animals. Nature has a cure for all diseases, but plant medicine is surely to disappear if the rain forests are lost.⁷⁷ It is a pity to realize that there is already a great distortion of resources for human research and healing, as a quarter of all prescription drugs have their origin in disappearing species!⁷⁸

It is believed that 1 species disappears every 12 minutes. The International Union For The Conservation of Nature & Natural Resources indicate that more than 800 species of higher animals such as the great whales, the Asian elephants, many different species of cats and a host of birds and animals, mainly from tropical forests have disappeared due to the direct application of human technologies.⁷⁹ It estimates that one in ten plants is threatened with extinction in the next twenty five years and predicts that the rate will increase to 10,000 species each year from 1990. The Philippine Eagle Conservation Programme reports that in 1985 it estimated 11,000 birds in the whole country, and now due to the disappearance of the forests the number is down to 150 pairs.⁸⁰ People depending on the rain forest suffer most.

Soil Erosion:

Chopping down rain forests that protect our watertables for various reasons, eliminating bushland and converting it into agricultural land, has far reaching effects. One of them is soil erosion. Demand for fuel wood, and poverty, forces people to clear forests and trees for planting crops and grazing cattle. Mining operations and the lumber industry destroy rain forests for the construction of factories. The demand for forest product is so high, it eats up vast area of woodland. Road construction opens the jungle to settlers, and the poor settlers cut down bushes to plant crops and graze cattle in addition to the destruction caused already. Timber Industries in South Asia and Africa are some of the most important causes of the destruction of rain forests.⁸¹

Soil erosion takes place everywhere in the world, but some areas are more exposed than others. The hardest hit area are the Andes Mountains in South America, the areas south of the Himalaya mountain chain and in Indonacia and Malaysia. Every

year about 23,000 sq. miles of fertile soil turns into desert.⁸² The continued shrinkage in earth's forests has effected the rainfalls as well. It is said that millions of hectares of land world wide - once productive, has been abandoned. In central Asia water volume has decreased by two thirds in recent years.⁸³ All these are the by-products of massive deforestation.

Changing Climate:

The whole world is experiencing extreme climatic change. Unusually high winds, destructive hurricanes, and cyclones, often coupled with heavy rains cause flooding. In many places, especially in India and Africa, the scorching sun and extreme heat cause severe droughts with crops withering and animals dying - a tragic loss of life. The whole weather patterns of the world has changed and the world is in turmoil. These years, it is very difficult to mark the seasons with precision because they are full of uncertainties and are unpredictable. Besides, warming in the global temperature is a death blow to all creation.⁸⁴ As no single country can build it's own environmental defense it calls for a greater sensitivity towards the damage a few countries can cause to others.

African Ecological Crises:

Kenyan journalist Calestous Juma seems to add an African voice against those waging war on the earth. He comments "Africa is full of lonely peasants; millions of people alienated from one another by the destruction of nature ... Forests recede day after day and the peasants walk farther and farther for firewood. As the rivers and springs dry up more often ... the lonely peasants toil only to harvest less year after year . . . The lonely peasants are a grim reminder to the rest of humnaity of the ultimate implications of a lonely planet."⁸⁵

Another serious problem of East Africa is the water polution of Lake Victoria, the world's second largest freshwater lake. Scientists say it is undergoing an ecological crisis of gigantic proportion, creating alarm about it's future health and the effect on the millions of people who depend on it.⁸⁶

A look at the factories and the refineries around the world make the fact known about the seriousness of the problem of the pollution of the air. At times these poisonous chemicals and smog end up in coming down with rain which is now known as 'acid rain'. Soon, this water joins the rivers and lakes and oceans, poisoning all life.⁷⁰ The whole atmosphere is polluted by the numberless destructive gasses. Scientists are now warning us about the "Greenhouse Effect",⁷¹ taking place due to the use of aerosol sprays, running huge motor vehicles that burn up fossil fuels, and burning of coal and other products. The direct results are the change in atmosphere and increase in the temperature of the earth.

Depletion of the Ozone Layer:

The increased production of Carbon Dioxide due to the burning of coal, oil and gas, the chemical emission from factories and vehicles, the use of artificial gasses like CFCs have gradually depleted the ozone layer, which exists above the earth's surface and acts as a protective filter and absorbs 90 per cent of the sun's damaging ultraviolet rays of the sun. It has been predicted that if it continues to be depleted at the present rate, soon there will be holes in the ozone layer, in which case the hazardous ultraviolet rays will reach the earth. It is believed that these rays will destroy plastic products, harm the sea life, plants and animals, and damage the immune system in humans.⁷² In other words, we are on the process of our own ultimate destruction, perhaps at a faster rate than we are possibly aware of!

Poisoning the Earth and the Water:

Because of the modern technologies people have succeeded in producing dangerous chemicals and pests that are used to fertilize the earth for a better harvest. Some of these chemicals are said to destroy the long term fertility of the soil. Some remain active for years and continue to poison not only the plants, but also birds and fish that come in contact with them. As humans rely on animals and plants for their food the poison is passed on to the human body, which has caused varying degrees of disability. When the fertile soil is washed away, there is greater need to use artificial fertilizers which in turn cause a chain of destruction to all forms of life. Equally true is the fact of direct contact with chemicals and pests that cause irreparable damage to

Nancy Chege, a Kenyan Researcher with 'World Watch Institute' says, "the once clear life-filled lake is mucky, smelly, and choking with algae."⁸⁷ This is just an aspect of extreme pollution. According to her the rapidly growing population by the lake's shore effects the lake in many ways. A booming export trade in fish, has resulted in the wiping out of hundreds of fish species, and more than 130,000 fishermen leave a hundred tons of human waste in their trail. In addition, some three million litres of untreated human waste and other run-off are drained into the lake everyday. The deterioration of the water quality thus makes it unsuitable for consumption by both human, fish and all other life. Besides pollution, lake Victoria has been invaded by rich businessmen and powerful government officials,⁸⁸ exploiting the lake and the fishermen, thus betraying the citizens by depriving them of thier food.

3.3 D) MANIPULATION AND EXPERIMENTATION

One of the proofs of the industrial countries exploiting the developing countries is the ratio of importing raw materials of various kinds at a low rate. It is believed that large foreign debts compel many countries to sell their natural resources in large abundance. Evidently the industrial countries import 94 per cent of coffee from Uganda; 90 per cent of copper from Zambia; 83 per cent of Sugar from Cuba; 84 per cent of Iron ore from Liberia; 82 per cent of Jut from Nepal; 73 per cent cotton from Sudan.⁸⁹ No matter what trade the industrialized countries are involved in, they make sure that their interest is sustained.

Double Standards:

The developed countries seem to adopt double standards as regard to domestic policies and imports. For example, Japan has stringent legislation regarding its own forests, yet is responsible for over half of the hardwood imports from developing countries. Raw materials of Africa are bought at a throw away price only to see the finished products return from developed countries at a very high cost.⁹⁰ There are no restrictions for most of the products as it is a free market policy!

There is no limit for the wants to western countries. Lake Victoria is also a victim of manipulation as the beneficiaries from the rampant fish export trade from lake Victoria are overseas markets in the Middle East, Europe and even the Far East.⁹¹

The cattle ranches, to supply the fast-food hamburger industry for the industrialized countries have destroyed enormous an amount of tropical rain forests. It is said that the meat thus obtained costs three times lesser than it usually does.⁹²

3.3 E) CONSUMERISM

Meanwhile, the economists suggest that human survival can be guaranteed if only wealthy nations reduce consumption and redistribute resources, and support the developing nations in employment and self-reliance strategies. But this is far from our reach as consumption is too disproportionate; the richest 20 per cent of the world receive 82.7 per cent of the world's total income; 20 per cent receive 11.7 per cent; another 20 receive 2.3 per cent of the world's income and again 20 per cent receive 1.9 per cent of income, and the last 20 per cent share 1.4 per cent of the world's total income.⁹³ Many theologians are of the opinion that the only way to get rid of injustice, and eliminate poverty is to go back to the concept of the fellowship of all humans, living in solidarity.

3.3 F) Enormous Population Growth

When we speak of the future of our planet, many ecologists include overpopulation as a major question. This earth is already overcrowded. The survey shows that the population has increased from 2.5 billion in 1950 to 5 billion in 1988.⁹⁴ Feeding this huge population is a greater task than eradicating poverty. The high growth rate in sub-Saharan Africa and Asian countries is a very serious problem, not so much because there is not enough food production, but that it will lead to deficiency in the development process, health care and over all political organization. A nation's greatness does not consist in the number of people it has but in the living standards, standards of education and, and a sound economic foundation. Given the figures and "faced with demands for food and shelter there will be a strong temptation to over-work the land, cut the forest or over-fish the lake in order to satisfy immediate human needs. This of course, will involve eating into the resources."⁹⁵ The problem is simply complex. Overpopulation will jeopardize all the efforts of a country to be self sufficient and leave the country in perennial misery. In other words, if we want protect this earth from ecological disaster then population control is one of the priorities of today's world. The

simple conclusion is that there can not be a stable livelihood or sustainable community without population control.

The environment can be safe guarded if there is cooperation in society, among governments, businessmen, scientists, religious leaders, theologians, citizen groups and peoples from all walks of life. Success requires a change in attitude. New environmentally safe ways are cooperation between factories and business, and change in daily lifestyle habits that destroy the environment. When there is increasing pressure on natural resources from a rapidly growing population, and environmental pollution crosses national boundaries, international cooperation is essential and is a manifestation of concern to live in solidarity.

Today, the great mission of the Church is to consider all realities of creation and human persons as one image of God. As someone rightly put it "linking environmental issues with issues of disarmament is as necessary as linking disarmament and abortion. In all these issues we work from a foundation of belief in the sanctity of life, crowned by human life made in the very image of God, and therefore crowned with glory and honour."⁹⁶

NOTES

1. For practical reasons I have limited the survey to a very few 'signs of the times', that too with an elaborated focus on the African Continent wherever possible.

2. Cf. *Women and the UN 1945-95*, (Rome: **Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation**, 1995), p. W 1. All further references to this source will be cited as J P I C , p. etc. [NB: The statistics presented by the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation is said to have been prepared in collaboration with the Government of Norway. As the information and statistics are found on transparencies it is hard to determine the numbering on some transparencies. In such cases I have numbered them arbitrarily. In case you wish to get more details contact: Rose Fernando, Via Iustitia 12, I 00185, Rome, Italy.]

3. Cf. *Action against violence*, **EAST AFRICAN STANDARD, WOMEN'S WORLD**, 3 January 1996, p. 2. (All references to Newspapers will be cited by the title of the articles, the name of the Newspaper, Section, date etc.)

4. Cf. *Orphan Girls Unwanted in China*, **SUNDAY STANDARD, NOW**, 7 January 1996, p. 7

5. Cf. *Baby Girls Crushed to Death*, **SUNDAY STANDARD, NOW**, 3 December 1995, p. 5

6. Cf. *Pacific Insurance for Women health 1992*, J P I C, p. W 13

7. Cf. *Action against violence*, op. cit., p. 2

8. Cf. *National Center on Women and Family Law, USA 1988*, JPIC, p. W 4
9. Cf. *Pacific Insurance for Women Health 1992*, op. cit., p. W13
10. Cf. *Action against violence*, op. cit., p. 2
11. Cf. *ibid.*
12. Cf. *National Center on Women and Family Law, USA 1988*, op. cit., p. W 4
13. Rene Denfeld, *The New Victorians*, (London: Simon & Schuster, 1995), p. 72
14. Cf. *Action against violence*, op. cit., p. 2
15. Cf. *Rape: Isn't the law too lenient on offenders*, **SUNDAY STANDARD, NOW**, 24 December 1995, p. 8
16. Cf. *Action against violence*, op. cit., p. 1
17. Cf. UD of HR articles 2, 25-26
18. Cf. JPIC, p. W 16
19. Cf. JPIC, p. 72
20. Cf. *Women empowerment encouraged in Japan*, **EAST AFRICAN STANDARD, TREND**, 23 December 1995, p. III
21. Cf. JPIC, p. E 4
22. Cf. *Action against Violence*, op. cit., p. 2
23. Cf. *Women make progress in Beijing*, **SUNDAY STANDARD, NOW**, 31 December 1995, p. 15
24. Cf. *Child Bride- No Marriageable Women Available!?*, **IMARA**, Issue 3, November/December 1995, p. 2
25. Pope Paul VI, *To the Peoples of Africa*, In: Joseph Gremillion (ed), op. cit., p. 424
26. For a balanced view on discrimination against women as well as a critical analysis of worldwide Feminist Movements read Rene Denfeld, op. cit.
27. Visuell Inform 1991, p. 92. [NB: The facts and figures appearing under Visuell Inform 1991 is said to have been presented by the Norway Central Statistics Office. I had access to these statistics courtesy JPIC. For more details contact: Rose Fernando, JPIC, . . .]
28. Cf. Christopher Cviic, *Looking for hope beneath the Ashes*, **The Tablet**, Vol. 15 August 1992, pp. 1003-5
29. Cf. Christopher Herdon, *Beyond words, says Vatican visitor*, **The Tablet**, Vol. 246, 29 August 1992, p. 1081
30. Cf. Evans Thomas and John Barry, *Making It Work*, **Newsweek**, 4 December 1995, pp. 28-34. See also Col. David H. Hackworth, *Hell in a Cold Place*, **Newsweek**, 18 December 1995, pp. 26-30
31. Cf. Christopher Herdon, *Ethnic expulsion from Bhutan*, **The Tablet**, Vol. 247, 24 July 1993, p. 957
32. Cf. Mary Craig, *The Agony of the Tibet*, **The Tablet**, Vol. 246, 15 August 1992, pp. 1006-7

33. For a better vision of ravages of armed conflicts in Africa, see the map of African continent, Visuell Inform 1991, p. 45
34. Cf. Marguerite Michaels, *Streets of Slaughter*, **Time**, Vol. 143, 25 April 19 94, pp. 18-19
35. Cf. *Africa's Refugees- Tackling the problem*, UNHCR , October 1995, p.8
36. Cf. *UNHCR by Numbers, Public Information Section*, 1 January 1995, p. 8, and *African Refugees, Tackling the Crisis*, UNHCR October 1995, pp. 4-11
37. Cf. *What is Africa's future*, **EAST AFRICAN STANDARD**, 16 December 1995, p. 18
38. Cf. Bruce W. Nelan, *Breaking Point in Zulu Land*, **Time**, Vol. 143, April 11, 1994, pp. 22-25
39. Cf. *UNHCR by Numbers, Public Information Section*, 1 January 1995, p. 8. See also *African Refugees, Tackling the Crisis*, UNHCR October 1995, pp. 4-11
40. Cf. *Uganda Refugee Network*, UNHCR, Kampala, September 1995, pp. 3-11
41. Cf. *What is Africa' future*, op. cit., p. 18
42. Cf. Marguerite Michaels, *Streets of Slaughter*, op. cit., pp. 18-19
43. Now-a-days the terms 'the First World' and 'the Third World' have generally been replaced with 'the North' or 'the developed , industrialized countries', and 'the South' or 'the developing countries' respectively.
44. Cf. Sean McDonagh, *The Greening of the Church*, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1990), p. 9
45. Cf. *Capital Flow Out of Africa*, Visuell Inform 1991, p. 9, F2
46. Cf. JPIC, p. E 17
47. Cf. *The Report of Brundtland Commission 1987*, Visuell Inform 1991, p. 51
48. Cf. Mary McCarthy & Thomas McCarthy, *Third World Debt*, (Dublin: Trocare and Gill & Macmillan, 1994), p. 22
49. Cf. *Politics a major player in Third World poverty*, **SUNDAY STANDARD**, 7 January 1996, p. 12
50. *Three Myths About SAPs and Africa*, JPIC, p. 12
51. Cf. Peter F. Drucker, *The Age of Discontinuity*, (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1989), p. 59
52. Cf. Mary McCarthy & Thomas McCarthy, McCarthy, op. cit., p. 9
53. Cf. *Three Myths About SAPs and Africa* JPIC, p. 12
54. Cf. Visuell Inform 1991, p 9, F 2
55. Cf. Mary McCarthy & Thomas McCarthy, op. cit., p. 11
56. Cf. *Politics a major player in Third World poverty*, op. cit., p. 12
57. For Church's prophetic voice against economic manipulations of developing countries see chapter 4.3

58. Cf. Pheroze Nowrojee, *Why the Constitutions Needs to be Changed*, (Nairobi: Justice and Peace, AOSK, 1995), p. 7
59. Cf. Ian Barbour, *Ethics in an Age of Technology*, (New York: Paragon House Publishers, 1993), p. 37
60. Denis Coulet & Michael Hadson, *The Myth of Aid*, (New York: Orbis Books, 1971), p. 18
61. Cf. Paul Valley, *Bad Samaritans - First World Ethics and Third World Debt*, (New York: Orbis Books, 1990), p. 110
62. JPIC, F8
63. Cf. *Politics a major player in Third World poverty*, op. cit., p. 12
64. Cf. Peter F. Drucker, op. cit., p. 137
65. Cf. *Politics a major player in Third World poverty*, op. cit., p. 12
66. Cf. Sean McDonagh, *Care for the Earth*, (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 19860), p. 17
67. Quoted in Jay B. McDaniel, *Earth, Sky, Gods & Morals*, (Mystic: Twenty-Third Publications, 1990), p. 83
68. CFCs are a category of gasses that include chlorine, flouro, carbon and freon, used mostly in refrigerators, Freezers, Air Conditioners, Dry cleaners, Spray cans, Foam rubber Insulations etc. For more information on production and users of CFC Gasses see Visuell Inform 1991, p. 37, E3
69. Cf. Visuell Inform 1991, p. 39, E4 & p. 35, D4
70. Cf. Sean McDonagh, *Care for the Earth*, op. cit., pp. 18-24
71. GREENHOUSE EFFECT is an atmosphere resulted due to the increased concentration of gasses produces by burning of coal, fossil fuels and gasses, which prevents the sun rays being radiated from the earth. For pictorial presentation see *The Greenhouse Effect*, Visuell Inform 1991, p. 33, D1
72. Cf. *The Ozone Layer is Depleted*, Visuell Inform 1991, p. 36, E1
73. Cf. Sean McDonagh, *Care for the Earth*, op. cit., pp. 19-21
74. Cf. *Poisoning of the Oceans - Pollution*, Visuell Inform 1991, p. 19, A4
75. Cf. *Forests Disappearing*, Visuell Inform 1991, pp. 24&29
76. Cf. Danis Edwards, *Jesus the Wisdom of God*, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1995), p. 7
77. Cf. Sean McDonagh, *Care for the Earth*, op. cit., p. 74
78. Cf. Ian Barbour, op. cit., p. 184.
79. Cf. Sean McDonagh, *Care for the Earth*, op. cit., pp. 35-36
80. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 37
81. Cf. *What happens when the rainforests are destroyed?* Visuell Inform 1991, p. 27, C5
82. Cf. *Decertification and Soil Erosion*, Visuell Inform 1991, p. 29, B1 & p. 32, B4

83. Cf. *Why the World Faces an Eternal Drought*, **EAST AFRICAN STANDARD**, 4 January 1996, p. 6
84. Cf. Sharon Begley, *He's Not Full of Hot Air*, **Newsweek**, 22 January 1996, pp. 24-29. See also *What may happen*, *Visuell Inform* 1991, p. 40, D5
85. Quoted in Jay B. McDaniel, *op. cit.*, pp. 85-86
86. Cf. *Species Dying off as Scientists Debate*, **EAST AFRICAN STANDARD, TREND**, 6 January 1996, p. 2
87. Quoted in *Species Dying off as Scientists Debate*, *op. cit.*, 2
88. Cf. *Species Dying off as Scientists Debate*, *op. cit.*, 2
89. Cf. *Debt - Food Production - Poverty - Decertification are Interconnected*, *Visuell Inform* 1991, p. 42, F3
90. Cf. Sean McDonagh, *Care for the Earth*, *op. cit.*, p. 34
91. Cf. *Species Dying off as Scientists Debate*, *op. cit.*, 2. (See also *World Bank seeks to save L. Victoria ecosystem*, **EAST AFRICAN STANDARD, BUSINESS & FINANCE**, 2 January 1996, p. III)
92. Cf. Sean McDonagh, *Care for the Earth*, *op. cit.*, p. 34
93. Cf. *Champagne-Glass Civilization*, JPIC, p. 16
94. Cf. Sean McDonagh, *The Greening of the Church*, *op. cit.*, p. 44
95. *Ibid.* p. 43
96. Mary Evelyn Jegen, *The Church's Role in Healing the Earth*, In: Wesley Granberg-Michaelson (ed), **Tending the Garden**, (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), p. 112

CH: 4 THE CHURCH AS A PROPHETIC WITNESS

“Christ, the great Prophet, who proclaimed the Kingdom of His Father by the testimony of His life and the power of His words, continually fulfills His prophetic office until His full glory is revealed.”¹ Indeed, the mission of a prophet is to trouble the world. The Church, the body of Christ (Eph 1:23), is no less than a prophet to our modern ‘progressive’ world.

4.1 CHURCH IN DIALOGUE WITH THE WORLD

The Church continues to proclaim the Good News of salvation like a stranger in a foreign land, pressing forward amid persecutions of the world and the consolations of God.² To adapt itself to the new world view is the first great task of the church in the modern world.

4.1 A) CHANGE OF WORLD VIEW

The classicist world view, including the natural sciences, regarded the world as a well-oiled machine, governed by immutable and unchanging principles. Since everything was considered to be well-balanced and our duty was to balance ourselves. Stability was the key principle and human beings were to constantly change in order to be integrated into the eternally fixed world.

The development of physics has changed the concept of determinism in physics. Evolution theories have developed the concept of the human person. The modern scientific mind is curious to know more and more about everything. The person is in the process of knowing the secrets of the material world on the one hand, and in search of the meaning of life on the other hand. Because knowledge is conditioned by place and time, there is limited self awareness and a limited grasp of reality. Thus we judge everything from the knowledge of truth we have at a particular given moment.³ However, we are so interconnected to the world that there is a possibility of our becoming the product and makers of ourselves, which means we choose our identity through encounter with a given time and place, by the choice of values we make.⁴

4.1 B) FAITH IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

A particular religion is born in a particular time. As each religion is confined by its own intellectual and sociological boundaries, likewise, the Church too was the victim of an ideological frame. However, Vatican Council II opened its door to the already changed world confessing that "the human race has passed from a rather static concept of reality to a more dynamic, evolutionary one"⁵ and accepted the truth that "it is difficult for us to utter a unified message and to put forward a solution which has universal validity."⁶

It appears that Vatican II revealed the nature of the Church's vocation, that the Church exists to show people the path of choosing human identity, of course, always pointing to our destiny. Therefore, faith is not something that is alien to the life of people here on earth; rather, faith is of the earth, concerned with all the humans of the world.

The Universal Truth:

There is only one principle common to all religions and faiths, the golden rule of promoting the good of others. This is the principle of the transformation of the world and of the peoples. Primitive religions too were based on the foundation of this single principle. The Hindu scriptures read "one should never do that to others that which one regards as injurious to one's own self".⁷ For Buddhists "Life is dear to all. Comparing others with oneself, one should neither strike nor cause to strike",⁸ and for Taoists one should regard others' gains as if they were one's own, and their losses in the same way.⁹ The New Testament golden rule is identical with that of Confucius, who said "Do not do to others what you would not like yourself."¹⁰ This principle becomes part of the greatest commandment of Christianity - loving one's neighbour which is equal to loving God. According to Mohammed no one can be a true believer unless one desires for the other that which one desires for self.¹¹ This is the sole immutable principle that determines a unique place for humans and makes them supreme over all creatures.

Evolution of Doctrine?

There can be many religions and creeds but one God; many means but one end. There can never be an unchanging static religion. Therefore the Church should not fear to admit that most of our conclusions in matters of faith and science are tentative

summaries of the present situation.¹² Religions and creeds therefore, need constant renewal according to the signs of the times and places. During change there is no absolute disregarding of the old nor any advantage in accepting all that is new, but dialogue between both understanding the past and marching towards the future.¹³ The guiding principle is the hidden immutable principle that is the core and kernel of faith, which is explicitly stated in all religious scriptures. Love, compassion, self-sacrificing concern for others, kindness and forgiveness constitute the essence of each religious creed. No change in our world view can change this principle. Scientific progress and changing ideologies are always at the service of this axiom. Anything contrary to this is neither part of religion nor the will of the divine.

Catholic Church in Changing times:

The Church is no exception. It has claimed to have immutable and eternal principles based on human person's constitutive elements and essential relations which transcend historical contingencies. But we see the traditional doctrine has changed and some of the old principles are simply untenable and irrelevant. The present ones too need constant renewal to make them credible.

Human experience determines the change in the formulation of beliefs. The values of the Kingdom, and the 'deposit of faith' are to be reinterpreted according to the present situation. Pope John XXIII courageously declared, "The substance of the ancient doctrine of the deposit of faith is one thing, and way in which it is presented is another."¹⁴ He affirmed, "Our duty is not only to guard this precious treasure, as if we were concerned only with antiquity, but to dedicate ourselves with an earnest will and without fear to that work which our era demands of us, pursuing thus the path which the church has followed for twenty centuries."¹⁵ This sort of bold and encouraging statement is really prophetic and itself a Good News to people of our time.

Pope John XXIII was right. Our experiences of the past are not absolute as they belonged to a different time and are conditioned by a particular situation. The signs of the times indicate an inclination towards a historical development of human existence, due to change and transformation.¹⁶ Therefore, there is no one good news that is applicable to all time and places. There should be no going backwards¹⁷ fearing the unavoidable progress humans have made. The responsibility of the Church is to make the scriptures relevant to the present day, in the light of present day human

experience.¹⁸ Scriptures and religions exist for humans and not humans for the religions. Should human experiences fail to see light in the scriptures, then the scriptures are dead. In that case the problem is not with the 'deposit of faith', but with our interpretation of it.

4.1 C) THE CHURCH - CREATIVE FIDELITY

For the Church, to fail to be ever vigilant is to be unfaithful to what Jesus taught and did. The life that he lived and the deeds he performed are the good News to his people. To reinterpret them to modern "structures of sin" is just being creatively faithful to the mission of Christ. Not to trace back the roots of the Church to the life and teaching of Jesus is to make the Church less credible before God and before humans.

Preferential Option for the Poor:

Scrutinizing the signs of the times and interpreting them in the light of the Gospel is the mission of the Church¹⁹ as it has the mandate to speak for troubled humanity with a spirit of unparalleled generosity, to forgive past insults and present oppression, and join together in the work of building a planet that can be a home to all its children.²⁰ Its mission today is to bring about peace and solidarity not among angels in heaven, but among poor humans on earth.

Jesus' life was good news to the poor, the socially marginalized, women and the sick. Today the Church, the mystical body of Christ, carries the same good news with massive external structures, with an unlimited number of regulations, often confusing scripture with 'man made traditions'. A general question is 'who does the Church today identify with?'. If the world is in "structures of sin" then the Church should come out of the trap that it has fallen into. Pope John XXIII cautions: "We must keep firmly to this principle: our faith demands of us a certain sparingness in use, and the Church is obliged to live and administer its own goods in such a way that the Gospel is proclaimed to the poor. If instead the Church appears to be among the rich and the powerful of this world its credibility is diminished"²¹ To make Jesus relevant today is to side with the people he stood by, and to defend the people he defended. Faithfulness to the mission of evangelization expects the Church to be "a truly poor, praying and fraternal community."²²

The poor offer the toughest challenge to the Church structures and the life style of the Christian laity, clergy and religious. It is time to question ourselves "whether our life style exemplifies that sparingness with regard to consumption which we preach to others as necessary in order that so many millions of hungry people throughout the world may be fed."²³

4.1 D) THE CHURCH AND WOMEN

Pope Paul VI made it explicit that "the church is proud to have glorified and liberated woman, and in the course of centuries, in diversity of characters, to have brought into relief her basic equality with men."²⁴ Indeed, it has manifested this through various organizations supported by the Church. The involvement of Christian women, both lay and religious, in various private and public socio-political institutions is a vivid example of the significant role of Christian women in transformation of the society.

Women in Church Tradition:

Jesus was a creative leader and in fact a real revolutionary. Contrary to Jewish traditions Jesus not only accepted and respected women with tenderness and love, but also made women a part of the faith community just by calling a woman daughter of Abraham (cf. Lk 13:10-17). Women accompanied Jesus from Galilee to Jerusalem and witnessed his death and resurrection (cf. Mk. 15:40ff). Even though St. Paul is guilty of advocating the inferiority of women, the Church is always aware of what he wrote to the Galatians. For him there was no distinction between Jew or Gentile, woman or man, slave or free, as all who accepted Christ were equal.

Indeed, the early Church considered all the baptized members to be equal. Historically, women have contributed much to the welfare of the Church in all fields. Women served in the Christian communities as deaconesses. Besides we had enough women preachers in the past, without complicated seminary formation.²⁵ Many don't seem to be aware of this. In addition, the survey on women preachers prove that women preached fascinating and convincing homilies.²⁶ Equally evident is the fact that a few women were ordained to the priesthood by the Czech Catholic bishop's during the era of communist domination,²⁷ admittedly without Rome's agreement. For unknown reasons we do not hear much about these episodes from the Catholic Church writers.

Facts Distorted and Contributions Not Recognized:

Unlike Jesus, the Apostles and Paul were victims of particular ideologies. Despite the fact of women being the first witnesses of Jesus' resurrection, Paul seems to ignore this altogether (cf. 1Cor 15:3-5). It means that the distortion started taking place right from the early church. Jesus happened to be a man and the Church he left behind soon gathered male connotations and reservations. Now we see the Church being highly institutionalized and obviously governed by men down through the centuries. Obviously, it has deep-rooted "man made" traditions, with total exclusion of women in decision making²⁸ which are facts of total discrimination against women.²⁹

Women - Justice in the Church:

Discrimination against women is a product of a male world view. One of the Genesis accounts on the human person claims that woman was created out of man (cf. Gen 2:21-22). Some are bitter that "for too long, women have been stereotyped in the Church, as saintly mothers or wicked temptresses."³⁰ Besides, traditionally some regarded women as the defective copies of men.³¹ This type of limited knowledge of biology conditions the culture, and cultures in turn condition beliefs, which soon enter the category of tradition and subsequently to the 'deposit of faith', hence an infallible dogma. Our tradition then is founded on a primitive understanding to back up our prejudices against women, a remarkably shaky foundation on which to base any lasting opinion. But ignorance and human folly can always be changed with divine light.

Guilt Accepted and Women Praised:

The struggle for women's rights is one of the predominant signs of our times. At this time of the history the Church is proud to have been considered the champion of human rights, the guardian and defender of women's rights, and a powerful advocate of human rights and justice to all peoples. It also demands from everyone to be just oneself first, before one would venture to speak to people about justice.³² It appears to speak for women's rights as well in urging that "women should have their own share of responsibility and participation in the community life of society and likewise of the

Church."³³

There is no doubt that the Church now is quite well aware of its contribution to the degradation of women as much as Pope Paul VI was conscious of its role in liberating women. Along with high sounding words praising women for what they are and for what they have achieved,³⁴ Pope John Paul II has also recognized discrimination against women even in the Church, acknowledging that "Unfortunately, we are the heirs of a history which has conditioned us to a remarkable extent. In every time and place, this conditioning has been an obstacle to the progress of women. Women's dignity has been often unacknowledged and their prerogatives misrepresented; they have often been relegated to the margins of society and even reduced to servitude. This has prevented women from truly being themselves and it has resulted in a spiritual impoverishment of humanity. Certainly it is no easy task to assign the blame for this, considering the many kinds of cultural conditioning which down the centuries have shaped ways of thinking and acting. And if objective blame, especially in particular historical contexts, has belonged to not just a few members of the Church, for this I am truly sorry."³⁵

By advocating justice for women Pope John Paul II has been trying to establish his credentials on women's rights. After Beijing the Church became 'one of the best allies' of women outside the Church. 'Gender equality, opposition to violence against women, the universality of human rights and the dignity of women', seem to stand first in the fight for human rights. Since, woman is a figure to be loved, valued, cherished, protected, honoured, esteemed, and even commended for her genius,³⁶ then charity should begin at home, presumably by giving opportunities for women to speak in the Church.

Ministry - Equality:

There are several feminist movements that are fighting for their rights and for equality. But Dr. Janne Matlary would warn that "Modern Feminism is impoverished in its concept of the human person or rather lack of it. Instead of exploring what

womanhood really is, it seems to assume and offer an aggressive view of man where the two sexes are engaged in a power struggle."³⁷ Hopefully, this will not be the case in Church circles.

One of the possible areas to continue to liberate women in the modern world is to extending ministries to them. Access to ministry in the institutional Church is a justice and peace issue. Justice calls for equality of human dignity. Equality does not mean everybody doing the same ministry. But, there is no ministry that requires gender for its success. Since the tradition of women discrimination is deep rooted on a primitive knowledge of biology, we cannot glory in any tradition that degrades women.³⁸ There is an increasing number of women pursuing doctoral degrees in biblical studies, theology, Christian ethics, pastoral theology and homiletics. Theology is no more the privilege of men. If women can acquire the required amount of knowledge of scripture and other disciplines why can't the institutional Church let the doors be open for women in parish ministry. It is true that to have a theological degree does not ensure that one will preach, or be ordained, or even enter into a religious vocation as a profession.³⁹ Should then gender be a block for proclaiming the word of God to the faithful?

For some if *equality* does not include the possibility of women's ordination, not one syllable of the term equality makes any sense. Women also desire to get rid of this discrimination. They insist that "Women should be visible on all levels of the Church . . . and have to be involved in the formulation of theology and church law, in issuing encyclicals and celebrating liturgy",⁴⁰ as a manifestation of the equality of all believers before God.

Women - Bright Future Promised!

Pope John Paul II himself encourages the Church to transcend any present lopsided tradition that is not in conformity with the Gospel. He accepts the truth that "when it comes to setting women free from every kind of exploitation and domination, the gospel contains an ever-relevant message which goes back to the attitude of Jesus Christ himself."⁴¹ His assurance to women is that "transcending the established norms

of his own culture, Jesus treated women with openness, respect acceptance and tenderness",⁴² so does the Church. The promise firmly lies in the words "May this regret be transformed, on the part of the whole church, into a renewed commitment to fidelity to the Gospel vision."⁴³ A concrete proof of commitment of the Church to the welfare of women is further expressed through the message for 30th World Communication Day (30th May 1996) which will be focussed on promotion of dignity of women.⁴⁴

Need to Change Scripture and theology?

A prophetic role always involves critical fidelity to the religious doctrine presented by the institutional Church and legitimate disobedience to the authority. Over structuring of religion is bad and dogmatism is worse. We discover the roots of prejudice against women deeply hidden in our scriptures and religious language. Scriptures exist for humans and not humans for scriptures. Therefore, the attempt to introduce a gender inclusive or mutual language in the Bible and liturgy should be the first step.

Secondly, modification of the image of God and revision of theological and christological assumptions, including, the use of feminist or liberation hermeneutics for the interpretation of biblical texts should be considered as reading the signs of the times and interpreting them in the light of the gospel. Since the early Christians affirmed that all social political and religious status differences were abolished in the body of Christ the Church (cf. Gal 3:27-29), then we must fall back to what the Church said - "there is in Christ and in the Church no inequality on the basis of race or nationality, social condition or sex . . ."⁴⁵

4.2 CHURCH AND WORLDLY AFFAIRS

The Church is not an agent of the 'other world' as it has "the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the gospel."⁴⁶ Without any ambiguity the Church proclaimed - "the joys and hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or any way afflicted, these too are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts. For theirs is a community composed of men. United in Christ, they are led by the Holy Spirit in their journey to the kingdom of their Father and they have welcomed the news of salvation which is meant for every man. That is why this community realizes that it is truly and intimately linked with mankind and its history."⁴⁷ In the process of scrutinizing the signs of the times the Church *translates* the evangelical message⁴⁸ to make it relevant to a particular time and place. Therefore, evangelization today is incomplete unless it constantly relates the gospel to people's personal, social, cultural and political life. To our modern world Good News is *integral salvation or the complete liberation* of peoples.⁴⁹

World - a Means for Self Identity:

The Church recognizes that the material world influences our faith, hence it declares that "by vivifying the temporal order with the light of Christ it reveals people to themselves; it leads them, therefore, to discover in themselves their own nature, their own dignity, their own end."⁵⁰

Having realized the need to address the temporal order, the Church is bound to address these issues like the present-day ongoing battle for social justice, racial liberation and world economic development, and protection of ecosystem. These are the factors causing the decay of moral and spiritual principles in our contemporary society. It is the duty of every Christian to join the struggle to bring about a just and peaceful society.

4.3 PROPHETIC ROLE OF THE CHURCH

It is said "no structure is without its injustices, and no society without its poor and no civil order without evil If the congregation is to continue its critical witness against the powers that be, then it must not be subservient to any political or social

order. It must jealously keep vigil over its independence"⁵¹ In other words, the church should always be independent of the state for it can be a better observer when it watches from outside. In this context Pope Paul VI firmly assures humanity that the Church does not tolerate any structures that degrade human dignity and undermine the basic principle of human solidarity. According to him, the church is untiring in its fight against "Bureaucratic socialism, technological capitalism, and autocratic democracy."⁵²

4.3 A) THE CHURCH - CRITIQUE OF ECONOMIC MANIPULATION:

"Today the Church is witnessing a crisis underway within society... as in the most tragic periods of its history. It is a question in fact of bringing the modern world into contact with the vivifying and perennial energies of the gospel, a world which exalts itself with its conquests in the technical and scientific fields, but which brings also the consequences of a temporal order which some have wished to reorganize excluding God. This is why modern society is earmarked by great material progress for which there is not a corresponding advance in the moral field."⁵³

The fittest survive by virtue of their force or cunningness. If human dignity consists in being equal, it demands unparalleled generosity to forgive past insults and present oppression, and join together in the work of building the planet that can be a home for all earth's creatures. The only requirement is to "work while it is day". Being conscious of this duty, Pope John Paul II fights for human rights, but always putting basic 'fundamental rights' in the first place, which some believe are next to 'civil rights'.⁵⁴ However, for today's world Pope John Paul II is a prophet.

Structural Adjustment Programme Criticized:

Some economists suggest that economic aid is a deadly poison as it cripples the nation from any progress. The reason being that each country should have its own economic policies of development and not borrowed formulas. These formulas may work in some countries, but will be counterproductive if implemented in others.⁵⁵ But others are of the opinion that aid is necessary but there is a need to challenge the creditors, as the policies of aid are designed to serve their own interest.⁵⁶ At the same time, some optimists recommend that it is time for Africa to invent solutions to its own problems rather than blindly borrowing 'adjustment programmes' that create a pattern

that paralyses the indigenous economy. Some economists also are of the opinion that the redemption of poor countries from the bondage of runaway debts lies in the total writing-off or in radical restructuring of their dysfunctional and destructive debt.⁵⁷

The Church too speaks: It wants first and foremost all countries to adhere to Human Rights. It also recommends greater participation of developing nations in the decision making at the international bodies. Keeping in mind the need of developing the poor nations, it urges the rich nations to transfer a precise percentage of national income to the developing countries as an expression of international solidarity. Moreover, the Church wants the international agencies to consider the question of world poverty, in the fields of agrarian reform and agricultural development, health, education, employment, adequate housing, and to provide sufficient food and protein for the real mental and physical development of children. It also advises the governments to be responsible in decision making and in setting the priorities and investments.⁵⁸

In 1987, the Pontifical Commission on Justice and Peace affirmed in a letter "At the service of the Human Community", the need to adopt an ethical approach to the International Debt crisis. It appealed to the developed countries to show some humanitarian concern toward developing nations, and advised them not to limit themselves to economic and financial concern. It strongly condemned the existing monetary injustice as 'privations incompatible with human dignity.'⁵⁹ Its appeal was for the cancellation of the debt and a change of conditions and modes of loan and repayment.

Being aware of the repercussions of debt on the poor of developing countries, Pope John Paul II recently urged that struggle against causes of hunger must remain a priority. He questioned the international institutions for their failure to relieve the starvation of the millions of poor despite the possibility of producing sufficient food. He remarked, that humanitarian aid was not enough as the greater need was "first and foremost, to recover a sense of the human person."⁶⁰

4.3 B) LIBERATION OF AFRICA FROM ECONOMIC BONDAGE

Most countries of Africa are in economic bondage. Jesus's prophetic voice today is expected to be heard in the Church's commitment not to make any compromise with the shabbiness and rottenness of decaying political and economic systems. The

Church is aware of its universal mission. Reading the signs of the places the Church expressed its concern by calling for change of political structures in Africa as they are the root of all miseries in Africa.⁶¹ Being fully aware of this, Pope John Paul II, appealed to the IMF and the World Bank, and all foreign creditors to alleviate the crushing debts, and to the African Heads of States the pope warned "not to crush their peoples with internal and external debt"⁶²

The leaders too are aware of this reality. Julius Nyerere, the former president of Tanzania, challenged the Christians that "Unless we participate in the rebellion against those social structures and economic organizations which condemn people to poverty, humiliation and degradation, the Church will become irrelevant to people and the Christian religion will degenerate into a set of superstitions accepted by the fearful."⁶³ Mzee Jomo Kenyatta too advised the AMECEA bishops in 1976: "The church is the conscience of society, and today society needs a conscience. Do not be afraid to speak."⁶⁴

4.4 THE VOICE OF THE CHURCH IN AFRICA

The local church has an equal duty to stand by the suffering, even if the Church in Rome is slow to act. The fact is clear in what the Synod of Bishops in 1971 stated - "The examination of conscience which we have made together, regarding the Church's involvement in action for justice, will remain ineffective if it is not given flesh in the life of the local Churches at all their levels."⁶⁵ A clear example where the local Church was active was the instance when the Dutch church led the civilian demonstrations to condemn the persecution of the Jews by the Nazi, which deserved to be called a Christian prophetic stand.⁶⁶ They risked their lives to stand for truth, ready for martyrdom, not for theoretical dogmatic speculations but for the dignity of human life redeemed by Christ. Spreading faith necessarily involves fighting for justice not only in theory but in practice. There are times we need to take a firm stand against injustices to the extent of suffering trial and imprisonment.⁶⁷

The voice of South American leaders cried out: "Friends and Christians, it is time that you realize that our conflict is becoming one gigantic prison, and in some regions, one vast cemetery; that human rights, the grand guidelines of the Gospel, are becoming a dead letter, without force. And all this in order to maintain a system, a structure of dependency, that benefits the mighty privileged persons of a minority of

your land and of our land, at the expense of the poor millions who are increasing throughout the width and breadth of the continent."⁶⁸ Is the cry of Africa any different?

Bishops in Africa - Real Prophets:

Good News is "liberation from everything that oppresses the human person ... in the joy of knowing God and being known by him. All this began during the life of Christ and definitely accomplished by his death and resurrection.. But it must be patiently carried on during the course of History".⁶⁹ The Synod of Africa 1995 is a landmark in the history of the Catholic church in Africa. The Evangelization to Africa involves liberation, and therefore "it is impossible to accept that in Evangelization one could or should ignore the importance of the problems so much discussed today concerning justice, liberation, development and peace in the world."⁷⁰ The serious problems effecting Africa are "increasing poverty, urbanization, international debt, the arms trade, the problem of refugees, and displaced persons, demographic concerns and threats to family, the liberation of women, . . ."⁷¹ The building of the Kingdom of God is impossible here in Africa unless we speak of justice and liberation issues.⁷² The Synod is a positive move in challenging the Heads of States "to guarantee the liberation and development of their people."⁷³ Africa is one of the continents that is very committed to raising its prophetic voice against leaders, governments and the structures that perpetuate injustices. It has been observed that in many African countries gross violation of human dignity and rights are perpetrated. The greater awareness in Africa is the formation of clergy, religious and laity in the matters of justice, especially by being aware of the social teaching of the church.⁷⁴

Critique of Corrupt Political Leaders:

Democracy is a new word in the African dictionaries. It has been usually associated with foreign principles and thus treated with suspicion. Leaders in Africa are considered to be representatives of God for life. As a result there is total autocracy, and exploitation of the poor and helpless. It has been observed that "the greatest challenge of bringing about justice and peace consists in good administration of public affairs in the two interrelated areas of politics and the economy... Many of the continents's problems are the result of a manner of governing often stained by corruption."⁷⁵ However, the church leaders did not hesitate to fight the leaders even though some were threatened with death.

There is a need for a collective voice. Unlawful means of oppression by the political leaders are to be checked with a unified action. Making people aware of the failure of the political leaders and their government policies,⁷⁶ and conscientizing them about the need for political reformation should be the priority of mission in Africa.

Bishops Act:

The process of democracy in Kenya has been furthered by the bishops of Kenya through their constant issuing of pastoral letters, even though some received death threats and others 'risked arrest'. The Kenyan bishops have been vigilant to keep the government on the alert. It always raised concern for the poor, the farmers and the victims of tribal clashes.⁷⁷ The political leaders will not forget the strongest letter against the accumulation of the powers of the president and the urging of a resettlement of the displaced. They reminded the government that it was 'enough of dishonesty, of lies, of self seeking, of bribes and corruption of all kinds, even at the lowliest level' and invited the politicians, ministers, and the president, to conversion.⁷⁸

The Malawian bishops dared to challenge the dictatorial rule of Banda in 1992. One of the effects of the pastoral letters⁷⁹ emphasized health and education and participation in the government. Even though one of the missionary bishops, Monsignor J. Roche, had to pay the price for his prophetic voice,⁸⁰ it shook the dictatorial government and paved the way for democracy, after 30 years of dictatorship by Banda.

The prophetic stance of the Archbishop of Kisangani against Mobutu of Zaire,⁸¹ and the pastoral letter of the bishops of southern Africa, urging for critical analysis of the political situation, had much impact. The formation of more and more justice and peace commissions to be guides to action, by training clergy and religious and lay leaders,⁸² is the outcome and fruit of such a prophetic voice.

Greater Need to Be African:

As the Church in Rome cannot assess the real situation there should be more autonomy for the African Church to come up with solutions to their own socio-political and economic problems without waiting for orders from Rome. In the words of Aylward Shorter the Church should consider the signs of the places as much as signs of the times. This means the church needs greater decentralization for an effective

Evangelization, both to spread the message of the gospel, and to serve the people of a particular place, in a unique way as the signs of the places indicate.⁸³ Only then Christianity and Good News will be the good news to a particular place.

4.5 GOOD NEWS OF JUSTICE AND PEACE

The social teaching of the Catholic church reached its climax when the Synod of Bishops in 1971 made struggle for justice and peace the "constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or, in other words, the church's mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation."⁸⁴ This is evident as the Church set up the Pontifical Commission for Justice and Peace with a "mission of awakening all within the church to our common responsibilities for peace, international justice and development."⁸⁵ Regretting a failure to implement education on justice, one of the bishops of Burundi confessed, "The church was called to fulfill its mission of reconciliation through educating the entire population on justice, but it was guilty of remaining silent too long. If we had taken action 25 to 30 years ago, if we had the same courage as in recent years, then probably what is happening today might never have come about."⁸⁶

4.5 A) CHURCH'S RESPONSIBILITY - WITNESSES

Ever since *Rerum Novarum*, many encyclicals outlined the principles of 'see and judge' but Pope Paul VI urges every Christian to put all the Church's teaching into practice - in other words, to act. He maintained that the Church "has the duty to proclaim the liberation of millions of human beings . . . The duty of assisting the birth of this liberation, of giving witness to it, of ensuring that it is complete. This is not foreign to evangelization."⁸⁷ According to him, the Church's responsibility is twofold: first to enlighten minds to discover the truth and to find the right path to follow; and secondly to take part in action to spread the energies of the Gospel,⁸⁸ by being witnesses both by word and by deed to the new heaven and the earth.

Responsibility of Minister:

The ministers are servant disciples of Christ, always ready to guide the laity in their Christian living. They are expected to be prepared to listen to the laity and

consider their wishes, and acknowledge their experience and competence in different fields of human activity. Therefore, the Church demands from the pastors, that they should recognize and promote the dignity as well as the responsibility of the laity and encourage them to take initiative, by allowing them freedom and room for action. It alerts the pastors that they "respectfully acknowledge that just freedom which belongs to everyone in this earthly city."⁸⁹

By virtue of this responsibility, a minister is to enlighten peoples' minds in order to assist them to discover the truth and guide the laity to find a right path to follow. In a world that needs liberation, there is a greater need of ministers who are in constant touch with the laity under their concern.

But this is not so on many occasions. A Cuban lady seems to be honest in narrating that "the parish priest would read the bible to us, and tell us not to worry about our poverty and misery, because God was storing up rewards for us in heaven, . . . but one day Fidel came down that road, and gave us all this"⁹⁰, the modern homes, the medical clinic, the school etc. The likely question is what need do we have of the church? This indicates that the minister had neither discovered the truth nor was able to show the path. In a world where individuals are deprived, degraded, disrespected, mistreated, looked down upon, dehumanized, our efforts to make them feel accepted and respected itself is the manifestation of justice.⁹¹ Whether our ministers able to form the laity in matters of justice is a question much debated at the present time.

Another great challenge to pastors and all ministers is the development of natural and social sciences. The Church cautions the ministers - "Secular culture and even sacred science are advancing at an unprecedented rate in our time. Priests are therefore urged to adequate and continuous perfection of their knowledge of things divine and human. In this way they will prepare themselves to enter with greater advantage into dialogue with their contemporaries."⁹² Are the majority of our ministers well informed about what is going on outside the liturgical celebrations? Or are they just content with theology?

Duty of Laity:

To be a Christian is to be a Christ to the world. As Jesus demanded from each of his followers, every member of the faithful is obliged to contribute "for the

sanctification of the world and from within in the manner of leaven."⁹³ Since the Gospel is an invitation to a relationship with God's Spirit and to share divine life,⁹⁴ our faith is not be a private affair and cannot be reduced to discussion at the spare time, rather it should permeate the public life, in politics, place of education, place of work, etc. In other words faith should be mixed with every day activities.⁹⁵ To achieve this an individual Christian is to be convinced of one's role in the Church.

Against the traditional practice of laity passively expecting the clergy to know everything, including all Christian mysteries, the Vatican II reminds them "the laity should not consider that their pastors always have the expertise indeed to provide a concrete and ready answer to every problem which arises, even the most serious ones, or that this is their mission", instead, every one has to courageously exercise their competence⁹⁶ in the areas of service in the world in a manner it bears witness to divine love, justice, peace and freedom.

Pope Paul VI too urged all the faithful, specially the laity, to witness to the Gospel, 'without waiting passively for orders and directives, to take the initiative freely and to infuse a Christian spirit into the mentality, customs, laws and structures of the community.'⁹⁷ He further asserts that "It is not enough to recall principles, state intentions, point to crying injustices and utter prophetic denunciations; these words will lack real weight unless they are accompanied for each individual by a livelier awareness of personal responsibility and by effective action."⁹⁸ He elaborated that people should engage "with all their energy in the effort and struggle to overcome everything which condemns them to remain on the margin of life: famine, chronic disease, illiteracy, poverty, injustices in international relations and especially in commercial exchanges, situations of economic and cultural neo-colonialism."⁹⁹ Indeed, Pope Paul VI sounds quite brave and modern in evaluating the concept of evangelization.

The Church reminds that , despite our earnest expectations of the reward of eternal life, we need to gain it by acting in various possible ways, means and methods,¹⁰⁰ so that every Christian can become the leaven of the society, the salt of the earth and the light of the world. The Church reminds us that, our aspiration of a better world must stimulate our concern for this one as Christians are able to give some kind of foreshadowing of the new age.¹⁰¹ Can Christians claim to have manifested that lifestyle so that the world sees in us a shadow of heaven?

4.5 B) GOOD NEWS TODAY - JUSTICE

It is believed that one of the reasons why the church did not make much impression in public affairs was that it talked a great deal about love and not nearly enough about justice.¹⁰² However, those who found that the Bible is not neutral made great progress in pursuit of justice. Proclaiming the Word of God should not consist in evaluating how the Word speaks to unjust situations, but how the conditions influence and affect our understanding of God's Word.¹⁰³ So, the ability to read the signs of the times and to read the Bible accordingly is the beginning of Evangelization.

Justice - Development of All:

The signs of the times indicate a lack of respect for human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, namely the need for the development of people in the economic, social, cultural, educational, and health fields.¹⁰⁴ Christians work out their salvation by deeds of justice. This is the message of all the encyclicals and apostolic letters of the popes since *Rerum Novarum*. Justice is attained through the development of all people, which is the perfect manifestation of our faith.¹⁰⁵

Justice in Action:

Good News today is action, not words. Action on behalf of justice and participation in socio-economic and political transformation of the world, and the right to development is a vocation, and a process of salvation.¹⁰⁶ Since the development of all peoples is connected to salvation, promotion of justice and transformation of the world is indispensable responsibility of the Church. The Good News of salvation today therefore, is a message of liberation from "structures of sins."

Justice in the Church:

What is required are concrete guidelines for justice, and to begin the practice of justice within the church, through a spirit of dialogue, promotion of the laity, respecting women, and through a simple life style for all Christians. Church structures, land, a luxurious living which looks like a 'higher level of consumer spending' challenge to ask ourselves "whether our life style exemplifies that sparingness with regard to consumption which we preach to others as necessary in order that so many

millions of hungry people throughout the world may be fed"¹⁰⁷ This challenge and the power of these words will remain a potential for the transformation of society. The real prophetic statement of the Synod of 1971 declared "we must firmly keep to this principle: our faith demands of us a certain sparingness in use, and the Church is obliged to live and administer its own goods in such a way that the Gospel is proclaimed to the poor. If instead the church appears to be among the rich and the powerful of this world its credibility is diminished."¹⁰⁸

Fullness of Justice - Peace:

According to *Gaudium et Spes* "Peace is not merely the absence of war. Nor can it be reduced solely to the maintenance of a balance of power between enemies. Nor is it brought about by dictatorship. Instead, it is rightly and appropriately called 'an enterprise of justice' (Is. 32:7). Peace results from that harmony built into human society by its divine Founder, and actualized by men as they thirst after ever greater justice."¹⁰⁹ Pope Paul VI in his Encyclical letter *Populorum Progressio*, maintained that peace is real only when there is development of all people in the spirit of solidarity.¹¹⁰ He insisted that peace grows out of just societal structures, particularly economic structures, in which all citizens participate. Accordingly, to be a Christian is not just living a peaceful life in isolation. It entails struggle, struggle to alter the course of the history of injustice. All along the process brings discomfort, which is an element of living the gospel. Therefore, development is the new name for peace.¹¹¹ Consequently, it is implied that the goods and resources of the earth are given by God primarily to all people, and unless we all share them in a spirit of fellowship there will be no peace in the world. This new element of peace is for meditation for all Christians, both pastors and laity.

4.5 C) JUSTICE IS SPIRITUALITY

The Christian understanding of Justice consists essentially in love and respect for the other. Love for the other is manifested in charity. Spirituality, on the other hand, signifies the human search for the meaning of life, or an intense desire for intimacy with the divine.¹¹² Spirituality can also be understood as the action of the Spirit in the human person. In other words, justice is fellowship with humans in action, spirituality is

companionship with the divine through the Spirit. Since the greatest commandment stresses the need to manifest our love for God by being in fellowship with our neighbour (cf. Jas 2:14-26), justice and spirituality form the two sides of the same coin.

Christians, being guided by the Spirit working for justice is the manifestation of union with the divine. Since Christian love of God and justice for our fellow human persons cannot be separated,¹¹³ charity becomes the concrete expression of spirituality. So, Christian spirituality then is no private piety but public action.

Spirituality is Struggle:

Today we need a broader understanding of spirituality, as we see "irruption of the exploited classes, marginalized cultures and humiliated races, 'expressed revolutionary struggles, political uprising and liberation movements' . . . 'a world that is not Christian, bursting into history with a voice of its own, demanding justice and equality, reaffirming its age-old religions and cultures and challenging the West-oriented and narrowly Christian understanding of the world and history.'"¹¹⁴ To accept the challenge and join the poor in their struggle for justice is an articulation of spirituality, and the core of Christianity.

4.6 ECOLOGY AND THEOLOGY

Denis Edwards, evidently an ecologist, observes that the fight against the causes of poverty and homelessness, the worldwide feminist movement, and the growing ecological consciousness are the dominating signs of the times.¹¹⁵ Indeed, the wanton ravaging of creation is an urgent theme of protest today. There is a need to see the whole of creation as one single reality. Our claim to be the image and likeness of God, and the injunction to subdue the earth has led to unjustified domination and crazy mismanagement of resources, forgetting the demand to be just and honest co-creators of God's creation.¹¹⁶ Moreover, some blame 'Western civilization with its Christian heritage' for making such a terrifying contribution, by refusing to see the interrelatedness and the fragility of the life systems of the planet.¹¹⁷ It is only now, that the church is becoming aware of 'certain phenomena' of reckless industrialization, exploitation and pollution of the natural environment, and invites nations to a 'rational and honest planning'.¹¹⁸

These years, the awareness of the ecological crisis and environmental insecurity is growing. The Church desires that believers of all religions and all people of good will have to show concern towards ecological problems, as the obligation to "safeguard the environment and natural resources concerns the entire human community: individuals, associations, states, international organizations, both governmental and non-governmental."¹¹⁹ The issue is so serious that it is appropriate and even "necessary to arouse the awareness of the public and especially of political leaders"¹²⁰ to work together for the good of future generations.

Rereading the Scriptures:

Christians need to view the connection between theology and ecology by merging St. John's prologue 1:1-5 and the salvation account of Paul in Col.1:15-17. This will take us back to the creation narratives. Christ not only restored the image of God in humans, but also revitalized the whole of the universe. Reinterpreting salvation in the Gospel light makes us see creation in the totality of things, which means, there is only one creation, one community of creatures, living in harmony and security with one another. Since all creatures are the creation of God, the extinction of any one by human recklessness "is to silence for ever a divine voice."¹²¹

Some associate following Christ with caring for fellow humans and creatures. Therefore, ethics includes caring for soils, plants, animals, and all species. For some the extinction of various species is a concern as important as pro-life. They observe that "there has been no in-depth theological reflection on what the extinction might mean for the community of the living and for God's sovereignty over creation. For the Church that glories in being pro-life, this is a serious omission."¹²²

Creation to Be Worshiped?

Some religions like Hinduism believe that creation is to be worshiped, as God is present in creation. It also stresses the fact that human beings should prefer to use less of the things of this world. Most Christians will never agree with such principles.¹²³ In fact, Christians rightly believe that God alone is worthy of worship, as he is the Creator of all. But we go wrong when we manipulate the rest of creation for our benefit

alone. Christians are not fully convinced of the right of other creatures to exist. Saints and mystics like St. Francis of Assisi and St. John of the Cross are the best guides to teach Christians a proper approach to creatures and the universe. The ecologically miserable state we are in today may give some light to borrow a more noble approach to God's creation.

For Pope John Paul II ecological crisis is a moral problem. He has expressed the Church's serious concern towards ecological crisis primarily by placing it in a broader perspective of human dignity and universal solidarity of all humans and whole creation.¹²⁴ Therefore, it should necessarily be dealt with in a context of "a more internationally coordinated approach to the management of the earth's goods."¹²⁵ The obligation of respecting the order of the universe and preserving the goodness and beauty of creation is the responsibility of individuals, peoples, States and the international communities. The solution is a process as it is connected with the broader context of the search for peace in the modern world. Pope John Paul II remarks that ecological problem has a message from the earth and its atmosphere that "there is an order in the universe which must be respected, and that the human person, endowed with the capability of choosing freely, has a grave responsibility to preserve this order for the well being of future generations."¹²⁶

Population - an Ecological Problem?

When we speak of the future of our planet, many ecologists include overpopulation as a major problem. From 1950 to 1988 the population has doubled.¹²⁷ Given the facts and figures, the religions have been apologetic or defensive in turning down the claim. Many wonder how can any religion refuse to acknowledge the stream of rapidly increasing population while it has been proved beyond reasonable doubt that production cannot keep pace with the population growth.¹²⁸ This refusal to acknowledge the facts does not encourage the people to respond positively.

Taking into account the high population growth rate in sub-Sahara Africa and Asia, many ecologist suggest that we need to consider this issue as important as our pro-life concern. Even though the Church does not denounce the problem of overpopulation, it has to be more enthusiastic to propose possible as well as more

practical means other than natural family planning. It has been observed that there is a growing danger of deficiency in the general development process, health care, education and therefore, hazardous to the overall socio-political organization of developing countries.¹²⁹ As some one stated "the question which we have to face is not whether population growth will slow down or not, but whether we plan to use our intelligence to do it rationally and humanely through foresight and dynamic leadership. Should we try to avoid awful suffering and dislocation, or should we let the present growth rate continue unimpeded until we reach the point of disaster? Our future is in our own hands."¹³⁰ Perhaps, areas like population explosion should get more attention and cooperation from local Churches, so that the signs of the times really gain as much concern as the signs of the times.

4.7 FIGHT FOR 'PEACE BE WITH YOU'

Peace is the great legacy left behind by the risen Christ. The signs of the times also indicate that the more important form of the evangelizing mission of the church in the modern world lies in its efforts to bring about peace. Since peace is the fullness of justice, there should be a unified fight to bring about justice, from which follows peace.

Common Enemy:

The mandate to proclaim the message of peace is the obligation of every Christian. The Kingdom of God is a process of establishing peace here on earth. The modern world presents unjust structures that jeopardize the possibility of a kingdom of justice, peace, and universal solidarity. Due to modern technology, the causes of the threat to peace are many. Nations spending money on destructive weapons, and wealthy nations dispersing their money to tame poor countries are equally menacing.

Unity of the Mission:

A new world demands new evangelization. The Church too needs a re-imaging of its mission. The task is great, perhaps needing a powerful prophetic voice of Jesus. In these circumstances, the Christian vocation is to proclaim the good news to the poor who are exploited by the rich; to the prisoners of oppression; to the powerful who are

ignorant of truth. Humans have become slaves of the products of their own thoughts and deeds. To liberate them all is "to save and renew every creature so that all things might be restored in Christ so that in him all people might form one family and one people of God."¹³¹

Ways of Bringing about Liberation:

Peace is a product of love, and the fullness of justice. When everyone learns to respect and love the other, there is a witness to our fellowship with each other and with God. As God is kind to all, we are invited to resemble him in the modern world. Our God does not expect offerings and sacrifices, but a loving heart. As the prophet Micah reminds us, the Lord requires of us but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with our God (cf. Mic 6:8).

"To do Justice" is to demonstrate in deeds of sharing, in a spirit of fellowship as if we belong to a single natural family. As the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states, we are all born free and have equal right to grow as humans with equal rights to use the resources of this earth. But the vast majority of the population are in chains today. The principle of solidarity has been totally neglected by the politically powerful and the economically mighty. The cry of the poor and the socio-economically marginalized is a prophetic voice, proclaiming the sin against human dignity. In a world full of selfishness and individualism, we can create a new world only:

"by fostering a society
based on creed
instead of greed,
on systematic unselfishness
instead of systematic selfishness
on gentle personalism
instead of rugged individualism ..."¹³²

Nonviolence:

"To love kindness" is to treat the other person as being as important as oneself. This precept is another form of the 'Golden Rule' that speaks of not doing to the other what one would not want done to oneself. Here lies the noble principle of nonviolence.

Unfortunately, the present day situation confirms that a resort to violence is all too readily taken as a means to resolve conflicts. Being the most powerful weapon of struggling against any sort of injustice, kindness to fellow human being is an act of worship to the divine. For Gandhi, nonviolence was the greatest means to bring about justice and Truth. Establishing its boundless character he declared - "Nonviolence is a universal principle and its operation is not limited by a hostile environment. Indeed, its efficacy can be tested only when it acts in the midst of and in spite of opposition. Our nonviolence would be a hollow thing and worth nothing, if it depended for its success on the goodwill of the authorities."¹³³ For him it was the only means to achieve socio-political liberation.

For successful applications of this principle, practical nonviolent weapons may be numbered under three categories - nonviolent protests and persuasion; noncooperation gestures in social, economic, and political fields; and nonviolent interventions.¹³⁴ When the principles of justice and kindness are extended toward human beings and towards all the living and non-living creation of God, there arises a worshipping community. So then, our faith too is in need of revision in the new horizons of a progressively changing world.¹³⁵

4.8 UNIVERSAL RELIGION - GLOBAL VILLAGE

Technical civilization has brought our global civilization with a possibility either to live and let live, or to cause global annihilation. It is said, 'injustice in any place is a threat to justice everywhere'. "The situation of the human family at the end of the 20th century presents a picture of vivid contrasts. There is a widespread and intense yearning for peace and well-being, while on every continent ethnic, nationalistic and economic interests continue to spur rivalry and violence."¹³⁶ Unfortunately, this is obvious in many parts of the globe.

The first phase of technological progress came to an end with World War II, after the global destruction. And now it is believed that the rebuilding of the world is possible if we try to know and understand the meaning of progress, transformation and evolution. Evidently, technology does not comprehend the meaning of these terms but religions do. If religions emphasize human dignity, human vision for good, right, truth,

justice, peace, freedom, love and transformation, it is the beginning of a reconstruction of our already decaying world.¹³⁷ However, the prophet Amos warns against any religious formalism and ritualism, as opposed to their true nature:

"I hate, I scorn your festivals,
I take no pleasure in your solemn assemblies.
I do not look at your communion sacrifices of fat cattle.
Spare the din of your chanting,
let me hear none of your strumming on lyres,
but justice flow like water
and uprightness like a never-failing stream!" (Amos 5:21-24).

In other words, religions are not institutions of ritualism but agents of justice, peace and solidarity among humans, manifested concretely through sharing the goods and resources of the world,¹³⁸ without which religions are empty and virtually worthless. Religions then deserve to be called justice bearers, peacemakers and in a sense homemakers.

Justice and peace through dialogue:

Before we speak of dialogue all Christians should first be committed to unity among themselves. If Pope Paul VI insisted on Christians becoming witnesses to justice, Pope John Paul II argues that witness depends on unity among the Christians. Unity is not understood in coming under one single structure but in accepting the unity of mission.¹³⁹ By unity I do not mean all Christians holding a uniform doctrine, but a sincere commitment to a common mission of spreading the message of peace left behind by the Risen Christ.

The Church views dialogue with religions as essential to the right ordering of society. Since all religions seek peace, dialogue among religions is of immense help, or perhaps an absolute necessity. The Church advises that the faithful labour and collaborate with others in the proper regulation of the affairs of economic and social life. To come together to share the treasures of our religions with others and to form one single human community where the adherents of different religions can listen to each other, and agree on some form of common values, seems to be the only means to convince the modern consumerist society about the dignity of the human person.

Pope John Paul II is a realist in his vision. He is of the opinion that "solving serious national and international problems is not just a matter of economic production, or of juridical or social organizations, but calls for ethical and religious values. There is hope that the many people who profess religion will also contribute to providing the necessary ethical foundation. But the Christian churches and the world religions will have a preeminent role in . . . building a society worthy of the human person."¹⁴⁰ This is the foundation of the global village.

Religious dialogue is to agree upon a common value system, that respects human life, defends human dignity and upholds human rights. These are irreplaceable if we want to live a decent and peaceful life. It is certain that "no human life is possible together without a world ethic for the nations; no peace among the nations without peace among the religions; no peace among the religions without dialogue among the religions."¹⁴¹

There is no excuse for Christians not to participate in socio-economic life, as Evangelization does not consist in proclaiming the Good news of peace with clarity, and challenging other religions, but by giving witness to the Truth in struggling to achieve a life of dignity and justice, which are the ingredients of the Kingdom of Heaven.

4.9 HEAVEN ON EARTH - A RAY OF HOPE!

A new earth can be created if only all individuals and nations show willingness to cooperate. Human creativity is the primary resource of construction of a new society. Again Pope John Paul II confirms that human intelligence enables us to discover the earth's productive potential and the many different ways in which human needs can be satisfied. He cautions that "important virtues are involved in this process such as diligence, industriousness, prudence in undertaking reasonable tasks, reliability and fidelity in interpersonal relationships, as well as courage in carrying out decisions which are difficult and painful but necessary, both for overall working of a business and in meeting possible set-backs."¹⁴²

The **Global Village** is not a place but an atmosphere whereby humans learn to share their views and communicate their deep aspirations with each other. Through dialogue lies the possibility of incorporating all our intellectual and spiritual forces,

those of statesmen, of citizens, of religious leaders, to put an end to violence and hatred and seek out the paths of peace. This can be achieved only when every nation puts aside nationalistic selfishness and ambitions to dominate other nations by cultivating an immeasurable reverence for the whole of the human community and advance towards greater maturity. If human beings succeed in attaining this attitude the prophet Isaiah's vision of a peaceful society will be realized, where -

"The wolf and the lamb will feed together,
the lion shall eat straw like the ox;
and dust shall be the serpent's food.
They shall not hurt or destroy
in all my holy mountain, says the Lord."¹⁴³

NOTES

1. *Lumen Gentium* 35, In: Walter M. Abbott (ed), **The Documents of Vatican II**, (New York: The America Press, 1966). Unless stated otherwise, all subsequent references to Vatican II documents will be taken from the same edition, and will be cited by their Latin names.

2. Cf. *Lumen Gentium* 8

3. Cf. Richard M. Gula, *Reason Informed by Faith*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), p. 31

4. Cf. Terence P. Brinkman, *John Paul II's Theology of the Human Person and Technologized Patenting*, In: Albert Moraczewski, et. al. (eds), **Technological Power and the Person**, (Missouri: The Pope John Center, 1983), p. 354

5. G. S. 5, In: Austin Flannery (ed), op. cit.

6. Pope Paul VI, *Octogesima Adveniens* 5, In: Joseph Gremillion (ed), **The Gospel of Peace and Justice**, (New York: Orbis Books, 1980). (Unless stated otherwise, all further references to Encyclicals will be taken from the above mentioned edition, and will be cited by their abbreviations as found on page 623).

7. John Hick, *The Universality of the Golden Rule*, In: Joseph Runzo (ed), **Ethics, Religion, and the Good Society**, (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), p. 158

8. Ibid., p.159

9. Cf. Ibid., p.159

10. Ibid., p. 159. See also Lk 6:31

11. Cf. John Hick, op. cit., p. 159

12. Cf. Richard M. Gula, op. cit., p. 38

13. Cf. Richard M. Gula, op. cit., p. 36

14. *Pope John Convoles the Council*, In: Walter M. Abbott (ed), **The Documents of Vatican II**, (New York: The America Press, 1966), p. 715
15. Ibid.
16. Cf. Richard M. Gula, op. cit., p. 37
17. Cf. James Hitchcock, *Catholicism and Modernity: A Time for Decision*, **The Catholic World Report**, Vol 5, December 1995, pp. 40-45
18. Cf. G. S. 46
19. Cf. G. S. 4
20. Cf. Franz Bockel, *Fundamental Moral Theology*, (Dublin: Gill and Macmillian, 1980), p. 153
21. Synod of Bishops 1971, *Justice in the World* 47, In: Joseph Gremillion (ed), op. cit. (All further references will be cited by the abbreviation J W)
22. Synod of Bishops 1974, *Evangelization of the Modern World* 12, In: Joseph Gremillion (ed), op. cit., p. 597. (All further references will be cited by the abbreviation E M W)
23. Ibid. 48
24. Pope Paul VI, *To the Peoples of Africa* 36, In: Joseph Gremillion (ed), op. cit., p. 424
25. Cf. Ibid., pp. 15-83
26. Cf. David Albert Farmer & Edwina Hunter (eds), *And Blessed is She*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1990), p. 90
27. Ibid., p. 1616
28. Cf. Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, *Discipleship of Equals*, (London: SCM Press, 1993), p. 143
29. For detailed historical development of women's ministry and the reasons for discrimination against women by the institutional Church read Ruth B. Edwards, *The Case for Women Ministry*, (London: SPCK, 1991). This account will serve as a distinctive and constructive contribution to Christian understanding of ministry in the modern world.
30. Shirley Williams, *Women respond to the Pope*, **The Tablet**, Vol. 249, 15 July 1995, p. 920
31. Ibid.
32. Cf. J W 39
33. Ibid., 42
34. For a sincere appreciation of women's dignity and women's rights read Pope John Paul II, *Dignity and Vocation of Women (Dignitatem Mulieris)*, (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1992).
35. Pope John Paul II, *A letter to Women*, **The Tablet**, Vol. 249, 15 July 1995, p. 917
36. Cf. Editorials, *Words and Actions on women*, **The Tablet**, Vol. 249, 12 August 1995, p. 1015
37. Janne Matlary, *Dare to be different*, **The Tablet**, Vol. 249, 13 January 1996, pp. 44-46

38. Cf. Avery Dulles, *Tradition says No*, **The Tablet**, Vol. 249, 9 December 1995, p. 1572
39. Cf. David Albert Farmer & Edwina Hunter (eds), op. cit., pp. 98-240
40. Elisabeth Schusler Fiorenza, op. cit., p. 88
41. Pope John Paul II, *A letter to Women*, op. cit., p. 917
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CONCLUSION

God created the whole of the universe in the beginning, and formed human beings in his own image and likeness to crown the act of creation. God blessed them and gave them the injunction to till the earth, a garden which God created for all his creatures. The facts and figures of our times manifest the hard life for future humanity on the earth. The human person's freedom, creativity and greed are the root of the decay of this planet. Instead of realizing the image of God in humans, human beings have distorted the image. Now many Christians wonder, whether Christ really redeemed fallen humanity!

The development of science will continue, it cannot be blocked. But religions of the world can assist the progress towards human development and destination. Science and technology has progressed, but religions of the world have not progressed proportionately. The whole universe is evolving, science proves it. But religions should evolve too. Vatican Council II attempted to up-date the doctrine of the Church according to the signs of the times, but it has hardly been implemented. What we need is to read the 'Good News of Salvation' in the light of the contemporary signs of the times.

Jesus was sent to remind human persons of their origin and destiny. He preached the equality of all human persons and demanded that we live in solidarity with each other. He gave easy access to God by advocating the love of God and telling us that love of neighbour is the highest form of worshipping God (cf. Mk 12:28-34). The Church continues to proclaim the same message, but in a different place and at a different time. Hence it is challenged to make Jesus's message relevant to all humanity. How can we do this other than looking back to our origins?

The Vatican Council II is a landmark in the Church's attempt to make Jesus relevant to the modern world. Unfortunately, many have not realized the treasures the Vatican documents, especially *Gaudium et Spes*, have presented to today's world. The subsequent encyclicals of the popes are a tremendous contribution to human progress.

But the Church and the religions of the world should come together to read the signs of the times collectively, so that all discern the need of transformation and agree upon some general norms and values, so that religions can guide and lead modern humanity to its destiny.

What we are striving at is a **global community**. The foundation and the corner stone of that community are Human Rights. There cannot be fullness of human life without the dignity of everyone being equally respected and everyone's rights restored. This is justice. Globalization does not make any sense unless attempts are made to solve the problems of inequality in the world. Human Rights should always transcend socio-economic, political and religious boundaries. This truth has been continually reflected in the social teaching of the Church. It has been increasingly shaped by the primacy of love. This love is at the heart of the virtue of justice, and brings the actions of justice to their fullest potential, meaning, and life. Secondly, love is a motivation to act on behalf of justice and the fundamental option of love produces moral action.

In my essay I have attempted to stress the scriptural background for the dignity of the human person which is the good news for all reasons and for all seasons. Human dignity consists in being free and responsible. Each individual is free and has equal dignity and value and is bound to live a life worthy of God's image. This is the only ground on which we can put a firm foundation for a better world.

During these years we have seen overwhelming generosity from the Christian countries, not so much for love for Jesus, but on humanitarian concern, so that development in some nations can change the standard of living of the poor countries. Having outlined the most alarming signs of the times I have highlighted the contribution of the Church to the world, specially in the transformation of social, economic and political life of peoples. I am of the opinion that no other religion has done so much good to humanity than Christianity. In a very special way, the Catholic Church too is becoming more and more conscious of its responsibility to speak for the temporal welfare of the peoples. In a world torn apart by individualism, greed, and manipulation of the poor, the Spirit speaks to the Church to be aware of its prophetic role to speak to concrete situations such as economic slavery. My appeal now is for unity among

Christians and a greater cooperation between religions of the world to solve the crisis of the modern world.

The area to begin collaboration is the whole question of justice and peace in the modern world. As my work points to a modern understanding of religion and spirituality, I did not attempt to solve the problems I mentioned in chapter three. My thrust for all those who read this essay is to come up with some concrete action-oriented suggestions so that our religions may preach a salvation here on earth, rather than point out to an imaginary paradise, whose shadow is not reflected here.

The notion of paradise presented by science and religion is different. The third millennium needs a paradise presented by our faith. Only faith can give light to human calamity created by human injustices. "For faith throws a new light on all things and makes known the full ideal which God has set for man, thus guiding the mind towards solutions that are fully human."¹ All these facts I hope will stimulate a more determined search for a shared belief in the divinity of humanity and a conviction of the need of greater solidarity among all, specially cooperation in understanding the beauty and value of this planet earth as our common and unique home. Our God wants to see -

"justice flow like water,
and the uprightness like a never-failing stream."(Amos 5:24)

NOTES

1. G. S. 11

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