

TANGAZA COLLEGE

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN AFRICA

FACULTY OF THEOLOGY

***CHURCH'S FACING THE CHALLENGE
OF POVERTY***

A CASE STUDY OF KOROGOCHO SLUM

*This long Essay paper is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a
Bachelor of Arts Degree in Religious Studies.*

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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. *Alain P. MAKAYA.*

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my mother *Veronique Ngoma*, to Father *Alex Zanotelli* and to the
People of *Korogocho*.

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

In this modest work, we are going to present the *Church's Facing the Challenge of Poverty* especially the case of *Korogocho* Slum. The first reason of choosing this topic is that we are interested in the social, economic and political problems going on today in Kenya, particularly in Nairobi. The second reason is the fact that the problems of injustice, according to our experience, find their apex in the slums, in our case *Korogocho*. All these social problems and their effects on human life are summarized as caused by *Poverty*, which is going to be our main theme throughout this long essay.

In the first chapter, we are going to give a short explanation of poverty in all its forms. The second chapter will be the facts on poverty as lived and experienced in *Korogocho*. We will also talk of urbanization as the backbone of the birth of the slums; and the last section will be on the presence of the Church in *Korogocho*. The third chapter is going to portray God's intervention on behalf of the exploited, the oppressed through prophets, Jesus of Nazareth, and the Early Christian Community. Finally our last chapter will be the mission of the Church which is the hope of this research: The *Church's Facing the Challenge of Poverty in Korogocho*.

Therefore, our final aim is, first of all, to be aware of the problems or sufferings caused by the different sort of injustices or rather the presence of unjust structure which many people are living in (e.g. *Korogocho*). Secondly, to take this as a challenge for us lay people and religious and also as a challenge for the Church at large.

CHAPTER 1. WHAT IS POVERTY

0. INTRODUCTION

From the beginning of human existence poverty has been a companion of human beings in every society. However poverty seems to be a source of concern for modern man and woman, and especially the Church. Thus our first chapter will help us discover what is poverty and its various implications in the social and economical arena in human life. So this present chapter will be dedicated to the various definitions of poverty, its types and causes.

1. POVERTY. QUID?

By virtue of many meanings the concept of poverty has been attributed along human history. Therefore, there are variations in its definition. According to the study reports of the World Bank in 1994, and AMREF-GOK in 1997, poverty is defined as *"a multidimensional phenomenon comprising economic, political, physiological and psychological deprivation. Its manifestations are vulnerability, powerlessness, humiliation, social inferiority, physical weakness, isolation, lack of assets, and inaccessibility to basic needs"*.¹

And far from viewing poverty with a certain fatalism by excluding from it any religious and human ideal Gustavo Gutierrez provides us with much a more complete definition of poverty as *"...a subhuman situation. Concretely, to be poor means to die*

¹ Aloys Ayako, *Review of Poverty in Kenya*, (Nairobi: Action Aid, 1997), 6.

of hunger, to be illiterate, to be exploited by others, not to know that you are being exploited, not to know that you are a person".²

In addition, poverty in Africa might be a situation where one cannot afford the basic goods and services such as food, clothing, housing, transport, health and education. It consists of lower global expectancy, lower salary, higher population growth and highest overall mortality rates. It is, therefore, a state of hopelessness to sustain one's life.

In the circumstances, the poor are a disabled lot who lack land, livestock and farm equipment, who cannot both participate in the political process and provide decent burial to their deceased, who have many mouths to feed but live in poor shelters, and who suffer from alcohol abuse or drunkardness, child labour, and insecurity. Being so powerless, the poor are unable to have easy access to services and goods allocated to the society of the rich by the rich. Hence they are susceptible to a permanent defenselessness, stress which likely give room to the loss self-worth, inferiority complexes, leaving no thought beyond mere physical survival.

And in addition with Gutierrez, *"the last term, rarely used when talking about the poor, is an attempt to include the -new poor-: the alienated, the uncared-for, and the elderly".³*

² Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1973), 288-89.

³ Gustavo Gutierrez, *The Power of the Poor in history*, (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1983), 115.

2. TYPES OF POVERTY

The poor of today can be defined by three adjectives: collective, conflictive and alternative. The poor are a collective phenomenon, they are the products of a conflictive process and they demand an alternative historical process.

2. 1- THE POOR ARE A COLLECTIVE PHENOMENON

Poverty today is a social, structural, massive problem. The poor make up whole classes, masses and peoples. Poverty exists because of two main causes:

Moral causes: poverty is the fruit of ignorance or prejudice. Or it can also be the fruit of the egoism and greed of others. But in neither case there is a perception of the structures or social mechanisms that embody these moral forces.

Natural causes: the poor are poor because they were poor. It has always been thus. "Since Adam and Eve", there have been rich and poor.

2. 2- THE POOR ARE THE PRODUCT OF A CONFLICTIVE PROCESS

The poor constitute a social phenomenon that has been produced; that phenomenon does not come about naturally. They have been reduced to poverty (impoverished) or held in poverty by the forces of a system of domination. In this sense, the poor are the dominated classes.⁴

The poor are poor because they are exploited or rejected by a perverse economic system: capitalism. This is an exploitative and excluding system, which

⁴ Clodovis Boff and George V. Pixley, *The Bible, the Church, the Poor*, (New York: Obis Books, 1989), 3.

means the poor suffer and are oppressed, means the system keeps them under it or outside it. This is the real explanation for the fact that the poor are poor. Taken as the oppressed, the poor fall into two main groups:

The Marginalized: which means those who are still outside the prevailing economic system or are positively excluded from it, such as:

- The unemployed or part-employed.
- A whole gamut of the wretched: beggars, abandoned children, outcasts, prostitutes, and so on.

The Exploited, those whom the socio-economic system treats unjustly. They are the -working poor-, the whole mass that live in the city or in the countryside, the proletariat and the rural works.

2. 3- THE POOR NEED A DIFFERENT SOCIAL SYSTEM

Just as the situation of the poor has a structural cause, so their liberation has to go through the process of changing the social system, which prevents them from growing and playing a positive part in history. The poor judge society as it is at present, and see that if their situation is to change, this change has to come about in a new form of society.

What in the past belonged to the sphere of utopia, in the sense of an unrealizable project, has now moved into the realm of historical possibility. What was just an ideal has become a definite plan. In effect, humanity is material (technical and scientific) and cultural (political understanding). The historical process has now made possible to create a society in which there need be no deprivation of basic necessities

(food, shelter, clothing, elementary education and basic health care), nor any domination of some over others.

This is what is shown by the historical process that has been going on for the past twenty-five years in the Third World, particularly in Latin America. The poor are rising up and organizing themselves for their collective liberation. In the early 1960s, Pope John XXIII had seen the appearance of the working classes on the historical scene and characterized it, together with the independence of former colonies and the emancipation of women, as one of the -signs of the times-.

3. CAUSES OF POVERTY

It is clear that the phenomenon of poverty today is different in kind from that of the past. Poverty today is not simply backwardness in the sense of lack of material development. This is still a factor, but no longer the most important one. Poverty today is mainly the result of a contradictory development, in which the rich become steadily richer, at the expense of the poor who are made steadily poorer. Poverty today is endogenous: it is internal to the system and a natural product of it. This is why poverty today means oppression and dependence in social systems, and injustice and social sin in ethical terms.

There are three definite groups that make up the poor today:

- *The Socio-economic poor*, consist of marginalized and the exploited.
- *The Socio-cultural poor*, including blacks, indigenous peoples and women.
- *The "New poor"* of the most developed countries and areas.

These -New poor- are the physically and mentally handicapped who have been abandoned to the streets of huge cities, immigrant workers, the homeless, the unemployed, the suicidally depressed, old people dependent on a state pension and young drug addicts. These categories do not make up new classes besides the marginalized and exploited classes, but form part of them. Their class provenance may be different (the handicapped, pensioners and drug addicts come from all classes), but their actual class situation places these New poor among the socio-economic, and within this category, among those we have described as marginalized.⁵

4. CONCLUSION OF CHAPTER ONE

The three sections of this first chapter on *what is Poverty* indicate how servile and dehumanizing is the scourge of poverty as it is affecting a great majority of the human population. And we have seen who the poor are and why they are poor. They are poor because of the existence of systems that exploit and exclude them. We might call this explanation *dialectical*, since it explains that the growth of poverty is dependent on the growth of wealth. Hence an attitude of protest is arising among modern people in view of a better social and economic order. This means that the poor are indissolubly wedded to the ideal revolution, in the real sense of a basic change in a social system.

⁵ Boff and Pixley, *The Bible, the Church, the Poor*, 9.

CHAPTER 2. FACTS OF POVERTY IN KOROGOCHO SLUM

0. INTRODUCTION

This second chapter is going to be a big portrayal of poverty and its manifestations in *Korogocho* slum. It will be divided into five sections. The first section is the location of *Korogocho*; the second will be a more explanation about slums; the third will talk of urbanization as one of the ways making slum-reality; the fourth is going to be dedicated to the true image of *Korogocho*; then the last section will talk about the presence of Church in *Korogocho*.

1. LOCATION OF KOROGOCHO SLUM

Korogocho is one of the slums found in Nairobi (Kenya). It is part of *Kasarani* division, in the East sector of the city about 15 kilometers from the Central business district. Population wise, it is shouldering about 130,000 people. The place lacks basic facilities most remarkable amongst them being health and education. The hopeless situation of this slum leads the majority of people to theft, child labor, street people, prostitution, crime, etc. All that one can sense is fear and danger on entering this sprawling slum. To know more about this social phenomenon, let us describe what do we mean by the word *Slums*.

2. WHAT SLUMS ARE

In 1986, more than 600 million people (45% of urban world population) were forced to live on the fringes of large modern cities commonly known as *Shanty towns* or *Slums*. They differ from country to country according to the language. Some of the

terms used for them include: *bidonvilles*, *shanty towns*, *canico*, *musseque*, *tekita*, *moundoun el questir* (zinc roof cities), *brarek* (literally, hut areas). But, whatever the name, the reality and the common elements remain the same.⁶

Consequently, in many cities, misery permeates the streets even in the luxury areas. Human beings sleep in the sidewalks under old blankets, plastic papers or cardboard. No doubt, they survive under sub-human conditions. Today, no urbanization occurs in Africa or any other developing country without slum areas.

Contrary to common belief, a slum is not a spontaneous offshoot of cities. Various important factors account for its birth and affect its growth. It influences individuals and families by imposing on them certain primary rules of social order which are no longer of the village and, certainly, not the affluent part of the city. Often, when speaking of life in the slums, it is the negative side that is emphasized, as much as this may be true, anyway, considering the poverty, lack of water and electricity, no public services, the promiscuousness and general disorder that are the order of the day.⁷

The common problems in African slums which affect people's way of life, culture, religiosity and economy are: poverty and unemployment; poor housing; lack of public services; denying people their civil, land and human rights; the ever-increasing number of street-children...

⁶ Daniel Moschetti, *Urban ministry in Africa: need for new models*, (Eldoret: AMECEA Gaba Publications, 1997), 18.

⁷ Daniel Moschetti, *Urban ministry*, 18-19.

3. URBANIZATION AS ONE OF THE MAIN CAUSES OF SLUM-REALITY

Population displacement is a constant phenomenon in human history while rural-urban exodus is a positive element in the process of socio-economic development. Motivated by the search for a better life, this exodus is a sign of vitality. Unlike the growth of the Western world cities that was fed by industrial investments and the need for unskilled labour, in the developing countries, it is the poverty of the rural world which forces people to flock towards the city in search of a future. Regardless of the misery of the popular sectors of the African cities, for millions of people the city represents the only and last chance to survive. In it, there are less dangers of starving to death than in the countryside, even if the living conditions are deplorable.⁸

Therefore, the imbalances of urban development in African countries come more from vital needs than the desire to reach the city. The rural exodus often combines with large numbers of refugees and displaced persons, who number more than 24 million in many African countries. They are victims of conflict, drought, disasters, clashes, etc. For them slums and shanty towns become a last haven and choice.

The city-pull is overwhelming for the person born and raised in the rural area. The city as presented in the media (radio, television, magazines, and tourist attraction brochures) conveys the image of a world of ease and comfort where everything is available. Socio-cultural factors also play a major role in this city-pull. Basic education, more often urban than rural in content and methods, spurs departure for urban life. The city frees many young people from tribal constraints, village customs

⁸ Moschetti, *Urban ministry*, 16-17.

and laws, which are obstacles to their freedom. It also emancipates and enables women to insert themselves into the urban milieu as domestic helpers, shop-keepers, secretaries, etc. Prostitution and illegal distillation of alcohol are the common means for them to earn a living and plan their life to their taste.⁹

4. FACTS OF POVERTY IN KOROGOCHO

4. 1- SHORT HISTORY

Mathare valley was the first slum in Nairobi and has been in existence since 1939. Other slums in the area in *Kariobangi* and *Korogocho* came up recently due to the rising demand for housing within the low-income bracket. The other slums, though not as old as *Mathare*, grew rapidly between 1960-1980 under the impetus of the massive rural-urban migration.

It has always been believed that *Mathare* squatter settlement is the largest slum area in Nairobi followed by *Kibera* then *Korogocho* settlements, but according to the findings of this research, *Kibera* squatter settlement is by far the largest. *Mathare* takes the second position according to the number of structures. *Korogocho* is the third largest, but according to observation, at the rate at which *Mathare* slum buildings are being demolished and new permanent buildings coming up, *Korogocho* is expected to take second position in the near future.¹⁰

According to the study done in *Korogocho* with the assistance of Father Alex Zonatelli, a Comboni missionary working in *Korogocho*, we have come across with

⁹ Moschetti, *Urban ministry*, 17-18.

¹⁰ Antonio Domenech, *Urban Apostolate: A Challenge for the Kenyan Church*, (Nairobi: New People, 1992), 49.

some elements that are seen as the causes of *slum* reality, especially *Korogocho*. The causes are *colonization, urban exodus, political leadership, tribal clashes, and women oppression*. First, during Colonization time especially in the beginning of the last 20th century, most of the people were deprived lands by the British. Therefore, it is not that people were born poor but because of colonial domination. Second, many people moved from their rural areas with the hope of finding good jobs and live better life in Nairobi. Third, the political oppression by the local leaders on the people. Majority of the people are jobless and even some that are working are not paid a good salary that can enable them to live better life or to buy a portion of land. Fourth, the tribal clashes that make people displaced. Fifth, women oppression whereby the divorced or single mothers without an employment or good job find themselves in a hopeless condition of life which, later on, leads them to find refuge in slums.

4. 2- CONDITIONS OF SOCIAL LIFE IN KOROGOCHO

4. 2- (1). POPULATION

Korogocho slum is divided into different villages: *Korogocho, Gitathuru, Grogan, Highridge, Kisumu Ndogo, Nyayo, Ngomongo and Ngunyumu*. The villages grew separately at different times as a result of the policy of demolition of slums and resettlement of squatters pursued by Nairobi City Commission during the years 70s and 80s. And until recently as a result of the immigration from the rural areas. Now *Korogocho* forms a physically homogeneous settlement. Some variations are evident;

particular ethnic groups populate some villages: *Luo* in *Ngunyumu* and *Kisumu Ndogo*; *Luhya* in *Korogocho*; *Kikuyu* in *Grogan* and *Gitathuru*.¹¹

According to the Census done by Action Aid in 1992, it seems to confirm the presence of more than 20,000 residence units. The population is about 130,000 persons. And the population growth of the slums in Kenya is 4-6% per annum. The common language in the slum is *Kiswahili*. Ethnic languages are also widespread where people of one background cluster together.

- Employment and Unemployment

Most of the people who are employed work in town as clerks, messengers and security guards, while the unemployed can obtain jobs in *Marigiti* (City Council Market) as *Mkokoteni* (hand cart) pullers, load carriers, sellers, etc. Others work in the neighboring estates, e.g. *Eastleigh*, *Muthaiga*, *Huruma*, *Kariobangi* market, *Dandora* and *Ruaraka*.

A small percentage of residents (about 20%) work in the industrial area either as security guards, casual labourers or machine operators. A large percentage of people are self-employed in these areas (in most of the slums). This group often own small businesses which mainly sell farm produce or manufactured goods while others are involved in trades such as carpentry, tailoring and metal welding or stalls. The highest number of unemployed residents can be found in the informal settlements of *Kasarani* division. Most of them are women and youth.¹²

¹¹ Daniel Moschetti, *Urbanization in Africa: Quest for a missionary interpretation, presence and activity*, (Nairobi: New People, 1996), 76.

¹² Domenech, *Urban Apostolate*, 50.

The average income in *Korogocho* is 1000-1500 ksh per month. Incredible fantasy and creativity is the usual way for survival. For a great number of people, life is exactly this: a *Fight for Survival*. Small scale activities, primarily hawking, petty commodity trading, artisans (*Jua kali*) and small services provision, illegal activities such as prostitution and illicit distilling of alcohol (*Kumi-Kumi, Chang'aa*). The result is a life of precariousness, tensions and suffering with incredible poor versus poor exploitation.

For women, like in other informal settlements, they are largely unemployed. The cardinal roles of women in these settlements are selling in kiosks, doorstep vending, roadside vending, fetching water and minding the house.

- Religion

Religions are as diverse as the settlements themselves and there is a strong attachment to religion. Splinter churches can be found all over the slum evidenced by flags and signs of crosses, even in residential houses. Many denominations are present in *Korogocho*. There is even a Muslim mosque. Many sects are spread all over the slum. In the people there is a great demand of spirituality and for God since the situation is really degrading and suffering is experienced by all the people. Children and women are the most vulnerable. In many cases, the answer given by the people to their desire of meeting God and to forget for a while their problems, is to be member of one of these many sects present on the territory. Sure they are more appealing because there they can express and externalize fully themselves with all their problems, in prayer, shouting, and crying in an unending Sunday-worship. Most of the time, this

is an escape from their reality. In general, the poorer the person, the stronger the religion.¹³

4. 2- (2). LAND USE AND CONDITION OF HOUSES

The whole parcel of land at *Korogocho* is owned by the government, except for *Nyungumu* settlement where individuals privately own the land. The people of *Korogocho* initially occupied a sewage area, but were evicted and given the present land by the government. They were required to build only temporary houses but people have ignored this edict and have built permanent structures.

The houses in the slum are of various categories and sizes. Some are made of mud, others of flattened tin and cardboard and some are of mud and wattle covered with plaster or corrugated iron sheets. The average room is 3 x 3 meters, and the occupancy rate is 5-6 persons per room with 3-4 children and 2 adults. The conditions of the dwellings are usually very poor with no ventilation and are generally overcrowded. The shelter is mainly for sleeping, as storage for family belongings or as a mini-workshop because most of the activities take place outdoors.

80% of the residents pay rent meaning that they are working although they do not have good salary. Some people who have money do not like building, but keep their money and prefer going to buy a piece of land in their rural area and build houses.

¹³ Moschetti, *Urbanization in Africa*, 76-77.

- Land use pattern

Korogocho has temporary earth roads and numerous footpaths. Vehicular access is possible on the main road but very limited because the terrain is very rough and the houses are built very close together. During the rainy season, it is almost impossible to pass through the paths, as they are muddy and very slippery. More than 50% of *Korogocho* dwellers walk to their places of work, as they normally cannot afford the high transport costs.

4. 2- (3). *INFRASTRUCTURE*

- Water

In nearly all the areas, a few individuals and the Church have tapped water from nearby formal settlements and sell it to the informal settlement residents for between 50-100 cents per 20 liters container. In some places, the owners of water kiosks have installed big aluminum tanks to store water for selling.

- Sewage disposal

Toilet facilities are poorly constructed. As the number of toilets is very small compared to the number of users, it is not uncommon to see open areas used as toilets, thus causing a serious health hazard, especially during the rainy season.

- Refuse disposal

Garbage is strewn all over the settlements. The City Commission of Nairobi has not been able to cope with garbage collection. Nearby, there is the presence of one the biggest dumping places in Nairobi, where many people work for gaining their daily

bread (20-40 ksh). Those who live near the river (*Nairobi* and *Gitathuru* rivers) throw their refuse into the river thus polluting the river and the surrounding area.

- *Electricity and Communication*

Although electricity is available to the nearby estates, there are very few residential structures that have electricity. Streetlights are available in both *Korogocho* and *Mathare* although those in *Mathare* do not work. The streetlights in *Korogocho* were installed recently due to excessive crimes occurring at night.¹⁴ Unlike *Kibera* where telephone booths could be found outside every *Kanu*¹⁵ office, in *Mathare* and *Korogocho* these do not exist. Instead people have to travel to the nearby estates to make telephone calls.

- *Education and Health facilities*

Older residents (over 40-50 years) are illiterate. Most youth attain only primary school level of education because of the lack of enough educational facilities and the inability of parents to send their children to school. Nursery schools are few and run by organizations such as churches, NGOs and private individuals. All this is always under the threat of eviction and demolition since the land does not belong to any of the people present in *Korogocho*. The land belongs to the government. There are no governmental or City Commission health facilities inside the slum area.¹⁶

- *Social and Shopping facilities*

There are very few social facilities in *Korogocho*. Churches, mosque and nursery schools are often used as meeting points for social functions. There are also many

¹⁴ Domenech, *Urban Apostolate*, 51.

¹⁵ KANU: *Kenya African National Union*.

¹⁶ Moschetti, *Urbanization in Africa*, 78.

unlicensed public pubs often selling illegal liquor. The main shopping facilities are numerous kiosks often found in and between the houses. These kiosks offer a range of goods, both industrial and consumable.¹⁷

The famous *Korogocho (Soko Mjinga)* market is located on the outer boundary of *Korogocho* settlement. Although not well organized in terms of planning, the market contains all sorts of goods, being famous for its ever-fresh vegetables and sale of second hand clothes.

4. 3- KOROGOCHO: "BRIDGE TO HELL"

"*Bridge to Hell*" is inscribed in the wall (in deep black) of one of the video houses (cinema) in *Korogocho*. This notice portrays how really life is there. It is, therefore, in *Korogocho* that some of the most dreaded criminals hide. There is too much insecurity at night and even during daytime. It is not common for foreigners even for Kenyan citizens who are not residents in the place to move safely. Rape, prostitution, abortion, drugs and murder are also regular occurrences there.

4. 3- (1). CRIME

"*We watch through the window as young boys attack and maim people then disappear into the dark. Sometimes they follow their victims into the hospital, beat, knife and even kill them. We live in fear of being attacked*", says Dr. John Kitheka, director of Provide International.¹⁸

¹⁷ Moschetti, *Urbanization in Africa*, 78.

¹⁸ Sunday Standard Newspaper, *Special Report* (Nairobi: August 22, 1999), 10.

The sound of gunfire is all too common in *Korogocho*. By the fact of being exposed too much to violence, some children aspire to be gangsters when they grow up because the most vicious of thugs are considered role models. Exchanges of gunfire between police and gangsters in broad daylight, extortion, cases of police loaning guns to thugs are very common there. There is a booming gun trade in the slum. Sophisticated guns have replaced the knives formerly used by boys aged between 15 and 25 years.

The situation is worsened by policemen who release the thugs only a few hours or days after their arrest. *"We see these people in the streets a few hours or days after their arrest"*. When police arrest suspects, they should take them to court to be charged... *"Residents fear co-operating with the police for fear of reprisal because the revenge visited upon them is dreadful."* One resident who requested anonymity for security reasons says all the gangsters in the area are known by the residents- but Kenya is corrupt and if you point a finger at a thug, he will come back for your neck. He demonstrates how easy it is to kill and go free in *Korogocho*.¹⁹

Stephen Manoah, Chairman of the *Korogocho* self-help United Group, says the slum has become a profitable "factory" for powerful and corrupt individuals. They live in luxury in up market parts of the city from where they monitor and direct their criminal operations. These are men and women who survive, thrive and grow rich on the proceeds of insecurity, murder and mayhem. They import guns and ammunition from Rwanda, Burundi and Somalia, bribe poorly paid police officers and then supply

¹⁹ Sunday Standard Newspaper, 11.

their merchandise to thugs for car jacking, bank robberies and other criminal activities.²⁰

4. 3- (2). *SEX-ABUSE*

Incest, homosexuality, lesbianism, rape, sexually-transmitted diseases, rape and child prostitution are all familiar traits to pupils in the sprawling slum's primary schools. Life seems to revolve around cheap sex and illicit brews, and has often been compared to the biblical twin-cities of Sodom and Gomorra. Most of the criminal and illicit sex activity involves children and their relatives (mainly parents) men and boys, boys and boys, and girls and girls. Some parents, like the single mothers, use their daughters as commercial sex workers to make ends meet.

On the other hand, teachers in school cannot send children back home for any reason before the final evening break. *"They say if they go back, they will find their mothers in bed with –other fathers- which would invite untold wrath."* This, and other things they see in their one-roomed houses at night, has led to the children becoming sexually active at tender ages.²¹

Violence against women is also a big issue. Most of the women are not officially married but stay with partners. These partners beat them thoroughly for any minute mistake if any. Along the same line is rape. In some parts of *Korogocho*, one would be raped and people would just be looking on as an entertainment.

²⁰ Sunday Standard Newspaper, 11.

²¹ Sunday Standard Newspaper, 11.

Young girls are raped by their own relatives: fathers, brothers or uncles. Finding a solution in such cases is not easy because at times the girls have no idea of what is being done to them and even if they do, culturally they are trained to “respect” adults and especially male adults.

Prostitution is another challenge. It is very common and considered as normal because it is a way of surviving. It is not easy to know the men and women involved because there is no designated areas (red-light districts) for these activities. They are done in people’s houses. This is a major contributor to the high rate of HIV/infections.

Life in *Korogocho* is really a “*Hell, a Rumble in the Jungle.*” The seed of all these vices and sufferings is Poverty. And we have to notice that *Korogocho* is also an important political and economic market ripe for exploitation. For the politicians, it is a pool of cheap votes every five years. In between elections the hapless residents are a ready source of cheap, uncomplaining labour. But we should know that people need their basic human rights. Who should make them be aware of their rights? This is our call, our mission.

5. THE CHURCH IN KOROGOCHO

5. 1- ST. JOHN CATHOLIC CHURCH

Father Alex Zonatelli after working for about one year in *Soweto, Kayole* and *Kahawa* (within Nairobi) moved to *Korogocho* to begin his work in *Kariobangi* Parish, a parish run by Comboni missionaries. This was in January 1990. During these last years of working in the slums, he has placed a lot of attention on the need of

“incarnation” in the reality of the people e.g. to live as the people live. Therefore, he tries to live in their midst, trying to reduce the structures to the minimum. Working together with the people, he gives a lot of importance to the organization and conscientization of the people so that the people of the slums are able to organize themselves. They become responsible for their own future. The people become aware of their own rights through reflection on the Gospel and the social teaching of the Church. The work of conscientization is one of the most important. He puts a lot of stress on Justice issues.²²

The main means he uses in the process of evangelization are:

- All the activities in the Church are done through SCCs (Small Christian Communities). In each SCC there are people in charge of justice and peace, health, liturgy, etc. Therefore, the Christians develop different ministries.
- Formation of leaders.
- Seminars about Justice and Peace issues.
- Stress on personal relationships and dialogue with people. Visiting the people in their houses.
- Use of a serious social analysis of the local situation.
- Attempts of inculturation in the liturgy. People responsible for preparing Sunday liturgy, introducing cultural elements. Special care in the preparation of the different liturgical seasons and events of the liturgical year.
- Human development: he has started a number of social projects e.g. an informal school with more than 800 children, nursery school, care for the handicapped

²² Domenech, *Urbanization Apostolate*, 96.

children, *Jua Kali* (artisans) projects, a co-operative of the people collecting rubbish from the rubbish dump near *Korogocho*.

- Use of the Sunday homily as a moment to catechize and formation for the people with the participation of all.

In spite of all these efforts, Father Alex recognizes that the link between life and faith is still unclear to the people. Most of the Christians still consider their Christian Faith as something abstract. This is a very slow process, which needs a lot of patience for the people. He is convinced that the Gospel can offer a lot of hope and communion to the people in the slums.²³

5. 2- OTHER MOVEMENTS INVOLVED IN KOROGOCHO

However, the Catholic Church is not the only church involved in building up life and peace in *Korogocho*. There is also the presence of other Churches and Secular movements. *Mungano* (Ecumenism) that is the union of the churches like Catholic, Protestant, Legio-Maria and Pentecost has a purpose to build peace and to reconcile people.

The laity have also involved in different projects²⁴: *Udada* which is grouping the prostitutes who are doing some hand-made products; *Kindugu* that unites the thugs who are working as carpenters; *Mama wa Siondo* for the poor women making baskets;

²³ There are also other Comboni Fathers who have been working in *Korogocho*: Fr. Gianni Nobili (1991-92), Fr. Porto Mario (1992-93), and Fr. Dagostino Antonio (1993-today). There is also an Italian lay, Gino Filippini, working with the Comboni.

²⁴ Claudina and Monica are Italian volunteers in *Korogocho* projects since 1996.

and *Kotcho Kange* is for youth. These groups join together into a co-operative called *Bega kwa Bega* initiated by Father Alex in 1992.

The presence of some schools also within the slum helps a lot for education, guidance and counseling. *"We do general counseling with the pupils and at times together with their parents. We impress on them the negative consequences of the things they see, do and we hope for the best"*, said a teacher in St John Primary School. For some of the teachers hope that the Action Aid Seminar would help them to cope better and enable them to make further inroads into the children's behavioural change. Another teacher, who says gradual change is being achieved, observes that the main problem in *Korogocho* is poverty and single-parent homes where discipline is unheard of.²⁵

6. CONCLUSION OF CHAPTER TWO

Korogocho is a multidimensional phenomenon comprising economic, political and psychological deprivation. Its manifestations are social inferiority, powerlessness, isolation, and lack of assets or lack of basic needs. This subhuman situation has led people to some social illness like crime, theft, sex abuse and child labor. The presence of different Churches and some secular movements that aim at the conscientization of the people to be protagonists of their own struggle to liberation is still a long process. Therefore, the challenges are still there. The poor are getting poorer. People are fearful to claim their rights. Many illiterate residents are still ignorant of their state of

²⁵Sunday Standard Newspaper, 11.

social life. The Government has not allowed people access to land and yet has closed its eyes to face the sufferings of slums.

On the other hand, there is a slow reaction of the Missionary organizations to face these challenges. It is encouraging that in recent years many religious communities have put their program the “preferential option for the poor”. But it is still too much theoretical. Hence, *Korogocho* is a seed of poverty and yet is a call to Church’s Answer. Let us look what was the answer on poverty in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 3. POVERTY IN THE BIBLICAL CONTEXT

0. INTRODUCTION

The biblical tradition shows the history of Israel's development of a progressively clearer image of God as truly universal and as the only Creator and Savior of all peoples and all human beings. However, in the historical actions recognized by the faith of Israel from the Ancient alliance to Jesus-Christ, God is always seen as the liberator of the exploited, the avenger of the oppressed, the guarantor of justice.²⁶ This is what we are going to picture in this chapter. Our first section will demonstrate God's option for the poor from the Exodus to the prophets. Then the following one will deal with this option for the poor in the New Testament background.

1. THE OPTION FOR THE POOR IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Generally, the Old Testament encounter presents *God's option for the Poor* as a long process starting from the Exodus, through the Davidic monarchy, the Prophets, the petition of the Psalms and, to the Wisdom literature. But this first section is a portrait of God's intervention for the (poor) Israel from the slavery in Egypt to the prophets. After a short explanation on the Exodus, we will largely postulate the social, economic, political and religious backgrounds within which the prophets (such as Amos, Micah and Jeremiah) emerged. Our explanation will focus within the realm of a settled Israel, after the advent of the Monarchy as the urban and how the commercial way of life was greatly developed. Hence a period characterized by the centralization

²⁶ Ronaldo Munoz, *The God of Christians*, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1991), 98.

of social structures, giving rise to the existence of the Royal official, the court and the standing army whose sustenance was under the expenses of the community beside the tolls exacted on trade in transit. These changes shaped new patterns of belief and behaviour apparent in the social and economic environment. So we invite you to have a look at God's liberating action in the Exodus and in the relevance of the prophets beyond Israel.

1. 1- THE EXODUS REVEALS YAHWEH AS LIBERATOR

In the mid-second millenium B.C., because of famine in Canaan, a group of Hebrew clans came to Egypt in search of food and pasturage. They found both and settled in Egypt in the delta region. With the rise of new, native Egyptian dynasty, these settled Semites were perceived as a foreign group, and they experienced oppression and enslavement at the hands of the ruling power. When the Pharaoh, Ramesses II came to the throne (1290-1224 BC), they were put to work on his extensive building operations. *"Still the Israelites groaned and cried out because of their slavery. As their cry for release went up to God, he heard their groaning and was mindful of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He saw the Israelites and knew..."* (Ex 2: 23-25).

"Go and gather the elders of Israel together and tell them, Yahweh, the God of your fathers, has appeared to me, -the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob; and he has said to me: I have visited you and seen all that the Egyptians are doing to you" (Ex 3: 16).

"Thus God called Moses to free his people from their oppression and to lead them into the desert to worship him (Ex 4: 23; 5: 1; etc). They left in haste and were pursued by the Egyptian force. At a body of water (called in Hebrew the -sea of reeds-), they faced certain death at the hands of their pursuers, but then something happened. Yahweh, their God, delivered them -by his mighty hand and outstretched arm- (Dt 11: 2). The Hebrews were snatched from death and blessed with new life; the Egyptians were drowned in the sea. This was the greatest of Yahweh's saving deeds for his people and formed one of the central affirmations of Israel's faith-. I am Yahweh your God who brought you out of Egypt, out of the place of slave labor"(Dt 5: 6).²⁷

Poverty and oppression are evils. In their distress and helplessness, the Israelites cried to Yahweh for deliverance. So Yahweh is one who heard and delivered them.

1. 2- HOW YAHWEH DEALS WITH POVERTY THROUGH THE PROPHETS

About 1200 BC, the Israelite tribes were settled in the land of Canaan and lived a fairly independent existence for about two hundred years. Then a big change took place. The continuing threat posed by the presence of the Philistines, a non-Semitic people living along the western plain, highlighted the need for a stronger sort of government and defense. The loosely organized tribes were no longer able to meet the situation; they asked for a king (1 Sam 8: 1-9). Despite warnings and opposition, the people persisted, *-There must be a king over us. We too must be like the other*

²⁷ Michael D. Guinan, *Gospel Poverty: witness to the Risen Christ*, (Ramsey NJ: Paulist Press, 1981), 21-22.

nations, with a king to rule us and to lead us in warfare and fight our battles- (1 Sam 8: 19b-20). Saul was anointed king first (1 Sam 9-10), but was later replaced by David (1 Sam 16: 1-13) who gradually consolidated his power and established his rule in Jerusalem.²⁸

The period of the monarchy started in Israel, this represented not only a major social reorganization but also serious religious crisis (1 Sam 8: 6-8). Although the Mosaic covenant (and the Davidic, Jerusalem covenant) had a stray sense of justice for the poor and the oppressed, it could be violated. When this happened, Yahweh raised up spokesmen to call the people and the king back to covenant fidelity.

1. 2- (1). THE MEANING OF A PROPHET

At times the word *Prophet* might appear ambiguous in the scripture as it could apply to either functionaries of the national religion or attached in some way to its sanctuaries. Indeed, prophet Samuel fits well as an example, first of all when he is connected with the high place (1 Sam 9: 11-26), and then as leader of a band of ecstatic prophets at Ramah (1 Sam 19: 18-24). However, we have traces of Israelite prophets in a strict sense, only after the establishment of the monarchy among the peasant clans of Israel through their denounce of injustice done by the new ruling classes, incompatible to the value of their religion.

Therefore, in religious terms, "a prophet is a person, who announces a message received through direct inspiration by a god and who speaks from the fringes of the religious institution. Because of their direct link with the divinity, prophets can

²⁸ Guinan, *Gospel Poverty*, 26.

preserve a relative autonomy from the dominant religious and political structures of their society. When a society had an egalitarian and anti-monarchical tradition, as did Israel, prophets were bound to take on greater importance during the period when the people were subject to indigenous royal dynasties”.²⁹

Far from enjoying a hierarchical status within the society, the prophets were the Charismatic figures as they were making an impact on their contemporaries because they were God’s envoys and had a special relation with Him. So in accepting or rejecting them, people accept or reject God on the grounds of them being God’s medium.

1. 2- (2). *THE PROPHETIC ROLE*

The prophets were concerned with social conditions and public issues revealing a spiritual crisis since the actual human situation and fundamental moral issues were ignored. At the centre of their preoccupation was the anxiety to remind and call back the people to the God of their fathers, -a God who is ever active within their community that were expressive of the vitality of their religion as well as the moral standards they strove for through their ministry.

Indeed, the prophets helped recreate the religion and the culture of Israel through their dominant influence as we recall with admiration. By all means the teachings and actions of the prophets were a clear reflection of the actual people’s ways of living and its patterns through their poor personal relationships. However, the prophets’ motivations were religious as they strove to model society on the divine standard in

²⁹ Boff and Pixley, *The Bible, the Church, the Poor*, 41.

order to promote good and the worth of life. In this account Amos was accurate when he exhorted his contemporaries: "*Hate evil, but love good and establish justice in the gate*" (*Am 5: 15*).

Thus, their main preoccupation was no other than giving testimony to the circumstances of their call, which is mostly in crisis. Their duty was to stimulate and invite the people to judge, decide and act when faced with crisis.

1 .2- (3). THE PROPHETIC REACTIONS

Israel's prophets were challenging the society of their time in response to the social and institutional ill that was a flagrant abomination to Yahweh's covenant. Apparently Yahweh ceased to be at the people's centre of reference since their nomadic tradition and religion had to accommodate with the new physical condition predisposing them to make compromises.

So the traditional and equalitarian order of Israel was disappearing and this gave room to a very complex stratified society of free Israelites as well as slaves whose lot was only their labour power; and there existed resident aliens, descendants of Canaanites, and later immigrants. Alongside there existed also the class of the wealthy landowners and merchants who were well associated with the court, the army, and the professional group of priests, wisemen even prophets, the elite of their civilization.

Privileges such as literacy was confined strictly to this upper class. Slowly individualistic preoccupations became so flagrant that the interests and values inherent to an egalitarian society were disappearing through judicial corruption, greed, and lust for power, commercial dishonesty, debauchery of the wealthy and their mad struggle

for private gain. As a result crimes such as violence, theft and all kind of immoralities were frequent that the value of life and properties of the weak members of the society were no longer safeguarded.

Indeed, Israel's search for self-satisfaction was beyond her control that her fundamental values and identity as God's people were sacrificed by their option for immediate advantages. This is what the protest of the prophets was all about since the existing social order to rehabilitate the ill economic and political structures by fostering the establishment of justice, righteousness, good will, love and integrity as capital values that would restore their broken covenant with Yahweh.

However, the prophet's appeal proved fruitless as social evil was amounting to a greater scale as they fiercely denounced them with such a vivid realism: "*... there is no truth, no kindness, no knowledge of God in the land; cursing, lying, murder, theft, adultery break out, and crime follow crime*" (Hos 4: 1-2).

Their disciplines point to the concrete actions posed or left out by their fellow countrymen since the responsibility falls accurately upon the beneficiaries of the existing system, namely those who live in luxury heedless of destitute because they have let evil invade each and every realm of life; and social ill ceased to be simply individualistic aberrations but structurally normalized. Often in their vindication, the prophets showed a double attitude of anger against the oppressors and pity for the victims. To this is also associated the prophetic rebuke of the popular complacency and degeneracy: "*Yahweh indicts the elders and rulers of his people –it is you who have consumed (all the fruit of) the vineyard; what is in your houses has been plundered from the poor*" (Is 3: 14).

These are false principles and corrupting practices in contrast to the nature of Yahweh and to the nature of the new community. However we can still witness distortions in every human history if structures are not founded upon the principle of justice and truth. So the following section is going to be a proof of that failure, giving rise to charismatic figures, prefiguration of an alternative social order.

1. 3- THE RELEVANCE OF THE PROPHETS BEYOND ISRAEL

The prophets as agents of God's active involvement in Jewish history, continue to be acknowledged as such in any culture as long as God's ever permanent concern for human welfare can still be felt among people of any culture. So there is no doubt about the relevance of the prophets, their message and their actions within each society in process of recreation.

1. 3- (1). PROPHETIC PROTESTS

The society in which we live in today is based on a wrong economic principle consisting of people not deserving their actual standard of life. Either they do not have what belongs to them, precisely because others have, use and enjoy what is not theirs. Consequently the society is affected at all levels with an uncontrolled crisis, that some members take advantage over the silence or the inability of others in order to guarantee their selfish pursuit which is no less than a sanctioned injustice of the dominant order. Here the critical analysis of Micah is enlightening when he uttered:

"Woe to those who devise wickedness and work evil upon their beds! When the morning dawns, they perform it, because it is in the power of their hand. They

covet fields and seize them; and homes, and take them away; they oppress the man and his house, a man and his inheritance" (Mic 2: 1-2).

By all means the achievement of happiness in a society depends mainly upon its view of life in society which is to be supported by good values, which seek satisfaction from good sources and by appropriate methods. This basic and fundamental factor will condition political systems, economic activities, legal and judicial practice, social institutions, public morals, culture and religion. When the meaning, the value and the direction of life are no longer revered, then the whole social fabric collapses automatically as the Jews experienced it after the time of the monarchy. As a matter of fact, the social resolution initiated by the prophets was stimulated by no more than their anxiety to revive essential ethics and social creativity as Yahweh himself is even in the struggle for social justice by being the authentic ally of the wronged and dispossessed.

By all means, the people and their community are the prior importance in contrast to the political, social, economic and religious structures. The former and the ethical values they enshrine are paramount. Hence, the welfare of the people as well as that of the community cannot be achieved without reference to Yahweh whose cult demands justice and kindness from his true worshippers. People's welfare implies a fair distribution of economic facilities rather than accumulation of private wealth. Moreover true prophets as instruments of social justice were, through their pronouncement, out to ensure a rule of right within the society as to preserve the common good against a systematic power of evil which was involving the whole community.

1. 3- (2). CONTEMPORARY PROPHETS AND THEIR IDEAL

As long as one commits oneself to the promotion of justice in respect to human fundamental rights, implicitly one is God's instrument he or she co-operates in God's work of creation and liberation.

Co-operating with God requires a vocation and courage since one will have to face individual greed and selfishness whose only concern is self-worship. This was and still is the main mission of the prophets, namely to challenge and confront all the structures which embody the oppressive greed at the expenses of the less fortunate. Today this oppressive and structural greed is well represented through the multi-national firms, cheap labour, the exploitation of children, the billion-dollar-trade in prostitution, the arms trade; for their main preoccupation is profit rather than the common good.

Indeed, contemporary history has provided us with some stimulating examples of prophets who made a right reading of the social reality, of social power, and social goods who did not spare their efforts in raising people's conscience in regard to justice; among them we can only mention few of them such as *Mahatma Gandhi*, *Reverend Martin Luther King*, *Archbishop Oscar Romero*, *Dom Helder Camara*, *Father Jerzy Popieluszko*, *Father Anthony Kaiser*, people who have provided the effectiveness of God's ever concern in reshaping the contemporary society in need of restoration by their courageous commitment to justice.

Besides, it is worth to note that here as always, the justice question is raised from below, not from above since the upper class is mainly preoccupied with the question of prosperity and security whose cost oppresses the voiceless in society. So a

prior analysis of the actual crisis that implies discernment and critic will enable the prophet to establish the profound injustice that is sanctioned and practiced within the society, as the first duty of the prophet. Therefore, the prophetic demonstration is to be directed first of all to the rulers who embody the corrupt structures, for being beneficiaries of the actual system. Indeed, the ground of injustice is to be found in the economic realm since it has to do with access to and control of life as well as goods.

Thus a possible social transformation could only occur if the prophet commits him/herself to raising people's awareness: both the oppressors as well as the oppressed. In fact, we can proudly recognize today a number of people, be they Christians or non-Christians, even the so-called atheists, deserving the title of prophets by their tireless commitment to justice and right through their caritative, and above all through educating the masses in expectation of a better social order. However, despite religious confessions they can rightly be acknowledged as contemporary prophets in virtue of their stand on behalf of the God of justice, be it explicit or not. This same prophetic drive can also be seen operating among some civil servants while versed in the struggle of reform provided that their motto is the promotion of the common good. By all means no serious revolution can be achieved in a corrupt society if the value of life and property is not at the centre of their struggle.

2. THE OPTION FOR THE POOR IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

From the Old Testament literature, especially the prophetic books, on previous section has shown some indication of Yahweh's particular attention and care for the less privileged in the society. Since Jesus' message and action is the prototype of

God's concern for the weak members of the society, the New Testament is, therefore, the milieu par excellence to draw God's direct involvement within human history as the first Christians tried to actualize and incorporate Jesus ideal in order to establish a love-motivated community where the aim would be the eradication of poverty for the establishment of equality among all, foretaste of God's kingdom.

2. 1- JESUS AS A SOCIAL REFORMER

The gospels try to portray a picture of Jesus predominated by faith but do not really speak of the historical Jesus. It is, therefore, possible to reconstruct to a certain possible degree the cultural, social and political environment in which Jesus was born and lived. Indeed, Jesus was born as a peasant and an artisan. He was a gifted speaker and an inspiring orator. He left his work as a carpenter (Mk 6: 3; Mt 13: 55) and became an itinerant preacher (Mt 8: 20; Lk 9: 58). In his public preaching, there was nothing new like any of the prophets. He preached about love, peace, justice, reconciliation, piety... But Jesus was unique. His proclamation of the kingdom, his struggle for the justice, led him to be in big trouble with political and religious leaders. Thus was also the cause of his death.

Politically, Jesus was seen as an imposter, seditious by bringing disaffection to those in authority, a rabble-rouser. Religiously, he was accused of being a revolutionary, seditious, sacrilegious (by rejecting the Law of Sabbath and acclaiming himself to be equal to God: Jn 5: 18). Socially, his public life was a complete and unequivocal rejection of the basic foundation of the socio-economic structure of his time: "...It is hard for someone rich to enter the kingdom of Heaven" (Mt 19, 23).

2. 1. (1)- THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC STRUCTURE OF THE TIME OF JESUS

The socio-economic structure was strictly stratified and also highly hierarchical.

They were two sets of groups:

Patron class: they were those who had a lot of money, holding power mostly hereditary.

Lower class: they were the vast majority of the people and dependent of the Patron class who were basically rulers and governors and also priests, generals and merchants (1% of the population, owning 50% of the land).

The Pharisees were a group, primarily of lay people, who were not conspicuous for being either wealthy or powerful, though some individuals may have been. The Sadducees, on the other hand, were quite willing to co-operate with the ruling Roman power and so held the high offices of prestige and influence. The Pharisees (whose name probably means –separatist-) held themselves apart from this kind of cooperation, basing their claim to respect and authority solely on their religious integrity, their fidelity to the Law. The tax collectors were engaged in collecting tolls for the government; their own profit came from what they collected over and above what the government had demanded. They became wealthy by extorting from others more than was just (Lk 3: 12).³⁰

The Lower class was divided into three groups:

- *Peasants*: they lived at subsistence level barely able to support family and social obligations. Several times drought, debt, disease or death forced them out of their land.

³⁰ Guinan, *Gospel Poverty*, 63-64.

- *Artisans*: they were basically people who did some trading. They were few in number 5%. Jesus and his family belonged to this broad social class of the poor, of those who had to work for their living.
- *Degraded or Expendables*: they were about 10% of the society. They comprised of beggars, outlaws, day laborers, and slaves.

All these social classes were justified by the religion of that time. The social structure had a religious implication meaning that the classes on top were the blessed of God; the emperors were deified; the legislators were the righteous; then the peasants, artisans and expendables were seen as the accused of God, morally impure, considered as sinners.

2. 1- (2). JESUS' TEACHING AND MISSION

Jesus' mission and teaching is one of preaching the kingdom of God which is seen as a manifestation of God's mercy and consolation and directed especially to the poor, the hungry and the oppressed.³¹

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord" (Lk 4: 18).

As we have seen in the previous point on the social and economic structures, Jesus himself was discriminated. His preaching was short and totally dedicated to breaking down the sacrosanct barriers of his contemporary society. He preached that

³¹ Guinan, *Gospel Poverty*, 62.

before God there was no difference between the patron and the client, all people are valuable: "*There can be neither Jew or Greek, there can be neither slave or freeman, there can be neither male nor female, -for we are all one in Christ*" (Gal 3: 28).

The condition of poverty is an evil, a scandal, an affront to the royal justice of God who, through his Messiah, has decided to put an end to it. In his preaching, Jesus affirms the kingdom has now come, and his is good news particularly for the poor and the oppressed.³² If the coming of the kingdom is good news especially for the poor, what about everyone else, all other people (the rich)? So they are by no means excluded. The gospel is proclaimed to all humanity. Jesus' preaching is not only for the physically poor and sick, but also to those who are sick and poor in other ways and who turn to God in their distress.

This proclamation of the kingdom, this struggle for justice, heads Jesus to death. His life and his death give us to know the only possible justice is definitive. The only justice is the one that goes to the very root of all injustice, all breach with love, and all sin. The only justice is the one assaults all the consequences and expressions of this cleavage in friendship. The only justice is the definitive justice that builds, starting right now, in our conflict-filled history, a kingdom in which God's love will be present and exploitation abolished.³³

2. 2- *THE POOR IN THE EARLY CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES*

The attraction of the poor in the Church has been comforted and strengthened

³² Guinan, *Gospel Poverty*, 63.

³³ Gutierrez, *The Power of the Poor in history*, 14.

by the hope of the coming of God's kingdom pledged by Jesus through life and death. This hope became the foundation stone of the community of disciples whose efforts made their ideal expanded beyond their circle of action. By all means the way of responding to poverty on account of the gospel ideal differ from one community to another; thus the need to sketch out three accounts of the primitive and prototype community of Jerusalem according to the book of the Acts of the Apostles as well as to the writings of Paul to the Corinthian community and the epistle of James, each reflecting a particular experience of the writer.

2. 2- (1). *THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH ACCORDING TO BOOK OF THE ACTS*

From the Acts of the Apostles, we have no evidence to determine with certitude the proper economic status of those who made up the Jerusalem Christian community since they were people with varying amounts of possessions. However, we can presume that expectation of the Holy Spirit and the imminent return of the Lord is an indication for the Jerusalem community to have been constituted of the *Poor of Yahweh*. This disposition did allow them be ready to share. The *Poor of Yahweh* are known as quiet and religious people, endeavour to observe God's will with the hope of being privileged by God's blessing in the line of the poor of the Psalms.

The material sharing was only a consequence of a deeper fellowship based on the sharing of one faith through a common prayer and the breaking of bread in their homes (Ac 4: 32-37). In this perspective, poverty is not seen by any means as an ideal to pursue rather than a counter-value to vanquish and eradicate in view of a society without poor. This new order can only be a result of a loving fellowship expressive

through the act of sharing with the poor, which is the characteristic of the Jerusalem community. As the book of Acts depicts it, we can hardly call it *Church of the Poor* because none of them would have lived in poverty and misfortune as long as there was sharing of goods. What is known, as sharing of goods or possessions is the result of the celebration of breaking of bread symbolizing the new messianic people in its ideal expression. Their intimate bond with Christ stimulates and transforms them into a (new) community of sharing fellowship, expressive through sharing of goods and possession without any speculation.

On account of this common ideal, the apostles managed to associate there with the loving care for each other in everyday life, especially in the service of the table. This latter became, by virtue of historical demands, the specific duty of deacons whose main prerogatives were probably the care of needy members of the community.

2. 2- (2). *THE EARLY CHURCH IN PAULINE LITERATURE*

When we come to Pauline writings, we discover that the terms –rich- and –poor- scarcely occur. Whether we can conclude from this that Paul's communities were predominately –upper class- is open to dispute. Be that is it may, we can conclude fairly safely that the question of economic poverty does not seem to have been a pressing one. Several points can, however, be made in regard our theme.³⁴

Paul stresses the need to work. While preaching the gospel for free (1 Cor 9: 1-18), he worked to support himself and his needs (2 Thes 3: 8_10; Ac 18: 3) and

³⁴ Guinan, *Gospel Poverty*, 68.

demanding that Christians likewise work to provide their needs. He also stresses the obligation of Christians to care for others when they are in need. This is, in fact, a common theme in the early Church (Eph 4: 28; Tim 6: 17-19; Jas 1: 27; 1Jn 3: 17). He himself had been the beneficiary of such care more than once (Phil 2: 25-29). Citing the example of Christ becoming human to save us, Paul reminds the Corinthians that they cannot separate spiritual and physical concerns. If they truly live in Christ, they cannot turn their backs on brothers and sisters in need.³⁵

In this perspective Boff and Pixley suggest that: *“The authentic way of opting for the poor is to make oneself poor with them in order together to deny inhuman poverty and together emerge into human riches.”*³⁶

Indeed, Paul fought by all means against all pretence and pride of the rich, exhorting them into the *Koinonia* of the Eucharistic celebration whereby each member is an equal partaker (1 Cor 17: 34). For Paul, community eating and drinking must be a symbol of unity in order to eliminate all distinctions of status so that no one is despised and humiliated. Furthermore, Paul’s concern for the poor goes beyond an individual and narrow care among members of a community. He also broadens the extension of fellowship among the various churches as sign of *Koinonia* between the mother Church (Jerusalem) and subsiding branches in hope of benefiting from the richness of each other while getting rid of poverty in all its forms. The common invitation to provide or share might be equally material, spiritual or moral.

³⁵ Guinan, *Gospel Poverty*, 68.

³⁶ Boff and Pixley, *The Bible, the Church, the Poor*, 55.

In the thinking of Paul the theme of poverty is not a priority by its own accord, but there appears a clear indication of an active charity within the community. By no means does Paul view poverty as a virtue to be fostered, but as a participation in Jesus' self-offering humility for the redemption of the whole creation.

2. 2. (3)- THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH IN THE LETTER OF JAMES:

Despite the apparent contradiction with Paul, James in his message keeps active the prophetic tradition about the poor as well as their rights. Manifestly this prophetic is shown in an action re-play-off some of the strongest denunciations against the greed and arrogance of the rich in the Old Testament:

“You want something and lack it; so you kill. You have an ambition that you cannot satisfy; so you fight to get your way by force. It is because you do not pray that you do not receive (Jas. 4: 2). Can you hear crying out against you the wages, which you kept back from the laborers mowing your fields? The cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord Sabaoth” (Jas. 5: 4).

Facing the imminent coming of the Lord, the author of James invites the poor for patience since only God is able to care for them. Moreover he summons the rich and admonishes them for exploiting the poor. In contrast he gives priority to the poor as long as they await whole heartily for the kingdom and its justice, while the rich are being stranded and undecided whether to serve God or earthly things. For these latter constitute, according to James, a hindrance from practicing true piety which advocates the care of the less privileged of the community. Hence the author does not suggest a strategy or an alternative leading to a better social order.

By all means, both Acts and James' vision long for a Christian community without need so that the believers may all share an equal social status. Thus such a model of society is meant to eradicate all forms of exploitation of the poor.

3. CONCLUSION OF CHAPTER THREE

From both Testaments, God is seen as the universal Savior of all human beings – a Savior, however, of all in their history, from their particular place in society. Through Moses, the Prophets, Jesus-Christ, and the Early Christian Communities, God is always shown as the God of an oppressed people, of the different categories of poor and outcasts thrown up by the changing historical situation. Indeed, the Old Testament' Prophets are for us models for the simple reason that speaking to their own time they put in disclosure the reality and the nature of the present-time crisis. The New Testament, on the other hand, shows Jesus' message and action as the prototype of God's concern for the weak members of the society, especially as it is as well actualized and incorporated in the first Christian communities.

Therefore, the Church today has to use with profit a great deal of her past experience in reshaping her prophetic stance through her actual involvement in social, economic and political questions. So her option for the poor has to take a new form as she is opting to struggle for the poor and working in solidarity with them since they have to be protagonists for their own liberation and that of the society.

CHAPTER 4. HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

0. INTRODUCTION

After grounding on God's option for the poor in the Old Testament through the actions and teachings of the prophets as well as on the New Testament equalitarian ideal, we are now equipped with enough elements in order to launch a strategy for the liberation of the oppressed in regard to today's situation of misery (especially in Korogocho slum) as created by actual social and economic structures. Therefore our last chapter is presented in the following manner:

- Early Catholic social teachings,
- Slums as a challenge to the Church,
- A missionary vision and praxis to the Church, and
- Preferential option for the poor.

1. CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHINGS

In response to new challenges of the poor, a series of Papal encyclicals starting with *Rerum Novarum* (1891) were issued. The abuses, lack of honesty and insecurity shown by the rich and powerful then incarnated in social structures were the root of the problem beside private property controversy. In the request for solution to the problem arising from the work place, Pope Leo XIII exhorted respectively the poor and the rich to deal respectfully with their masters and to love and deal honestly with their workers.

Never as before, the Church through Leo XIII's leadership, faced the oppression of the workers of the industrial revolution, made an appeal expressing their degrading condition of work, namely long hours, low pay, no leisure. *Rerum Novarum* is still considered the first major statement of Catholic social teaching. Curiously later social teachings of the Church seem to be a re-actualization of *Rerum Novarum* by repeating, confirming and developing it though in different perspectives as it is proved by *Quadregesimo Anno* of Pope Pius XI and *Octogesimo Adveniens* of Pope Paul VI. Furthermore, the burden of enormous debts and unfair trading systems affecting Africa in particular has been viewed as heritage of an unjust regime since the time of Pius XI.

Closer to our time, John XIII, in *Pacem in Terris* (1963) appealed for just international relationships and solidarity among nations. The greatest contribution of John XIII was the bringing of new impulses into the Church and confronting her to the needs and challenges of the modern world. *Gaudium et Spes* is the most significant results of Vatican II's request for relevance in the actual society in perpetual mutation. At the very heart of the social teaching was the recognition of the poor as a social class with a right to its own organizations.

Though some attempts were made to reach the working class of the poor, namely through worker priests, pronouncements of the Church of the poor including the efforts of Belgian Bishops at Vatican II, yet clear option for the poor was still not achieved in Europe at that point as it was in Latin America. In the latter context, being at the same time believers, the oppressed class made it possible for the bishops to make a clear pronouncement in favour of a preferential option for the poor, at Puebla in 1979.

With her social teaching, the Catholic Church made a significant attempt of subjecting the Bible to the new principles of historical and literary criticism. It committed itself to the extent of opting in favour of capitalism while condemning liberal ideology as this latter was the instrument of the Bourgeoisie used to overcome traditional barriers in the realm of science, politics, morality and the like. However Pius X brought the traditionalist flavour in Biblical criticism through a series of his pronouncements such as *Pascendi Domini Gregis* (1907) where modernism was condemned. Gradually the disparity between the Church and modern thought was becoming less felt as the Twentieth century was progressing, for instance when the tools of literary criticism started being borrowed by Catholic exegetes to study the Bible after *Divino Afflante Spiritu* of Pius XII in 1943.

At last the Second Vatican Council has enabled the Catholic Church to come to terms with liberal thought. The ruling class after abandoning its liberal ideology allied itself with traditionalism to fight the common enemy, Socialism. In this regard, traditional values and conservatism were re-vitalized throughout wealthy nations. Therefore liberal ideology quickly gained ground in Protestant dominated countries by stressing on the new higher criticism whereby the Scriptures were subjected to a radical historical and literary examination followed by its obvious consequence, scepticism.

Insofar as the working class moved away from the Churches, they could not do better than serving the interests of the Bourgeois and middle classes. Therefore, Protestant and Catholic's traditional standpoint were able to reach the same result as long as the challenge of the organized poor of the working classes was concerned, that

is the *Social Gospel* corresponded with a program of service to the working poor in order to win them over to the Churches against the danger of Revolutionary socialism.

In recent years, efforts have been made by Christian ecclesiastical institutions to achieve a *preferential option for the poor* in a society alleged by exploitation and a growing disparity between classes. And Vatican II through *Lumen Gentium* has launched a ground for the Church's preferential option for the poor by integrating all social classes including the oppressed and the elite in the common belonging as God's people without underestimating the Church institutionalization on account of the service that ensures the common well being.

Besides, making a preferential option for the poor is a risking business as recognized by the Second General Conference in Medellin (1968), for it implies confronting the ruling power of the society and the reactions it entails. Hence the need to act in order to transform unjust structures at root of oppression rather than mere denunciation as means.

2. "SLUMS" AS A CHALLENGE TO THE CHURCH

Independence in many African countries has brought in an unexpected growth not only of the Capital cities but also of the other towns and given birth to many new urban centres. With the advent of political independence, there was a dramatic surge in urban growth. Between 1960 and 1980 the Church in Africa, despite an initial

reluctance, and despite a lingering anti-urbanism, began to establish an effective presence in the towns.³⁷

One of the historical problems of the pastoral ministry in these areas has been that the missions were planted rather outside the centres, so that the towns grew up without a Church nucleus. A great number of Christians had always settled down and forgotten the habit of Church-going, until eventually a priest came to stay in their midst. The rapid growth that followed brought with it many other problems, such as “lost” migrants, unemployment, secularism and an unexpected great share of the youth in both the population and the problems. The majority of the migrants to the cities and towns are youth as John Paul II has stated in the last Apostolic Exhortation, *The Church in Africa*.³⁸

The African City has developed as a place where African culture is undermined more than anywhere else and the slums have been produced a subhuman culture. They are places most in need of well inculturated Christianity that restores both Christian religiosity and African humanness in full hope.³⁹

The urban situation calls for a specific and missionary urban ministry. Generally speaking, such a ministry has not yet been developed in Africa. Pastoral care followed the established rural pattern of parishes; the cities are units in themselves and city life follows its own grouping, going across parish borders. Hence much missionary-pastoral action should have been carried out on an urban basis, with specialized teams as already indicated by the Bishops of Tanzania in their response for the 1974 Synod in

³⁷ Moschetti, *Urbanization in Africa*, 50-51.

³⁸ Moschetti, *Urbanization in Africa*, 51.

³⁹ Moschetti, *Urbanization in Africa*, 51.

Rome. This does not mean, however, that nothing is being done for the people living in urban centres. All the methods used for the care of spiritual and human welfare in the villages are also found in the urban parish.⁴⁰

What is often missing is an adaptation of these methods and new creativity to the urban situation and an overall plan for urban ministry that takes the new factors of city life into consideration. So far, only youth ministry has made steps in this direction. But many more attempts should have been made to tackle the problems of the city and its slums and shantytowns.

According to Father Alex Zanotelli, in one of his articles,⁴¹ noted that there is a slow reaction for the Church to face these challenges, and above all the lack of planning to meet them; and the socio-political-economic situation of the cities has indeed developed into one of the major issue for the Churches. In the countryside, poverty and lack of education is embedded in a society of basically equal standards of life, with an ancient tradition of sharing; in the cities it is contrasted with a much richer middle and upper class that seems to have nothing to do with the poor. Unfortunately this gap has also become reflected in the Churches.

The dramatic reality of poverty in the cities is calling us for a true reflection and implementation of what is concretely for us the preferential option for the poor, as African Church and specifically as religious. A special attention and task is needed for the apostolate to the professional, business class, universities, etc. creating bridges between rich and poor for the benefit of both. The poor need to be supported in taking

⁴⁰ Moschetti, *Urbanization in Africa*, 51.

⁴¹ Alex Zanotelli, *Facing problems of rapid urbanization*, (AFER 30, October 1988), 279.

their evangelizing responsibility towards the rich class too, which needs to be awakened to their Christian mission and duties.

The issue of urbanization was part of the pastoral agenda for several years at the beginning of the 70s in the Association of Member Episcopal Conferences of Eastern Africa (AMECEA) but for the last 15-20 years it has been an almost forgotten hot issue; only rare articles or books published and with little implementation and further reflection. There is not a Special Committee for gathering the goodness, the new insights, information and methodologies for a needy urban ministry. There are some attempts here and there but what is really missing is a network for sharing these experiences.⁴²

It remains to a great extent still true what was deplored in one of the AMECEA meetings in 1973, namely that “there is an apparent deterioration in the effectiveness of the Church in urban areas as compared to rural areas”, nor was the warning well heard that “if the urban apostolate is going to succeed, only specially-trained people, clergy and religious as well as lay, should be assigned duties in urban areas.” There is no doubt that the countryside is still twice as well served in terms of personnel and worship facilities as the cities.⁴³

⁴² Moschetti, *Urbanization in Africa*, 52.

⁴³ Moschetti, *Urbanization in Africa*, 52-53.

3. A MISSIONARY VISION AND PRAXIS TO THE CHURCH

3. 1- *SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES: A FITTING ECCLESIOLOGY FOR THE CITIES*

Throughout Africa, Bishops have been encouraging the establishment of Small Christian Communities. AMECEA made their establishment as a priority at Nairobi (1976) and renewed their intent in Malawi (1979). SECAM (the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences in Africa and Madagascar) has also been fostering them: at Yaounde (1981) and Kinshasa (1984).

The SCCs, or Basic Christian Communities, have been described in Church documents as “a source of hope for the universal Church” and “causes of joy and hope in the Church”. The purpose and the policy was threefold: to ensure that people could practice their Christian faith in the places where they work and live in small groups and not anonymous, to bring about a greater lay participation, and to provoke a more authentic inculturation. Not only was there to be decentralization to the out-station but a measure of decentralization to neighborhood household groups. This model of being Church-Community seems to befit the human situation of the city and slum-dwellers, creating a network of solidarity and mutual trust.⁴⁴

Participation, shared power and empowering people, is very ecclesial dimension still very urgent in the Church. The SCCs are very ecclesial also because of their centrality in reading the Scripture and the life of the people, in their context, even with political, economic and social dimension.

⁴⁴ Moschetti, *Urbanization in Africa*, 53.

The first evident value of the SCCs is that they create more personal interrelationships. The second important value is a new distribution of power in the community; it is much participatory and avoids all centralization and domination. The third value that is important to point out is that SCCs starts from the "base-level". Gustavo Gutierrez says that "base" means poor, oppressed, believing people, marginalized races, exploited classes, despised cultures, and so forth.

Therefore, the goal of the SCCc is much more than being simply "college of piety". The community functions in a way that enables its participants to realize that they have intrinsic worth, that they have the mutual support of others, and that they too have a voice. In this way, the voiceless and powerless are empowered to speak and act, thereby becoming subjects within history.⁴⁵

3. 2- PROMOTION OF PEACE, JUSTICE AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

One of the challenges before the Church-Community in the African City is the promotion of justice, peace, development and liberation. That the promotion of justice is an essential dimension of evangelization does not need an elaborate defense today. And if the proclamation of justice and peace is an integral part of the task of evangelization, it follows that the promotion of these values should also be part of the pastoral program of each Christian community.

The formation of clergy, religious and laity, imparted in the areas of their apostolate, should lay emphasis on the social teaching of the Church. Each person, according to his/her state of life, should be specially trained to know his/her rights and

⁴⁵ Moschetti, *Urbanization in Africa*, 54.

duties, the meaning and service of the common good, honest management of public goods and the proper manner of participating in political life, in order to be able to act in a credible manner in the face of social injustices.⁴⁶

3. 3- "HUDUMA": MINISTRIES TO THE COMMUNITY

Huduma is a Swahili word meaning *service* or *ministry* inspired by the following scripture passage, "Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord..." (1Cor 12: 4-11; 27-31). *Huduma* requires Christians to place their gifts at the service of the whole community to create new ministries. A ministry is a free and committed service for the benefit of whoever is in need of it. One or two representatives from each SCC attend the regular weekly meetings of the *Huduma* and report on the services they offer within the SCC.⁴⁷

Huduma covers a wide range of the following needs:

- Organization: *Huduma ya Watumishi (Baraza)* consist of SCC representatives in the Pastoral Council. They include the chairperson and secretary of SCC.
- *Huduma ya Legio Maria (Matembezi)* which caters for home visits, evangelization, prayers in liaison with other ministries e.g. ministry for health⁴⁸, ministry for the poor, ministry for faith, ministry for the sick, etc.
- Education/Awareness/Leisure: *Huduma ya Haki na Amani* is concerned with justice and peace issues. It offers non-violent education, human rights awareness

⁴⁶ John Paul II, *The Mission of the Church (Redemptoris Missio)*, (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1993), 16.

⁴⁷ Moschetti, *Urban ministry in Africa*, 73.

⁴⁸ -Sr. Gil, a Missionary Medical Sister, is working with the *Huduma* for Health in *Korogochi*. -Sr. Martha Citterio, a Comboni Missionary Sister, is also helping for Pro-life movement.

and conscientizing people on political/economical issues thereby creating a peace-loving culture. *Huduma ya Wafanya Kazi* deals with trade unions that maintain justice for workers, unity among workers and offers legal advice to employers and employees. *Huduma ya Shule* pleads for poor children in government schools regarding fees payment, uniforms, etc. It also supervises the running of Church-sponsored schools. *Huduma ya Michezo* is concerned with youth entertainment activities e.g. drama, sports, competitions, etc.

- Social service: *Huduma ya Maendeleo* caters for social development including special SCC projects (e.g. hand-made products) to help the poor, the handicapped, drunkards, thieves, prostitutes, etc. looks for a market for the products they do produce.
- Counseling/Activity/Meetings: *Huduma ya Familia* handles family and marriage counseling. *Huduma ya Wazazi Wapekee* caters for single mothers/fathers counseling.
- Ecology: *Huduma ya Usafi (Mazingira)* is concerned with cleanliness in the estate and the environment, educates the public in hygiene and health as well as collaborates with NGOs by creating small building co-operatives for housing improvement.

4. PREFERENTIAL OPTION FOR THE POOR

Who makes or should make the option for the poor?

In the first place, the *Institutional Church*, e.g., the official representatives of the Church: pope, bishops, priests, religious and lay ministers. This option for the poor,

put into effect by the Church's pastors, was expressed in different ways: by adopting a poor lifestyle, by living or working in close proximity to poor people, by steeping pastoral ideas in the cultural world of the poor, by sharing the life and struggles of the oppressed, and so on.

In the second place, *Lay Christians* too must make the option for the poor. In fact, in the course toward the poor taken by the Church in Latin America, many lay people anticipated the clergy, or associated with them, particularly those lay persons involved in the pastoral work of the Church.

In the third place, the *Rich* are also called to take up the cause of the poor, by joining in their struggle for justice and with them building a new society in which there will be neither rich nor poor, in the manner of the early Christian community (Acts 4: 34).

Finally, the *Poor* themselves are clearly agents of the option for the poor. They carry it out in terms of solidarity among themselves, of openness to the poorest of the poor, and finally by welcoming the non-poor who seek to become their companions on the way. In fact, the poor in the Church became agents of the option for the poor and protagonists of their own process of liberation through pastors working for and with them, arousing their consciousness of their own dignity and encouraging them to take a constructive part in society. In this way, the poor began to opt consciously for their own future -which is the future of all- instead of opting in an alienated manner for their own oppressors and their projects.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Boff and Pixley, *The Bible, the Church, the Poor*, 135-36.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

Poverty is something negative and degrading, a scandalous conditions inimical to human dignity and therefore contrary to the will of God. It is the result of unjust society; it is a social crime challenging us, as Church to create a visible presence of God's kingdom. *Korogocho* as well as other slums are the "shame" of Nairobi City.

Many documents of the Church on social concern have been written but little or nothing has been implemented. Here in Nairobi, according to Father Alex Zanotelli, there is no policy of the Church as regarding the slums. The concern of the Church is limited at the parish level and most of the people there are middle-class. There is nothing to do with the slums. Thus the problem of the slums remains only a charismatic choice rather an option for the Church. And yet the Mission of the Church is to side with the poor, to liberate the oppressed and free the prisoners. In short to fight any kind of evil.

Therefore, the challenges are still there. For the Religious, it is very important to be aware of all kind of injustices going on in the slums; to realize that our formation in itself does not give us enough room to come close to these oppressed people; our structures, where we dwell, create a great gap between our present life and the work we are prepared for; we need personal and humble conversion which requires: - a critical mind, - choice for the personal and most abandoned, - to live simple life, close to the people, - to relate our life to the one of Jesus through prayer and meditation.

All this demands from us a great love for people. We have to remember that there will never be justice without love. As John Paul II mentioned it on the World Day of Peace (1st January 1993), "*If you want peace reach out to the poor*".

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