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Editorial

What's in a name? It is said that even if the rose was called by any other name, it would still fill the air with the same sweet fragrance. The Mizoram Theological Journal is now going through a similar situation. Since we are engaged in the process of registering the journal with the government, we are renaming the journal as the Mizoram Journal of Theology (MJT). While the name of the journal is changed, the contents of the journal would continue to reflect concerns that are of important theological significance to the church and society in the region.

In this issue we begin by addressing the concern of climate change. Human beings in general suffer from an inertia to confront concerns that do not affect them immediately or with catastrophic impact. Why should the church worry about climate change? It is said that Noah started constructing the ark when there was not a single rain cloud in sight and people ridiculed his prophetic utterances of the impending global deluge.

The second article is a study of the factors that have motivated the Mizos to be actively engaged in the mission of proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Church in Mizoram has the distinction of being the community with the highest percentage of missionaries.

The third article highlights the importance of worship as a channel of facilitating pastoral care. In a world where pastoral care and counselling are becoming highly professional one-on-one transactions, this essay throws light on the significance of community worship as a healing, sustaining, guiding and reconciling experience.

North East India is confronted with another burning issue: the violation of human rights. Should the church and society be passive spectators? Should they outrightly condemn revolutionary movements which are engaged in the struggle for asserting and protecting human rights? The article in this issue highlights different perspectives on the same.

The journal also presents abstracts of dissertation projects of the Doctor of Ministry Degree programme and a stimulating review of a book which attempts to present an indigenous Mizo Christology.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE CHURCH'S RESPONSIBILITY

*Roger Gaikwad **

The purpose of this presentation is to conscientize us about the ecological challenges that confront us and to stir us to respond constructively to the same. I hope we are not interested in indulging in a mere academic exercise. I would not want this presentation to add to the number of seminars and consultations on the subject, during which we will express our horror at the ecological state of affairs, perhaps be moved to send a statement to all the constituent bodies of the church, WCC, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, etc. and thus pat ourselves on the back saying that we have had a successful discussion. I wish this paper serves to initiate a movement in our region for monitoring climate changes and water crisis situations and for spurring the local congregations and like-minded bodies to be committed to be responsible stewards of mother earth and her gracious gifts.

The Pandemic Problem

None of us present here today would like to sound like "doomsday prophets", yet we cannot deny the reality that we are sitting on an ecological time bomb which has started ticking faster and louder, sending vibrations and warning us that the bomb is about to

* Rev. Dr. Roger Gaikwad is Principal of Aizawl Theological College and Professor of Religion and Society. This is a professorial lecture given at the Aizawl Theological College, on November 21, 2008.

explode. To use another image we humans are like the proverbial unmindful woodcutter, who having climbed high up a tree is blissfully chopping the branch on which he himself is seated!

Discussions on the global situation of climate change and water crisis are quite alarming. A WCC document declares:

“Climate change, as the variation in the earth’s global climate or in regional climates over time, and its effects are being experienced already in many regions of the world. Global warming, i.e. the increase in the average temperature of the earth’s near-surface air and oceans, is one of the most evident aspects of climate change.¹ The average temperature of the earth is rising. This creates the melting of ice sheets in Antarctica and Greenland, glaciers, permafrost in mountainous regions and the rising of the average sea level. Rising sea levels are already affecting some countries like Bangladesh in Asia and some islands, particularly in the Pacific. A water crisis brought on by severe droughts and unprecedented floods has resulted in a lack of access to safe drinking water and sanitation. Other effects of climate change are hurricanes, cyclones and typhoons, which are increasing in strength, causing loss of life and destruction of the environment and property.”²

While issues of climate change and water are inter-related, yet the water crisis by itself is considered to be a very special concern all over the globe. The Porto Alegre WCC Assembly in 2006 declared:

Access to fresh water supplies is becoming an urgent matter across the planet. The survival of 1.2 billion people is currently in jeopardy due to lack of adequate water and sanitation. Unequal access to water causes conflicts between and among people, communities, regions and nations. Biodiversity is also threatened by the depletion and pollution of fresh water resources or through impacts of large dams, large scale mining and hot cultures (irrigation) whose construction often involves the forced displacement of people and disruption of the ecosystem. The integrity and balance of the ecosystem is crucial for access to water. Forests build an indispensable part in the ecosystem of water and must be protected. The crisis is aggravated by climate change and further deepened by strong economic interests. Water is increasingly treated as a commercial good, subject to market conditions.³

Specific studies of the South Asian region (which has 1/5th of the world's population and 40% of the world's poor) also paint a grim picture. Following are some of the observations and predictions made about South Asia during a meeting of the Second Working Group of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)⁴ on February 16, 2007:

Sea levels will rise by at least 40cm by 2100, inundating vast areas on the coastline, including some of the most densely populated cities whose populations will be forced to migrate inland or build dykes – both requiring a financial and logistic challenge that will be unprecedented... Up to 88 per cent of all Asia's

coral reefs, termed the 'rain forests of the ocean' because of the critical habitat they provide to sea creatures, may be lost as a result of warming ocean temperatures.

Bangladesh is slated to lose the largest amount of land globally – approximately 1000 square km of cultivated land – due to sea level rise.

The Ganga, Brahmaputra, and Indus will become seasonal rivers, dry between monsoon rains as Himalayan glaciers will continue their retreat, vanishing entirely by 2035, if not sooner. Water tables will continue to fall and the gross per capita availability in India will decline by over one-third by 2050 as rivers dry up, water tables fall or grow more saline. Water scarcity will in turn affect the health of vast populations, with rise in water-borne diseases such as cholera. Other diseases such as dengue fever and malaria are also expected to rise.

Crop productivity will fall, especially in non-irrigated land, as temperatures rise for all of South Asia by as much as 1.2 degrees C on average by 2040, and even greater crop loss – of over 25 per cent – as temperatures rise to up to 5.4 degrees C by the end of the century. This means an even lower caloric intake for India's vast rural population, already pushed to the limit, with the possibility of starvation in many rural areas dependent on rainfall for their crops.

Mortality due to heat-related deaths will climb, with the poor, the elderly and daily wage earners

and agricultural workers suffering a rise in heat-related deaths.

Today much of India's energy comes from coal, most of it mined in the rural areas of Orissa, Jharkhand, and Bihar with devastating consequences. Tribals and small and marginal peasants are being forced to resettle as these mines grow wider by the day. Inadequate resettlement plans mean more migration of landless populations to urban slums. The environment is being destroyed by these mines and their waste products – among them fly ash laced with heavy metals and other toxic materials. But the biggest irony of this boom in coal-fired power is that much of the power is going to export-oriented, energy-intensive industry... all burning India's coal, at a heavy cost to local populations⁵

The Struggle to Redeem the Situation

Perhaps it is too late for us to turn the tide of the ecological deluge that is soon going to drown us. However efforts are being made to contain the rot, at best to slow down the pace of the process of ecological suicide that humans seem to have initiated. One category of such efforts is classified as Mitigation. Through mitigation, efforts are made to deal with the causes of greenhouse gas emissions, to get rid of such causes or if not at least to reduce the volume of their emissions. The mitigation approach is mainly meant for developed industrialized countries that are largely responsible for the problem of greenhouse gas emissions and the consequent global warming. Such

countries along with globalizing commercial powers are also responsible for dumping toxic wastes within the space of developing countries, thereby polluting water, the earth, and harming all creatures in it. At the same time, they have set in a process of the commercialization of water, air, herbs, plants, etc. and even claiming patent rights over essential necessities of life which have been given graciously by the Creator.

The other category of efforts to address the problem is called Adaptation. In this approach efforts are made to help humans and all creation to adjust themselves as best as they can to the consequences of climate change and water crisis. To use one literary image, instead of crying over spilt milk, efforts need to be made to mop up the spilt milk, clean it and make it potable as far as possible. Another adaptive approach is to learn to live without the spilt milk or to look for another alternative to split milk. To use another literary image, a stitch in time saves nine and so in the adaptive approach, efforts are made to weaken the magnitude of the adverse impact of climate change and water related problems. The Adaptation methodology is mainly meant for developing countries which are largely bearing the brunt of climate change and water crisis since they have large populations and they still need to use fossil fuels for their energy resources, and lack the economic, technological and political power to mitigate the causative forces of climate change and water crisis. Such countries need to cope with the changes that are happening, do their best to alleviate

the suffering of the people and all creation because of the changed circumstances, as well as look for suitable alternatives to cater to their needs.

The Kyoto Protocol

It is in relation to the Mitigation approach that the Kyoto Protocol has to be understood. This Protocol is an agreement under which industrialized countries will reduce their collective emissions of six greenhouse gases (GHG) namely carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, sulfur hexafluoride, hydrofluorocarbons, and perfluorocarbons. The objective is to achieve stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system. The largest share of historical and current global emissions of greenhouse gases has originated in developed countries while the per capita emissions in developing countries are still relatively low. It is also recognized that the share of global emissions originating in developing countries will grow to meet their social and developmental needs.

It is in this context that the Kyoto Protocol was adopted at the third session of the Conference of Parties to the UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change) on December 11, 1997 in Kyoto, Japan. As per the Kyoto Protocol, compared to the emissions of the year 1990 the collective emissions of the six greenhouse gases by the industrialized developed countries (such as European Union member countries, USA, Canada, Japan,

Australia, etc) will be reduced by about 5.2% by December 31, 2012. Developing countries like China, India and others have not been included in the numerical limitation of the Kyoto Protocol because they were not the main contributors to the greenhouse gas emissions during the pre-treaty industrialization period. However, even without the commitment to reduce according to the Kyoto target, developing countries do share the common responsibility that all countries have in reducing emissions.

As of May 2008, 182 countries are said to have ratified the protocol. These account for only 60% of countries in terms of global greenhouse gas emissions. The United States of America, one of the predominant greenhouse gas emitters, is the only developed country that has not ratified the treaty.

The Dilemma before South Asia

What should be the response of South Asia to the problem of global warming and climate change? There are some who assert that global warming is not our problem. David S. Gosling elucidates such a response in the following words:

People tend to view these issues according to where they live. From the perspective of the industrial nations, the world's most serious environmental problems are mainly the anticipated effects of global warming, ozone layer depletion and high population growth rates elsewhere. In the developing world,

however the perceived environmental problems cannot be so easily separated from their social context, but tend to be associated with loss of forest cover (and its inappropriate replacement), biodiversity loss, the contamination of rivers and natural resource depletion. Desertification is a major problem, in some areas. Lesser problems are perceived to be urban traffic pollution, overfishing and the destruction of marine environments, and the environmental impact of large populations."⁶

Speaking along similar lines, Indira Gandhi in a speech at the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment at Stockholm in 1972 had remarked, "When they themselves feel deprived, how can we urge the preservation of animals? How can we speak to those who live in villages and in slums about keeping the oceans, the rivers and the air clean when their own lives are contaminated at the source? The environment cannot be improved in conditions of poverty."⁷ Commenting on the Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, Walter Fernandez critically observes, "At the Rio Summit in 1992... groups... ensured that mainly issues like global warming that affected the rich nations were dealt with and that important aspects like desertification that affected the poor were ignored.... The same groups would also speak of the traditional practices as destructive. For example, they attribute deforestation mainly to shifting cultivation and overpopulation."⁸

Other persons however recognize that climate change and global warming affect developed and developing

countries alike and so we cannot be the proverbial ostrich digging its head in the sand in the face of an approaching storm. However they are undecided on the manner and the time of the response. As Daphne Wysham and Smitu Kothari put it, South Asia is truly at the crossroads: Either we can be complacent or wait for leadership from a reluctant United States or begin to take action now, regardless of what other countries do. The path that India has taken thus far, of waiting until wealthy countries take action on global warming, is understandable if viewed from the historical perspective of the exploitation of the country since colonial rule, and the current energy needs of the region in its pursuit of development. The U.S., the U.K., and other countries in the wealthy North, have developed their economies largely thanks to fossil fuels. It is only fair that India and the rest of South Asia be allowed to attain the same standard of living before curbing their greenhouse gas emissions. Even Christian ecumenical discussions seem to indicate that at the present moment it is justifiable for developing countries to use fossil fuels for their energy needs. These developing countries could be asked to adopt appropriate gas emission reduction commitments after the first round of commitments from the developed countries comes to a satisfactory culmination by December 31, 2012.⁹

However as the IPCC report points out, while it may be justified to do so, it is suicidal for South Asia to pursue any strategy but the least carbon-intensive path toward its own development. Wealthy, less populous countries in the North are very likely –

and very unfairly – going to suffer fewer devastating blows to their economies. They may in fact actually benefit with extended growing seasons in their areas because of climate change, while India and other South Asian nations will dramatically and painfully suffer if remedial and preventive action is not taken now.

Therefore South Asia has to go in for a combination of mitigative and adaptive approaches: A self-interested, self-preserving way, focussed on clean energy such as solar and wind; on energy efficiency, ensuring that all energy resources are used in the most optimum way for the maximum number of creatures without any wastage; on providing for its own population's energy needs ahead of foreign corporations; on public transportation plans that strengthen India's vast network of rail and bus transportation routes, rather than weakening it with public subsidies to massive highways and to automakers. The IPCC final draft report urges India and other Asian countries to prepare for the coming crop apocalypse with crop varieties that can withstand higher temperatures, salinated aquifers, and an increase in pests. It also advises better water resource management and better disease monitoring and control.

The Response of Churches to the Ecological Challenges

The Need to Change our Theology, Biblical Hermeneutics and Ethics

Jawaharlal Nehru with his concern for industrial development has been quoted as once asserting that factories and dams were the temples of modern India. In a similar vein Claire Foster, Policy Advisor to the Church of England reports that a Chicago businessman W.P. Rend declared in 1882, "Smoke is the incense burning on the altars of Industry." He went on to qualify, "It is beautiful to me. It shows that men are changing the merely potential forces of nature into articles of comfort for humanity." Such statements were made in the background of the mistaken hermeneutics of the Genesis creation story that human beings were placed on the earth to dominate nature: "And God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.' " (Gen.1:28). Christians, churches, industrial and business companies, and their countries believed that it was God's will, and therefore their duty, that they should bring nature under control and make it serve their purpose.

This gave rise to anthropocentric sciences, consumer cultures and exploitative technologies. The twentieth century in particular has seen the invasion by humans of all spheres of the earth. We heated up the atmosphere; we polluted the rivers and seas of the hydrosphere, and dammed them indiscriminately; we mined the lithosphere; we farmed the soils; and we emptied the biosphere.

We became a rogue species dominating all other species, which had to find a way of adapting to life with us or die out. Because we lived within a worldview that assured us we were special, we thought that others didn't matter. The understanding of Genesis that led to human domination was simply bad theology and gave rise to selfish morality and irresponsible ethics.¹⁰

The domination theology also gave rise among humans to exploitation of the poor and the weak by the rich and the powerful. Human history bears testimony to the importance of water for the life of any civilization. The earliest civilizations were situated along river banks (including the Garden of Eden). Thus one nation fought against other nations to conquer irrigated fertile lands. Gradually power was identified not only with acquisition of water resources and fertile land but also with the acquisition and use of technologies to exploit natural resources on, below and above the surface. The owners of water, land and exploitative technologies became economically rich and politically powerful. Sex, Caste, and Class hierarchies further caused greater divisions in the human community. In recent times colonization and globalization are expressions of the injustice of exploitation and oppression by the rich and powerful individuals, corporations and countries of poor and weak individuals, communities and countries. "Chosen People of God" theologies and "Prosperity" theologies have justified such injustices.

Insights from Other Religious Traditions

When one discerns the general message of the different religious traditions (while no religious tradition is perfect and could be manipulated by vested interests) one discovers that they advocate certain views and ways of life that fit in well with ecological concerns. For instance, tribal (indigenous/primal) religions emphasize the integral connection of humans with nature. Wati Longchar asserts, “The tribal people’s culture, religion and spirituality cannot be conceived without creation. Humans always understand themselves as an integral part of creation and not apart from it. That is why harmony with creation is the starting point of the tribal people’s spirituality.”¹¹ When such harmony is broken, evil follows. A legend among the Mundas and other related tribes in the Jharkhand region goes as follows:

“(C)ertain Asurs who were iron smelters burned their fires so persistently that the vegetation was scorched, water supplies dried up and the air was polluted. This displeased Singbonga (the Supreme Spirit), who burned all the Asurs to death in a furnace. The women then complained that without their menfolk they could not survive. So Singbonga took the charred bones of the men from the furnace and scattered them all over the earth. Falling on mountains, rocks, deep waters and wooded places besides springs, the bones became *bongas* or guardian spirits of those places. Thus the Singbonga resolved a conflict between a settled tribe of cultivators who had resorted to environmentally unsound practices and the original

inhabitants by restoring a truly symbiotic relationship between his people and nature.”¹²

Similarly in Vedic Hindu traditions we see the affirmation of “the unity and interrelatedness of all that is – God, selves, the natural world.”¹³ One verse in the Chandogya Upanishad declares, “This whole world is Brahman... This atman of mine within the heart.”¹⁴ The Mundaka Upanishad affirms: “In front is Brahman, behind is Brahman, to the right and the left, it spreads forth above and below. Verily, Brahman is this effulgent universe.”¹⁵ Karan Singh comments, “All creation, whether this tiny speck of cosmic dust that we call our world or the billions of galaxies that stretch endlessly into the chasms of time, is in the ultimate analysis a manifestation of the same divine power.”¹⁶ He observes further that in Hinduism the concept of welfare is “not of any particular person or group or class, but of all creation. As the ancient prayer goes: *Sarve pisukhinah santu, sarve santu niramayah* (May all beings be happy, may all beings be free from fear). Here welfare is described not in limited terms but as all-embracing, covering not only the human race but also what, in our arrogance, we call ‘lower’ beings – animals and birds, insects and plants, as well as ‘natural’ formations, such as mountains and oceans.”¹⁷

In Buddhism, as Gosling observes, the “Buddha’s emphasis on desire, craving, attachment etc., and his practical measures for overcoming them, have enormous potential for the removal of the human causes of environmental degradation. Buddhist

teaching though anthropocentric in focus, attacks the root causes of human attitudes that account for so many of our modern social and environmental ills. Consumerism, materialism, wasteful competition, and the self-centred individualism that destroys the possibility of sound social and ecological relationships, are all challenged by the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path.”¹⁸ Ashoka, the Buddhist Mauryan emperor, affirming the integrity of humans with nature and therefore human responsibility toward nature issued an edict saying, “The king...enjoins that: medical attendance shall be made available to both man and animal; the medicinal herbs, the fruit trees, the roots and tubers, are to be transplanted in those places where they are not presently available... wells should be dug and shadowy trees should be planted by the roadside for enjoyment both by man and animal.” In another edict he said, “ Forests must not be burned either uselessly or in order to destroy [living beings].”¹⁹

Therefore the Church needs to re-examine its anthropocentric theology. The latter has to give way to an eco-inclusive integrated theology.

The Need for Eco-Theology and Just-Peace Ethics

The WCC document on Ecumenical Earth declares:

Life itself being a gift from God, the atmosphere as precondition to the coming into existence and the continuation of life can be seen as a heavenly gift of loving grace to all life, shared in common by the whole creation. Thanks to this, a subtle balance and

interdependence was created between various living organisms and a specific composition of the atmosphere.²⁰

In the light of this, protection of the atmosphere is a moral responsibility. Tim Fannery, the author of *The Weather Makers: The Past and Future Impact of Climate Change*, Penguin, 2005 asserts, “Climate change is a moral issue because each and everyone of us is responsible for the greenhouse gases that are warming our planet. Climate change is a real, unfolding threat to everything we hold dear – from our children to our cities, our biodiversity and our wealth. No rational person would endanger all of that just so they could continue driving large cars and not thinking about where their electricity comes from.” The protection of the atmosphere and earth’s water resources is also a spiritual answer to the divine invitation that humanity contribute to the creation of a more inhabitable world. Here spirituality is defined as a practice of living out of gratitude and wonder for the life-sustaining richness of creation, a feeling of deep commitment to all life and to nature as God’s creation, and a sincere indignation about all threats to this richness.

Furthermore, as the WCC statement on Ecumenical Earth emphasizes, the commitment of churches to the issue of climate change and water crisis grows out of the attentive listening to the cries and stories of the most vulnerable and marginalized sections of society and creation, and responds to the

prophetic call for justice and transformation. These stories together with the Biblical witness of the God of life urge us to affirm that our moral responsibility must be guided by God's love for life and by principles of justice, accountability, solidarity and sustainability.

The urgency for the Church is to take immediate action and go beyond simple declarations and statements. New alternative models of life are called for. All people have to adopt a style of life that derives its quality from the attentive enjoyment of nature and human relationships, from mutual care, dependence, trust and solidarity instead of the illusions of individual autonomy and material wealth. We have to cultivate an all-embracing spirituality and feelings of community, connectedness and intimacy, instead of one-dimensional self-centredness. We have much to learn from the community-oriented and simple lifestyles of indigenous and other marginalized communities. Thus the WCC document goes on to recommend the creation of 'just, participatory, sustainable and sustaining communities' for mutual support, and they call upon the churches and authorities to join them on this journey with reflection and practical support.

The Task Ahead

The above-mentioned WCC document lists out certain actions, which churches, ecumenical bodies and all humans should work for. The same are highlighted below:

Preventing the Kyoto Protocol from collapsing

The implementation of the Kyoto Protocol is crucial for future steps towards a just and sustainable global climate policy regime. The major challenges before us are to advocate for industrialized countries to meet their targets within the committed timeframe and to re-engage those most responsible for emissions into the global treaty process, in order to make it possible for developing countries to adopt appropriate reduction commitments in the next round of negotiations.

Another challenge involves preventing the Protocol from becoming a totally market based instrument without realizing the real greenhouse gas emission reductions. (Kyoto includes “flexible mechanisms’ which allow developed economies to meet their GHG emission limitation by purchasing GMG reduction shares from financial exchanges, projects which reduce emissions in developing countries, Joint Implementation (J.I.) programmes with other developed economies, and from developed countries with excess allowances (e.g. Australia has 8% and Iceland has 10% permitted increases in GHG emissions. Since allowances and carbon credits are trade-able instruments, financial investors can buy them on the spot market for speculation purposes, or link them to future prospects.).

A third related concern is to launch a more concerted effort to provide for mitigation and adaptation (in the global south) on the basis of equal rights to the

atmosphere and the polluter pays principle. Energy efficiency must also play an important role in these strategies, but long-term success will require a concerted effort to de-carbonize the global energy system. This means significantly increasing the use of non-fossil fuel energy sources, significantly raising the energy efficiency of fossil-fuel power plants through advanced technologies, and developing technologies that trap and store the CO₂ produced by the fossil fuels that will remain in use.²¹

Developing a framework for the period beyond 2012

The WCC document asserts that a much more principle-based approach is crucial for reaching an effective, equitable and justifiable global climate policy regime after 2012, which is the end of the first commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol (e.g. principle of equal entitlements; precautionary principle; priority for the poorest/weakest). Scenarios need to be negotiated that might provide for a range of emission limitation commitments for developed and developing countries depending on the level and pace of industrialization while not jeopardizing sustainable development.

Increasing focus on adaptation to the impact of climate change

The WCC document calls for comprehensive policies supporting adaptation programmes in countries severely affected by climate change, with special attention to the increasing risks related to water

resources. What is required is ministries of solidarity and presence as well as practical support of community-based initiatives for adaptation projects and renewable energy systems. This implies dynamic and intensive collaboration with ecclesial and ecumenical relief and development agencies.

Transformation of the prevailing economic model

The prevailing economic model has to undergo a paradigmatic transformation. The focus of the globalization model is on unqualified economic prosperity combined with the tendency to neglect and deny the destructive effects on people and the earth. We need an ecumenical ecological economic model.
Identifying new horizons for the witness and role of the churches

The WCC document urges the churches to call publicly for consistent action in implementing the international policy framework on climate change. So also the WCC Statement on Water of Life emphasizes the need to promote awareness of, and take all necessary measures for, the preservation and protection of water resources against over-consumption, commercialization and pollution as an integral part of the right to life. This will also imply undertaking advocacy efforts for the development of legal instruments and mechanisms that guarantee the implementation of the right to water as a fundamental right. In order to strengthen such actions, churches would have to build linkages with related issues. This could include the WCC programmes such as the

AGAPE (Alternative Globalisation Addressing People and Earth) process, and JPC (Justice Peace and Creation) focal areas like water, biotechnology, gender and HIV/AIDS.

Moreover churches continue to have a role of education and of setting an example both among their members and in society. Tim Flannery laments, "Sadly I don't see a lot of solar panels on churches or public institutions anywhere. And business can be a powerful tool for change. Has your business had an energy audit done?" The development of lived models of an alternative life style that emphasize the value of relationship with the earth, families and community rather than high material consumption levels, are an essential part of this task.

It's all a matter of curbing CO₂ and cultivating H₂O !
It's all about curbing injustice and cultivating shalom!

End Notes

¹ Global warming is caused by the emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. The contemporary economic system depends on energy which is generated by burning fossil fuels. (Fossil fuels are natural fuels such as coal or gas which are formed in the earth from the remains of animals and plants). As these fossil fuels burn they produce and release carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, warming up the latter.

² Minute on Global Warming and Climate Change, WCC (<http://www.oikoumene.org/?id=5610,8/28/2008>)

³ "Statement on Water of Life", (<http://>

www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/assembly/porto-alegre-2006/1-statement, 8/28/2008)

⁴The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is a scientific body tasked to evaluate the risk of climate change caused by human activity. The panel was established in 1988 by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), two organizations of the United Nations. The IPCC shared the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize with the former Vice President of USA, Al Gore

⁵ Daphne Wysham & Smitu Kothari, "Climate Change Will Devastate South Asia", *The Hindu*, 18 April 2007.

⁶ David L. Gosling, **Religion and Ecology in India and Southeast Asia**, London: Routledge, 2001, p.1

⁷ Indira Gandhi, "Man and Environment" (Plenary session of UNCHE, 14 June 1972) in Indira Gandhi on Environment, Delhi: Department of the Environment, Government of India, 1984, p.20.

⁸ W. Fernandez, "Tribals, Forests, Displacement and Sustainable Development", in K.Gopal Iyer (ed.), **Sustainable Development: Ecological and Sociocultural Dimensions**, Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1996, ^{p.245}.

⁹ "What shall we do?" Justice, Peace and Creation Concerns: Ecumenical Earth (<http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/jpc/ecearth-climatechange.html>, 8/28/2008)

¹⁰cf. "Theologians warn of 'false gospel' on the environment; call Christians to repent of sin" (<http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/jpc/falsegospel.html>, 8/28/2008)

¹¹ Wati Longchar, "A Critique of the Christian Theology of Creation", **Doing Theology with Tribal**

Resources:Context and Perspective, (ed. A. Wati Longchar and Larry E. Davis), Jorhat : Tribal Study Centre, Eastern Theological College,1999, p. 70.

¹² Gosling, pp.19-20.

¹³ Ibid.p.31.

¹⁴ Jesuit Scholars, **Religious Hinduism**, Allahabad: St. Paul Publications, 1964, p.45.

¹⁵ Gosling, p. 30

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid., p.31.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 84.

¹⁹ Ibid.,p.71.

²⁰ "What shall we do?" Justice, Peace and Creation Concerns: Ecumenical Earth (<http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/jpc/ecearth-climatechange.html>, 8/28/2008)

²¹(http://www.earthinstitute.columbia.edu/grocc/grocc4_statement.html, 8/28/2008).

DETERMINING THE MOTIVATING FACTORS OF THE MIZO MISSION

*C. Lalhlira **

There could be various factors that might have motivated churches to have sent out missionaries to their neighbours.¹ The same is true with the Mizo Church. The present Mizo church has been sending missionary personnel to different places in India and even abroad. Outsiders are amazed when they calculate the ratio of the total number of missionaries in relation to the total number of the whole Mizo population or of the church members. In this article, we are attempting to discern the factors that have motivated and continue to motivate Mizos for engaging in mission by responding to questions such as: Are there socio-cultural and theological factors that motivate Mizo Christians to be zealous in evangelisation? In other words, we are seeking to highlight Biblical-theological and socio-cultural factors that motivate Mizo Christians to become enthusiastically committed to mission among people of other cultures.

1. Biblical-Theological Factors

One important thing in mission is the theological perspective or “paradigm” that not only motivates people to go out for mission but also determines the priority given in missions.² Mizo mission in general seems to have been influenced by what may be called “the old paradigm” or the traditional predominant

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paradigm of *missio Dei*³ in its mission outreach and the literal understanding of the so called ‘Great Commission’ of Jesus Christ in Mark 16: 15, “Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation,” and Matthew 28: 19a, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations.” This commitment to mission is clearly expressed in the report of the Review Committee of Mission of the Mizoram Presbyterian Church (hereafter referred to as MPC) in 1996:

The Mizoram Presbyterian Church has taken as its responsibility and accepted as its supreme task the commission of our Lord to ‘go into all the world to proclaim the gospel’. We prepare ourselves to fulfil [this task] until he comes again.⁵

The Church therefore has therefore committed itself to mission as its responsibility in order to show obedience to Christ. The commitment is so intense that it extends its areas of operation, sending more missionary personnel, and increasing its financial contribution to mission year by year.⁶ The statistical chart given below provides a good indication of the commitment of the Mizos to mission.

Synod Mission Board Finance: Record of Church members’ contributions:

▶ In the year 1932:	Rs.	26/-
▶ In the year 1942:	Rs.	840/-
▶ In the year 1952:	Rs.	751/-

- ▶ In the year 1962: Rs. 13,896/-
- ▶ In the year 1972: Rs. 143,203/-
- ▶ In the year 1982: Rs. 2,093,891/-
- ▶ In the year 1992: Rs. 3,01,65,006/-
- ▶ In the year 2002: Rs. 11,25,19,256/-
- ▶ In the year 2005: Rs. 14,99,68,685/-
- ▶ In the year 2007: Rs. 58, 99,80,100/-

Besides the missionary mandate related biblical texts, there are experiential and theological reasons for people to be committed to mission. Many Mizos are involved in mission because of the the impinging 'constraints by the love of Christ' (2 Cor. 5: 14a).⁴ Rev. Lalthanmawia says that it is because of the experience of God's love, people feel compelled to go for evangelisation. "Those who experienced God's love perceive others with the attitude of love. That love leads and motivates one to deny himself to be a blessing to others."⁷

The eschatological aspect of missionary motive can also be seen at the same time. What Harry Boer says in *Pentecost and Mission*, "The Church and her missionary task must be seen eschatologically," seems to be how the MPC understands mission. This eschatological dimension, however, seems to be usually understood in terms of "the imminence of the end of the time"⁸ because, as Saiathanga says, during the spiritual revival that occurred in 1913, the emphasis was on the imminence of the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. This made the believers to hasten the evangelisation of their own community members.⁹ Not only their own community members but also

others needed to be evangelised. Lalsawma, who likens their feelings with that of Paul, describes this concern as follows:

Due to the driving sense of urgency, many left [their] homes to preach the Good News of Salvation to others not only in Mizoram, but also in the states of Tripura, Manipur, and Assam. Like Paul of old, they felt convinced that it was necessary for them to preach at home and abroad.¹⁰

The conviction that gospel proclamation is urgent has not died out even after the whole Mizo population has become Christian. Songs are still composed to impress and motivate people on the urgency and the need for mission. One contemporary Mizo song composer, namely Ramdinthara Sailo, a medical doctor by profession, composed a number of 'missionary songs'; he and his wife (also a doctor) went out as missionaries to Solomon Islands. The chorus of one of his songs goes as follows:

*Chanchin tha hi ramtinah hrilin,
Thil siam zawng zawngte hnenah chuan (aw tunah)
Zirtir zelin, he chhandamna thu
(Aw) boral mekte chhandam rawh*

[Preach the Gospel to all the world,
To all of creation (urgently now!);
By teaching them this story of salvation,
(Oh!) rescue those who are perishing.]

The third stanza of this song challenges those who had not saved any soul if they would dare stand before God:

*Rorĕlnaah kan din hun chuan,
Huaisen ber pawh an khūr dawn;
Thlarau bo pakhat pawh hruai lo hian,
Lal i tawk ngam dawn em ni?*

[When we stand before the Judgment,
Even the bravest will shiver;
Without bringing a single lost soul,
Will you dare to meet the King?]¹¹

‘Saving souls’ is another important concern in Mizo mission. This is reflected in the songs popularly sung in meetings. One of such songs is composed by R. J. Lalmuana, who asks God’s forgiveness for enjoying the joy of salvation by himself but not saving ‘lost souls’. In the third stanza he says:

*I lawmna ber Lalpa, thlarau bo chhandam,
I hna ṭul ber khawvela chanchin Ṭha hril;
Mahse tumah ka la rawn hruai si lo,
Min ngaidam rawh Lalpa, min ngaidam rawh.*

[Saving the lost soul is what pleases you most, Lord,
To preach the Gospel in the world is your chief work;
But, I have not brought to you a single soul,
Forgive me Lord, forgive me.]¹²

Along with the feeling of being constrained by the love of Christ, and the urgency of fulfilling the task

the Lord has commanded, the Church seems to adopt a 'superior attitude' in doing mission.¹³ While there is no explicit description in support of this assertion, one can find hints of it in some writings and songs. In a recent 'lesson' for *Beihruah* [Community Endeavour Month (September)] in *Nilai leh Beihruah Thupui*, [Wednesday Evening and Community Endeavour Month Services] Rev. Z. T. Sangkhuma says that mission work is about "spiritual warfare and that is the war of the Lord" (referring to the stories in the book of the Judges). He further says that God has "already given the land in the mission fields to the church."¹⁴ English songs which are under the category of 'Mission Service' in Sankey's *Sacred Songs and Solos*, etc, are translated and included in the church hymnal.¹⁵ The Mizos themselves have composed such triumphalistic songs. One composer namely Lianmânga composed a song "Zoram Hmangaihtu Lalpa" [Lord, the Lover of Zoram (Mizoram)], and in the last stanza he expresses his vision of the time of glory for Mizos who, as a result of their preaching the Good News, will experience a great victory.

*Harh r'u Zofate Harh r'u,
Hnehna ropui kan chang thuai dawn;
Kan Pathian Hmingin puan zar,
Kan zar ngei ang khawvelah*

[Awake, children of Mizos,
A great victory will soon be ours;
In the name of our God,
We will soon unfurl our banner in the world.]¹⁶

What makes the Mizos to have this triumphalistic attitude? Can it be the influence of missionaries of the colonial period? Or is it their triumphal hermeneutics of certain biblical passages? The first one is very possible, while the second one may not be ruled out. Taking the first as true, one may assume that since the Welsh missionaries came under the banner of the British colonial power, it is likely that they had some influence on the Mizo Christians with regard to the idea of superiority feeling, that the gospel and the missionaries are supposed to conquer all, and those who carry the gospel will have victory over others. The MPC seems to understand itself as an agent that has been authorised by the commission of Jesus Christ who says “all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”¹⁷

Instilled with this superiority attitude, Mizo Christians take the responsibility of preaching the gospel quite seriously; they seem to carry the ‘burden’ of preaching the gospel on their shoulders. With this, they go out from their houses to far off places. They consider themselves to be ‘ambassadors’ for Christ, quoting Paul who says, “We are ambassadors for Christ.” (I Cor. 5: 20). Applying this text to themselves, the Mizos understand their responsibility as “highly honourable, a noble task of making Christ known on behalf of Christ himself.”¹⁸ However, such an attitude can make a missionary to undertake the task by himself or herself and thereby not letting others to participate in the task.¹⁹

2. Ethno-Political Identity and Affinity as Motives for Mission

No one would deny that the Mizos are 'identity' conscious; for this has been reflected in their mission ventures.²⁰ Writing for *Beihruai* lessons in the 2004 *Nilai leh Beihruai Thupui*, Rev. C. Vanlalhruaia recommends that the Mizo mission should turn to those who are similar to them ethnically or racially such as the Mongoloid races in the Eastern part of the World. He says:

It is imperative that our mission now turns towards the Mongolian races. There are many places in the East where the Gospel can be proclaimed. Let our gifts and prayers turn towards the East, but not necessarily forgetting others.²¹

Since the time they went out as missionaries the Mizos seem to have the tendency to go first to the people with whom they think they are related ethnically and culturally.²²

2.1 A Search for Mizo Diaspora

Vanlalchhuanawma strongly contends that the motive behind the mission endeavour of the Mizos was their love for their fellow Mizos. To him, Mizo mission is predominantly a search for Mizo identity. He contends that the Mizos have suffered identity confusion due to colonisation. The Mizo church therefore searches those people who are identical with them but have dispersed in different places by

political and geographical divisions. He says that while it is true that they have the passion to share the joy of the gospel with others, it is even true to say that a search for people who are identical with them is an undeniable fact. In other words, Mizos want to share the gospel first with their Mizo sisters and brothers who have not received the gospel. If evangelisation is the basic reason for missions, the secondary purpose is to find identical people in terms of racial origin and culture. Only after the Mizos felt settled politically following the formation of the Mizo District Council, they made attempts to reach non-Mizos inside and outside Mizoram.²³ He goes on to say that even after they turned to evangelise non-Mizos, they still tried to find similarities with them in terms of cultural practices.

This assumption is understandable when one looks at the mission movements of the Mizos. Wherever Mizos go for evangelisation, whether it is in Tripura, Manipur, or Cachar area in Assam, they seek first their fellow Mizos. This is true even in Burma (Myanmar). In 1940s there was a revival movement of a peculiar type. By the initiative of Mr. Robuanga of Champhai (a sub-town in Burma border), collections of used literature both secular and religious were put in wooden boxes called *Chanchin tha dāk* (The Gospel Mail) and were sent to Mizos and Mizo sub-clans in Burma who at that time had nothing to read. These boxes were sent through numbers of villages where villagers welcomed and bid farewell with revival singing and dancing.²⁴ Even in mission fields where

people were not exactly found identical with Mizos, there were attempts to search for similarities in terms of vocabularies, cultural practices, and so on. Even among the Brus and Chakmas, the minority groups in Mizoram, who have quite distinct cultures from the Mizos, the target of Mizo mission since earlier times, has been to make them 'like Mizos'.²⁵

2.2 The Spiritual Revival Factor

The above mentioned assumption of motivation for doing mission has highlighted the ethno-political factor. But this may not be the only factor that makes Mizos passionate about sharing the gospel with others. The 'Spiritual Revivals', which had their origins in Wales, UK, in 1904-5, and which came to Khasi Hills (Meghalaya) in 1905, also spread to Mizoram in 1906, and inspired enthusiasm in mission endeavours.²⁶ It reoccurred in series, one after another, in 1913, 1919, 1930, and occasionally later, but in different forms.²⁷ Whenever there is revival, the awareness of the need for and urgency of mission seems to be felt by Mizo Christians.²⁸ For instance, after the 1913 revival in Mizoram, a number of Mizo Christians who were influenced by the revival movement visited Manipur voluntarily with the purpose of evangelising those who are "closely related to them ethnically."²⁹ This seems to be not a rare case, of course, for it is said to have happened even in different places that revivals bring about both awareness of and interest in missionary endeavours.³⁰

Each revival in Mizoram was marked with ecstatic experiences with singing and dancing which at the same time brought a particular emphasis on a biblical or theological theme which added to the motivation for mission. It would be good here to note that singing and dancing play an important part in revivals. Downs affirms this particular character of revival among the Mizos:

Another unique feature of Mizo Christianity which was enhanced if not created by the revivals was singing. While all north-eastern tribal Christians became fond of singing, among none did the singing of religious songs play such an important part in the development of the Christian movement as in Mizoram.³¹

It may be thought that it was a mere coincidence that Welsh missionaries who loved singing had contact with Mizos, who too loved singing. Donna Strom calls it as God's providence: "God in His providence sent the musical Welsh to the musical Mizos ..."³² Songs were either translated from English hymns or composed either by missionaries or Mizos themselves. Biblical knowledge was increased through songs,³³ and at the same time people were motivated to work engage in mission inspired by certain 'missionary songs', both translated and newly composed. In the ensuing years, numerous songs were composed to impart to the people the message of the urgency and the need for mission.

However, Mizos have been singing to motivate not only their fellow Mizos for mission, but also others by touring various places. As early as 1929, Mizo choirs visited 16 cities of North India. Such tours were organised in later years also to inspire Christians and attract people in various parts of India, and even abroad.³⁴

2.3 Socio-cultural Aspects of Missionary Zeal

In seeking various motivating factors for mission, one discerns that the Mizos are culturally oriented to be concerned for the good of others and are at the same time sharing oriented. In the following section we discuss these two characteristics of Mizo cultural traditions that are found to have influenced their attitudes toward mission.

2.3.1 *Tlawmngaihna*: The Ethical Foundation of Mizo Culture and Mission

Tlawmngaihna, as a characteristic of the ethical/moral code of the Mizos is mentioned as an inevitable subject in many writings about Mizo culture. Our aim here is to describe what it is and its relevance to intercultural communication particularly in Christian mission. Rev. Challiana, one of the first ordained ministers and a prolific writer, has given a comprehensive description of its meaning. To him the concept of *Tlawmngaihna* includes the broad spectrum of virtues like charity, diligence, patience, bravery, loving kindness, faithfulness, honesty, and unselfish sacrifice of one's service for the welfare of the

community.³⁵ C. L. Hminga describes a *tlawmngai* person as one who is courteous and industrious. He must always be ready to help others, even at considerable inconvenience to himself, and must try to surpass others in doing his ordinary daily tasks efficiently.³⁶

Traditional Mizo society was said to be guided by the concept of *Tlawmngaihna*, whereby everyone had to help others rather than expecting help from them, because of *tlawmngaihna*.³⁷ It is a sign of *tlawmngaihna* when a person refused gifts, or help, from others. At the same time, when circumstances compel a community member to call others for help, say to work in paddy field, the same *tlawmngaihna* would force them to accept the invitation without any expectation of return. It was a selfless, sacrificial service rendered to others, even being exposed to dangers (animals or humans) and severe hardships.³⁸ Thanzauva says, "*Tlawmngaihna* is the social principle as well as the norm for good conduct of the people in the community."³⁹

This selfless service and readiness to help has been the guiding principle of the moral character of the Mizos, which, even after many transformations of cultural practices, has been the Mizos' cultural norm of a communitarian society. In the past, *tlawmngaihna* was needed in times of head-hunting expeditions, or when hunting animals, or in normal daily living when others were in need of help. Even after the end of head-hunting era and inter-village wars, each individual member of community has a feeling of

responsibility as defender of their respective village community, particularly when natural calamities strike.⁴⁰ Voluntary help and comfort rendered to one's neighbour, far and near, the tradition of young men digging graves when a person dies, while young women do all the needful in the bereaved house, the tradition of giving first chance to others, all these have emanated from the *tlawmngaihna* philosophy and ethos. Lianzuala says:

Like salt that preserves and savours, *Tlawmngaihna* preserved and kept the Mizo society intact and made it a worth-living society. *Tlawmngaihna*, by virtue of its unique, moral and social contribution is not only held in high esteem, but it has become a guiding principle of all aspects of the life of the Mizo people.⁴¹ *Tlawmngaihna*, therefore, is the guiding principle of the Mizos in their relationship with one another. The legends of *tlawmngai* persons have a deep influence on younger generations, and it is still very laudable to be considered to be a *tlawmngai* person today when competition for individual success and profit seems to have become the norm.⁴² Thanzauva maintains that the principle of "*Tlawmngaihna* is a message of Jesus Christ hidden in the tribal culture. It is an active love or love in action."⁴³ When some Mizos experienced the 'Joy of Salvation' and learnt about the 'deplorable condition' of their unconverted friends, their *tlawmngaihna* was challenged; in spite of the probability of facing hostility and even death, they went out to save them from 'eternal death'.⁴⁴ In other words, we may say that *tlawmngaihna* is communication in action.⁴⁵ It has affinity with the

‘Incarnational’ concept in which the love of God emanates from the person of Jesus Christ into the world. The whole work of Jesus as Saviour-Liberator can be seen as the highest form of *tlawmngaihna*, which is “to serve but not to be served,” and to sacrifice one’s life for others.⁴⁶

However, as early as 1930s, N. E. Parry, the erstwhile Superintendent of the Mizo Hills, (then under the Assam State) regretted that the spirit of *tlawmngaihna* was deteriorating due to education and contact with other cultures.⁴⁷ Since then, it has been an ongoing debate whether *tlawmngaihna* has declined or not. Thanzauva is trying to find its relevance for the reestablishment of a ‘communitarian tribal society’ at a time of individualism.⁴⁸ These writers, however, do not relate its relevance to the church when it goes out for Christian mission. This writer, though, thinks that this concept could be taken as the “root paradigm” (cf. Victor Turner and Biernatzki) of the Mizos. The concept of communicative action resembles this *tlawmngaihna* concept. It is this same *tlawmngaihna* that sends Mizos out to preach the gospel for their Lord Jesus Christ, and on behalf of the church and the whole Mizo community. It is therefore possible to say that *tlawmngaihna* is a motivating principle for doing missions in and outside Mizoram. As *tlawmngaihna* responds to a call of the need to help voluntarily, many Mizos go out voluntarily to do mission. This is true even till today, that many people, both local churches and groups of people, visit mission fields either to spend the Passion Week, or Christmas, or to construct buildings for new Christians. Mizo Christians are ever

willing to give either money, or in kind, if it is to be collected for helping people in *Ramthar*, (literally new land – Mizos' way of referring to mission fields).⁴⁹

However, one wonders how far this concept of selfless love and sacrifice to others is being practised when it relates to non-Mizos. Will the Mizos, who had to defend their respective village communities from intruders in pre-Christian time, and are still conscious of their responsibility to their own community, be able to practice the same *tlawmngaihna* in relation to people of different cultures? In other words, do the Mizos practice *tlawmngaihna* when they communicate with other people who belong to different cultures? Do the partner communities of Christians see the practice in their communication with the Mizos? These are the significant and challenging questions the Mizo Christians should ask themselves in their communication with people of other cultures in their act of Christian mission.⁵⁰

2.3.2 Willingness to Share: The Principle of Sharing in relation to Mission

Another important Mizo characteristic is their willingness to share – things as well as news – with one another. The Mizos are ever ready to share their produce with one another. They have an axiom: *Sem sem dam dam; ei bil thi thi*, which could be translated as, "he who distributes, lives; he who eats by himself/herself, dies." This is the principle that demands sharing with others. Even the *sechhun* feasts, in which a *mithun* is slaughtered to feed the whole village, has

a sharing motive, because when a rich man made a feast, a lot of rice would be spilled in the brewing of *zu* and in cooking. The leftovers were for the poor who would come and collect them. Zairema holds that *thangchhuah* festivals, which seemed to be designed for ego-building and hero worship, were devised to camouflage charitable acts. He explains:

Sickness in the family might completely upset the family programme...living in extreme condition of poverty and could not afford to supplement their rice with meat than three or four times a year. When wild animals were killed all those who were willing to go to the kill could have equal share of the meat...The poor could also share in the feast the hunter prepared in the *ai* [celebration of the kill with feast]. Were it not for the feast that followed the *Sechhuns*, a number of the poorer section would have suffered serious malnutrition.⁵¹

In other words, the simple Mizos lived in a sharing community in which rich and poor had respect and concern for one another with mutuality although there could be exceptional cases. In such a society one could communicate freely and readily with one another. Mutual relationship was built, making all community members involved in trying to do good to one another. But unfortunately this spirit of sharing is fading away gradually because of the consumerist mentality.

In the past, people shared not only their goods, but also news. There were two important sources of

information. When women fetched water from a common well, and waited for their turn, it was convenient to share news with one another.⁵² Another was the *Zawlbuk*, the bachelors' dormitory, where all unmarried young men slept at night.⁵³ Along with all kinds of instructions and sports in free times, they shared any news with one another. When Christianity came, the Mizos carried on this readiness for sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ.⁵⁴ Within a short period they engaged themselves in spreading the gospel to people around them, first fellow Mizos and then others. Even after the passing away of the institution of *Zawlbuk*, and when access to water became easier with the help of modern water supply systems, the culture of sharing news with one another continues to prevail. When a person hears and experiences the joy of the Good News of Christ, the first thing she/he did was to share it with others, or to witness to others. Thus, all Christians became evangelists in their respective capabilities.

However, the readiness to share news does not go *easily* beyond one's own community. While they are passionate to tell the gospel to other Mizo clans scattered in Northeast India, particularly to people having similar lifestyles and languages. They relate in a special way to the Meitei in Manipur and the Karbis in Assam, although these tribes do not consider themselves Mizo.⁵⁵ On the other hand, they do not easily interact with unknown persons. While they have considerable zeal to share the good news with others, generally speaking, they have problems of forging relationships with people who are culturally

different from them. That may be a reason why they delayed the mission work among Hindus and Muslims. This has consequences in their intercultural communication with other Indians and other religious communities.

Conclusion: The above discussions on Biblical-theological and socio-cultural aspects of mission motives show that in addition to motives from the biblical mandate, Mizos in their mission outreach have been following their traditional ethical principles, but in a restricted manner. The traditional practices can become useful in framing a mission paradigm if they are practised ideally. However with the growing political and cultural ethnocentrism, this ideal will be far from happening as one may expect. For the traditional values and practices to be practised meaningfully they would have to be given a wider ecumenical interpretation.

End Notes

¹ Cf. M. Thomas Thangaraj's discussions on motivations for missions in *The Common Task: A Theology of Christian Mission*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999.

² See for mission paradigms, David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1997) especially his discussion on theological and missiological paradigms, 186-189.

³ The term *missio Dei* is basically understood to mean that the whole [Christian] mission is the mission of God, which implies that humans have no other choice

but to spread the Gospel. It has also been implied that since it is 'the' mission of God, the missionaries, the representatives of God, are in authority; so they dominate others.

⁴ Cf. Rev. S. Lalkhuma, *Mission Hna (Ramthima Rawngbawlina)* [Mission Work], (Aizawl: Synod Publication Board, 1986, 23), points out that the Early Church did not only proclaim the gospel but also collected funds to help poor people due to famine. Moreover, the Mizoram Presbyterian Church in recent decades has now focused on ecological, social and political concerns through the work of its Social Front Department.

⁵ Mizoram Presbyterian Church, *Ramthar Rawngbawlina Enthatu Committee Report 1996*, (Aizawl: Synod Mission Board), 1999, 2; also in the *Synod Bu 1996*, [the minutes of the Synod of the MPC 1996], 'General 56' and Appendix 9. Translation from Mizo by this writer.

⁶ Source: Rev. Zosangliana Colney, *Synod Mission Board*, The Mizoram Presbyterian Church, Synod Office, Mission Veng, Aizawl: Mizoram).

⁷ Rev. R. Lalthanmawia, "Theology of Mission" in [n.a.] *Welsh Presbyterian Mission in Mizoram: Centenary 1897-1997 Souvenir*, ([n.p.]: Synod Literature and Publication Board, 1997), 40.

⁸ Harry R. Boer, *Pentecost and Mission*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1964), 62 as cited in Nengzakhup, *Amazing Missions*, 34. According to Bosch, the understanding of the imminence of time influenced the early church's understanding of its missionary engagement, "which had already come and is at the same time still pending...its missionary involvement was itself constitutive element of its

eschatological self understanding...It is not true that, in the early church, in itself, an eschatological event." Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 41.

⁹ Saiaithanga, *Mizo Kohhran Chanchin*, 55.

¹⁰ Lalsawma, *Revivals*, 55. The pioneer voluntary missionaries referred to here went to their destinations after they had experienced the 'ecstatic' revivals.

¹¹ Ramdinthara Sailo, "Thupek Ropui" [the great commandment], the song is cited from Bangalore Mizo Christian Fellowship, *Fakna Hla Bu* [a song Book of Praise], (Bangalore: Bangalore Mizo Christian Fellowship, 2004), 41; translated by this writer. To his credit, Sailo has composed many songs, which are sung popularly in Christian gatherings. The themes of his songs cover various biblical themes, ranging from the joy of salvation, the urgency of mission, the social concern of the gospel, and life after death. It may be expedient if more songs of this type are cited, but it is felt unnecessary. Cf. Hrangkhuma, "Mizo Transformational Change" and Nengzakhup, *Amazing Mizo Missions*, have done surveys of songs used to motivate people for mission.

¹² From *Kristian Hla Bu*, 18th edition, 2005, No. 520.

¹³ Cf. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 292, who discusses the superior attitudes of the Western world over others with regards to culture. Their works of evangelisation were influenced by this attitude.

¹⁴ Rev. Z. T. Sangkhuma, *Mizoram Presbyterian Kohhran 2005 Nilai leh Beihraul Thupui*, [Lessons for Wednesday and *Beihrual*] (Aizawl: Synod Literature and Publication Board, 2004,) 142-143, a lesson for 7 September, 2005. Biblical passages referred to are Gen.

15- 11; Josh. 1: 2 Judg. 1: 2). (He could have cited from 1Sam. 17: 47, which contains the exact words of his statement!)

¹⁵ Some of them are “Onward Christian Soldiers”, No. 402 and “Christian Soldiers, Proclaim the Holy Gospel”, No. 403. There is a section “*Indona*” [battle] which comprises 14 songs. Mizoram Presbyterian Church and Mizoram Baptist Church, *Kristian Hla Bu*, [Christian Hymn Book], (Aizawl: Synod Literature and Publication Board, 18th edition, 2005). Hereafter *Kristian Hla Bu*.

¹⁶ C. Lianmânga, “Zoram Hmangaihtu Lalpa”, *Kristian Hlabu*, No. 343.

¹⁷ Matt. 28: 19. There were some allegations that colonial power of the British was made use of by the missionaries. While this is true in certain respects, in some other things they had contradictions against each other. One illustration that had been pointed out for the former is the right of the sale of salt given to the pioneer missionaries by the Superintendent of the Lushai Hills in 1894. Illustration for contradiction is the issue of slavery in Mizoram. See Lloyd, *History*, 27, and 153. See also Lal Dena, *Christian Mission and Colonialism*.

¹⁸ Nengzakhup, *Amazing Mizo Missions*, 39.

¹⁹ Cf., Thangaraj, *The Common Task*,

²⁰ Pachuau, *Ethnic Identity*.

²¹ Rev. C. Vanlalhruaia, 2004 *Nilai leh Beihrual Thupui: Thuthlung Hluia Pathian Hming leh a Nihnite*, (Aizawl: Synod Literature and Publication Board, 2003), 111, lesson for *Beihrual* of 3 September 2004. Translation is by this writer.

²² It is believed that no one will condemn this attitude,

as if they are their 'Jerusalem and Samaria' (cf. Acts 1: 8). But when they go farther among the quite different people from them culturally, it is possible to assume that they have problems to deal with them.

²³ Interview with Rev. Vanlalchhuanawma, Vice-Principal of Aizawl Theological College May 6, 2004. Also, see Vanlalchhuanawma, "A Historical Study of the Synod Mission Board, 1953-1981", unpublished M. Th. Thesis submitted to the United Theological College, 1983; and by the same author elaborates this contention in *Christianity and Subaltern Culture: Revival Movement as a Cultural as a Cultural Response to Westernisation in Mizoram* (a published D. Th. Dissertation), Delhi: ISPCK, 2006. But one wonders if the Mizos feel whether they have settled well or not.

²⁴ For detail, see Lloyd, *History*, 351-355. Hminga, *The Life and Witness*, 185; [Hminga uses 'post' for 'mail'].

²⁵ This writer remembers listening during his teens to missionaries returning home on furlough from Manipur reporting about similarities in the vocabularies of the Mizos and Manipuris.

²⁶ Downs, in *History*, Vol. 5, 95, in note 3, says that ecstatic revivalism was found mainly among the Welsh missions before the Second World War. But he was not, it seems in this work, concerned whether interest in missionary attitude was brought about by it or not.

²⁷ The MPC gives importance to spiritual revival; and to make it constantly occurring, a separate "Revival Committee" is set up, having regular "Revival Speakers" who were sent or called to different churches to motivate people for spiritual revivals.

²⁸ Mizo researchers such as V. L. Zawnga and Hrangkhuma, and Vanlalchhuanawma, contend that

the revivals brought about increase in mission awareness or sending out missionaries. See V. L. Zawnga and C. L. Hminga, *Revival and Social Reformation*, (Serkawn, Mizoram: The Literature Committee, Baptist Church of Mizoram, 1995), 26; Vanlalchhuanawma, "Synod Mission," 74; and Hrangkhuma "Revival in Mizoram" in *Light of Life*, 32, 4 (1990), 16-19, as cited in Nengzakhup, *Amazing Mission*, 27. In the same line, gathering written and oral testimonies of missionaries and Mizo church leaders, Nengzakhup concludes that the revival experiences increases awareness of Christian mission. See Nengzakhup, *Amazing Mission*, 27-28.

²⁹ Vanlalchhuanawma, "Synod Mission," 164.

³⁰ V. L. Zawnga and Hrangkhuma, *Revival and Social Mission*, collects information about the revival influences on interest in Christian missions in China, Africa and other countries. Even in Nagaland in North East India, Pentecostal influenced revivals became widespread after the First World War, and this increases in the spreading of the gospel in and around their state. See Nuklu Longkumer, *The Growth of Baptist Churches Among the Aos of Nagaland*, (Changtogya: 1988), 56; also, see Phuvey Dozo, *The Cross Over Nagaland*, (New Delhi: Zuve and Ato Dozo, 1992), 32.

³¹ Downs, *History of Christianity*, Vol. 5, 98. This researcher enquired from his fellow students from different states of northeast India about Christian songs composed by their own people. Among the northeast tribes, the Mizos could be considered as champions with regard to having more Christian songs originally composed by the nationals comparing with the songs translated from foreign

languages.

³² Donna Stromm, *Wind Through the Bamboo: The History of Transformed Mizos*, (Vepery, Madras: Evangelical Literature Service, 1991), 50.

³³ The titles of the books of the Bible and the places where Paul visited in his missionary journeys are examples of such songs which were composed to make them easier to remember.

³⁴ Other tours were organised in 1951, 1963 in which various Indian cities were visited. In 1972 and after, different churches sent their choirs both in India and abroad. It is not our intention to narrate a long history about this, but our aim is to highlight the fact that the Mizo Christian love of singing is an inspiration to go for mission. For details about the tours of Mizo choirs, see Vanlalchhuanawma, "Synod Missions," 152-154.

³⁵ Challiana, *Pipu Nun*, (Serkawn: 1944), cited by P. L. Lianzuala, "Towards Theology of Tlawmngaihna," in *Towards A Tribal Theology: The Mizo Perspective*, (Rajabary, Jorhat: The Mizo Theological Conference, 1989), 56. Hereafter, Lianzuala, "Theology of Tlawmngaihna." To explain the literal meaning: *Tlawmngaihna* is noun; *tlawmngai* is an attributive adjective form of *tlawmngaihna*, a person who practises *tlawmngaihna*.

³⁶ C. L. Hminga, *The Life and Witness*, 3. Kipgen discusses the same topic at length under a sub-title, "Social Institution" in his book, *Christianity and Mizo Culture*, 64-73. Also see Donna Strom, *Wind Through the Bamboo*, 6.

³⁷ K. Thanzauva, *Theology of Community: Tribal Theology in the Making*, (Aizawl: Mizo Theological Conference, 1997), Chapter 7, 120-133. Thanzauva cites a number

of works to show that although the term has been popularly used, the meaning is not easily and concisely explained. Among the works cited are J. H. Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*, (*passim*); C. L. Hminga (*passim*); Rev. Challiana; and Sangliana, whose works are not specified. Hereafter, Thanzauva, *Theology of Community*. Even the foreign administrators and writers about Mizos see this moral character apparent in the Mizo culture. Among them, mention may be made of superintendents in the Mizo Hills during the British regimes, namely N.E. Parry, who calls *tlawmngaihna* as a good moral code enforced solely by public opinion and Major A. G. McCall, who regarded it as a system of community obligation implying public service.

³⁸ Lloyd describes in comprehensive manner: "The Mizo 'tlawmngaihna' and mutual help would not permit even small boys to ignore a call for help." Lloyd, *History*, 197. Quotation is as in the original.

³⁹ Thanzauva, *ibid*, 122. I must acknowledge here that there is another way of looking at *Tlawmngaihna*, mainly in a negative sense. C. Vanlallawma sees it to be opposite to Christian teaching, because he contends that the aim to become *tlawmngai* person is prompted by the desire to be recognized as *tlawmngai*, due to which people do things even what they don't want or dare not to do; refused even what they like [to eat]; and the desire to be offered a large cup full of *zu* for a prize, which was banned by Christians. Because it is against Christian principles, he sees no reason to reemphasise it. But his view is not endorsed by this writer. For full description of his thesis, see C. Vanlallawma *Hringlang Tlang*, (Khatla, Aizawl: MCL

Publications, 1998), 1-14.

⁴⁰ The NGOs in Mizoram are usually referred to as *Tlawmngai pawl*, i.e., associations that are meant to serve and help others.

⁴¹ Lianzuala, "Theology of Tlawmngaihna, 57; (italics are mine).

⁴² Jurgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative of Action: Critique of Functionalist Reason*, Vols. 2, (Cambridge: Polity Press, Reprint, 1992), 181, considers prestige as "attributed to the flow of communication itself." (Hereafter cited as Habermas, *Communicative Action*). One may likewise consider *Tlawmngaihna* as a prestigious virtue in the Mizo society that has a powerful communicative action, prompting people to do good things for others.

⁴³ Thanzauva, *Theology of Community*, 128.

⁴⁴ This kind of evangelical message is still prevalent today.

⁴⁵ Jurgen Habermas, *Communicative of Action*, uses the terms 'communicative action', analysed and interpreted by Rick Roderick in *Habermas and the Foundations of Critical Theory*, (New York: St. Martin Press: 1986). Edmund Arens (*passim*) makes a comprehensive analysis of this theory from theological perspective. But I loosely use it here to refer to the whole concept and practice of *tlawmngaihna* that drives Mizos to render selfless service to others; and that binds the community together.

⁴⁶ Cf. Thanzauva, *Theology of Communication*, 132. Lianzuala, in "Theology of Tlawmngaihna," categorically says: "I would say that the saving act of Jesus Christ is the paramount *Tlawmngaihna*." (Italic

is mine). The core concept of *Tlawmngaihna* is likened with the basic reason for Jesus' coming into the world. Cf., Matt. 19: 27-28.

⁴⁷ Lianzuala, "Theology of *Tlawmngaihna*," 55.

⁴⁸ Thanzauva, *Theology of Communication*, 127-133.

⁴⁹ There have been different ways of raising funds for missions; it ranges from collections of firewood, manual works of different kinds as a day's labour in someone's field, etc, or selling things to give the commission from the sale, and so on. The list will not end so easily. Outsiders would always be puzzled when they see the interest of church members and their readiness to donate for that, even though most of them are lower middle class people in terms of economic condition.

⁵⁰ Thanzauva, in *Theology of Community*, 126, points out that *tlawmngaihna*, though it may be difficult to translate, has its related concept in other cultures. In Hinduism, *niskama karma*, "a desireless action is found...the theory of non-attachment which demands self-sacrificial action without any desire of reward." He also points out that other tribal groups have their own terms with similar concept, such as the term *Sobaliba* in Ao Naga culture "embraces the traditional etiquette, social conduct, virtues and concern for others...honesty, integrity, and denial of oneself for the sake of one's community. It is important to know such existence to avoid having the attitude of cultural superiority over others.

⁵¹ Zairema, "The Mizos and Their Religions," in K. Thanzauva, ed., *Towards A Tribal Theology: The Mizo Perspective*, (Rajabari, Jorhat: Mizo Theological Conference, 1989), 43-44.

⁵² One can imagine Mizo villages of the past where water springs became dry in the dry seasons and it was women who had to wait for their turns one after another to fill their traditional bottles of water made of bamboos.

⁵³ For a detailed description of *Zawlbuk*, see N. Chatterji, *Zawlbuk as a Social Institution in the Mizo Society*, (Aizawl, Mizoram: Tribal Research Institute, 1975). One may add the village smithy, where village men, while having had their tools sharpened, shared news.

⁵⁴ In the early years of Christianity, *Zawlbuk* was the convenient place for sharing the new faith. But it soon became extinct with the introduction of modern education and other new styles of life.

⁵⁵ Of course most of the tribes in the northeast India are Mongoloid races, and it is likely that they have similarities one way or another, the Karbis in Assam, different tribes in Arunachal Pradesh, and even the Meitei Hindus in Assam. For instance, in *Ramthar* January, 2005, 11, a missionary writes that one Arunachali was said to have thought that they and Mizos are of same family. But it is possible that the 'claimed similarity' can be a barrier to communication between different cultures because of living in different geographical and cultural contexts for a long time.



WORSHIP AS THE CONTEXT OF PASTORAL CARE

*R. Vanlaltluanga **

Introduction

We Christians are a worshipping community. Worship occupies a central place in Christian life, and it may be truly understood as a communion between God and human beings. At the same time, we are social beings; no one lives in isolation. This 'togetherness' of individuals in a community is at the very heart of the understanding of the church as a body of Christ. As a body of Christ we are called to rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep, that means to 'care for each other'. Sadly, however, the popularly held assumption that pastoral care invariably means pastoral counselling, with primary emphasis on counselling as a one-to-one psychologically-oriented encounter, has largely limited the practice of modern pastoral care. Therefore, it is very important to re-emphasize the pastoral-priestly dimension of pastoral care. In so doing, an attempt is made here to understand worship as a context where we can fulfill our calling to care for each other.

Pastoral Care

Before we move further, I would like to propose two definitions of pastoral care for consideration -

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Pastoral Care is “the broad, inclusive ministry of mutual *healing and growth* within a *congregation and its community*, through a *life cycle*.” – Clinebell.

It “consists of helping acts, done by *representative Christian persons*, directed towards the *healing, sustaining, guiding and reconciling* of troubled persons; whose troubles arise in the context of ultimate meanings and concerns.” – Clebsch & Jaeckle.

This definition takes the position that Pastoral Care is a specific dimension of ministry... and includes caring for those in distress in body, mind or spirit, and being with people in life-shaping events such as birth, marriage, bereavement or decision about family or work.

It suggests that pastoral task is for the building up of the whole community, which includes supporting the able and strong in their strengths, to enable the community to grow and to help people have vision and hope to face the challenges and opportunities of life.

The definition seeks to limit pastoral care to Christian pastoral care. It is clear that the roots of pastoral care are in the Christian tradition and that normally the reference is to care in and through the church or its agencies.

Rediscovering the Heritage

In their monumental work on the history of pastoral care, Charles Jaeckle and William Clebsch identified

four historic functions of pastoral care, such as *healing, sustaining, guiding and reconciling*. While all these forms of care are present in the church at all times, because of changing circumstances, the church has tended to emphasize some forms more than the others at various times in history. For example, during the age of Persecutions many Christians fell away or lapsed from their faith. After this period, **reconciliation** of lapsed souls into the life of the church through acts of penance and contrition became a central focus of pastoral care.

The post-Reformation, post-Enlightenment Christianity has presented pastoral care with serious problems. Newfound reason questioned the church's old formulas for personal fulfillment and individual well-being. Many souls were going elsewhere for their healing, sustaining, guiding and reconciling. Due to the negative influence of Protestant Pietism, misinterpretation of 'priesthood of all believers', development in psychology and psychotherapy, and the popularly held assumption that pastoral care invariably means 'pastoral counselling', religion became viewed as a private, subjective, personal affair. With the development of Clinical Pastoral Education in the West and its emphasis on pastoral counselling as the primary task of pastoral care, and the lack of awareness of the social dimension of human personality [because of its fondness for one-to-one counselling situations], pastoral care gradually became relegated to one-to-one relationship between the Pastor and the individual members of the flock.

A major difference in the pastoral care of previous ages of the church and that of modern day is the switch from care that utilized mostly corporate, priestly, liturgical actions to care that increasingly limited itself to individualistic, psychologically-oriented encounters. Therefore it is imperative to rediscover the rich heritage of pastoral care by emphasizing and restoring the *pastoral – priestly* dimensions [corporate – togetherness] of pastoral care, to re-discover the congregation as a primary context and agent of care for the people of God.

Worshiping Community as the Context of Pastoral Care

It is important to remind ourselves that the primary 'pastoral-priestly' context of pastoral care is the community of faith, a worshipping community. Pastoral care is more than an opportunity for the Pastor to be with troubled individuals within the congregation. Pastoral Care is an extension of the Pastor's communal edification. The term *pastoral* itself has had a fundamentally communal connotation. It derives from the figurative language of Jewish Scriptures and, supremely, from the Lord's care of Israel (Ps. 23, 80).

This is not to deny that one-to-one psychological and psychotherapeutic techniques and resources are pastorally and theologically appropriate in the practice of pastoral care. It is simply to remind ourselves that we have unique resources that can help people, our God-given, community-bestowed

resources. To deny the broader moral-theological-communal aspect of pastoral care is to overlook a significant source of people's problems and a basic resource for growth and enrichment. Therefore, it is always important for pastors to use their pastoral/priestly identity creatively in the practice of pastoral care.

To be more focused, it would be necessary to emphasize a specific context within the context of community of faith – i.e. the liturgical context of pastoral care. The concern here is not that we should use the liturgy as a new method of pastoral care, but that the liturgy itself and a congregation's experience of divine worship already functions as pastoral care. The pastoral care that occurs as we are meeting and being met by God in worship is a significant source for the wholeness of life.

As such, it may be rightly assumed that worship service should make major contribution to the growth and wholeness of persons. Let us consider some of the important pastoral significance of corporate worship service.

A Shared Experience

A worship service is a shared experience for a particular religious community, simultaneously expressing and strengthening its unity. The blending of horizontal and vertical interactions gives worship its unique ability to enhance wholeness. The

'togetherness' of the members can perform a constructive caring functions. It is said that even casual conversation can perform constructive functions. Often unnoticed, much natural caring occurs among members of a body of faith.

The practical effect of the sharing experience of worship can be that of helping individuals overcome feelings of loneliness and isolation. Through the sharing of mutually meaningful symbols, hymns, prayers, and liturgies, a congregation experiences a togetherness which helps to overcome the shadow of loneliness which haunts many people in our contemporary society. Feeling 'cut off' from others is one of the major elements in the inner world of modern people. The worshippers, aware of their minister, their fellow-worshippers, and their part in the body of Christ, are released to some degree from loneliness and empowered by the awareness of belonging.

An Experience of Personal Integration

We are living in a 'busy world'; people are very busy. For many people the worship hour is the only time during the week when they sit quietly and 'collect' themselves. In our hyper-activist culture, worship is a radical and essential form of quietness and rest for most of us. And we clearly know that there is healing power in quietness and rest. After an exhausting day work, many worshippers respond with gratitude to the invitation to come and rest in him (Mt.11:28).

Worship is integrating because it encourages persons to centre down while looking up. Centering down, finding oneself, taking a long look at one's life – these are healing experiences, particularly in the context of a unifying faith and an accepting fellowship.

An Experience of Transcendence

Worship provides a rich experience of the mystical and the transcendent. This is very important because the modern 'spirit of consumerism' and technological savvy have dulled our awareness of the wisdom of wonder. Our desire to be technologically and materially well-to-do has spoiled our inner life. In this shattering situation, experiencing awe and wonder can revive the spirit of a person. But this requires the interruption of the obsession to worship the 'golden calf'. Somehow we must give up our obsession with manipulating nature and our fellows. Only thus we can recapture the wonder and mystery of the world revealed by our experience.

In worship, much of what is healing and growth-stimulating is on a nonverbal level. There are deep feeling-level responses in genuine worship which help us keep in touch with neglected areas of our inner lives. Because it can touch the depths as well as the heights of human experience, it has tremendous health and growth potentialities. However, many factors play a part to help us come alive to the reality of the vertical dimension. The Scriptures, the sermon, prayers, sacraments, music etc. are all important instruments to this end. But, the crucial factor is the

attitude of those who lead the worship. Their sense of awe and reverence will be communicated to the congregation by the way they handle every aspect of the worship service.

A Spiritual Feeding Experience

One of the major caring values of worship is as a feeding experience. We all need a periodic refilling of inner resources. Regular intake experiences are required to balance the outgo. Intake experiences are those in which one feels loved, cared for, esteemed, and fed through the stimulation of ideas, music, inspiration, relationships, and the pleasures of the senses. Worship is a major means of overcoming inner emptiness through the rich experience of psychological-spiritual feeding. Therefore, in planning and leading worship, it is important for a minister to concentrate on enhancing its feeding function by enriching the service in every way possible. Most important of all is the giving of himself/herself in and through the service.

A Challenge to Face Reality

Worship brings the mystical and the ethical elements in religion into union. Worshippers are challenged to invest the new understanding and power they derive from worship experiences in helping others and improving society. They are helped to discover what will be required to give up 'unfavourable ways' in various areas of their

lives. Growth toward more mature meanings and relationships in one's life result from such exploration.

An Experience of Self-Investment

As in any relationship, it is the blend of receiving and giving that strengthens mental health. Participation in both the give and take of relationships contributes to personality growth. Worship brings the awareness that it is in self-giving that one receives the finest satisfaction of life. The giving aspect of worship includes the outpouring of adoration to God, intercessory prayer, the offering, and the acts of personal dedication.

A Way of Resolving Guilt

One of the most common problems of modern people is that of guilt. It prevents us from enjoying life in its fullness. It stands like a stumbling block between God and human beings, and between human beings and other human beings. Many people try to hide or suppress their feelings of guilt. But, suppressed guilt robs a person of the peace of mind. Keeping guilt within constructive bounds is one of the major contributions of worship to human wholeness. A valid test of the effectiveness of worship is its ability to help persons find that experience of reconciliation which is the essence of forgiveness. Therefore, the forgiving, healing, reconciling love of God should

be the foundation of any worship service that takes guilt seriously. This is the good news of the gospel.

A Way of Handling the Crises of Life

Anton Boisen has declared that “the function of Christian worship is to help men to face their actual problems and difficulties in the light of the Christian faith and to find insight and courage to deal with them constructively.” The worshippers take their inner struggles, fears, and burdens with them to the worship service. Many find a new perspective for viewing their life situations and fresh energy for problem-handling and load-carrying.

Conclusion

Living in an ever changing world, none of us is completely free from the effect of these changes in modern world. Move towards individualism has brought with it many challenges to the understanding of Christian communitarian life. Because of the rapid development of information technology, the western individualistic lifestyle has a widespread effect on the lives of the people. Many people now do not care for other members of the community; they just live their own lives according to their own will. It is becoming the root of many of the problems in our society. We are becoming so opinionated that it is getting difficult to live together as a shalomic community. “Ours” rapidly being replaced by “Mine” is not helping either. In such a context, worship, when observed by using some

psychological sensitivity, can be a revelatory experience of great pastoral significance, a vivid, expressive way of doing meaningful pastoral care.

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REINFORCING HUMAN RIGHTS IN NORTH EAST INDIA *

Rev. Lalfakzuala

In looking at its past history, the post –independence history of North East India has seen the emergence of many resistance movements. North East India has also been infested with conflicts and violence, and the region is plagued with layers of inter-community and inter-ethnic tensions. Our daily newspapers are replete with the news of human rights violations. The Times of India, one of the most widely read national newspapers, had this to report during October 2008:

October 7, 2008

The communal flare-up in Assam's Udalguri and Darrang districts is leading to civil war like situation, with the violence spreading to neighbouring Chirang district. The death toll in the ongoing violence has gone up to 40, of which 15 were killed in police firing. Hundreds of houses have been burnt down so far and thousands forced to flee for their lives.

October 22, 2008

At least 13 people were killed and over 20 injured in a powerful bomb blast triggered by suspected militants in the heart of Imphal on Tuesday evening.

* The original version of this paper was presented by Rev. Lalfakzuala (Asst. Professor, ATC), at the National Seminar on Human Security in North East India: Problems, Responses and Strategies, co-organised by Mizo Research Scholars' Association: Gen. Hqrs. Shillong & Government Zawlnuam College, Mizoram during March 30-31, 2009 at I& PR Hall, Aizawl.

October 31, 2008

In the worst ever terror attack in the northeast, nine high intensity blasts in a span of 30 minutes killed 61 people and wounded more than 350 in Guwahati, Kokrajhar, Bongaigaon and Barpeta Road on Thursday morning.

So also on January 22, 2009 the Times of India reported:

Security forces gunned down three hardcore Karbi militants in two separate incidents in Karbi Anglong district as police stepped up operations against the recalcitrant Karbi Longri North Cachar Hills Liberation Front (KLNLF) ahead of Republic Day celebrations.

The above news speaks volumes about the situation in North East India. Today, hardly a day passes without incidents of rioting, looting, gun-running, killings, explosions, arsons or assault in one state or other in North East India. In this paper I am going to highlight a few of the instances of human rights violations that have occurred in North East India, and attempt to suggest some corrective measures to reinforce human rights in the region as well.

Stark Reality in North East India

Due to their geographical, racial and socio-cultural differences, the people of North East India feel excluded from the rest of India. A majority of the people feels that they were incorporated into the Indian Union against their wishes and aspirations and

given step-motherly treatment by the government of India. The whole of India is getting engulfed by revolutionary and resistance movements which are fighting for their rights and engaged in protecting their rights, cultures and identities. A person no less than Lt. General V.K. Nayar, the former Governor of Manipur and Nagaland pin-pointed the basic problem when he rightly said that "the main problem of the region is not insurgency but alienation."²

North East India has earned the dubious distinction of being home to Asia's longest running insurgency. Geostrategic locations of the region surrounded by Bhutan and China (Tibet) in the North, Myanmar in the east and south and Bangladesh in the south and west and 4000 kilometers of porous international borders further accentuate the security threat. For the last several years, the intensification of insurgency incidents has put a question mark on the various security efforts in North East India.

Excepting a few, most of the states experienced armed insurrection costing enormous bloodshed. Killing, looting, ambush, kidnapping and such kind of shocking news are regular features in our newspapers and magazines. In fact, the death toll due to insurrections reported by the media even for the last ten years is quite high - several hundred peoples! S.K. Ghosh rightly describes North East India as a "a boiling cauldron of insurgency and terrorism."³ Some writers also call North East India as a "Problem Child" of Modern India. Indeed, North East India is deeply characterized by political and ethnic unrest of various

kinds and it has become a highly sensitive and unstable region because of armed conflicts.

Insurgency movements in Northeast India cut across religious lines and the tribal-non-tribal divisions. To the non-tribal Hindu Assamese and Meiteis as well as the tribal Christian Nagas and Kukis, belong certain groups which are considered to be the fiercest insurgents of today in the region. All of the so-called insurgents are not however demanding the same. However all of them fight against the establishments, that is, the government of India in most cases. Whereas the early movements in the region carried out by the Naga National Council and the Mizo National Front clearly demanded sovereign independent states for Nagaland and Mizoram respectively, the demands are varied today according to the political situation of the state and the people involved.⁴ Mizoram is perhaps the only state in the region which can claim to have abandoned insurgency.

Sometimes even a single movement bears different political ends. Take the case of the "Assamese Movement" as an example. It began as a language issue, later became an anti-foreigner's movement, which has however, inconclusively ended with the Assam Accord in 1985. But the same movement also bore the now infamous insurgent United Liberation Front of Asom which demands a sovereign independent Asom. The case is not different in the Bodo movement resulting in the creation of Bodo Autonomous movement in 1993. Those termed as

extremists in the movement under the banner of Bodo Security Force (BSF) continue the movement taking arms to liberate Bodoland. The two faction groups of National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN), and the United National Liberation Front (UNLF) of Manipur and its ally groups also fight for sovereign independence of their states. While these organizations continue to demand sovereign home lands, a few other armed insurrectionists such as those in Tripura, the Kuki National Front of Manipur, the Hmar Peoples Conference in Manipur and Mizoram, and the Bru National Front in Mizoram do not envision a sovereign independent states, but a rightful place for their respective tribes.⁵ Insurgents of such kind are still looming at large and people are suffering the same.

Within a short span of time several instances of ethnic rivalry and tension have taken place in North East India. Some of these have turned to violent ways. The massacre of 24 Dimasa tribal villagers by activists of the Hmar People's Conference and the Dimasa's retaliation in killing and forcing evacuation of Hmar tribals from North Cachar hills is one such example. The age-old Kuki- Naga and Kuki-Paihte tensions in Manipur have flared up into violent conflict, causing enormous casualties. The Jantia resentment of using Khasi language, the ethno-regional movement among the Lai and Mara people in South Mizoram are other examples in inter-ethnic tensions. Even today we are experiencing such ethnic and linguistic tensions among communities in various states of the region.

Thirdly, we need to address the issue of poverty and social injustice in North East India. In fact, ethnic conflicts, armed conflicts, insurrection movements and the issue of poverty and injustice are inextricably interlinked. We are experiencing a situation of extreme poverty in the midst of plenty. It is said that even in North East India 20 percent people at the top corner 80 percent of resources and funds while 70-80 percent of population get 20 percent resources only. This clearly shows the unequal distribution of resources among the people. The reality of our society is now that the gap between the rich and the poor keeps on becoming wider. The developmental fund from Central government virtually goes to the cities and towns alone whereas the rural areas hardly get any benefit from the developmental fund even through the so-called trickle down system. The majority of the people is at the receiving end of political games. Many people live in dire poverty; the poor being marginalized and the political and economic structures are virtually regulated by a few elites.

Human Rights Violations in North East India

The ongoing conflicts between the resistance movements and the Indian army raise the issues of human rights. The Indian army armed with the 'Armed Forces Special Power Act' have taken undue advantage of the innocent civilians. Wide scale human rights abuses have been reported during army combing operations, including torture and extrajudicial executions. This Act permits soldiers (not

lower than the rank of Havildar) to punish anyone even to the extent of shooting on the basis of suspicion. In fact, civilians are subject to much torture and harassment on the basis of that Act. There are several testimonies of women being raped by the army. Many people were killed in the custody of the security forces, apparently after torture. The Army claimed that they died in "armed encounters" or 'while trying to escape.'⁶ In fact, the provisions provided by the Act to the armed forces promote excessive human rights violations. It also prohibits the possibility of inquiring or investigating the legality of their actions or redressal for excesses committed by the armed forces.

As we know very well in the context of militarisation, the reality of North East India is that torture is pervasive and daily routine irrespective of whether arrests are made by the police, para-military forces or the army. Many cases are never reported at all, especially if they occur in remote areas. Sometimes government officials have refused to acknowledge that the problem of torture exists. It is true that the widespread practice of torture and terror in the course of daily law enforcement flouts the basic rights recognized by the Indian Constitution and the international instruments of Human Rights to which India, rightly, is a party. The Amnesty International Declaration is against torture perpetrated by armed forces or others:

The use of torture is a violation of all principles of human freedom and of the life and dignity of the

human person, and as such must be identified as a crime against humanity. There can never be any justification for torture.⁷

Torture is no doubt against the Article 2 of the United Nations Declaration on the Protection of all Persons from Torture:

Any act or torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment is an offence to human dignity and shall be condemned as a denial of the purpose of the Charter of the United Nations, and as a violation of the Human Rights and fundamental freedom proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.⁸

The activities of resistance movements also have to be evaluated from the perspective of human rights. In a situation where there is armed conflict with the armed forces, the innocent civilians are the one who suffers most. Wati Longchar rightly stated that "It appears to be the policy of freedom fighters that whoever goes against their objective is considered to be against the national interest and therefore, they are to be eliminated. People are denied freedom of expression. Another form of human rights abuse is forced labour. The villages are forced to perform as porter of arms, ammunitions and supplies for freedom fighters. Sometimes the villagers have been pressurized into paying taxes and threatened if they do not comply with their orders. There have been many cases of freedom fighters beating up the villagers or the people who are caught indulging immoral

activities, such as gambling, drunkenness and flesh trade. All these are the violations of human rights.”⁹

Today the whole of North East India is in an explosive and volatile situation. The innocent people are the victims sandwiched between the Government forces and armed resistance groups. A number of innocent civilians have been killed during the so-called “encounter-insurgency” operations. It is indeed deplorable that the Governments both at the central and the state levels have failed in safeguarding the innocent citizens. Many people died of hunger, sickness, and psychological fear.

As we have already stated earlier, there have been several communal classes in the region. Notable among them are the Kuki-Naga conflict, Paite- Kuki conflict, Mizo-Chakma conflict, Mizo-Bru conflict, Tribal –Non Tribal conflict in Tripura, Khasis-Nepali conflict, Bodo-Adivasi clashes (1995,1998), Kuki- Karbi conflict (2003-2004), Hmar-Dimasa clash (2003), Karbi –Dimasa clash (2005), Bodo-Muslims class (2008) and several others. In all these conflicts and clashes, several people have died and several thousands have been rendered homeless. In many cases, innocent people have suffered the most the communal flare-ups in this region.

Widespread poverty in the region which achieved a fairly high rate of economic development is the principal cause of the violations of rights. Poverty deprives individuals, families and communities of

their rights and promotes prostitution, child labour, and sale of human organs. While certain sections of the people live an extravagant life style, many people are denied basic rights like right to life, right to food, right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well being of himself/herself and of his/her family, including food, clothing and housing. A life of dignity is impossible in the midst of poverty. The elite and the rich within and between states adopt mechanisms that make millions of people live in hunger and poverty. In fact, the issues of injustice, poverty and hunger entail the basic and fundamental human rights. Sometimes, in the name of developmental projects such as hydro-electricity and construction of National Highways several people have been displaced and denied their basic rights like right to life, right to food and shelter.

Some steps that need to be taken to reinforce human rights.

Firstly, creating an awareness of specific violation of human rights. Violence is deeply entrenched in our society. There are some practices that have been socially and religiously sanctioned but are harmful to the people. Sometimes such practices of violence lurk beneath the surface. Only a critical analysis can help make the people aware by exposing these evils, e.g. child labour. Legal redressal of violations can be obtained and with the help of institutions victims could be empowered to take advantage of them. Today the courts have moved in to restore the land rights of the tribals and to restore children's rights.

Secondly, it may be noted that it is harmful to adopt extra constitutional Acts like the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Acts, 1958 because it overrules all those existing civil laws. One of the main reasons of severe human rights violations is that Indian armies suspect all the people to be 'underground fighters' or their active supporters. This Act often appears as lawless because it contravenes all democratic rights enshrined in the Constitution of India on the basis of suspicion. I suggest this Act to be repealed or at least to be amended to some extent so as to safeguard the innocent civilian people and their rights.

Thirdly, it is also highly advisable that State Human Rights Commission has to be set up by the Government in every state so that human rights violation can be checked. In fact, we need an independent body with powers in every state to take action against human rights violations because bringing human rights violation cases to the National Human Rights Commission is burdensome and rather difficult. Therefore, every state needs its own Commission which can function as a watchdog, subsequently leading all responsible citizens to bring such cases to the notice of the Commission.

Fourthly, the tenets of human rights should be included in the syllabus of school education right from primary school to university level so as to inculcate the importance of human rights to students' lifestyle. It is also highly necessary to assess whether educational and other institutions run by the

government, private bodies and even the churches are in accordance with the norms set by the Human Rights Commission.

Fifthly, we also need to revitalize tribal resources and to rediscover tribal ethical principles. Every tribal community has ethical and altruistic principles through which they maintain their communitarian life. This underlying principle of the tribal communitarian society is called Tlawmngaihna in Mizo, Tomngaina in Kukis, Sobaliba in Ao-Nagas, Meth in Konyak-Nagas and so on. This has to be rediscovered and has to be extended to the larger context in contemporary society. Say for example, the Mizo have a proverbial saying : '*Sem sem dam dam, ei bil thi thi.*' This may be translated as "Share and live, grab and die." Survival of the community is dependent on everyone being ready to share his life and what he has. In a nutshell, man's true destiny is to sacrifice his life for others. Therefore, tribal life principles and ethical norms have to be revitalized and rediscovered so as to reinforce human rights in the region.

Sixthly, there is a clarion call for us today to have a deep concern for the well-being of humanity and work towards equitable and just distribution of wealth, jobs and power according to one's capacity and knowledge in order that socio-economic inequality among the people be removed and rights and privileges be enjoyed by all section of the peoples. The situation calls us to commit ourselves to change the appalling conditions whereby through our involvement in changing the situation, people can live without hunger and poverty.

Seventhly, we need a theology of self-readjustment by providing space for the other. Celebrating difference or otherness is a basic step toward overcoming violence. In a context of ethnic violence and conflictual situation, Lalsangkima a tribal missiologist- theologian asserts that "Appreciation of difference or respecting the other by appreciating the otherness of the other is a human value we need to promote in our multi cultural and pluralistic context...Why is the other a menace, threat, or demon? It is one's perception of the other based on the otherness of the other itself, that is the root of the problem. To develop a positive perception of the otherness (or difference) of the other is paramount to overcoming the conflictual situation caused by depreciative perception of otherness. Thus, overcoming violence in this conflicting circumstance demands overcoming one's perception of threat in the other. A change from one's perception of otherness as threat to otherness as societal enrichment is essential. Racial and cultural differences are often seen as impediments to the unity of humankind, but they should be seen as expressions of richness of human hood. Unity of creation can be achieved only by celebrating the diversity of creation and recognizing the beauty of difference."¹⁰

Eighthly, we must acknowledge the fact that violence or the so- called ethnic cleansing as a political means based on exclusionary view of one's identity is morally and intellectually condemnable. Violence as a means to an end is immoral and bad. In today's world, I believe that the method of nonviolence is

perhaps one of the best ways we can give witness to our faith in Christ. Christians in North East India must make a conscious effort to utilize this gift of Christ. If humanity is to be saved from self-destruction, we must give witness to the Gospel of peace and justice by our lifestyles, our love for one another, our attitude toward God's creatures, our commitment to qualitative growth of economic life and our political efforts to ensure the reign of God.

End Notes

² Shimreingam Shimray, *Theology of Human Rights-A Critique on Politics* (Jorhat: Bharkataki & Company Private Ltd, 2002), 152.

³ S.K Ghosh, *India's North East: Fifty Turbulent Years* (Titagarh: Linkman Publication, 1998), 36.

⁴ Lalsangkima Pachuau, "Towards Overcoming Violence in the North East India- A Perspective Drawn from Minority Experience" in *Overcoming Violence*, edited by Samson Prabhakar (Bangalore: SATRI/BTESSC, 2004), 33.

⁵ Ibid, 34.

⁶ Shimreigam Shimrey, *Theology of Human Rights...*, 132.

⁷ *Amnesty International Conference for the Abolition of Torture- Final Report*, Paris, December 10-11, 1973, 9.

⁸ "The United Declaration on the Protection of all Persons from Torture", adopted by U.N. General Assembly Resolution 3452 (XXX) of December 9, 1975. This is quoted from Shimreigam Shimrey's book entitled *Theology of Human Rights- A Critique on Politics*, ...157.

⁹ I. Wati Longchar, "Human Rights- Focusing on North

East India," in *Struggle for Human Rights- Towards A New Humanity*, edited by I. John Mohan Razu (Nagpur: National Council of Churches in India Urban Rural Mission, 2001), 122.

¹⁰ Lalsangkima Pachuau, "Towards Overcoming Violence in North East India...", 44.



**DOCTOR OF MINISTRY DEGREE COURSE:
THESIS ABSTRACTS**

**Impact of Selected Indigenous Christian
Movements in Mizoram on the Pastoral Ministry of
the Church in Mizoram : The Response of the
Church**

*Lalmangaiha **

This work surveys the magnitude of the impact of some selected indigenous Christian movements on the life and ministry of the Presbyterian Church in Mizoram, one of the States of India, and critically analyses the Churches response to it.

The approach adopted in this research takes into account seriously the socio-cultural aspect. An attempt has been made to bring to the light the tension between the indigenous culture and the alien culture manifested in the different stages of Christianity for a century in the land.

The emergence and proliferation of several indigenous movements in Mizoram have created disunity among the Christians leading to the deviations of several groups. The division in the Church is considered a serious issue; therefore, an attempt has been made to find out the reasons of divisions.

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Chapter two gives us the background information such as geographical location, the people, social and religious background. Considerable space is given to the account of revival movements which is often considered to be responsible for the emergence of indigenous movements. It also introduces briefly the history of the Church in Mizoram and the establishment of the Presbyterian Church. The chapter ends with a historical account of the rise of the indigenous movements with statistical data along with its analysis.

Chapter three narrates the selected indigenous movements one by one giving us some of their relevant basic teachings and the nature of each of these movements. It reflects on, wherever possible, the points of departure from the orthodox tradition and how the indigenous movements appropriated the official doctrine of the Church. It also deals with the main causes of divisions; with a brief history of four consecutive revival stirrings; and the positive and negative impact of the revivals.

Chapter four is an elaborate account of the impact of the indigenous Christian Movements (ICMs). It talks about the counteractions between the ICMs and the established Church and the tensions that occurred between the two. It also critically analyses and interprets the Questionnaires I & II. It ends with a critique and a summery of major findings from the Data I & II.

Chapter five critically examines the responses of the Church towards the ICMs. It tries to identify where the problem lies and analyses the actions taken by the Church against the adherents of the ICMs. The strategies employed by the Church in encountering the ICMs have been evaluated and the finding is that the ecclesiastical leadership, in some areas and to some extent, failed to handle the situation as its response has been conditioned by the mission perspective undermining the socio-cultural aspects.

Chapter six, therefore, proposes a model of response applicable for any possible attack by heretical teachings in the light of St. Paul's method as recorded in the Bible and on the basis of the experience of the Church. The proposed model takes into account seriously the intra-Church and the inter-Church relations, efficiency in personnel management and collective decisions as effective tools for handling ecclesiastical administrative problems.

**DOCTOR OF MINISTRY DEGREE COURSE:
THESIS ABSTRACT II**

**The Psycho - Social Problems of Teenage Children
of Mizo Working Parents: Challenges for Christian
Ministry of the Church**

*C. Chawngmingliana **

‘Teen-age’ is an important stage in human life. A child needs parents more at this time than at any other time in life. For it is during this period that many teenagers make critical decisions about their lives. Therefore, it is very important that they are given proper guidance and good education during this period. In other words, without proper care and education, teenagers could easily choose wrong ways for their future. In this fast changing world in which consumerist lifestyle is impinging more and more on the lives of people, the same impact is being felt even in the Mizo society, especially among teenagers. Parents are more and more after money and consumerist lifestyles, thereby neglecting to give proper Christian Education to their children. They usually leave their children to the care of domestic helpers who might not be able to give them proper direction in life.

Furthermore, their exposure to cable TV, advertisements, and gossip columns in magazines and newspapers attract them to try out consumerist lifestyles, including using drugs, drinking alcohol,

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and immoral sexual relationships. To add to this is the pressure from some of their peers to be adventurous and to experience the worldly ways of life. Thus, many teenagers are tempted to practice the so-called fashionable styles of the times and so indulge in irresponsible living.

This leads to Psycho-Social problems, the symptoms of which are seen in their disinterest in Church Programmes, engagement in bad habits, substance abuse and alcoholism. The absence of their parents at home makes them confused in life, for they do not get proper instructions. They usually do not practise good manners, lack an attitude of cooperation with others, and lose interest in living in fellowship with others.

In such a situation, they need proper and effective religious education that would help them to cope with the problems caused by all external and internal pressures. Therefore, a good and an effective Christian Education is really the need of the day in order to address the Psycho-Social problems of Teenagers.

It is, therefore, very urgent to undertake a systematic study on the psycho-social problems of teenage children of Mizo working parents. There have been several works on the study of teenage problems in general and their psycho-social problems in particular both in English and Mizo. Viewing from different perspectives teenage problems could be dealt with as proposed by psychological analysis, sociological

research and counseling techniques. However, there has been little attempt to study the psycho-social problems of teenage children from the perspective of Christian education ministry. Moreover, there is an enormous challenge for Christian ministry to make a substantial contribution in dealing with the problems of teenage children of Mizo working parents. Therefore, this dissertation project tries to study the psycho social problems of teenage children of Mizo working parents to challenge the existing Christian Education ministry of the Mizoram Presbyterian Church.

It is well known that teenage is a stage of drastic changes in the psycho-social lives of children. These changes cause teenage children to live in awe and a search for identity has become one of the characteristic features of teenage children. These changes may be observed in various dimensions including physical change, attraction to opposite sex, career consciousness, hero worship, flight on imagination etc. While some changes are biological, others are affected by peer pressure. Thus a need for proper family management is obvious. The same problem of teenage children caused by a psycho-social dilemma has also been found among Mizo families. The Mizo family had been defined by a well organized unit with the father as its head. However, considerable changes and developments in the society are seen in contemporary Mizo family which also affects family discipline in Mizo family. Status of teenagers in contemporary Mizo family is marked by hero worship and thus parenting teenage is not a very

easy one in these days and a need to pay more attention to teenage children has been felt.

To elucidate the psycho-social problems of teenage children of Mizo working parents, attention is paid to a cursory survey of theories of personality development. The theories chalked out in this study are proposed by Sigmund Freud, Eric H. Erikson, Elizabeth B. Hurlock, Abraham Maslow and Shyam Sunder Shrimali. These theories not only outline major psycho-social problems of human beings, but they also delineate the characteristic features of teenage problems and the psycho-social realities of teenage children in the developing stages. In this study a comparison is made with the development of Mizo teenage children in relation to their psycho-social problems. It is considerably true that major theories of personality development theories could be applied in the study of teenage children of Mizo working parents. Thus, to delineate the psycho-social problems of teenage children, an indispensable task is to do a field research using relevant questionnaires. This is done by chalking out questionnaires and thereby analyzing and interpreting the data.

Analysis and interpretation of data collected out of several responses from children of both working parents and single working parents shows that teenage children in Mizo family are facing immense problems in terms of physical, psychological and social aspects. Analysis of the data shows those problems faced by teenage children of both working parents are not very much different from those of

teenage children of single working parents. Therefore, one could not undermine the problems of teenage children of both working and single working parents. Therefore, the need for giving proper Christian education programme is enormous in both the cases.

In the light of interpretation of data and testing of hypothesis, the Christian education programme of the Mizoram Presbyterian Church is examined so as to see whether the psycho-social problem of teenage children of Mizo working parents is addressed in her programmes. It is obvious that the church addresses the need of the psycho-social problems of teenage children in considerable dimensions. However, the limitation could not be undermined. Hence a project is chalked out to reassess her Christian education ministry project. The Christian Youth Service (*Tleirawl Inkhawm*), which has been an important factor for educating and nurturing teenage children, is taken up for ministry experiment/model.

Formerly, teenagers were included in Children afternoon Service. However, since the year 2002, **Teenagers Service** (*Tleirawl Inkhawm*) has been conducted separately in Sunday afternoon with proper Guidelines and textbook under the Mizoram Presbyterian Church until today. The MSSU textbook cell appoint efficient and expert persons to write the textbook each year. Some local churches termed this Service as “**Christian Youth Service**” (CYS). The programme is used for learning Bible stories and topics as well as prominent Christian biographies, dramas, quizzes, songs etc. Some local churches

follow the prescribed textbook where as some others do it in their own style. The Ministry Experiment is being done in Teenagers Sunday Afternoon Service.

By experimenting a Christian education ministry project through the Christian Youth Service in two local churches the researcher finds that the Christian Youth Service has become a very vital institution/ programme to deal with the psycho-social problems of Mizo working parents. However, there are limitations in the programmes and practices of the service. Thus the ministry experiment suggests that changes and improvements could be made to meet the need of teenage children in the Christian education ministry. The study shows that Christian education ministry can be carried out more meaningfully through the Christian Youth Service by facilitating various programmes to address the psycho-social problems of teenage children more particularly of Mizo working parents.



Book Review

Lalnghakthuami *

L. H. Lalpekhlua, Contextual Christology: A Tribal Perspective. Delhi: ISPCK, 2007, (pp.259).

This book is the published version of a dissertation submitted by the author to the University of Auckland, New Zealand, for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Theology. The book is now available for public reading with the author's hope that it may in some way provide a contextual understanding of Christology for the Christian communities in general and for tribal Christians in particular. The book is trying to explore the question of "Who is Jesus Christ for us today?" in Mizoram. This is the main focus of the book.

The author is trying to highlight the need of contextualizing Christology in general and in Mizoram in particular from a tribal perspective in the first chapter. He takes up important contextual issues like the relationality of contextual Christology with other christologies, the ability to speak beyond its context and openness to hear voices from beyond its own boundaries, a christology that will preserve human values and enhance life. Any reader will be enlightened and get new insight into the contextual theological concerns after reading this topic.

A discussion on the criteria for evaluating the authenticity of contextual christology is another

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important concern in this book. In this section we can sense that the author is very much influenced by the liberationist theologians taking seriously people's concern as one of the basic norms and criteria of contextual christology. This is followed by a short discussion on the biblical foundation of the contextual christology, which helps us to see the plurality of christologies in New Testament. It is a clear indication for us to acknowledge that it is both possible and necessary to construct a contextual christology since the gospel writers have already developed a contextual christology in their own time. In this connection the author could have brought out the *Logos* concept utilized by John in his gospel. As John already set an example of constructing a contextual christology in his own time, we also can formulate a contextual christology within our God given cultural elements. This is one of the theological legitimization of *Pasal̄tha*.

The next important issue discussed here is on models for contextual christology. He has pointed out models like the transplantation model, the fulfillment model, the translation model, the synthetic model and the praxis model. The author opts for a synthetic-praxis model for understanding Jesus Christ among tribal in Mizoram mainly because it will take the local culture seriously and at the same time emphasize liberation and social justice. And we see the author discussing on the christological approaches namely, incarnational and soteriological approaches. Here the author is trying to do justice to the concern of the traditional christology and to the modern contemporary presentation of christology. Any reader

may be stunned to note that the classical atonement theories have occupied a large section that makes little sense to the real issues and questions raised by the tribal context and Mizoram in particular.

The following two chapters concentrate on analyzing the tribal situation in Northeast India and the christological heritage of the tribal Christians in Mizoram. The author concludes that the Mizo and other tribal in India are one of the marginalized communities in India. They have been alienated socio-culturally and economically from the dominant community of mainland India. However, Mizoram is in the process of modernization where a new class of tribal capitalists has emerged. This small number of capitalists controls most of the state's economy and political decision-making. Therefore, people have become more and more individualistic and self-centered. This is what a contextual christology needs to address. After a careful consideration the author is trying to identify the inadequacy of the christological heritage of the tribal Christians in Mizoram. He considers that the existing tradition of Mizo christology fails to take the local culture into account in its christological formulation. Therefore, there is a need to take the liberating traditions and worldviews of the people for the reconstruction of christology in Mizoram. One may be interested to see the author's arguments and elaborations of the inadequacies of the existing Mizo christology or the existing christological problems that would enhance any reader to acknowledge the need to re-construct a christology

in the Mizo context. One may be interested to know the arguments of the author about the weaknesses of the existing Mizo christology like the approach or trends or the content or even the location of christology. It would be also interesting if the author deals systematically with the factors that led him for the re-evaluation of the existing christology in the Mizo context.

In his analysis on the socio-cultural traditions the author interestingly looks at the socio-cultural and religious elements of the Mizo without giving a new interpretation for the modern people. Concepts like Humanity, *Pasaltha*, Land and the understanding of God and spiritual beings and other cultural practices inherited by Christians are discussed at length. The author is taking us back into the Mizo traditions and practices that would enhance us to acknowledge tribal resources for doing theology in general and christology in particular. However, in his rediscovering the socio-cultural basis of christology the author's arguments on the gospel and culture in the Mizo context are quite general. This may be mainly because the author has too many concerns in the socio-cultural elements that cannot be studied properly. This could be avoided if the author could have concentrated on a study of select cultural elements mainly on the basis of *Pasaltha* concept. It would be helpful for the reader if the author could have done it mainly because the concept of *Pasaltha* in the past is no more acceptable in the present context.

Therefore, if we are to contextualize the concept of *Pasaltha* the author should make an attempt to re – interpretation of the concept of *Pasaltha*, and see the modern understanding of this concept. Otherwise the understanding of the concept in the past context makes no more sense to the modern Mizo community. For instance, *Pasaltha* is understood as brave and the most *tlawmngai* in the community as they acted as the shield and defender of the people (p. 165). This concept was true at the time when there was a constant warfare with neighbouring clans or villages or when they encountered with wild animals. But now we are in a completely different world. If we examine carefully the understanding of *Pasaltha* or *tlawmngai* in today' context the meaning and its connotations are quite different even though the basic ethical concern may be the same. Moreover, the author seems to be ignorant about the feminist concerns while utilizing this concept. Feminists have argued that we cannot accept the patriarchal values and norms as it is for our theological reconstruction unless they are reinterpreted and liberative. It is mainly because they are the product of the patriarchal worldview that ignored women's experienced in the male world. Therefore, while agreeing with the author to a certain extent on the continuity of the traditional and cultural elements of the past we also have to recognize the need of refining and purifying those liberative elements in the light of the kingdom values.

By using the Mizo concept of *Pasaltha* as a working model, the author argues that the idea of Christ as *Pasaltha* incorporates much of the New Testament portrait of the

person and work of Christ. In the same way Jesus Christ can be proclaimed as the *Pasaltha* through whom God's self and purposes are disclosed to them in the Mizo context. Not only this, even the resurrection of Jesus Christ can be perceived in Mizo context as God's response to Jesus' person and work as *Pasaltha-tlawmngai* and God's exaltation of him in this character. This type of systematic attempt of contextualization is helpful in today's context in order to make the gospel truth deeply rooted in one's own culture. We need to encourage more and more of this kind so that our theology may have a critical interaction with the socio-cultural elements in a more acceptable way. In this area we appreciate the author's contributions for the development of contextual christology in the Mizo context.

In our efforts to construct a relevant and meaningful contextual christology, one may raise certain questions like the biblico-theological basis of such attempt. This is necessary in a context like Mizoram where people are staunch believers in the infallibility of the Bible. It is prerequisite for a relevant contextual christology to have a strong biblical foundation so as to be more acceptable to the evangelical circle. As a whole the author seems to give less emphasis on the biblical foundation of contextual christology.

As a whole we appreciate Lalpekhluva for contributing a very valuable pioneering work in the area of christology in Mizoram context. This is our assurance that any one who comes across of this book will continue to think further to bring out more contextual theologies from our tribal heritage.

