

Mosaiclessia: Creed, Context and Differentiated Unity in Christ and the Spirit

Swarup Bar

Abstract

The paper seeks to highlight the fact that the notion of the Church is essentially a mosaic i.e. it is a community of diverse peoples from various backgrounds, cultures and nationalities but identified as one. The mosaic represents the presence of various peoples who play different roles in the Church but are united in purpose and the will of God. The paper begins by pointing out the significance and role of the Nicene Creed in establishing a common doctrinal basis for the churches, since its formulation. However, the paper goes beyond to argue that while the Nicene Creed and Christ's high-priestly prayer have been the bases of unity or ecumenism, we need to go beyond and point out the significance of the event of the Pentecost additionally as a basis, which reinforces the aspect of 'diversity in unity'. This perspective is most needed so that we can speak of a differentiated unity in Christ and the Spirit, in God. Therefore, the model of the church as a mosaic or mosaiclessia is forwarded so that the diversity of churches, issues and contexts especially in Asia are highlighted that can go beyond doctrinal unity to differentiated unity, transcending borders of caste, class, race, gender, poverty, confessional and denominational barriers. Thus 'mosaiclessia' becomes a model of differentiated unity, which addresses these contextual challenges and bases itself on the Creed, Christ's affirmations and the Pentecost narrative, while being relevant in today's world, particularly in Asia.

Nicene Creed: A historic ecumenical affirmation

The CCA has organized this Congress of Asian Theologians (CATS-X) in a most significant and opportune time when the world church is celebrating the 1700th year anniversary of the Nicene Creed. One of the most momentous affirmations in Christian history, the Nicene Creed lays down succinctly the fundamental and core elements of our Christian faith, reflecting on the Trinity, the Church and eschatology. The Nicene Creed (325 AD) or more specifically the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (381 AD) have thus become the most revered documents or creeds followed by almost all sections of Christendom. Therein lies its appeal and power to continue to influence Christian spirituality and practices and most importantly the overall ecclesiology of different traditions. Since this Creed is accepted by most Christians, scholars have argued that this has been and would continue to be one of the significant bases for church unity, cooperation and dialogue among various denominations. However, the importance of this Creed for ecclesial unity is not a new discovery. Particularly in India, where I come from, this Creed has been suggested as a basis for forming a national Church in India, way back in the 19th century by Lal Behari Day, a converted Christian from Bengal in India, a pastor and missionary of the Free Church of Scotland and one who was passionate about indigenous leadership and missions.¹

Whether the Nicene Creed can continue to be the basis of unity and ecumenism in the future, remains to be seen. But it has to be noted that in the first few centuries of the Christian Church, doctrinal disputes over the person of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit have been the

¹ For a detailed study see Ray Burbank, "The Three Self-Model, Christ's Headship and Christian Unity: Bengali Christians seeking and reforming the Nineteenth Century Indigenous Church ideal" in *Scottish Church History*, October 2023, Vol.52, No. 2, 109-130.

primary motivation behind the establishment of the Nicene Creed. In other words, the Nicene Creed can be said to be an ecumenical effort towards bringing churches together on the basis of common doctrinal affirmations. From an early period, divisions and dissensions were not uncommon in the Church, as it was true even of the New Testament times, as witnessed to by Paul. The Patristic times experienced upheaval in the Church due to various philosophies and doctrines that threatened to break-up the Church. There were various ‘heresies’ and schisms in the early church. The communion of the Church suffered quite a bit due to these heresies which were based on doctrinal and ecclesiastical matters. But there were theologians of the early church who defended the unity of the Church on the basis of common faith and the doctrinal deposit. For example, the disputes emerging from Gnosticism and Montanism led Irenaeus (c.132-200) and Tertullian (c. 155-240) to develop paradigms to provide strength to the Church as “one house” although scattered throughout the world and of handing down the truth through the ages.² The Arian heresy was one of the primary Christological heresies, which threatened to split the church.

Concerned about the threat to unity of the empire, Emperor Constantine called the Council of Nicaea in 325 AD. It happened to be the first general ecumenical council of the whole Church attended by about three hundred bishops and others.³ It declared that the Son is consubstantial with the Father and was not a created being. This was first clearly expressed in the Nicene Creed and established in the Council of Constantinople in 381 AD. However, the Arians were not wiped away as there were groups which maintained this position till the 7th century. By the beginning of the 8th century, however, there was a general acceptance of the Nicene Creed. So Arian heresy which threatened to split the church, actually did not succeed to a large extent and the heresy died away in the 8th century.⁴ Philip Turner, commenting on the importance of Nicene Christianity, particularly the Creed, considering it as a bedrock of new ecumenism argues that Nicene Christianity anchors the church in those beliefs and practices without which the church can preserve neither its unity in Christ, nor its identity as Christian.⁵ The creeds serve as tokens of Christian identity. They have been providing the norm for reading the Scriptures, evangelization and instruction and basis for unity.⁶ So the Creed has been playing a pivotal role in Christian unity since the beginning of its formulation.

However, the Church was not fully immune from division and subsequently there were ‘heresies’ like Nestorianism, Monophysitism and others which divided the church, although, there were later councils like Council of Ephesus, 431 AD and Council of Chalcedon in 451 AD which sought to bring them into unity. In spite of these efforts, six churches, commonly known as the Non-Chalcedonian Churches (Oriental Orthodox Churches) rejected Chalcedon and went back to the formula of Cyril of Alexandria “The one nature of the Incarnate God”.⁷ Thereafter, the history of the Church saw many divisions, majorly the East-West Schism (1054 AD) due to various factors, theological (*filioque*), ecclesiological, socio-cultural and political and so forth. Attempts at reconciliation through two councils namely, Council of Lyons and Council of Basel-Ferrara-Florence were made. However, both failed since the ecclesiological differences carried over from

² Conference of Catholic Bishops of India, *May they all be One: Ecumenism in Catholic Perspective* (Bangalore: ATC, 2021), 28.

³ Conference of Catholic Bishops of India, *May they all be One: Ecumenism in Catholic Perspective*, 34.

⁴ Conference of Catholic Bishops of India, *May they all be One: Ecumenism in Catholic Perspective*, 34.

⁵ Christopher R. Seitz, ed. *Nicene Christianity: The Future for a New Ecumenism* (Michigan: Brazos Press, 2001), 10.

⁶ Christopher R. Seitz, ed. *Nicene Christianity: The Future for a New Ecumenism* (Michigan: Brazos Press, 2001), 11.

⁷ Conference of Catholic Bishops of India, *May they all be One: Ecumenism in Catholic Perspective*, 36.

the first century into the second and a mixture of politics and doctrine, made matters complicated.⁸ The history of divisions in the Church is long and complicated, not only based on doctrinal but social, political and cultural milieu of Europe and West Asia. Here, the point was to show how the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed continued to be the basis of common affirmation among Christians, although divisions continued.

Problems with unity based on ‘oneness’ or ‘uniformity’

As we have seen that in the early church and even later, the criteria for ecumenical unity were assent to doctrines. But this began to change as the movement stressed joint action and commitment to the society, leading to the slogan ‘doctrine divides, service unites’. However, Faith and Order discussions revealed that behind doctrinal and theological disagreements lie deep socio-cultural and political factors. Moreover, mission of the Church began to be understood of the whole of humankind and unity was found to be inseparable from this.⁹ In spite of this, the ecumenical movement spent lots of efforts on seeking to focus on oneness, or common doctrine or common activity. However, less effort went into acknowledging and tackling the differences and diversity among the churches in the nature, ministry and sacraments of the church.¹⁰ The effort of finding common ground or oneness was also sought through a Christological perspective, wherein churches were supposed to move towards the centre that is Jesus Christ, hoping to bring them closer to each other. However, this Christological method was also found inadequate as scholars showed that there is plurality inherent in all our theological propositions and methods. In other words, there is no common theology or ecclesiology.

Historically, many people conceive unity or in a broader sense, ecumenical movement as a movement for ‘uniformity and conformity’ among the churches. Beginning with the Christian Rome, the local churches within the Empire sought uniformity in matters related to doctrines, structures and organization for political stability and all new ideas, and developments were frowned upon, resulting in divisions. However, as Kuncheria Pathil contends that ecumenism is not essentially a movement for uniformity in ecclesial structures or governments or disciplines or customs or ways of worship or theology. Not even uniformity in doctrinal formulations or expressions. It is a movement for ‘unity in diversity’, ‘unity in plurality’.¹¹ Pathil further notes that the unity of the early Churches was lost as a result of insistence on uniformity as they rejected all diversity in doctrinal and theological formulations.¹² However it is a fact that diversity of different local churches was an essential part of original vision of Christianity. The New Testament testifies to different types of Christian traditions (Jewish, Hellenistic, Apocalyptic, Charismatic, Episcopal) existing side by side with mutual recognition and acceptance, though not altogether free from conflicts, tensions and controversies. In spite of their differences, they had a fundamental unity in Jesus Christ.¹³ Movements of Christian unity have therefore largely subordinated the plural dimension of our existence.

This has continued till the modern period. George Matthew Nalunnakkal shows that most modern thinking depends on the notion of oneness. From missionary conferences in

⁸ Conference of Catholic Bishops of India, *May they all be One: Ecumenism in Catholic Perspective*, 42.

⁹ Pathil, *Future of the Ecumenical Movement*, 24.

¹⁰ Pathil, *Future of the Ecumenical Movement*, 78,79.

¹¹ Pathil, *Future of the Ecumenical Movement*, 11-12.

¹² Pathil, *Future of the Ecumenical Movement*, 6,7.

¹³ Pathil, *Future of the Ecumenical Movement* (New Delhi: ISPCK, 2017), 5-6.

Edinburgh (1910) to meetings of the World Council of Churches, like Harare (1998); from Vatican II to modern times, ecumenism faces the problem of orientation towards a sort of ‘monistic unity’ of churches. He argues that oneness is not without its inner contradictions. Here he refers to who is seeking this oneness and for which purpose? The concept of the ‘one’ can be a presumed to be normative in the sense of swallowing up other views and conceptions.¹⁴ Nalunnakkal asserts that the foundation for unity or ecumenism should not be oneness anymore but rather an affirmation of pluriform identities (religious, denominational, ethnic, caste, gender and so on). The task of the ecumenical movement is to respond creatively to the affirmation of diverse identities by various subaltern communities. His proposal is that of a Trinitarian and Eucharistic theology of ecumenism which would develop a community of communities. He explains that the Holy Trinity is key to ‘Pluriform ecumenism’. It transcends ‘oneness’ and affirms plurality. Nalunnakkal draws from Abraham P. Athyal to state that Jesus’ prayer does not suggest an organic or structural unity as we assume, because it would be anachronistic, rather Jesus was focusing on ethical/moral implications of oneness.¹⁵ Moreover, he suggests that Eucharist can be the basis of unity which refers to the commemoration of the breaking up of the One body of Christ into many bodies. Hence, a church becomes the Church not in its ‘being one’ but in its becoming broken. ‘Then the church will be really among the broken people. An unbroken church can become an institution. Only a broken church will grow into a fellowship of communities’.¹⁶ While Trinitarian and Eucharistic foundations could be helpful for reinforcing the value of diversity or plurality in ecumenical relationships, the question is how far these can suffice for exploring wider ecumenism, which should include the whole inhabited earth. In the following, I critically look at Jesus’ high-priestly prayer as a basis for ecumenism in the context of diversity, plurality and wider ecumenism.

Drawbacks of some ecumenical perspectives or foundations

From the beginning of ecumenical discourses, Christ’s high-priestly prayer has been central to the affirmation of Church unity. The prayer found in John 17:20-23, voices the desire of Jesus for unity so that “all may be one”. But the essence of this oneness has always been debated. For some, the high-priestly prayer represents moral oneness, for others, this has translated into organic unity, or structural unity or visible unity. Still for others this seems to be more an ideal unity of ourselves with the will and purpose of God. Biblical scholars hold various views on the interpretation of unity that is derived from this passage. Raymond Brown, one of the renowned Biblical scholar notes, citing from various scholars that this unity is interpreted differently by different people; for some it is a question of united purpose, for others, it would mean working together harmoniously, still for others, it represents the relationship between a husband and a wife. Others suggest that this is supposed to be a mystical union, or an unity founded upon the paradigm of unity between the Father and the Son. Still others argue that this is an unity founded on love.¹⁷ Whatever the interpretation of the unity envisaged in this passage from John’s gospel, one is sure that the emphasis is on unity, but not so much on diversity as such. While many would argue that diversity is implicit in this affirmation, here one can safely say that the aspect of unity overshadows

¹⁴ George Mathew Nalunnakkal, “Ecumenism: Challenges Ahead” in Vinod Victor, Leslie Nathaniel and P. Suryaprakash, eds., *Ecumenism: Prospects and Challenges: A Festschrift to the Rev. G. Dyvasirvadham* (New Delhi: ISPCK, 2001), 115-117.

¹⁵ Nalunnakkal, “Ecumenism: Challenges Ahead”, 119.

¹⁶ Nalunnakkal, “Ecumenism: Challenges Ahead”, 121.

¹⁷ Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John (xiii-xvi): Introduction, Translation and Notes, The Anchor Bible* (New York: Doubleday, 1970), 775-776.

the diversity. However, for generations this passage has been utilized for ecumenical movement or unity of churches without realizing the fact that it has not much to say about diversity, which should be inherent in the unity.

Diversity of the Asian context and the envisaged ecumenism

Why is this diversity dimension in our ecumenical discourses very important? It is for the fact that we live in a world full of diversity. Especially when we speak about the Asian context, it is an epitome of diversity. Speaking about Asian realities which impinge on ecumenism, Wesley Ariarajah lists six features which are common for the whole region. These are diversity and plurality, Christianity and colonialism, Asian poverty, deprivation and oppression, influence of religious and cultural traditions and revolutionary upheavals.¹⁸ While pointing out the immense diversity and plurality in Asia, in terms of religion, culture, language, society and politics, Ariarajah also notes that this sort of plurality is opposed to oneness embraced in the ecumenical impulses in the western hemisphere”.¹⁹ Moreover, Christianity’s tryst with colonialism led to churches with denominational differences and rivalries which were imported, and doctrinal problems which were irrelevant to Asia. Colonial Christianity was associated with power and privilege and this sort of Christianity had little sympathy with the religious and cultural traditions of Asia.²⁰ So, in essence, the ecumenical agenda of Asia has been vastly different than its western counterparts. Asian understanding of unity of churches or peoples were to overcome the challenges of division, hegemony, power-play and westernizing influences brought about by colonial Christianity. Moreover, since in Asia, poverty, deprivation and oppression are common, issues of justice, human rights, gender equality and human and economic developments are among the highest priorities.²¹ The Asian context have seen quite a lot of social, political and cultural revolutions, with international wars, resurgence of religious and cultural nationalisms- all these have provided the context for Asian ecumenism. Today the concerns have multiplied in terms of globalization, social liberation of the marginalized groups, reunification of the Korean peninsula and challenges brought about by economic growth of China, India and other countries.²²

Keeping in mind this Asian context of plural issues and concerns, Paulos Mar Gregorios states that “Unity cannot be achieved through agreement in dogma and cooperation in mission alone. Unity is mainly a matter of love, in a structure of justice, freedom and dignity for all.”²³ Kuncheria Pathil adds that the churches in Asia may have to take into consideration the following: first, abandon the traditional position of visible unity of the churches and instead seek for mutual recognition, intercommunion and conciliar fellowship; second, from an ecclesiocentric approach to a committed towards wider ecumenism focusing on the unity of the whole humankind towards struggle for justice, peace and ecological concerns, third, mainline churches to learn lessons from the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements and their amazing growth in indigenous Churches in Asia, Africa and Latin America.²⁴ Furthermore, he suggests the method of inter-contextuality to achieve these ends, which will take into consideration various contexts and deal with them

¹⁸ Ariarajah, “The Ecumenical Movement in Asia”, 229-232.

¹⁹ Ariarajah, “The Ecumenical Movement in Asia”, 229.

²⁰ Ariarajah, “The Ecumenical Movement in Asia”, 229-230.

²¹ Ariarajah, “The Ecumenical Movement in Asia”, 230.

²² Ariarajah, “The Ecumenical Movement in Asia”, 230-232.

²³ Jacob Kurian, ed. *Paulos Mar Gregorios On Ecumenism* (New Delhi/Kottayam: ISPCK/MGF, 2006), 29.

²⁴ Pathil, *Future of the Ecumenical Movement*, 33-35.

appropriately.²⁵ While so far we have been stressing on the value of diversity in ecumenism, attention to contexts, limitations of mere visible or structural unity, suggesting we go beyond mere church unity to wider ecumenism; we have also seen the limitations of some perspectives or bases of ecumenism. We need a model which will hold forth the importance of creeds and doctrines on the one hand and also be inclusive enough to appropriate the diverse contexts, issues and concerns that Asia particularly faces. We need an ecclesiology which engages in church unity to wider ecumenism. We need a model of differentiated unity.

Mosaiclessia: A model for differentiated unity in Christ and the Spirit

Here I put forth the model of mosaiclessia, which is the church understood as a mosaic. Encyclopaedia Britannica, in its entry refers to mosaic “as an art, the decoration of a surface with designs made up of closely set, usually variously coloured, small pieces of material such as stone, mineral or glass, tile or shell...once disassembled, a mosaic cannot be reassembled on the basis of the form of its individual pieces.”²⁶ The essence of a mosaic is that only when different pieces are put together, a clear picture arises. When the pieces are separate, it does not produce any sensible image. Moreover, the essence and meaning of the picture is lost when the mosaic is disassembled. On the other hand, each piece of material, be it stone, mineral, glass etc. has its own unique design, but they marvelously fit into the mosaic to produce a meaningful and beautiful picture. Here, each material used in the mosaic plays its role in filling up the gap and provides meaning and essence to the whole image. One can definitely find parallels in this mosaic model, with Paul’s image of the body put forward in the Corinthian passage. 1 Corinthians 12:12-14 speaks about the fact that we are all baptized into the one Spirit so as to form one body and that this one body is made of many parts having its various roles. This image of oneness is not monistic but explicitly affirms the significance of each part in the body of Christ. Here people of various churches, denominations and confessions can still retain their vitality, identity and uniqueness, without getting dissolved into the monistic oneness sometimes affirmed in these discourses. So, one might argue that if the diversity in unity is already represented in Pauline imagery, what is the need of this new model of the church, coined in the term mosaiclessia?

I can contend that mosaiclessia is more inclusive and diverse than the image of the body that Paul has used to represent diversity in unity in the Spirit and in Christ. How so? While Paul speaks of our unity in Christ’s body, notwithstanding the different parts of the body with their different roles, all are essentially flesh. I would like us to imagine that mosaiclessia in essence envisages an unity, which is differentiated since it can include, stone, clay, glass, shell or other minerals or materials in order to build up the mosaic. What it implies is that the materials which are joined to form a mosaic image are not all the same. In Paul’s body imagery, however, all are part of human flesh. I do not mean to stretch this contrast too far, lest I may be charged of a simplistic understanding of the human body, or the mosaic for that matter. However, I wish to highlight the fact that in the mosaic model of the church, the affirmation of diversity of its constituent elements are more pronounced.

Another reason why mosaiclessia is important is that through its penchant for diversity, it gives room for the role of the Holy Spirit, which seems lacking in some perspectives and models. Even in Christ’s high-priestly prayer, which is universally referred to in ecumenical thought, the

²⁵ Pathil, *Future of the Ecumenical Movement*, 28-33.

²⁶ Frederick O Waage & Per Jonas Nordhagen, “Mosaic”, (accessed on 4th Oct. 2024), <https://www.britannica.com/art/mosaic-art>

role of the Spirit seems minimal. Therefore, Christ's high-priestly prayer does not adequately express as a basis where diversity in Christ's body is affirmed. But this lack is corrected when we consider the event of the Pentecost as the basis for mosaiclessia. In the Pentecost event more than fifteen regional-linguistic backgrounds are represented, but they are all united by the Spirit. Ultimately as per the Biblical witness, around three thousand people were baptized in the name of Christ. What this explicitly shows is the role of the Holy Spirit to bring together people of diverse backgrounds into one body in Christ. This affirmation of diversity is very important as it goes beyond the possibility of unity among people from the same background. The Holy Spirit is understood as the Spirit of unity who brings diversity into the united body of Christ. The church formed at Pentecost is the concrete demonstration of diversity in unity in the body of Christ. Here of course, Christ is the one who sends the Spirit and the people become a new community in the name of Christ. So, the diversity in unity envisaged here is both in Spirit and Christ.

While not neglecting Christ's high-priestly prayers as one of the bases, or rejecting altogether the Trinitarian, or Eucharistic models, this model of a mosaiclessia, with its basis on the Pentecost event can be inclusive of various issues, contexts and concerns, especially in the Asian contexts. This model has the traction because of its potential for diversity. It can be declared that this model emphasizes on diversity while envisaging unity, since in a mosaic, without the diversity of the various elements, the mosaic cannot be created. This model makes it much easier to speak of a differentiated unity, rather than unity in terms of monistic oneness. Mosaiclessia can be a broad platform which can include multiple contexts like ethno-linguistic, religio-cultural, socio-political and so on especially in the Asian landscape. It can also include concerns of poverty, globalization, marginalization, social justice, human rights issues and so on. When we consider the differentiated unity in Christ and the Spirit in the Asian contexts, we return to the original meaning of ecumenism, i.e. *oikonomia*, which concerns the whole inhabited earth. Fortunately, in Asia the word 'ecumenical' has gradually begun to recover its original meaning of concern for the whole inhabited earth. In this sense, in Asia, the emphasis has more clearly been on the 'peoples, social movements, economic realities and socio-political revolutions in the Asian continent'.²⁷

Mosaiclessia as a model for wider ecumenism in Asia

So, the question is how does mosaiclessia hope to deal with these varied contexts and concerns in Asia? Mosaiclessia offers the theological basis, bringing together the role of the Christ and the Spirit into our efforts at wider ecumenism, whose character is essentially differentiated unity. The mosaiclessia model generates avenues to deal with issues of poverty, marginalization, exploitation, injustice and so on. This model seeks to reshape the nature, ministry and mission of the Church. In the Asian context, ecumenism should be able to transcend the divisions of caste, class, gender, religion and so on and so forth. What it essentially means is that it should be able to take into consideration these concerns from an intersectional perspective. This of course, makes ecumenism more complex. But this specifies the objective of ecumenism in an Asian context.

But how would creed form part of the essence of the church in this? Any mosaic needs a floor, wall or platform on which it is based or designed. Therefore, particularly the creeds form the platform on which the mosaic can stand. Engaging in wider ecumenism does not mean that we discard altogether the received tradition and doctrines that we cherish. However, it does mean that through this ecclesiological model of 'diversity in unity', we have the option of going beyond these

²⁷ S. Wesley Ariarajah, "The Ecumenical Movement in Asia" in *Christian Theology in Asia*, edited by Sebastian C. H. Kim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 228.

creeds, reinterpreting them in our own contexts and engaging them in the diverse issues we face. Basing on the foundation of these creeds the mosaic is being designed, which allows meaningful participation of diverse groups of people with diverse concerns. Here on the one hand, we hold on to the Christological affirmation, taking seriously the high-priestly prayer of Jesus, and on the other hand, the plural engagements opened up for us through the Pentecost narrative. Here the Spirit of God works in and through the diversity of contexts and issues to bring unity in Christ. Also the Christological principle is not against our engagement with people of other faiths, nor the Holy Spirit against our diverse engagements with issues of justice in the context of oppression and marginalisation, but these altogether work towards the common goal of wider ecumenism, which is the transformation of the society and building up of the Kingdom of God.

Let us now look at how mosaiclessia would fare in its responses to some prominent concerns of Asia.

Poverty and gap between the rich and the poor

Mosaiclessia, with its penchant for inclusivity and diversity would determine that issues of poverty and the ever-widening gap between the rich and the poor are some of the serious concerns to be addressed in Asia. As in a mosaic, the constituent elements provide meaning to the larger picture, the poor would be able to determine the nature and mission of the church. The Pentecost narrative as a basis for mosaiclessia would provide the rationale to include people from all different economic backgrounds as participants whose ‘Spirit-filled’ voices should be heard. This would include raising our voices along with the poor and marginalized against structures that dehumanize and policies that usurp the dignity of the poor. All voices as part of the mosaiclessia would synchronise into a meaningful song of protest and transformation. These trajectories may not neglect even the Nicene Creed. What it takes is a reinterpretation of our Creeds and doctrinal deposits in our contexts. Jesus, who became human, born of the Holy Spirit, incarnate of the virgin Mary, very well continues to be our paradigm, who mixed with the poor and the marginalized, towards their liberation.

Religio-cultural, ethno-linguistic conflicts

Mosaiclessia, on the one hand would appreciate diversity in Asia, which includes, religion, language and ethnicity. Any mosaic art would reject uniformity or swallowing up of one particular piece of material with the other. Also, the Pentecost event shows that although they were all speaking in tongues in different languages the crowds could hear them speaking in their own mother tongues. This is countering the oppressiveness of any monistic framework. The hegemony of one religion, one culture, one language and one ethnicity are never supported in a mosaic formation. So mosaiclessia would always affirm the identity, uniqueness and vitality of each culture and religion. This goes against fundamentalism in culture and religion of all sorts. Wherever there are conflicts due to these religio-cultural, ethno-linguistic factors, the bottom-line to begin with is affirming the identity and worth of each. Although conflicts due to these in various parts of Asia are deeply embedded and complicated, yet this model guides the church that proper methods or approaches are needed to be integrated into its theology and mission to deal with these situations. Once again, the Creed which speaks of God the Creator, who created the world in diversity and the Son and the Holy Spirit working together gives a picture that diversity in unity is

our reality. Here the Church must be ready to acknowledge diversity on the one hand but also unity in terms of bridging gaps, reconciling groups, manage conflicts as it faces them.

Discrimination due to class, caste, tribe, gender, sexual orientation

Mosaiclessia is not only a model, it is a method and an approach. This model has the potential to address issues of class, caste, gender and sexual orientation mainly because of its affirmative stance towards diverse existence and total rejection of discrimination on the basis of these constructs. While the Pentecost event led to a church or community of diverse peoples from different backgrounds in the name of Jesus, the efforts towards wider ecumenism would take into consideration these struggles towards the goal of inclusivity and acceptance. In the Pentecost event all were filled with the Holy Spirit, irrespective of their background or nationality. Here wider ecumenism in Asia would transcend borders of class, caste, gender and sexual orientation. The discrimination towards the poor, the atrocities towards the Dalits, tribals and adivasis by the high caste groups and influential members of the community, and oppression and subjugation of women and sexual minorities, all are realities of Asia. In these circumstances, mosaiclessia motivates the church to struggle along with these communities, to consider them as valuable contributors to the society, irrespective of which section they belong to. We must be able to redefine the nature of the church, its ministry and mission from the perspective of these marginalized groups as each piece of material determine the mosaic art. The importance of the Creed here is that it speaks of the Church as one, holy, catholic and apostolic, oneness understood as differentiated unity; being a counter-culture; i.e. being holy, recognize our belongingness to the wider community, i.e. being catholic and retrieving the good from traditions, i.e. being apostolic.

Communities of peace, justice and biocentric existence

Mosaiclessia, built on the Pentecost event can be inclusive of peace and justice concerns since, during this event, the weak and the powerless disciples and others were given a voice through the speaking in tongues. The Holy Spirit, whom Christ sent became the powerhouse for the downtrodden. The disciples and others were vindicated and a new community was formed where peace, mutual sharing and acceptance became hallmarks. As in a mosaic, there are different types of materials from the earth used to create a picture, this shows that the concerns of the church go beyond human well-being to an integrated existence, where God, humans and the rest of creation develops a biocentric living. Here concerns of humans are intertwined with concerns of nature, ecological crisis and our befriending of the earth. The church is thereby motivated to strive for peace, justice and well-being for all, including non-humans. This is supported by the Nicene Creed where God is the creator of all and therefore the Creation belongs to God, not to be domesticated and exploited by human beings.

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