

# Editorial

With the world increasingly intertwined and interdependent, it is no longer possible today to remain indifferent to what is going on in other parts of the globe. Christians living in one context thus need to converse and relate with those in other contexts in order to live out their faith in response to global/local realities. The present issue of *Asian Christian Review* has indeed become such a conviction-put-into-practice, with pregnant implications for inter-contextual dialogue.

The issue begins with featured reflections on the Fifth General Conference of Latin American and Caribbean Bishops (CELAM V), held May 13-31, 2007, in Aparecida, Brazil. Four authors with their brief essays shed light on the significance, limits and challenges of the event.

**Kiyoshi Seko** (myself) puts the conference in the global context by way of introduction. Although CELAM tends to be seen in terms of struggles over liberation theology, argues Seko, distinct newness as well as “signs of the time” of the fifth conference must also be recognized.

**Camilo Maccise, OCD**, based in Mexico, introduces the final document of CELAM V. With some background information, Maccise presents the basic structure and content of the document, while offering a concise evaluation of the conference.

**José María Arnaiz, SM** from Chile reports on the event through the eyes of a participant. Arranging his thoughts around the question “What was at stake in Aparecida?” Arnaiz discusses the key issues and general orientation of the conference.

Finally, **Maria Clara Luchetti Bingemer**, who was also present at the conference as a theological advisor to Brazilian bishops, gives a relatively longer account and in-depth analysis of the event as well as of the final document.

Latin America remains as the focus of this issue’s *Viewpoints*. **Aloysius Pieris, SJ** in his “Jon Sobrino and Theology of Liberation” seeks to defend a Latin American theologian, Sobrino, in the wake of the recent Vatican censure on his writings for their “discrepancies with the faith of the Church.” Strongly questioning the Roman approach to the theology of liberation in general, and to Sobrino in particular, Pieris calls readers to join, rather than impede, the Latin American theologian in his “noble task.”

The first of the four main articles, “Liberating Political Theology Today” by **Anselm K. Min** is an immensely significant challenge to the existing political/contextual theologies. Min sharply questions how these theologies mainly preoccupied with their own “context” can address “universal themes and concerns,” or speak to “Others” not included in the “context.” Criticizing their “particularism,” i.e., the lack of the sense of common issues, common agency and common efforts for liberation, Min proposes “solidarity of Others” as a

new paradigm for theology in the age of globalization in order to respond to the common global challenges that we are facing today regardless of political, cultural, ethnic, or gender particularities.

**Rekha M. Chennattu, RA** offers fresh exegetical insights on the Eucharist in John's gospel in her "Break the Word and Build the Community." Focusing on the questions why John associates his teaching on the Eucharist with the multiplication of the bread (and feeding of the multitude) rather than the Last Supper, and why he replaces the synoptic account of the Eucharist at the Last Supper with the foot-washing one, Chennattu powerfully argues that the gospel writer's intention was to oppose the magical understanding of the Eucharist of his day and to demonstrate the "intrinsic connection between the Eucharistic celebration and a life committed to God's work of creation and liberation."

How the Roman Catholic understanding of religious pluralism has evolved in Asia is the theme of **Edmund Chia's** article, "Asian Theology of Religious Pluralism." Noting that the "theology of religious pluralism" is not a product of Western liberalism, but was born out of a concern over the "myth of religious superiority," Chia illustrates how the post-Vatican II Catholic Church in Asia has overcome the centuries-old sense of superiority and developed dialogical attitude and theological reflections with regard to other religions. While lamenting that such an emerging theology is now the principal target of Vatican's scrutiny and criticism, Chia expresses his hope that the turbulent process will cease when Rome "is ready to yield."

**Jose Mario C. Francisco, SJ** in his "Translating Christianity into Asian Tongues" makes a valuable contribution to the discussions on inculturation. Analyzing the dynamics of the encounter between Christian faith and cultural context through the example of the 17<sup>th</sup> century Philippines, Francisco proposes to understand this dynamics in terms of "translation," rather than incarnation. Incarnation analogy, he continues, is based on the dichotomic theology which clearly separates grace and nature, assigning faith and culture to the respective realm, and thus is unable to see grace within nature. Francisco instead argues for a "theology of cultural context from below," daring to speak of the "salvific and liberating value" of culture.

Finally, **Kwok Pui-lan** reviews a book, "Body and Sexuality," which is a fruit of the second conference of Ecclesia of Women in Asia.

It is hoped that the present issue will be of help for readers in their intellectual/pastoral engagements, and they should be reminded that *Asian Christian Review* always welcomes their comments and responses.

Kiyoshi Seko  
Editor  
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