



Relational Christology: An Effective Response to the Brokenness of the Church in India

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Abstract: The author attempts to provide a Christological response to existential brokenness of Indian Christian community. Referring to the term 'Relational Christology' used for Christology of Adolf Schlatter (1852-1938), He delves into the Gospels to see Jesus through the eyes of relationality. We ask: How does Jesus help the Christians in India in healing their own brokenness and guide the Church to respond to the existential brokenness in India? The paper is organized into four parts. The first part deals the brokenness in the Indian Christian community in terms of her identity, her social existence and in the life of the Church leaders. The second part provides theological foundations for interrelatedness in the world. In the third part, we deal with Relational Jesus of the Gospels. Finally, I derive some social and ecclesial implications of the relational paradigm of Jesus for Christians in India. The method adopted is mainly contextual and analytical. The author has also made use of Adolf Schlatter's theological method which contains three stages: seeing-act, thinking-act and living-act.

Keywords: Adolf Schlatter, *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis, Relational Christology, Healing, Relationality.

Introduction

Pope Francis, in his encyclical *On Care for Our Common Home*, addressed the world in the following words, "The human person grows more, matures more and is sanctified more to the extent he or she enters into relationships, going out from themselves to live in communion with God, with others and with all creatures" (*Laudato Si*, 61,66,241). He invited the Church as well as the whole world to give witness to the conviction that everything in the world is interrelated and interconnected.¹ The invitation of Pope Francis to give witness to the sense of interrelatedness in the world by gazing at Jesus led me to ask the following questions: How does Jesus guide me to respond to the issues of brokenness?² How do I perceive Jesus when I see him through lens of relationships? How does Jesus help the Christians in India in healing their own brokenness? How does the Church respond to the individual, societal and environmental brokenness in India? Consequently, in this paper, I establish that *a relational Christology inspires the Church in India heal her own brokenness and respond effectively to the larger Indian context of individual, familial, societal and environmental brokenness by promoting positive relationships with God, humans and nature.*³

1. Indian Christian Community: Fragmented Reality

The Indian census (2011) shows that the Christians make 2.30% (2.78 crores) of Indian population. It is a negligible minority in comparison to 79.8% of Hindus and 14.23% of Muslim population.⁴ Though minority in number, Christians in India boldly proclaim Christ and live the values envisaged by the Gospel of Christ. Through centuries of its presence Christianity influenced various aspects of Indian society. Addressing the 30th Plenary Assembly of the Conference

of Catholic Bishops of India (CCBI) of the Latin Church, in Bangalore on Feb 4, Cardinal Oswald Gracias said, “The Catholic Church needs our nation and India needs the Church.”⁵ This clarion call exposes the deep rootedness and relatedness of Christianity to Indian soil and to Indian hearts. However, being a minority, the journey of Christians on Indian roads has not always been smooth sailing. They are continuously exposed to varied and complex situations of brokenness or feelings of alienation.

1.1. Broken Identity

The question before the Indian Christians is to what extent they can merge their identity with general society and yet remain true to their faith. They fear that conformity to the general pattern will lead to criticism from the Christian community and refusal to conform will be misconstrued by their Hindu hosts. The dilemma is, “merging the Indian Christian personality with the danger of losing his identity versus the refusal to adapt to the Indian culture and remaining isolated from the culture of our nation.”⁶ Christianity even after long years of its existence in India is not yet firmly rooted in the Indian soil and still struggles for its sustenance (social, organizational, and spiritual).

1.2. Broken Social Existence

The Christian community is drawn primarily from the socially and economically weaker sections of society and has yet to be liberated from the psychological, social and economic alienations particularly in the rural area.⁷ India experiences today an escalation of attacks on its Christian minority. The Catholic Bishops of India (CCBI) affirms that Dalit Christians suffered in India.⁸ In the first six months of 2017, Indian Christians were harassed, threatened or attacked for their faith as reported in 410 incidents (248 in

the first quarter) almost as many as the total for the whole of 2016 (441).⁹ Maharashtra passed a bill which criminalized social exclusion based on religion, caste or race, yet 80 incidents against Christians were recorded. In Chhattisgarh, one of five states to have an ‘anti-conversion’ law, 122 incidents were recorded in 2019 in comparison with 72 in the year 2018. There is also an increase in Christian persecution across the region driven by extreme religious nationalism by local and national governments.¹⁰ These atrocities and antireligious attitudes infused a sense of fear amidst the Christians endangering both their social status and religious status making them feel broken in their own country and their own lands and their own religious faith.

1.3. Broken Leaders of the Church

We blame not only the changing trends in the postmodern scenario or other social or religious communities but also the changing mentality of the Church leaders.¹¹ The priesthood is essentially a relational reality.¹² This is true in many senses, and was vigorously affirmed by Pope John Paul II in his apostolic exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (no.12). It is clear that like every human being the priest must relate himself to the source of his existence, God, the Father and he communicates depth of his loving relationship in his ministry by relating to the people whom he serves. Pope Francis calls the Shepherds to ‘to live with the smell of the sheep’¹³ but the modern trends indicate that the stench of the shepherd is keeping the sheep away. The reality shows that the leaders of Indian Christian communities are alienated from ‘Indian people, Indian Intellectuals, Christians.’¹⁴ The very ones who are called to relate with people are broken themselves and break themselves away from the people whom they are commissioned to serve. Indicated realities of new scenarios of modern world keep challenging the

Indian Church for a renewed outlook. Indian Christian community has her dual task of responding to brokenness of her country on the one hand and responding to her own internal brokenness on the other.

2. Biblical Witness to Human Relationality

Human beings are relational beings. They optimally function when they are in community. John Donne wrote, “No man is an island.”¹⁵ No one can live as an individual. Even to call a place an island it has to be surrounded by water. Similarly, it is only in community even individuality of a person is realized. Dwayne Huebner uses the metaphor of weaving to describe how individuals create a fabric of life.¹⁶ The inter woven relationships (with people, creatures and community) define the comprehensive understanding of human life. As beings in the world, humans’ wellbeing is dependent a lot on their meaningful interpersonal relationships and social living.¹⁷ They are connected to every living and non-living in this universe.¹⁸ They find their meaning and fulfillment of life by relating with the world around them. Their world consists of realities that are progressive in relationship. It is through reverting to relatedness, they attain a sense of meaningfulness in their lives.

This vision of human relationality was also reflected in the themes of Creation and Covenant in the Bible. The creation stories (Gen 1-2:4a; 2:4b-3:24) highlight the fundamental relationality and interdependence of humans. They expose the reality, “To be human means to be-in-relation.”¹⁹

2.1. Relational Dimension of Creation

The creation stories in Genesis are concerned with explaining the establishment of relationship with God and

creation. In Genesis 1-12 the intimate communion and relationship between the first humans and their creator is inaugurated. In the second creation story (Gen 2:4b-3:24) the intimate relation between humans and the earth is highlighted by saying that *adam* was made from *adamah*. God makes them. He touches them. He blows his breath into their nostrils. This personal involvement makes God, a God of relationships. The Bible testifies that the fall of the first parents in sin brought about every human being born in sin (Rom 5:12). The primary consequence of the Fall is the separation from God, their Creator, in whose image they were made.

We also read about an alarming brokenness of human relationship with God and with one another manifested in their brokenness with other human beings and the nature. The story of Cain is representation of humans cry for Divine-human-cosmic Harmony.²⁰ The extension of this brokenness becomes manifest in the deathly chaos of the flood. Even after a new creation and the covenant with Noah, we see the deadly fruit of the pride which disintegrates humanity. When men and women are interested only in themselves, the inevitable result is Babel, the breakdown of relationship and the destruction of community.²¹

God extended relationality to all God made through the act of creation. The Bible says, “So, God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them...” (Gen 1:27). The metaphor ‘image of God’ evokes this Christian understanding of the human person. There are two dimensions of the *imago Dei*.²² They are the vertical relationship (between God and person) and the horizontal relationship (between persons and creation). The first dimension of this *imago Dei* is reflected in human beings’ ability to relate and respond to God, to God’s Words, and

to God's presence in creation. The second dimension is reflected in their ability to relate with one another and with the whole creation.

Among various types of interpretations of this metaphor, interpretation as relationality seems to be appreciated by some of the theologians.²³ Karl Rahner (1904-1984) stated most succinctly the central motive of all his theological effort: "Human persons in every age, always and everywhere, whether they realize it and reflect upon it or not, are in relationship with the unutterable mystery of human life that we call God."²⁴ Human persons are defined in their relationship with God. This is not only a gift but a responsibility. This is the reason why Karl Rahner stated, "The original relation to God is the love of neighbor."²⁵ Human persons' relationship with God extends to their relationship to fellow human beings and to the whole of creation. This is further revealed by God in the covenantal relationship.

2.2. Relational Dimension of Covenant

God enters into a relationship with humans by making a covenant with them. Covenant affirms and effects the relationship between God and humans and the whole of creation. His covenants are also revelatory events wherein God reveals himself as personal God and relational God. The Bible says that God makes covenants both with Israel and all creation.²⁶ The core of the Israelite understanding of its relationship with God was the notion of covenant (FABC paper no.146, 40). God's covenant making demonstrates God's relationality. These events of Yahweh's covenant are begun with Adam and are fulfilled in the new covenant with Jesus Christ.²⁷ God's initiative to not only relate with the people of Israel but through Christ with all the whole of

creation. These covenantal relationships are made out of love assuring humans their dignity and fulfilment of their destiny.

As we progress through the covenants in the Bible, we know that God discloses himself "a being-in-relation, a unity of three persons—Father, Son and Holy Spirit."²⁸ Covenant presents God's desire to enter into relationship with men and women created in his image.²⁹ This is very clearly reflected in the repeated covenantal proclamation, "I will be your God and you will be my people" (Ex 6:7; Lev 26:12; Jer 30:22; Jer 31:33; Ezek 36:28). John R. Sachs, commenting on this proclamation, sees the covenant as a matter of the heart and a matter of personal relationship.³⁰ The source for this interpretation of human persons as relational is Trinity who is communion of Persons. The divine trinitarian love is the origin and source for achieving this goal of human community of loving relationships.

2.3. Trinity as Source for Beings-to-be-in Relation

In Trinitarian Theology, relationality became a prominent theme in late twentieth century.³¹ Inter-relationality of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit emphasizes to perceive God as One in Three Persons. Theologians like John Zizioulas, Jürgen Moltmann, Wolfhart Pannenberg, Robert W. Jenson, Leonard Boff, Miroslav Volf, Paul Fiddes, Colin Gunton and Stanley Grenz contend that the relationality of the Father, Son and Spirit are one God.³² We find that liberation theologians extensively speak about God's interaction with the world. Therefore, I revisit the inner relationship of the Trinity in the light of liberation theology. These theologians who propose social Trinitarian approach take shelter under Cappadocian Fathers namely St. Basil, St. Gregory of Nazianzen and Gregory of Nyssa

and Richard of St. Victor. It is worth quoting the words of Gerald O'Collins about Social Trinitarian approach of Cappadocians:

At the heart of God, the Cappadocians saw an interpersonal communion or *koinonia*, with communion as the function of all three divine persons and not simply of the Holy Spirit. For this interpersonal model of Trinity, **God's inner beings is relational...**³³

Some of the Liberation theologians such as Gustavo Gutierrez (b.1928), Leonardo Boff (b.1938) and Juan Luis Segundo (1925-1996) also insist on this social or communion aspect of social Trinity. Among them, Leonardo Boff elaborately deals with social Trinity in terms of communing in love expressed in terms such as *Perichoresis*, mutuality, egalitarianism, openness to the other and love.³⁴

The grandeur of oneness, communion, mutuality, openness, indwelling, fullness of life and love in Trinity demands that every reality is to be viewed from a trinitarian perspective. This perspective inhales the perichoretic relationship within the Trinity and the expression of the same Trinity in human beings who are created in the Trinitarian image.

We observed that our relationality is not in doubt but the appropriateness of our relationality is questionable. The question arises, 'Where do we find a concrete realization of these relational character of God and human beings?' Do we find the answer in the person of Jesus Christ? Christians believe that Jesus Christ is the perfect expression of this loving relationship with God and with Humanity and the creation. He is the One who is the image of the Trinitarian loving communion (Col 1:15, 2 Cor 4:4, Heb 1:3). He reveals God to humans and humans to themselves

(*Redemptor Hominis*, no.10 & *Gaudium et Spes*, 22). This gives us an impetus to proceed to the next section where we explore into relational dimension of the life and the mission of Jesus Christ.

3. The Relational Jesus: His Identity and Mission through Relationality

B.L. Callen says: "A relational [Triune] God has created relational people in a relational world."³⁵ The Trinitarian God who is relational by communing in love, created the world which is relational. God renews this relationality with humanity through his Son Jesus Christ. According to Biblical witness, long ago God spoke to our ancestors in various ways but now most definitively through the Son, Jesus Christ who is the exact imprint of God's very being (Heb 1:1) in and through the presence of Spirit. Thus, the intra-Trinitarian loving relationship is manifested in the world in and through the person of Jesus Christ and the unitive power of the Holy Spirit. Now, we look into Gospels to take a close look at Jesus' life and mission through the spectrum of relationality.

3.1. Relational Jesus in the Gospels

One of the ways theologians try to understand Jesus is by analyzing Christological titles found in the New Testament. A few such titles are the following: 'the Christ,' 'the Son of God' or 'the Son of Man.' The evangelists, however, do far more. They tell the story of Jesus who makes a profound impression upon human beings and relates to them in unique ways. The evangelists accentuate his relational approach, his activity, and teachings in the context of his personal interaction with individuals and groups.³⁶ They provide a

deep and dynamic perspective of Jesus in his relatedness to the Father, the Spirit, the disciples and the people.

3.1.1. Jesus' Relationship with the Father

The major focus in Jesus' life and his ministry is solely based on his relationship with the Father. Mohan Doss says, "The life of Jesus is the flowering of his intimate relationship with the Father."³⁷ The Gospels portray Jesus' profound and foundational experience of God as the *Abba* Experience (Mk 1:11, 14:36). Joachim Jeremias argued quite convincingly that the baptism of Jesus by John was the occasion for his *Abba experience*.³⁸ Jesus becomes "Conscious of being authorized to communicate God's revelation, because God had made himself known to him as Father."³⁹ Through this intimacy with the Father, what is communicated to him is not simply the message or ministry but relationship. Thus, as the beloved Son of the Father, Jesus shares in the sociality of his Father. He teaches that God is our *Abba* (Father, an intimately relational description).⁴⁰ He resides in a privileged relationship with the Father (Jn 1:18). In and through this relationship with the Father, Jesus is empowered to share the story, nature, and relationality of the Father with others. Similarly, just as Jesus lives in an ever-so-close relationship with the Father, so, the Fourth Evangelist, who is in a privileged position of being 'at the bosom of Jesus' (Jn 13:25) narrates the Jesus-story in a relational perspective. The evangelist repeatedly and emphatically portrays that he is the one sent by the Father (Jn 4:34; 5:23, 30). He and the Father are one (Jn 10:30, 38;14: 9, 11, 20).⁴¹ Thus, it is convincing to say that Jesus' obedience to God's will flows from his *Abba* experience.

3.1.2. Mediating the *Abba* Relationship

The *Abba*-experience of Jesus not only revolutionizes the relationship of God with humans but also radicalizes the relationship among humans themselves.⁴² The focus of his relationship is seen in the redemption of creation, specifically the redemption of humanity. Because Jesus basically spoke of God as his *Abba*, he respected and related to all peoples in that radical and dignified relationship of the children of God. He could command them to love one another as he loves (Jn 15:12).⁴³ Jesus says, "I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God" (Jn 20:17). His return to the Father is a moment of rejoicing. His ascension ensures the ultimate fulfilment of his promises to the those he loves. In returning to the Father Jesus makes it possible for his disciples to share fully in his relationship with God.⁴⁴ Jesus has graciously revealed to us his filial relation with his Father. Thus, we can see that his mission reflected his relational *Abba* experience of God. His relationship with humanity flows from his filial relationship with the Father.

3.1.3. Jesus' Relationship with the Spirit

The Gospels portray the indispensable relationship between Jesus and the Spirit. The *Federation of Asian Bishops' Conference* (FABC) declares that "the presence and activity of the Spirit in Jesus Christ can be found throughout his life and ministry, from [Incarnation to Resurrection]" (FABC No. 81, 3.3). His incarnation, words and deeds are the hope filled signs of the Kingdom of God. Pope John Paul II emphasizes that "The incarnation of the Son of God is the supreme work accomplished by the Holy Spirit" (*Ecclesia in Asia*, no.16). In his redeeming journey Jesus is accompanied by the loving Father and the Spirit.

The relationship with the Spirit is glimpsed in the baptism of Jesus, where the Spirit is manifest in the form of

a dove alighting on Jesus even as the Father's voice came from heaven saying, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with whom I am well pleased" (Mk 1:11, Mt 3:17, Lk 3:22). In the synagogue at Nazareth he began his prophetic ministry to preach the good news to the poor, freedom to captives and a time acceptable to the Lord (Lk 4:18-19). He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be strengthened for his public ministry (Mk 1:12; Lk 4:1; Mt 4:1). Jesus of Nazareth inaugurates the Reign of God with the power of the Spirit. The presence of the Spirit is manifested in his teaching with authority (Mk 1:22, 27), and in his miracles (Mt 12:28). Jesus' last gasp is the Spirit that animates creation.⁴⁵ Pope John Paul II rightly points out that "All of this shows how Jesus' saving mission bears the unmistakable mark of the Spirit's presence: life, new life" (*EA*, no. 16).

The relationship between the Spirit and Jesus manifests the communing dimension in the Trinity. The Spirit is meaningful to the community of believers along with the presence of Christ. Similarly, the acts of Jesus are redemptive together with the Spirit. *Redemptoris Missio* pronounces, "The Spirit is not an alternative to Christ. Whatever the Spirit brings about in human hearts and in the history of peoples, in cultures and religions...can only be understood in reference to Christ, the Word who took flesh by the power of the Spirit" (*RM*, no. 29).

3.1.4. Jesus' Relationship with Mother Mary

The Gospel of John offers us a portrait of Mary as the ideal disciple.⁴⁶ Mary appears twice in the Fourth Gospel: at the wedding feast in Cana (Jn 2:1-12) and at the foot of the Cross (Jn 19:25-27). At Cana, we see Mary's significance in her relationship with Jesus. The event provides an illustration of the close cooperation and union between

mother and Son. The relationship of Jesus and Mary at Cana was one of mutual cooperation. At Cana, one learns that by being in communion with the Word, Mary leads people to Jesus.⁴⁷ In the scheme of John's Gospel her activity at Cana is a preparation for the comprehension of her role on Calvary.⁴⁸ At the foot of the Cross, she becomes mother of the Beloved disciple.⁴⁹ Jesus brings them into a mother-son relationship and thus constitutes a community of disciples.⁵⁰ Jesus reveals and creates his mother as the mother of the new family of disciples, of those who hear the word and act on it (Lk 8:21). She epitomizes what fidelity and love mean by standing at the foot of the Cross (Jn 19:25). She stands as one who nurtures and fosters a sense of family interrelatedness.⁵¹ Christians' relationship with Mary is an expression of their relationship with Christ.⁵²

3.1.5. Jesus' Relationship with the Disciples

Jesus manifested the relational essence of the Kingdom of God to the disciples by being with them, by teaching them through parables and by showing them signs of the Kingdom through miracles. His relationship with the Father and the Spirit is extended to the disciples.⁵³ Jesus' formal appointment of the twelve begins with the purpose statement, "to be with him" (Mk 3:14-15). Relationship with Jesus precedes their commission (Mt 10:5, Mk 6:7, Lk 9:1) or the seventy's charge on their short-term mission (Lk 10:1ff). Due to their relationship to him, they obey and venture out and engage in the challenging task of proclaiming the Kingdom of God. Jesus' command, 'follow me,' invites relationship and obedience that are coupled with his faithful promise.⁵⁴ In him, they experienced "a complete transformation from alienation to communion,

from fragmentation to wholeness, from meaninglessness to meaningfulness, from death to life.”⁵⁵

3.1.6. Jesus’ Relationship with the People

Jesus reveals the essence of the Kingdom of God by relating with all kinds of people. He sought relationship with others before they gain benefits or gifts. Even though people come to him with their pressing physical needs, they learn that he deals with them individually, in a completely personal manner. Thereby, they develop a relationship with his person who accepts and invigorates their relationship with God, with other members of the community.

Not only does Jesus become poor with the poor, he makes himself an outcast by associating with outcasts. He touches the leper to welcome him back into human fellowship (Mk 1:41). He eats with tax collectors and sinners earning the reprobation of the religious elite (Mk 2:15; Lk 15:1-2). He puts aside the laws of ritual cleanliness to which the Pharisees attached so much importance (Mk 7:1-23). These are not casual gestures on the part of Jesus. They are expressions of his relationship with them. He consistently and radically identifies himself with the poor and the marginalized of society, not only by announcing their liberation (Mt 11:2-6; Lk 4:16-21; 6:20-27) and protesting on their behalf (Mk 3:1-6; 10:13-16; Lk 7:36-50; 13:10-17) but by relating to them, by sharing their life and their shame.⁵⁶

These reflections on the Gospels depict Jesus in his relationality with the Father, the Spirit and the whole of creation. In essence, the Gospels portray a relational Jesus. The implications of embracing this relational Jesus who reveals a relational God through his relational approach will be explored in the final section.

4. Implications of Encountering the Relational Jesus

The Indian Christian community has the dual task of responding to the brokenness of her country and to her own internal brokenness. The Church in India looks up to Jesus for a response. It is quite fitting to recall the statement of Pope John Paul II in *Ecclesia in Asia*, “Contemplating Jesus in his human nature, the apostles of Asia find their deepest questions answered, their hopes fulfilled, their dignity uplifted and their despair conquered” (*EA*, no. 14). The Relational Jesus whom the evangelists portray in the Gospels provides direction for Indian Christians to courageously respond to the pressing challenges. These implications are not immediate solutions but invitations for the Christian community “to know Him [Christ], to introduce Him and to trust India with the Christ and trust Christ with India.”⁵⁷ These implications are not presented as solutions but as directives for the Christians in India to revitalize the relational paradigm of Jesus in their context.

4.1. Healing Loneliness

The loneliness and isolation of the people in India reveal very strongly the ambivalence of our personal situation. They want to communicate, and yet they experience over and over again that nobody listens to them. The stance of Jesus in John’s Gospel is that of one who really listens (Jn 4: 4-26). He says no word to the woman until the end. He listens to the silence of the woman. He listens to the Pharisees, to their worldview, and to their anger with him. Jesus listens to people who are in need of forgiveness. Jesus’ ministry of healing sprang from his ability to be moved with pity when he saw the needs of those among whom he lived. He went out to the others in their need, and responded to them through a gesture, a touch, a life-giving word. It was

a liberating movement because the persons in the encounter were revealed their own power of being, of becoming what they were created to be. The Indian Church, as body of Christ, should emphasize on the ministry of listening, the ministry of affirming and the ministry of healing. Our image of the relational Jesus propels every Christian to listen to the silent cries of lonely widows, shattered youth, broken farmers, rape victims and trafficked women.

4.2. Healing Parishes

Parishes or Christian communities are to be built on interpersonal relationships. As children of God, as brothers and sisters who claim God as ‘*Abba*’ our parent, Christians related to one another in the Parishioners are called to a relationship of love rather than a task or function in the life of the Church. The Church is to be a place where they can be persons in relation with God and each other. It is where love and authentic self-revelation can be shared. No activities and programs will fill the void if a relational context is missing in a parish. In this light we can say that congregational growth means drawing others into authentic personal relationship in parishes. This involves much more than simply adding numbers or names to a parish list. The measuring rod for real growth in a parish is positive interaction among the members of the community.

4.3. Healing Religious Communities

I always wonder at the amount of suffering and pain encountered in religious of all ages. Very often, they are maimed by fears and are unable to open themselves.⁵⁸ This kind of internal brokenness in religious communities needs healing. One of the greatest difficulties experienced in the area of relationships comes from the fact that they are creating relationships which are in fact a constant denial

of the other’s freedom in the name of charity. Our wanting to protect the other from one’s own hurt, from one’s own mistakes, from one’s freedom, is the most damaging element in the relationships. It would seem that many of our relationship in ministry are characterized by this being ‘responsible for’.⁵⁹ Being ‘responsible to’ another person is a very different thing. One is able to accept the other where he/she is independent of his/her choice. It involves a relationship of listening, caring, of respecting the freedom of the other. One of the impressions, the relational Jesus imprinted on the people was a sense of acceptance, a sense of freedom. Thus, by truly knowing the heart of the relational Jesus religious communities shall heal their internal brokenness.

4.1.4. Healing Families

The prosperity of a person and of both human and Christian society is closely attached to the healthy state of conjugal and family life (GS 47). The healing of the institution of the family heals the society. Healing of the institution of the family requires that it is transformed by Christ and restored to its natural purpose and essential structure (CCC 1643). A mutual surrender of will and trust are some of the values that a modern Christian family could learn from Jesus who in his volitional union with the Father saved humanity. A mutual giving of two persons, and the good of the children demand total fidelity from the spouses and require an unbreakable unity between them (GS 48). Jesus on the cross becomes a guiding light for families to surrender to one another in love (*Amoris Laetitia*, 11,13,22). Jesus is the model of obedience to God’s will in the families and of perseverance to enjoy the fruitfulness of their marriage (*AL* 18,22). In the footsteps of Christ, mutual love, mutual freedom and mutual obedience become guiding principles

for them (GS 52 & CCC 1660). Thus, Christian families heal themselves by truly loving one another as Christ loves them (Eph 5:25, 32).

4.1.5. Ecological Stewardship

The facts discussed in the beginning show that people are turning this living planet earth, our home into a wasteland. By emphasizing the relational dimension of the Kingdom proclaimed by Christ, Christians will realize the fact that God not only creates, protects and perfects all the creatures but also indwells, accompanies, participates and delights in them and, calls for a relationship of mutuality between creatures and us humans.⁶⁰ Pope Francis says that Jesus invites every one of his disciples to “recognize the paternal relationship God has with all his creatures” (*Laudato Si* 96-100). On the basis of the covenant with the Creator each one is invited to a deep personal conversion in one’s relationship with others and nature.

Thus, the Christians in India have a special responsibility to develop appropriate eco-theologies. Only through attitudinal change, can one eradicate one’s greediness and selfishness which are the root causes of ecological crises (LS 201). The Church in India has to recognize and honour the untiring services of environmentalists like Medha Patkar, Saalumarada Thimmakka, Robert Athickal and others. Today to safeguard this beautiful planet earth the Church India needs to work along with people of other faiths.

Conclusion

The emphasis on relationality in Jesus’ life navigated us to find implications for brokenness in the Indian Christian community. I began highlighting the responsibility of the theologians to present a relational image of Jesus

to the faithful like Jesus the listener, the healer, the compassionate, the merciful and others. By emphasizing the relational dimensions of faith, redemption the Indian Christian community and the faithful are guided to become mediators of reconciliation and healing in the individual, familial and cosmic spheres of the Indian society. The same holds true also for religious communities. This mission of reconciliation is possible only when the Indian Church relates with the lived experiences of broken people through the ministry of presence, listening, caring. Finally, one realizes that the purpose, communication and the calling of Christology is relationality. Though, the Christians are minorities in India, the implications indicate that they could be guiding lights having their source in the relational Jesus who revealed a relational God. Thus, a relational Christology inspires the Indian Church and the Indian society heal their brokenness and become joyful witnesses to the conviction that everything and everyone in the world are interrelated.

Notes

1. Michael Braütigam, *Union with Christ: Adolf Schlatter’s Relational Christology* (Oregon: PICKWICK Publications, 2015), 13.
2. Whenever I refer to ‘brokenness,’ it mainly refers to the existential brokenness of people in society. I treat relationship from the theological, social and cosmic perspectives.
3. This is my dissertation thesis which I defended in March, 2019. It is to be noted that I reworked on the paper to convey the argument succinctly.
4. *The Census Organization of India*, “Religious Census 2011,” <https://www.census2011.co.in/religion.php> (accessed February 12, 2018). The Census presents that 2% (1.67 Crore) of them are in rural India and 2.96% (1.12 Crore) in urban area.
5. Vatican News, “Cardinal Gracias: Indian Christians should become fully Indian and fully Christian,” (February, 2018) <http://www.vati->

- cannews.va/en/church/news/2018-02/cbci-meets-in-banga-lore-india.html (accessed February 21, 2018).
6. S. K. Hulbe, "The Dilemmas before the Indian Christian," in *The Indian Christian's Dilemma Disaster or Opportunity*, eds. Yeager Hudson, Joseph Barnabas et al. (Poona: Israelite Press, 1968), 43-44.
 7. Hulbe, "The Dilemmas before the Indian Christian," 39.
 8. The Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI), *Policy of Dalit Empowerment in the Catholic Church in India: An Ethical Imperative to Build Inclusive Communities*, 8 December 2016, <https://www.cbci.in/Policies/Policy922172823534.pdf>, (accessed 20 September 2017), nos. 9-36.
 9. World Watch Monitor, "Hinduisation of India Leads to more Anti-Christian Violence," August 8, 2017, <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2017/08/hinduisation-of-india-leads-to-more-anti-christian-violence/> (accessed February 15, 2018).
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