

GLOBALIZATION: A CHALLENGE TO THE CHURCH IN FIJI

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FOREWORD

The idea of writing this paper developed from two experiences, the first is through exposure and the second through the confusion of recent events in Fiji. My exposure was to two overseas countries, Australia and the Philippines. One is a first world country; prosperous and very developed while the other is a very poor third world nation. These two experiences somehow revealed to me the two faces of globalization. It was in the Philippines that I came face to face with the outcome of the negative effect of globalization. I was greatly disturbed and felt restless with the realities that I was encountering. It was my first hand experience of sheer poverty, injustices and corruption. I just wished that it would never happen in Fiji.

When I was still in the Philippines I saw on the BBC news the coup in Fiji. Deep within me I could feel and sense that something was very wrong. I came back in September 2000 when Fiji was still in turmoil. I went straight to my village which is in the province that is known to be the central home of nationalism. The stories that I gathered from

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around the *kava* bowls just confirmed what I had believed all along - that these grassroots people has been smartly manipulated to fight for indigenous rights.

During my last two years of study in PRS I became very much interested 'in the Modern Social Issues in the Pacific, the quest for a Local Theology and a Local Church and of the Documents of Vatican II. This gave me the belief that the Catholic Church has so much to offer in rebuilding this nation to its former image as the way the world should be. From those three factors writing this paper has ceased to be just an idea but has become an irresistible desire.

This paper is about the Catholic Church's mission in Fiji in our world of today. In Chapter 1, I looked at the great phenomena of today called globalization. What is globalization, where did it originate, how does it operate and who benefited and was deprived because of globalîzation. Secondly I try to look at the positive and negative effects of globalization to better understand what it is all about. Chapter 2 is more or less a social analysis on the political history of Fiji, centred on democracy, political and economic stability and political upheaval. I try to make a balance and objective reflection on some of the events that have happened and how globalization has played a major role in them. In the last chapter I look at Chrîstianity in Fij - how Christianity has been preached, practiced and its impact on our society; the dangers of the influence of globalization creeping into our churches. I try to go back to the person of Jesus Christ living in his time and place and how he cominitted himself to the problems he faced. It is only in the person of Jesus Christ that the Christian churches in Fiji will have a very firm foundation and clear mission in tackling the negative effects of globalization.

PART 1 : GLOBALIZATION

Introduction

Today we heard this new word *globalization* and we wonder what is it. It is not a word that is common among all people and for us who are familiar with the word do we really understand what it means. This chapter tries to focus on what globalization is all about, the word itself and its concept. It looks at globalization as a reality in our world today and how does it work? I try to look at its positive and negative effects. How globalization has enhanced, developed and promoted human life and helped make this world a better place. I will also discuss the devastating effects of globalization in our world and in our life.

What is Globalization?

The term *Globalizadon* only came into existence in the 1980's.¹ However its concepts go back centuries and even millenia, when early civilisations like the Greeks, Egyptians, Babylonians and Roman empires inter-acted with each other. Then came the great European conquest from the 14th to the 19th centuries and the development of trading empires throughout the world.² European countries like Britain, France, Spain, Portugal, Germany, and Italy and later on the United States. Hundreds of years of international trade and migration has brought the world into more understanding and more wealth but perhaps reached its darkest hour in the "Great Depression" in the 1930's. The world came to realise that international markets can produce great opportunities and also great misery and poverty.

¹ "Globalization: What on Earth is it about?" *E-Cyclopedia* (BBC News online, 2000)

² Kevin Barr, "Globalization and the Economy," *The Pacific Journal of Theology* no. 24 (2000) 6.

Our modern concept of Globalization today is that increasing integration of our world. After World War II, the West strengthened her international trade and political ties and laid the groundwork of today's globalization. This new *intégration* of our world touches the area of economics, social, cultural and religions lives. The best definition of globalization is that of Etienne Perrot - it is the summary of all the elements of globalization and he combined the ideas of two words: *internationalisation + homogenization = globalization*.³ If we accept the meaning of this schematic description then we see that globalization touches almost every aspect of human life.

One of the greatest impacts in our life today in refereiice to this topic is economic globalization. One can argue that it can be described in three catégories. Firstly, the increasing *intégration* of the world in terms of restructuring and reorganisation of economic life.⁴ This involves the creation of global markets in which counties will be interdependent and guided by a global structure of production and investments. Secondly, the increasing integration of free-markets, the almost free flow of investments, trade and information. It broke down trade barriers such as tariffs, quotas, foreign exchange control and bilateral trade laws and agreements. States have to open up to these new developments so their economy can grow. Finally, globalization of the economy through interdependency of different countries in their trade of good and services and movement of capital and technology, especially information technology.

When we look at globalization, we ask who are the agents that are controlling and pushing it into the world of today? It is not a secret, there are three major agents of globalization. The first are wealthy and powerful industrial nations of the world, what is called the G7 nations (the Group of Seven), United States, Great Britain, Germany, France,

³ Jon Sobrino & Felix Wilfred, ed. *Globalization and its Victims* (SCM Press, 2001) 17.

⁴ Kevin Barr, "Globalization and the Economy," *The Pacific Journal of Theology*, no.24 (2000) 8.

Italy, Canada and Japan. The second agents are the international organisations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank (WB) and the World Trade Organisation (WTO). These organisations give loans to countries who are in need and also they give conditions and direction on how to develop a healthy economy. Lastly and very effective are the transnational corporations. These great powerful corporations that possess wealth far greater than some national economies are rooted in those great wealthy and powerful nations. They are protected by the WTO and they advertise and sell the products of their country of origin all over the world .⁵

One of the biggest and most influential agents of globalization is the mass media. It is a means of transmitting values of the modern world to the corners of the earth. It informs us of what are the best clothes to wear, how to be healthy, and the best medicine to use, the best food and drink we should consume, etc. This is what is called homogenization; the world is sort of being directed to embrace the same values. All of us are to believe that we are in need of those values. The world embraces the same life-style, same language. It promotes the using of the same products to satisfy our needs, thus making our world a sort of a single society and culture. These are propaganda engineered by wealthy nations and transnational corporations to sell their products and ideologies. The secret behind it is they are the ones who gain financially from it. As long as the world believes in those values, the agents of globalization will continue to reap their harvest.

We must not forget that individual states also have a hand in the promotion of globalization. I would say specifically, the leaders of the states, the politicians. They are the ones who lower custom duties to allow free and easy flow of trade and capitals. At the end of WW II, custom duty average in the world was at 40%; today it is down to 4%.⁶

⁵ Ibid. 9.

⁶ Jon Sobrino & Felix Wilfred, ed. *Globalization and its Victims* (SCM Press, 2001) pg. 19.

In doing so they gain access to the global market and an easy way of making up their budget deficits. It is through these deficits that the giants in world finance like World Bank and IMF put conditions on the economy of the state so they can pay back the loan.

Positive Effects of Globalisation

We can say that globalization is here to stay, it touches and effects our everyday life, and it is a reality that has its positive and negative effects in our world. The Holy Father, John Paul II says that *"it would appear that, on the level of individual nations and on international relations, the free-market is the most efficient instrument for utilising resources and effectively responding to needs "* (*Centesimus Annus*, 34.) Like Adam Smith's idea, the free-market was to lift up and promote the human condition. Markets are opened up that enable different countries to produce and sell their goods and services anywhere in the world where before it was almost impossible. In the process they might gain sufficient wealth to live a decent life and a good house, enough food on the table and better education for their children.

Globalization has brought about better communication; modern technology has made any part of the world accessible from anywhere. Through television we can see what is happening half way around the world at the same time. We can watch our team while playing in other countries at the same time. We can purchase goods through the Internet rather than going through agencies. It opens up new markets for new goods. Ten years ago overseas traders came into our villages to buy sea products such as *beach-de-mars*. For years this kind of sea goods were just lying idle in thousands in our seas but now it becomes one of the biggest money earners for some poor villagers. National boundaries are more relaxed for migration and for employment. People migrate to wealthy nations for better wages and can better help their struggling family's back home.

Globalization has also brought about better human interaction and understanding among different groups of people. Because of the vast movement of people from one place to another, it has helped people to look beyond their own selves, cultures, nations and try to understand others who are different from them. It broadens the minds and life's of people to think universally. It helps us to move away from the ethnocentrism and nationalism. Education is an area that has benefited greatly. It has lifted the level of education in the sense that it has brought awareness in the consciousness of people of what is going on around the world. In the process, it has triggered desires for people to know and understand more, the desire for knowledge. It has also offered various forms of acquiring information. Like the Internet, we can get access to different schools of thought, news around the world and general information of many things.

It has also brought about new peace in the world. This is what some call an optimistic "beckoning heaven" view of globalization.⁷ Countries that used to be at war before, especially the European nations, are now merging their economies and societies. It is also leading to a world system of justice, where crime against humanity in any country whether by government, armies, police forces or individuals can be tried in international courts and penalised if found guilty. Kosovo and East Timor are two examples, not forgetting Nuremburg after WWII.

The Church in some ways has also benefited from globalization. In her proclamation of the Good News it has used various forms of communications technology to proclaim the message of salvation to all. Today the Holy Father. can speak directly to people of different levels of education throughout the world through live telecast. Encyclicals and Vatican documents are only designed for intellectuals who have to re-interpret them to the faithful. And above all, the Catholic Church

⁷ Jon Sobrino & Felix Wilfred, ed, *Globalization and Its Victims* (SCM Press, 2002) 21

has been an agent of globalization for centuries in the integration of the world. The positive dimension of globalization is that it can bring the world into solidarity as a family.

Negative Effect of Globalisation

As we have seen above, globalization can make our world a better place in making us wealthier, allowing us to lead more diverse lifestyles and promoting unity and justice. However, the recent mass demonstrations in IMF, WTO, WB and G7 summits seem to disagree. The coalition of environmentalists, anti-poverty campaigners, trade unionists and anti-capitalist groups see the growth of globalization, as raising more problems that it solves.⁸ If we are to be realistic ~ this phenomenon, then we have to accept the fact that the negative effects of globalization far outweigh its positiveness. As John Paul H assures us of the advantages that globalization can bring about, he also warned us that there are many human needs that find no place in the market. (CA.34) The human condition today clearly portrays how economic globalization has failed to uplift our state of life and our human needs.

If we look at our world scene today we can see the great imbalance in the distribution of wealth. There are very rich nations and there are also very poor nations and among those nations there are also very rich people and very poor ones. The imbalance is that those who are rich, whether nation or people, are a minority whereas the poor are the vast majority. This growing gap between rich and poor seems to escalate in the age of globalization. The irony is that the free-market has brought about new production of goods to be sold and has made our world more wealthily. However, the poverty rate at the same time is growing at an unimaginable rate.

⁸ "Globalization: What on Earth is it about?" *E-Cyclopedia* (BBC News Online, 2000)

Let me look at some statistics. In 1960, the average income of the richest 20% of the world was 30 times that of the poorest 20%. today it is 78 times. In the last seven years the number of billionaires has triple and the wealth of the worlds 447 billionaires is equal to the total income of the poorest 50% of humanity.⁹We can imagine the big difference in the distribution of the world's wealth. The UNDP Report in July 1999 reveals that the richest fifth (20%) of the world receives 82.7% of the total world income while 80% of the world receives 17.3%. That is how the economic progress that our world has taken us into as been dictated by wealthy nations, global companies and international organisations. Most of these big global companies produce their goods in poor third world countries where labour are cheap. In the year 2000, I read a report about Puma manufacturing its products in Indonesia. They pay their labourers US\$1.00 per month though in Indonesian currency will be thousands of rupees. Yet at the same time they pay millions of dollars to sports personal in sponsorship. The company makes fortunes out of advertisements and the money en-routed to the wealthy nations where the company is owned. This is how these big transnational companies are making us poor and the wealthy nations rich.

The poor countries will always be affected and be victims of globalization. Because their national revenue cannot match their public spending they will always borrow from the World Bank or International Monetary Fund to cover their deficit. In the process the WB or IMF will lay down conditions for them to pay back their loans like putting on extra tax, restructuring their economy and privatization of public enterprises to be money and profit making entity. It will be the poor workers of that country that will be mostly affected as they will be out of work and thus bring more poverty to the country.

⁹ *Colloquium on Church in Asia in the 21 st Century* (office for Human Development, 1999) .26

Furthermore, these poor countries have to compete in the global market monopolised by the wealthy countries that make economic and trade policies to enhance their own interests. For example, one of the G7 countries donates a certain amount of aid every year to a 3rd world nation. In return, that country has to sell a certain amount of its resources back to the donor country. By comparing the amount of aid and goods sold, and bearing in mind the differences in currency and the economic situation of both countries, the poor nation will always be the loser. It is said that Brazil's natural resources are greater than that of the United States (Brazil's biggest trading partner) but because of the US foreign and economic policies, Brazil is one of the poorest country in the world.

If we look at the G7 countries, they are the champions of democracy. It is through democracy in a country that they can implement their own policies, that is why they will always condemn any form of government that is contradictory to democracy. They have the wealth, power to make sure that they have a government that will serve their interest. If not, they will use IMF or WB to see that that particular county is penalised through economic sanctions and denial of loans so it can be pressured to go back to democracy. Some even go to the extreme in financing and giving technical assistance in ousting governments that are opposed to their interests and install puppet rulers that will serve their agendas. The US has been doing this in Latin America for decades, ousting socialist governments and installing military rulers that play right into their hand. They did this in 1973 in Chile - the CIA financed and helped in the ousting of the Socialist government and installed a military government.¹⁰

Another effect that globalization has bestowed on us is by giving us new needs and values. Most of these values are western but because of globalization we are led to believe that it is a universal need and values

¹⁰ Arthur McGovern, *Liberation Theology and its Critics* (Orbis Books, 1989)
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and are ours too. The food we eat, the drink we drink, the clothes we wear, the way we look; like body figure, hair style, the cars we own, etc. Our traditional dance and songs are replaced by western music and western movies. Our children are loosing our own language because they are led to believe that the English language is "the" language. The world is becoming a global village embracing one culture. In adopting this new culture, we are not only loosing the very means of our autonomy and identity; we are also financing the source of these new needs and values. It is the wealthy countries and big corporations that benefit, they become richer and we become poorer. I will agree with Jon Sobrino when he *said "that in a globalizing world with growing disparity as tall as the soaring towers of the Trade Centre, and misery as deep as the bottom of the ocean, the anger of the victims of globalization explodes on the 11th September, 2001 on the World Trade Centre in New York and on the Pentagon in Washington. Was it perhaps a symbolic and defiant hit at the trade and transnational capital which engineers globalization ?"*¹¹

Conclusion

Globalization is a reality and we encounter it everyday, we cannot run away from it and it is here to stay. It has its good and positive qualities that are vital to our human life today. However we cannot deny the fact that the negative aspects of globalization far outweigh its positiveness. Globalization as has been engineered by the powerful and wealthy of our world is another form of colonisation in which the majority of people are oppressed and marginalised in their own countries.

¹¹ Jon Sobrino & Felix Wilfred, *Globalization and its Victims* (SCM Press, 2001) 11

PART 2: FIJI IN THE AGE OF GLOBALIZATION

Introduction

This chapter tries to focus on how globalization has affected Fiji. I will not disagree with anyone who says that Fiji has benefited from globalization, which I truly believed it has. However, the focus of this chapter is the negative effect that has somehow contributed to designing the destiny of this nation. Globalization is not only an outside force invading our shores but it is something that we also received and accepted - It is something that we can freely choose to take or leave. In this chapter I try to discuss how globalization has been received by us locals and how we have implemented it in our own nation among our own people. How this whole process is harmful to the country.

Democracy

It has been said recently that "democracy is a foreign flower on alien soil". How true is this statement if democracy was going on smoothly for 17 years from 1970 to 1987 when the Holy Father says that Fiji was a symbol of hope in the world. Well, it was said by an ardent nationalist (Apisal Tora) who saw democracy as an obstacle in pursuing his individual interest. The Fijian way of living is communal and must have a communal interest but where has this individual self-centred interest crept into our system. We can say it is through democracy. It is a western influence and shows how we Fijians have abandoned our way of life and embraced westernisation, most of all globalization.

We tend to blame the British and the Indians for our Fijian problem today. However our history tells us that Britain did not force herself into the country and take over. The British were asked to come by our

chiefs, Fiji was offered to them and the first offer was refused in 1858.¹² It was a collective agreement of our chiefs to forfeit and hand over their rights and the sovereignty of this country to be protected and governed by the British crown. The Deed of Session in Levuka on October 10, 1874 is the living witness of this peculiar event, Fijians handing over the control of their nation and the British accepting that gift.

Britain not only accepted the gift of Fiji, but was also committed to governing and protecting the rights of the Fijians. However the colony needed revenue to run and that is why the Indians were brought into the country, to plant sugar so that the Fijian way of life might not be disrupted by allowing them to stay in their villages in living their lives. We cannot blame the British or the Indians. In a way they were the ones who saved our Fijian culture and race. If it was not for the British, the United States could have taken over and we could have become like the Hawaiians, losing our culture and our sovereignty. In 1849¹³ the US Representative's house in Nukulau island was burnt and the Fijians looted the burnt down house. The Americans assessed the loss from the looting as \$US5000.00 and by 1958 it had risen to \$US45,000.00 and the US through its navy was threatening chief Cakobau to pay or they would take over.

Before Fiji was ceded to Britain there were many Europeans already settled in the country and they became very influential in the formulation of the colony. One of their very strong notions was that Fiji should 'be ruled according to the standards of western civilisation. Sir Author Gordon, Fiji's first governor who was a champion of native rights disagreed with the Europeans. He believed that Fiji should be ruled according to the ancient customs and traditions. He set up the Native Affairs Ordinance of the Fijian People in 1876¹⁴ which Ratu

¹² *Cyclopedia of Fiji* (Sydney: The Cyclopedia Company of Fiji, 1907) 104

¹³ C.J.A Kerr, *Fiji in the Pacific* (Melbourne: Jacaranda Press PTY LTD., 1969) 20.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 38

Sukuna developed into the Fijian Affairs Board in 1945 and we still have that today. Most of the European settlers saw that Fiji would be westernised after the Cession and suggested that Fijians should divide their land according to European ideas of individual land ownership. Sir Arthur refuted that notion when he said: "*All who are acquainted with the Fijian race know perfectly well that if you separate them from their land the race will die out*".¹⁵ It was for this very reason that the Indians were brought in, as Dr Vijay Naidu said: "*Given his (Sir Arthur) conviction about the future of the Fijian race, his policy of protecting and perpetuating the Fijian way of life he thought that immigrant labour is the only alternative for the survival of the economy.*"¹⁶

For us Fijians today, we must not hate the Indians but we must respect and treasure them. They are the living proof of what it means for us to be Fijians, to continue to live our life, our tradition and our customs. We can continue to tell our stories, sing our songs and dance our mekes. The Indians gave us that opportunity to be who we are while they toil and sweat like slaves in the sugarcane fields. This is the other side of the coin that we Fijians do not want to see as we are blinded by racial prejudice and political manipulations. If Fijians keep on blaming the British and Indians we will never get out of our problem. Our problem is part of the very nature of who we are as Fijians, it was covered up in the Deed of Session in 1874 and erupted after May 19, 2000. It is called *vanua* (provincialism) and it has been influenced by foreign elements like democracy and most importantly, globalization.

There is no doubt that democracy was introduced by the British. Two of the prominent leaders who emerged from the colonial era were Ratu Kamisese Mara (Fijian leader) and Saddiq M Koya (Indian leader). They were the fathers of Fiji's democracy. They set the tone and pace of democratic life which was already moving towards racism. Ratu Mara later recalled. "*Both of us (Mara & Koya) were trained overseas,*

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Naidu, *The Violence of Indenture* (Suva: USP Publication, 1989) 27.

*both became disciples of the western gods, mouthing their gospels and disdaining the primitive way of our own people. As political careers developed, with it developed the assured enmity against each other. The gods of socialism and capitalism in whose temple we worshipped overseas taught us to struggle- class against class - to get to the top. And in the political forum you must divide yourself to develop."*¹⁷ It was democracy adopted by our own leaders that brought a new element into our system, class or categories according to wealth and politics of race.

Fiji's problem today is not the Indians but Fijians themselves. Indigenous Fijians felt neglected and abandoned after thirty years of democracy under modern indigenous leadership. During that period our leaders sacrificed our economic and cultural well being for the advancement of a few.¹⁸ Truly, democracy developed as a foreign flower on alien soil, because it has classified our communal way of life. It has brought about individualism and self-centredness to a people who valued communal way of living. Globalization just walked into an environment already set for it to flourish at the expense of the Fijian public. It was our local indigenous leaders who created that climate so that globalization could thrive and thus promote private luxury and public poverty.

Political/Economic Instability

It is said that Good Governance, Co-operative Development, Genuine Local Autonomy and Quality Education are the four pillars of progress in a poor and struggling society. Fiji since 1987 has been plagued by mediocre or rather bad governments. It is because after May 14, 1987 we had an Interim government for five years and there was no

¹⁷Kamisese Mara, *The Pacific Way* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997) 62.

¹⁸ Teresia Teaiwa, *Nationalism: The Other Hostage in Fiji's Political Crisis* (ABC News Online, May 2000)

opposition to keep them on track. Parliament was restored in 1992 but we have an imbalanced constitution (1990) that gives so much power to a particular race and to the executives that led to lots of abuses, corruption and bad governance. This had a great impact on our economy and the whole life of the country.

Prior to 1987, Fiji's economy was thriving and maybe one of the best among the developing nations of the world. It was evident that in 1986 we would have to import sugar (our main export at the time) from overseas to balance our trade. After 1987 our economy was going down due to two main factors. Firstly, because of the political turmoil that the country was going through as many offshore corporations withdrew and there was no investment because of insecurity. By 1989 our total exports stood at \$F579.5m while our imports were \$F938.4m with a trade deficit of \$F359m, an increase of 160.3% from the \$F140.6m in 1988.¹⁹ Secondly, we lost a lot of skilled people, academics and wealthy citizens as they fled the country because of racial tensions. The interim government has to struggle with a small revenue and a bigger public. After five years a lot of debts were acquired from the World Bank and that when the Value Added Tax (VAT) was introduced to help in paying that loan.

VAT was the first major impact of the negative aspect of globalization to be experienced by the people of this country. A 10% tax was added, placed on every goods and service. Every person, rich and poor has to pay the same amount of tax. A poor beggar in the streets of Suva has to pay tax if he or she buys a bun, peanuts or bean. On the other hand some of the duty and custom taxes (mainly imposed on wealthy traders and business people) were reduced to allow more trade. The new system of taxation only made the rich richer and the poor poorer. In 1991 twenty five percent of our population were living in poverty and most emerged after May 14, 1987.

¹⁹ Profiles of the Forum Island Countries (Suva: Forum Secretariat, 1991) 23.

In 1992 democratically elected Rabuka government came into power full of passion and vitality promising indigenous Fijians prosperity. However its seven years in power it can be said that it has been the worst government that we ever had. Corruption and abuses of power was crippling this nation. The Fiji National Bank saga is an example in which more than \$200 million of public money was lost. The economy was very weak and there was so much public spending that we have to rely very much on the World Bank to cover our deficit. If we look at the difference between the Public Revenue and Public Expenditure from 1994 to 1998 then we can understand the Fiji situation. [1994, (in \$F1m): rev.689.02-ex.786; 1995, rev.710.18-ex.801.14; 1996, rev.736.18-ex.881.44; 1997, rev. 794.09-ex. 770.30; 1998, rev. 848.65-ex.1, 029.46.]²⁰ In that five year period the deficit was \$F570.42 million and that has to be borrowed from the World Bank and IMF. That was when conditions were placed to help paying that debt.

This was when lots of privatisation and restructuring took place to meet the conditions and demands of the IMF and World Bank. Public enterprises that had gone through corporatisation and privatisation during this period were the National Bank of Fiji, Government Ship Building, Air Pacific, Ports Authority, Public Transport, Telecom Fiji, Post Fiji, Aviation Fiji Ltd. This did strengthen our economy but by 1997 our poverty rate rose to 30%, an increase of 5% from 1991.²¹ How can the economy increase and poverty increase at the same time? This is the hallmark of globalization, benefit for the minority and deprivation of the majority.

A great danger of globalization is that it is a process of exclusion.²² In Europe during feudal times, the poor were subjugated but they were needed. In the Industrial capitalism the poor workers were paid unjust

²⁰ Barry Tumer, ed. *The Statesman Year Book* (New York: Orbis Books, 2002) 614

²¹ *Fiji Poverty Report* (Suva: UNDP, 1997) 2

²² Jon Sobrino and Felix Wilfred, ed., *Globalization and its Victims* (London: SCM Press, 2001) 12

wage but they were very much needed to work. During colonial conquest the poor natives were discriminated against and oppressed but they were needed. Today with globalization, we have reached this terrifying situation where the poor are not needed any more. The process of restructuring and redundancies shows that these poor workers are no longer needed. This is one of the great miseries that this country is facing at the moment. The 1997 Fiji Poverty Report reveals that 1 in every 3 persons live in poverty. Furthermore, it also stated that 10% of the population receives 35% of the total income while the lowest 10% receive 4%.²³ Globalization brought about poverty, inequality and injustice, and most of all bad governance.

2000 Coup

Two years have passed since the event of May 19, 2000 and different sectors of our population have experienced its burden and its glories. It is a time for analysing and reflection into the event and the big question that we must ask today is why it happened? Was Mahendra Chaudhry's government so bad that it had to be dethroned? What major errors did he do that it was unacceptable to the Fijian public? If it was about race and religion then we know it is not true because the majority of the Cabinet were indigenous Fijians and Christians.

Through Army Intelligence it was revealed that there were seven plotters of the coup.²⁴ - he "magnificent seven" whose identity is not yet revealed to the public or proven guilty by a court of law. However, their status is known, businessmen (both Fijian and Indian), Politicians who lost power in 1999, Military and Police officers. The businessmen were not happy with the economic reform of Chaudhry. The failed politicians have acquired a lot of debt during their term in office and were being pursued by the government. Their way out of

²³ Fiji Poverty Report (Suva: LTNDP, 1997) 3

²⁴ Aniltra Chaudhari, "Man of Honour," *The Review* (April/May 2001) 15

that mess was to go back into power. The Army and Police officers saw an opportunity of an easy passage to civil and military leadership.

What I want to argue here is that globalization was a major cause of the event of May 19, 2000. The indigenous Rights was never an issue but a means used to gain the support of the indigenous public. First, we look at George Speight. In the history of Fijian nationalism we see no record of his name. By the time of the coup, Speight was a failed businessman. His track record shows that he was sacked from the reign of leadership both of Fiji Pine Corporation and Hardwood Corporation. It was Chauldry himself who sacked him because of abuse and corruption. Speight saw that he would lose a lot of business opportunities with the Chauldry government in power.²⁵ When Speight walked into parliament on that Friday morning, he was fighting for himself and not for the indigenous Fijians.

If we see the economic performance of the Rabuka, , Chauldry and Qarase governments, then we can see that Chauldry was the best we had. The government revenue was at its highest ever and expenditure lowest. Highest economic growth at 9.6%, and inflation lowest ever. Every other economic sector seems to have performed at its best and the Fiji Dollar was at its strongest. Let us look at some statistics.²⁶

²⁵ Extract of Jone Dakuvula's Interview on *Fiji One* on 25/8/ 2000, 8.10pm, that leads up to the destruction of the TV Station on that same night by rebels who were occupying the Parliament complex

²⁶ Peoples Coalition Manifesto (Suva: 1991)

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	Rabuka 1998	Chauldry 1999	Qarase 2000	Projected 2001
Govt. Revenue	\$1013m	\$1201m	\$1047m	\$960
Customs & Excise	\$228m	\$250m	\$220m	\$212m
Inland Revenue	\$498m	\$496m	\$541m	\$502m
Govt. Expendire	\$1029m	\$982m	\$920m	\$1010m
GDP	1.4%	9.6%	-9.3%	na
Inflation Rate	8.1%	0.2%	3%	5%
Total Exports	\$1013m	\$1201m	\$1047m	\$960m
SugarEx. \$244m	\$263m	\$236m	\$220m	
Garment Ex.	\$301m	\$322m	\$278m	\$230m
Tourism	\$483m	\$559m	\$434m	na
Tourist Arrivals	371,342	409,955	294,070	300,000
Hotel Turnovers	\$269m	\$315m	d\$254m	na
Currency FD/USD	50c	51c	43c	41c
Health Budget	\$94.7m	\$108.3m	\$91m	na
Education Budget	\$188m	\$198m	\$179m	na

In their 12 months of leadership, the Chauldry Government were able to remove VAT and Custom Duty from five basic food items, and reduce 25% the price of essential everyday consumer items such as soap and toothpaste. State assistance for poor needing overseas treatment was increased from \$2000 to \$200,000. They introduced a \$1m student loan scheme for needy students striving for higher education and free-fee education raised from Form 4 to Form 5. Housing interest rates for lower income workers were brought down by 6%. Water rates down by 10%, Electricity by 16% and International telephone charges by 10%. Furthermore, Chauldry started to localise leaderships of state owned corporation like Fiji TV that were held by expatriots.

If we look at the Four Pillars of Progress, Chauldry's government seems to have achieved them all in just a short period and we wonder if he had finished his tern. Above all, great emphasis was directed

towards indigenous Fijians in Education and development (Land Use Commission). If that government had survived, this country would have prospered and united and it would be the indigenous Fijians would have benefited most. Chaudry in a way has proven to the world that we can contain some aspects of globalization by reducing the burden on the poor and at the same time raising the economy. Unfortunately, some that have benefited from the inequalities and injustices of the past sabotage that ray of hope. They are the agents of globalization.

The event of May 19, 2000 is the unseen hand of globalization because it saw that Chaudry's government was diminishing its opportunities to flourish in Fiji. The people behind the coup were self-centred, narrow minded, greedy individuals pursuing their own interest, well being, prosperity and power. They are the ones who led Fiji back into the wrath of globalization. When George Speight and his seven troopers kidnapped and took Chaudry's government hostage, they also kidnapped and took hostage much of the hope and potential for this nation to be united and prosperous.²⁷ Chaudry was a true warrior and statesman who had great vision for this nation and was taking globalization head-on and it was only the point of the gun that stopped him. What we need in Fiji are statesmen and stateswomen and not politicians. People like Chaudry, Ratu Sukuna, Ratu Mara, Jai Ram Reddy; they strive for the national interest and common good of all, while politicians only strive to win votes so that they can hold high offices.

Conclusion

We can see the strong influence of globalization that can manipulate people by its values. It blinds people, especially leaders of our society, from seeing clearly and objectively and striving for the common good

²⁷ Teresia Teaiwa, "Nationalism: The Other Hostrage in Fiji's Political Crisis" (ABC News Online, May 2000).

of all. It demoralises individuals and makes them self-centred and greedy and that is enough for leaders to destroy a nation. In May 19, 2000, globalization triumphed in Fiji as powerful individuals in this nation ousted a person who was showing signs of progress and prosperity for all. However we must not give up hope, we must turn to the last bastion that can stand up to and destroy the evils of globalization.

PART 3 : A CHALLENGE TO CHRISTIANITY IN FIJI

Introduction

Christian churches have a lot to offer to the world because of the richness of their teachings and truth. It is ironical that it is the Christian countries in the world which are among the richest and poorest. Christianity as drawing its faith and life from the person of Jesus Christ, possesses the most vital weapon that can destroy any inhuman made structure just as Jesus did in his time. Fiji is not so unfortunate because more than half of the population is Christian. However, it is the interpretation and implementation of the message of Jesus that can be a problem in combating globalization. My emphasis will be based entirely on the Catholic church as the sole Christian institution that is in a better position to tackle globalization. Three broad issues, poverty, *vanua* and culture sum up the Fiji problem in relationship to globalization. Like Jesus, the Church's primary role is interior change, heart and mind, structures and systems are secondary.

Jesus Christ the Liberator

"The Spirit of the of the Lord is upon me because he has chosen me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives, recovery of sight

to the blind, to set free the oppressed and announce that the time has come when the Lord will save his people." (Lk 4:18-19).

That is the challenge to all followers of Jesus Christ and especially the established community (churches) who were founded to carry on his mission. Jesus was born, lived and died in a conservative religious society colonised by the powerful Roman Empire. Yet in the midst of all that, he proclaimed, promised and gave his life to bringing about a new way of life to his people. The Kingdom of God, a life of love, peace, justice and freedom for all people.

Jesus' life experience in his society seemed to be influenced and was deeply disturbed by the state of life of his nation Israel. We cannot deny that Jesus was born and brought up in Israel, a Jewish society in Palestine of the 1st century of the modern era. A society in which religious, social and political life are so deeply intertwined that we cannot distinguish their differences. Furthermore, his society was a colony, under the direct rule of the mighty Roman Empire. Jesus emerged from a society that was ripe with oppression and injustice. First by Roman direct rule and secondly from within the Jewish structure.

The Jewish society in which Jesus was born into was divided into three different social classes.²⁸ The first were the upper class which consisted of the royal family, Herod and his family, the Chief Priests and the Elders. They were the authority and wealthy aristocracy, the elite and they were a minority. The Chief Priests was the authority, they were the true leaders of the people, and they acquired a lot of wealth through the Temple Tax because they were the ones who ran the Temple. The Elders were the lay nobility, wealthy too because they owned most of the land. They were also known as Sadducees, the

²⁸ Albert Nolan, *Jesus Before Christianity* (New York: Orbis Books, 1978) 27

conservatives of Hebrew traditions. They have no problem with Roman rule because it supported their aristocratic life.

The second group was the middle class, the professionals and tradesmen. The professionals were the doctors, businessmen, lawyers and theologians, academics, the learned. Most of these were the Pharisees, Scribes, Essenes and Zealots. The tradesmen were mostly carpenters and fishermen. This is where Jesus came from because his father Joseph was a carpenter and most of his disciples were fishermen. The dominant groups in the middle class were the Scribes and Pharisees because they were the educated ones, they knew the Law. They hated Roman imperialism but they loved its wealth. They imposed very strict observance of the Law and Tradition to please God and liberate them from the Romans. The Zealots also hated being subjected to Rome and they took arms to fight, which led to the final destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD. With the professionals, the middle class was also a minority group though they were bigger than the upper class.

The third group was made up of the third class, the majority. They were like the untouchables of India. This class consists of the poor, disabled, widows, sick; sinners like the prostitutes and tax collectors, the persecuted, captives, prisoners and the uneducated. They were the oppressed. These were the people that touched Jesus' heart and moved him with compassion. He called them the lost sheep of the house of Israel which he would seek and save. This led Jesus to abandon his middle-class status in order to serve them. He fought their cause from within, proclaiming that the Kingdom of God belonged to them. It was for these people that he dedicated his life in serving them and in the end gave his life so that they could be saved.

The Romans were oppressing the Jewish people as a whole and there were elements in Israel that wanted liberation. The Scribes and Pharisees called Israel to turn back to God by the strong observance of the Law and Tradition so that God could be merciful and save them.

The Zealots were like guerrillas, the only way to liberation was to fight the Romans, which was impossible. Jesus also wanted to liberate Israel from the Romans but for him, Israel has to change.²⁹ That is why in the whole of Israel the only person that impressed Jesus was John the Baptist. If Israel had to change it had to come from within, the individual person had to change. John was the only person who was calling for such change through his call for repentance and individual baptism.³⁰

The liberation that Jesus brought about did not call people to be strictly religious like the Scribes and Pharisees. He never inspired people to resort to violence like the Zealots. It is also interesting that even though he was attracted to and was baptised by John the Baptist, Jesus never baptised anyone. Jesus had his own way to liberate Israel and that was through love and compassion. If Israel was to be free from the Romans, then they had to love the Romans. (Love your enemies, turn the other cheek). The only way to weaken your enemies is to love them and it does not mean giving in to them but to win them through kindness. Jesus believed that the root cause of all domination and oppression was the lack of human compassion.³¹ It is through love and compassion that people will be truly liberated. If Israel was liberated from the Romans but did not have love and compassion, there would be another oppressive regime among them. Society can only change through a transformation of the human heart and mind of each individual. The world needs loving and compassionate people.

Christianity in Fiji

"Go back and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind see again the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and

²⁹ Albert Nolan, *Jesus Before Christendom* (New York: Orbis Books, 1978) 95

³⁰ *Ibid* 16

³¹ *Ibid* 95

the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life, the Good News is proclaimed to the poor, and happy is the man who does not loose faith in me" (Lk 7:22-23).

"It is not those who said to me, 'Lord, Lord', who will enter the Kingdom of heaven, but the person who does the will of my Father" (Mt 7.21).

Our world of today (and in Fiji) is not very far from the world experiences of Jesus. We are still colonised by the imperialism of globalization. Our nation has been dictated to by this outside force which has shaped and controlled our life. Furthermore, the leaders of our nation have embraced the values of this new imperialism and imposed it on all its subjects. We have become part of this whole system. We are so much soaked and duped by this system that it has become normal just as life is supposed to be. Some are aware of it but because of its immensity and power, they just look and wonder, shake their heads and believe that it is too big to be fought against. We have come to accept and allow the situation to be the way it is. We are defeated by the illusion that we cannot change or fight the system. Jesus faced a similar situation but he stood up to it and fought the system.

If Jesus could do it in his time, what about those who proclaim themselves to be followers of Jesus. We are more fortunate that we are better organised and already have influential status in society. Jesus was a nobody, more or less a one-man army, but he made great and lasting impact in his society and in the world throughout the ages. Mahendra Chauldry face the same challenge and stood up to it and was beginning to yield success and that was why he was ousted. Was Chauldry our last hope? He had sown the seeds of hope in us that globalization can be confronted. Even though Chauldry is an Indian and a Hindu he was a humanist, he has great love for the people of this nation. That is something we cannot take away from Mr Chauldry and must be respected. We as Christians must not let that flame of hope

fade. Chaudry fought globalization through political and economic reform, we as Christians must fight it in the way of Jesus.

The biggest question that Christians in Fiji are asking today is can Christianity bring about peace, justice and freedom to the nation? We can also ask ourselves if we can defuse the evils of globalization. Then we have to take a closer look at Christianity in Fiji which makes up 52% Fiji's population.³² There are many different Christian denominations but they can be put into three different categories. I have divided them according to their theologies and world-views and how they can influence our country. The three groups are the Protestants (Methodist and Anglican Church); the Evangelical/Fundamentalist churches (all the new religious movements) and the Catholic Church.

The Fiji Methodist Church (61% of Christians and 36% of the total population)³³ is the biggest Christian denomination and most influential. They have a very traditional Old Testament kind of theology and concept of God. They see God almost the same way the Israelites saw Yahweh as their God among the different pagan nations. About 90% of the Methodists are indigenous Fijians and they conceive God as the God of the Fijians. When Sitiveni Rabuka staged the coup in 1987 he justified his action by saying: "The Bible makes it clear that God chose Fiji for the Fijians."³⁴ The traditional theology and ideology of the Methodist Church were integrated into the exclusive Fijian mentality of the "vanua". This is how Fijian nationalism was born. Both Sakeasi Butadroka (founder of the Fiji Nationalist Party) and Rabuka were lay ministers of the Methodist Church.

³² Turner, Barry, ed., *The Statesman Year Book* (New York: Orbis Books, 2002) 613

³³ Ernst, Manfred., *Winds of Change* (Suva: PCC, 1994) 202.

³⁴ Dean, Eddie and Rotova, Stan, *Rabuka: No Other Way* (Suva Marketing Team Int. Ltd, 1988) 11

Globaliation: A Challenge to the Church in Fiji

The Fiji Methodist Church is a nationalistic church and as long there is Fijian leadership in government, they will always accept the status quo. The Methodist Church disassociated itself from Rabuka in 1998 and with the Taukel Movement they formed VLV (Christian Democratic Front) political party in 1999. They helped in ousting Rabuka from power in the 1999 General Election as they joined the grand coalition of Mr Chaudry. However, last year they just changed their name to SDL led by Mr Qarase and they are now in power. That is why the Methodist Church cannot fight globalization, they cannot fight or challenge a system supported by political leaders that are their allies.

The second block of Christians is the Evangelical/Fundamentalist churches (22% of Christians, 12% of the total population).³⁵ Though there are many different groups they seem to have the same theology. It is very much based on St Paul's writings on Justification by Faith (Gal.2:15, 3:9), on eternal life and of the Second Coming. They are escapist on one level, they have no concern in building the Kingdom here in Fiji. Their only concern is to go to heaven individually. On another level they are individualistic and materialistic. The belief that with their faith in God they will be rewarded by material wealth. Almost all of these groups are rooted directly or indirectly in the United States. They are another tool or means of exporting the US culture,³⁶ proclaiming its gospel of prosperity. They are capitalist churches that proclaim and practice materialism and individualism. They are agents of globalization and no way we can expect them to take on the system because they are part and parcel of the system.

Lastly, the Catholic Church (17% of Christians and 10% of the total population,)³⁷ the last bastion that can challenge and destroy the evils of globalization in Fiji. I am not saying this because I am a catholic but because I believe that the Catholic Church has a better theological

³⁵ Manfred Ernst, *Winds of Change* (Suva:PCC, 1994) 202

³⁶ Kevin Barr, *Blessed-are the Rich* (Suva: Fiji Council of Churches, 1998) 54

³⁷ Manfred Ernst, *Winds of Change* (Suva:PCC, 1994) 202,

perspective, understanding and approach to tackle this phenomena. I am referring to the new understanding of the Church that emerged from the Second Vatican Council. The Church as the Sacrament of Jesus Christ, the light of the nations, the sign and unity of all the human race and in union with God. (Lumen Gentium, no. 1)

Although the Catholic Church is a minority in Fiji, it is very influential mainly through education. Most of the leaders (of different races) in this country in whatever area in the civil arena and in the security forces have had catholic education. Secondly, of all the Christian churches, the Catholic Church has the best-educated clergy. If the Church is to take on the system, fight the evils of globalization, then it has to educate the people. It has to re-present or reincarnate the persona and mission of Jesus in the people of this nation. It has to be true to its nature as the Sacrament of Christ. Just as Jesus took on the system in his time and society so must the Church do the same in the Fiji of today. If the Church is to be truly in a position to transport our society, and then the focus must always be on Jesus and the context is Fiji.

Poverty

Alas for you Pharisees who like taking the seats of honour in the synagogues and being greeted obsequiously in the market squares. Alas for you Scribes because you loan on men burdens that are unendurable, burdens that you yourselves do not move a ginger to lift. (Lk 11:43,46)

Let us look at some issues that the church has to confront if it has to tackle globalization. God created this world out of His love and goodness and He wanted us all to share in his creation and therefore its resources. (Gen. 1:29-3 1). How far have we drifted away from this intention of God - as we know already the vast majority of people in the world today live in poverty. Poverty is an indication or a very clear sign that something has gone wrong with the divine plan of God for

this world. That is why we who believe in God have no other option but to fight it. Poverty is like the visible sum total of the sinful world, whether individual or collective (structural) sins, a manifestation of oppression, injustice and inequality. Today we can prove beyond reasonable doubt that Globalization is a major cause of poverty. If the Church has to tackle poverty than the simple fact is; it has to fight and destroy the evil dimensions of globalization.

Jesus encounters such phenomena in his time and he dedicated his life to fight against it. Jesus also called us to care for the poor, feed the hungry, clothed the naked, visit the sick and prisoners (Mt 25:35-46) just as he did in his time. The Church (both universal and local) has always been faithful to the call of Jesus through the ages, serving the poor. However, the Church has to move into another level, not just serving the poor or just a charitable organisation. Jesus not only served the poor but he also challenged the people in authority; Chief Priests and Elders (by whom he was put to death) and a structure that promoted poverty and oppression. Jesus always denounced the Scribes and Pharisees for imposing laws and practices that made it impossible for the poor to get out of their misery. (Mt 23:13-36, Lk 1 1:45-46) Serving the poor for Jesus is not just a matter being charitable to them - the forces that cause poverty must be challenged and destroyed.

The most recent report on poverty in Fiji says that 54% of the population live below the poverty line and 83% of paid workers earn wages below poverty line.³⁸ This is a dangerous situation for a country to be in and has to be addressed and fought outright. It may be understandable because of the 2000 coup but our statistics says that our economy is growing at a rate of 4 to 6 percent.³⁹ What is more disturbing is that from the government level, poverty is accepted as part of our development as being said recently by Losana Salabula, the

³⁸ Pratap Singh "Parliamentary Speech on Poverty," *Fiji Times* (Suva) July 24, 5

³⁹ *Fiji Times*, 24 July 2002, 6

Assistant Minister for Women and Social Welfare.⁴⁰ If such a statement is coming from the leaders of our nation (almost all are Christians) then something is dramatically wrong. Globalization as the agent of inequalities and injustices is accepted as normal and it is supported by our political system.

The Catholic Church that re-emerged from Vatican II has the most powerful medium to confront globalization and eradicate poverty. *Gaudium et Spes (Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World)* is the a vital weapon that the Church has to combat the evil forces of globalization that are inflicting miseries to our world today. Through *Gaudium et Spe,s* the Church has a very clear direction in her mission in relation to our world today. The first part of the Document (no. 1-45) deals with the Church and humanity, no.12-22 deals with the dignity of the human person; no. 23-45 deals specifically with the human community, human rights, human relationships, social justice and love, human activity in the world and the role of the Church in our world of today. The second part (no.46-93) is concerned with the problems of special urgency. First of all is marriage and family (no.47-52) as the primary basis of society, of love and transmission of life. The importance of culture and its proper development (no. 53-62) and the respect of the uniqueness of every different cultures. The economic and social life (no. 63-72), life of the political community (no. 73-76), fostering peace and promoting unity among nations (no. 77~90), the importance of peace in a world that is threatened by destruction. Finally, in numbers 91-93, the Church is instructed to be true to her mission as the light of Christ to bring the Good News to our modern world.

Gustavo Gutierrez discovered three things about poverty.⁴¹ Firstly, it is destructive to people and society and has to be destroyed. Second, it does not happen by chance but is meant to be as a result of structures

⁴⁰ Fiji Times, 25 July 2002, 5

⁴¹ Arthur F. McGovern, *Liberation Theology and Its Critics* (New York: Orbis Books, 1989) 28

and systems of life that we make or adopt. Finally, we have no choice but to move or take political action. The Church's concern about human life is the development of the whole human person to achieve its full realisation. Sin is what interferes with the realising of our true potential and vocation. Therefore the mission of the Church is to combat sin. If the political system is the cause of sin then it takes it on. If globalization causes sin then it must tackle globalization. It is clear now that these man-made sinful, structures and forces are the root causes of poverty. Moreover, it is the selfishness and unwillingness of the wealthy to share riches. Unlike Jesus whose society did not distinguish religion and politics, we have a very clear dividing line between the two. The Church cannot be directly involved with politics like church officials who take on political offices or support a particular political party. The mission of the Church is first and foremost a religious one but also open to the realities of the world (GS, 42). However, we can join non-government organisations, human and civil rights movements and support political organisation like trade unions. It is happening in Fiji but it is not up to a level that scares unjust and oppressive governments. The intention is not to destabilise governments but to be the conscience of society. To remind governments of their true duty of bringing about the common good of all. Our mission, first and foremost is a religious one, we have to bring into the hearts of our people the root of all virtues; compassion and love.

The Vanua

"You have learnt how it was said. You must love your neighbour and hate your enemy."(Mt 5:43) The words of Jesus concern Jewish solidarity. It has become very clear in Fiji since the 2000 coup that if the indigenous Fijians are not united this nation will never live in peace and harmony. The major problem still is that Fijians cannot be united among themselves. The Catholic Church in Fiji is a multi-racial and multi-cultural community but the majority of its members and of the local clergy we indigenous Fijians. However, it is part of the universal

church which is truly multi-cultural and multi-racial and has survived the test of time through its age-old wisdom. If the local church rise to its true potential it can become the major source of love and unity in our society.

One of the huge challenges that the church has to confront or face squarely is the negative aspect of the *vanua* mentality of the Fijians. Basically, in the mind of a Fijian, the *vanua*⁴² is all there is for him. It has its physical dimension; the land, sea, vegetation, animals, fish, birds; the social dimension; the customs, traditions, relationships, chiefly system, language; the spiritual dimension; the gods, spiritual world, religion. A *vanua* is defined by a specific area of land, a common custom and tradition, and traces its lineage back to an ancestral god. It is a close unit that only those who are born into it are members, thus it becomes an exclusive system. Those who are not members of that particular *vanua* are outsiders and are potential enemies. The history of Fiji is mostly stories of tribal wars, and this was the cause. When the Indians arrived, Fijians became united as they felt their *vanua* had been intruded upon, the Indians becoming their common enemies.

The concern is only with the negative aspect of the *vanua* mentality. Firstly, because of its closed and exclusive nature, the exclusive principle of globalization can have a great impact on it. We have seen this among our Fijian leaders of the past thirty years in which an elite group emerged and become very powerful and wealthy while the majority of Fijians still live at a subsistence level. The task is not to do away with the *vanua* mentality, which is the heart of the Fijian culture, but to help Fijians to move beyond, to transcend their *vanua* and to embrace the all-inclusive solidarity of all the people of the nation and of all humanity. I do believe that in every culture there exists the seed

⁴² Asesela Ravuvu, *The Fijian Way of Life* (Suva: USP Publication, 1983) 70

⁴³ for the fullness of the Kingdom, but no culture is perfect and they all need salvation, the Good News.

Another danger that arises from such a mentality is our move towards a local theology. To localise our theology it has very much to do with the *vanua* and if we are not careful, we will be in trouble. We might end up having an exclusive theology like the Methodists. We have seen the danger of Methodist local theology based on the *vanua* concept: Sunday ban; religious intolerance, burning of mosques and temples. They became supporters of militant nationalistic groups like the Taukei Movement that promotes racial hatred and political instabilities. Blind supporters of the coups, discrimination and injustices. In doing that, they are indirectly supporting globalization, the very system that promotes injustices, inequalities and disunity. They became hypocrites, practising the very opposite of who they are proclaiming, namely Jesus Christ.

Another area of the *vanua* mentality that needs to be addressed is its negative aspect of dependency. We Fijians, like other Pacific people, have this noble characteristic of helping one another so that no one is in need while others are fulfilled. The trouble that has occurred is that people have become too dependent on one another that there is no progress. One of the major drawbacks in our villages is that people sit and wait for help. We tend to rely on our relatives rather than ourselves. There is that expectation that someone will help me. If I sleep all-day I will still have three meals and bowls of grog at night. It is a matter of what my relatives can do for me rather than what I can do for my relatives. Globalization is a system that creates dependency and it can be very destructive if it is integrated into this Fijian dependent mentality. In our villages people always sit and wait for government and overseas aids for their development but they are sitting on the very means of their well-being and prosperity, their land.

⁴³ *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no.53.

Jesus Christ came from a community that is known for its solidarity. If one Jew is hurt, all the Jews are hurt. However, Jesus believed and trusted in himself that through him he could help and save his people. His whole life was self-less and in the process he was no less a Jew but became a true Jew.

Global Culture

"In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent to a town in Galilee called Nazareth to a Virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the House of David, and the virgin's name was Mary. Listen! You are to conceive and bear a son, and you must name him Jesus. He will be great and be called Son of the Most High. " 1:26-27, 31-32)."

In the Incarnation, the Second Person of the Trinity became a human person in a particular culture in a particular period in history. Jesus was born and raised just as any Jewish person according to the norms, customs and traditions of the Jewish culture of the time. This great mystery of God reveals to us the truth that God so values our culture that it was worthy for Him to be born into and brought up in. Jesus laid down the means of the continuation of our salvation from the very elements of his culture. It does not mean that the Jewish culture was a perfect or divine culture, no culture is better than the other, they are just different ways of becoming human, it is the culture that makes us human as Vatican II says: "Man comes to a true and full humanity through culture." (GS 53)

We are not born with our culture but we are born into our culture and it is our culture which made us Fijian, Rotuman, Indian, part-European, Solomonese or Banaban human persons. Imagine if a young boy upon birth is taken away by a monkey and raised. No way that person will be a human, he will act, think, eat, walk and speak like a monkey. This

how vital culture to our human life. It is what makes us unique as a particular people with our own way of expressing our God given life, in fact it is the uniquely different ways of our expression of our Creator. This is why Jesus came - not to destroy but to fulfil (*Mt 5:17-19*) On the contrary this is what globalization tries to destroy because it will only survive if the majority of the world adopts its way of life and values.

We cannot deny the fact that globalization is a big threat to our cultures today. It has introduced attractive ways of life, life styles and values so that most us turn our back on our own cultures. It has promised us that we will live a good and high standard life and attain true freedom if we eat such food, drink such drinks, have such cars, wear such clothes, listen to such music, live in such a house, how to save and earn money, etc. It has driven us to value the materialistic aspects of life that we do not strive for the high -quality life, life of love and sharing. The quality of our life has become secondary to what we should own and possess. Material things are supposed to support us to live our human life but globalization is telling us to live our life for the material things. It promises us freedom but we only become slaves to possessions.

I believe that many will not disagree with me in saying that the Catholic Church was the great agent and advocator of globalization. The Church (with colonialism) was the major exporter of western culture to the whole world in her history prior to the Second Vatican Council. Furthermore, everything was centralised in Rome and almost everything was done in the Roman way. In the process it has suppressed or even wiped away many cultural values in different countries as happened among the Aztec, Inca and Mayan civilisations in central and south America. Our cultures were seen as evil and not worthy for the Church's divine life and worship. Vatican II redirects the Church back to Jesus when it says: *"If the Church is to be in a position to offer to all the mystery of salvation and the life brought by God, then it must implant itself among the very group of people in the*

same way that Christ by his Incarnation committed himself to a particular social and cultural circumstances of people among which he lived" (Ad Gentes, no.10)

The challenge for the Church in Fiji is not only to the whole nation but also within itself. To build a true local church with its local theology. To draw an example from our own Vincentian Formation house in Wailoku. When we celebrate Eucharist every morning everything is done in the English language. There are only two priests and it's understandable that they have to say the Mass in English. However, the hymns, parts of the mass, readings are also in English but are being prepared by us students and novices who are all locals. (There are 25 people attending mass every morning, 23 or 92% are locals). We ourselves seem to have abandoned our own ways. Maybe this is the problem of reception from our part that needs to be addressed.

To build a genuine local theology then we have to raise the question about inculturation because true local church will only emerge from the process of inculturation. Inculturation as what Pedro Arrup conceived: *"The incarnation of Christian life and of the Christian message in a particular cultural context, in such a way that this experience not only finds expression through elements proper to the culture in question (adaptation) but becomes a principle that animates, directs and unifies the culture, transforming it and remaking it so as to bring about a new creation.."*⁴⁴ Maybe the Church in Fiji is still on the level of adaptation. The transportation of our cultural forms and rituals to the Roman rite of worship, it is just like putting our traditional costume on a foreigner, the person is still a foreigner but in local clothes. The danger that can arise or has been experienced already is dual spiritualities, because it is only the cultural forms that go to worship while the underlying values stay outside the place of worship. Jesus goes out and touches the very heart and mind of people,

⁴⁴ Alyward Shorter, *Towards a Theology of Inculturation* (New York: Orbis Books, 1988) 11

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renewing and transforming the deep values of the people that already were being developed by the culture so that it became a new creation, this is what inculturation is all about. It is these deep underlying values that globalization is trying to destroy and put in totally new values.

If inculturation is so important in building our local church, our Kingdom of God, then we have to learn from the first agent of inculturation; Jesus Christ. In Lk 2:41-50, Jesus spent three days in the Temple in Jerusalem listening and asking the teachers and elders questions. inculturation is going to the heart of the particular culture (not the skin as in adaptation), its central home. There one sits down listening and asking questions among the people learned in the culture in order to find out what God wants of that particular people. God respected the uniqueness of our cultures and our own expressions of Him from within, as expressed in our own cultural ways. Globalization maintains its own values but uses the forms of different cultures to present itself, it is a process of adaptation.

In the Transfiguration (Mt 17:2-6, Mk 9:2-8, Lk 9:25-36) some disciples saw Jesus speaking to Moses and Elijah. Inculturation is to speak to the great prophets and leaders of the indigenous or local people. To understand their vision and goals for their country and people. The dreams they have for their future. Globalization has its own vision and goals and it is not about the people and country. The vision and goals of globalization have obscured the visions and goals of the great leaders and prophets of our nation. The voice of globalization is so loud that it has silenced or compromised the voices of our leaders and prophets of today. It is the duty of the church through inculturation to silence globalization and bring back the goals and visions of our great leaders and prophets revealed to them by God, re-interpreted by the light of the Gospel. This is some of the mission of the Church here in Fiji if it is to be true to Christ its head.

Conclusion.

The Catholic Church in Fiji has never been so challenged in its one hundred and sixty years of existence in the country to face the burden and the glory of living the life of Jesus Christ. It must always focus on Jesus if it has to survive the test of time and reinterpret, re-assess and re-evaluate the person and message of Christ in our Fijian context of today. The Church is capable of doing that because it is already stated in its Vision from the 1990 Synod. *"The Archdiocese of Suva is a family of God, united in faith on pilgrimage, committed in realising the Kingdom of God under the inspiration of the Sacred Heart of Jesus."*

A PERSONAL CONCLUSION

I believe that I have achieved what I intended to write and in the process have discovered many new facts that are most vital to who I am as a Fijian, a Catholic and as a candidate for priestly ministry. I have fulfilled that burning desire that I found myself so restless unless I share a piece of my mind of what I believed in about our Fijian problem. It has been a deep growing conviction within me to explore more about this issue and if this paper somehow does not fully express that conviction, it is totally due to my personal failure and not because of the lack of my conviction.

This paper is the last major paper I have written as a seminarian and I did it to the best of my ability according to my research and reflections and to the limits of my understanding. Any error of judgement, reflections, thinking or about the Catholic faith that arises from the paper is totally mine. It must not to be projected onto the institution under which I am studying, the religious congregation that I am in or of the ethnic group that I am part of, but as a personal failure to do my homework. However, I am very confident that I am not far from the

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truth and I am convinced that I was not only speculating and I have given some proofs to justify and support what I had written.

The negative aspect of globalization is truly a destructive force in Fiji today and the Fijian public must be awoken to protect themselves. That is why I believe that Catholic Church is our first and last line of defence at the moment because our cultural and political system has failed and other Christians do not have the disposition both in their theologies and ideologies to tackle such a force. With due respect to them I believe that they cannot fight the cause because they have erred from the person and teachings of Jesus Christ.

I wrote this paper first and foremost because I am a Fijian and I am proud to be one and feel so privileged to be a member of the indigenous people. I am so honoured to be part of our history, its struggles, toil, joys, hopes and dreams for its future. However, I was also writing as a Catholic and as seminarian trying to be true to its mission of building the Kingdom in this beloved country. Many of my fellow indigenous Fijians may disagree, dislike or even hate what I have written, in my reflections and line of thinking. They have every right and freedom to do so but I must be very frank that this paper was not written to please anyone. I was searching for the truth and sometimes the truth may not be what we want it to be. May God bless Fiji.

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