

Eco-spirituality in Indonesia.

Diego Irarrazaval *

May there be *paraka* (spiritual energy, in Arabic language) and *berkat* (blessing in Javanese language) at the beginning of this reflection. Early this morning all of us have been enriched by the wisdom of M. Maksum Machfoedz (1), and I wish to contribute with some other dimensions.

When concerns are shared in the midst of an open-hearted muslim society (as is the case of Indonesia) one is moved to praise the allmerciful who our brethren call *Allah* and who we christians call *Abba* (fatherly source of life). Moreover, being among millions of muslims who suffered the 2006 earthquake and recently the eruption of Merapi volcano and now work doing bricks out of that lava, our theological interaction draws from their resilience and creativity. People (that we met yesterday on the slopes of Merapi volcano) have not only endured natural destruction of rice fields and homes, they have turned it over into an opportunity for rebuilding life in harmony with the environment.

Throughout Latin America, communities have begun to acknowledge being earth and water, through the mediation of our bodies. This happens within divine creation. Reception of the gift of life demands taking care of each other and of all entities in the universe.

My words are based on Andean celebrations, Guaraní symbols, and the growth of voluntary associations that contribute to justice, peace,

stewardship in creation. Christian communities confront pragmatic and individual prosperity.

We are developing a holistic concern for the environment and for human happiness. This belongs to the secular realm where we all are at home (muslims, hindus, followers of Confucius, Christians, etc.). Such a concern may also be understood as indispensable ground work for contact with the power of the Spirit in the universe, and for faithfulness to the Spirit of the Crucified who has been Risen. One feels that crucified people in Asia (and here in Indonesia) are enjoying opportunities to be themselves and to grow with whoever is different. In this sense I offer you some elements from South America (2).

In ecological concerns we are dealing with what believers call God's providence and Christ's saving grace. In experiential terms we are embraced by life and in the hands of others; there is also a caring engagement in the well being of the universe. Humanity feels more and more aware of its responsibility with a sustainable planet, as it has been with the elimination of hunger and injustice. These claims are widespread and most urgent.

However, a critical discourse often does not go hand in hand with systemic responsibility. Ecological proposals and historical transformation seem to be like different galaxies. Most persons are more focused on socio-economic issues, on one part, and significant minorities are more focused on the ecological agenda, on another part. In our theological activities do we swing from one end to the other? If one perspective grows does the other have to be left aside? Rather they may interact and enrich each other. Hopefully it may so happen.

The Christian heritage has developed two separate doctrines: creation and salvation; and church programs have privileged the latter. This is more than a hermeneutical dilemma; it may be considered a widespread heresy

(although one may not be aware of it). According to the Gospel, the love of God encompasses all of creation and is the driving force in human events.

All of this arouses much debate. Many of us see humans not as owners of the planet, nor as saviours, but rather as 'guests' of this land and co-responsible with God. Persons are spiritual bodies, who exist within earth and water. As such we are sons and daughters of a gracious Father/Mother God. It is urgent to have a holistic praxis in the midst of a crisis of civilization. A band-aid pragmatic approach has to be confronted; for example adding a green agenda within the world market (which is spoiling the planet).

A positive side of these discussions is to rediscover creation/salvation, and to see the meaning of the Trinity within and around us. As Leonardo Boff says: earth "is eco-spiritually experienced in terms of being temple of the Spirit, and it belongs to reality assumed by the Word" (3). This perspective implies that all is in God (and it has been called pan-theist, which is not animism nor theological reductionism). It draws from Christian revelation, read according to the signs of our times.

People all over the world (and also in our sub-continent) are fascinated by technology and scientific work, by pragmatic solutions to everyday problems, by dreams of unlimited progress. However, there is a growing questioning of market-cultural patterns. At the same time some theological events and associations hear the wisdom of autochthonous ways of life, and reclaim modern civilization without leaving aside local and regional patterns of well being (and in our case latinamerican values). Among grass roots leadership, spoke-persons and social movements in secular society, institutions doing research and academic work, there is a flourishing ecological awakening. Hopefully it may become a holistic concern (and not merely a 'green agenda') in spiritual networks and in churches, and also in personal endeavours.

Footnotes:

* Diego Irarrazaval Brief input during the VII General Assembly of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians, Indonesia, april 24, 2012. Resource person in social networks and in catholic church activities in several places in Latin America. Had leadership roles in the Aymara Institute in Peru (1981-2003) and in EATWOT (1996-2006).

1. M. Maksum, muslim scholar, underlined the local socio-cultural system, and prompted 25 women and men theologians into the foundations of just, honest cooperation for the sake of equity, sustainability, growth.

2. See Hector Alimonda (comp.), *Ecologia Politica*, Buenos Aires: CLACSO, 2002; Fernando Mires, *El discurso de la naturaleza: ecologia y politica en América Latina*, San José: DEI, 1990; Hector Leis and others, *Ecologia e política mundial*, Petropolis: Vozes, 1991; Emilio Moran, *La ecología humana de los pueblos de la Amazonia*, Mejico: FCE, 1993; Enrique Leff, *Saber ambiental: sustentabilidad, racionalidad, complejidad, poder*, Mejico: Siglo XXI, 2002; Antonio Elizalde (comp.), *Las nuevas utopías de la diversidad*, Santiago: Universidad Bolivariana, 2003; Juvenal Quispe, *Ecoteología*, Oruro: CEPA, 2003; Luz Donato and others, *Mujeres indígenas, territorialidad y biodiversidad en el contexto latinoamericano*, Bogotá: Equilátero, 2007; Claudia Zapata (ed.), *Intelectuales indígenas piensan América Latina*, Quito: Abya Yala, 2007.

3. Leonardo Boff, *Ecología: grito de la tierra, grito de los pobres*, Madrid: Trotta, 1996, 251 (see all his “Eco-epiritualidad: sentir, amar y pensar como tierra”, chapter 10 (pgs. 235-252); and see Alirio Cáceres, *Pasos hacia una hermenéutica ecoteológica*, World Forum of Theology and Liberation (within the World Social Forum, Belem, Brasil, 2009).