## CHURCH WEEKLY



# Church Weekly 

## Sri K.C. Chacko

Founder of the Church Weekly (1946)


## CHURCH WEEKLY

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# A WEEKLY PAPER FOR A WEAKLY CHURCH 

## A Letter from Bishop H. Pakenham Walsh to the Readers of the Church Weekly CHRISTA SISHYA ASHRAM, TADAGAM, Nov. 16

## Dear Friends,

All of you know of my great love for, and interest in the Orthodox Syrian Church of Malankara, and that for the last eleven years my wife and I have been closely connected with you, helping in your first mission field outside Travancore, and worshipping in your daily offices and frequent Holy Qurbanas. It was members and friends of our Sangha who conceived the idea and carried out the project of a weekly paper for your Church; and our Sangha will always give all the help it can to make it a success.

This contribution of mine will be in English, but I hope that many of my later ones will be translated into Malayalam; but this one being in English, you will allow me, as a humour loving Irish man, to make a joke, which cannot be translated into any other language.

When I saw the name of the paper, "The Weekly Church Paper", I at once said, it might be called "The Weakly Church Paper" or "The Weakly Paper of a Weakly Church"!

But joke though it is, there is, like most Irish jokes, something valuable in it, which reminds me of a Provost of Trinity College, Dublin, Dr. Mahaffy, long ago speqaking at the 'Oxford Union', and filling his speech with delightful "Irish bulls" as a particular kind of Irish joke is called. The next speaker an English man spoke disparagingly of the Provost's Humour, and burst out with the taunt, "What is the difference between an English bull and an Irish bull"? Whereupon Mahaffy jumped up and said, "The difference between an English bull and an Irish bull is this, that an Irish bull is always pregnant."

So this joke is pregnant. None of you will deny that your ancient Church, with all its inherited adornments and treasures, its majestic liturgy, its impressive rituals, its ancient orders, its hoary antiquity, is at present a weakly Church. It is split and divided, and lacking in unity and effective brotherhood; it is not pulling its weight in the great enterprise which the Lord committed to His Church, to advance the Kingdom of God throughout the whole earth; it is not showing such a standard of saintliness, as to attract to it the non-Christians of India.

And our little paper is a weakly paper. Can we do much by means of a little paper, to fight against great forces of evil, to bind the brethren of the Church together in love, to kindle zeal for the uplift of the whole world, and to make men and women glad to sacrifice themselves for the sake of God's Kingdom?

What is this little scroll of paper, that can be torn up by the hand as a weapon against the heavily armed forces of the Evil One? Is it not a weakly paper for a weakly Church? And yet we feel that because we trust it into the hands of Christ the King, because we pray and labour that it may be full of His Spirit, and that it may speak His words of power to those who will hear, it will not be a weakly but a strong paper; that it will "strengthen the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees, and will say to them that are of a fearful heart, 'BE STRONG, FEAR NOT'. (Isaiah $35: 3,4$ )

Yours in His Service, Sd. H. Pakenham Walsh

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## God moves in a mysterious way

 His wonders to perform；He plants His footsteps in the sea， And rides upon the storm．








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 （Writings of Church Fathers），ゅ๐ாேวற！






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 ＂The Lord said，I am the truth．He did

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 living embodiment of the essential na－ ture of the Church）ஊைைஸั ஃ๐ை ๓าઠิญ


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 ＂Synods and councils I salute from a dis－ tance，for I know how troublesome they are．Never again will I sit in those gath－ erings of cranes and geese．＂




 full of it，the squares，the market place， the alleyways，old clothes men，money changers，food sellers：they are all busy arguing．If you ask someone to give you change，he philosophizes about the Be－ gotten and the Unbegotten；if you inquire about the price of a loaf，you are told by way of reply that the Father is greater and the Son inferior；if you ask＂Is my bath ready？＂，＂the attendant answers that the Son was made out of nothing．＂








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## ＂All that is not given，is lost＂－an old Indian proverb．

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# Pilgrimage-43 <br> Fr.Dr.K.M.George <br> The Human Horizon: "Mystery and Mastery" 

(continued)



## Image and likeness

The Bible opens with the magnificent statement in the very first chapter of the first book that the human being was created in the image and likeness of God.
"And God said; Let us make man in our image, in our likeness...
so God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them"(Gen. 1:26-27).

Two things are important here:
1.Each human person, male or female, is created in God's image and likeness.
2. Humanity, as a whole, as one body, inclusive of men and women, is created in God's image.

Unfortunately in the history of exegesis of this passage, patriarchal interpreters sometimes restricted the image of God only to the male. They also limited it to the individual males rather than to humanity of men and women as a whole.

We need to restore the twin aspects of the image of God in male and female as individual persons as well as in the one humanity of men and women corporately, irrespective of their religious persuasions. (When the new Pope, the charismatic Francis washed the feet of a woman, a Muslim, among others in the Washing of the Feet ceremony during the Holy Week, traditional Catholics were scandalized, and the official Roman Catholic media played it down as much as possible.)

## The Image of the imageless God

A major difficulty arises here. Do we know the shape of God the Archetype? Does God have a form? We are taught that God is without form. God is Spirit. Then how can we have God's image and likeness portrayed in the human being?The Judeo- Christian tradition zealously keeps the aniconic notion of God.

In India, the philosophical-theological tradition of Advaitha Vedanta also strongly holds that Atman has no name or form. It is radically beyond all Nama and Rupa, name and form. The word Atman, the ultimate reality, is translated in an approximate way in English as Self or Spirit.

So when we say we are created in God's image, what do we mean? In the Christian Patristic tradition several answers have been given: some would identify the human power of reason/power of speech(logos) as the key element in the Imago Dei. Some others would place emphasis on freedom and creativity as reflection of God's nature in the human being. This of course would not exclude the power of reason. Some early teachers would identify the soul as unique to the human being created in God's image. Still others would say that it is the whole human person-body, mind and soul together - that constitutes the image of God.(See, Olivier Clement, Questions sur I'homme, Edition Anne Sigier, Saint-Foy, 1986.)

The importat thing is to recognize that the image of God is an open reality. You may take
in all these interpretations of the Image. Still it is open and capable of receiving new contributions. There is no neat definition of the image of God in us, closed and sealed forever. Like the horizon it can be pushed further and further infinitely depending on our spiritual mobility and our capacity for higher vision. If God's nature is infinite, then the human nature, though created and contingent on God's will, participates in that infinity of God's will and love. This is the free gift of God to humanity. We are called in Christ to be partakers in God's nature(II Pet 1:4). This is the basis for the Eastern Patristic concept of deification or Theosis. 'Becoming God' is the destiny of the human person. The Fathers of the Church would say this is "bold language", but still they insisted on using it.The gift of participation in God opens up vast possibilities for humanity.

## Iconoplasticity and Creativity:

Neuroscientists now tell us about one important feature of the human brain which they call neuroplasticity. It is the ability of the human brain to create new connections between neurons or brain cells and reorganize the brain as and when need arises. This means there is a high degree of openness in our brain's ability to learn new things and to respond to new situations and environment.

Let us take the analogy of neuroplasticity in a metaphorical sense and use it in relation to God's image (icon) in us.So let us coin here a new word Iconoplasticity. It is the unbounded image of God in us that can grow, make infinite progress, branch out to ever new transcendent dimensions, repair damages and injuries caused in our personality by sin, make new connections between human beings of all races and religions, relate to nature in a new way, help
us become a new creation in Christ and embrace the whole of reality. In brief it is our God-given ability to reorganize ourselves and re-order the world. Iconoplasticity can be understood in terms of our freedom, creativity and our inclination to the Good without, however, underestimating the fallen condition of our humanity, the reality of sin and evil. Our ethical choices and our inclinations for that which is ultimately Good and Beautiful depend on Iconoplasticity, the flexibility and freedom of the image of God in humanity to enter into ever new relations with others and with the rest of creation and envisage new configurations of Reality.

The early theological tradition of the church makes a distinction between image and likeness, fully knowing that they are synonymous and it is a matter to Hebrew parallelism. Irenaeus, Origen, the Cappadocians, Cyril of Jerusalem and other teachers in the Alexandrian tradition have used it. It is a deliberate device to distinguish between a gift and a task - the gift of the image in human person and the task of the human person to realize the vast potential of the image by living a life that will lead to God's likeness in us. While we are born with the image imprinted in us because of the Creator's will and love, we are called to realize that orginal image through our life in this world. This is the space for social, ethical and spiritual commitment in the world. In other words one has to grow from image to likeness. One carries the whole history with all its ambiguities and possibilities in this process of growth and transfiguration. One does not escape or shortcut it but lives it out in faith, hope and love.
(To be continued)

# Christianity Should Be Caught 

The Christian Church as such started after Pentecost. It was the entire body of all comrades, united in the fellowship with one another with faith in Jesus Christ. The way the community lived was an eyeopener for their neighbours. It leavened the social life by a new standard of conduct, by works of charity, care for the poor and its emphasis on personal purity of life and a spirit of forgiveness, and thus it stood for a new social order. Their happiness was won out by the simplest materials of life. The peace and joy they exhibited was so palpable that others took notice of their transformation and expressed their desire to join them. Thus Christianity was caught, not taught.

The first Christians experienced the Church as a zone of freedom and liberation. They saw the life in the Church and the life in the pagan society as a contrast between freedom and slavery. They entered the new environment as if out of a world of darkness and despair and fear and anxiety into a community of love, hope and mutual service. Thus the spread of Christianity in the early days was mainly through informal missionaries. The first generation of the Christian Church realised that the gospel should reach all mankind. The spontaneous enthusiasm on the part of the people, differing in age, background and culture was backed up by the quality
of their lives. In an age that was pleasureconscious and materialistic like ours today, the pagans saw something unusual and attractive.

Jesus had given his disciples power to spread the message of love and to heal the sick. They understood their responsibility and obeyed Him. All of them travelled far and wide, undergoing various tribulations and accepting martyrdom. The first three centuries witnessed severe persecution of Christians and many of them welcomed their martyrdom, because they felt that their Christian faith was worth dying for. We have to feel that it is a faith worth living for. They gave their best by dying; we must give our best by living that faith. Every Christian must feel some personal responsibility for the gospel.

History records the life of several later missionaries who left their comfortable lives and travelled all over the world to spread the message of love. Hudson Taylor in China, Dr. Schweitzer in Africa and Father Damian treating the lepers in their colony are a few examples. They were trail blazers. Their simple life styles and the love and care they exhibited were enough to win many souls for Christ. Mother Theresa, a recent missionary, is well known to all of us. No organisation has been so enduring, so world-wide in its influence
and so beneficent in its service and vitality as the Christian Church. Wherever it has gone, it has sown seeds out of which have grown hospitals for the sick, schools and divine ideas of courage, charity and brotherhood unknown before. Those missionaries practised what they preached. Christianity was thus caught, not necessarily taught.

How different are we, the modern Christians! We have a reticence about our religion; we count it too intimate and personal, a matter not to be discussed in public. They say: "I don't wear my religion on my sleeve," as though we are ashamed to say we are Christians! Do our lives exhibit any relation to Jesus's message? Of course we had very saintly bishops in olden days, like Parumala Thirumeni, who practised what they preached and brought glory to our Churches. Those are only faint memories now. The present day emphasis is on building bigger churches, erecting 'kodimarams' and bell-towers! Some of the modern churches are so huge and opulent that they look like museums and have become tourist attractions, hardly a house of prayer. I wonder if Jesus will ever want to step into any one of them! There are divisions inside the same Church, not in the matter of faith, but over money and power! The churches now charge for every service they give; even at a funeral, every priest who turns up at the site is entitled to a purse! The Bible says: "Freely you are given; freely you must give." Such truths are swept under the carpet; now it is:
"Make hay while the sun shines." Preachers become rich overnight; they live in palatial houses, drive around in posh cars, and they fly 1 st class by air and stay at 5 -star hotels. I am told that in the marriage market preachers are in greater demand than doctors and engineers. I don't want to paint every one of them with the same brush. I am sure there are people who walk the talk and bring glory to Christianity. Many ordinary Christians give up their highly lucrative jobs and work among the deprived and marginalised people in our country. They are often not visible to the public, but they quietly show their commitment to their Saviour. What attracts people is their simple life-style, their piety.

Christianity has great resilience. In spite of attacks, hostility and factions within, it has risen from death, cast off its grave clothes and entered into new life. Where we thought communism had completely wiped it off, we see that in many of the former communist countries, it has risen again. God always seems to leave a remnant who rise up to give leadership when all seems a failure.

God is more interested in what you are than in what you do. When people look into our lives, will they be inspired to call us Christians?
"Only those who see the invisible and believe in the incredible are able to do great exploits in the name of Christ."

## A Little Act of Kindness



A little act of kindness can change this world into a better place to live in. Many of you might have seen the whatsapp video which presents the attitude of a rich man to his little lovely dog. While he was eating sumptuously, his dog had whimpered at the feet of the dining table for the morsels which fell from his master's plate. (This, in fact, reminds us of the story of the rich man and Lazarus in the Bible in which the rich man does not show any mercy to Lazarus who begs for a little food.) This dog's unkind master's behaviour changed totally when he happend to see a beggar on the roadside pampering that hungry dog, giving it the little food he had got from others and the dog in turn wagging its tail, expressing its thanks to the beggar. This benevolent act of the beggar turned that malevolent rich man into a very kind person. Aesop, the Greek fable writer, writes, "No act of kindness, however small, is wasted. A simple act of kindness can make a tremendous impact on a person's life.

Another video presents the gentle behaviour of a young man who collects the leftovers of rich men who waste their food, from luxurious hotels everyday in carrier bags and distributes them to poor
beggars on the street. One day, the manager of the hotel sent a waiter behind him to see what he was doing with the leftovers. The gentle act of that man really touched the manager of that hotel. John ruskin writes, "A little thought and a little kindness are worth more than a great deal of money". Even a small act of kindness can make a big difference in someone's world, another anonymous writer remarks.

Norman Mc Kinnel's play, 'The Bishop's Candlesticks' which is an adaption of an abstract from the French play 'Les Miserables’ by Victor Hugo tells us how a little act of kindness has changed a hardcore criminal into a reformed person.

Love, kindness and redemption are the major themes of the play. In the play, a convict breaks into a Bishop's house and asks for food, threatening the Bishop's life in the process. The Bishop offers him not just food and shelter, but his sympathy too. Instead of being grateful, the convict steals the Bishop's candlesticks, his valuable possessions and escapes. He is soon caught and arrested by a sergeant, who presents him to the Bishop. The Bishop, however, claims to have given the candlesticks to

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the convict as a gift and requests him to be released. This simple act restores the convict's faith in humanity and encourages him to go back to leading an honest life. William Wordsworth, the 17th century poet, the greatest lover of Nature, in his poem, Tinter Abby Lines... writes, "The little nameless unremembered acts of kindness and love are the best part of a person's life". Everyone comes into this world with nothing and leaves this world with nothing. It is what we do in between that makes all the difference. Let's light the candle of kindness and love in the dark
$21^{\text {st }}$ century world where people are groping about in the darkness of life, wanting kindness and love. "Light a candle in darkness instead of cursing the darkness."

Little drops of water, Little grains of sand, Make the mighty ocean And the beauteous land. Little deeds of kindness, Little words of love, Make our earth an Eden, Like the heavens above.
(Nursery rhyme) ©

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## Life Style <br> Dr. Annie David <br> The Parable of the Prodigal Son



The story of the Prodigal Son is perhaps the best known of all the parables recorded in the Gospels. To the best of our understanding Jesus had the intention of illustrating through this parable the limitless love of our Heavenly Father who is forgiving to a fault.

Here is a father completely forgiving the worst possible sins committed by a wayward son, just because he came back to him with the deepest possible repentance. Sometimes I am tempted to think that most of us parents these days are much wiser than the father in this story. In the first place, not many of us would grant to our children all the foolish things they ask for; we know that such requests come from them out of their ignorance, and we imagine that we certainly know better than they do. Perhaps we do. And we also believe that it is because we love them so truly that we don't grant them what they ignorantly ask for. This could be true too.

Let me push you a little more along this line of thinking. What happens next? Do we try to get our child to understand the wisdom behind our refusal to comply with his request? Or, do we leave him alone, hoping that he would understand and come round on his own? Let us go one step further. What if the son totally fails to understand our intention? What could happen if this is the case?

There are two possibilities. Either he eventually comes to the realization that his
father was right in denying him what he wished for, and with gratitude he rebuilds his broken relationship with his father; and there is perfect harmony once more at home. It is also possible that your son never gets back to you with love and affection; the relationship is broken for ever. These two possibilities existed in the case of the Prodigal Son also - to come back to his father, having realized his folly, or to turn his back upon his father forever, and he chose the first one, according to the story that Jesus told; it could very well have been the other way too.

To my mind, it is immaterial whether the father grants the son's wish or not. In our understanding of the story that Jesus told, the focus is on the unfathomable love of the father. But my preference is to have the focus on the son's repentance. The father could be either 'foolish' or 'wise'; whichever way the father acts, what is crucial is the son's reaction to the way his future unfolds. I would rather have my spotlight on the son's repentance; the depth of his repentance is what made all the difference in Jesus's story. Sometimes God answers our prayers immediately, and we are granted what we asked for. At other times, God in His great wisdom, withholds many things we ask for. Whichever way He acts, are we willing to restore our relationship with Him if it is broken? How sincerely do we repent when we realize that we were wrong in our decisions and actions?

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## WHY SETTLE FOR LESS?

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# Reflections <br> Leehkruvila Defeat is Temporary (Post Lent thoughts) 



Defeat is temporary but giving up makes it permanent. If you limit your efforts after a few defeats you are allowing defeat to become permanent. If a child fails in one subject, every time, he has to put in extra effort for that subject not just saying "Oh! that subject I can never pass, no use studying it." What use is algebra(or any particular subject which the child hates) in life? To make matters worse WhatsApp and trolls add fuel by saying big personalities were school drop outs or they were not toppers in schools. Most parents might have gone through these experiences while teaching their children during the exam times. I have also gone through these while teaching my children and now while teaching my grandchildren.

Tell them to keep trying until they succeed. If the spider had given up with its first fall it would never have made its beautiful web. If Sachin Tendulkar had given up after getting a 'duck', he would never have reached the 'Master Blaster' position. Failure is the stepping stone to success.

During the lent period we may have broken our lent at times, may have committed small mistakes, we may not have said all our hourly prayers, we may have made violations in the food we ate. It's OK... God has not told us to forsake meat or fish, it is just a sacrifice, a small restriction we impose on ourselves. I know
people who gave up sweets, or something which was inevitable for them like alcohol, etc.

There are still others who believe it's not what goes into the mouth that matters but what comes out of the mouth that matters more. A restriction in our talking, not to use foul language, not to hurt any one by sarcasm etc. may be a good idea.

There are still others who believe in giving their time and energy for helping others. They place less emphasis on "what to give up" but give more importance on "what to give" - in volunteering and giving their time and energy to others.

The lent period should always be a time for spiritual servicing. Just as our vehicles need periodical servicing our body and mind also require servicing. Clean out any sin we have committed knowingly or unknowingly and fill our hearts with good thoughts and deeds for receiving our resurrected saviour.

Small defeats and omissions may happen but we have a God who knows us inside out and will forgive us if we truly repent and surrender ourselves into his hands. You know the Lord will do great things for you at the right time, provided you accept him and thank him every moment of your life for all the sufferings he bore for you.


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## SHOE SHINE!!



As usual, I was late in the church. So I entered through the western gate, in the hope that all devotees would be facing the east. To my dismay, I found many people sitting on the steps facing the west, as if they were there to count the latecomers. Some were busy managing their restless kids, who otherwise would have enjoyed the fun of running up and down the red carpet in the middle of the church, quite unaware that it is meant for the souls of the departed believers. Some of the office bearers were walking here and there with an air of importance, not giving that much importance to what was going on inside the church.

I joined the less faithful in the last line in the open space in front of the church, taking care not to embarrass the east-bound devotees. From where I stood, the activities inside the church were not visible and so I literally joined the group about which our Lord had said, "Blessed are those who believe without seeing!"

Roaming to the left and right, my eyes finally rested on the different kinds of shoes and other footwear scattered all around us... so many models... colours and designs!... It was a treat to my eyes... until I noticed that some of them were very shabby!

We come to the church from different places, but with a common purpose... we leave our footwear outside, not because we like to do so but because there is a direction board to that effect... Most of the footwear
were similar... but some of them were shining and some very dull. Why is it so?

We are very careful about our attire and appearance. We take due care of our physical fragrance even though that much concern is not there for our behavioural fragrance. Most of us try to keep our footwear neat and clean. We want our shoes to shine! But the majority of the pieces appeared very shabby, obviously because of careless usage and poor cleaning. Accumulated dust, left unattended for a long time, has seriously affected the shine of the footwear; in other words, they have lost their original grace!

It applies to our lives as well. Most of us take care to appear great in front of others but some are careless. Just as the footwear requires regular dusting, cleaning and polishing, we also require regular cleansing. During the period of Lent, we were in an atmosphere of such a cleaning process but to keep up the tempo, it requires much effort on our part. The sea of footwear in front of me made me more conscious about the need of such cleaning. Unless we do periodic cleaning, dust will be accumulated, and we will lose our 'grace'. So it is a must that we clean our minds and reset our lives.

Oh! The church service is over and I have to move forward to get the blessing, which is preceded by the offertory. Then, nobody bothers whether I came in time or not! Now I am entering the holy place where shoes and all thoughts of footwear are not allowed... So, Bye for the time being.

