

Water in Crisis: Evolving a Theology of Water in the Context of Sri Lanka

W.V.Krishani Prabodha Perera

Visiting Lecturer, Department of Western Classical Culture & Christian Culture, University of
Kelaniya

History and archaeology reveal Sri Lanka to be a land endowed with abundant water resources and its people to have been creators of a civilization stamped by a tradition of hydro-engineering. Yet, during the last few decades, this culture has been adversely affected by a series of inappropriate human interventions, leading to a massive water crisis including water pollution, scarcity of water and privatization of water. The present study examines this crisis from the perspective of liberation theology. The method employed is based on the “see-judge-act” model proposed by Joseph Leo Cardijn. The importance of this study lies in the fact that there is little research on theology of water in the context of Sri Lanka. A solution to this pressing problem could be found by unearthing the riches of the religious and cultural heritage of ancient Sri Lanka. The values of this unique water culture transmitted by oral tradition are still alive in the collective memory of the communities that live in the wewa regions. This study explores these values to further a liberation theology stance on the use and preservation of island’s water resources. Sri Lanka’s water heritage and its people’s religious convictions will be judiciously incorporated in this study. The establishment of equality in the use of water as a commonly owned means of production resort to biblical rather than juridical justice. Co-responsibility with the Creator over water and the need for conversion are some theological options proposed to solve this crisis. The study concludes with a series of practical proposals.

Keywords: Water crisis in Sri Lanka, Religious Perspective on Water, Liberative Christian Perspective on Water, Theology of Water, Joseph Cardijn’s Method.