

VISITATION OF CONSERVATISM IN THE TALKS OF ECOLOGICAL CONSERVATIONISM

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Abstract

Conservatism is normally approached as a negative term but here in my article I wrestle with the term conservatism from an ecological sense and connects with the efforts of conservationism. While modernism eats up the resources conservatism helps to retain the resources in the name of orthodoxy. The entire discussion is how to learn positive elements from the so called conservatism. In a context of redefining every aspects of our life we ought to undertake few attempts which may help us to discover new things meaningfully. It is a search to discover where the ideology of conservation works negatively and where one can claim its good legacy. It could be an essential exercise in the path of social transformation. Under God's creation nothing is fully evil or fully perfect in its existence. We are all moving towards perfection and improvement.

An aversion to the term conservatism is undisputedly recognised in many discussions, at least in the Indian context. The assumption and reality about conservatism is recently somewhat shaken and

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therefore we are forced to make a few clarifications. The values we inherited from the past, which perhaps all put it together indiscriminately under the 'conservatism' category, need some rethinking. Modernism, which assumes that it works against conservatism, wants to prove that whatever is new is good and to be appreciated. In this tension between tradition and modernity so-called intellectuals are forced to take a position, who is conservative and who is progressive? How do we arrive at a conclusion? Is there anything useful among the conservatives or are they wholly untouchable? What is the dividing line between conservatism and conservationism? This essay is mainly concerned about the vitality of some of the dimensions of conservatism in strengthening ecological conservation arguments. Giddens is one the major exponents of the connections between Left and Right as well as Conservation and Conservationism with other ideological linkages used extensively for the arguments.

Traditional Conservatism

Conservatism is generally understood as an ideology or abstract 'theory' used by anyone who opposes any radicalism or changes in the existing social system. But 'the conservatives themselves deny that conservatism is abstract theory and defend their judgments on the ground of abstract, historical experience and gradualism.' However it is an everyday notion meaning to 'preserve' or 'keep intact' which has come to be associated with a set of political principles, at least in Europe and the United States since the nineteenth century.¹ However, it does not have a clear cut philosophy but a set of beliefs which, in general, tend to support (1) free enterprise capitalism, (2) continuation of tradition, (3) minimal government intervention in the economy, (4) strict law and order enforcement, and (5) gradual change as opposed to radical reform. Conservatism gradually evolved between 1750 and 1850, a period of upheaval in Western societies, beginning to counter the ideas of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution (1789) and continuing with the Industrial Revolution. It has a non-doctrinaire approach and a pragmatic outlook but has opposed many progressive ideas such as universal adult suffrage (especially for women), the emancipation of slaves, and religious freedom.²

Modern conservatism tends to draw two intellectual strands, namely the organic conservatism of the Middle Ages and the

¹Gordon Marshall, ed., *Oxford Dictionary of Sociology*, Oxford: OUP, 1998, 111.

²<http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/conservatism.html#ixzz2BFbSpV45>, accessed on 4/11/12.

libertarian conservatism of writers like Edmund Burke. The former harks back to the medieval ideal of the close-knit local community and a stable social hierarchy, and the latter favoured laissez-faire economics, unregulated capitalism, minimal state intervention, etc. These strands have proved difficult to reconcile in the long term, and so modern conservatives have grappled to balance the two and offered a full range of hybrids.³ The main thrust of conservative thought and its foundations were laid by the Irish politician Edmund Burke (1729-1797), and from the days of Burke there has been suspicion of radical change in most or all of its forms.⁴ Thus one can find from history many dimensions of conservatism till today, such as organic conservatism, libertarian conservatism, political conservatism, religious conservatism, philosophical conservatism which are very much combined with fundamentalism, orthodoxy and all unprogressive ideas. For instance a conventional right-wing party in England representing the most reactionary social class, believing in private enterprise and capitalism, is generally called the Conservative Party.⁵

Religious Conservatism

This is basically about using religion for some traditionalism, maybe with some ulterior motives. Many practitioners of religion today including Muslims, Hindus, Christians, Buddhists and others practise religious conservatism for sectarian political purposes rather than total social transformation. For instance in the Latin American context conservative as well as fundamentalist Protestant preachers were used by military juntas with the help of the Reagan administration to break the revolutionary influence of the Catholic theology of liberation.⁶ In India the difference between Centrists and Rightis is slowly blurring due to the erosion of distinctive religious ideology and practice. Often the Indian people are hard put to find a distinction. However in this article the author will mainly limit the conservatism discussions to the Christian frame of reference. For instance, in Christianity we increasingly encounter Conservative Evangelicals who practise dualistic principles very systematically. Sometimes it is enigmatic to look at their strategies as Christians. On the one hand they project that they are not at all concerned about 'evil earth or world', and on the other hand they have no hesitation in

³Gordon Marshall, ed., *Oxford Dictionary of Sociology*.

⁴Anthony Giddens, *Beyond Left and Right: The Future of Radical Politics*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995, 2.

⁵Jawaharlal Nehru, *India Rediscovered*, London: OUP, 1955, 177.

⁶Bastian Wielenga, *Introduction to Marxism*, Bangalore: CSA, 1984, 359.

uncritically enjoying the fruits of modernism and capitalism. Rather this group eventually proves to be more materialistic than spiritual, bestowing more importance on wealth, prosperity and riches while negating the spiritual side of life.⁷

It is understandable that these conservative Christians so far do not have much idea about the conservation of nature but tend more to otherworldly approaches. Rather one can easily assess them as being very selective and choosy in their approach in this material world.⁸ Now things are changing in some corners of Christian conservatism but only at a very fragmentary level. One of the glaring examples is John Stott, a British evangelical theologian, who has demonstrated in his voluminous writings how he switched over to new social issues gradually from the traditional conservative outlook. Leftist Pentecostals in the United States, especially Jim Wallis and his team members, tend to be highly critical of the so called conservative leaders who associate with corrupt and authoritarian governments.⁹ Thus there is enough evidence that a few evangelicals, although small in number, have chosen the path of radicalism within the frame of evangelicalism. Therefore a constant tension prevails among them over the use of terms like evangelical, conservative and fundamentalist. The New Right in the US tends to be associated with the Protestant religious right.¹⁰

I. Selvanayagam has demonstrated in his book how certain strategies played by the conservatives and fundamentalists highjack the name 'evangelical' since it fundamentally means one who shares the gospel. Therefore he emphatically believes that Christians have to reclaim the term 'evangelical' from Christian conservatives and use it in a progressive way.¹¹ This defence needs to be understood from the context of the origin of the Pentecostal movement in South Africa and the struggle for Black Liberation. Nevertheless he did not elaborate much over how the term 'conservatism' is connected with evangelism and the need for its redefinition, but one thing is clear to us, that

⁷Prakash James, *Deconstructing Christian Fundamentalism in Televangelism*, MTh thesis at TTS, Arasaradi, Madurai, March 2011, 3.

⁸For more details refer: Solomon Victus, "Indian Conservative Evangelicals and Modern Market Expressions," in *Discipleship and Dialogue: New Frontiers in Interfaith Engagement (Essays in Honour of Dr Israel Selvanayagam)*, ed. Eric J. Lott, M. Thomas Thangaraj & Andrew Wingate, New Delhi: ISPCK, 2013, 243.

⁹Jim Wallis, "Falwell's Foreign Policy," *Sojourners*, Washington DC, 2 Feb 1986, 5-6.

¹⁰Giddens, *Beyond Left and Right*, 23.

¹¹Israel Selvanayagam, *Being Evangelical and Dialogical: A Healthy Balance in a Multi-faith Context*, Delhi: ISPCK, 2012, 36ff.

Christian evangelicals are afraid of branding themselves with the term 'conservative'. A few North American authors like Mathew Fox are uncomfortable with the word conservative; he writes, "... Because I feel that calling ritual conservative has such political overtones and it gives too much energy to those who are in fact turning ritual into a political conservative statement or into nostalgia. It feeds the religious immaturity which is around us in our culture."¹²

In many continental European countries, the word 'conservatism' suggests the political influence of Catholicism. Christian democratic parties and the intellectual influences which have nourished them have sometimes favoured outlooks and policies generally associated only with left parties in the English-speaking countries.¹³ Stephen Zunes explains how it operates in the U.S.

[I]t is important to recognise that the rise of the religious right as a political force in the United States is a relatively recent phenomenon that emerged as part of a calculated strategy by leading conservatives in the Republican Party... By mobilizing rightist religious leaders and adopting conservative positions on a number of such highly-charged social issues as women's rights, abortion, sex education and homosexuality, they were able to bring millions of fundamentalist Christians who — as a result of their lower-than-average income were not otherwise inclined to vote Republican — into their party.¹⁴

One of the top Republican staffers noted: "Christian Conservatives have proved to be the political base for most Republicans..." As the *Washington Post* observed, "For the first time since religious conservatives become a modern political movement, the president of the United States has become the movement's de facto leader."¹⁵ Selective approaches limit their scope, for instance conservative evangelicals usually advocate economic liberalism but not moral liberalism. The well known Moral Majority Christian group in the U.S. falls into this category. My personal experiences with some of the conservative Bible College students around the world is that they do the same, claiming to be conservative and fundamentalist in teaching but in reality they are very liberal in their life style and morality.

¹²Mathew Fox and Rupert Sheldrake, *Natural Grace: Dialogues on Creation, Darkness, and the Soul in Spirituality and Science*, New York: Doubleday, 1996, 176.

¹³Anthony Giddens, *Beyond Left and Right*, 22.

¹⁴Stephen Zunes, "The Influence of the Christian Right in U.S. Middle East Policy," in *Challenging Christian Zionism: Theology, Politics and the Israel-Palestine Conflict*, ed., Ateek, Naim, Duaybis, Cedar and Tobin, Maurine, London: Melisende, 2005, 108.

¹⁵Cited by Stephen Zunes, "The Influence of the Christian Right...", 109.

Conservationism

It is important to distinguish the term 'conservationism' from the term 'conservatism'. Although these terms, conservatism and conservationism, etymologically have strong connections, yet their strands are very different. Conservationism is a related concept coming from the term conservation, which means an expression of our desire to care for others, to give to others, to share and sacrifice, preserve and protect from decay, harm, loss etc. But in commercial language preservation and preservatives mean very different things although they are partly connected with conservation. A preservative in the commercial sense is to do with applying some extra natural or unnatural salt or chemicals to preserve the product for a longer period. Any processed food is a part of that preservative process. In India the term conservation is also very popular in archaeological fields, cultural heritage and museums too, done with the help of chemical preservation which commenced from the time of colonial rule.¹⁶ The people involved in the conservation process are generally called conservationists.

The term 'conservation' in this paper is applied to the environmental sense of taking care of the earth and preserving natural resources, particularly mountains, forests, lakes, rivers, ponds and meadows from the so called modern 'development' process. Such modern understanding of the development process usually starts with the claim that they are intended to remove poverty and disease and will take care of the wellbeing and security of the entire masses. And so, in the name of development and progress the political authorities start mining ores, constructing mega dams, erecting aerodromes, and testing sites of nuclear bombs, satellite launching venues and so on. In the process of such so called development projects they become involved in destroying forests, agricultural fields and poor people's settlements and natural surroundings. Their ultimate aim is to supply more and more raw materials for the increasing demands of industrial production in the name of development and growth. They exhibit their economy relatively more strongly in terms of GNP and GDP. Here the very idea of conservation of resources becomes questionable due to explicit human made destruction. While modernism tries to devour all the natural resources, the conservatism at least hesitates to misuse it. The traditional understanding of conservation has been sacrificed

¹⁶V. Jeyaraj, *Manual for the Conservation Gallery*, Chennai: The Commissioner of Museums Office, 2003.

on the altar of development. This emerging phenomenon is common in almost all Third World Countries who are literally copying the Western model of development. However today in developed countries, having experienced many ecological repercussions, many of the areas such as forest, meadows and trees are closely watched over against any damage done to nature, and the pollution level is reduced, having exported all of their industrial production to developing countries. The conservationists in Europe are very strong in demonstrating against any violation of nature and life.

Although both the above terms conservatism and conservationism are differently understood, in recent times, there are serious discussions taking place to discern the deeper connections and meaning of those terms together, and possibilities of drawing new inspiration from both. Most of the time, the conservationists were and are viewed by the modernists as typical traditionalists, interested in conserving some of the old systems. However there is a certain amount of bewilderment prevailing over the usage of terms between conservationists and conservatives, and it is often asked whether it is right to say that all conservationists are conservatives or vice versa. Shall we come to a conclusion instantly that both of them diametrically always play an opposite role? The realistic quest could be, in what way are they related or opposed? From whose perspectives are some viewed as conservatives or conservationists? Where do they draw real a connection and distinction in the ecological sense? Where do they support each other at any particular point? In which context do the conservatives become progressive and radical? Where do they become damaging? With these questions we need to continue the discussion here.

Conservatism in Left and Right Discussions

As we touched on earlier, we tend to associate conservatism with right wing politics and neo-liberalism in general. It is usually understood as an unprogressive ideology often associated with right wing politics. Unlike European conservatism, American conservatism, in some of its major forms at least, has almost from its beginnings been aggressively pro-capitalist in its approach.¹⁷ In recent years the distinctive characters of the left and right are blurred in the joint discussions of conservatism and conservationism. Rather, as confirmed by Giddens, the left and the right have assumed new roles and meaning in the light of the fall of socialism and the rise of neo-

¹⁷Anthony Giddens, *Beyond Left and Right*, 23.

liberal projects of our current condition. Yet although green movements often tend to situate themselves on the left, there is no obvious affinity between radical ecology and leftist thinking.¹⁸

Here, however, we must distinguish conservatism from the right, at least to a minimum extent. 'The right' means many different things in different contexts and countries. But one main way in which the term is used today is to refer to neo-liberalism, whose links with conservatism is at best shaky. For if this conservatism means anything, it means the desire to conserve — and specifically the conserving tradition, as the 'inherited wisdom of the past'. Neo-liberalism is not conservative in this (quite elemental) sense. On the contrary, it sets in play radical processes of change, stimulated by the incessant expansion of the markets. As noted earlier, 'the right here has turned, while the left seeks mainly to conserve — trying to protect, for example, what remains of the welfare state.'¹⁹ Here in India the Rightist parties have turned politically towards neo-liberal economic policies while culturally talking about conserving Indian traditions and culture. On the other hand Leftist parties oppose neo-liberal policies and support conservation of resources for the local economy in spite of their pro-development fever.

The neo-Leftists' connection with Ecology is very interesting and has evolved very well in recent decades. They are coming much closer to ecological issues than traditional Leftists. Alan Lipietz echoes the Communist Manifesto in speaking of a 'spectre that stalks the world' near the turn of the new millennium — a spectre that is no longer Communism but ecological radicalism.²⁰

Neo-liberalism, the New Right and Neo-conservatism

In speaking of those conservatives who favour the indefinite expansion of market forces, Giddens uses generic terms like 'New Right' and more often, 'neo-liberalism'.²¹ The New Right is incarnating in the neo-liberal policies of many modern states. The question is, do the ideas of the New Right have anything to do with conservatism at all? For Giddens, Neo-conservatism may 'claim the future', but it is the New Right that over recent years has been the truly radical force in conservative politics. The ideas of the New Right are better described as neo-liberalism rather than neo-conservatism,

¹⁸Anthony Giddens, *Beyond Left and Right*, 200.

¹⁹Anthony Giddens, *Beyond Left and Right*, 8.

²⁰Anthony Giddens, *Beyond Left and Right*, 200.

²¹Anthony Giddens, *Beyond Left and Right*, 23.

since economic markets play such a large role in them. For the neo-liberals, the capitalistic enterprise is no longer regarded as the source of the problems of modern civilization, quite the opposite: it is the core of all that is good about it. A competitive market system is understood, not only as maximizing economic efficiency but it is the main guarantor of individual freedom and of social solidarity. In contrast to the Old Conservatism, the neo-liberals admire economic individualism and they see such individualism as the key to the success of democracy within the context of a minimal state.²² It is not surprising that New Right doctrines mix liberal freedoms and unstable fashion. The New Right did indeed address changes which have affected industrialized societies over the past few decades, but contributed nothing to genuine conservation.²³

Giddens defines Neo-conservatism as more sociological than philosophical. Its major protagonists are found in Germany and the United States. The neo-conservatives accept the pervasive influence that capitalism and liberal democracy have come to have over their lives today; but they see the bourgeois order as destroying the traditional symbols and practices on which a meaningful social existence depends. Neo-conservatism in the U.S. has to be interpreted against the backdrop of the remarks made earlier about American exceptionalism. The American neo-conservatives mostly come not from a background of old rightism but, on the contrary, from one of old leftism – with which they became disillusioned early on.²⁴ However for Giddens, the distinction of the neo-conservatives from the New Right or neo-liberalism is essential, for each of these perspectives has influenced the others, nonetheless the differences between them are fairly clear.

Whither Old Conservatism

Conservatism, it is often believed, opposes rationalism, with its advocacy of clear and definite principles; hence conservative thought resists exposition. It is bound up with feelings and with practices, not with the imposition of logic on a refractory and complex social world. Conservatism in Britain and the United States has rarely been overly 'theoretical', it is true, but then much the same applies to other political views in an Anglo-Saxon context. The Old Conservatism is not stagnant any way, and amalgamation takes place in different

²²Anthony Giddens, *Beyond Left and Right*, 33.

²³Anthony Giddens, *Beyond Left and Right*, 40-41.

²⁴Anthony Giddens, *Beyond Left and Right*, 30-31.

forms. For Giddens, the more capitalism and democracy spread, the more Old Conservatism did in fact breed with radicalism – but this was always above all a radicalism of re-establishment, looking back towards the past. There are clear links here between French and German conservatism. The Old Conservatism stood for hierarchy, aristocracy, the primacy of the collectivity, or state, over the individual, and the overreaching importance of the sacred.²⁵

Classical model Old Conservatism was destroyed because the social forms it sought to defend came to be more or less completely swept away in Continental Europe, because of its indirect ties to Fascism. No one any longer sees in feudalism a social order that is politically instructive for the modern world. Correspondingly, no one seriously puts up a defence of aristocracy, of the primacy of landed property, or of the forms of hierarchy linked to aristocratic rule.²⁶ In similar way things are happening in India. Casteism and labour holding patterns play a very important part in conservation behaviour. Because of the neo-liberal policies of India, the breaking of feudalism takes place. Land ownership and denial of dignity are the main reasons for the breaking down of conservative hierarchical order but this is aggravated by liberal economic policies.

The Old Conservatism by and large was hostile not just to commerce but to capitalism more generally,²⁷ which may be a reactionary way out of frustration and the fear of loss of feudal authority. The more the processes of commodification advance, the more organic solidarities are destroyed; bourgeois society, in which 'all that is solid melts into air', to quote Marx's famous metaphor, undermines those very continuities through which the past is brought into contact with the present. This includes the domain of the sacred. Economic individualism, according to Old Conservatism, is the enemy of that permeating sense of the religious so important to premodern social life - it is a secularizing force.²⁸ Many present-day conservatives continue to see religion as basic to their world-view; but most no longer propose that the social order itself is divinely ordained.

Conservatism, Conservationism and Fascism

For neo-liberals in some countries there is little need to find legitimacy since their thinking is tainted through association with

²⁵Anthony Giddens, *Beyond Left and Right*, 24-25.

²⁶Anthony Giddens, *Beyond Left and Right*, 26.

²⁷Anthony Giddens, *Beyond Left and Right*, 27.

²⁸Understanding of secularism differs country to country. Anti secular feelings of Christians in European and American culture are different from Asian context.

Fascism. In Germany the most important neo-conservative authors were those writing during the first two decades or so after the Second World War – authors such as Hans Freyer and Arnold Gehlen. Several such writers, including both of these, were tainted by associations with National Socialism, but recovered their reputations through their postwar writings. According to the German new conservatives, modernity tends to dissolve institutions of historical continuity which provide a moral framework for life.²⁹ In Britain, however, such considerations do not apply; here the New Right, which has enjoyed a sustained period of power, has a strong interest in claiming continuity with earlier perspectives.³⁰

Early forms of ecology and conservatism were associated particularly with the critique of modernization coming from Old Conservatism. It was Burke who wrote that the French Revolution had made everything ‘stray from nature’s path into this strange chaos of foolhardiness and infamy’. Nature was to be defended against the inroads of economic expansionism, which threatened its inner harmonies as well as its beauties.³¹ Such ideas became important in Fascism; the National Socialists envisaged major conservation and reforestation programmes. Savitri Devi was basically a proponent of Fascist principles in India and abroad. She openly declared that Hitler was an avatar of Vishnu. On the one hand she used to uphold animal rights and vegetarian food very firmly and on the other hand promoted anti-Semitism and violence.³² They follow a concept of ‘blood and soil’ and give too much importance to the soil and ‘sons of the soil’ and they will not mind shedding blood for that. In the name of soil and nature they do not hesitate to use violence and authority. This can happen to any religion if they blindly place emphasis on earth with the help of violence which will ultimately leads to Fascism.

Is Conservatism an Unredeemable Concept?

As many theologians reclaim the term ‘evangelical’ for liberative purposes it is time to redeem the term ‘conservatism’ for liberative works. We need conservation and conservationism but then how do we make use of conservative ideas which are closer to the real spirit

²⁹Anthony Giddens, *Beyond Left and Right*, 31.

³⁰Anthony Giddens, *Beyond Left and Right*, 119.

³¹Anthony Giddens, *Beyond Left and Right*, 200.

³²Goodrick-Clark, Nicholas, *Hitler’s Priestess: Savitri Devi, the Hindu-Aryan Myth and Neo-Nazism*, New Delhi: OUP, 2000, 106.

of conservation in positive sense. In a straightjacket manner we can neither reject nor accept conservatism rather we have to be very selective in our approach in dealing with conservatism. Conservative forms may with liberative contents be a possible solution to many ailments in our present society in India. Can we create an atmosphere for liberative conservatism? For instance, Indian villages and cultures are sometimes deemed as conservative and backward while people are struggling against caste hierarchy and thereby advocating rigorous urban migration as if urban migration is the only solution to the issue of caste. So also in India many theologians love the word evangelical but hate to be called conservatives. They want to make a distinction between evangelicals and conservatives. Political motivations are always demand: you are either with us or against us. Is there a place in between these two extremes? Redemption needs to take place in all aspects of our life, including in the field of conservative thinking.

Conservative Conservationists

Conservatism is altogether not an untouchable concept provided we understand its multiple faces of total reality. The relevant question should be how to shape them in the right tract with ecologically conservative agenda. As A. Giddens puts it, 'Conservatism, in certain of its currently most influential guises in Europe, and to some extent elsewhere in the world has come to embrace more or less exactly what it once set out to repudiate... Many conservatives are now active radicals in respect of that very phenomenon which previously they held most dear – tradition ...'³³

There is no need to mention all those historic connections to see the affinities between green philosophies and conservatism. The 'conservation of nature', however that is interpreted, has clear ties to conservatism as the protection of an inheritance from the past. Some of the key concepts of green theory could be such as sustainable development, the fostering of local variety, or respect for the interdependence of things, resonate with basic strands of philosophic conservatism. The pronouncements of economic theorists sometimes closely match those of conservatives.³⁴

When conservatism joins hands with power politics it polarizes people negatively, whereas if conservatism could join with ecological conservation issues then it becomes a positive cementing factor. Unlike political conservatives a few religious conservatives are relatively a little more genuine and helpful for conservationism in

³³Anthony Giddens, *Beyond Left and Right*, 2.

³⁴Anthony Giddens, *Beyond Left and Right*, 201.

certain places. For instance, both Amish and Mennonites in Lancaster County of the US in the peak of sophisticated modernity and technology are considered biblically conservative in their outlook but they could be easily said 'radically conservationists today'. Most old order Amish live on farms with no electricity, depend on horses to work their fields and travel by horse and buggy. The Amish have decided 'no to cars' and for a member of the Amish community to own a car is an offence that results in excommunication. Rural living and a well balanced diet contribute to the good health of their families. The Amish, particularly, depend a great deal on home remedies. They attach great importance to working the soil and remaining close to nature. They oppose education above the eighth standards. They often turn their backs to cameras. They strongly prefer farming over any other occupation, but to engage in other jobs and trades when necessary. Non-farm works and other cottage industries such as quilt-making and handicrafts cause some concern among the Amish. These businesses take them away from farming, put them more in touch with the outside world and encourage competition.³⁵ The lifestyle of Amish and Mennonites in North America undoubtedly demonstrate how the so called conservative lifestyle is able to contribute to the conservation of natural resources, especially land. Their conservatism could be rightly called 'Radicalism Embraced Conservatism.'

However, looking forward must always be based on looking back: 'people will not look forward to posterity, who never look backward to their ancestors.' Innovation, as opposed to reform is dangerous because it flouts the 'stupendous wisdom' contained within institutions that have stood the test of time.³⁶ Here we need to remember well known neo- Socialist, Raymond William's idea 'walking backwards into the future' which echoes resonance in our discussion how to rediscover old ones into the modern dreams.³⁷

Conclusion

Giddens argues although traditional conservatism has collapsed or become self-contradictory it maybe acquired a new relevance when removed from its original context. Realizing its potentiality he finally

³⁵A. Martha Denlinger, *Real People: Amish and Mennonites in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania*, Scottdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1993, 53-55.

³⁶Anthony Giddens, *Beyond Left and Right*, 26.

³⁷Raymond Williams, *Resources of Hope: Culture, Democracy, Socialism*, London: Verso, 1989, 281.

invites us, 'We should all become conservatives now, I shall argue – but not in the conservative way. The trite (tired) observation that there is no longer a right or a left takes on a new intellectual and practical power in present-day social conditions. Distinctions between right and left have of course always been to some extent confused or ambiguous, and radicalism has never been an elusive property of the left.' And he strongly believes that conservatism in the shape of neo-conservatism and philosophical conservatism can be drawn on positively, if critically, to help to shape such a programme. In the new context, and in unconservative ways, we might assert again the old slogan mentioned before: too conservative not to be radical! Or to put it the other way around: too radical not to be conservative!³⁸

On the other side of the scene conservationists are also under attack. Grey notes that green writers and green parties have been widely attacked by conservative critics in recent times. The Greens have been accused, among other shortcomings, of propagating socialist ideas in another guise, being hostile to science, making apocalyptic judgments that are quite unwarranted, and corroding social solidarity.³⁹ Ecological ideas do not have a privileged connection with conservatism any more than they do with the left or with liberalism. It would be more accurate to see green philosophies as reflecting the shifts in political orientation which Giddens has sought to document throughout his study.

If neo-liberalism is considered a conservative idea why are such ideas still adhered to by a few developed states of the world? Why feudal kingship still maintained in some modern countries while politically practising all sorts of liberalism? If an idea like socialism is considered progressive why do so-called progressive states of the West hesitate to follow? It clearly shows that the interest of the 'developed nations' is not the welfare of all nations but only theirs and their allies' which can only be achieved by means of imperial infrastructures and networks. Religious as well as ideological conservatism is needed to justify invasion and if necessary war for the resources, annexation of borders and expansion of military power. On the one hand conservatism seems to be collapsing, but on the other hand it resurges in different ways. Our task is to identify the multi-dimensional purpose of the Conservatives' attempt and use them to win it in the genuine conservation efforts. Ultimately we can

³⁸Anthony Giddens, *Beyond Left and Right*, 49.

³⁹Cited by Anthony Giddens, *Beyond Left and Right*, 201-202.

come to the assessment that the conservationists can sustain their wish only if they come closer to Green, inclusive and non violent social transformation.

Extremism is harmful to any community. Extremism cannot withstand for a longer period and so our challenge is how to accommodate theologically both old and new or conservative and liberal traditions in a positive manner? The dilemma today is to accept the old and new together: Is new wine into old wineskins possible? (Lk.5:36-39). We need not justify all the new ones as evil and also cannot accept all old ones as gold. How do we balance them both in a moderate manner and select good ones? What are the criteria of selection? However, one thing is clear—that our culture, religion and traditions need to be redefined, for they are attached strongly with many irrelevant understandings in our context. For instance the Conservation mindset of Sabbath is not given more weight in the course of new theological interpretations. Salai H. Aung made some beautiful connections of Sabbath and ecology worthy to be quoted here:

The Sabbath in its three biblical forms – Sabbath day, Sabbath year, and Jubilee – are a significant theological formulation of a conservation ethic... But the problem with the Old Testament Sabbath tradition is its one-sided emphasis on religious observance... It overlooks and forgets the conservation commitment. In other words, Sabbath as God's protective measure for human and ecological wellbeing is absent. It is simply a religious obligation to be strictly observed and enforced.⁴⁰

Moreover two texts from the Bible seem to be more relevant, inspiring me to reflect upon culture, religion and tradition, taking the old and the new in a balanced way. The first is from the book of Malachi — 'He (Moses) will turn the hearts of parents to their children and the hearts of the children to their parents, so that I will not come and strike the land with a curse' (Mal. 4:5, Lk.1:17). The second is from Matthew — '... every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old' (Mt. 13:52). Both these texts are emphatically against out-right destructive exclusion but rather very accommodative of so called old and conservative aspects towards constructing a new creative and sustainable society in the future.

⁴⁰Hla Aung, Salai, *God's Providence in Nature: Theological Reflections on Nature's Ecosystem and our Responsibilities*, New Delhi: ISPCK, 2011, 125.