



TOPIC: ECUMENISM -- MISSION

Preparatory Material  
May Seminar

DIALOGUE: DOES IT COMPLEMENT, MODIFY OR REPLACE MISSION?

By Anton P. Stadler

In the missiological literature of recent years, it has become popular to associate the concept of dialogue with that of mission. Some advocate dialogue as positive modification of mission; others reject it as undermining the missionary commitment of the Church. Thus dialogue has contributed to the continuing polarization among Christians concerning the meaning of mission in the modern world.

This paper deals primarily with the positive reception of the dialogue theme by the World Council of Churches and the Magisterium of the Roman Catholic Church. For over a decade these bodies have devoted increasing attention to the issue, mindful of the question to which no satisfactory answers have yet been found: Does dialogue complement, modify, or replace mission?

This writer intends to attempt a clarification of the relationship between mission and dialogue. He presupposes that the association of these concepts indicates, in the final analysis, the need for a rethinking of the traditional understanding of mission. For this task, two basic requirements must be met: the integrity of both mission and dialogue must remain intact and their intrinsic relationship must be made explicit.

#### The Mission-Dialogue Issue since 1955

##### Contributions of the World Council of Churches

In 1955 the Central Committee of the World Council approved plans for a long-term study on *The Word of God and the Living Faiths of Men*. (1) This initiative was not totally unprecedented as the study by Hallencreutz indicates, (2) but it marks the beginning of a systematic inquiry into the possibilities of dialogue between Christians and people of other religious traditions.

In the first years, the question was discussed at intra-church levels under the guidance of two WCC agencies, the Department of Missionary Studies and Studies in Evangelism, and the Department of the Study Centers in Asia. Between 1955 and 1967 a number of consultations sought to identify the issues and explore relations between Christians and Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists, respectively. Soon the need for a new understanding of mission was felt. (3)

The Mexico City Assembly of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism in 1963 (4) added a new dimension to the dialogue concern. The conference was particularly aware of the secular world, calling the Church to discern the will and work of God by reaching out to people - be they secular or religious - wherever they live. At this meeting, "witnessing" and "meeting" were the key words.

Concluding the series of intramural gatherings, the Kandy (Sri Lanka) Consultation in 1967 considerably advanced the understanding of inter-religious dialogue: Dialogue means a positive effort to attain a deeper understanding of the truth through mutual awareness of one another's convictions and witness... Dialogue implies readiness to be changed as well as to influence others. (5)

In the same year, the Central Committee recommended the continuation of the study project. It suggested, however, that exponents of Marxist and humanist thought also be included as partners in dialogue.

The first interreligious consultation was arranged at Ajaltoun Lebanon, (6) in 1970. A small number of Hindus, Buddhists, and Muslims met with a larger number of Christians to experience living in dialogue and to explore its future possibilities. The question of mission and dialogue was raised and listed among the topics referred to future meetings.

Immediately afterwards, a group of theologians convened in Zurich to evaluate the consultation. An Aide-Mémoire (7) was drafted. The mission-dialogue issue is prominent in this document which attempts to clarify misunderstandings and allay fears in this domain. The freedom of the partners to witness to their own faiths is advocated. Dialogue as a new missionary strategy is, however, rejected. Still, as "means of communication" dialogue is considered "clearly part of mission and... to be undertaken within the context of God's mission." (8)

Since Ajaltoun, dialogue has become a central concern of the World Council. The Central Committee, which met in Addis Ababa in 1971, issued a three-part document entitled An Interim Policy Statement and Guidelines. (9) The document emphasizes that dialogue is "a dynamic contact of life with life, concerned with living together and acting together." (10) It recognizes, furthermore, the tension arising from the simultaneous promotion of dialogue and of mission. The clarification of the connection between mission and dialogue is left to "further theological study" and "actual experience of dialogue." (11)

In the following year, the World Council sponsored a first bilateral encounter between Muslims and Christians at Broumana, Lebanon. (12) Some forty-six participants, almost equally divided between the two faith communities, gathered together under the theme of "The Quest for Human Understanding and Cooperation. Christian and Muslim Contributions." Neither the papers nor the Memorandum focused on the mission-dialogue

problem. The concerns of the participants centered more on the challenges of the present socio-political situations to which both sides should respond.

At the Bangkok Assembly of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism in 1973, (13) the overarching theme "Salvation Today" and the genius loci may have been conducive to pondering the mission-dialogue question. The report of a special discussion group argues that there need not be tension between mission and dialogue. Rather, it observes, "increasingly mission is being carried on in this spirit of dialogue without the subsequent decrease in the sense of urgency in evangelism." (14) In view of renewed missionary activity of other religions, the report speaks of reciprocal mission. In his report, Philip Potter, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, considered dialogue as the first of four methodologies appropriate to evangelization in our time.

The theme of the Colombo Consultation in 1974 (the second multi-lateral meeting) was "Towards World Community. Resources and Responsibilities for Living Together." (15) The mission-dialogue problem did not surface in the interchange. There was, however, considerable interest in dialogue as a major resource toward world community.

The Nairobi Assembly in 1975 (16) epitomizes not only the drive for dialogue that became manifest in the years after Uppsala, but also the unresolved problems of a theological nature inherent in the dialogue concept.

The theme of Section Three documents the fact that the World Council has opened its doors to the people of various faiths, cultures, and ideologies who join in a common search for community. Again the mission-dialogue issue is not much advanced except for the statement that dialogue is no alternative to mission. Lynn A. de Silva from Sri Lanka offered, however, a remarkable apologia for dialogue in Asia for the sake of authentic mission. He stated:

Dialogue is urgent and essential for us in Asia in order to repudiate the arrogance, aggression, and negativism of our evangelistic crusades which have obscured the gospel and caricatured Christianity as an aggressive and militant religion.... Above all, dialogue is essential for us to discover the Asian face of Jesus Christ as the Suffering Servant, so that the Church itself may be set free from its institutional self-interest and play the role of a servant in building community. (17)

Apart from these well-publicized events, the World Council engaged in contacts with exponents of contemporary Judaism, with Marxists and humanists, and with representatives of primal world views.

From its inception, the World Council manifested a particular

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concern for Jewish-Christian relations. (18) Gradually it fathomed some of the far-reaching consequences of the Holocaust. It also became sensitive to the political aspects of modern Judaism.

In the new structure of the World Council, the Committee on the Church and the Jewish People moved from the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism to the Sub-Unit on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies. In 1968 official joint consultations between the committee and exponents of Judaism (later the International Committee for Inter-religious Consultations) were inaugurated and held seven times through 1976. World problems in general and themes touching Jewish-Christian relations in particular were discussed. Most recently, the Jewish side suggested a clarification of the meaning of mission or witness in connection with dialogue. Rabbi Henry Siegman formulated the question as follows:

The principle of witness - Christian or Jewish - need not be offensive to religious sensibilities nor pose a barrier to Christian-Jewish relations. I do recognize, however, that it is a concept that leads to abuse. A clearer definition of the concept and of its limitations within the concept of dialogue is one of the major issues to which we need to address ourselves in future discussions. . . (19)

In 1974 the first regional Muslim-Christian dialogues, co-sponsored by the World Council, were organized in Legon, Ghana and in Hongkong. (20) Priority was given to the question of constructive relations between the two communities at the local levels. In this connection, the mission-dialogue issue was raised. It was stressed that the right to witness one's faith does not, however, justify proselytism. Muslims and Christians alike advocated a peaceful coexistence of the two communities.

Only lately, people of primal world views have been considered as potential partners in dialogue. The report on the first exploratory consultation at Ibadan, Nigeria, (21) in 1973, does not mention the mission-dialogue problem.

Although the World Council perceived the urgency of interchange with representatives of ideologies, particularly with Marxists, (22) only one Christian-Marxist dialogue materialized in 1968. At a later meeting, the question of "Faith and Ideology" was constructively resumed. (23) The mission-dialogue question was absent there.

A Theological Consultation on Dialogue in Community sponsored by the Sub-Unit on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies, took place at Chiang Mai, Thailand, April 18-27, 1977. The preparatory material recommended the study of previous documents concerning the problems of community, dialogue, mission, and syncretism. Thus the consultation was very conscious of the mission-dialogue issue, and its report - published in the April 1977 issue of the Occasional Bulletin of

Missionary Research - said:

We endorse dialogue as having a distinctive and rightful place within Christian life, in a manner directly comparable to other forms of service... But by "distinctive" we do not mean totally different or separate... We do not see dialogue and the giving of witness as standing in any contradiction to one another. Indeed, as we enter dialogue with our commitment to Jesus Christ, time and again the relationship of dialogue gives opportunity for authentic witness... Thus ... we feel able with integrity to commend the way of dialogue as one in which Jesus Christ can be confessed in the world today. (Paragraph 20)

#### Contributions of the Roman Catholic Magisterium

In order to capture the development of the mission-dialogue question at the level of the Roman Catholic Magisterium, conciliar, synodal, and papal documents as well as the publications of two Vatican secretariats must be reviewed. We shall first focus on the pronouncements of Pope Paul VI in Ecclesiam Suam (1964) and Evangelii Nuntiandi (1975). Then, some of the major documents of Vatican II and the reports on the Third General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops (1974) will be considered. Finally, attention will be given to the work of the Secretariats for Non-Christians (1964) and Non-Believers (1965) and also to the Commissions for Judaism and Muslims (1974).

The encyclical Ecclesiam Suam (24) deals extensively with the question of the Church's dialogue with the world. Its theological presuppositions are the following: God's relation with the world is dialogical for the sake of the salvation of humanity (colloquium salutis); the Church is called to continue the God-initiated dialogue; for this purpose, the Church is placed at the center of the world, surrounded in concentric circles by the rest of humanity. Those outside are defined by their proximity to or distance from the center. The Church is sent to all people far and near. Dialogue greatly assists the Church in fulfilling its mission. Thus the relationship of dialogue to mission is one of subordination. Mission is the primary task of the Church and dialogue is a suitable method of evangelization. In particular, dialogue humanizes, as it were, the Christian approach to people of other religious or secular convictions.

It is not accidental that the latest papal document, the apostolic exhortation Evangelii Nuntiandi, (25) is exclusively devoted to the theme of evangelization. It is a vigorous promotion of evangelization in the face of growing reluctance and indifference among Catholics to support the missionary involvement of the Church. The exhortation is concerned with the primary dimension of the Church's mission, i.e., the proclamation of the Gospel to all people of the inhabited world. It makes clear that evangelization aims at the conversion of the evangelized and at their incorporation into the Church. In contrast to Ecclesiam Suam, the mission-dialogue problem is not articulated here.

The documents of Vatican II (26) manifest the concerted efforts of bishops and theologians to discern the signs of the times. The mission of the Church in the world is the central concern of the council. Dialogue is recommended in different pronouncements, but the mission-dialogue issue as such is not articulated.

The Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, Dei Verbum, offers the basis for a truly theological interpretation of the mission-dialogue question, for it speaks of the dialogical structure of the God-world relationship. According to biblical experience, God was pleased to disclose himself to the people he created and make known to them his innermost plans for the salvation of the entire human family (colloquium salutis). The human partners, in turn, are invited to participate in this dialogue by their response of faith.

God reaches his people through socially mediated means, ultimately through Jesus Christ and, subsequently, through the Church. In the process of handing on the revelation in Jesus Christ, the Church evolves and becomes itself a transmitting agent. Hence the missionary nature of the Church and the essential connection between mission and dialogue.

The Council's teaching on the mission of the Church is found in three documents: Lumen Gentium (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), Ad Gentes (Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church), and Gaudium et Spes (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World).

Lumen Gentium mirrors the tension between the static and the dynamic ecclesiological concepts of, respectively, Vatican I and biblical and patristic theology. Thanks to the emphasis on the symbols of the Church as the "Pilgrim People of God" and as the "Universal Sacrament of Salvation", the ecclesiocentric views on mission are in principle overcome. The meaning and role of other religions and the relationship between Christians and people of other convictions can now be seen afresh in the light of the universal salvific will of God and in the perspective of salvation history.

By promoting the idea of dialogue, Ad Gentes attempts to mediate between the conflicting notions of salvation (hence the necessity of mission). Dialogue is understood as an approach in the missionary endeavour and as an important factor in the process of the Church's adaptation to other than Western culture.

No other document is as outspoken on dialogue as Gaudium et Spes. It reflects awareness of the interaction between different cultures and the manifold forms of international interdependence. In this constitution, the Council is both offering and promoting dialogue. The Church wishes to participate in all efforts toward a truly human world and, accordingly, seeks to enter into dialogue with all who toil for the transformation of the earthly planet. Likewise, it rallies all people of good will to engage in dialogue in order to strive in a common effort

for a better world. To achieve this goal, the Church declares its readiness to assist the world and also to learn from it. Thus the principle of mutuality in dialogue is openly recognized.

The Declarations on Religious Freedom, Dignitatis Humanae, and on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, Nostra Aetate, are particularly significant for the mission-dialogue problem. Both affirm the mission of the Church in the sense of evangelization and, at the same time, clearly advocate dialogue.

With the recognition of the principle of religious freedom as a human right, Dignitatis Humanae removed one of the major obstacles that for centuries had prevented the Church from meeting people of other religious traditions with respect and openness. The far-reaching consequences of the change in attitude for the mission-dialogue question are not spelled out in detail. The declaration insists, however, on two basic things. On the one hand, proselytism, propaganda, and any use of coercion in evangelization are contrary to the spirit of Jesus. On the other hand, religious freedom does in no way lead to religious indifference and relativism nor does it interfere with evangelization. To the contrary, this principle is an essential prerequisite for missionary work. Only if and where religious freedom is fully honored can there be a climate favorable to the Christian message.

While this document stresses the legitimacy of evangelization, Nostra Aetate emphasizes the desirability of dialogue and collaboration among the different religions. The reflections of the latter on the significance and function of other religions in the lives of people crystallize in two essential statements. Firstly, the Church does not reject any of the values present in other religious traditions but regards their teachings and practices with esteem. Secondly, Catholics are encouraged to "acknowledge, preserve, and promote" the spiritual and moral values of other religions by engaging in dialogue and collaboration with their adherents.

Aware of the historical and theological connections with and chasms between the Church, Islam, and Judaism, respectively, the declaration (sections three and four) seeks a sincere approach to these faith communities by suggesting collaboration and dialogue, above all, in areas of common concerns. It also takes a clear stand against antisemitism. The issue of Christian mission to Muslims and to Jews is carefully avoided. Thus no clarification of the mission-dialogue problem has been achieved at Vatican II.

Evangelization in the Modern World was chosen by Paul VI as the theme for the Third General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops. (27) In his opening address, the Pope made the problem under consideration the principal issue as he urged the Synod Fathers to study and clarify how universal mission and dialogue can be reconciled. Despite the papal mandate, the question did not receive adequate attention and was, at the close of the synod, practically abandoned by the Pope himself. A few



scattered voices from Africa and Asia advocated the concern for a dialogical approach to people of other religious traditions.

Two insights ensuing from the synod are pertinent in future discussions on mission and dialogue. The assembly came to realize the fact that Europe, hitherto considered a Christian continent, had become a religiously pluralistic world (a description equally applicable to North America). It is, therefore, likely that Europe - and not the so-called Third World - will become the testing ground for the credibility of mission and dialogue in Asia and Africa. The second insight refers to the key role of the Holy Spirit in mission and to his active presence in other religions. Dialogue was in general closely linked with mission as a dimension or method of evangelization.

The commitment of the Roman Catholic Church to dialogue is institutionalized by the establishment of two secretariats and two commissions. The general purpose of these agencies is to implement the teachings of Vatican II, notably Nostra Aetate and Gaudium et Spes. Accordingly, the secretariats promote dialogue with people of other convictions and assist the particular or local churches to engage in dialogue with their neighbors.

The Secretariat for Non-Believers is not directly concerned with the mission-dialogue question. It is primarily interested in the study of atheism and of ideology in its various forms, particularly the Marxist variant.

The mission-dialogue issue has, however, been articulated from the beginning by the Secretariat for Non-Christians. Dialogue and evangelization are seen as distinct activities of the Church, each having its own integrity, objectives, and methods of work. Thus there can be no conflict or alternative between the two concepts. Despite their distinctiveness, mission and dialogue are held inseparable. (28) By its stance, the secretariat documents that for organizational reasons it does not interfere with problems concerning mission, although it recognizes the theological connection between dialogue and mission.

The Commissions for Judaism and for Muslims were founded for the purpose of promoting and fostering relations of a religious nature between Jews and Catholics and between Muslims and Catholics.

The mission-dialogue issue is urgent above all in the relations among these communities. Jews and Muslims are equally opposed to Christian advances in the sense of proselytism. Christians, on the other hand, feel the pressures of Muslim expansion in certain countries. The reverberations of the tragic history of Jewish-Christian and Muslim-Christian relations are still felt, partly in actual tensions and conflicts, partly in pertinacious prejudices. Dialogue is, therefore, utterly difficult and delicate.

The Commission for Judaism (attached to the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity) is officially entrusted with the furthering of Jewish-Catholic contacts. In 1975 it published Guidelines (29) for Catholics on Jewish-Catholic relations. It focuses primarily on practical questions. Among other things, the necessity of evangelization is advocated in the context of religious liberty. In subsequent meetings of the Jewish-Catholic Liaison Committee (founded in 1970), the Jewish partners had to be assured that no proselytism was intended by these statements. Conversely, the document earned credit for its clear stand on antisemitism and its willingness to understand the Jews as they understand themselves.

In the discussions of the Liaison Committee, the concepts of people, nation, and land in Jewish and Christian perspective were central. At the Jerusalem meeting in 1976, the committee decided to place the problem of witness in the context of dialogue on the agenda of future studies and discussions.

The Secretariat for Non-Christians paved the way for the Commission for Religious Relations with the Muslim. From its inception, it sought contacts with representatives of the highest authorities of Islam and with Muslim scholars. At the local level, contacts with Muslims were initiated in various countries, e.g., Indonesia, Pakistan, the Arab World (Egypt, the Maghreb). The Tripoli Seminar in 1976 on Islamic-Christian Dialogue (30) indicates that the prospects for future collaboration are promising, provided both sides abstain from proselytizing activities.

The problem of the compatibility of mission and dialogue emerged in both Jewish-Catholic and Muslim-Catholic encounters as a key factor in determining the future of these relations. Since Catholic as well as Muslim missionary activities are often defined in terms of proselytism, it is imperative for all involved in mission (or witness, or Islamic Da'wah) to clarify what they mean by this activity per se and in connection with dialogue.

#### Critical Comments

The mission-dialogue problem has been recognized, articulated, and intensified by both the World Council and the Roman Catholic Magisterium. The issue became increasingly more acute the more the idea of dialogue was advanced. Gradually, the churches realized there was something definitely wrong in their theologies that kept them from constructive interchange with their neighbors of other convictions and world views. They became conscious, furthermore, of the tendencies toward a world community owing to growing economic and cultural interdependence. No doubt, the churches have begun to change their attitudes toward people of other persuasions. Inevitably they had also to ponder the implications of this change for their understanding of mission.

If our impressions are correct, the churches felt attracted by the possibilities of dialogue but sensed its challenging implications for the traditional understanding of mission. In the World Council, a clear gravitation toward dialogue concurrent with a doemphasis on mission is evident. It can be observed, in contrast, that the Magistorium sought to rekindle missionary ~~enthusiasm~~ among Catholics and thereby let the concern for dialogue slip silently into the background.

Exploring the possibilities of dialogue in bilateral and multi-lateral encounters, the World Council came to the awareness that inter-religious dialogue requires living together much more than talking together. Through the well-defined channels of its secretariats, ~~the~~ Magisterium focused its attention on the preliminary stage, i.e., the preparation of the potential Catholic interlocutors for dialogue.

It seems that in their own ways both sides avoided facing the conflict between mission and dialogue theologically. It is significant that the mission-dialogue problem was most strongly felt in Jewish-Christian and Muslim-Christian relations. The Jewish request to study the issue evinces that gathering common concerns and insisting on the compatibility of mission and dialogue in no way suffice for a theological response to the question.

#### Outline of a New Approach

The following considerations are meant as mosaic pieces that may contribute to the formation of a new theology of mission made necessary by the emergence of the dialogue theme.

Today the call for a contextual theology is universally heard. It is, however, less difficult to identify particular contexts (31) than to sketch a universal context. To capture the ~~true~~ proportions of the mission-dialogue problem, we must gain a global view on the world in which we find ourselves today and which is in the making. Suffice it to signal the most conspicuous phenomena of our time.

Our world is one of extreme contrasts. Humanity moves forward toward a world community and yet is unable to stop the process of fragmentation. The phenomena of growing economic interdependence and cultural interpenetration indicate that humanity is approaching a crucial stage in its continuing transformation. Thomas Berry interprets this process as follows:

We are presently creating the multiform human tradition as the effective and encompassing society in which each person and each particular society finds a comprehensive context for existence in the human order of being. Within this universal society of mankind each human person becomes heir.

to the fullness of man's past cultural achievements, participant in the convergent cultures of the present and, according to capacity, maker of the future.(32)

Two aspects of this interpretation are decisive. The resources for making this planet a place for all to live and breathe freely lie in the people themselves, and these resources are now available to all persons, ready to be tapped.

At the point of the convergence of the various cultures, people can no longer coexist at the level of superficial conversation. It becomes increasingly urgent that people learn to communicate with one another on a deeper level. In this endeavor, the religious traditions of humankind are destined to assume a significant role. From ancient times they articulate the yearnings and aspirations of the people and are themselves interpretations and responses to the human quest for purpose and meaning. The meeting of religious traditions promises, therefore, the release of immense spiritual energy needed for the transformation of this planet. The churches are called to leave their ecclesiastical ghettos and share their resources with other religious and secular traditions in a common venture of constructing a world that will once more be inhabitable. It follows that the rethinking of mission should take place within the horizon of the global context.

The universalist biblical motifs, present already in the first chapters of the Bible, correspond theologically with this global perspective. For the Bible is the story of God's ongoing involvement in the history of humankind - the story of his mighty deeds among his people. As creator and redeemer, Yahweh is the Lord of history yet letting his human partner be the maker and responsible agent of history. The Torah is the authentic witness and normative interpretation of the divine-human interaction in history. The covenant with Israel is not an end in itself but is designed to be a blessing for all peoples on earth.

In formulating a new theology of mission we must remember that the divine promise is valid and effective for the entire creation. Hence the distinctions between universal and particular salvation history and similar theologoumena are questionable. Recent biblical research encourages us to approach the Bible with new questions. In view of the convergent cultures of our age, questions such as these are highly relevant: How did Israel relate to the surrounding cultures? What did she learn from the wisdom of her neighbors? How did she adapt the stories of other peoples? Are the hermeneutics for interreligious encounter already available in the Old Testament? Could it thus be said that the Bible serves as paradigm for the communication between various world views? (33)

With respect to the mission-dialogue question it may be advisable also to approach the New Testament differently. The beginnings of Christian mission in the context of the Mediterranean world of the first century (34) may tell us more about the New Testament understanding of mission than certain logia of commission. The parallels and differences as to the patterns and methods between early Christian mission and Hellenistic and Jewish religious propaganda indicate that the Church originated in a religiously pluralistic world. In this situation, mission acquired the characteristics of apologetics. The dual nature of apologetics as reasoned defense of religious claims and as the art of persuasion (promoting one's faith among others and motivating one's own people) sheds some new light on the mission-dialogue issue.

The significance of apologetics is that it is contextual. This means that Christians respond to the challenges of their contemporaries by rendering account of their faith publicly, in the arena of business, politics, and competing world views. Since apologetics has an affinity to both mission and dialogue, it may assume a mediating function between them. Although religious competition is well in business today and some would have interreligious encounter more in the sense of confrontation than dialogue, the signs of the times call for interreligious communication and communion. Apologetics properly speaking would, therefore, not sufficiently clarify the mission-dialogue issue unless it were modified. Such modification could be initiated through the concept of dialogue. Apologetics in our time must become dialogical. Dialogue adds a constructive and conciliatory note to apologetics while taking away its aggressive aspects. Dialogue requires both mutual respect for the otherness of the other and openness to be changed by the other. Naturally this view needs be unfolded. This cannot be done within the framework of this paper. Instead, two central ideas for a reorientation of mission will conclude this outline.

Firstly, the key insights of the Bible - no matter under which rubric (Revelation, Missio Dei, Incarnation) - converge in the recognition of the divine mystery according to which God chooses to communicate with humanity throughout its history. If the God-world relationship means divine communication with humankind, then the Church-world relationship must, analogously, be one of communication. Theology of religion, in particular, should see its task in the translation of this basic biblical datum into the modern situation of religious pluralism. Its primary task is to illuminate the disturbing fact that God's dynamic in the world in and through his Holy Spirit is absolutely boundless, extensively as well as intensively. As a consequence, all Christian superiority complexes must be eradicated.

Secondly, Christian mission started as a movement among Jews. After the Holocaust, Christian mission to the Jewish people seems impossible and dialogue utterly difficult. Without intending to minimize the formidable obstacles between Christians and Jews, we propose that a reorientation of mission must begin, on the one hand, with a decided departure from the missionary concepts of the colonial era and, on the other hand, with the promoting of communication with contemporary Judaism. The tentative Jewish-Christian approaches of the past years suggest that any missionary attempt would be offensive in the eyes of the Jewish partners. Yet the question of identity, indeed for both sides, is at stake. Christians and Jews cannot truly communicate without freely telling their stories: the story of God's odyssey with his people to this day (the Torah story) and the story of this odyssey including the journeys of Jesus from Bethlehem to Golgotha (the Torah-Christ story). Is it not the destiny of the Jewish and the Christian people to keep these stories alive so as to live by them and in the hope that one day God will write the ultimate conclusion? Is it too bold to assume that the credibility of Christian mission as dialogical apologetics will depend upon the communication between Jews and Christians? Christians must ask themselves seriously whether they can make any significant contribution to the transformation and humanization of our world if they fail to reach those who gave them all they have, the Jewish people.

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#### SUDAN

The Palica National Commission is one of five Executive commissions of the Sudan Catholic Bishops Conference. Under its direction is the recently established Palica National Centre which was set-up for seminars, workshops and study groups in pastoral, liturgical and catechetical matters.

The priorities of the Palica National Centre are Basic Christian Communities, Catechists Training Curriculum Development, Parish Council development, new ministries for lay men ongoing education for priests and religious, publications, Bible Apostolate and leadership training. The means by which the Centre intends to carry out these objectives are listed in detail on pages 12-17. Sedos Doc No 4/2776.

A copy of "Together" the Newsletter of the Catholic Sudan Clergy, Religious and Laity has also been received. Among other items it includes an article on "Africanisation" by Bishop Kpiobaya originally printed in Sedos Bulletin (77/178).

## CHRISTIANITY AND THE WORLD RELIGIONS

(At a recent meeting of the Medical Missionary Sisters, Professor A. Camps gave one talk using his latest book "Christianity and the world religions". The following is a report of his talks by Sr. Miriam Ritmeyer published in "smm Intercontinental", No 97, May 1977)

In his talk, Professor Camps explained the theme of the book: Mission now is salvation dialogue. The Christian Churches had never agreed about the presence of salvation in other religions but their own. Now that the world has "opened up" we have become more familiar with other religions.

We can discern two trends in the Bible:

- The broad attitude. God is the Creator of the whole world. Creation is God's self-communication. Man has responded to God's invitation in a social context and this positive response is called Religion. In other religions too there is a legitimate response to this divine revelation (Wisdom; epistle to the Hebrews).
- The narrow attitude. This attitude denounced all other religions but its own. Things were misinterpreted; the 'gentiles' were often ridiculed in the psalms.

After Vatioan II many documents start from the broad attitude. Meanwhile the young nations are searching for their own identity and a new evaluation of religiousness is developing, which is a search for authenticity.

The concept of "dialogue of salvation" is valuable, because it starts from the presumption that "salvation" is present in other religions. We believe that God has revealed himself in Jesus of Nazareth in the most profound and comprehensible manner possible. A dialogue will have to be started between cosmic revelation and the personal revelation in Jesus of Nazareth. Religion sheds light on our fellow human beings, on the world and on God. It inspires us to be active in the world, but we must remember that salvation is never divorced from life.

TOPIC: Afrique/Moyen Orient - Nouvel Ordre Economique  
International

ALGERIE: VERS UNE ACTION CONCERTEE POUR LA CREATION  
D'UN MONDE NOUVEAU  
par  
S.E. le Cardinal Duval

Il est déroulée à Alger une session sacerdotale interdiocésaine pour étudier les problèmes posés par la recherche d'un Nouvel Ordre Economique International.

La session a été ouverte par une allocution du Cardinal Duval. Après avoir évoqué les coordonnées de la situation actuelle et les impératifs d'une action concertée pour un nouvel ordre économique international, il a parlé concrètement de la création d'un monde nouveau. Dans cette troisième partie de son allocution, le Cardinal a déclaré qu'il revient aux chrétiens non pas de se substituer aux structures gouvernementales, mais de se concentrer sur "notre obligation stricte et dont personne ne peut nous dispenser, à savoir le changement des mentalités, la transformation en profondeur des consciences".

C'est donc cette dernière partie que nous publions ci-après car elle met très bien en relief l'esprit qui devrait animer les chrétiens engagés dans l'action sociale.

Le champ de l'action est immense:

- Travail d'information, tout d'abord. Beaucoup d'hommes sont impliqués d'une manière inconsciente dans des processus qui sont des processus d'égoïsme et d'injustice et qui, de surcroît, préparent à l'humanité des lendemains terribles. Nombreux sont déjà les économistes, les publicistes qui se consacrent à éclairer les esprits, mais une action plus large, plus concertée, plus généralisée s'impose.

- Travail de formation. L'ensemble de nos contemporains sont-ils en mesure de prendre effectivement leurs responsabilités au plan de la justice internationale? Ont-ils même conscience de ces responsabilités? Le grand danger n'est-il pas précisément que, à l'heure même où l'exercice de la responsabilité se fait le plus impérieux, la conscience de ce qui a une dimension universelle semble absente de beaucoup d'esprits? La question a été posée récemment: "En 1976, somme-nous encore capables de nous intéresser à autre chose qu'à notre propre bien-être?" (G. Blardone, Croissance des Jeunes Nations, déc. 1976, p.30).

- Effort d'engagement. C'est dans l'action et par l'action que se



transforment les consciences. Or l'engagement pour la justice internationale n'a pas pour unique théâtre les parlements ou les organismes de l'ONU: il s'exerce partout là où est en question la dignité de la personne humaine. La cause de l'humanité c'est la cause de l'homme et il n'existe pas d'homme abstrait, mais il existe Joseph, Pierre, Paul, Abderrahmane, Abdelmadjid.... Le progrès de l'universel dans la conscience de l'humanité est fonction de la valeur absolue de la personne humaine. L'humanité entière est virtuellement manacée lorsque, avec la complicité plus ou . . . moins affirmée de la multitude, une seule personne est victime de l'injustice et du mépris. Par contre, c'est l'humanité tout entière qui s'élève lorsqu'un seul homme est relevé dans sa dignité et reconnu dans ses droits.

L'exemple de la Mère Térésa, qui est, d'ailleurs, dans la ligne de la plus authentique charité, est une lumière et un encouragement; elle a commencé par s'intéresser aux malheureux des quartiers les plus déshérités de Calcutta; son amour fraternel n'est pas resté dans les nuages, mais d'emblée, il a été concret. Et parce qu'il a été concret, il a été contagieux. Actuellement cette contagion s'est répandue partout dans le monde et elle tient du prodige.

On pose quelquefois la question de l'utilité des oeuvres de charité et d'entraide. Ne seraient-elles pas le moyen de se dispenser des changements exigés par la justice? Ne seraient-elles pas l'occasion, en face de redoutables responsabilités, de se donner bonne conscience par l'accomplissement d'un geste passeger d'aumône ou de partage? La vérité, c'est que les oeuvres d'entraide, lorsqu'elles sont intelligemment menées, sont un moyen particulièrement efficace pour préparer les voies à l'avènement de la justice. Comme le disait Mgr Rodhain, la charité d'aujourd'hui est la justice sociale de demain. Pour décider les hommes à envisager les mutations exigées par la justice il ne suffit pas de leur expliquer, chiffres et statistiques à l'appui - bien que ce soit nécessaire - quelles sont les dimensions insupportables de l'injustice qui règne dans le monde. Il faut mettre les hommes en contact vivant avec les souffrances concrètes de leurs semblables; il faut leur faire toucher leur état de dégradation; il faut qu'ils ressentent dans leur propre chair les douleurs de leurs semblables. Aussi longtemps que les hommes ne seront pas attentifs à la souffrance de leurs frères, toutes les considérations d'ordre général sur l'amélioration du sort de l'humanité risquent de demeurer un jeu de l'esprit, une construction d'ordre purement intellectuel.

L'action pour la justice doit être universelle dans tous ces aspects:  
 - elle doit s'adresser à tous les hommes, ce qui suppose qu'elle prenne en considération chaque homme en particulier et qu'elle ne dédaigne pas les actes les plus humbles au service des pauvres, les actions au raz du sol;  
 - elle doit mobiliser toutes les forces vives et cela à tous les échelons

des responsabilités sociales et internationales;  
 - elle doit affecter d'une manière active tous les secteurs où la dignité de la personne humaine est en péril et où les droits de l'homme sont menacés (émigrés, handicapés, peuples privés de libertés spirituelles, misères sans voix, victimes de la discrimination raciale et de la torture.

- elle doit mettre en oeuvre tous les moyens d'éclairer les consciences et de susciter de puissants mouvements d'opinion publique;  
 - mais elle n'obtiendra de tels résultats que si elle est en même temps un témoignage; les hommes ne seront entraînés dans le sillage que s'ils acceptent le changement de leur propre vie, ce qui, dans le langage évangélique, s'appelle la conversion. L'établissement de plus de justice dans le monde comportera de toute nécessité, chez les peuples riches, l'acceptation d'une réelle modération dans l'usage des biens matériels, loin de la course effrénée vers une croissance indéfinie et vers une jouissance de moins en moins contrôlée. Mais n'est-ce pas le cas de rappeler que le premier principe de la charte de l'humanité est la béatitude des pauvres? La paix entre les hommes n'est-elle pas un bien plus précieux que la richesse possédée égoïstement? L'appétit non contrôlé de jouissance ne conduit-il pas à la ruine même de l'humanité? Par contre, le témoignage de ceux qui, par amour pour le Christ et pour les hommes, ont choisi une vie de pauvreté réelle, de prière et d'abnégation, apparaît comme un signe des réalités supérieures sans lesquelles il n'y a pas de vie vraiment humaine et un appel à l'amour et à la réconciliation universelle.

Dans une oeuvre aussi exigeante, nous avons besoin d'une parole d'espérance. Cette parole d'espérance nous vient de l'Eglise. Qu'il s'agisse du Concile Vatican II, notamment de la Constitution "Gaudium et Spes", qu'il s'agisse des enseignements de Jean XXIII et de Paul VI, nous avons à notre disposition toute une doctrine qui est d'une extrême richesse et qui nous permet d'engager le dialogue avec tous ceux de nos contemporains qui sont à la recherche de la justice à travers le monde. Nous serions vraiment inexcusables de ne pas mettre en oeuvre, autant qu'il dépend de nous, une doctrine si cohérente et si actuelle. Le Synode de 1971, en une affirmation d'une extrême concision, est allé jusqu'à dire que "l'action pour la justice et la participation à la transformation du monde nous apparaissent pleinement comme une dimension constitutive de la prédication de l'Evangile qui est la libération de toute situation d'oppression" (Introduction). Le même Synode précise: "La mission de prêcher l'Evangile exige aujourd'hui l'engagement radical pour la libération intégrale de l'homme, dès maintenant, dans la réalité même de son existence dans le monde" (2e partie).

N'avons-nous pas des raisons valables pour penser que cette action pour la justice, au plan même de l'humanité, si elle est menée avec concertation par les chrétiens, en union avec tous les hommes au coeur droit, sera l'annonce d'une grande lumière pour toute la famille des peuples?  
 (La Semaine Religieuse d'Alger, 54 N° 4, 1977)

## EVALUATION OF THE SEMINAR AND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

23 evaluation sheets were returned. 17 felt that the need to reflect a greater length on the material of the May Assembly was achieved; 4 did not comment and 2 felt it had not been achieved. In general they thought the discussion useful; a few thought 3 topics were perhaps too much.

Preparatory material - 6 did not comment, 15 made positive comments such as: aroused interest; well-prepared, bien, stimulating. One person would have liked a list of publications beforehand.

Presentations - 14 commented very favourable on the talks: clear, not too long, excellent, etc. One thought they were not long enough, another person would have liked a general discussion. One respondent felt the apostolate seemed to be mixed up with ministries and that the role of the woman in the home was overlooked.

Discussion Groups - on the whole these were rated: good, lively, had almost total participation. A few found the time too short. One person suggested having the case beforehand and two would have preferred "interest" groups. It was helpful to have had discussion leaders and secretaries appointed beforehand. It is a hindrance to have two groups in one room.

Case Study - "La necessite d'une telle reflexion en commun - interessante et stimulante." All but two liked the idea of a case study, some felt questions could be clearer. Some comments were: practical, gave us a good basis for work, captured essence of presentation, was close enough to real situation to spark off an animated discussion, worth trying again, etc.

Reporting back - Seven respondents felt points may have been lost in the synthesis. Five preferred to have individual reports. Those who thought the discussion probably seemed to lag, felt that was due to the time of the day or perhaps the topics (as well as the participants!) were exhausted.

General Assembly - 10 gave no comments (some may not have been present); most felt it was satisfactory; that the statutes were handled well by the Chairman and that more time could be given for budget.

15 prefer the Seminar and General Assembly on one day; 6 not on the same day; 2 did not answer.

Various helpful suggestions were received for the next Seminar. From the nature of the topic and the suggestions, it would appear that emphasis should be on input from the speakers followed by a general discussion.

## SEDOS EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

27 February, 1978

Those present: Fr. Timmermans, cssp  
Fr. P. Divarkar, sj  
Br. Pablo Basterecchea, fsc  
Sr. Danita Mc Conagle, ssnd  
Sr. Mary Motte, fmm  
Sr. Joan Delaney, mm

The Minutes 78/17 of 10th January and 78/18 of the 23rd January were approved.

## Matters arising from the Minutes

1. Sr. Joan visited the Augustinians on 1st February.
2. Fr. Timmermans reported on his contact with the speaker for the May Seminar of. Item 3.
3. Fr. Divarkar provided an amended copy of Fr. Hillengass' comments.

## Matters discussed:

1. Report of the Working Party.  
The suggestions made by the working party were agreed to by the Committee. It was suggested that a time-plan be drawn up for distribution to Sedos members. It is also planned to inquire from the Generalates to find out on what topics they wish to have reflection groups. This will be done in the beginning of May.
2. Sedos - Agrimissio Project.  
A request from Ghana that the present project continue was considered impossible. The project ends the 31st March and it was felt there were enough resources among the lay people and missionaries in Ghana to implement the project. The final meeting of the Sedos - Agrimissio Committee will be held on 31st March.
3. May Seminar.  
Fr. Timmermans reported that he had contacted Prof. Splinder, Director of IIMO (Inter-university Institute for Missiology and Ecumenism) in Leiden. The Institute has completed a large scale study on ecumenical co-operation. It was agreed to write Prof. Splinder and invite him to be a speaker at the May Assembly. Since the last two Seminars were rather heavy with three topics and since most of the members prefer the Seminar and Assembly on one day, it was felt that it would be best to centre on one topic and to have one speaker, leaving ample time for discussion.

Various names were suggested for the Preparatory Committee and various suggestions for background material were made.

4. Executive Secretary's Report - 23rd January to 27th February.
    1. Assembly Matters - The reports have been sent out. A total of 23 evaluations were received and a summary done. This should be printed in the Bulletin. Several people have expressed their appreciation of the day.
    2. An account of Fr. Moody's death. The Secretariat has a detailed account of Father's last days.
    3. Fr. Muskens - the asst. rector of the Dutch College visited Sedos and agreed to give a talk on the Catholic Church in Indonesia on 19th Oct. He is the author of a five volume work on the Catholic Church in Indonesia. At present he is revising the work and preparing a one volume edition to be published Orbis and Missio. The secretary will inquire about obtaining copies from Orbis.
    4. Typewriters. These continue to be a problem. Our original arrangements for a trade-in have fallen through. We are still waiting for the IBM machine.
    5. Additional Staff. Miss Doreen Chu has worked 3 Saturdays typing Bulletin stencils.
    6. Contacts: Commission VI, Cong. for Religious, Gregorian University, Vatican Radio, Secretariat for Christian Unity, Agrimissio, Cesta (FAO), Justice and Peace Commission, Monsignor Ligutti, RSCJ's and OSA's.
    7. Visitors: Approximately 20 persons visited including Fr. Tonna and Bishop Andoh of Accra.
    8. Executive Secretary's Schedule:
 

March 3 to 5th	Asiatic Centre in Milan - programme commemorating the death of Gandhi. Visit to the Centre which is run by the PIME Fathers
March 7	Justice and Peace Meeting
March 11th - 30	In the United States
    9. A request was received from Publica Securizia to subscribe to a magazine Ordine Nuova 16,500 a year. Does anyone know anything about this? We were called on the phone and asked to contribute if we did not subscribe. We neither subscribed nor contributed.
5. NEXT MEETING IS 10TH MARCH, 4 PM.