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## DEVELOPMENT, DIALOGUE AND EVANGELIZATION

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### PART II

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In fact, work for the liberation of peoples and for their development is the most effective witness of the Gospel which is founded in the universal and unconditional love of God for men. Seen in this perspective evangelization and development penetrate each other in a single movement for human progress and salvation embracing every man and every woman. Hence the work for human development is not extraneous to evangelization, but pertains to the Gospel core.

#### DEVELOPMENT AND CULTURE

Development in the last analysis is not a matter of economic goods and material advantages alone, but principally one of culture, what happens to people engaged in the integral development of man, the new values and the new human solidarity they make their own in their active encounter with the actual reality. Our deepest concern is not about economic "targets" but about "finding an adequate basis for building a new society in which abstract notions like human dignity, equality and fraternity will become a social reality". Hence the association of Mission and Development is for the advantage of both. Development brings missionary activity to the concrete man in flesh and blood living in an actual situation, and Mission can make a great and decisive contribution towards forming a new cultural basis for real human development.

#### EVANGELIZATION AND INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

Deeper than the cultural consciousness that embraces man's concern for the socio-economic and political problems is his religious consciousness. The Gospel is never carried by the missionary into a religious vacuum. India and the whole of Asia has a certain religious unity, which is expressed as a sort of aesthetic continuum consisting of attitudes and outlook. These attitudes and outlook originally created by traditional religions like Hinduism, and Buddhism lie deeper than the actual religious beliefs, customs and practices. Hence the Gospel cannot be preached in Asia without taking into account this deep religious sentiment of the people. As Sri Aurobindo Ghosh said, "India can be changed even socially and politically only from her deepest center of religious consciousness. The task of Christian Mission work is not simply to replace the religions but to recognize in them the working of the Spirit of God for the salvation of all men and provide the external experience of the Spirit into an explicit recognition of the Word of God acting in human history.

Here, first of all, the actual facts about the religions of Asia should be clearly borne in mind.

1) As Philip Ashby has shown in his "New Developments in Hinduism" there is no need to import religious and moral values into Asia. Asian religions are viable and integral ways of life for their followers, and they have an internal vitality that enables them to adapt themselves to the changing circumstances of the modern era without losing their moorings in the past.

2) We cannot also call into question the sincerity and deep religious conviction and authentic spirituality of the followers of these Asian religions in general. If it is granted that those who follow faithfully the dictates of their own conscience attain salvation, it has to be equally granted that they are saved in and through their traditional religions which provide them with answers for the fundamental problems of human existence.

3) Hence the urgency for mission activity cannot be drawn from the danger of otherwise souls being lost. Factually the non-Christian religions constitute the ordinary means of salvation for the great majority of men in the world today.

4) When we talk about the uniqueness of Christ and the absolute necessity of relation with him for salvation (1 Tim. 2, 4-6; Acts 4,12) it should not be taken in an exclusive sense of devaluing every other religion, but rather in an affirmative and integrative sense: Christ represents the most perfect union of man with God, and integrates in himself all that is positive and valuable in human religious traditions.

5) On the other hand, the absoluteness and uniqueness of Christ cannot be attributed in the same sense to Christianity or the Church which is characterized by many limitations and imperfections. There exist everywhere, especially in the World Religions positive values that can be integrated to Christianity. The Church has received from Christ and the Holy Spirit the capacity for assuming the plenitude of man, who does not ever cease to discover and develop new values. Hence the Church founded by Christ and guided by the Spirit as a fully human institution does not cease to learn and develop new dimensions of her human existence at the same time as carrying on her missionary activity. This communicative receptivity of the Church is the basis for inter-Christian and inter-religious dialogue.

#### THE CONTRIBUTION OF NON-CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS

In fact the non-Christian religions have something positive and valuable to contribute to the Christian missionary effort both in the appropriate understanding of the ineffable reality contained in divine Revelation as well as in the dynamics of its communication to humanity. Ever since the Asian religions came to the attention of world consciousness, there is a growing awareness that they have something precious to say about the divine Reality.

1) These religions present not only millenia old traditions but also religious ideas, customs, practices and religious gestures fully incorporated into a lived reality. Hence Christian mission cannot approach them

as mere systems or theories but only as communities of men who have an authentic experience of God and conscientiously live that experience in their concrete situation.

2) Followers of these religions are not satisfied with the knowledge they have of the divine reality but continue to search for God, and hence are found in an objective situation of redemption by Christ, formed and conditioned in depth by their culture, history and beliefs, but at the same time open to further manifestations of God. They often emphasize points of faith sometimes forgotten or neglected by Christians, so that the Christian missionary has to learn from them a great deal about his own faith at the same time as communicating the Gospel of salvation:

3) Another important positive factor to be taken into account is the close connection between the Gospel and culture. As Vatican II in its document on the non-Christians has clearly pointed out, various religions like Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam have shown particular cultural emphases in their religious ideas that are of special value to the Gospel.

4) Even talking about the Gospel as revelation, the non-Christian religions are not without their special relevance. Revelation itself is a complex reality with different aspects. It is God disclosing himself to man, giving testimony to Himself, sharing with man His own thoughts and plans, communicating to him His inner life, entering into intimate fellowship with Him. Revelation is also God acting in human history, taking hold of the course of events, Himself becoming its focus and leader through the Incarnation. It has clearly two foci, one the objective reality of God's intervention in human history, and the other, the experiential perception of the divine self-disclosure by men. The principal contribution of the non-Christian religions to divine revelation is this experiential aspect. They present different ways in which man can encounter God's presence and the saving grace in his interior.

But this subjective religious experience is easily objectified and thematised creating thereby close analogies to the historically revealed deposit of faith. Such analogies we find in great many instances like the "Avatara" and "Trimurti" ideas of Hinduism which bear certain definite similarities with the Christian doctrines of Incarnation and Trinity, and the idea of Sacred Scriptures in different religions. The existence in non-Christian religions of doctrines analogous to those found in divine revelation is not at all an argument against the revealed character of the latter, but rather a confirmation of it, since God speaks to man in and through human history and human consciousness and not from outside of it. Even regarding the historical character of revelation it has to be stated that if the instances of God's special intervention to reveal himself to humanity took place in the context of the history of a particular people, the histories of other peoples and nations often reflected in their religious traditions were not without the salvific providence of God.

#### EVANGELIZATION - A DIALOGICAL TASK

The mandate to preach the Good News of salvation to all nations and persons should not be taken as an exclusive feature of the Christian religion. Even before Christianity there were religions that felt a moral

obligation to communicate their special spiritual message to other men as well. The story of Buddha recounts how after his spiritual illumination under the Bodhi tree he felt a great reluctance to preach his doctrine to others for fear that it would be misunderstood, but finally decided to preach the Middle Path of liberation only under great persuasion by Brahma and other gods. Buddhism presents missionary work as the basic need of human nature itself. It is the expression of two human religious virtues, "karuna" or compassion towards all those who are bound in the shackles of ignorance and suffering in this world of momentary existence, and "maitri" or friendliness towards all. These persuade the Bodhisattva; one who has almost attained enlightenment, should naturally communicate his new realization to others as well, and help them attain by themselves the same realization. What Siddharta Gautama Buddha became by his illumination is what every man is to become ultimately. Hence Buddha himself organized his disciples to spread his teachings far and wide.

BUDDHIST MISSIONARY IDEALS: The Buddhist missionary ideals are most clearly presented by the rock edicts of the Buddhist emperor Asoka who ruled in the 3rd century B.C. Thus in one of the edicts the king who calls himself Priyadarsi states that after the conquest of Kalinga which entailed the slaughter or deportation or death of hundreds of thousands of people he "became intensely devoted to the study of Dharma, to the love of Dharma and to the inculcation of Dharma", and that then he decided that moral conquest, i.e. conquest by Dharma, Dharmavijaya, is the most important conquest. Then he claims that sending missionaries even as far away as three thousand miles into the kingdom of Syria, Egypt, Macedonia, Cyrene and Epirus, and to Ceylon in the south, he achieved the moral conquest of the peoples in those countries, and then adds: "even in countries which King Priyadarsi's envoys have not reached, people have heard about Dharma, and they themselves conform to Dharma and will continue to do so".

HINDU DISCIPLESHIP: Similarly, Hinduism which was a religion built upon the example of the Rsis who left the world and sought divine realization in isolation in the forest, under the impact of Buddhism eventually became missionary. The Acaryas were ascetics who attained spiritual realization and then founded schools of their own disciples and toured the length and breadth of the land spreading their teachings and endeavouring to refute the positions of their adversaries and convert them to their own groups. One of the gifts the Acaryas demanded from their benefactors in their mendicant tours was the right to debate with them on religious truths.

ISLAM AND SIKH MISSIONARY SPIRIT: The Islamic religion was intensely missionary and endeavoured in every way to convert all men to the acceptance of the law revealed by God to Mohammed. In the same way sikhism was a missionary religion from its very beginning. The intention of Guru Nanak was to establish a religious fellowship among all men beyond all distinctions of class, color, and sect, through "sangat", the fellowship in the teaching of the Guru and Pangat, sharing food together.

Hence the Christian missionary task has to be fulfilled in the context of religions that are themselves inspired by the same missionary zeal and the conviction that they are under obligation to share with others. In this situation the Gospel cannot be presented as a mere religious system along with other systems at the same time claiming superiority over them by the excellence of its doctrines, rites and moral teachings. Apart from the sheer difficulty of proving such claims of superiority, such an approach leads only to rivalries and conflicts in the name of God and religion, that should rather unite men than divide them. This point is stated by Asoka in one of his edicts:

"The faiths of others all deserve to be honored for one reason or another. By honoring them, one exalts one's own faith and at the same time performs a service to the faith of others. By acting otherwise one injures one's own faith and also does dis-service to that of others. For if a man extols his own faith and disparages another because of devotion to his own and because he wants to glorify it he seriously injures his own faith".

DIALOGUE: Generally religious dialogue recognizes and respects the actual plurality of religions. In dialogue one can take an inclusive or exclusive or parallelist attitude towards other religions: One can assume that the other's faith is in some manner already included in one's own religious tradition, or consider it as incompatible with one's own, or consider the other's faith a valid way parallel to one's own without any need for the two to converge at any point in the future. But, the ideal of dialogue is to bridge the gulf of mutual ignorance and misunderstandings between the different cultures of the world.

On the other hand a dialogical approach sends each tradition back to its own authentic foundations, which always means the concern to foster practical ways of handling our concrete human condition. This implies a number of aspects of human life like the experience and realization of our ultimate ground of being as the fullest meaning and final goal of life, the unity of the human family and man's union with other men, the unity of human history and our response to the past in view of the future, and also our responsibility to the world and our environment to maintain the conditions suitable for the survival of the human race. These are not matters of mere theory but concrete facts in our way of life, though there is a vital circle between praxis and theory. If all these foundational facts are seriously taken into account the different religions which place the emphasis on one or another of these factors cannot fail to recognize in each other their own basic dimensions.

Thus the fundamental point emphasized by the Christian Gospel is that the human race is one family, that it has a single history and that it has been radically altered by the Incarnation, by the fact that the Son of God became the son of man and thereby became the unique center and focal point of that history. This cannot be a matter of indifference to other religions. They have to examine seriously this claim, which if true radically changes the shape of human society. Thus Evangelization is not a oneway traffic. It is the concern both of Christian believers as well as of non-Christians: It is the common search of people sharing in the same cultural situation, to discover the meaning and implications of God's Gospel in that situation, to find out how the divine Word, which is the inner unifying and energizing principle of all creation, transforms the

same world by entering its history. This is not blind search or an impersonal process.

Christian believers know that the Word of God has become incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth and radically transformed human history, through his victory over sin and death. The non-Christians from the experience of their own traditional religions know that the world cannot attain the divine goal of its aspirations unless the divine word becomes in some manner present in man's world. Christians proclaim the transformation of history through the concrete, historical humanity of the Word in their preaching, their worship, their continued reflection on the impact of that "good news" on the actual situation and especially by the living witness of their communion in the fellowship of the Church.

Non-Christians respond to the same experience by their constant search for the divine in their life and in the world. Christians on the other hand cannot be indifferent to the authentic insights of other religions, the unreality and transitory character of the world emphasized by Buddhism, the presence of the Divine in the cave of the heart of every man stressed in Hinduism, the absolute and binding character of obedience to God in faith constantly proclaimed by Islam and the like.

#### CONCLUSION

There was a time in the history of Church when "disciplina arcani", the law of secrecy was the basic norm of Christian faith. The Mystery was reserved to the initiates. This idea of the secret teaching was emphasized not only by the Christians but by almost all the major religions of the world. The parable of the Sower was proposed not only by Christ but before him reportedly by Buddha: sowing the seed on rocky ground or among thorns does not yield any return. One should not cast pearls before swine. So Buddha disclosed his full doctrine only to the monks, and Christ reserved to his disciples the plain interpretation of the Kingdom. Today, however, in all religions the attitude has changed. The concerns of faith belong to all men. Faith and religion have gained a certain prestige even in secular universities. What is right or wrong, salvific or baneful to Christians is equally so for men of other faiths as well. Hence there is no secret faith for Christians alone today. If there is a God, He is God for the atheists too. If Jesus Christ is the one focal point of human history and the Savior of all men, He is so also for the Hindus and Buddhists even though they may not know it, and they have a right to know how Christ affects their lives.

Thus the basic reason for evangelization is that the Gospel is the Good News for all men. The Christ event which radically transformed human history into a new order of universal salvation calls for universal proclamation. Even the scoffers will have to face up to the answer given by Buber's Rabbi Levi Jizchak to the doubting scholar concerning the Bible: "But perhaps it is true after all!". Gospel is the meeting of men as free persons in Jesus Christ, the Logos. Evangelization is not merely an exchange of ideas or information but the encounter of man with man in Christ and God. In the Asian context this encounter of man with man in Christ can be done only against the deeply spiritual background of Eastern Religions.

Reference: EUNTES, 1980 - (7) - XIII.

## TERRE AMÈRE AU BRÉSIL

(A simple Christmas greeting-card came from Brazil last year. It consists of five folds, each fold as it opens out portrays in a simple black and white sketch, a Brazilian peon, easily recognisable from his typical working clothes. The unfolding card shows him in stages tumbling to the ground. In the last section he is prostrate, face down to the earth. Across the top of the folds the texts from Isaiah: "There shall come forth a shoot from the root of Jesse..." accompany the falling figure of the man, and "the shoot of Jesse" springs from the earth. In the last drawing "the shoot of Jesse" has blossomed in beauty beside the prostrate figure of the man.)

The following short account of the peon scandals in Brazil points up the challenge to religion arising from involvement in the problems of injustice, exploitation and the destruction of human dignity.)

Depuis quelques années les conflits de la terre se multiplient au Brésil. De grosses compagnies acquièrent d'immenses domaines et s'efforcent peu à peu rejeter vers la périphérie les petits agriculteurs qui en exploitaient la terre. Ceux-ci, sans titre de propriété, ignorant tout et impuissants devant les complexités légales et administratives et craignant souvent pour leur propre vie s'ils tentent de résister à la pression des compagnies, préfèrent dans la plupart des cas courber la tête et quitter les terres qu'ils exploitaient jusque-là, pour s'exiler vers d'autres régions.

Il y a aussi un autre problème. C'est celui des ouvriers agricoles ou péons, employés dans les grands domaines fonciers. Pris dans l'engrenage d'une organisation complexe qui tire de leur travail le maximum de profits, ils n'ont souvent d'autre perspective, s'ils veulent subsister, que de se soumettre à leurs rudes conditions de travail.

L'Eglise du Brésil s'est résolument engagée dans la lutte pour la défense des pauvres et des exploités. Elle veut, là-bas aussi, se faire la voix de ceux qui sont sans voix, et redonner un peu d'espoir à tous ceux qui sont écrasés sous le poids de l'exploitation et de la misère. Il s'agit souvent de faire prendre conscience à ces hommes de leurs droits et de leur donner un nouveau courage dans leur lutte.

La Commission Pastorale de la Terre est un organisme d'Eglise qui prend en charge tout ce travail de conscientisation, de conseil, d'information, pour aider à résoudre ces multiples conflits de la terre. Cette Commission a édité en 1980 une brochure intitulée: "O Piao entrou na roda, o Piao." Dans cette brochure sont analysés les différents rouages d'un gros domaine foncier, son organigramme et la façon dont il fonctionne. On y montre aussi le processus d'exploitation du travailleur agricole, ou péon.



Pour mieux comprendre certaines réactions, certaines luttes, là-bas sur le terrain, qui opposent petits cultivateurs et grosses compagnies, ou qui mettent aux prises les exploitants des domaines et les péons, il n'est pas sans intérêt de mieux connaître l'organisation de ces grands domaines et quels en sont les principaux personnages dans leurs fonctions respectives.

#### ORGANISATION D'UN GRAND DOMAINE FONCIER

A la tête de l'exploitation se trouve un régisseur. Ce n'est pas le propriétaire mais le gérant ou l'administrateur général de l'entreprise. Il reçoit des directives et les met à exécution. Il répartit les tâches, établit les contrats de travail. C'est lui également qui est responsable des finances. Il est secondé en cela par un comptable chargé plus spécialement de la paie, de l'administration, des impôts et des factures... Souvent un secrétaire s'occupe de toute la partie administrative, du courrier et des communications radio.

Le chef d'exploitation (capataz) est responsable du bétail. Il a sous ses ordres les vachers. C'est lui qui s'occupe des vaccinations des bêtes, de l'insémination artificielle. L'achat et la vente des têtes de bétail relèvent de la direction. Les vachers sont sous ses ordres. Ils s'occupent du bétail, le répartissent dans les pâtures appropriées, soignent les maladies, font la traite du lait... Selon l'étendue du domaine, ils constituent des groupes dispersés dans les coins isolés.

Le contrôleur général vérifie l'exécution des travaux sous-traités par les "chats". Ce sont là des embaucheurs qui prennent en charge des travaux à base de main-d'oeuvre manuelle. Ce sont en quelque sorte des sous-traitants qui passent un contrat écrit avec les responsables d'un domaine. Le "chat" est donc indépendant. On fait appel à cette main-d'oeuvre "extra", pour des travaux tels que la déforestation, l'édification des clôtures de barbelé, l'entretien des pâturages, etc.

Le contremaître en chef (empreiteiro geral) est responsable des adjudications de travaux aux "chats". Il est contracté au titre de mensuel, mais il fait des super-profits dans la mesure où il sous-traite un travail au "chat" à un prix moindre que celui prévu par le domaine.

Les hommes de main (jagunços), constituent l'organe répressif des domaines. Ils sont toujours présents, même s'ils sont parfois discrets. Ils sont qualifiés de "contrôleurs". Professionnels de la violence, ils sont au service des intermédiaires pour faciliter la surexploitation des péons.

Il y a en outre plusieurs équipes de travailleurs plus qualifiés que les péons. Ce sont les vachers, dont il a été question plus haut, les tractoristes et les tronçonneurs. Les tractoristes conduisent les tracteurs attelés pour le transport interne des marchandises, du matériel, des piquets de pâture, etc. Ils sont chargés aussi d'aller dans les villages pour l'achat des provisions ou pour le ramassage des péons. Ils peuvent travailler aussi sur d'autres engins motorisés tels les niveleuses, les machines

pour le déboisement, le nettoyage des terrains, l'ouverture des routes... Quant aux tronçonneurs, ils travaillent à la coupe du bois pour les scieries et pour fabriquer les poteaux de pâture, et même au déboisement comme tel. La tronçonneuse leur appartient personnellement et ils ont à leur charge les dépenses de carburant et d'entretien.

Tout au bas de l'échelle se trouve le péon. C'est le travailleur manuel sans qualification, qui travaille au déboisement, au nettoyage des pâturages, à la confection des clôtures, etc.

Voilà en gros l'organisation des fonctions dans un gros domaine foncier. Bien souvent chaque échelon de cette hiérarchie s'arrangera à tirer un profit au détriment, il faut bien le dire, de ceux qui se trouvent au bas de l'échelle.

#### PROCESSUS D'EXPLOITATION DU PEON.

Le péon est embauché et payé par le "chat", lequel a reçu l'adjudication de travaux précis: déboisement d'une parcelle de 1000 hectares, par exemple, ou nettoyage d'une zone de pâturage... Le péon sera donc payé en fonction de ce contrat précis qui a déjà été passé entre le "chat" et le domaine.

Prenons un exemple: Imaginons que la direction d'un grand domaine a calculé que le déboisement de 5 hectares de forêt lui reviendra à 10,000 cruzeiros. Elle débloque ce crédit. Le régisseur passe alors un contrat de travail avec un embaucheur en chef au prix de 9000 cruzeiros. Celui-ci sous-traite auprès du "chat" sur la base de 7000 cruzeiros. Pour finir, le "chat" recrute des péons pour ce travail à raison de 5000 cruzeiros pour les cinq hectares.

De plus le péon se voit déduire de son salaire un certain nombre de frais réels ou hypothétiques, sans possibilités de contrôler: transport, soins médicaux, etc. Il règne en outre un climat de travaux forcés, sous contrôle constant des hommes de main armés.

#### IL DEPENSE LE MAIGRE ARGENT QUI LUI RESTE

Son travail terminé, le péon retourne habiter dans la pension de famille de la région où il attend, en célibataire, d'autres contrats d'embauche, semblables au précédent. Il y dépense l'argent durement gagné, en achats de première nécessité (nourriture, logement, habillement). Et surtout il va distraire dans les cabarets avec leur alcool, leurs femmes, leurs jeux et leurs bagarres. Il arrive au péon de dépenser jusqu'à 5000 cruzeiros en une seule nuit.

Sans argent, il ne lui reste plus qu'à rechercher une nouvelle embauche, heureux d'être à nouveau "accueilli" dans le domaine.

Reference: ECHOS DE LA RUE DU BAC, No. 151, Mai 1981.

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## THE MISSION OF THE LOCAL CHURCH IN CHINA

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Angelo S. Lazzarotto, pime.

### SECTION 4: THE PATRIOTIC ASSOCIATION OF BELIEVERS

L'article du P. Lazzarotto a été présenté lors du Séminaire sur la Mission organisé par SEDOS. Il comprend 7 parties. Les 3 premières décrivent de façon très intéressante et précise la situation qui se dessine actuellement en Chine; elles s'intitulent:

- Un pays cheminant sur une route difficile vers la modernisation;
- Les Chrétiens sont encore vivants en Chine;
- La place de la religion dans la Chine d'aujourd'hui.

Nous publions les 4 dernières parties de son article, en débutant dans ce numéro du bulletin par son rapport sur l'Association des Croyants Patriotes. Le P. Lazzarotto est un spécialiste de la Chine et il a visité le pays à plusieurs reprises au cours des dernières années.

Fr. Lazzarotto's paper was presented at the Sedos Mission Research Seminar. It contains seven sections. The first three give an highly interesting and up-to-date account of the emerging situation in China and are entitled: "A country marching on a difficult road to modernization"; "Christians are still alive in China" and, "The place of religion in present day China." We are publishing the four concluding sections of his paper, commencing in this issue with his account of the Patriotic Association of Believers. Fr. Lazzarotto is an authority on China and has visited the country on a number of occasions in recent years.

To implement the official policy on religion, the government instrument is the already mentioned Religious Affairs Bureau. Set up in 1951, scrapped during the cultural revolution and now re-instated, it is responsible to the State Council and, at least at the central level, it appears to be staffed entirely with marxist cadres and experts. Along the Party line, the competent office is a special bureau in the United Front Department, which refers directly to the Central Committee of the CCP. These official bodies can hardly keep a direct control over the popular, traditional practices and superstitions of the peasant folk cropping up and taking the most unexpected forms. For these the authorities will have to rely on the local cadres and the alertness of the people themselves.

But for the main religious groups, the instruments devised to ensure the exercise of "proper religious activities" and to keep them under proper control ("to strengthen the management of these activities"), are within the religious groups themselves. The "patriotic" associations of Buddhists, Taoists, Muslims, Protestants and Catholics were set up in the '50s, to rally the believers around the CCP and the Government, in line with the "United Front Policy". It was also a way to justify, in Marxist logic, the right of religions to exist in the period of the "new democracy". The RAB was recently reorganized also at the provincial level, inviting back the

surviving representatives of the main religious groups. According to a "Xinhua" report (30 July 1979), it was at such a meeting, held at the United Front Department of the Canton City Committee of the CCP, that the decision was taken to open a certain number of churches and temples, to unfreeze rents paid to local religious institutions and to rehabilitate people in religious circles who had been wronged.

In 1980, with the reformulation of the official policy reaching a stage of relative stability, the time was considered ripe for inviting the patriotic associations to hold their national congresses and appoint new central governing bodies, which would subsequently reorganize their provincial and local structures. The Islamic Association (set up in 1953) was the first to convene its fourth general conference in April, with 250 delegates; as already mentioned, it gave the political leaders a good opportunity to reinstate the official policy ("Xinhua", 6 April '80). The more volatile and loosely organized Taoist community was also made to convene its third conference since the establishment of the official association (in 1957). They met in Peking at the beginning of May, but little was said about the proceedings, the number of delegates etc. ("Xinhua", 7 May, 1980).

The third national conference of the Protestant "Three-Self Patriotic Movement" (established in 1954) was held in Nanking with 176 delegates from 6 to 13 October 1980. Already at the end of February its Standing Committee had proposed the main target of the forthcoming congress. In an "open letter to brothers and sisters in Christ of all China" issued on 1st March, a plan had been announced to set up a national structure of a pastoral nature. It was stated that this should be something separate and independent from the "Three-Self Movement": "as the two hands of the body". At the recent conference, in fact, a new "China Christian Council" has been established. The resolution adopted on 13 October specifies that "the Council will give major attention to the work of improving the pastoral care of Christians all over China, including the training of appropriate church workers, publication of the Bible and literature of Christian nurture and strengthening the ties among churches and fellow-Christians". To preside both the new Council and the new Committee of the "Three-Self Movement" has been elected Bishop Ding Guangxu.

The last to be convened, in December 1980, was the fourth national conference of the Buddhist Association, ("Xinhua", 17, 24 Dec. 1980). Perhaps the authorities did not wish to rush things through, while contacts were going on with the Dalai Lama, in the hope of his return from exile.

#### THE THIRD CONGRESS OF THE CATHOLIC PATRIOTIC ASSOCIATION

The Patriotic Association of the Chinese Catholics (PACC) held its third congress in Peking in May 1980. Founded in August 1957 at the conclusion of a two week congress highlighted by a fierce "struggle" against the so-called rightist elements, its second congress had taken place in 1962. This recent assembly and its follow-up deserve particular attention for the consequences they may have for future developments of the Catholic Church in China.

The third PACC congress, which lasted nine days (22nd to 30th May 1980), was in fact immediately followed by another significant event, when for the very first time a "Conference of Chinese Catholic Representatives" met for three days (31st May - 2nd June). The participants in the two meetings coincided to a very great extent. Two "open letters", addressed to the priests and laity of China and to those of Taiwan, were jointly signed by the PACC congress and by the Catholic Representatives Conference. A "Chinese Catholic Bishops' Conference" and a "Chinese Catholic Church Affairs Committee" were established at the conclusion of the second meeting, but from the official press releases it appears that the decision had already been taken at the PACC congress. The new "Bishops' Conference" and the 105 member "Church Affairs Committee" are to concentrate on pastoral matters, with the aim of "discussing and deciding important questions relating to national Church affairs, so as to unify our will, our planning and our operations", as the letter to the faithful in China states.

It is not yet clear what the relationship between the Patriotic Association and the new Church structure will be. For all its religious and pastoral concern, the "Catholic Representatives Conference" also endorsed the strongly political statements prepared by the PACC for the "open letter" to the faithful of China, calling "on the clergy and laity of the whole country to unite closely together and rally around the Party and the People's government, to uphold the socialist road, to mobilize all positive factors, and, along with all the people of the country, to make a positive contribution to the four modernizations..."

The letter expresses support for the Church's "policy of independence, autonomy and self-direction", which brought about the election and consecration of "their own bishops in over 50 dioceses". This decision is justified by referring to the needs of "the souls of both clergy and laity", stating that it was taken "in conformity with the spirit in which Jesus Christ established the Church and in the tradition of the Apostles' preaching". The letter then pledges to "put a stop" to "a small minority of bad elements and reactionary influences from abroad, which fabricate 'miracles', spread rumours, stir up trouble, create divisions and carry out illegal activities under the guise of religion".

Among the decisions announced at the conclusion of the meetings was the setting up of a philosophical and theological training centre for the preparation of Catholic priests and scholars; the preparatory work has been entrusted to "Church Affairs Committee". It was also decided to start the publication of a Catholic magazine, entitled "Zhongguo Tienzhu Jiao" ("Catholic Church in China")

The PACC congress and the subsequent conference were said to have been attended by delegates "from all the dioceses of China" ("Xinhua", 22 May 1980). It appears that a number of them were priests or religious recently released from labour camps; they are known for their fidelity to the Holy See. In the present-day social structure of China one can hardly refuse an invitation issued by the provincial RAB offices. The names of the 33 bishops, as well as of most other participants have since been published. It appears that at least four of the surviving "senior bishops", canonically appointed by the Holy See in the early '50s, also took part.

Reading some expressions of the PACC delegates reported in the first issue of the new magazine "Catholic Church in China" (pp. 2-3), one is struck by the insistence on the duty to love the country. Religion is to motivate and support patriotism, which is the common task of all United Front movements. After affirming that "a good Catholic's duty is to practice patriotism", one delegate was quoted as adding that "at the same time, to be patriotic is a concrete expression of loving the Church". And another: "If we work for the four modernizations, then we are obeying the law of God". These rather unusual moral evaluations can perhaps be better understood in the light of another opinion expressed at the congress: "Only if our motherland develops and flourishes and if the people's life is happy, will our Church and our clergy and laity have a future and a hope".

Some delegates who attended the Peking meetings, speaking privately with overseas Chinese friends, expressed different views about the proceedings and the atmosphere of the conference. During the nine days' PACC congress, most of the time was given to small group discussions. For almost all the participants, this was the first opportunity in 15 years to exchange some information on the Church situation in the different provinces and to meet old acquaintances. Although the meetings were generally calm and sedate, there appeared to be no room for views dissenting from the official line. Yet it is known that the traditional Catholic position, defending as necessary the unity with the Holy See, was also clearly presented by some delegates.

The third PACC congress fits well within the established RAB pattern. Zhang Zhiyi, deputy director of the CCP United Front Department, and Xiao Xian-fa, director of the RAB, were present during the proceedings, just as they had attended the congress of the Islamic Association the previous month. The second conference, of the Catholic Representatives, was given the same publicity by the official media; its delegates were even received in the great People's Congress Hall by two "leading members of the Communist Party": Ulanfu, member of the political bureau of the CCP Central Committee and vice-chairman of the Standing Committee of the NPC, and Peng Chong, member of the political bureau and of the secretariat of the Central Committee of the CCP ("Xinhua", 31 May 1980).

#### BETWEEN HOPE AND DOUBT

This has brought some observers to consider the newly established "Chinese Catholic Bishops' Conference" and the "Catholic Church Affairs Committee" as other "united front" structures, completely dependent on the political authority. Only future developments will show the real meaning and value of the new structures. At the moment they appear to offer something positive, being in line with the Catholic tradition and with the post-Vatican Council II developments.

From the government point of view, these new Church structures may well be justified by the desire to reach out in some new way to the broad Catholic basis, to the grass-roots priests and faithful, disenchanted with the PACC. It may in fact be an implicit admission of the failure of the PACC to represent the totality of Catholics in China, although the official propaganda still seems to attribute this role to the PACC.

Since its foundation in 1957, the PACC had exercised complete control over the public life of the Church. It was, in fact, the only Church structure recognized by the Party and the Government. This inevitably brought the PACC leaders themselves to speak in the past for the Church as a whole, thus practically identifying the Association with the Church itself. Significantly, the official news agency in English, when referring to the PACC congress, most of the time used the term "Catholic Synod", and this lead was blindly followed by the foreign press correspondents .

These meetings may mark a deeper change, as there is now a clear tendency to stress the fact that the PACC has simply a political role. I was somewhat surprised, during a visit to China soon after the two national conferences, to hear priests who had all along supported the line of the PACC, spell out clearly that "this association is not the Church but a simple association of Catholics, and should therefore not be equated with it. The PACC, the priests insisted, is but a political structure, with specific political aims and objectives". It can be assumed that the traumatic experience of the Cultural Revolution caused a number of Church leaders who in the past had wholeheartedly endorsed the Party's approach to religion, to have second thoughts, as they were able to save very little of the Church structure. Time has confirmed this approach to be in fact unrealistic and inadequate, as it left the door open for the radical onslaught. Moreover, it is no secret that the great majority of the Catholic faithful have kept away from the PACC.

From the point of view of many Catholic leaders, even among the "patriotically" minded, the possibility of setting up new structures in conformity with the Catholic tradition may have appeared as a providential chance to start afresh, now that the authorities are anxious to give credibility to their "policy of religious freedom". The question remains: how much room will they be allowed, while the principle of the leadership of the political power over the Church affairs is confirmed? Experience of other communist countries leaves little doubt about the difficulties that will continue to exist in the internal and pastoral administration of the Church. Will the new reality of China prove an exception? During the Cultural Revolution, most officers of the patriotic religious associations ended up in trouble, because the Red Guards, organized to overthrow the "four old things" by the ultra-leftists then in power, did not give credence to any profession of patriotism by believers. But also at several other times when the stress on political education obsessively overshadowed all other activities, the dialectical relationship between "patriotic" religious leaders and the public authority had not proved so easy and smooth.

The new national periodical will be jointly managed by the PACC and the Church Affairs Committee. Which line will it take, to assure the "close communication with clergy and laity", which is claimed to be its aim? More delicate still will be the management of the proposed new theological seminary. Two bishops have been put in charge, though no place has yet been made available. The main question will be: how free from political interference will the selection and formation of the new priests be? This remains a vital issue for the survival of the structured Church in China.

### TIGHT CONTROL BY THE PUBLIC AUTHORITY

The resolutions passed recently at a regional Islamic conference in Urumqi called on the Islamic clergy to rally still "more closely" around the CCP and the People's Government. The delegates were urged to study conscientiously the policies on the nationalities and on religion, to enhance their understanding and emancipate their minds... They were further reminded that "it is necessary not to interfere with the State's policies, not to interfere with culture and education, not to interfere with marriages and not to engage in intercommune, inter-county and inter-prefectural religious activities. It is necessary to assist the government in making use of religious belief to accomplish the four modernizations and wage a resolute struggle against the reactionaries who engage in counter-revolutionary activities under a religious disguise".

The resolutions passed at this Muslim Conference seem to imply that religious leaders (even the "patriotic" ones) are not supposed to organize religious activities of a wider scope, except under the supervision and guidance of the RAB office ("Xinjiang Daily", quoted by Radio Urumqi, 30 June 1980).

The RAB director, Xiao Xianfa, had an important article printed in the "People's Daily" recently (14 June 1980). One of the points he raised refers to the so-called "management" of the religious activities by his office, which obviously constitutes a real problem. He acknowledges that somebody ("a onesided view", he thinks) "takes management to mean interfering in people's religious beliefs by administrative means". Other people "only like freedom and not management, thinking that management means interference and is out of keeping with the policy of freedom of religious belief". According to Xiao Xianfa, it is in order "to guarantee fuller freedom for religious activities", that "the management of religious activities" must be brought about by the RAB: "by management we mean safeguarding people's right to believe or not to believe in any religion according to the laws and decrees of the state".

Xiao Xianfa complains that there are, even at present, people who "sow discord, create confusion and sabotage the implementing of the (government) policies" (on religion). He laments also that "some people one-sidedly emphasize faith and attack patriotic law-abiding religious officials". According to Xiao's article, "relations between the officials of religions and the masses of the faithful, and relations among religious officials themselves" constitute a problem for his office.

The strictly religious implications of the official policy seem to be ignored sometimes by other government departments. Zhao Puchu, the distinguished Buddhist lay leader, presented some problems met by the Buddhists at a recent CPPCC meeting: "At present, the temple administration system is in grave confusion. The Bureau of Foreign Affairs and the Tourist Bureau are clamoring to administer the many major temples, historical relics and gardens which are open as areas for religious activities". He quoted examples from temples in Yangzhou and Loyang and from the Shaolin Temple in Henan. "The grave confusion in the system of administration, he added, was caused by the "gang of four", but the basic problem is one of consciousness. Therefore, at the same time that we clarify our thinking, we



must also formulate regulations, and clearly stipulate that temples used for religious activities should be under the guidance of the Religious Affairs Bureau, with the monks themselves administering them" ("People's Daily", 9 Sept. 1980).

To have a better picture of the real situation, we should try to appraise also the record of the positive achievements which the patriotic religious associations claim for themselves. Unfortunately very little documentation is available on this point. During my recent visits to China I heard more than one Protestant leader attributing to the "Three-Self Movement" the merit of having corrected the distorted image which many intellectuals and the political leadership of the country had about Christians, as people subservient to foreign interests, because of the historical connections with imperialism. Now at last, they contend, Christians in this country have won recognition of their true identity. As believers sincerely committed to the common good and to the cause of revolution, they feel that they are finally accepted as truly part of the people of China.

One of the high ranking Party officials who recently met the members of the Catholic Patriotic Association Congress was quoted as having publicly stated that, if the Catholic Church was still allowed to exist in China, that was due to the PACC. Echoing this, the leading article in the magazine "Catholic Church in China" (p. 2), says that without the PACC "there would be no today for our Church, nor any today for our clergy and Catholics".

In the new "united front" climate, the leaders of the patriotic associations were given some opportunity to make their voices heard in the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. Some of the structures imposed on believers, particularly during the radical period of the "gang of four", were relaxed, as already mentioned, because of the request made by two religious leaders that in the new penal code a clause be introduced to safeguard the "legitimate freedom of religious belief".

A proposal, endorsed by representatives of all religious groups, was put forward for consideration at the third session of the 5th National People's Congress in Sept. 1980. The request aims at cancelling from art. 46 of the present Constitution the existing discrimination in favour of atheistic propaganda, which was mutated in 1975 from the Russian Constitution. It is widely believed that this amendment may be accepted by the special commission on the Constitution set up by the NPC. But reverting to the expression of the 1954 Constitution will have real meaning only if this could eventually lead to recognizing to the believers also the right to propose publicly their religious convictions. Unfortunately, even under the old Constitution, which (in art. 86) did not mention any specific privilege to propagate atheism, little ground was left for an open evangelization. And the recent article in "Guangming Ribao" (30 Nov. '80) repeats the known position: on one side there are the believers, who "have the right to carry out the usual religious activities, but should not hinder production or affect the good order of society"; on the other side, "the non-believers also have the right to propagate their own opinions"; the limit imposed to them is that "they must respect the feelings of the believing masses: they should not propagate atheism in a religious place or while religious activities are going on".

There is another incongruous regulation, which can hardly be accepted as expression of real freedom, and which surely is of concern to a number of religious leaders. It is the prohibition to teach religion to young people (and for Christians to baptize them) below the age of 18, even if they belong to families of believers. This seems particularly unfair when religion has become an integral part of the family's way of life, as in old Christian villages or among the national minorities of Buddhists and Muslims. A change on this point would be a great step towards giving credibility to the present policy of religious freedom.

Reference: SEDOS RESEARCH SEMINAR, March 1981 - paper prepared specially by Angelo Lazzarotto, pime.

end of 1st extract

### LATIN AMERICAN CHURCH MYTHS

Karl Gaspar

When I met Father Segundo Galilea he told me, "It's good you could come to discover the myths about the Latin American Church." This is what I learned.

Myth 1: "The Latin American bishops are very progressive."

Really only the bishops of Brazil and Chile, I was told, are notable for their interest in justice and peace issues. CELAM is becoming more and more conservative.

Myth 2: "The theology of liberation is the theology of Latin America."

Liberation theology, they told me, is strong only in Central America, Peru, and Brazil, but not with everyone even in those countries.

Myth 3: "Basic Christian Communities are everywhere."

The Basic Christian Communities are strong in Brazil, but in few other countries.

Myth 4: "The Church is involved in armed liberation struggles." This is true only of some Church people in Central America. For the rest, the Church is very much for non-violence.

Myth 5: "There is splendid grassroots lay participation in the affairs of the Church". This doesn't seem to be true. I attended a lay congress in Honduras of lay leaders from all over Latin America and they seemed to be all middle class or upper class people. Still at the level of the Basic Christian Community the participation of the lay people is excellent.

Reference: INFO ON HUMAN DEVELOPMENT, Volume 8, No. 1, January 1981.

## NEWSLETTER SELF-HELP

(The following tips and techniques for improving your newsletter or bulletin are taken from the NEWSLETTER SELF-HELP IMPROVEMENT KIT produced by the National Sisters' Communication Service and edited by Fr. John McHenry, SVD and Sr. Joy Clough, RSM for editors, writers, proofreaders and other bulletin staff members. This resource is on-order and will soon be available in the MULTIMEDIA office.)

### On Design

-use downstyle for all headlines--i.e. capitalizing only the first letter and proper nouns--it's 12-25% faster to read.

-use photos or other illustrations only if they relate directly to the content. Better a clean, well-written newsletter than poor or irrelevant art.

-use only hairline rules for boxes. A heavilylined box traps readers' eyes inside.

-even the best design won't disguise poor content.

### On Printing and Production

-It is uneconomical and inefficient to request bids on small jobs (under \$500), but it is absolutely essential on medium to large jobs."

### On Editor/Staff

What can be accomplished by a good editor?

proofreading: 15 pages/hour  
 simple editing: 10 pages/hour  
 rewriting: 2-1/2 pages/hour  
 original: 1/8 page/hour

### On Content/Writing

"To qualify as news, information must be current, not weeks old. Developing a plan at the beginning of the year for the contents of each newsletter will enhance continuity and relevance to specific concerns at certain times of the year. The plan won't always work but it's a goal to aim for. Yet you have to reserve space for flexibility: you can't omit printing a pertinent article in May because it wasn't in the plan drawn up in January."

### On Proofreading

A reader is most likely to notice errors in a headline; in a title; in the first line, first paragraph, or 1st page of copy; and in the top lines of a new page. These are precisely the places where editors and proofreaders are most likely to miss errors. Take extra care at every beginning.