



4. The short extract from Bishop Balduino shows that when the Brazilian Bishops founded their Indigenous Missionary Council they did not appreciate fully how difficult it would be to present the gospel to the indigenous Indian groups while having absolute respect for their religion and their culture. It is an important statement on inculturation.

#### NEWS

SOLIDARITY IN SITUATIONS OF CRISIS: SEDOS and the J & P Commission UISG/USG held their initial consultation on this topic on Friday 28th February. A report of the meeting is being sent to participants. Copies may be had on request. Fr. Louis Hechanova, CSSR presented the case of Fr. Rudy Romano, CSSR kidnapped some nine months ago in the Philippines. He described what action they had taken and the value of solidarity as they tried to obtain news of Fr. Rudy and his release. Specific lines of action emerged from his presentation.

Many other examples of similar crisis situations were shared and an informal exchange of viewpoints took place. Sr. Helene O'Sullivan, MM, the new Assistant Executive Secretary of SEDOS then facilitated a more formal examination of what action could be taken in times of crisis. Sister had investigated for Maryknoll, the deaths of the four Missionaries murdered in Salvador. The discussion opened up many possibilities of action, the need of preparation for action before a crisis occurred, the role of communications, the need for a process of conscientisation and study of what could or should be done by the members of institutes. Various viewpoints were shared during this discussion. We realised the work had only begun.

This was a valuable opening of the topic, initiated at the SEDOS Seminar in Villa Cavalletti, in 1985 and discussed at the recent General Assembly of SEDOS in December 1985. Participants were very appreciative of the meeting and looked forward to a follow up which will be held on Wednesday 26th March at 16.00 hrs. in the SVD Generalate (See Coming Events).

CHINA CHURCH TO-DAY : A well attended meeting of SEDOS was addressed by Fr. Jerome Heyndricks, CICM on Friday, 7th March. This was an account of the Church in China to-day and the developments taking place there in the religious, social, political and scientific fields. A feature of this meeting was the excellent slides which illustrated many of the aspects spoken about by Fr. Heyndricks. He has constant contact with China, visiting it regularly in his work as founder of the Verbiest Foundation in Louvain University. His respect for the Chinese culture and his sensitiveness to the many issues involved were obvious. This was a fascinating meeting.

NEW SEDOS MEMBER : We welcome to membership of SEDOS the Congregation Serve di Maria. The Superior General is Sr. Mary Alice Haley RSM., and their address is Via Feruccio 28, 00185 Roma. Tel. (06) 73.25.93.

---

THE CHURCH'S TEACHING ON JUSTICE AND PEACE  
 TWENTY YEARS AFTER VATICAN II

---

Doanl Dorr, SPS.

(Concluding Part)

*(Dans la deuxième et dernière partie de sa conférence, le Père Dorr nous propose une liste révisée des principes fondamentaux de la justice et de la paix, basée sur l'enseignement actuel de l'Eglise, en les comparant avec ceux d'avant Vatican II. Mais il insiste sur l'élément essentiel de sa conférence: l'enseignement en tant que tel, aujourd'hui est secondaire par rapport à l'enseignement vécu. L'Eglise, aujourd'hui doit enseigner la justice et la paix, non pas en proclamant des principes, mais par un témoignage vécu de ses convictions et de ses options. Si cela semble donner priorité à la pratique sur la doctrine, il se justifie en citant Paul VI, dans Evangelii Nuntiandi: "La proclamation de l'Evangile doit se réaliser avant tout par le témoignage vécu". N.D.L.R.)*

III. AGENDA 1966

In this third part of my talk I want to propose a revised list of principles about justice and peace, based on present Church teaching. As I go through the new list I shall comment on each item, to show how it relates to the corresponding item on the earlier list.

PRINCIPLE NO.1

Pre Vatican II: The dignity of each individual human person must be respected and defended and the individual must not be subordinated to the State.

New: The dignity of each human person is to be respected and this is shown in practice by respecting his or her fundamental human rights; many of these rights can be specified e.g. the right to life, to security, to work, to a family income, to the ownership of property, to freedom of conscience, to have one's own culture respected, and above all the right to participate in the making of all decisions which affect one's life and the life of the community.

Comment: Note the way this item has been modified. There is now far more emphasis on human rights, and the list of such specified rights has been getting longer. Furthermore, it is now clear that human dignity and rights have to be defended not just against the State but against a variety of potential aggressors.

PRINCIPLE NO.2

Pre-Vatican II: The individual has a right to own private property.

New: The goods of the earth were given to humankind to be used for the benefit of all; the right of every individual to own private property is, in practice, a necessary but not a sufficient means of putting this principle into effect, while safeguarding the dignity of the person.

86/62

Comment: Note how the right to private property has been put into context and relativized. There have been, and still are, tribal societies where there is little ownership of private property, or at least of ~~imm~~moveable property such as land. The right to own private property is a practical necessity in our kind of world. But it is not an absolute; it takes second place to the right of all to benefit from the goods of the earth.

PRINCIPLE NO.3

Pre-Vat.II and New: Society is not just a collection of isolated individuals; it is rather an organic whole, a community composed of diverse elements where all are called to cooperate together for the common good.

Comment: This item remains as before. But in recent years it has become clear that we need to add a separate item, namely:

PRINCIPLE NO: 3a

New: The primary community is the human race taken as a whole rather than individual nations.

Comment: The point here is that our responsibility for others is not confined to the local or national level but extends to people everywhere.

PRINCIPLE NO.4

Pre-Vat.II and New: The authorities in society have the God-given task of promoting the common good and they have a God-given right to the obedience of the citizens.

Comment: This item also remains as before. But it has to be supplemented by an extra item:

PRINCIPLE NO.4a

New: The common good of all people cannot be attained when the government of any individual country single-mindedly pursues the national interest without taking due account of the welfare of the people of other countries; the common welfare is to be promoted by cooperation under the auspices of international agencies such as those of the United Nations family.

Comment: The point here is that international cooperation is now a pressing moral obligation, since our world has become a single economic entity, and since all of human life is now threatened by weapons of mass destruction and by environmental degradation. So now it is not just citizens but also governments that have the duty of respecting a higher authority; they must use and respect the international agencies.

PRINCIPLE NO.5

Pre-Vat.II: Citizens have a right and duty to use lawful means to resist serious misuse of power by a government.

New: Oppressed groups and all citizens have a right and a duty to work by lawful means for the replacement of any government which notably and consistently fails to respect fundamental human rights.

Comment: Note that this represents only a difference of emphasis; specific mention is made of the right of those at the bottom of society to claim their rights and to work for justice. Until recently the Church teaching tended to play this down. That was because Church leaders, when they called for a more just society, directed their challenge mainly to those with power, rather than to the powerless and

the marginalized. In the past, Church leaders were reluctant to encourage those at the bottom of society to struggle for justice because that might lead to instability; and there was a tendency to give a higher priority to order and stability than to justice. Another point to note about the revised version of this item No.5 is that it makes specific mention of fundamental human rights. Respect for human rights is a practical criterion for judging whether or not a government is misusing its power.

#### PRINCIPLE NO.6

Pre-Vat.II: Sedition or violent resistance to an established government is unjustified; class warfare is quite unacceptable.

New: Sedition or violent resistance to an established government is almost invariably unjustified; class warfare is quite unacceptable.

Comment: Note that the new formulation is almost the same as the old one; however, a small but important phrase - 'almost invariably' has been added before the word 'unjustified'. The point is that the Church recognizes that in principle it is possible to have a justified war of liberation; but it teaches that in practice such violence would almost certainly do more harm than good; therefore other forms of resistance must be used instead.

#### PRINCIPLE NO.7

Pre-Vat.II: Under certain stringent conditions a State is entitled to go to war against another State, in defence of its legitimate interests.

New (i) The development of international institutions makes it highly unlikely that a war between States could be justified, although one can still conceive of some situations where armed resistance to unjust aggression might be justified as a last resort.

(ii): The use of modern weapons of indiscriminate mass destruction cannot be justified.

(iii): The morality of holding such weapons as a deterrent on an interim basis remains ambiguous.

Comment: The changes here are very considerable. Firstly, the Church teaches that some of the basic elements of an international global authority have been gradually emerging; in so far as such global institutions have already emerged, their moral authority transcends that of individual States; consequently the arbitration and peace-keeping efforts of these international agencies impose morally binding obligations on State governments. Secondly, actually to fire the weapons that are currently targeted on New York, Moscow, Rome and other population centres could not be morally justified, since they involve deliberate killing of innumerable non-combatants. Thirdly, the pope and some other Christian leaders and theologians seem to be saying that the threat to use such weapons provides a breathing-space for disarmament negotiations; and that this makes it legitimate to rely on the deterrent in the interim. Other Christian leaders and theologians believe that the threat to use immoral weapons is itself immoral.

#### PRINCIPLE NO.8

Pre-Vatican II: Those who hold power in society must show particular concern for the poor and other categories of people who are vulnerable to exploitation; those who have wealth and influence

must renounce exploitative practices and attitudes; governments have the duty of modifying systems or mechanisms that foster injustice by giving undue power to certain groups.

New: Those who hold power in society must show particular concern for the poor and other categories of people who are vulnerable to exploitation; those who have wealth and influence must renounce exploitative practices and attitudes; governments must ensure that structural injustices are eliminated.

Comment: There is no change in idea here but there is a significant change in the wording: the useful phrase 'structural injustice' now replaces the more cumbersome formulation used before. Furthermore, this No.8 now has to be supplemented by two new items to which I am giving the numbers 8a and 8b.

#### PRINCIPLE NO.8a

New: The special concern of the Church for those who are disadvantaged or oppressed in any way is to be shown by the making of a 'preferential but not exclusive option for the poor'.

Comment: This point refers specifically to the role of the Church. The most significant word in it is, of course, the word 'option', which is something much more than mere 'concern'. It means, firstly, that the Church and its leaders repudiate any political or social alliance with those who unjustly hold power or privilege in society. Secondly, it means that Church leaders, and the Christian Community as a whole, are called to be in solidarity with all categories of people who are underprivileged in any way, to defend their interests, and to work effectively for the kind of structural changes that will eliminate such systematic injustice; this applies at the global, national, and local levels.

#### PRINCIPLE NO. 8b

New: The Church, which seeks to promote justice and a true peace based on justice, must itself give a living witness to these values in its own institutions and procedures.

Comment: There is a negative and positive aspect involved here. Negatively, the Church accepts that it is obliged to eliminate structural injustice that may have crept into its institutional life. Positively, the Church is obliged to establish traditions and institutions that respect the dignity and responsibility of the person and that foster dialogue and participation at all levels of Church life.

In addition to the above revised principles the new list must now include two further items to which I am giving the numbers 9 and 10. They are concerned with matters that were not very much thought about in the past.

#### PRINCIPLE NO.9

New: All people and all peoples have a fundamental right to integral human development; the model of development chosen must be one that lessens rather than widens the gap between the privileged and the under-privileged in the economic, social, political, and cultural spheres.

Comment: Within the past generation the idea of economic development has come to the fore; this has led on to a wider and more integral conception of human development in all spheres. The Church now teaches that such an integral development is a basic right not only for humanity as a whole but also for each ethnic-cultural group. In principle, development offers the possibility of eliminating the

terrible disparities in wealth, power, and status that mar our world. In practice, however, these disparities have been made much greater by the type of development that has been chosen or imposed. The Church now challenges such mis-development.

#### PRINCIPLE NO. 10

New: The style of development allowed and fostered by governments must be one that is sustainable.

Comment: The concept of sustainability is one that has burst on to the justice and peace agenda within the past fifteen years. It involves two aspects. The first concerns the use of the resources of the earth: we are stealing from the future generations if we use up these resources faster than nature renews them - unless we make compensation, or use them in a way that will be of value in the future. The second aspect concerns the world of animals and plant life, and the inanimate world: we are obliged to avoid an exploitative attitude towards them; we are called to a respectful, peaceful and harmonious partnership, in which we avoid unnecessary cruelty to animals, ensure that the variety of species of animals and plants is respected, and not to destroy or pollute our environment wantonly or unduly.

I invite you to look again at the old list and the new revised one. In each there is one item which from a practical point of view assumes a central importance. In the old list it is the right to private property. In the new it is the right to participate in decision-making. If we are looking for a convenient yardstick to know whether justice is effectively present in a given situation than we should ask: 'Is real responsibility being exercised by the people affected by the decisions being made; are they allowed to share in the decision-making?' If they have the right to participate, then the other rights are fairly well assured. And if all the fundamental human rights of the people are respected, then justice and peace are assured.

#### IV KAIROS

In the first three parts of this paper I have been concerned with the body of Church teaching on justice and peace. If there is one point I would like you to remember it is this: the corpus of teaching is really secondary to the activity of teaching. The primary way in which the Church teaches about justice and peace, or indeed about anything else, is not by proclaiming a list of principles. Rather it is by its lived witness to its beliefs, its values, and its options.

##### 1. WORDS AND WITNESS

There ought to be a very close relationship between the teaching of the Church as an activity and its teaching as a corpus of truths and values. Consider the disparity between the words proclaimed and the action of proclaiming them in these examples: I may say in a very dull voice: 'This is a very exciting subject.' Or I might organize a panel of five male theologians to speak on the topic, 'The importance of giving to women an equal role in theology'. Or the Central Administration of a religious congregation might discuss their latest Chapter documents on option for the poor, while eating a lavish meal cooked by a poorly paid domestic servant.

The Church's proclaimed principles on justice and peace should be the expression of the operating principles that shape the institutions and procedures of the official Church. But suppose there were a flagrant

disparity between this official teaching and the way the Church lives, acts, and organizes itself, it is obvious that the official teaching would be lacking in credibility. I believe that in such a situation the teaching would not only lack credibility but that it would be incoherent, contradictory, and meaningless. The primary mode in which such truth is communicated is by witness. If the truth is not proclaimed by being lived, then it is not proclaimed at all. Words without witness are not truth. They are mere rhetoric and hypocrisy, a counter-witness to the truth.

What I have just said may sound radical, seeming to give priority to praxis over doctrine. That sounds like liberation theology for some Church people today - and that has been labelled dangerous. I am simply repeating what Pope Paul VI said in Evangelii Nuntiandi: 'The proclamation of the Gospel must take place above all by witness', (E.N. 21; cf 41). The proclamation in words is to make explicit and unequivocal the truth already communicated by witness (E.N. 22 and 42). Furthermore, the Epistle of St. James provides very strong Scriptural grounds for insisting on the priority of lived truth over proclaimed truth: to rely on the spoken word alone is to look in the mirror but then forget what one saw (1:22-24); it is not merely useless but even demonic, for it means having the same kind of faith as the demons (2:14-24).

## 2. THE PAST HUNDRED YEARS

1886-1961: During the first three quarters of that century, from 1886 to 1961, there was a high degree of consistency between what the Church proclaimed in words and what it stood for in practice, both in its own life and in its relationship with civil society on issues of justice and peace.

(1) In the pre-Vatican II era the Church's teaching on authority gave little recognition to the right of people to participate in the making of decisions that affected them. This teaching was reflected in the practical sphere by the very authoritarian style of leadership exercised by most of those who held authority in the Church.

(2) Prior to 1961 there was a rather one-sided insistence on the right to private property as a basic element in the social teaching of the Church. This proclaimed truth was matched by the lived truth, namely, an open hostility to all forms of socialism.

(3) Pius XI acknowledged that his encyclical Quadragesimo Anno paid 'benevolent attention' to the Italian corporative-sindicalist system. For thirty years after that (from 1931 to 1961) the Church's social teaching looked with favour on this model of what was called 'vocational organization' (eg. Salazar's Portugal was presented as a model of how society should be organized). This leaning towards one aspect of the fascist political philosophy became an element not only in the proclaimed social teaching of the Church but in its practical approach. During this period the Church was far more hostile to left-wing philosophies and politicians than to those on the right.

(4) Leo XIII had a great fear of civil disorder; this led him to abandon the mediaeval teaching that would allow Christians to resist a tyrannical ruler. He taught that even persistent abuse of power by unjust rulers could never justify rebellion. This official teaching was matched by a rather escapist spirituality promoted in practice by the Church - a spirituality which encouraged oppressed people to obey and submit rather than to struggle for justice.



There was consistency, however, between the Church's officially proclaimed truth and its attitude shown in its actions. The proclaimed principles were linked to the practical policies adopted by the Vatican. The official teaching provided a justification for the policies.

1961-1986: Over the past twenty-five years the Church has had to face a new problem arising from the changed emphasis in **official Church** teaching on justice and peace. A rather wide gap began to open up between the new proclaimed teaching and the teaching embodied in the Church's own attitudes and institutions. The word was no longer the obvious expression of the lived witness of the Church's own life. To the extent that such a gap persists it makes the Church's teaching on justice and peace incoherent, meaningless, and even a counter-witness to truth.

The fact that the gap exists is already something of which we can be proud for it shows that the present teaching of the Church on justice and peace is not just a reflection of the church's practical policy and a rationalization for it. The gap between theory and practice has opened up precisely because Pope John and Vatican II and, above all, the 1971 Synod of bishops really listened to prophetic voices and through them allowed the Spirit to challenge the Church.

There are three ways in which the Church can react. The first is an inauthentic way: the gap can be narrowed by trimming down the official teaching so that it becomes largely an ideological justification for the Church's quasi-political policies. The second is also inauthentic: to substitute rhetoric for action so that the Church becomes a mere verbal champion of justice and peace. The third is the only authentic way to acknowledge that in many ways the Church itself stands under the judgement of its own teaching, and to undertake the painful task of correcting our inadequacies and failures.

That is precisely what the 1971 Synod of Bishops did. The Synod document 'Justice in the World' contains the following striking passage:

*While the Church is bound to give witness to justice she recognises that anyone who ventures to speak to people about justice must first be just in their eyes. Hence we must undertake an examination of the modes of acting and of the possessions and life-style found within the Church herself. (40)*

The 1971 Synod document makes the challenge very explicit. It indicates that there is need to look again at the way in which certain categories of people are treated in the Church: lay employees, the laity as a whole, women in general, women religious, people involved in judicial procedures (41-45). Above all it insists on the right to participation - the right of ordinary members of the Church to be involved in its decision-making processes (46). The Synod Fathers were not content to make exhortations. They made a very practical proposal:

*that a serious study of justice in the Church be made by a mixed commission of men and women, religious and lay people, of differing situations and competence'. (43).*

That proposal was made by the Synod fifteen years ago; there is no evidence that it has yet been acted upon.

### 3. MOMENT OF TRUTH

This present moment, twenty years after Vatican II, is a moment of truth for the Church. We have now had time to allow the full implications of the Council to sink in. The body of teaching on justice and peace has been worked out fairly comprehensively. What remains is the challenge of trying to live by it. That is why, now more than ever before, this teaching of the Church has become a sign of contradiction for the Church itself. There are difficulties.

Ecclesiastical and political worlds. The first major difficulty concerns the relationship between the ecclesiastical and the political worlds. Church leaders and many ordinary Christians are severely tempted to allow the Church to be drawn into the East-West confrontation. In practice, this would mean colluding to some extent with pro-Western regimes which are authoritarian and oppressive. To do so would be to abandon the new direction established by Pope John, confirmed by the Council, and worked out with great cost especially in the Third World over the past twenty years. And it is important to remember that what matters most is not strong affirmations of human rights and ringing condemnations of oppression. Far more important than such words are the practical ways in which the Church can support oppressed people struggling for their human rights - or can distance itself from them.

Justice within the Church: The second major difficulty concerns justice within the Church itself.

Can we ourselves find ways to encourage those with power implemented? Can we ourselves find ways to encourage those with power in the Church to trust the ordinary members? Can we help to set up effective structures and procedures in which all Christians will share in decision-making? Will we ensure for lay people, for women, for religious congregations, for priests, and even for diocesan bishops, the opportunity to exercise their full responsibility as disciples of Jesus, sharers in his work as prophet, priest, and king? To put it in a nutshell, will we help the Church to bridge the gap between its proclamation and its witness? These are responsibilities we must not evade.

### CONCLUSION

To draw this paper to a close I venture to share with you a little light that came to me as I was preparing the material. It struck me that God has two special means or instruments which he gives to his Church, to help it to develop its theoretical and its practical teaching on issues of justice and peace. The first instrument is the prophetic figure - people like Pope John XXIII, Dom Helder Camera, Archbishop Oscar Romero, the two Rosemarys (Rosemary Reuther and Rosemary Haughton) Father Arrupe, and Gustavo Gutierrez. These are successors to the prophets of old; and they often meet the same fate.

The second instrument of God is the communal discernment process. Amazing things can happen when Church leaders at any level come together with the specific purpose of listening for the voice of the Spirit and of reading the signs of the times - provided of course that they are given the opportunity to engage in an unhindered process of discerning together. What comes out of such gatherings may be much more radical than the average opinions of those who went in. We saw this happen

at Vatican II and in the 1971 Synod. We saw it at Medellin and more recently in the joint pastoral letters of the bishops of the United States. Many of you will have experienced it in your own Chapters and Assemblies.

I pray that God will continue to send us prophets to challenge us in our complacency and to comfort us in our trials. I also pray that our Church will make more effective use of communal discernment to enable us to hear the word of the Lord spoken through the voices and lives of the prophets.

- end -

---

CHRETIENS ET MUSULMANS DANS LES TEXTES  
DANS L'HISTOIRE ET DANS LA VIE

---

COURS D'ETE

AU

PONTIFICIO ISTITUTO  
DI STUDI ARABI E D'ISLAMISTICA

Piazza di S. Apollinare, 49  
00186 Roma  
Tel. 656.11.31 - 656.15.92

30 JUIN - 17 JUILLET 1986

BUT et ESPRIT

Ce cours d'été est destiné aux Chrétiens qui sont déjà engagés dans la rencontre et le service des Musulmans, en vue d'un meilleur dialogue à partir de ce qu'ils savent de la foi et de la vie de ces mêmes Musulmans.

PROFESSEURS

Père Maurice BORRMANS, PISAI  
Père Justo LACUNZA, PISAI  
Père Armand GARON, PISAI  
Soeur May NAJM, PISAI  
Sr. M.Thérèse HIRSCH, PISAI

Demandes de registration: avant le 15 Avril 1986

---

---

CATHOLIC APPROACHES TO RELIGIONS:  
DEVELOPMENT AND OTHER TENSIONS

---

Paul F. Knitter

(Dans cet article qui donne à réfléchir, Paul F. Knitter étudie l'évolution de l'attitude de l'Eglise et des théologiens à l'égard des autres religions. Cette évolution est caractérisée par le passage de la position "hors de l'Eglise, pas de salut", à celle de Karl Rahner, après Vatican II, selon laquelle les autres religions sont ou peuvent être des voies du salut et sont donc positivement contenues dans le dessein salvifique de Dieu.

Vingt ans après Vatican II, les théologiens qui sont engagés dans le dialogue avec le Judaïsme et les grandes religions de l'Orient et du Tiers monde essaient généralement de montrer comment les chrétiens, en affirmant clairement le rôle salvifique universel du Christ, sans revendiquer cependant son caractère normatif. Leur approche des non chrétiens est théocentrique plutôt que christo-centrique. N.D.L.R)

---

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:  
FROM EXCLUSIVE TO INCLUSIVE ECCLESIOCENTRISM

From the start, Christian theologians have had a hard time reconciling God's universal will to save with the particular mediation of that will in Jesus, word, and church. The early fathers held to a fairly common opinion that an authentic revelation and possibility of salvation were available to all peoples. This opinion soon lost currency. Especially under the imposing influence of Augustine the prevalent attitude toward other religions from the fifth century through the Middle Ages (even for Aquinas) was that "outside the church there is no salvation". The Council of Florence (1442) officially declared that "no one, whatever almsgiving he has practiced, even if he has shed blood for the name of Christ, can be saved, unless he has remained in the bosom and unity of the Catholic Church."

From an Exclusive to an Inclusive understanding: The Council of Trent signaled a "radical change" in the exclusive ecclesiocentrism of the Middle Ages. Especially in light of the newly discovered peoples who had never heard of Christ, the council allowed that "baptism of desire" could admit into the church anyone who lived a moral life but could not receive baptism of water. This more optimistic attitude toward the "pagans" characterized, for the most part, Roman Catholic attitudes from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries. What took place was a significant shift in Catholic theology from an exclusive to an inclusive understanding of the church as the sole channel of grace. During the first half of the twentieth century, Catholic theologians came up with ingenious concepts to include within the church any trace of salvation outside it: saved non-Christians belonged to the "soul" of the church; they were "attached", "linked", "related" to the church; they were members "imperfectly", "tendentially", "potentially".

Historians often forget that this positive shift in Catholic attitudes toward "pagans" did not include a more positive attitude

toward pagan religions. Very few theologians ventured the assertion that universally available grace might be available through the religions. The experience of God's grace, always an ecclesial affair for Catholics, was evidently a private affair for pagans.

CONSTITUTIVE CHRISTOCENTRISM:  
CHRIST IN THE RELIGIONS (VATICAN II AND KARL RAHNER)

Vatican Council II continued the inclusive ecclesiocentrism of the previous period. While the council fathers reaffirmed that the church is necessary for salvation, they also, as it were, extended the universal possibility of salvation - even atheists could be saved. Yet the council, as is well known, took a definitely new turn when, for the first time in the history of official church statements, it praised individual world religions for the way they reflect "that Truth which enlightens every person". The majority of Catholic thinkers interpret the conciliar statements to affirm, implicitly but clearly, that the religions are ways of salvation. These theologians endorse the theology of religions elaborated by Karl Rahner, whose thought so strongly influenced the council's deliberations. In Rahner, and in his endorsers, we see another radical change in Catholic theology of religions.

The main ingredients in Rahner's optimistic assessment of other religions are well known. They are two: God's universal salvific will (grounding what Rahner terms a "salvific optimism" for all humanity) and humanity's essentially social nature. Combining the two ingredients; if God wills to grant grace to every person, this grace must take on a sociohistorical "body" in order to be really available; and among the most likely mediating bodies for grace are the religions. The religions therefore are or can be "grace-filled" ways of salvation and are "positively included in God's plan of salvation". What enables Rahner to draw this conclusion is his subtle but significant shift from ecclesiocentrism to Christocentrism.

Anonymous Christians: This shift is embodied in Rahner's much discussed model of anonymous Christianity (which, as his critics often forget, he intended only for Christian consumption, not for proclamation to outsiders). The model's first intent is to remind Christians that God's saving presence "is greater than man and the Church"; grace can, as it were, float free of the visible church and incarnate itself in other words and sacraments. But for Rahner, if grace is not bound to the church, it is bound to Christ. Jesus of Nazareth is the constitutive cause of all salvation. As the full and final manifestation of God's saving presence in history, he is both the cause (final cause) and the goal of every experience of God. Grace, therefore, is always Christ's, always oriented toward Christ and toward Christ's continued embodiment in the church. (In this sense, Rahner continues to claim the "necessity" of the church.) In the final analysis, then, the religions are incomplete without Christ; they must be fulfilled in him and his church; they are a *praeparatio evangelica*, a preparation for the gospel. This missionary mandate remains intact and is reinforced.

NORMATIVE CHRISTOCENTRISM:  
CHRIST ABOVE THE RELIGIONS (A NEW DIRECTION)

Although most contemporary Roman Catholic theologians readily accept the basics of the mainline approach to other religions, many are uneasy with the way it seems to judge religions before really

listening to them, especially by predefining them as anonymous Christians. This uneasiness has given rise to another realignment in Catholic attitudes toward religions; there is a shift beyond Vatican II and Rahner, toward a clearer recognition of the independent value and enduring mission of other faiths. The underlying, often implicit, theological foundation for this shift is a new understanding of Christ's (and the church's) salvific role.

Hans Kung speaks for many in his criticism of the anonymous-Christianity model. For Kung, this theory is but a "theological fabrication," intended to save the "infallible formula" of outside-the-church-no salvation. To view other believers as Christians without a name is an offense to them and an obstacle to Christians' ability genuinely to listen to what these others have to say. Kung urges Christians to admit, honestly, that the church is not necessary for salvation...he describes the religions as the "ordinary," or common, way to salvation, while Christianity makes up the "extraordinary," or special way.

Religious Pluralism: Other Roman Catholic theologians complement Kung's views when they suggest that perhaps it is not God's will that all peoples enter the Christian fold; perhaps "religious pluralism is the will of God for humanity." This implies that the other religions and Christianity may be parallel paths to salvation, with any final convergence reserved for the eschaton. In this view, the accepted image of the church as the "Sacrament of salvation" means that the primary mission of the church is not to bring redemption but "epiphany," not to win conversions to the church as the necessary means of salvation but to help build the broader kingdom of God as it takes shape within history. Furthering the kingdom might well mean making Buddhists better Buddhists.

Another aspect of this new shift among Catholic theologians is seen in their approach to dialogue. They suggest that Christians should speak with other believers not only to reveal points of agreement or conflict, not only to understand more profoundly what they (Christians) already have in Christ, but also to discover genuinely new pieces of the mosaic of God's universal revelation. Such a view implies that God has more to say than what was said in the Christian word.

...implicit in this new attitude toward other religions is a move away from understanding Christ as "the constitutive, unique ...mediator of salvation for all mankind." Just as Rahner no longer tied universal saving grace to the church, many Roman Catholic theologians no longer tie it to Christ. Therefore they feel no pressing need to identify other believers as anonymous Christians or to usher them into the church. Yet despite this Christological shift and its intent to let the religions stand on their own, all the theologians exploring this new direction continue to affirm Jesus Christ as God's normative and definitive revelation. Jesus and the gospel remain the "superior or ideal type, which can function to measure, correct, and judge others by its own standards."

This recognition of the independent validity of other religions, together with the continued affirmation of Christ/Christianity's normativeness, makes up what might be called a growing common opinion among Catholic theologians.

DIALOGICAL THEOCENTRISM: MANY  
RELIGIONS/PARTNERS IN GOD (A MINORITY VIEW)

Another group of Catholic thinkers, still a minority, detect a tension, even a contradiction, between the previous view's more positive approach to other faiths and its insistence on the normativeness of Christ. In trying to resolve this tension, these minority theologians epitomize the "great deal more ferment"...predicted in Catholic mission theology. These theologians, all of whom are veterans in the actual arena of inter-religious dialogue, try to show how Christians can encounter other believers with a clear affirmation of Christ's universal salvific role without having to claim his normativeness and finality. In somewhat greater detail, let us consider three examples of this new ferment.

1. Dialogue with Hinduism: Raimundo Panikkar is one of the most learned and experienced advocates of revised understanding of Christ and religions. Within the "ecumenical ecumenism" that he has promoted over the past two and a half decades, he has revised his earlier view that Christianity is "the end and plenitude of every religion." In the completely revised 1981 edition of his *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism* and in statements since the early 1970s, he affirms that no religion can enter the dialogue with claims of final or absolute normativeness. He now advocates "an authentically universal Christology," which makes use of traditional Logos Christology and presses the distinction between the Christ (Logos) and the historical Jesus, Christ/Logos is the universal bond between humanity/world and God - the self-communicating, unifying outreach of the Ultimate. As to the relation between Christ and Jesus, Panikkar states succinctly: "Christ the Savior is...not to be restricted to the merely historical figure of Jesus of Nazareth.... Though a Christian believes that 'Jesus is the Christ'...this sentence is not identical to 'the Christ is Jesus'..." From his own Christian and interreligious experience, Panikkar holds that Christians can allow for other historical names and manifestations of the Christ, without lessening their personal commitment to Jesus as the Christ or to the urgency of making him known to all. With such an approach, Christian mission consists both in witnessing and in being witnessed to.

2. Dialogue with Judaism: Another clear call for revisions in traditional views of Christ and other religions is sounded by Catholic theologians engaged in the dialogue with Judaism: Gregory Baum, Monika Hellwig, John Pawlikowski, Rosemary Ruether. While their particular perspectives differ, they are unanimous in insisting that insofar as Christian understanding of Christ has led to a "supersessionist," subordinating approach to Judaism, "our traditional Christology is severely inadequate" and must be "significantly rethought." In different ways, all of them appeal to Christians to modify their understanding of Christ as the final Messiah, that is, as he who has brought about the final, normative realization of the kingdom.

Baum argues that until the last days are upon us, all absolute, final assertions about Christ should be avoided. Hellwig points out that all Christian talk about Christ is religious, existential language that should not be turned into absolute, ontological claims for all peoples and times. Ruether proposes that the death and resurrection of Jesus be seen as a salvific paradigm of hope and transforming praxis that exists alongside other salvific paradigms.

Pawlikowski wants to safeguard the uniqueness of the Christ-event, which, he feels, Judaism would do well to recognize; but he also admits the uniqueness of Judaism, which must complement and complete Christianity. Again, all of these theologians hold that a relativizing of Jesus' finality does not lessen his universal relevance. In their minds, Christian commitment to and witness of Jesus remain robust.

3. Third World Mission Theologians: Some of the boldest proposals for a revision of approaches to other religions are sounded by Third World mission theologians such as Ignace Puthiadam, Henri Maurier, and Aloysius Pieris. Puthiadam and Maurier propose a model for mission and dialogue that recognizes unique, universally meaningful truth in each religion (and each "savior"); yet each "unique" religion or revealer is not excluded or relativized by the other, but essentially related to the other. All religions, in their real differences and otherness, are related to each other as a "coincidence of opposites"; they are in need of each other in order to carry on, together, their common pilgrimage toward the Divine Mystery, the "Source and Goal" that animates them all. The primary goal of mission, then, is not conversion (though that is not excluded), but mutual witnessing.

For Pieris the basis and framework for Christian mission and religious encounter should not be Christology (presupposing Christ to be either against or already within other religions) or theology (exploring whether/how other religions recognize God). Rather, Christian approaches to other faiths should be grounded in soteriology, in the "ineffable mystery of salvation," which for Pieris is the divine urge and impulse to liberate and generate "a new humanity"; All religions, including those of the East, share in and contribute to this liberating mystery, which is the only real "absolute" in religious encounter. Mission and dialogue should be based on collaboration with other believers in this mystery. Theological clarifications about the uniqueness of Jesus can follow.

This most recent shift in Roman Catholic theology of religions incorporates a clearly theocentric perspective. It is both distant from and yet continuous with the ecclesiocentrism and Christocentrism of earlier Catholic views. While continuing to affirm Jesus as a savior for all peoples of all times, together with the church as the community by which Jesus' presence and message is embodied through time, these Third World theologians see all religions as partners in a salvific dialogue in which not the church or Jesus, but God, the "mystery of salvation", is the final ground and goal and norm.

Paul F. Knitter is Professor of Theology at Xavier University, Cincinnati. He is the author of "Towards a Protestant Theology of Religions" (1974) and numerous journal articles on religious pluralism. His recent survey and evaluation of Christian attitudes toward other religions will be published by Orbis Books.

Ref. International Bulletin, Vol 8 No.2.  
6315 Ocean Ave, Ventour, New Jersey 08406 USA



## Readings Relevant to the text:

1. Schillebeeckx, "The Church and Mankind", *Concilium* 1 (1965); pp.36, 43-47; Rossano, "Christ's Lordship and Religious Pluralism in Roman Catholic Perspective", in *Christ's Lordship*, ed. Anderson and Stransky, pp.96-110; Dulles, *Models of Revelation* (New York: Doubleday, 1983), pp.189-92; McBrien, *Catholicism* (Oak Grove, Minn.: Winston Press, 1981), pp.269-71, 290; Ursula King, "Religion and the Future: Teilhard de Chardin's Analysis of Religion as a Contribution to Inter-Religious Dialogue," *Religious Studies?* (1971): 307-23.
2. Küng, *On Being a Christian* (New York: Doubleday, 1976), pp.97-98; "The World Religions in God's Plan of Salvation," in *Christian Revelation and World Religions* ed. Joseph Neuner (London: Burns & Oates, 1967), pp. 31-37, 51-53; H.R. Schlette, *Towards a Theology of Religions* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1965), pp.80-81.
3. Gregory Baum, "Christianity and Other Religions," *Cross Currents* 16 (1966): 461; Piet Schoonenberg, "The Church and Non-Christian Religions," in *The Evolving Church*, ed. D.Flanagan (Staten Island, N.Y.: Alba House, 1966), pp.97-99; Eugene Hillman, *The Wider Ecumenism* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1968), pp.60-61; Ignace Puthiadam, "Christian Faith and Life in a World of Religious Pluralism," *Concilium*, 135 (1980); 105-6.
4. Schlette, *Towards a Theology of Religions*, pp. 93-96; Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (New York: Seabury Press, 1972), pp.112-13, 119; Bühlmann, *The Chosen People* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1983), pp.207, 219-22; Camps, *Partners in Dialogue: Christianity and Other World Religions* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books 1983), pp.33-34, 48, 54, 113, 155; Thompson, "The Risen Christ, Trans-cultural Consciousness and the Encounter of the World Religions," *Theological Studies* 37 (1976): 381-409.
5. Panikkar, *The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books 1973), p.55; *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism* (Maryknoll, N.Y. Orbis Books, 1981), pp.75-96; "The Category of Growth in Comparative Religions," *Harvard Theological Review* 66 (1973): 113-40; "Christianity and World Religions," in *Christianity* (Patiala, India: Punjab Univ., 1969), pp.78-127.
6. Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide*, pp.249, 256; *To Change the World: Christology and Cultural Change* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 1981), pp 42-43.
7. Pieris, "The Place of Non-Christian Religions and Cultures in the Evolution of Third World Theology," in *Irruption of the Third World: Challenge to Theology*, ed. Virginia Fabella and Sergio Torres (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books 1983), pp.114-22; "Speaking of the Son of God in Non-Christian Cultures, e.g. in Asia," *Concilium* 153 (1982): 66-67.

THE APPROPRIATION AND REJECTION OF MARXISM  
IN LIBERATION THEOLOGY

---

John Fuellenbach, SVD

PART II

*(Dans cette deuxième et dernière partie de sa conférence, le Père Fuellenbach aborde les fondements Métaphysiques de la Théologie de la Libération. Le rapport entre "salut" et "Libération" et entre "histoire" et le "Royaume" constitue la clé du conflit. Le débat sur la Théologie de la Libération tourne autour de deux modes de pensée: l'un personnaliste et néo-thomiste, et l'autre hégélien et dialectique. Tous deux peuvent se retrouver dans l'Évangile. D'un côté, on met l'accent sur le "Royaume à venir", de l'autre, on parle du Royaume déjà présent dans le monde. Est-il possible de surmonter le conflit entre ces deux attitudes?)*

5. THE METAPHYSICAL PRESUPPOSITIONS OF LIBERATION THEOLOGY

What really remains the basic background of the Theology of Liberation is the Hegelian approach to reality or Hegel's world-view. This is rarely reflected upon and therefore, many argue that Liberation Theologians make statements constantly without ever coming to grips with their own philosophical presuppositions. The accusation has its point. Many Liberation Theologians do not reflect deeply enough on their own frame of reference out of which they do theology. Biblical statements are just not enough.

There is good reason to show that the organizing principle of the final synthesis of Marxism and Christian faith really seems to be Hegel's dialectic. Hegel saw the world and history as the unfolding and the coming about of the universal Spirit into its own. History is the Absolute on its way to consciousness. This it achieves through emptying itself into the finite. History is a process in which the Absolute Spirit becomes a concrete totality through the inner mediation of finite spirits. The essence and immanent telos of spirit is freedom. The destiny of states and "historical world" figures is to inspire and effect the self-liberation of finite spirits. For Hegel, history is a history of liberation with a twofold meaning: in its historical content, it is political; in its absolute finality it is also religious and transcendent. The one cannot exist without the other. (Min.448).

6. RELATION BETWEEN SALVATION AND LIBERATION IN LIBERATION THEOLOGY

The relation of salvation to liberation is internal, not external; liberation makes salvation concrete and effective, but salvation itself as a totality effects and inspires liberation as its selfconcretion.

Salvation embraces all human reality, transforms it, and leads it to its fullness in Christ. Nothing escapes this process: nothing is

outside the pale of the action of Christ and the Spirit. Those who diminish the meaning of salvation are really those who limit it to the strictly 'religious' sphere unaware of the universality of the process.

As Segundo has it: "If an absolute is unwilling to immerse itself in the relative, it ceases to be absolute; indeed it fails to attain even the value of that which is 'relatively' alive and operative." The salvific process gives human history its profound unity, and sees this as a history in which Christ's liberation is at work. (Gutierrez: Theology 332-39).

#### 7. LINK BETWEEN HISTORY AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD

The question remains how history is linked with the Kingdom process. All will agree that a total discontinuity between Kingdom and general history cannot be maintained in view of the witness of scripture and our own experience of God's presence in the world. Yet, the difficulty of the "how" remains. The official magisterium fears that the Theology of Liberation goes too far in its stress on the Kingdom present.

In the "Instruction on Certain Aspects of 'Theology of Liberation'" Card. Ratzinger writes: "Thus there is the tendency to identify the Kingdom of God and its growth with the human liberation movement, and to make history itself the object of its own development as a process of the self-redemption of man by means of the class struggle." (IX,3)

It is interesting that the official Church has never really clarified for herself how to define this relationship. The Church's own documents contain both aspects. In *Gaudium et Spes*, 39, we read: "Earthly progress must be carefully distinguished from the growth of Christ's kingdom. Nevertheless, to the extent that the former can contribute to the better ordering of human society, it is of vital concern to the Kingdom of God." And in the *Profession of Faith* of Paul VI (1968) we find similar statements. While the Pope is eager to make sure the Kingdom "consists in an ever more profound knowledge of the unfathomable riches of Christ", he still urges all "to contribute....to the welfare of their earthly city, to promote justice, peace and fraternal concord among men", and to help specially "the poorest and most unfortunate". (Neuner/Dupuis: *The Christian Faith*, 39/20).

*Evangelii Nuntiandi* speaks of people seeking the kingdom, "building it up, and implementing it in their lives, (13) and again: "For men, (and women) created to God's image, received a mandate to subject to themselves the earth and all that it contains, and to govern the world with justice and holiness..."(34).

There remains a certain ambiguity and yet how will one interpret terms like "sign" or "flowering" or "building up" if not to mean that a more just world is a sign of the growth of the Kingdom? None of the major Liberation Theologians, ever identified the inner earthly processes with the Kingdom of God. They all keep what is called the "eschatological proviso" of present history. None of them see the fullness of the Kingdom in an affluent society. The third world problem is not that the Kingdom has not yet come in its fulness, but that even the 'provisio' of the Kingdom is formally denied. (Sobriano *True Church*: 278-79).

The Kingdom as eschatological fulfilment has been traditionally related only to history which nourishes our personal faith. The other, general history, has been disregarded as devoid of eschatological significance. Lonergan defines revelation as God's say in the unfolding of human-kind's becoming. (Conversion: 10)

The relation of the Church to a graced world? Liberation Theology sees the Church herself as servant, - not at the centre of the stage but at the service of a graced world. The Church is then defined as the community which knows through revelation the full meaning of what is going on in the history of the world at large, - the community of those committed to witness to what it is to be fully human. (Laishley III:129). Faith makes three specific contributions to the work of political liberation:-

Firstly, it provides an effective inner motivation of the theological order for engaging in the praxis of liberation.

Secondly, faith provides a critical principle. It not only makes us critically sensitive to the presence of sin in oppression and injustice; it also makes the praxis of liberation critical to its own motives, strategies and temptations to absolutize itself.

Thirdly, faith provides hope against despair through the conviction that a just society is something possible.

If salvation thus mediates liberation as its totalizing principle, liberation on its part, as an inner demand of salvation itself, makes salvation historically effective. It enters salvation history as its concretizing principle. Here lies the most original aspect of Liberation Theology and the closest to the Marxian movement. By stressing total liberation, Liberation Theology reacts against the traditional tendency of limiting the scope of salvation to the religious dimension. By emphasizing the political dimension of liberation as a means to make salvation historically and socially concrete it reacts to the traditional tendency to stress the importance of ultimate ends, the transcendence of salvation, and to neglect the concrete means and ways to make such ends effective and actual.

Salvation must become effective by liberating the totality of human existence from the reign of sin in all its dimensions. As the ultimate fundamental alienation, sin cannot be touched in itself, in the abstract. It can be attacked only in concrete historical situations, in particular instances of alienation. In subordinating the 'totalistic' ambition of Marx's materialist dialectic to the equally totalitarian imperative of Christian salvation, Liberation Theology has brought Marx into the inner chamber of Christianity; he no longer remains outside as an enemy. Is Liberation Theology going to succeed in keeping him domesticated and tamed while also keeping his cry for the concrete alive and vital? (Min. 450-51).

## 8. THE TWO OPPOSING POSITIONS IN THE CHURCH TODAY

From this point of view one can see that the present conflict between the Vatican and Liberation Theology is a conflict between two different modes of thinking. The Vatican's position is either 'personalist' or 'Neo-Thomist'. Liberation Theologians, on the other hand, are Hegelian Marxists in their basic "Denkform". The former are concerned with the transcendence of the personal over the social

and of Christian Faith over the historical. In fact, they locate the distinctiveness of Christianity in this very transcendence. In contrast, Liberation Theologians try to see a dialectical, historical, inner mediation between transcendence and history, between the personal and the social.

In terms of the New Testament one could distinguish these two views by saying: the first stresses the NOT YET of the Kingdom and develops from here a corresponding world-view, and the second one puts the stress on the ALREADY of God's Kingdom now and arrives at a different understanding of inner earthly reality. The problem between the ALREADY and the NOT YET of the Kingdom is well known. It deals with the relationship between the present and the future elements in the teaching of Jesus concerning the Kingdom.

On the level of political involvement, the personalists are either frankly dualistic or maintain at best a duality of faith and history that is always on the verge of relapsing into dualism. To the extent that God's final shalom for the world and creation is placed at the future coming of Christ, outside the current of history, it is more logical for them to speak of salvation in exclusively personal and apolitical ways.

It has been argued lately that both conceptions can be found in the New Testament itself. Matthew's gospel is quoted to support the NOT YET position while Luke seems to support more the ALREADY position concerning the Kingdom of God now. (Wall: 3-4).

#### THE BASIC STRESS OF THE "NOT YET" POSITION

This way of looking at history and the world has been called millenarian eschatology. It reveals the following features:

1. A decidedly pessimistic view of historical change; history and its corrupted institutions will only get worse. Only the in-breaking of the future Kingdom will be able to change the world.
2. The emphasis must be placed on the transcendence of God who will intervene at the end of history to bring about the hoped-for perfect world.
3. A distinction is made between the realities of the consummated Kingdom and any experience we might have of it in the present. In this interim period, the community of faith experiences God's Kingdom "personally, inwardly, spiritually and vertically."
4. God's transcendence is preserved without dilution. He is "the heavenly Father" who reigns now from his "heavenly Kingdom" in the hearts of his disciples. Their mission is not to bring about structural changes but to work for spiritual change and not to attempt to usurp God's work on his future day.

#### THE BASIC STRESS OF THE "ALREADY" POSITION

Against such a view Liberation Theology's emphasis is on the ALREADY; the now of salvation is intensified, the power of the risen Lord is experienced as a power to set free particularly those who need liberation most. A new world order of basic justice and peace is no mere utopian dream but a possibility for whose realization we are all responsible. What is most distinctive in the New Testament concept of

the universe is its christological emphasis. The world was created by God through the Word (John 1:10), and without him nothing that has been made was made (John 1:3). The Christ whom the gospel proclaims as the agent of redemption is also the agent of God's creation. And he is at the same time the goal towards which all creation is directed (Col. 1:16). The gospel implies the hope of "a new heaven and a new earth" (Rev 21; 2 Pet. 3:13). (Padilla: 2).

The second argument starts with the risen Lord. There is no basis in the gospel for limiting to the personal and private sphere of life the fulfilment of the promise of a new creation inaugurated on the first Easter morning. As God's Word in the incarnation assumed without exception all that is human, earthly and cosmic, so God's Son in the resurrection has begun to transfigure the whole of creation. (Clarke: 212-14).

In a practical way, situating God's Kingdom and the blessings of his salvation in the future of human history conceals an "inability to take seriously and to work for actual radical changes in man's present position". Futuristic eschatology only postpones the triumph of God and effectively prevents his salvation from being realized historically.

#### 9. CONCLUSION AND OUTLOOK

The conflict is ultimately a conflict between two modes of thought, between personalism, existentialism and Neo-thomism and the thought of Hegel and Marx. While theology has managed to come to grips with the enlightenment challenge of critical reason the question today is will it also manage to survive the second, potentially far more explosive phase and its demands for critical praxis? (Min:454).

Can the conflict be overcome? At the moment it seems not. The positions and viewpoints will most probably harden and we might have to live for the time being with the tension this creates. What is important is that both sides remain in dialogue, open to listen to each other's arguments and not shutting themselves into their own frames of reference. Liberation Theology is definitely a challenge to all theology and could be regarded as an "anti-environment" for traditional theology. (Hennelly: 709). In the light of what was said before, that the Church never really clarified the relation between Kingdom and history, we could say that the challenge which the Ratzinger Document poses to the Theology of Liberation becomes the very challenge that Liberation Theology poses to the Church.

There is a real need to explicitate once again in the light of current cultural, psychological and sociological findings basic concepts like grace, salvation, history and the various movements of the present. The question is not a matter of "we have the truth and you have to listen". The truth is something we can find only in listening to each other, knowing that none can ever have it without humility and conversion.

As one Liberation Theologian put it: if there is nothing we can agree on at the moment let us start with confessing first of all that we are sinners standing in dire need of conversion. On that we can all surely agree.

The real challenge of Liberation Theology is this: proclaiming

new ideas or denouncing present situations as unjust and dehumanizing, while at the same time avoiding the real struggle to change structural causes which ultimately create exploitation and oppression will not bring about change, no matter how prophetically it is done.

#### THE NECESSARY SPIRITUALITY

The Theology of Liberation demands a particular spirituality. Option for the exploited and oppressed is simply not natural. It is important that in such a commitment the God of Jesus Christ is experienced as one who came to set us free through his suffering with the poor. It is he who gives us the strength and courage to undertake for the poor, the "liberating praxis" which always includes the oppressor as well, and refrains from hatred and violence against those who cause the situation of "institutional violence". Without such deep christian spirituality, orientating itself constantly to Jesus Christ, one cannot live this commitment without ending up in total frustration and disillusionment as we have seen so often.

A commitment to the poor does not guarantee that we will be successful in the sense that we will finally create a just society - the Kingdom of God on earth. If Liberation Theology is capable of such a spirituality, then the accusation so easily hurled against it, that it is nothing but a "revolutionary kind of praxis, a la Karl Marx" will be utterly wrong; without such a deep biblical spirituality it will not, and even should not, survive. But with such a spirituality, it is a real challenge and will lead, of necessity, to a new way of doing theology in all fields of traditional theologizing.

#### THE FINAL QUESTION

What is the key to the correct understanding of the Word of God for our time and in our situation today?

Liberation Theology would say: Only a true commitment to a liberating praxis on behalf of our oppressed and exploited brothers and sisters will enable us to see and to experience who the God of Jesus Christ really is. The word of God is disclosed only from such a commitment. Therefore, theology, talk about God, can only start and be carried out from such a presupposition if it wants to be authentic. (Fuellenbach:91).

#### SOURCE MATERIAL

- Jorge Alvarez, "Sobre la Teologia de la Liberation", Christus 50 (1985) pp. 11-16
- Jose M. Bonino, Christians and Marxists, Grand Rapids (1976) pp.91-94
- L. Boff, Teologia del cautiverio y de la liberacion, Paulinas, Madrid (1978)
- Th. E. Clarke, "The Kingdom of Justice", The Way (July 1984) pp.208-216
- J. Fuellenbach, "Some basic remarks about the Theology of Liberation", Sedos Bulletin, March 1985 pp. 84-91

- G. Gutierrez, The Power of the Poor in History, Orbis, New York (1983)
- G. Gutierrez A Theology of Liberation, Orbis, New York (1973)
- A. T. Hennelly, "Theological Method: The Southern Exposure" Theological Studies 38 (1977) pp. 709-735
- J. Laishley, "The Theology of Liberation I and II", The Way 17 (1977) pp 217-228; 301-311 "Theology of Liberation III", The Way 18 (1978) pp. 128-140.
- A.K. Min, "The Vatican, Marxism, and Liberation Theology", Cross Currents (1984/85) pp.439-455
- A. Moser, "Sin as a negation of the Kingdom", Theology Digest 30 (1982) pp. 27-30
- C. Rene padilla, Mission between the times (1985) pp. 1-18
- R.W. Wall, "Eschatologies of the Peace Movement", Biblical Theology Bulletin 25 (1985) pp. 3-11

- end -

---

THE CHURCH IN HARMONY WITH CULTURE  
JOHN PAUL II IN SHILLONG

---

*As Pope John Paul II arrived at the panoramic scene tribals from the Khasi hills broke into a harvest dance called shad suk mynsiem. Referring to diversity as an integral part of Christianity in every culture the Pope said "God's work can be known in this region of north-east India...Each group has within it, a longstanding tradition of God's communication with mankind through sings and symbols that have assumed a sacred character." He quoted from Vatican II: "In intimate communion with the universal church let your local churches take to themselves, in a wonderful exchange the perennial values contained in the wisdom, customs and traditions of your peoples so that Christian life will be adapted to the mentality and character of each culture,".*

*He urged missionaries to ensure that the church be absorbed and assimilated into the local traditions and customs. In the ceremony, local customs and traditions were integrated into the structure of the Holy Mass. "The Gospel in this area," the Pope said, "is not for dominating but for serving and this must be incarnated in your cultures without doing violence to them. In this process Christian traditions both enrich and in turn are enriched by the values of the peoples of these hills and plains and the proclamation of the Gospel should continue in harmonious dialogue with local traditions".*



---

MISSION IN DIALOGUE WITH ANCESTRAL RELIGIONS

---

*(We publish this extract from the well known "Church in the World" section of the The Tablet of January 11, 1986 as a comment on our article on "Interfaith Dialogue with particular Reference to Islam" in the last issue of SEDOS bulletin.*

*In 1975 the Brazilian Bishops founded the INDIGENOUS MISSIONARY COUNCIL (CIMI) to carry out an apostolate to the indigenous, largely Indian, peoples of Brazil. Vatican Council II had excluded indigenous, ancestral/tribal religions when acknowledging that the great world religions already possessed the seeds of revelation. This was a decision, not an oversight. How far the Church has gone in changing and rectifying this attitude, in consequence of the demands of interculturalisation and contextualisation, can be seen, for example in the statements of Pope John Paul II during his recent visits to Africa and Asia.*

*The change was already evident during the Bishops' Synod on Mission in 1971 but the increasing awareness of the depth of the challenge involved in dialogue with indigenous religions is well stated by the Bishop Tomas Balduino, O.P., quoted in the Tablet. "To eliminate these people's religion, would be to kill the tribes from within, because here they find their most fundamental reference point, as we do in Christianity." Ed.).*

-----

"We understood our original challenge to be that of evangelising while standing in solidarity with indigenous peoples, but this was eventually questioned within the bishops' conference itself," said Bishop Balduino. Some asked whether this was explicit evangelisation or whether it was not pre-evangelisation, a preparation for evangelisation at a later date. Many still understood evangelisation as the direct announcement of the gospel message, leading to the profession of faith and involvement in the Church's sacramental life. "This approach had changed as our relationship with the Indians has deepened, and now the Church has absolute respect for their religion."

What was involved, the bishop explained, was an ecumenism that respected religion even when it was not Christian and acknowledged its gospel value and its theological value as God's tool in leading these peoples towards liberation and salvation.

"If we are to be consistent," Bishop Balduino went on, "this demands not just total respect but also the decision to become part of this world and to come to know it deeply. This effort can lead us to communion with these peoples, to deep immersion in their lives, and to the conviction that their religion is a cultural value so essential to the group's stability that it cannot be changed in any way without destroying the group.

"To eliminate these peoples' religion would be to kill the tribes from within, because here they find their most fundamental reference point, as we do in Christianity. Therefore the most efficacious way missionaries can show esteem for this world is to strive to immerse

themselves not only in the language, culture and customs of a people but also in their religious experience - not forsaking the Gospel but rather deepening it and at the same time recognising that this good news speaks through every language and is made flesh in all cultures."

Comparison with Islam: Bishop Balduino acknowledged that it undoubtedly required great discernment on the part of the missionaries to be able sincerely to affirm the religious values of indigenous groups and to understand them as possible forms taken by the good news revealed by God to all peoples. He compared ecumenical contact with the indigenous religions of Brazil to that of the Catholic Church with Islam. "Theological reflection tends to see the religious world of Islam as adequate for creating a relationship with God," he said. "While the Catholic Church has developed a relationship of respect with Islam, it has maintained much more destructive attitudes towards indigenous belief systems. Perhaps this is because Islam has always been able to offer strong resistance, even in political terms.

"Native religions undoubtedly contain impurities and ambiguities, and because of their immersion in the community missionaries feel able to aid in questioning them. For reasons of survival or to preserve a demographic balance, for example, some groups have the custom of killing certain infants: it appears to be an extremely strong religious obligation, and many anthropologists have preferred not to interfere. But some missionaries have enabled the custom to be modified without endangering the group's inner balance."

Ref. The Tablet, 11th January, 1986.

- end -

---

BOOK NOTES

---

We draw the attention of our readers to the following recent publications from Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York 10545.

Kosuke Koyama

MOUNT FUJI AND MOUNT SINAI: A CRITIQUE OF IDOLS. 1985, pp.278. \$12.95.

James H. Cone

MY SOUL LOOKS BACK. 1986, pp.144. \$8.95

James H. Cone

A BLACK THEOLOGY OF LIBERATION. 1986, pp.195. \$9.95

Enrique Dussel

PHILOSOPHY OF LIBERATION. 1986, pp.215, \$10.95

Deane William Fenn

THIRD WORLD LIBERATION THEOLOGIES: AN INTRODUCTORY SURVEY. 1986, pp.150. \$10.95

Guillermo Cook

THE EXPECTATION OF THE POOR: LATIN AMERICAN BASIC ECCLESIAL COMMUNITIES IN PROTESTANT PERSPECTIVE. 1985, pp.316, \$13.95

Renny Golden and Michael McConnell

SANCTUARY: THE NEW UNDERGROUND RAILROAD. 1986, pp.214, \$7.95.

Richard Henry Drummond

TOWARD A NEW AGE IN CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY. 1985, pp.258, \$12.95.

Kenneth Cragg

THE CALL OF THE MINARET. 1985, pp.358, \$13.95

Pastoral Team of Bambamarca

VAMOS CHAMINANDO: A PERUVIAN CATECHISM. 1985, pp.373, \$14.95

Juan Luis Segundo

Vol. II THE HISTORICAL JESUS OF THE SYNOPTICS 1985, pp.230, \$9.95

Robert Gnuse

YOU SHALL NOT STEAL: COMMUNITY AND PROPERTY IN THE BIBLICAL TRADITION 1985, pp.162 \$9.95.

Rubem Alves

PROTESTANTISM AND REPRESSION: A Brazilian Case Study. 1985, pp.215, \$11.95.

COMING EVENTS

---

CONSULTATION ON NICARAGUA

---

An informal sharing on the present situation in Nicaragua specially for those SEDOS Societies who have members working in Nicaragua. Others welcome.

PLACE :: SEDOS SECRETARIAT  
DATE : TUESDAY, 18th MARCH , 1986  
TIME : 16.00 - 18.00 hrs.

---

SOLIDARITY IN CRISIS MANAGEMENT

---

Sponsored by SEDOS and J & P Commission UISG/USG. This is a continuation of the initial meeting held on Friday 28th February, 1986 at the SVD Generalate. Fr. Willie Frankenhuizen, SMA., will facilitate the group in discussing the impact on the community and the individual in the cases of arrest, disappearance or expulsion. The "BANZER PLAN" - a systematic programme for persecuting the Church will be examined during this session.

PLACE : SVD Generalate  
DATE : Wednesday, March 26th  
TIME : 16.00 - 18.00 hrs.

---

THIRD WORLD THEOLOGIES IN RELATION TO THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

---

PLACE : Villa Cavalletti.  
DATE : Tuesday, May 6, 18.00 hrs.  
to  
Saturday, May 10, 14.00 hrs.  
SPEAKERS: Jean Marc Ela - Cameroun,  
José Marins - Brazil  
Michael Amaladoss, SJ - India  
FACILITATOR: Sr. Kit Collins, RSCJ.  
REGISTRATION: Write or Phone: SEDOS Secretariat