

Vol. 27 No. 5

15th May

SEDOS

bulletin 1995

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EDITORIAL

In this number of SEDOS, we are glad to offer you in an extended first part a conference of the Brazilian theologian, CLODOVIS BOFF, OSM., held for SEDOS here in Rome during Easter-week. The missionary congress of the Latin American Church to be held in July in Brazil, was for us a welcome invitation to reflect on the 'present hour' of the Church in Latin America. What do challenges like: New Evangelisation, Option for The Poor, Communion and Participation mean for our missionary congregations?

Fr P.J. STAMER insists in his article on Islam in Africa, that, however difficult it may be at times, there is no other possible way for the Church than dialogue.

Fr ANTO KAROKARAN, CMI., proposes some concrete steps for incarnational evangelisation as a method of missionary activity.

Fr JOHN M. WALIGGO, known through his collaboration for the new Ugandan Constitution, looks critically at African experiences with Democracy and formulates some conditions which may lead to greater success.

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It was with deep sadness and a great sense of loss that we learned of the death of Eileen on Sunday 3 April 1995 in Warri, Nigeria. She was yet another victim of the violence that prevails today. Some robbers came to the pastoral Center where she worked and took the car and water pump among other things. Without any doubt they did not want a witness and so Eileen had to die. She was found around midday by Christopher the cook, with whom she worked for several years and to whom she often entrusted the Center when she was absent.

Eileen has been in Nigeria for the past fourteen years and began the Center in Agbarrow, Warri Diocese. Before that, we taught together in Zambia. My memory of her is of a woman of faith, a person who did not say much but when she spoke we heard pearls of wit and wisdom. Eileen loved her work as teacher of home science and formation of women was high on her priority list. She had one special hobby - reading poetry and could recite at length in Irish or in English. It was a joy to travel with her as she supplied the words of a song or spoke her favorite verses from Pearse, Yeats, Wilde or Wordsworth.

Bishop Fitzgibbon, Bishop of Warri, has already spoken of Eileen as one of our modern day martyrs - saying that in her last moments she must have walked the steps of the Way of the Cross. While our faith does not banish our sense of loss, that same faith invites us to reflect on life as Gift. Eileen's life was a gift to many. We now render to God the gift she was for each and all.

Patricia McMenamin, OLA



The Church in Latin America

between perplexity and creativity

Clodovis Boff, OSM

The Latin American Church is important not only because it has almost half the world's Catholics, but also because of the pastoral and theological dynamics to be found there. My presentation will be on three points, with well-known titles that have become almost classical: 1) new evangelisation, 2) option for the poor, and 3) communion and participation. At the end I will touch on some specific questions that are now emerging as new.

1 - New evangelisation

This is the main theme of the present Holy Father's pontificate. All his documents and his travels are in the spirit of this theme. It was also the central topic of the Fourth Latin American congress in Santo Domingo. What is behind this new evangelisation? What concrete situation does it presuppose?

Spiritual situation of our time

The background to the new evangelisation is a very particular spiritual situation of our time, which can be defined as the search for a new mysticism, the return of the sacred on the level of society and culture, the re-emergence of what may be called the transcendental hunger and thirst for God. I think this is one of the signs of the times that is most characteristic of our age, of our modern society. And it is not just a personal or community problem, like the liberal ideas of the last century. It is a social problem, a cultural problem. I would even say that it is a problem of civilisation. This problem of the sacred touches the problem of meaning, the ultimate meaning of our human destiny and indeed of societies, of civilisations. Why is there this search for the transcendent in all societies today? We do not have the time to go into this question in depth, but we can say that it is a reaction against today's society, against its functional rationality, its technology, and the imperialism of machines. Today's society, as Max Weber said, is characterised by disenchantment, a society which leaves no room for other dimensions of life, of the human, of the tran-

scendent, of the divine. We can add that the institutionalised religions find it difficult to respond to this new search for the sacred. We see that on the one hand the institutionalised religions diminish, while on the other hand the search for the sacred and the transcendent continues to grow. Religion spreads, but the religions diminish.

This is not just a problem in societies of the North, in developed countries; it is also in societies of the South, in developing countries. It is true that this search for the sacred shows itself in a variety of social forms. The sacred is experienced in different ways. There are gnostic groups, which look for the sacred in esoteric forms, in magic and sorcery, orientalism, astrology, in the development of human potentialities. There is also the multiplication of what are called religious movements, autonomous religions and sects among the poorer classes. This search for the sacred is not limited to Christians, or to people of the right, but is to be found also on the left in the political world. What is the relationship between this search for the sacred and social commitment? Today we realise that it is not enough to create a just world. The world must also have meaning, it must be a world in which life is worth while, a world of riches and justice, but also of meaning and ideals, of values and relationships. Over half of the world's population suffers material hunger, but almost half suffer also from a metaphysical hunger. Side by side with economic misery there is also a great moral and spiritual misery in today's society. Within the Catholic Church itself there is a great search for spirituality. I am involved in a movement concerned with popular education, not only for base communities but for all kinds of groups, and there is a great search there for spiritual meaning. They look for help in this interior journey. I remember when I was in a small diocese in the interior of Brazil which held a synod for pastoral workers. The books provided for them had two special chapters on spiritual renewal. We had prepared a programme for base communities, with the usual treatment of the bible, the formation of community, participation, social questions, etc. But the members of the base communities asked why they should not be concerned also about spirituality. They wanted this. This whole question

of the hunger for spirituality needs to be studied, because people want it.

The Church's response

What do the institutional Churches, including the Catholic Church, do about this? The primary socialisation of religion, the elementary education of children on the religious level, is no longer guaranteed or supported in modern society by social or Christian tradition. Families no longer pass on Christian values to their children. Who is Jesus Christ? What is the Creed? Who is the Virgin Mary? What does it mean to say "in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit"? Faith no longer comes to people in the traditional way, it is no longer handed on by tradition, but comes as an option, a choice which people have to make for themselves, freely. Therefore we can no longer rely on Christian culture alone to pass on the faith. We need organized pastoral activity, a programmed and planned evangelisation. The present Holy Father has seen and felt this. He came out with this new idea of evangelisation. We have to make our faith clear and explicit. We have to announce and proclaim Jesus Christ, beginning with the primary, central *kerygma*. Modern culture is a new mission field for the Church. It is true that we still have some Christian culture, where people live Christian values like freedom, pluralism, equality among persons, love and care for the poor and the weak, but the central core seems to have been lost: the mystery of Christ crucified and risen, Christ who gives us his Spirit. The Santo Domingo congress was devoted to this. It is clear in the first part of the document. To meet the challenge of modern culture Santo Domingo puts its hopes in the strength of popular religion, of popular Catholicism. Popular religion has a power of resistance in the face of the philosophical, moral and religious relativism and pluralism of modern society. We need a re-proclamation of Jesus Christ, a rediscovery of the *kerygma*.

It is interesting that this need for a new proclamation of Jesus was more clearly seen by the institutional Church and the neo-conservative movements than by the base communities and various groups of the left working for social justice. The latter feared that the new evangelisation would be in competition with the concern for social justice and social change, so they seem to have kept a certain distance from the new evangelisation. They failed to see the deeper dimensions of the problem. The most dynamic responses to the challenge of this search for the sacred, of the divine, worldwide but particularly in Latin America, came from the so-called new ecclesial movements, *cursillos*, charismatic groups, Catholic Renewal, because their objective was to re-awaken the faith of people, to bring it to life. They focused on baptism and its commitment, on belonging to a Christian movement. Great numbers of

young people are in these movements and this is symptomatic. It means that there is something which touches them deeply here, something in touch with the times, something which is fermenting. Young people are more sensitive to cultural movements of the times. I once asked a group of 200 young people what they found in the charismatic movement. Their answer: spirituality, prayer. Most of these were university students, so we cannot write them off as misguided, mistaken, deluded.

There is a challenge here for all of us, a challenge for the whole Church. Not only youth, but also the intellectual classes in the world of business and administration are sensitive to this new reality and respond to it. Just look at the success of the religious programmes in the mass media. Protestants are far ahead of Catholics in this field, because they are more modern. But even in the committed groups of Christians, those engaged in the fight for justice, in the base communities, people have recovered the missionary spirit of their faith. They strive not only to multiply and set up other groups, but they are committed to spread the faith by radiation, by contact and witness. They have now become conscious of the need to address the great mass of people in society, especially the great religious masses, to approach them with the proclamation of the gospel. There have been interesting experiences in this area. When a particular parish or diocese is celebrating a centenary or some special occasion, they organise a whole mission led by groups of laity working for a week or more. They invite the mass of the people to a variety of meetings, on the bible, reconciliation, etc. and then invite them to form real communities (biblical, prayer, etc.) which will continue to meet. New ministries arise and community churches come alive. There have been very rich experiences of this kind in the North East of Brazil and also in the interior.

The sects

We ought to look at the sects in this context. We respectfully call them autonomous religious groups, to avoid the pejorative meaning of "sect." The attitude of the Latin American Church to the sects is not usually one of confrontation or of distance, because the sects are not a problem, but a response to a problem. The sects respond in their own way to the search for meaning, for the sacred, for God. It is true that we can criticise their methods (seduction, psychological pressure, charlatanism, economic exploitation, etc.), but we cannot judge them primarily on this superficial level. The deeper level is that they respond to the search for God, for personal identity, for meaning. In my parish in Rio de Janeiro there are seven *favelas* where I work, and I have noticed that when a family from a *favela* becomes a member of a sect, they acquire a sense of dignity. They feel special, chosen, and they begin to feel good, they begin to work, to organise their

family life. They feel important, they have a function in their church community, and they even improve their material life. They look you in the face, their eyes meet yours, and they no longer feel humiliated. I thank God for this, for the good work done by the sects among these poor people. The sects help them to stand on their own feet, they give them hope and open up possibilities for them. I know that politically the sects are usually right-wing, but this should not take from the fine work they do in restoring human dignity to so many poor people. I recall a fine catechist we had, a beautiful 14-year old girl, whose father was an alcoholic. We prayed for him, that he might be cured, but without success. He turned to the "believers" as they are called, the Pentecostals, and they cured him. The family then converted to the Pentecostal group, believing that they were more powerful, had more of God, than the Catholics to save people. Unfortunately, I lost my catechist. But the father was cured, thank God.

One of my own brothers, an ordinary Catholic now finishing his studies in Brazil's best school of economics, was converted to the Baptists, and is now a preacher with them, preaching every week. He is brilliant in economics, but he spends every single week-end evangelising in the public square. There is no point in talking about the Church, the Pope, the Blessed Virgin. The Catholic Church and all of us religious are challenged by this. We have not taken sufficiently seriously this problem of the hunger and search for God. Last year on Good Friday, the holiest and most solemn day of the year in Latin America, when people in their thousands crowd into the churches to kiss the feet of the dead Christ, all sorts of people, drug traffickers, prostitutes, and freemasons, a Pentecostal bishop, a great popular preacher, was able to gather 200,000 people to listen to him, and he kept them all day, healing, exorcising, preaching the gospel. His message got through to the people. He met their needs, responded to their searching. This is a challenge to all of us in the Church.

Fr José Comblin, a Belgian theologian who spent long years in Latin America, warned that because of the mistake the Church is making with regard to the sects, in a hundred years from now Latin America will be one great Pentecostal continent, no longer Catholic, although today it is the only great Catholic continent in the world. He says we need to study how the sects respond to people's hunger. We need to devise the kind of flexible, effective methods that they use. The Catholic Church is weighed down by a heavy weight of structures, both on the doctrinal and organisational levels. It is too centralised. In the 642 pages of the new *Catechism of the Catholic Church* it is not easy to discover the central point to be preached to people. In recent times we have had official documents from the Vatican against allowing divorced and remarried Catholics to receive Holy Communion, against the ordination of women,

against abortion, contraception, etc., etc. But with such a mass of documents we can lose sight of the essential, of the vital centre of our faith from which everything else flows, Jesus Christ and his Spirit. When a priest goes to India to speak of Christianity, his preaching is very limited because people ask him what he thinks of abortion, priestly celibacy, etc., questions very far removed from the centre of faith. Preaching is not centred on the essentials, and when a parish or diocese discover new methods or initiatives, they need all kinds of permissions to go any further and these things can be an obstacle to faith. Modern society is extremely mobile and flexible, but the Catholic Church is so overlaid with dead weight that it cannot keep up. Some groups move ahead very fast and cannot maintain their relationship with the institutional Church, so they form para-ecclesial groups alongside the institutional Church, like the dissenting groups in Europe. Dissent is also a threat for the Church in Latin America. The Latin American Church, through some of its institutions like the Episcopal Conferences, has succeeded in leaving room for these *avant-garde* groups, but when tension builds up, the groups tend to separate.

A final point under the heading of "new evangelisation" is the mission *ad gentes*, part of the "first evangelisation," not the "new evangelisation." In Belo Horizonte, on 23 July, we will have the fifth great congress of Latin America, involving all parishes and communities, and its central theme will be: Our Mission, Reaching Out From Our Own Poverty. We are poor in so many ways, in personnel, pastoral agents, etc., but why should we not be involved in mission to India, Africa or to the other parts of Latin America? It is not a question of theological or practical reasons, but just an insight, a new evangelical imperative to get involved in mission beyond our own borders. This is a movement that is growing more and more.

2 - Option for the poor

Social situation of Latin America

First of all, a word on the social situation of the Church and the Christian communities of Latin America. For some years now most of our governments are democratic and liberal, and those who have lived under dictatorial regimes know what an advance this is after experiencing persecution, violence, the infringement of basic human rights, the most arbitrary treatment of people, and the restriction of freedom. But apart from this advance in democracy, the picture is not quite so positive. Illiteracy is growing, wages are going down in almost all Latin American countries (in Brazil over 30% of workers earn only the minimum wage of \$80). Why is the social situation getting worse? First of all the international factors are

unfavourable. Countries of the South are technologically very much behind the developed world, the European community and Eastern countries, and they cannot compete internationally. The gap seems to be widening. Another unfavourable factor are the liberal ideas about the supremacy of the market, privatisation, the policies and actions of the IMF (you know the sad results, the latest example is Mexico, but Brazil can be included too). There is a failure of the economy in many countries of the South. On the other hand, there is the historic event of the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the death of socialism. The historical projects of other systems apart from capitalism are all in crisis. We in Brazil had hoped that by the year 2000 at least we could look forward to another type of society, but this hope is now gone. What are the alternatives to capitalism, to the globalised market economy. The situation is not as clear as we thought ten years ago. Another unfavourable factor to add to this sad state is a certain turning in on itself of the Church.

The mass of "excluded" people

It is from this context that the figure of the poor person emerges, the poor of the 1980's and 90's, the poor we now call "the excluded." This new kind of poor in countries of the South, this new face of the poor, spoken of in Santo Domingo in 1978, is to be found in the masses of people who suffer hunger, and who grow up like that. In Brazil there are 32 million such people, who live on less than half of the minimum wage, who need outside help in order to survive. You know about the crowds of street children, many of whom are murdered by paramilitary squads. There are the masses of unemployed, who can find no work in the marketplace. It is important to understand that the excluded in the South are masses of people. It is estimated that over 50% of workers are excluded from the recognised formal economy; they belong to the underground black economy. Thus among the poorer classes themselves there are two categories: those who are integrated in so far as they have work and a salary, qualified, skilled workers, and the remainder, the "excluded," who are weak, unprotected, cut off from formal society, literally "outcasts," considered social pariahs. It is a kind of social *apartheid*. The excluded are citizens without rights, stripped of rights. They have only the merest symbolic link with society, through television. They are considered citizens, but they live in *favelas* on the outskirts of cities and towns. They vote in elections but their link with society is extremely fragile, purely formal. There is now a whole society of people who are outside the normal social classes, who are classless, outcasts, a mass of people increasing in numbers who seem to be a threat, since no one knows what may come from them.

I have worked in the *favelas* for fifteen years and I notice that some people there are well established,

with a job; they are poor workers, but at least they have work, and they feel that they have a place in the economy, a recognised place in society. But many others have a different experience. They are the new poor, totally cut off, who do not belong anywhere, ignored even by the institutional Church, and it is among these that the sects thrive. Ten years ago we did not talk much of the poor, but rather of the "impoverished," thinking that the poor were simply the product of exploitation. But now we see that it is a privilege to be exploited in today's capitalist society, because the exploitation at least links people to the system, enables them to belong, to have a place. Nowadays it is much worse not to be exploited, to be no good even for exploitation. Such people really have nothing, and feel that they are nothing. Such people are a problem for society and for the Church.

Response of the Latin American Church

What is the attitude of the churches in Latin America to this new kind of poverty? You can see that the option for the poor continues to be a challenge, more than ever. The greatest contribution of liberation theology to the universal Church is this concern for the poor. This is not an invention of liberation theology, but the rediscovery of a fundamental biblical concept of care for the least of the brethren. It was never totally absent in our tradition, but it has been rediscovered with new force in Latin America and is now part of our common heritage. But there is no doubt that because of the present neo-conservative atmosphere, the option for the poor, whether on the social or ecclesial level, is much less strong now than in the recent past. The prophetic, utopian voice of Santo Domingo is not as strong or outspoken as that of Puebla or Medellín. There is a clear turning back on the part of the universal Church, reflected also in the Latin American Church,

I have been asked about "creativity" in this context. In fact, we have rediscovered the need for direct and personal assistance for this new mass of excluded people, and for groups. In the past we paid little attention to the masses, and we tended to speak of the need to conscientise people to social injustice and political structures, to organise trade unions, various kinds of action groups, etc. in order to get at the root of poverty and social misery. But now we have changed our strategy. Masses of people have to live and they cannot afford to wait until we have changed social structures. For this reason the Church has gone in to tackle poverty directly, helping people personally. The Church is one of the most powerful social groups going in this direction. The Sisters have been marvellous in their social work. We are now encouraging the setting up of small businesses to provide work for people so that they can survive and take care of themselves. We have also discovered the need to involve in this

kind of social work not only the poor themselves, but people from the middle class who will work in solidarity with the excluded.

I wrote an article on the need to challenge such people to become involved, people qualified and skilled in various fields. We found a real response to this call among the middle class. I visited universities to invite students and teaching staff to become involved in the *favelas* and I found a very generous response. It is clear that political education and organisation continue and must continue, but we must work on both fronts, on the structures and in direct help to the poor. Many Christians who have had experience exercising authority are becoming conscious of their responsibility. In the last few days I had a fax invitation from the bishops to speak at a congress they are organising for next January, to be attended by 75 young people who want to discuss their mission in party politics, in the exercise of political power, and they ask for guidance from the Church.

Religious continue to be involved in direct help to the excluded and this enables them to understand the problem better and to discover creative ways of meeting their needs. Many positive things have happened. In North East Brazil many municipalities have succeeded in lowering the child mortality rate by 30% through new methods of preventive care; this is almost a world record. It was achieved through the cooperation of base communities, mothers' groups, etc. The Sisters also do marvellous work in the professional training of women, in nutrition advice, helping people to improve their lot. I was in Chile a few months ago, where I spoke to 500 people at the Conference of Religious, and I was asked what is the potential for change among the masses of the excluded, what political chances have they. I did not answer directly, but I know that the excluded have now formed groups of various kinds among themselves. Last year we set up the centre for popular movements and many of these movements have the word "less" in their title: the homeless, workless, foodless. They meet to share and discuss home, work and school, and they support each other. It is early yet to say how these will develop, but they are keen to push ahead. However, they cannot wait until tomorrow or some future date to survive, to work, to find shelter.

Liberation theology

A brief word about the liberation theology because everywhere I go I am asked about this. It is said that the theology of liberation is in crisis. It is less talked about now and there are fewer publications about it, but my response is: who is not in crisis today? The crisis is worldwide, epochal, involving everybody, families, religious, the Catholic Church itself, politics, governments, the market, the stock exchange. It would be miraculous if liberation theology were not in crisis. But I would

say that for liberation theology, the crisis is in no way radical. Its roots are not at all in crisis, so whatever crisis exists can be overcome. What are the roots of liberation theology if not contact with the reality of the poor. Its *locus et origo*, its natural place and origin, is none other than care and concern for the poor, to fight for them and for their rights, solidarity with the poor. This is where liberation theology is born, and will continue to be born, because poverty is still a reality, the poor are still there. They still suffer hunger and they still hunger for justice. Even if their dreams are in crisis, they can continue to dream. They are not looking for the perfect society. All they want is a viable society, a small utopia where they can eat three times a day, have a school for their children, take care of their health, have a house to live in. Technically and morally we should be able to offer this kind of society to all. The poor continue to dream of this. They are hard-headed about it; they cannot but dream. Theology is born from this and it continues to come from here. Liberation theology will be truly in crisis when liberation theologians cut themselves off from the poor and their little groups, and begin to lecture in Rome or other great capitals, in faculties and universities, write books and articles and find success. But as long as they stay close to their source with the poor and try to respond to the crisis of the poor they will not be in crisis. Marxists, socialists, left-wing political groups and trade unions are all in crisis, but liberation theology has no crisis in the area of its roots.

Together with solidarity with the poor, the second basic source of liberation theology is biblical faith, prophetic, utopian faith, in Jesus Christ. We speak of the spiritual experience of the poor, not merely of their social experience. The poor have their own experience of God, in the context of their faith. On the level of mediation, of course, things are different. Ten years ago in Latin America we had the socio-analytical approach to understand the situation. We used Marxism, and at that time it helped us to understand the contradictions in the social situation, but we have more difficulty with it today, because the situation is much more complicated. Another mediation is the utopian one: what alternative can we propose to solve our difficulties? The situation is not clear.

The theme for the Brazilian social congress last year (attended by all the pastoral social workers of the country) was: Viable Alternatives for the Country. Various kinds of socialism were proposed: utopian, coloured, half-breed, our own kind of socialism, liberation socialism, socialism of freedom, of democracy, — all sorts of adjectives were used. But now we are much more discreet and humble in our choice of words. When it came to strategies, to practical steps for the way forward, we thought we had to give special importance to educating the workers, that they should be our primary concern. But now we find that these very

people are privileged. When they go on strike for a basic wage and look for support from the inhabitants of the *favelas* where I work, the excluded people in the *favelas* react angrily. They see no reason to put themselves out in support of people who already have a job, some of them earning three wages, and they have so much more stability and security than the people in the *favelas*. There is a whole mass of people who are outsiders, outcasts, excluded from the workforce. These are the people we have to be in contact with, and we are only at the beginning when it comes to helping them to change things.

I wrote an article recently on the need to be in touch with the masses of excluded people. We need a new pedagogy to reach them, one adapted to the fact that we are dealing with masses of people, one that is less rational, less modern, more emotional and symbolic, more pictorial and more religious and explicitly spiritual. We need to discover new ways. But in this we are helped by the very important distinction between weak and strong thinking. In today's world everything is relative. We no longer have principles or convictions. Even in morality and religion we have preferences in place of imperatives. This leads to domination by the stronger party. The stronger preferences dominate over weaker preferences.

That is why we need to have strong thoughts, real conviction about the roots of our pastoral theology, about the option for the poor. We should never call this in question, but try to understand and hold it more profoundly. The liberating strength of the gospel is not in question. We are convinced of it, but how do we work for the poor, which poor are we talking about, what means are we to use, whom do we work with, these are questions which are open to discussion and there can be different responses. This is not a matter of principle and we should relativise our responses. We can ally ourselves with liberals, even with the devil, if it will serve our purpose of freeing the poor. But there are things beyond question, matters of principle which are non-negotiable. This distinction between basic principles or convictions and practical responses or strategies is extremely important. On the second level, that of mediation, of strategies, of practical steps, we can afford to be flexible and open.

3 - Communion and participation

I speak now of communion and participation within the Church. By participation I mean the active involvement of all members in the life and mission of the Church and especially in decision-making. Participation is one of the most critical problems in our Catholic Church.

Centralisation returns

The lack of participation reflects the general, global process of institutional re-centralisation that is now taking place in the Church. It is a return to the principle of authority as against dialogue. This is not a novelty, but it is a very noticeable reality especially in the Churches of the South, in Latin America. There are very clear signs of this process of turning inwards instead of outwards towards participation. We see it especially in the new kind of pastor that is being imposed on local communities in the Latin American Church, especially the new kind of bishop. These bishops have less prophetic thrust, less denunciation of unjust social structures, less proclamation of change. It is true that some of them are counter-cultural and prophetic enough in denouncing the permissiveness and moral subjectivism of today's world, in attacking abortion, etc. and this is indeed necessary, but it is also true that social and political prophecy is much less present in our countries, in our churches. The presence of bishops of this kind is relativised by the dynamics present at the grass roots level, where the people continue to develop a Church of sharing and participation, and indeed often succeed in converting the new bishop. I have heard it said that, "Rome creates them and the people convert them." In fact this is true, because some bishops come to a diocese which is already alive with various forms of participation, and since their own hearts are pastoral they join in and respond to the people. They are converted, sometimes to the great surprise of those who appointed them.

There is also a new type of seminarian and priest emerging. The institutional Church is greatly concerned about the formation of priests and insists that they be isolated from the ordinary world of men and especially women. I live only three minutes walk away from the major seminary of Rio de Janeiro, and the students often come to see me. There are 200 of them, from about 15 dioceses. I am struck by how different they are from the kind of seminarian we had up to five years ago. Their ideas, their whole way of thinking is different. Of course when they move into a lively participative parish they can change, be transformed, and go beyond the formation they received in the isolated seminary. An interesting fact at present is that there has been a notable rise in vocations to the diocesan priesthood, while vocations to religious life are still diminishing in all of Latin America. Many students in religious life transfer to diocesan priesthood. This is something we need to reflect on.

Base communities

There is a double dynamic in our Churches today: the dynamic of participation, coming from Medellín and Puebla, which finds expression especially in the base communities, and the dynamic

of order and authority, of commands, of discipline and obedience, with everything coming from the top down. Unfortunately, this latter dynamic seems to be growing, but at the same time the experience of base communities is something which is irreversible in our Churches, there is no going back. I work with a group involved with statistics and we analysed the ten dioceses in which the base communities are the most successful in Brazil and we discovered that numerically these groups seldom exceed 15% of the Catholics of a diocese. This seems to be the saturation point of their membership. The question naturally arises: what about the other 85% of Catholics? What is to become of them? How can they be involved in a participative Church, a Church of communion?

At the moment we are involved in a deep study of this question, reflecting on the missionary responsibility of the base communities towards the remainder of the Church, the mass of people who continue their own rhythm of Catholic life outside the base communities. It is true that the base communities form only 15% of Catholics, but they represent a notable number. A survey by the Bishops' Conference to list the numbers and addresses of base communities in the whole country shows that there are about 80,000 communities in Brazil, with about 50 people in each. This means that there are four million Catholics who regularly take part in base communities. This is a very considerable number in terms of quantity, but instead of reaching out to extend their influence, there has been a tendency recently to incorporate them into the parish structure and restrict their activity to the renewal of the parishes, as a kind of auxiliary service in parishes, whereas their original thrust and inspiration was to transform the parish into a dynamic centre of community, to decentralise, de-sacramentalise the parish. These two thrusts are both present.

Lay "movements"

The laity in Latin America are very actively involved in the Church precisely through the base communities, because the base communities give the Church a very lay face. The laity ask: how can 15,000 priests in Brazil minister to 152 million people, of whom 87% are Catholics? 75% of Sunday gatherings of Catholics are led by laity. Only 25% of the Sunday meetings are Masses, led by a priest. 80% of the liturgy of the word meetings are led by women. This statistic from the Bishops' Conference makes it clear that it is the laity, and especially the women, who are carrying the greater load of the Church's responsibility with regard to evangelisation, celebration and mission. The laity of the base communities are the real leaders in the Church, although the official line is that a cleric, an ordained minister must be the centre. It is a different picture of Church. Here we have the laity

come of age, the laity who have reached their majority, although unfortunately the laity are still too often thought of as minors, as children. There is much talk of the importance of the laity and their role, but this is mostly on the level of talk; in reality there are all kinds of canonical and institutional restrictions on them. There is a great variety of lay movements in the Church in Latin America today, Charismatic, Communion and Liberation, university students, Focolare, Neo-Catechumenate, etc. all led by laity themselves. These have great value and need to be fully recognised in the Church. All of them have rediscovered the importance of the word of God, of baptism, of missionary responsibility, the challenge to bring morals into professional and family life, the awakening to the world of feelings, the freedom of expression, spontaneous prayer, etc. But the influence of these lay movements on the level of Church structure, in terms of change or transformation, is very relative. They renew, but they do not transform.

How do we guarantee participation?

Here we are faced with the huge problem of the democratisation of the Church, although the word is equivocal. We can speak of structures of communion and participation already in the Church. There are many parishes led by laity, where the groups have significant influence, always of course with the presence of the priest. The structures for participation are there in place, but all of them can be reversed at a stroke, changed overnight, with the arrival of a new bishop or a change of parish priest. Even the most thriving community of participation can be reduced to nought. We have so many sad experiences of this kind. The problem is that none of these very successful experiences have any structural, juridic guarantee to enable them to continue. The new developments have not been institutionalised, recognised in law. Which means that all these groups have no more than a consultative role, with no say in decision-making. Whenever they are allowed some decision-making authority it is always by concession, by delegation. It can be objected therefore that the Church of base communities is merely a tolerated Church, allowed to continue with the permission of the pastor, and he can dissolve them at will, send them all home, as a president dissolves a government. A typical example is the diocese of Recife, which has been changed from top to bottom.

It is a pity that theologians seem to have neglected the importance of canon law in this context. There has never been a worthwhile discussion of rights in the Church. Everything is reduced to canon law, which can become an instrument of the right to cripple people. But we need a new kind of canon law, one which will make room for all these new developments, one whose starting point is ecclesiology, the bible, liberation theology. When

will we have a canon law where the poor will have a central place? As Fr Congar said, we need to take the bible as the source of human rights in the Church, not Roman law, as at present.

4 - Special questions

Inculturation

This was a central theme at Santo Domingo. I think Santo Domingo will remain in history as the assembly of inculturation. This is its trademark. It did not give many practical directives, but it certainly opened up the question, put it on the table. It was also the great theme of our last meeting of base communities in Brazil in 1993. Inculturation responds to a great number of themes, like the rediscovery of regional identities, and cultural differences. We have wars in ex-Yugoslavia and the ex-Soviet Union caused by these realities. Latin America is an extremely complex continent, with so many different cultures and ethnic groups, with the indigenous cultures, the Amerindian cultures, the Afro-American culture, and modern culture, which is a trans-culture influenced by all the others. There is so much to be done in this area, especially in liturgy. The Roman liturgy makes no sense in this context. Brazilian Blacks see the "Roman liturgy" title and ask what it has to do with them. They are in communion with Rome and the Pope as Bishop of Rome, and they have the faith, but a Roman liturgy is foreign to them. There have been many interesting experiments in Brazil, with special Masses for different cultural groups. This is the ecclesiology of the local Churches, and not of the universal Church dominating all others, because all cultures are local by definition.

Pastoral care of the masses

This is a new development. In our pastoral and social activity we have discovered the need to address a special word to the masses and not only to special groups. What do we do about popular religiosity, about sacramental Catholicism? Everybody wants to be baptised, to have 30th anniversary Masses, church weddings, first Communion. These are rites of integration into the social body of the Church. Until recently we looked down on popular religiosity and treated it as something destined to disappear in the face of secularisation. But in fact popular religiosity has a tremendous power of resistance. What do we do in face of this reality? The base communities turn their backs on the masses of poor people with their popular religion. But when you take a taxi, the driver is listening to religious radio programmes from Pentecostal groups. We cannot afford to ignore this reality. We need a two-speed ecclesiology to cater for two different sections of the people: one for the base com-

munities and another for the great mass of the people of God. And we need two kinds of pastoral activity corresponding to these two ecclesiologies. one for the communities, for the awakening of faith and conscientisation, and another for the masses, centred on feelings, images, symbols, solidarity. These questions are already being studied, and will form the topic for next year's meeting of base communities in Brazil. We have to ask: what are we going to do for the masses of Catholic people? Formerly we thought that all should join base communities, that we should create a Church based on a network of base communities. But we now see that this is sociologically impossible, because the masses have their own religious dynamic, proper to themselves, which goes beyond that of the communities. They want to take part in pilgrimages, they are attracted by apparitions. It is interesting that in the apparitions of Our Lady she asks for three basic things: conversion, fasting and prayer, but this calls for popular organisation.

Urbanisation and pastoral activity

The Bishops' Conference in Brazil has carried out a special survey on this topic. Urbanisation presents the Church with a major challenge. I have taken part in several meetings and sessions on this, and I receive many invitations to speak to groups about it. It is an extremely complex problem, because modern cities themselves are very complex, full of contradictions. Social scientists find it difficult to analyse the situation. We have the same difficulty in the Church. But at least we have come to realise that to undertake urban ministry does not mean simply opening up another pastoral front. It is not a sectional pastoral activity. It is a question of pastoral activity in its entirety. It is a particular way of seeing and approaching pastoral ministry, a different focus, which will then influence liturgy, catechesis, the Church's methods of communication, theology, and everything else. To speak of urban pastoral activity means doing pastoral work with regard to modernity, which means pluralism, heterogeneity, tremendous change, etc.

This involves changing the internal structure of the parish, of the diocese. It is an integrated pastoral activity. We can no longer have pastoral care in an isolated community, college or parish; it must be done together, and this means supra-parochial structures and services. Just like pastoral activity for youth, how can you do this within the confines of a single parish; by its nature it goes beyond the parish. Therefore the traditional canonical territorial divisions of parishes and dioceses will disappear, because the world has changed. Modernity breaks through the bonds of geography. A person may live in one place, but through television, fax and computer be part of the whole world. This raises questions for language, communication, the use of the media, and touches on a problem area

where we have arrived very late, namely the use of the media. Our Holy Father knows how to use the media to be in touch with people. So often when you have a bishop, a theologian, a religious brother or sister on TV, it is a disaster. They are not trained for it. A month ago I watched a TV debate between a Catholic bishop and a Protestant pastor, and the pastor stole the show. He spoke easily, naturally, with conviction, in touch with his audience, whereas the bishop was stiff and formal and totally out of touch. This whole area of the media needs serious attention.

Other questions

1) In the context of the option for the poor, is capitalism the only model to follow, or are there alternatives?

Yes, in fact, it seems to be the only model at present. It would seem to be the natural way to organise the economy. We know it was criticised by Marx, but its strength is in valuing personal initiative and freedom, and it promoted social and technological development. Socialism in fact lost out to capitalism with regard to progress. But the great weakness of capitalism is its emphasis on individual creativity, neglecting equality and justice. There needs to be equal opportunity for all in a just society. Equality and justice are the basic ingredients of a healthy society, and therefore of a society of Christian inspiration.

Capitalism is too individualistic, and has lost the sense of solidarity, whereas in fact we are all brothers and sisters and need each other to survive and to thrive. We all have basic human rights and we need the space and the structures to enable us to preserve and to enjoy these rights. United Nations statistics a few years ago pointed out that 80% of the world's riches are in the hands of 20% of the population, who live in the North. This unjust division simply cannot continue. But how do we bring about equality? Socialism tried to bring change through revolution, especially through workers' movements, and through State authority. The important thing is that economic processes and the market be subject to supervision and control by people democratically organised. We are not looking for a society without a market, nor on the other hand a market economy, but rather a society with a market in which the civil authority is in charge of the market. This is the social teaching of the Church. We have only to read the encyclical *Centesimus Annus*, which accepts the market but balances it with State authority and with the various organisations of the people, cultural, religious, etc.

This three-pole combination should ensure a balanced check on the market in favour of the citizens, so that socialism will come about through a democratisation of the economy, not through a State economy as in classical socialism, which abolished private property in favour of State ownership. So

we no longer speak of socialism, but of the democratisation of capital. The Pope insists that the market needs to be subject to ethical norms and values, like the common sharing of goods, the notion of common good, etc.

2) Is there a possibility of ecumenical dialogue with the sects?

We have real difficulty in dealing ecumenically with the sects, because they refuse to dialogue on principle. They see it as a Catholic trap to win them over and convert them. I think the greatest thing the sects can give us Catholics is on the level of pastoral challenge. They are experts at providing liturgies which involve full participation. They know how to receive newcomers, how to welcome them and make them feel at home. They know how to put the believer in direct contact with Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit and with the Father without any institutionalised intermediary. They can give believers a real ecclesial feeling, with the conviction of being part of the Church, in touch with God, responsible for mission, battling with the devil. They are in immediate touch with God, whereas Catholics have to go through a whole series of mediators.

There is a doctrinal and institutional heaviness about the Catholic Church that can be enormous, a real obstacle (I speak only in general). The sects criticise us very strongly as idolators, going to the Madonna and the saints, etc., but we should learn from our critics, and we have much to learn from them. One thing we should appreciate with the Pentecostals and Protestants of the sects is the *kerygma*, their central message focused on the essential, on Jesus. Believe in Jesus, commit yourself to him and you will be saved.

This stark simple message comes with conviction and is continually repeated day and night. What kind of message would a Catholic bishop, priest or theologian give? The 642 pages of the new *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, with all the details about angels, archangels, etc., but where is the central point? It doesn't come across. We need to drink from the well of the *kerygma* which they present. Of course you can ask about the Madonna, the Pope, the sacraments, etc. But in today's world which has lost the very centre of religious faith, we need to concentrate once again on the essential, on the basic truth of faith in Jesus. The success of the Pentecostals can be traced to their preaching of the essential, whereas our failure is due to the heavy weight of so much that we have to carry. If you speak in the name of the Church, it has to be in the name of the entire Holy Roman Catholic and Apostolic Church, and this inhibits free, spontaneous proclamation. You are no longer free.

In Rio de Janeiro we are preparing for a 2-week course next July to form pastoral workers in dealing with the masses, and we have invited members of the sects to take part, to speak to us. We need to

speak to them and to hear them, even if they seem to be antagonistic, critical, closed. Some have accepted to come. They have the masses on their side and we need to learn from their experience. I am a professor at Petropolis, where homiletics are taught and I suggested to the lecturer that he invite a Protestant pastor to speak to the students, since Protestants are often so much better preachers than we are. I am not speaking of doctrine, but of method. They can touch the people, and they get a following. We need to be a lot more humble and open in learning from them.

3) Is there anything new in Latin America that could provide a message to the other Churches?

The new projects to which the Latin American Church was committed are still new, because they have not been fully implemented yet. The basic insights are still fresh. In the area of ecclesiology, for example, the conviction that the centre of the Church is not the mysteries, but the community, hence the importance of the sacrament of baptism, and the lay dimension of the Church as essential, central. Priests are at the service of God's people. The whole Church has a ministerial role, it is a participative Church, involving all. This has still to become a reality. There are parishes and indeed whole dioceses which are organised along these participative lines, but they are still a minority. But unfortunately, as I have already said, the whole process could be reversed because there is no guarantee of stability, continuity. It is all very fragile still.

I believe that the Christian Churches have an important word to say in the creation of a new society. People still have their utopian dreams of a better world, but where are they being taken seriously? No significant group, no political party can do anything. The trade unions have done something, but most groups have lost their drive. Cultural groups can still do something, local groups and regional cultures, but the world religions are the only powerful bodies to lead in this field. They have the capacity to contribute to a better society, a new civilisation. The gospel values are particularly important and this is a special *kairos*, or moment of opportunity for them.

Even the recent encyclical of the Holy Father, *Evangelium Vitae*, is extremely important here. It can be criticised for its tone, its repetitions, and various other minor points, but the basic message is clear, that human life is a fundamental value that needs to be defended. This is a much-needed counter-cultural, prophetic message. His encyclical on morality was criticised in Brazil, but I wrote an article defending it, saying that the Catholic Church is the only body to challenge modern society seriously, to insist that while moral values have to be personally chosen, they are not mere prefer-

ences, but basic convictions written in the order of nature, in our very bodies and in our being, and this is what the Church preaches.

4) Inculturation and Blacks

I think that Brazil is the world's second biggest negro country, with 60 million Blacks and *mestizos*, and the Brazilian nation and the Catholic Church owe them a tremendous debt for their contribution. It is they who built the economy of the country, and also culturally they made an enormous contribution, in song and dance, etc. Brazilian religion owes them a great deal. Unfortunately the Church was very late in waking up to its responsibility towards them. At present there is a very strong awareness of their importance and there are various groups at work to help them reflect on and appreciate their own African and indigenous cultures, and to encourage vocations among them, insisting that they express themselves in their own cultural expressions. Recovering their cultural roots is an enrichment for the Catholic faith.

I did a study of the phenomenon of syncretism, especially with regard to Our Lady, and I was very struck by the central place of the African goddess in Brazilian culture. But the Church missed an opportunity here and misunderstood, criticising syncretism, not realising that syncretism is simply an indication of poor inculturation. The Church is now trying to make amends, reaching out seriously, even if not very visibly on the official level. The movement is there among the small groups and communities.

5) Inculturation

There is an emphasis on local cultures, and the great temptation here is to see them close in on themselves, to become exclusivist, xenophobic, fearing other cultures. But this is what can give rise to wars, as we have seen in ex-Yugoslavia, the ex-Soviet Union and Rwanda. We need to realise that a local culture cannot be truly itself except in dialogue with other cultures, in openness. Holding on to one's own values should not blind us to the existence of trans-cultural values like solidarity, democratic dialogue, respect for the individual freedom of all, etc. As Lévy-Strauss said, it is difficult to measure the minimum of self-identity needed to define a culture. Openness to other cultures can be an enrichment, but there is also the fear of losing something of one's own culture. The challenge is to keep the balance.

6) The masses

The Holy Father can draw huge crowds. But the word "crowd" or "mass" of people is ambiguous. There are diffuse, amorphous crowds or masses. They can be impersonal, just numbers, going their own way, in the streets, at railway stations. When

we speak of "the people" in Latin America we normally mean a community, an organised group which reflects, decides, acts. But there is also the macro-people, the mass, the people in huge numbers, and a revolution cannot take place only with communities or small groups. Real change must involve the masses, masses which are mobilised. When we think of masses, we must not picture them as passive, immobile. We remember that famous speech of Pius XII in 1944, almost at the end of the war, when he spoke of the "people" deciding for themselves, and the "masses" being moved from without. He was thinking of Fascist and Nazi masses. In fact the people are a mass. As St. Peter says, "You who were no people have now become the people of God." The people have a memory and tradition, a collective consciousness. For the masses, for people in this sense we need a special pastoral activity of conscientisation, not of manipulation. The masses are in the hands of whom at present? They are in the hands of the media, of preachers, of politicians. But there is another possibility for them, the possibility of becoming conscious of their dignity, of being treated with respect. We need a new kind of pastoral activity to enable the masses to become a people.

Some people think of the masses as necessarily passive, waiting to be manipulated, to be worked on by others, but I think this denies the very principle of democracy and the concept of people of God. What does the "people of God" mean? It means that people feel themselves to be members of this great body of believers and play their proper role within it, speaking and acting personally with the power of the Spirit within them, aware that they are all equally called to holiness. The very concept of people of God demands this kind of understanding. The concept of democracy is the sovereignty of the people, the power of people to govern themselves, through their representatives. If we say that the masses are incapable of being conscientised, we destroy the concept of people of God, imagining that they need pastors and ministers to think for them and decide for them, that any authority they may be given is simply delegated to them. But if we look at history we can ask who led the social revolution we saw in Eastern Europe leading to the fall of the Berlin Wall? There are no names, it was the people themselves who took the initiative. The same with the French Revolution, when people became conscious of their rights and changed the social order. There are not many examples of this awakening of consciousness, but there are enough to make us realise that we must be thinking of a new kind of pastoral activity directed towards the masses.

Of course the masses are made up of individual people and of groups, all relating to each other. These communities are necessary to enable the masses to become fully conscious of their rights and their possibilities.

7) Why are there more vocations to diocesan priesthood than to religious life?

Why is it that religious life does not attract as it formerly did? Perhaps we are failing in our prophetic vocation, or we may have lost our charismatic identity. Or can it be that today's young people are too weak to make the commitment, that they need a support structure, or a more stable framework? Certainly today's youth has problems with long-term commitment. They are the products of our modern culture. We notice that the seminaries with most students, or the religious groups that attract more vocations, tend to be right-wing, highly structured, providing a certain type of security. The security system can protect people from having to make too many personal decisions; they are carried by the system. There is some truth in all of this.

8) Why have the well-formed laity difficulty in fitting into the structures of the Church?

Because they are not given the space or the encouragement to play their full role of responsibility. I think that the new ecclesiology has not yet touched the finances of the Church, and until it does, there will be no change. Whenever there is question of getting funds for the formation of laity, the official Church can seldom spare the money, but when it comes to building a seminary to educate students for the priesthood, funds are made available. Even when we notionally accept the ecclesiology which gives the laity their rightful place and says that our ministry is to be at their service, the laity feel that we do not really believe it. I visited many churches in Brazil where the laity were practically in charge of everything, but their place was still extremely weak and precarious, because they could be sacked at a moment's notice. A religious with solemn vows, or an ordained priest could not be dismissed without a complicated canonical process. Their place in the system is assured, and they cannot lose it if they do not wish to. They have acquired the right to be maintained even if they do not do their job.

But with lay people it is totally different. They can be dismissed at a moment's notice, without scruple. Furthermore, the Church counts very much on voluntary service from dedicated sisters, priests and brothers, but it expects the same service from laity without much reference to the fact that the laity have responsibilities to wife or husband and children, and must find money for food, house, health and education. The laity are excluded from financial decisions in our churches. Many lay groups were asked how they were financed; hardly any of them knew. It was all in the hands of the priest. The laity had no say in the matter, a matter which concerned them directly.



L'ISLAM EN AFRIQUE

P.J. Stamer

UN PARTENAIRE IMPORTANT MAIS DIFFICILE

Le Synode pour l'Afrique qui vient de se tenir à Rome, avait inscrit le dialogue à son ordre du jour comme un des thèmes importants pour l'avenir de l'Église dans le continent africain: dialogue oecuménique, dialogue assez aléatoire avec les sectes et communautés indépendantes d'inspiration chrétienne, et dialogue inter-religieux. A propos de ce dernier, si l'on peut retenir le fait, souvent exprimé par les Pères synodaux, que le dialogue avec la religion traditionnelle se place, pour l'essentiel, à l'intérieur même des communautés chrétiennes et rejoint ainsi directement le thème de l'inculturation par contre, le dialogue avec l'islam et les musulmans est vu du synode d'abord comme un défi ou une confrontation.

Un Africain sur trois au sud du Sahara se dit musulman, et le Synode voulait parler pour toute l'Afrique y compris l'Afrique du Nord. Le thème était certes important. Pourtant on ne peut pas dire que le Synode ait eu une position claire et unanime sur le sujet.

«Peut-on dialoguer avec des gens qui sont venus pour nous tuer?» s'est écrié un évêque Sud-Soudanais. Son cri de détresse rejoint fortement, mais avec d'autres arguments, l'opinion publique majoritaire en Occident. Pas de dialogue possible avec les musulmans! La position du Cardinal Thiandoum (Dakar), dans sa longue introduction au Synode et reprise dans son intervention propre, doit surprendre d'autant plus par son irénisme: «Dans l'ensemble, il faut reconnaître que les relations islamo-chrétiennes sont bonnes, particulièrement là où les deux croyances coexistent dans les mêmes groupes ethniques ou encore à l'intérieur du même cercle familial...»

L'islam est une réalité africaine

Ce contraste dans les interventions au Synode montrent bien s'il en était besoin encore, la complexité de l'islam en Afrique subsaharienne. Il serait plus juste, comme certains connaisseurs le font, de

parler «des islams en Afrique». Dans l'appréciation des enjeux de la rencontre islamo-chrétienne en Afrique au Sud Sahara, il y a une donnée de base souvent oubliée, même par une partie de la hiérarchie africaine: l'islam est une réalité africaine. La nouvelle vitalité de l'islam en Afrique, l'agressivité, voire la violence de certains groupes cachent un passé millénaire d'inculturation profonde de l'islam et de cohabitation pacifique entre musulmans et animistes. Il serait prétentieux de dire aujourd'hui que les uns sont moins Africains que les autres. Pourtant aujourd'hui encore bien souvent, l'islam est ressenti et présenté comme un corps étranger à l'Afrique, comme le perturbateur ou l'envahisseur, alors que de nombreux peuples africains en ont fait, depuis des siècles, un des éléments constitutifs de leur identité culturelle. Ils ne peuvent pas se concevoir Africains en dehors ou sans la religion musulmane.

Dans le Sahel ouest-africain, de vastes empires se sont constitués au Moyen-Age autour de chefs et de lettrés musulmans. Ils ont produit une culture et une civilisation typiquement africaine et pourtant islamique à laquelle on se réfère encore aujourd'hui; et cela sans jamais utiliser la force pour convertir. De l'autre côté du continent, sur la côte orientale, les comptoirs de commerce établis par les Arabes dès le IX^e siècle, n'ont jamais mené une politique d'expansion ou l'islamisation par la force. Ils ont pourtant produit, au cours des siècles, une langue et une culture islamiques: le Swahili qui sert aujourd'hui à une multitude d'ethnies de moyen de communiquer entre elles, et à certains pays, comme la Tanzanie, de base pour construire une identité nationale.

Toute cette histoire millénaire s'inscrit en faux contre l'image d'un islam violent qui se serait répandu par le glaive de la guerre sainte. L'Afrique de Ouest n'a connu la guerre sainte qu'au XIX^e siècle à l'approche des troupes coloniales. Sur la côte orientale, il n'en a jamais été question. Au contraire, pendant près d'un millénaire, les musulmans africains ont vécu «en minoritaires» au milieu de larges populations restées fidèles à la religion des ancêtres.

Religion des nomades et des commerçants itinérants avant tout, l'islam s'est présenté aux Africains à la fois comme la voie de la réussite terrestre et de l'ouverture au monde, puisque pas lié à un terroir ancestral ni à un environnement précis. L'écriture arabe donne à ceux qui la maîtrisent, un statut de privilégiés: détenteurs de la «Parole de Dieu», de la connaissance et partant du pouvoir magico-religieux. Les «confréries» musulmanes, avec leur structure hiérarchique et initiatique et leurs pratiques ésotériques, ont trouvé en Afrique un terrain fertile comme nulle part ailleurs dans le monde musulman. Malgré cette longue présence et cette adaptation aux réalités africaines allant souvent jusqu'au mélange, les communautés musulmanes ne sont que quelques îlots sur la carte de l'Afrique à la veille de la colonisation.

L'islamisation superficielle de vastes régions de l'Afrique est clairement le résultat de la période coloniale. C'est le choc même entre l'univers socio-religieux traditionnel quelqu'en soient les modes précis de réalisation et d'expression, et la modernité apportée progressivement par la colonisation qui a poussé les sociétés africaines à l'adoption de l'islam.

La religion traditionnelle, fruit de longs siècles d'expérience humaine ritualisée, constituait un cadre de vie sécurisant dans un environnement naturel bien précis. La vie moderne, dans beaucoup de ses apports, rompt cet équilibre séculier. Elle oblige de plus en plus d'Africains à sortir de leur milieu de vie. Elle provoque des déracinements physiques et mentaux irrémédiables. Où trouver une nouvelle sécurité personnelle et communautaire, un nouveau cadre de vie sécurisant au niveau familial, social et spirituel dans une situation où l'ancien cadre de vie est devenu inopérant?

La progression de l'islam est ancienne

Présente depuis des siècles, la communauté musulmane, par sa solidarité immédiatement perceptible et efficace, se présente tout naturellement et sans exiger de ruptures tranchantes avec les croyances et les modes de vie du passé. Le développement des centres administratifs et commerciaux, où l'islam a toujours été «chez lui», plus tard, l'exode rural et une urbanisation rapide avec son lot de déracinements et de brassage des populations, sont les facteurs décisifs de cette adoption massive de l'islam depuis un siècle.

La progression rapide de l'islam dont on parle tant, ne date donc pas d'aujourd'hui et peut même être considérée, quant aux chiffres, un fait du passé. Des relevés statistiques sérieux, dans la mesure où

ils sont possibles, montrent clairement d'une part que le rythme de croissance des communautés musulmanes a fortement diminué durant les deux dernières décennies, et d'autre part, que les communautés chrétiennes, toutes dénominations confondues, augmentent plus vite qu'elles.

Pourtant ce n'est que tout récemment que la forte présence de l'islam en Afrique subsaharienne commence par inquiéter. Effectivement, l'islam africain se trouve dans une nouvelle phase d'une évolution complexe à laquelle on applique bien trop vite des étiquettes de «radicalisation» ou «d'intégrismes». Il faudrait mieux parler de seconde islamisation ou de prise de conscience islamique en Afrique. Celle-ci a des causes multiples et ne peut s'expliquer ni par les seuls «pétrodollars», ni par des stratégies expansionnistes de l'islam arabe qui sont réelles. Il faut la comprendre d'abord à partir du contexte général de l'Afrique d'aujourd'hui.

La grande majorité des musulmans africains, aujourd'hui encore, vivent leur foi selon les modèles et dans les cadres de l'islam traditionnel, marqué par sa forte inculturation, ses particularismes ethniques, ses réseaux d'initiation et de solidarité confrérique, mais aussi sa grande tolérance, voire son humanisme. Mais l'Afrique est en pleine évolution et les communautés musulmanes avec elle. Leur nouvelle vitalité et la radicalisation, si elle se vérifie ici ou là, sont d'abord une réaction à la situation désespérée d'un continent en quête d'une nouvelle identité. Pourquoi les musulmans africains deviennent-ils aujourd'hui sectaires, intolérants et violents, surtout là où ils sont minoritaires, alors que leurs ancêtres, durant près d'un millénaire, ont cohabité pacifiquement, en tant que minorité, avec des non-musulmans? La seule présence de quelques groupuscules islamistes parmi eux n'en est pas une explication suffisante.

L'oubli de l'Afrique

Il faudrait d'abord parler du contexte international global de l'Afrique. Elle est sortie complètement épuisée et exsangue de trois décennies d'indépendance durant lesquelles elle était, en fait, un pion sur l'échiquier de la guerre froide. Celle-ci terminée, les problèmes de l'Afrique risquent de tomber dans l'oubli total sur la scène internationale. Beaucoup d'Africains se rendent douloureusement compte de cette marginalisation. La manière de traiter les conflits les plus récents en est une nouvelle illustration dramatique. Dans cette situation de mise à l'écart, les pays africains cherchent un apui d'où qu'il vienne et à n'importe quelle condition, bien que l'expérience leur ait montré que, même du côté des pays pétroliers arabes, ils n'aient pas grand chose à espérer.

Le désarroi africain est plus profond. Trente ans d'indépendance n'ont pas apporté le bonheur promis tant de fois par tant de systèmes politiques différents. Malgré certains efforts et des résultats partiels réels, le désenchantement devant la crise endémique est général. Il s'agit de bien plus que d'une simple crise économique ou structurelle. Il s'agit d'une vraie crise d'identité, une crise d'humanité: l'africanité elle-même avec toute sa richesse relationnelle et ses valeurs humaines va à la dérive, est en train de disparaître.

Cette situation de désarroi est accentuée diversément et souvent aggravée par une série de facteurs difficilement maîtrisables pour des pays dont les seules vraies ressources sont les hommes: la sécheresse et la dégradation écologique, une démographie galopante allant vers la prolétarisation des grandes villes, la corruption et l'enrichissement disproportionné d'une infime minorité, le chômage d'une bonne partie des éléments les mieux formés de la société ou leur exode vers l'occident euro-américain... En fait, c'est tout le tissu social avec ses liens et solidarités traditionnels, notamment la grande famille, qui est en train de se déchirer. Il y a certes des libérations par rapport à l'ordre ancien que l'on pourrait saluer (femmes, jeunes...), mais bien souvent, au lieu de libérer des énergies nouvelles, elles deviennent elles-mêmes destructrices.

C'est dans ce contexte socio-politique avec tout ce qu'il a de précaire, de décevant, voire de déshumanisant qu'il faut mettre la nouvelle vitalité de l'islam en Afrique. Dans sa crise d'identité, le continent africain est ouvert et lié à toutes sortes de fondamentalismes, de messianismes et d'idéologies. Le récent repli sur l'ethnie (tribalisme) en est un exemple. L'islam par contre, est une réalité africaine ancienne qui se présente aujourd'hui comme un système cohérent, un système qui couvre la dimension spirituelle de l'homme, les besoins de la vie quotidienne, la réussite communautaire et même l'exercice du pouvoir politique pour placer le tout sous ce qu'il affirme être la «Loi de Dieu». N'est-ce pas là une réponse toute prête à tout le désarroi de l'homme africain? L'Africain, tant de fois abusé par ses prophètes politiques laïcs, s'il entend cinq fois par jour dans l'appel à la prière musulmane: «Venez à la prière! Venez au succès!», ne va-t-il pas se tourner plus consciemment vers cette religion à laquelle il adhérerait peut être par simple tradition familiale, afin d'y chercher la solution à tous ses problèmes?

Dans l'actuelle vitalité de l'islam en Afrique, il ne s'agit certes pas d'un courant unique ou d'une stratégie commune et concertée, mais bien d'un faisceau de facteurs endogènes et exogènes qui

exercent leur influence sur les communautés musulmanes traditionnelles et qui s'expriment de bien des manières.

Fondamentalement, nous devons distinguer deux réalités qui, dans des situations concrètes, peuvent pourtant être bien entremêlées:

- 1) La prise de conscience par les Africains de leur islamité qui s'exprime dans une plus grande ferveur religieuse, une meilleure connaissance et observance des règles de l'islam dans la vie personnelle et familiale, dans la mise sur pied de structures communautaires proprement islamiques et la lente purification de l'islam traditionnel, taxé d'«ignorant et syncretiste».
- 2) L'islamisme en tant qu'un ensemble de courants minoritaires visant à imposer l'islam à la société africaine dans tous ses aspects: économiques, culturels, politiques et juridiques.

«Il faut devenir meilleurs musulmans pour que les choses aillent mieux!» Les prédications dans les mosquées ou les émissions dans les médias, tournent en permanence autour de ce thème en expliquant dans le détail ce qui est la véritable pratique musulmane et ce qui ne l'est pas. Les médias, surtout la radio, écoutée à longueur de journée jusque dans le dernier hameau et sous la tente la plus isolée, ont joué et continuent à jouer un rôle prépondérant dans cette prise de conscience.

Dans le passé, la mosquée du vendredi et peut-être encore un groupe d'enfants rabâchant par coeur quelques sourates du Coran dans le vestibule ou la cour de l'ima, étaient les seuls signes d'une communauté musulmane. Pour le reste, on participait comme tout le monde à la vie villageoise ou du quartier encore fortement marquée par les lois et les modes de vie de l'ethnie et de la religion traditionnelle. C'est seulement tout récemment que les musulmans africains se sont découverts «communauté islamique» au sens fort. Toute une floraison de structures, d'associations, d'institutions et de publications voient le jour avec le label «islamique». On peut trouver jusque des équipes de foot «islamiques» ou encore une boulangerie «islamique». La multiplication des mosquées et leur équipement moderne de sonorisation ne sont que les signes les plus visibles ou audibles de ce processus.

D'autre part, la rapidité et la facilité des communications ont rapproché les communautés musulmanes africaines du centre de l'islam. L'appartenance à l'«umma» est désormais une

réalité concrète grâce au nombre fortement accru de pèlerins pour La Mecque, grâce aussi à une information permanente et rapprochée sur les événements du monde arabo-musulman qui devient ainsi un point de référence à côté du monde occidental.

Cet éveil communautaire s'exprime encore par l'intensification et surtout la modernisation de l'enseignement religieux islamique. Au «par-cœur» sans comprendre, fait place un enseignement didactique de type moderne, mais en arabe et porteur d'islamité. Les médersa et instituts islamiques surgissent à une vitesse vertigineuse dans tous les pays africains, même là où les musulmans ne sont qu'une infime minorité. C'est là certainement le fait le plus visible et le plus marquant de la nouvelle vitalité de l'islam. On peut s'interroger sur les conséquences durables qu'il entraîne pour l'Afrique. Une bonne partie de la jeunesse africaine est formée dans une langue et culture qui ne débouchent que très rarement sur les maigres possibilités d'emploi d'une vie économique moderne. Cela ne peut produire que des chômeurs aigris et, partant, des islamistes potentiels. Les échecs ou les coûts prohibitifs de l'enseignement de type occidental, public ou privé, ne laissent d'autre part aux parents aucune alternative.

Le désir de modernisation parcourt les structures même de l'islam traditionnel, telles les confréries. On peut observer l'émergence d'une nouvelle classe de chefs confrériques, de culture à la fois arabo-musulmane et occidentale: des magistrats, des professeurs, des diplomates ou hommes d'affaires. Certaines confréries ont aujourd'hui leurs propres mouvements de jeunes aux activités socio-récréatives modernes, leurs organisations féminines menant campagne pour assainir la vie familiale et sociale selon les préceptes de l'islam, leurs dispensaires et maternités ou encore des coopératives et d'autres associations de développement.

Prise de conscience islamique et volonté de modernisation vont souvent de pair, mais conduisent les musulmans africains à un dilemme: d'une part, il faut rattraper et égaler le dynamisme des communautés chrétiennes sur le plan de l'éducation, de la formation intellectuelle et technique pour pouvoir jouer un rôle dans la vie politique et économique. D'autre part, l'approfondissement de l'islamité leur fait découvrir qu'ils poursuivent là un modèle de société moderne qui n'est pas celui de l'islam et qu'il faudrait donc radicalement changer les structures et les lois si on veut construire une société musulmane authentique. Les manières de répondre à ce dilemme, sont multiples. C'est là aussi précisément le point d'ancrage des courants proprement islamistes.

Réforme et islamiste

Volonté de réforme et même arabisation ne veulent pas encore dire islamisme, mais où est la frontière? Toute la difficulté de rendre compte de la nouvelle vitalité de l'islam en Afrique réside dans l'identification précise de ce qui est modéré par rapport à l'islam et où commence la pression sur les autres groupes de la société et sur les institutions publiques définies jusqu'à présent comme laïques ou pluralistes? Où s'arrête l'affirmation légitime de la différence religieuse et où commence l'intolérance et le prosélytisme «bon marché»? Le réformisme devient islamisme dès qu'il adopte un projet précis de société islamique à l'exclusion de tout autre, dès qu'il refuse tout pluralisme que ce soit à l'intérieur de la communauté musulmane ou en dehors d'elle.

Le dynamisme interne à l'oeuvre dans les communautés peut, mais ne doit pas nécessairement conduire à l'islamisme. L'intolérance et l'exclusion ne sont pas précisément des caractéristiques africaines. La brève évocation du passé l'a montré. L'impulsion principale vers la radicalisation de certains milieux musulmans africains vient nettement de l'extérieur. Ce sont des courants de pensées ou mieux, des idéologies du monde arabo-musulman, profitant de la situation désastreuse de la société africaine, qui arrosent l'Afrique d'une propagande islamiste puissante quoiqu'assez discordante.

Le courant de base d'où s'inspirent directement ou indirectement la plupart des mouvements ou associations islamistes, nationaux comme internationaux, est le Wahhabisme, l'idéologie officielle de l'Arabie Saoudite. Son influence en Afrique subsaharienne passe autant par la coopération officielle que par des canaux privés. Le commerce, le pèlerinage à La Mecque, les études prolongées en Arabie sont des voies diffuses, mais d'autant plus efficaces pour la diffusion du Wahhabisme. A côté de ces voies «souterraines», la dynastie saoudienne s'est donné un instrument structuré et efficace, la «Ligue du Monde Musulman». Organisation internationale pour la propagande et l'expansion de l'islam, dotée de fonds considérables, elle a, depuis une bonne dizaine d'années, choisi l'Afrique comme cible prioritaire de son action: «l'Afrique est le continent de l'islam, qu'il s'agisse du passé, du présent ou du futur».

Un réseau serré de représentations ou d'antennes couvre aujourd'hui tout le continent, même et surtout les pays où les musulmans sont des minorités parfois insignifiantes, comme à Kinshasa par exemple. Tout en favorisant l'arabisation par tous les moyens, la Ligue dispose d'un riche matériel de propagande dans de nombreuses langues africaines.

Une bonne partie de son action et de ses fonds passe aujourd'hui par une multitude d'organisations non-gouvernementales (O.N.G) locales islamiques qui s'investissent dans l'aide directe ou des opérations de développement au bénéfice des seuls musulmans ou ceux qui sont prêts à le devenir. Parmi ses «moyens pacifiques» pour contrecarrer l'influence chrétienne, il y a aussi le soutien qu'elle accorde aux polémistes anti-chrétiens tel un Ahmed Deedat par une large diffusion de ses écrits et vidéocassettes. Cette puissante organisation vise ainsi une transformation des sociétés de l'intérieur sans violence apparente, sans même mettre directement la laïcité des institutions en cause, mais en proclamant haut et fort: L'Occident «chrétien» est à l'origine de tous les maux en Afrique.

A côté d'elle, avec une stratégie bien différente, il y a l'islamisme révolutionnaire dont Hassan al-Turâbî à Khartoum est aujourd'hui le grand inspirateur et rassembleur. Sortis de la tutelle de l'Arabie Saoudite lors de la guerre du Golfe, les Frères Musulmans Soudanais et leurs associés ont trouvé à Téhéran un nouveau «parrain» et bailleur de fonds. Leur Organisation Populaire Islamique (O.P.I.) fondée en 1991, et dont les membres viendraient de 50 pays, notamment africains, cherche à établir des têtes de pont, des partis islamiques ou des «fronts» (de refus) dans chaque pays pour le déstabiliser politiquement. Après le Soudan lui-même, le Tchad, envahi déjà par les révolutionnaires de Khartoum pourrait bien en devenir la prochaine victime.

La grande majorité des musulmans africains n'entre que difficilement dans ce jeu d'influences, de prosélytisme, d'exclusions ou de révolution au nom d'une religion. Africains autant que musulmans, ils aspirent à vivre en paix et en harmonie avec tous plutôt que constituer une communauté sectaire. C'est là que les chrétiens africains sont interpellés en vue d'une vraie rencontre avec eux, une rencontre plus consciente, plus organisée et préparée que le simple partage des mêmes réalités de vie comme par le passé.

En Afrique, la rencontre islamo-chrétienne est certes d'abord, un fait de la vie quotidienne. La religion n'a jamais été un domaine réservé ou un tabou. Les Africains débattent de questions religieuses à longueur de journées dans les bureaux, dans les usines, les places de village, les marchés... Ils partagent la même culture, souvent la même langue. Il y a échange et entraide dans les innombrables besoins de la vie quotidienne. Ce «vivre ensemble» par delà les différences religieuses a des racines profondes dans la tradition africaine. Elle est l'expression concrète et journalière de la conviction profonde d'appartenir tous, malgré les

différences confessionnelles, à une même communauté de destin qui a Dieu et les ancêtres comme origine, comme garant et destination finale. C'est dans cette conviction que s'enracinent les nombreux exemples d'une entente et collaboration que l'on pourrait citer: Chrétiens et musulmans se prêtent main forte pour construire une église ou une mosquée se mettent ensemble pour lutter contre la désertification ou d'autres fléaux.

Précisément parce que cette convivialité allait tellement de soi, elle est aujourd'hui fortement menacée. De plus en plus d'Africains, souvent davantage pour des raisons économiques que par conviction, refusent et renient les valeurs et les exigences d'une solidarité ouverte à tous pour se replier sur les règles bien délimitées de la solidarité islamique.

Bien que menacé, le «dialogue de la vie» est une réalité bien africaine. Par contre il ne faut guère chercher en Afrique des grandes rencontres organisées entre responsables de communautés différentes. Même dans les pays à forte majorité musulmane, l'Église a grandi à côté de l'islam, pour ne pas dire en ignorant l'islam. De plus, des différences de formation intellectuelle et, du côté musulman, la non-représentativité des «religieux» musulmans rendaient ce type de rencontres bien difficile. Ces dernières années, un certain changement est intervenu: pour faire face à des problèmes ou des défis communs, ces rencontres se multiplient. Dans le processus de démocratisation et de pluralisme politique, les autorités religieuses sont souvent les seuls points de référence sûrs et de ce fait, se rencontrent, se concertent, arrivent parfois à une parole commune.

Il reste que, pour l'ensemble du continent, la réaction chrétienne à la nouvelle vitalité de l'islam, est plutôt une réaction alarmiste. Pendant trop longtemps, la théologie de la Mission et sa mise en oeuvre dans la pastorale avait laissé l'islam et les communautés musulmanes en dehors de leur champ. Vatican II et sa vision en faveur d'une découverte des valeurs chez les non-chrétiens, d'une rencontre et collaboration avec eux, n'est jamais passé dans des options pastorales concrètes sauf dans quelques Eglises profondément immergées dans une majorité musulmane comme au Sénégal ou au Niger.

Le dialogue suffit-il?

C'est ici que l'on attendait une réponse plus positive du Synode pour l'Afrique. Le principe et l'urgence du dialogue avec l'islam en Afrique ont été clairement affirmés. Mais est-ce suffisant dans la situation actuelle? Même au Synode, la connaissance profonde de la complexité des com-

munautés musulmanes et de leur évolution parfois tâtonnante et conflictuelle, a fait défaut si bien que les vrais enjeux de la rencontre islamo-chrétienne ont à peine été évoqués. Il ne s'agit pas seulement de voir l'islam globalement comme une menace or, au mieux, comme un défi. Il s'agit de voir comment les musulmans africains se débattent pour trouver une solution à la quadrature du cercle: devenir de vrais croyants musulmans tout en restant de vrais Africains qui entrent dans la modernité avec toutes ses ambiguïtés.

Une meilleure connaissance de l'islam et de ses interprétations diverses en Afrique comme d'ailleurs la mise en place de structure pour le dialogue islamo-chrétien à tous les niveaux des communautés ecclésiales, font partie des résolutions du Synode pour l'Afrique. Pourtant la rencontre islamo-chrétienne ne se jouera pas tellement au niveau du discours sur ce qui nous sépare ou nous unit dans les deux messages religieux, mais bien à l'intérieur de deux autres grands thèmes abordés au Synode: l'inculturation et l'action pour plus de Justice et de Paix.

Le slogan de la propagande islamiste: «L'islam est la religion des Africains, le christianisme celle importée par les colonisateurs européens» garde toujours une part de vérité. Seule une vraie inculturation du message évangélique en Afrique peut donner une réponse adéquate à ce défi. Celle-ci est d'autant plus urgente, que sous la forte poussée islamiste et l'arabisation en cours, les musulmans sont en train de faire le cheminement inverse, celui d'une aliénation culturelle pour devenir des «Arabes noirs». Bien des musulmans éclairés sont conscients de ce danger et regardent vers les chrétiens pour retrouver ensemble une identité de croyants africains.

C'est ici que la reformulation de tout le message chrétien dans le langage africain et sa mise en oeuvre dans des communautés de base vivantes prennent toute leur importance. Déjà le simple fait que des chrétiens africains prient et chantent dans leur propre langue constitue une interpellation pour beaucoup de musulmans. Ainsi toute la vie chrétienne, surtout dans ses dimensions communautaires, doit devenir signifiante pour eux. Un vrai dialogue spirituel, «la fine pointe» de la rencontre entre chrétiens et musulmans est à ce prix.

L'islamisme qu'il soit «pacifique» ou violent, s'inscrit en faux contre toute la tradition africaine en prônant la marginalisation, voire l'exclusion de tous ceux qui, musulmans ou autres, ne rentrent pas dans le modèle de la société islamique. Chrétiens et musulmans ensemble ont à prendre clairement conscience de cette menace. C'est là tout le champ

d'une collaboration possible dans l'engagement pour plus de Justice et de Paix, que ce soit dans la politique, à travers les médias ou simplement à la base en se mettant ensemble pour affronter les problèmes communs de la sécheresse, de la délinquance dans les villes, du Sida et de bien d'autres...

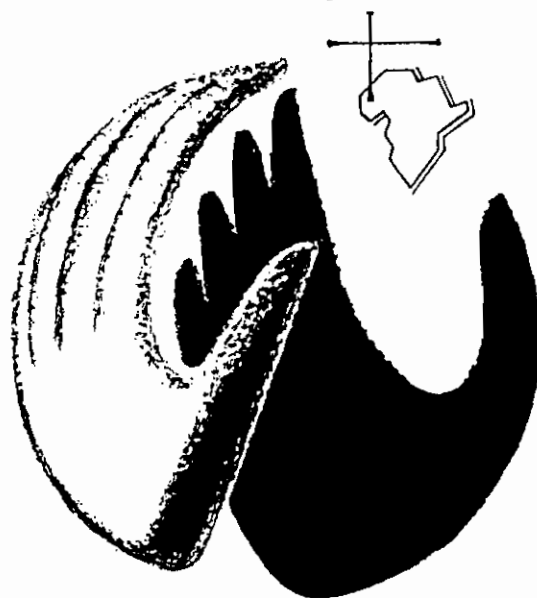
La place de la femme

Un des points où les thèses islamistes achoppent le plus en Afrique est certainement le rôle et la place de la femme dans la vie de la société. La «libération de la femme» fait partie de tous les programmes politiques et sociaux des Etats africains modernes avec bien des ambiguïtés, des solutions hâtives et parfois des contresens. Dans cet immense débat qui touche les bases mêmes de la société africaine, la rencontre entre chrétiennes et musulmanes est absolument indispensable. Nous sommes ici au plus profond «du dialogue de la vie». Tout ce qui est fait pour une vraie valorisation et promotion de la femme, est d'une importance capitale pour la convivialité pacifique des deux communautés dans l'avenir.

Devant la menace pour l'Afrique de devenir «le continent oublié» d'où il n'y a plus rien d'autre à attendre que des nouvelles de massacres et de catastrophes, chrétiens et musulmans africains n'ont guère d'autre choix que de se rencontrer et d'essayer de donner un nouveau visage à une tradition séculaire d'accueil mutuel et de convivence. Pour les chrétiens cela signifie: mettre le message évangélique au coeur de leur être personnel et communautaire, pour donner à leur africanité une dimension plus large que le seul clan ou la seule ethnie. Pour les musulmans, cela signifie: dans l'approfondissement légitime de leur foi, ne pas rejeter les valeurs traditionnelles d'accueil et de tolérance envers tous. Chacun a besoin de l'autre!

Ref: *Église & Mission*

numéro 275, juillet-août-septembre 1994



BUILDING BLOCKS OF AN INCARNATIONAL EVANGELISATION

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Ever since the Second Vatican Council, mission has been looked upon as a process of continuing the Divine Incarnation in time and space. In order to carry on Christ's mission, the Church is asked to do it Jesus' way, i.e., through identification with each particular people and culture (cf. *Ad gentes*, Ch.2). Carrying forward Christ's mission through a process of identification with various peoples by the Church is, these days, variously called, 'Inculturation', 'Contextualisation', etc. They mean more or less the same: cultural enfleshment of the Gospel in every people and place, at all times. In a country like India this will, in a special way, involve joining people's movements and identifying with their aspirations and struggles. We call this mission incarnational evangelisation and intend to delineate in this article some of its important theological and practical building blocks.

2. THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

2.1. No more exporting of Jesus by a Monocultural Christianity to other peoples. Instead, He should be related to each people from within its historical, religious and cultural identity.

All over the world we see now-a-days two diverse but complementary tendencies. On the one hand, the world is becoming a global village, i.e., different peoples of the earth come together, take from one another and get enriched by each other. On the other hand, we see the same peoples affirming their separate identities more vigorously than ever. It is amazing to see the very same peoples of Asia and Africa, who seemed to be, in the 19th century, all but washed out culturally by the colonising White races, forcefully staging a come back to their self-identities in a matter of a few decades. The revival of culture, the emergence of nationalism and the winning back of independence

from the colonial powers went hand in hand in all these instances.

India was no exception. On the contrary, even during the heyday of colonial rule in India, the British could not break the identity of the Indian masses. It is against this background that one should evaluate the efforts of the Western missionaries to convert the people of India. Compared to the enormous amount of personnel and other resources they invested in India, the success was negligible. Phenomenologically speaking, the failure of the Western Christian missions in India was more owing to the affirmation of their self-identity by Indians than a rejection of Jesus Christ and his significance. While Jesus held out irresistible attraction to the people here, his identification with Western man, his culture, and form of Christian faith must, to a great extent, be held responsible for this great dilemma. The dynamics of a monocultural Christianity propagated by the missionaries of the colonial era was such that the acceptance of Jesus Christ and the Christian faith involved not only the displacement of the recipient's culture but the imposition of the proclaimer's in its place. This is equivalent to the destruction of the self-identity of a people and their legitimate autonomy. Such an attempt will always be resisted by all, especially in today's world of heightened self-consciousness and affirmation. Today, India's rejection of Jesus Christ during the colonial era can be evaluated in terms of the rejection of a monocultural Christianity brought by the Western Missionaries.

A missionary who proclaims Jesus Christ purely from his own cultural dimension, and believes in a monocultural Christianity is repeating the fatal historical error committed by the Church in the colonial era. Jesus Christ, subject to the conditions of monocultural Christianity, will be looked upon as a foreigner by the people to whom He is addressed. This is tantamount to exporting Jesus Christ and, hence, He is not likely to be accepted; He cannot encounter people in a deep, personal and

resonating sense.

But is Jesus a foreign God to the various peoples of the earth? Has He got to destroy other gods in order to become their Lord? In the world of Israel, Yahweh at times seems to compete with other gods; he needs to destroy them in order to establish his authority. The Israelites were, during the Babylonian captivity, conversant with many creation myths of the Babylonians: the god of the Babylonians was the most powerful; he could destroy all the other gods. He, then, created the entire universe out of their corpses. A monocultural Christianity seems to entertain this kind of a view regarding other peoples' cultural identities, when they present Jesus Christ. However, such a theology of Christian mission is not only counter-productive, but even self-destructive. Gods can indeed be destroyed; for, there is only one God and others are only false. But the identities of peoples are real and they cannot be destroyed; they are positively willed and shaped by God; hence, they have a valid and creative role to perform for all time. Any attempt to do away with them by a monocultural Christianity in the name of Jesus would only be self-destructive because it might lead to a rejection of the Gospel. What needs to be destroyed is the monoculturalism in the Church in order that the significance of God's revelation in Jesus Christ be accepted for what it is by the different peoples of the earth. An incarnational evangelisation endeavours to enshrine and implement this perspective in mission. Its thrust is to present Jesus Christ as an insider, as somebody who is related to all peoples from within their identity. One is aware that Jesus Christ is trans-cultural. But this does not mean that he cannot become an insider. Otherwise, a revelation in history (incarnation), does not signify anything unique. Incarnation means what is not assumed is not saved (St Ireneus).

2.2. The Theology of Redemption has to be brought in line with a Theology of Creation. The traditional theology of redemption in Jesus Christ does not seem to be vitally linked with a Theology of Creation except for a brief preface describing the creation and fall of man. Otherwise, it expends itself in the extraordinary deeds of God in Jesus Christ for the salvation of human kind and in the position of the Church to be an exclusive instrument chosen to dispense the effects of God's special act of salvation through Jesus Christ. In traditional ecclesiology, it is as if the Church were only concerned about and accounted only for the extraordinary and favoured relation between God and her. There is an apparent lack of interest to see herself in a continuous line with God's presence and work in creation and among the diverse peoples of

the earth and their histories.

A similar attitude was at times adopted by Israel when she paid too exclusive an attention to the God of deliverance in history. In those moments, she has been led to interpret election as favouritism. This, however, made her a less effective instrument of witnessing to Yahweh among other nations; it led her to self-centredness and an eventual rejection by Yahweh.

A theology of grace in Jesus Christ which is not vitally linked with God's presence and activity in creation and among all the children of God outside her structured existence, is likely to lead to a mission theology of triumphalism and exclusivism. From here it is but a short step to monoculturalism and the identification of grace and truth with an institutional structure. An overwhelming tendency in traditional theology is to see God's act in creation in the context of sin and its expiation, which seem to suggest that God's act in Jesus Christ in history would not have taken place at all had sin not occurred.

A Christology that presents itself to the peoples of the earth only and exclusively via God's act in history in Jesus Christ and, that too, in exclusive terms of sin and its amends, can exercise but a negative relationship with other religions and cultures. This is because such a Christology will have serious difficulty in seeing how God's act in creation and His act in history can combine to bring to completion one and the same salvation of human kind. It is likely to fail to recognise the mutual reciprocity of God's act in creation and that in history in Jesus Christ.

2.2.1. Mission theology during the era of modern missions was based on this type of theology of grace, ecclesiology and Christology. The exclusivism, triumphalism, monoculturalism and the negative approach of the early missionaries to other religions and cultures, to a great extent, resulted from this theology. The method in mission and its goal setting in terms of preaching (exercised as a monologue without ever positively relating the Gospel to other cultures), conversion (practised as individual conversions involving the convert's total break with his social, cultural and religious identity) and planting Church (extending, in effective terms, the monoculturally institutionalised form of Western Christianity), are examples of a mission carried out under a Christology and ecclesiology never placed in conjunction with a theology of creation as part and parcel of the one and the same economy of salvation meant for the whole human kind.

2.2.2. In contrast to the negative missionary approach during colonial times, we see in the New Testament Church signs of a positive vision: it is based on a Christology that connects in an integral way God's presence and act in creation and his act in Jesus Christ in history. St John's Christology found in the prologue of his Gospel is perhaps the best illustration of the point under consideration. Here it is the same Word through whom the first act of creation came to be that continues also in the second. He, as the source of Life and Light, is the same both in creation and the new creation. "The appearance of the incarnate One is set in relation to all previous revelatory and redemptive acts of God as their consummation and perfection. That such revelatory and redemptive works took place within Israel's history is taken as axiomatic; the Evangelist John sees in Jesus the fulfillment of all intimations of "grace and truth" made known to Israel. The same applies in principle to the revelation of God in the world beyond Israel.

It is pertinent to note here that the expression, "He came to His own" (Jn 1:11), cannot be exegetically tied down to Israel alone; it means the whole human race. Our concern here is to emphasise the point that Jesus Christ is intrinsically and intimately related to all peoples and cultures both in the act of creation and the act of revelation in history. It is a relationship from within. The special significance of God's act in Jesus Christ is not outside the goal of God's presence and act in creation. Paul's words in Colossians, 1.16, "all things have been made in Him and for Him" also indicate the unity and the sameness of the goal of all creation in Christ. Therefore, the proclamation of the Gospel has to take note of this continuity and oneness in God's economy of salvation.

Because of their exclusivist Christology, the missionaries in the colonial era were not able to relate Jesus Christ to other cultures and peoples from within. This was also the reason why they did not find it incongruous to negate other cultures and the particular identities of peoples and tried to establish a relationship between the converts and Jesus by a monocultural faith. But such a relation, even at its very best, can only be external to those who do not belong to the culture of the missionary and consequently, Jesus could be felt as an outsider.

It is noteworthy that the proclamation recorded in the Acts takes care of the aspect under study very well. For example, in all the proclamations addressed to the Jews, the evangeliser related Jesus to them from within their historical, cultural and religious identity. On the other hand, in the proclamation addressed to the non-Jews (Paul's

speech at the Areopagus in Acts 17), not a single mention is made of Jesus' Jewish connections (no exporting of a Jewish Messiah to the Greeks!), but He is introduced and proclaimed against the cultural and religious background of the listeners. In the decision of the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15), we do not see any imposition of a universal Christ based on a single culture; on the other hand, there is a vindication of the principle that the Gentiles can have a relation with Jesus from within their identity and autonomy.

2.2.3. The dynamics of a revelation in history and its implications for presenting Jesus Christ from within the historical identity, particularity and concreteness of different peoples.

The starting point of any valid Christology cannot be a pre-existent *Logos* as a philosophical, 'ontic' Christ which is only a mental construct. As a mental construct, it may become a universally acceptable *Logos*. But the question is whether such a *Logos* can really be identified with concrete historical particularities.

The *Logos* experienced and proclaimed by the Apostles was a particularised *Logos*. The Christology of the Apostles began with the experience of the *Logos* identified with a particular person called Jesus of Nazareth. His credential to be a universal Saviour is precisely his ability to become particular, i.e., to be identified with all of us in our concrete historical existence. "He came to His own" means not only Jews but every people on earth. "For it is clear that he did not come to help angels...", therefore, he had to become like his brothers and sisters in every respect (Heb 2:16-17).

The Christian revelation as a historical revelation entails that Jesus be presented/shared from within the historical and cultural identity of peoples. The specificity of the historical revelation means, God's Self-communication through identification with the specific identity of the diverse peoples and bringing them to fruition along the lines of each one's special identity. This identity differs from people to people in a deeply ingrained way by the very internal law of historical existence. The Christian revelation can play its designed role in history only in so far as every culture becomes part of the text of the missionary proclamation and the Word becomes involved in the concrete life of the people addressed. Only then will Jesus be able to resonate within people and help them participate in his paschal mystery. This makes Jesus a universal Saviour in the truest sense of the word.

This understanding of the historical revelation has a number of radical implications:

2.2.3.1. *Inculturation Should be a Comprehensive Process*

In the historical process, human life is built into a wholeness consisting of various aspects such as culture, religion, society, economic ties, etc. There is a holistic inter-relatedness in these various concrete aspects and expressions. Therefore, inculturation cannot be restricted to the past alone or to the externals alone; there is no question of picking up certain innocent and harmless elements alone excluding the religious. The Faith has to be incarnated in the entire gamut of the different concrete aspects of a living culture in history. A compartmentalised inculturation cannot provide for a heart to heart meeting of the full Gospel with the whole culture. Christ, the Saviour in history, can be related to people, not as an abstract universal, but in historical totality and concreteness, as he was related to the Jews in their total concrete identity in the form of Jesus of Nazareth. It means, in the process of proclamation the evangelising community should go out and identify with the people rather than take from them some individual converts and get them identified with the present prevalent institutional form of the Church.

2.2.3.2. Not individual conversions, but evangelising cultures should be the goal of an incarnational evangelisation.

Under the compulsion of monoculturalism, in the mission of the colonial period there was a preponderance and predilection for individual conversions. Whether the converts came as individuals or groups, they had to make a clean break with their religious, social, cultural and historical identity and they then formed part of an entirely new social, cultural and religious identity. The converts could never carry their group identity into the Church under the dispensation of the old mission theology of the colonial era. This is what is signified by individual conversion.

But, as we have seen in the previous sections, culture and history are indivisible. We have also observed that a specificity is ingrained in every people and culture by the very internal human law of its existence in history. An individual belongs, in every atom of his being to a specific, historical, social, religious and cultural wholeness. He is what he is only in this specific wholeness. He cannot be understood or addressed apart from this concrete and specific wholeness. Gone for ever are the days when a human person was considered under the

Aristotelian-Thomistic concept, as a subject existing independently in intellectual nature. The human sciences have proved the utter untenability of such a stand about a human person and his autonomy.

Our understanding of the Christian revelation as historical shows that its historicalness is in relation to its reciprocity and mutuality with concrete historical human existence and its specificity is expressed in terms of culture, society, religion and its struggles and aspirations. It is never addressed to individuals apart from the historical situation. An incarnational evangelisation, following the dynamics of a revelation in history should be focussed on the cultures rather than on individuals in isolation.

The Jewish Christian community may be a good case for our consideration in connection with the present and the previous point. From many descriptions in the New Testament, it is reasonably clear that the Jewish Christian converts continued to live their historical, socio-cultural and even religious reality; they continued to go to the Temple and Synagogues and followed the Mosaic Law. Even after their conversion, they considered themselves as true Israelites, and, this, also in a religious sense. Accepting Jesus was for them a valid and decisive reason to continue as Israelites, because He had entered incarnationally into every aspect of their historical, social, cultural and religious identity. He transformed, fulfilled, and thus authenticated its God-given orientation. Jesus meant for them not a break with their historical identity, but a transvaluation and transformation from within. The Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) did not say it was anathema to practice the Mosaic Law by the Christian Jews in so far as it was a pointer to Jesus and was a strong aspect of their identity. The Mosaic Law was both a concrete religion and a strong, irrepressible element of their historical identity.

The Jewish Christians were wrong in their attempts to Judaize gentile Christians. But they (who included some pillars of the Faith in Jesus) were right in continuing in their historical, cultural, social and religious identity and way of life with a genuine transvaluation in Jesus Christ. In this respect, they present an example of an incarnational evangelisation.

3. SOME CONCRETE STEPS FOR THE PRACTICE OF AN INCARNATIONAL EVANGELISATION

Especially in the last twenty years, the concept of evangelisation has been widened: There is now an increasing recognition of the positive values and

the possibility of salvation in other religions. This, in turn, leads one to consider dialogue with them as an integral aspect of evangelisation. So too, the fight for justice, involvement in liberation struggles, and the total development of people are accepted as constitutive elements of proclamation along with its verbal aspect which no doubt retains preeminence. Again, one considers the specificity of different peoples and cultures and the indispensable necessity of incarnating the faith in them as a *conditio sine qua non* for the actualisation of the universality of Church. While the presence of the values of the Kingdom of God outside the institutional Church is acknowledged, the former is recognised as a wider reality than the latter. With these and other new perspectives we have described in detail earlier, the deck has been, to a great extent, cleared for the practice of an incarnational evangelisation. I consider the following areas very important for its practice.

3.1. Teaching, learning and developing a local theology by doing it, by a praxis of being involved with people, by an explication of the Word via participation and not mainly through academic and intellectual exercise.

Under the influence of the Western pattern theology has been taught/learnt in India through a speculative and intellectual process. The trend setter of this approach was the Rationalism and Enlightenment of the Europe of the 18th century. Many centuries before that, scholastic theology had already given preeminence to the intellectual aspect of grasping truth. A theology born out of this patrimony was not necessarily related to people and actual historical happenings in the world. Technically speaking, such a theology could be taught and learnt with full justification in the ghetto of a seminary with all the persons concerned far removed from people and history, as is the case today excepting a few experimental centres. This was then naturally considered as a perfect setting. But a revelation in history demands a different approach to truth and a different method of learning/teaching and transmitting it. Because, the truth concerned here is not an abstract, speculative or empirical truth meant for a secular profession or aesthetic enjoyment. The truth of a revelation in history with which any theology has to do primarily, is concerned with an act of liberation in history involving the whole human person and society. This truth is concerned with an inter-relatedness between God, the cosmos and human beings - something attainable exclusively through a process in history. Therefore, an incarnational evangelisation in Asia necessarily needs a theology ordained towards the grasp and explication of truth found in life, history and actual living con-

text. Such a theology, of necessity, entails learning/teaching/developing it by doing it. A theologian has to be involved in the actual life situations and struggles of the people, if he wants to speak authentically about God's liberating Word in history where it continues to become an event.

3.2. Participation in People's Movements in India

"Talk about inculturation will remain abstract till the Church has the courage to get involved with the lives, the struggles and hopes of the people", observes M. Amaladoss. If, in the Asian situation, inculturation can be considered the womb and necessary process for the birth of authentic local Churches, then participation in the struggles of the teaming millions of our peoples will be the baptism for the existing churches in Asia having a foreign pedigree, to be born again as true local Churches. In that case alone, the people will issue them an indisputable Asian birth certificate.

In India, the stance of the established Churches, as well as, of theologians has been, in this regard, culpably non-committal both in word and deed. A silver lining of the otherwise dark cloud, is perhaps the recent stirring found among certain sections of the religions in India for joint action in this realm. The interiority of the Indian religions and the contemplative nature of the Indian mind should not be made an alibi for the inaction of the official Church and theologians in India. The South American brand of liberation theology does not suit the Indian soil, some point out. But has the Church in India so far undertaken any concerted and sustained effort to initiate some form of involvement in the struggle of the masses that suits the so-called Indian soil? This has not been the case even in the acute instance of the Dalits. One does not overlook some initiatives on the part of some individuals and small groups. The point here is the conscientisation and mobilisation of the whole Church. The role of the official Church and theologians in this regard is practically nil except for lip service. A genuine inculturation cannot take place without the involvement of the Christian community in it.

The historicity of God's revelation has been experienced both in the Old Testament and in the New as God's presence among the poor, his involvement, action and option for and on behalf of the marginalised. The very purpose of Incarnation (of which the incarnational evangelisation is to be an ongoing process) is liberation from the slavery of sin. Today's material poverty, caste division, etc., in India is the ugly face of a most oppressive form of the conditions of sin. In this context, the Gospel

can be experienced and welcomed as Good News by the oppressed people of India only if the Church is able to translate God's revelation in Jesus Christ into his presence among and action on behalf of them for their total liberation. The words of E. Schillebeeckx are fully relevant here: "...The recognition that the contemporary context for talking meaningfully about God is the context of humankind's need for liberation, emancipation and redemption. In our times, an authentic faith in God only seems to be possible in the context of a praxis for liberation and solidarity with the needy. It is in that praxis that the idea develops that God reveals Himself as the mystery and the very heart of humanity's striving for liberation, wholeness and soundness".

3.3. There are many other ways of practising an incarnational evangelisation today in India. We suggest below a few of them:

- a) The Church has a serious obligation (and a golden opportunity for relevant witnessing) to enter into a ministry of reconciliation in the present context of acute tension between different religions, castes, races and language groups in India. The Church should understand herself as a sacrament of unity between God and people in India and the different sections of the people in our land. She has to exercise this mission with a sense of urgency and special relevance in today's situations.
- b) The Church has to take the initiative in forming and organising Basic Christian Communities. Besides, wherever possible, Basic Human Communities also have to be formed consisting of people belonging to different religions with a view to getting involved in issues like the fight against illiteracy, communalism and corruption. A Christian missionary has to consider this as his most urgent task and responsibility in today's India.
- c) Another effective form of an incarnational evangelisation will be the formation of inter-religious dialogue and prayer groups; the participation of Christians in national and important local festivals of other religions. In this connection, the Christian presence in simple *Ashrams*, where Indian religious ideals, values of the Kingdom of God and personalised service (no big projects) are combined and integrated with the life of the people around, will be a concrete step in the practice of an authentic incarnational evangelisation.

4. CONCLUSION

We undertook to propose some theological perspectives and practical measures that will underpin any serious attempts at incarnating the Christian faith in our land today. The old colonial method of mission practiced here such as preaching, converting and planting the Church goes against the ideals of divine Incarnation. The success which even the very originators of this method of mission had during the colonial era was negligible in India. Because of the compulsion of monoculturalism inherent in this method, it does violence to the integrity, specificity and autonomy of different cultures and peoples of the earth. The Second Vatican Council and the various recent Papal Encyclicals understand mission in today's world as 'evangelising cultures', or, as we have shown by incorporating the spirit of Vatican II and the Encyclicals, incarnational evangelisation. We will conclude our reflections in the beautiful words of S. Bantumalaia: "The Gospel message is to be lived, reflected, written, painted, preached, taught for God and for our neighbours in the midst of solidarity with them. When we carry out this stewardship of Christianity scripturally, sharing contextually, concretely and responsibly, we may give birth to the fifth Asian Gospel".

Ref: *ISHVANI DOCUMENTATION & MISSION DIGEST*
vol. XII, n.2,
May - August 1994



LA DEMOCRATIE MODERNE EN AFRIQUE

FACTEUR DE DEVELOPPEMENT INTEGRAL

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Importance et portée

On peut étudier la démocratie en Afrique dans son développement à travers quatre phases principales: la période pré-coloniale, la période coloniale, l'après-indépendance et la «seconde indépendance» actuelle. Pour une gestion démocratique rentable, mon approche mettra l'accent sur les deux premières phases qui éclairent les deux dernières qui requièrent une compréhension et une évaluation correctes.

A. ASPIRATIONS ET ILLUSIONS EN AFRIQUE

Très souvent, les définitions de la démocratie émanent d'essais érudits reflétant des contextes étrangers à l'Afrique. J'ai choisi, dans cet exposé, de m'inspirer principalement du peuple africain et de ses expériences pour définir et comprendre la notion de démocratie.

A trois moments précis, le peuple africain a exprimé clairement ce qu'il entendait par démocratie. D'abord avant l'indépendance; ensuite durant les années qui suivirent l'indépendance, années d'espoir et de désespoir, de paix et de guerre, de succès et d'échecs; enfin, l'époque actuelle où l'ensemble du continent semble déterminé à s'engager dans une gestion démocratique «totale» et en rectifiant les erreurs de leur propre gestion.

Bien que la compréhension et la pratique de la démocratie par le peuple africain aient subi une évolution évidente, partout perceptible, on peut distinguer quelques principes généraux qui ont été mis en relief au cours des trois moments signalés plus haut. A l'approche de l'indépendance, les peuples africains nourrissaient de grands espoirs d'indépendance. L'idéal démocratique était considéré comme le but et la raison d'être de l'indépendance.

Pour les Africains, la démocratie voulait dire, entre autres, les aspirations suivantes:

Etre leurs propres maîtres: les Africains voyaient l'indépendance comme le moment décisif où ils seraient pleinement eux-mêmes; ils prendraient leur destinée en main, feraient leurs propres choix et crieraient haut et fort leur égalité en tant que personnes devant tous ceux qui des siècles durant les avaient asservis et dégradés.

Exercer le pouvoir: les Africains considéraient l'indépendance comme l'occasion cruciale qui leur apporterait le pouvoir. Tout le monde pourrait ainsi savourer le pouvoir réel de choisir et de révoquer ses dirigeants.

Etre libres: avec la fin de l'ère coloniale, la liberté était le maître mot qui devait se traduire par l'action. Certains ont dépassé les limites de cette liberté. Tout ce qui était considéré comme instrument d'oppression sous le régime colonial devait être aboli. Par exemple, les impôts, les prisons, les chefs imposés, les cartes d'identité, les visas à l'intérieur d'un même pays.

L'égalité des chances: l'indépendance devait offrir des chances égales à tous. Hommes et femmes seraient traités de la même façon. Les masses rurales partageraient les fruits de l'indépendance avec celles des villes. On pensait que le développement économique était partie intégrante d'une indépendance tenue pour certaine.

Jouer de la paix et de la stabilité: la cause des conflits et des guerres a été imputée au colonialisme. Maîtres d'eux-mêmes, les Africains n'auraient plus de raison de se faire la guerre. L'indépendance était considérée comme le vrai début d'une paix durable.

Autrement dit: on pensait que l'avènement de l'indépendance signifierait la fin du colonialisme, de l'oppression et des massacres, de l'exploitation, de la guerre, de la discrimination, de la pauvreté, de la maladie et de l'ignorance, des injustices flagrantes et des trahisons par leurs propres enfants.

Trente ans sont passés depuis. Qui ne serait tenté de conclure que les Africains ont été naïfs? On peut tirer deux leçons de cette expérience:

Premièrement, les Africains savaient, comme ils le savent aujourd'hui, ce que la gestion démocratique veut réellement dire. Toute personne, quelles que soient les règles de l'éducation moderne, est à même de savoir ce qui est bon pour elle et pour la société dans son ensemble.

Deuxièmement, c'est la trahison de ces idéaux et la frustration des légitimes aspirations qui ont provoqué la colère et la révolte.

B. LES QUESTIONS PRINCIPALES:

Je vais essayer de répondre à deux séries de questions fondamentales concernant l'évolution historique de la démocratie en Afrique. La première série de questions porte sur l'échec de la gestion démocratique en Afrique. Pourquoi, depuis l'indépendance, les nations africaines ont-elles lamentablement échoué dans la tâche du maintien et de la promotion de la gestion démocratique? Pourquoi les dirigeants africains, à de rares exceptions près, ont-ils honteusement déçu les grands espoirs et les grandes aspirations du peuple africain? La deuxième série de questions concerne la recherche honnête de solutions durables. Que doit faire l'Afrique pour apporter à son peuple une démocratie sans bavures? Comment les Africains peuvent-ils défendre et promouvoir le régime démocratique?

Afin de répondre à ces questions, il convient de dresser un tableau de l'évolution de la démocratie en Afrique.

L'expérience pré-coloniale

On peut tirer de la longue période pré-coloniale autant de leçons négatives que positives, qui expliquent jusqu'à un certain point l'héritage que le passé a légué aux dirigeants africains de l'après-indépendance.

Commençons par les leçons positives: la société pré-coloniale plaçait la justice au centre de tout règlement des différends. Cet attachement à la justice permettait aux différents groupes ethniques de garder une forte cohésion à l'intérieur et d'entretenir l'entente avec les voisins à l'extérieur. Quelque oppressif ou dictatorial que fût un dirigeant, on s'en remettait autant que possible à l'administration de la justice en vertu des coutumes établies.

Cette valeur démocratique fut une des premières à s'effriter lors de la période de l'après-indépendance.

La valeur démocratique en Afrique traditionnelle voulant que la discussion se poursuive jusqu'au consensus a été soulignée par de nombreux penseurs et écrivains africains, notamment Julius Nyerere. Les Africains prenaient place sous un arbre et débattaient de problèmes de gestion jusqu'à ce qu'un consensus se dégage. La décision à la majorité comme concept démocratique était inconnue; car que faire si jamais la majorité avait tort? Chaque objection était prise au sérieux et l'argumentation suivait son chemin jusqu'au moment où elle rencontrait un compromis sage et avisé. C'est cette pratique qui permettait aux clans et aux petites communautés de rester unis. Dans l'ère de l'après-indépendance, le recours au consensus pour des questions de gestion était considéré comme un luxe dépassé que les dirigeants africains, issus d'une éducation moderne, étaient censés écarter.

La prédominance de la coutume et de la tradition en matière du gouvernement était très claire dans l'Afrique pré-coloniale. Les constitutions non écrites étaient connues de tous les adultes. Ils étaient loin d'ignorer ce que tout roi ou chef pouvait ou ne devait pas faire. La loi coutumière avait suprématie et tous devaient s'y conformer.

A l'époque de l'après-indépendance, la première chose que les dirigeants africains firent, ce fut de s'assurer que les gens du peuple ne connaissent pas le contenu des constitutions écrites calquées sur les modèles occidentaux. Une telle ignorance constituait l'instrument le plus puissant de manipulation du peuple.

Les aspects négatifs de la société africaine pré-coloniale semblent avoir été repris en bloc par les dirigeants africains de l'après-indépendance. La dictature et les pratiques oppressives furent décrites comme les meilleurs moyens de forger une nation avec une mosaïque d'ethnies.

Le culte du héros devint la règle pour exalter les nouveaux dirigeants africains en les mettant au-dessus des colonialistes qu'ils avaient remplacés et au-dessus de toute autre personne dans le pays. Quiconque s'opposait à eux ou remettait en cause leur style de vie ou leur gestion était considéré comme un traître. «Le plus grand Coq», «le Mzee de la Nation», «le Professeur de la Nation», «Le Conquérant de l'Empire britannique», «L'Unique», «Le Président à vie» et ainsi de suite, étaient autant de titres destinés à tuer dans l'oeuf toute opposition aux nouveaux dirigeants africains. Le culte du héros était le pire mythe que l'on eût emprunté à la tradition pré-coloniale.

Puisque les sociétés pré-coloniales n'avaient ni armée en poste, ni police, ni prisons permanentes,

les dirigeants africains de l'après-indépendance tentèrent d'en faire les nouveaux signes de leur puissance. Cela n'avait plus rien à voir avec le passé. Ceux-ci devinrent aisément les nouveaux instruments de l'oppression et de la coercition du peuple pour le faire obéir.

De même, on s'est servi de l'éducation occidentale comme d'un instrument d'oppression. Dans la société pré-coloniale, l'éducation élémentaire, non officielle, la gestion du bien commun était ouverte à tous. Après l'indépendance, seuls les quelques initiés à la «sagesse des blancs» étaient considérés comme aptes à assurer la nouvelle administration du pays. Ce système était attribué à la tradition par une oligarchie dont l'intention avérée était d'empêcher la majorité de participer valablement à la gestion du pays.

Les leçons de la période coloniale

Ce que suivit l'indépendance dans la plupart des États africains indiqua clairement que les aspects négatifs de l'héritage colonial étaient bien plus attrayants aux yeux des dirigeants africains que les aspects positifs du colonialisme.

Une petite élite éduquée à l'occidentale se constitua en groupe nationaliste et mobilisa la population pour l'indépendance. Leur objectif était de prendre la place des européens et d'occuper leurs positions stratégiques en jouissant des pouvoirs et des privilèges dont ils bénéficiaient. Le groupe ne souffrait ni opposition ni critique. Quiconque osait remettre en cause leurs intentions était systématiquement traité de «traître». Les voix séparatistes furent étouffées. Le groupe supposait que toutes les ethnies du nouvel État-Nation coexisteraient tranquillement sans conflit. Les gens du peuple, qui assistaient à tous ces événements, se demandaient sérieusement ce que l'indépendance apporterait.

Trente ans plus tard, il s'avère que le problème du partage et du contrôle du pouvoir n'a pas été traité de manière adéquate au moment de l'indépendance. Les garanties pour les libertés et les droits fondamentaux des individus et des groupes étaient simplement énoncées dans les constitutions sans qu'il y ait de culture ou d'institutions autonomes puissantes pour les faire respecter. Le problème de la résolution pacifique des conflits n'a pas été réglé. La gestion démocratique, que le nouveau groupe de dirigeants africains gardait pour lui et qui contrastait avec les périodes pré-coloniale et coloniale, n'a pas été complètement expliquée aux citoyens. Ces omissions et bien d'autres devaient engendrer désespoir et frustrations dans l'après-indépendance.

La gestion démocratique dans l'après-indépendance

Au lendemain de l'indépendance, plusieurs conseillers — ou, mieux, souffleurs — coloniaux sont restés à l'arrière-plan pour aider les nouveaux dirigeants à élaborer des projets quinquennaux de développement; ils leur montreraient comment faire fonctionner la constitution «étrangère» nouvellement adoptée. L'octroi du soutien financier nécessaire à la gestion de la nation indépendante dépendait souvent de la présence du «brave homme» au pouvoir. Au sein de l'armée, certains officiers coloniaux étaient toujours présents, bien que souvent invisibles. Les premières mutineries de l'armée, comme celles qui eurent lieu en Afrique orientale en 1964, ont été matées grâce à l'aide des renforts envoyés par les capitales coloniales.

Les interrogations

Peu après l'indépendance, l'un après l'autre, les États virent surgir des tensions, des Africains d'origines et de professions différentes commencèrent à se poser toute une série de questions: pourquoi une poignée de compatriotes devrait-elle simplement remplacer les blancs sans apporter aucune amélioration significative à la vie de la majorité? Pourquoi garder au pouvoir des personnes qui y ont accédé par des élections truquées? Et après tout, pourquoi serions-nous gouvernés par l'élite formée à l'occidentale? Pourquoi l'armée devrait-elle se tenir à l'arrière-plan de la politique alors qu'elle contrôle les moyens de coercition? Pourquoi conserver les institutions étrangères imposées alors qu'elles ne tiennent pas suffisamment compte des réalités locales? Pourquoi maintenir les privilèges des étrangers et des chefs héréditaires dans une nation indépendante? Pourquoi ne pas se faire de nouveaux amis outre les anciens maîtres coloniaux et exploiter le conflit idéologique Est-Ouest? Et après tout, pourquoi ne pas évoluer différemment, en termes de gestion et d'idéologie, par rapport à ce qui avait été décidé à l'indépendance?

Telles étaient les questions, comme celles que se poserait un jeune homme qui vient juste de se marier et qui veut s'affirmer en tant que personne adulte et émancipée de ses parents, dont il réprouvait l'autorité mais tout en ayant assimilé leurs valeurs et en ayant encore besoin de leur soutien.

Au fur et à mesure que de nouveaux problèmes, défis et situations apparaissaient, de nouvelles solutions étaient recherchées et appliquées. Bon nombre d'entre elles prirent la forme d'un refus direct de la gestion démocratique. Lorsque l'Ouest commença à douter de l'idéologie du développement de Kwame

Nkrumah, celui-ci se rapprocha de l'Est. Cela lui coûta son poste de dirigeant et plongea le Ghana dans le militarisme. Sékou Touré de Guinée défia la persistance du néo-colonialisme français et en fit à sa guise pour raffermir la dictature interne, laquelle fut seulement renversée le jour de ses funérailles présidentielles! Les premiers gouvernements africains qui avaient conquis le pouvoir par l'escroquerie du scrutin ne tardèrent pas à abolir toute alternative pacifique à leur gestion. Cela a tout naturellement ouvert la porte aux militaires. Un premier coup d'État réussit au Nigéria en 1966; plus de 101 façons de mener à bien un coup d'état furent ensuite imaginées, si bien que même un simple capitaine, ou de grade moindre, pouvait être porté à la tête d'un gouvernement africain à condition d'accéder au dépôt d'armes central et à la radio nationale pour annoncer son action «rédemptrice» au nom du peuple.

L'entêtement obstiné des Portugais à accorder l'indépendance à l'Angola, au Mozambique et à la Guinée-Bissau a donné naissance à de nombreux mouvements de libération qui eurent de la peine à s'unir au moment de la victoire contre les Portugais.

Les guerres civiles dans les pays africains indépendants ont anéanti la gestion démocratique au Soudan, en Ethiopie, au Tchad, en Ouganda pour ne citer que ceux-là. Le militarisme et les États à parti unique sont devenus la règle plutôt que l'exception. Ma réflexion n'entend pas s'abîmer en lamentations sur les misères que les nations africaines ont connues depuis l'indépendance ni s'épuiser en estimations des pertes en vies, propriétés, dignité et droits de l'homme. Ces faits sont bien connus et l'Afrique devrait avoir honte de certains résultats obtenus depuis l'indépendance.

C. LES ENNEMIS DE LA GESTION DEMOCRATIQUE DEPUIS L'INDEPENDANCE

Etudier les causes de l'échec de la gestion démocratique, c'est, du même coup, attirer l'attention sur certains facteurs responsables qui en ont été les principaux criminels.

L'ignorance

Le premier ennemi de la gestion démocratique est l'ignorance. Une personne ignorante est une personne exploitée et opprimée souvent sans en être consciente. L'ignorance supposée ici ne constitue pas tant le manque d'éducation que l'incapacité à évaluer ce qui se passe autour de soi. L'ignorance politique conduit de nombreux Africains à sous-estimer leur aptitude à participer à la direction de

leur pays et à dire non à la dictature et à tous les effets délétères qui l'accompagnent. Pareille ignorance est due au fait que les gens ne sont pas informés de manière adéquate: ils ne connaissent pas suffisamment les droits et libertés auxquels chacun peut prétendre en tant que personne et citoyen. Une personne ignorante ne connaît pas les lois qui la protègent et ne sait pas à qui s'adresser pour obtenir réparation.

L'ignorance de la gestion démocratique a aidé les dirigeants sans scrupules à tromper la population et à mener à bien leurs desseins égoïstes et malveillants à l'encontre des citoyens et du pays. A cause de l'ignorance, les Africains ont été incontestablement *patients*, trop patients même et résignés dans leurs souffrances et leurs oppressions. Une telle résignation repose sur le fatalisme. Beaucoup ont accepté en silence leur sort en attendant passivement l'arrivée d'un libérateur à venir d'ailleurs.

Pour que la «seconde indépendance» en cours porte ses fruits, l'ignorance politique doit être éliminée. Le savoir est l'arme la plus puissante pour chaque citoyen. Etre critique et capable d'analyser les problèmes est le point de départ du droit chemin vers la gestion démocratique.

Parmi les dirigeants politiques eux-mêmes, l'ignorance a également contribué au recours à la dictature. Plusieurs dirigeants, spécialement les militaires ont accédé au pouvoir en pensant qu'il était facile de gouverner un peuple. Bien vite ils se sont rendu compte que la tâche dépassait leurs aptitudes et compétences. Au lieu de se racheter en se retirant et en rendant le pouvoir au peuple, ils ont opté pour une dictature éhontée réduisant au silence ou à rien tous ceux qui osent remettre en question leur gestion ou démontrer la faillite de leurs idées aventurières.

Pauvreté, injustice et corruption

Aussi longtemps que l'Afrique restera pauvre au milieu de ses richesses naturelles, les citoyens ne pourront participer pleinement à la gestion démocratique. La pauvreté des gens a été utilisée pour acheter leur vote aux élections. La promesse de bénéfices économiques a poussé de nombreuses personnes à apporter leur soutien aux régimes oppressifs. Un pauvre peut rarement être complètement libre de ses choix. Pour être durable, la gestion démocratique devrait faire partie du développement économique avec l'élimination des injustices et de la corruption. Toute disparition de gouvernement démocratique en Afrique commence habituellement par la corruption et l'établissement d'injustices dans les divers secteurs des affaires publiques.

Le principe de responsabilité et de transparence

fait partie intégrante de la démocratie. La gestion démocratique et le développement économique ne peuvent jamais être séparés sans conséquence fatale.

Système à parti unique

Le phénomène des États à parti unique, peu après l'avènement de l'indépendance, a été désastreux pour le continent africain. Il empêchait l'émergence d'un contrôle efficace du gouvernement. Il n'hésitait pas à étouffer toute discussion sérieuse sur les problèmes réels. Il a naturellement engendré des actions subversives afin de destituer les dictateurs et, surtout, il a mené à de nombreux coups d'État militaires dans la plupart des pays africains.

La nouvelle ère ne peut tolérer le système du parti unique qui tend toujours vers la dictature. Le pluralisme politique est apparu comme démocratie. Comment organiser et mener à bien ce pluralisme, cela reste néanmoins la prérogative de chaque nation africaine.

Militarisme

Mais lorsque les dirigeants politiques essayèrent de rester au pouvoir pour de bon, il fut tout naturel que l'armée, dont ils avaient cherché le soutien, revienne sur scène pour les bouter hors du pouvoir et donner aux soldats la chance de goûter aux fruits de l'indépendance! L'armée, cependant — la plupart des Africains en sont totalement convaincus — n'a ni la formation, ni la vision, ni la qualification normale à diriger une nation. Le régime de commandement, à sens unique, sans réplique et sans dialogue, auquel elle est habituée ne peut être appliqué aux citoyens. La discipline à laquelle elle est soumise ne peut aller de pair avec la gestion démocratique.

Dans la nouvelle ère qui s'ouvre aujourd'hui, il faut que l'armée reconnaisse et reprenne avec honneur sa vraie place dans la société et qu'elle s'y tienne. Chaque société doit avoir sa division du travail. C'est elle qui crée l'ordre dans la société. Chaque partie de la société devrait se limiter strictement au rôle qui lui est assigné par la Constitution nationale.

Elitisme

Les gouvernements africains de l'après-indépendance ont vu les élites formées à l'Occident s'emparer du pouvoir et en faire un monopole sans vouloir le partager avec les simples citoyens. Ils ont tendance à se méfier de la démocratie pluraliste. Ils n'admettent pas le principe démocratique de la souveraineté du peuple. Ils en sont venus à mépriser les idées et opinions des gens ordinaires, en fait

leurs propres parents. Cet élitisme devrait disparaître dans cette nouvelle période de la «second indépendance». Le peuple devrait être éduqué de façon à être habilité à participer activement à tout ce qui le concerne.

Instabilité

Alors que les facteurs qui viennent d'être cités conduisent, d'une manière ou d'une autre, à l'instabilité, l'inaptitude des pays africains à résoudre leurs problèmes de façon pacifique s'est révélée une des causes évidentes de la guerre, de la destruction et du sous-développement. Chaque nation doit mûrir à l'instar de l'enfant qui devient adulte. Durant la période de croissance, des tensions, conflits et problèmes peuvent surgir. Ceux-ci pourront toutefois se résoudre par la voie pacifique lorsque les gens auront acquis une mentalité tournée vers la paix et la stabilité. Être réduits à résoudre les problèmes des nations africaines par les armes est un signe d'immaturité inacceptable. La gestion démocratique exige aujourd'hui que toutes les dispositions constitutionnelles ainsi que la culture de l'autorité de la loi et du droit aient pour objectif la solution des conflits avec sagesse et maturité, par des moyens pacifiques, voire diplomatiques et politiques.

D. LES CONDITIONS PREALABLES DE LA GESTION DEMOCRATIQUE EN AFRIQUE CONTEMPORAINE

La seule utilité d'une étude historique de l'évolution de la démocratie en Afrique est de tirer des conclusions sur lesquelles on pourra rebâtir dans la plupart des États africains la démocratie effondrée, défigurée, à peine reconnaissable.

L'aube de l'ère nouvelle qui s'ouvre actuellement nous a aidés à dresser ce constat. Certains pays ont effectué une évaluation superficielle, d'autres une plus profonde, tandis que d'autres encore ne se sont pas encore assis un moment pour réfléchir à la situation catastrophique de la gestion démocratique depuis l'indépendance.

La gestion démocratique en Afrique devrait être construite et reposer, entre autres, sur les principes suivants, qu'il faut constamment mettre effectivement à jour.

1. La reconnaissance, le respect et la promotion des droits de l'homme et des libertés fondamentales;
2. La reconnaissance de la souveraineté du peuple et son application effective;
3. L'instauration d'un système démocratique et

libre de gestion par des élections justes, libres et régulières;

4. L'instauration d'un système de gouvernement décentralisé et délégué, fondé sur une démocratie pluraliste pour tous;
5. La promotion et la consolidation de l'unité nationale et de la conscience, tout en respectant pleinement les différences légitimes;
6. Le principe de séparation des pouvoirs fondamentaux pour en assurer l'équilibre;
7. La garantie de l'indépendance du système judiciaire qualifié pour enrayer correctement la corruption;
8. Le principe de développement socio-économique allant de pair avec la gestion démocratique;
9. La reddition de comptes devant le peuple, garante de la transparence de tous les dirigeants et fonctionnaires publics.
10. L'instauration d'un politique de consensus comme élément fondamental du processus de prise de décision sur des problèmes cruciaux et le recours à des voies pacifiques et diplomatiques pour normaliser les situations conflictuelles.

11. Le contrôle effectif du pouvoir par des organisations politiques civiles et pluralistes, la liberté de la presse et l'éducation civique;

12. L'établissement dans le milieu familial, d'une base solide pour une culture de justice, de paix et d'honorabilité;

13. La promotion de la coopération régionale, continentale et internationale;

14. La promotion du respect sacré de la constitutionnalité pour une gestion démocratique sans failles.

Conclusion

Certes, l'Afrique a enregistré de mauvais résultats en matière de gestion démocratique depuis l'indépendance. Mais ce n'est pas une excuse pour continuer sur le chemin de l'auto-destruction. Si les trente dernières années ont une leçon à nous donner, c'est bien celle de repartir du bon pied avec détermination, en corrigeant nos erreurs, une fois pour toutes. C'est alors que l'histoire nous aura donné une leçon qui nous rend vraiment à jamais libres.

Ref. *TELEMA*

n. 81, janvier - mars 1/95



COMING EVENTS

May 30 - June 3

SEDOS RESIDENTIAL SEMINAR

PHILIPPINES - INDONESIA - PACIFIC ISLANDS

Divino Maestro (ARICCIA)

WORKING GROUPS

May 24 Haïti Group - 15.30 hrs. at SEDOS

May 31 World Debt - 15.30 hrs. (French) SMA Generalate,
V. della Nocetta 111

June 8 China Group - 16.00 hrs. at SEDOS

June 23 World Debt - 15.30 hrs. (combined English/French) at SEDOS
