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EDITORIAL

CARDINAL PAULO ARNS appraises the progress of the Latin American Church since the Second Vatican Council. At this moment in his life, as he hands in his resignation, aged 75, he looks back at some of the main issues which have characterised his historic ministry to the Church of São Paulo. — Our second article is an important paper CAROLE COLLINS presented to an AFJN workshop held in Washington. The author deals with the very interesting question of how “*economic globalisation*” affects Africa. — More than two years after the Special Synod for Africa, Fr RENÉ DE HAES, SJ., looks at the Papal Document and formulates some areas, where the Church in Africa should now pass from reflection to action. — How to confront the diverse phenomena of international violence and terrorism, becomes a real missionary challenge for the Church. In his article, the Peruvian theologian, MANUEL DIAZ MATEOS, reminds us how much the value of human life stands at the centre of Jewish and Christian tradition. — In our last article, the well-known economist and collaborator of the Centre of Concern in Washington, JO MARIE GRIESGRABER, dwells on the possibilities of reducing the external debt of the poorest nations. She shows how NGOs can get positively involved.

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ÉCOUTER LA CLAMEUR QUI MONTE DES PAUVRES

Le Cardinal Arns, une des grandes figures de l'épiscopat brésilien, fête ses 75 ans le 14 septembre 1996. C'est l'âge auquel les évêques doivent présenter leur démission. Le cardinal Arns avait célébré l'an dernier ses 50 ans de sacerdoce et ses 25 ans d'épiscopat. Infatigable défenseur de la ligne conciliaire, profondément engagé dans la défense des droits de l'homme et la justice sociale, le cardinal Arns ne s'est jamais lassé de défendre les pauvres.

Une Interview du Cardinal Paulo Arns

Nous traversons actuellement une étape de l'histoire où l'on prône d'un côté la globalisation, la compétition, les avantages de la technologie... et d'un autre côté l'exclusion et le chômage. Quelles sont les exigences éthiques annoncées par l'Évangile dans ce contexte?

Mgr Paulo Arns: Aujourd'hui, à la fin d'un nouveau millénaire, la défense de la vie des pauvres du Sud de la planète, ajoutée à l'extermination des nations autochtones sur tant de continents, exige de tous une réponse solidaire. Depuis Medellín, tous nous annonçons qu'une sourde clameur nous arrivait du monde des pauvres, signe d'interpellation adressée à la communauté des chrétiens. Dans les pauvres et les exclus sont niées l'éthique et la vie humaine de tous les peuples. Beaucoup affirment que l'hégémonie du marché pourrait sauver l'humanité, mais ce que nous voyons c'est la misère et la douleur sur tous les continents et l'idolâtrie pécheresse de ce système néolibéral. Nous, chrétiens, croyons en l'homme et en la personne comme critères de tous les systèmes et économies. C'est au service des pauvres que la technologie et l'évolution doivent exister. Dans les rêves de Dieu, la dignité humaine occupe la place centrale. Aujourd'hui, la fidélité aux valeurs les plus sacrées, telles que l'honnêteté, la solidarité, la justice et la paix doivent assumer une place prioritaire dans notre vie politique et ecclésiale. Nous sommes devant un des plus grands défis de l'humanité: partager les biens et le savoir avec tous, et essayer de sauver notre planète des prédateurs voraces du bois, des vies et des richesses et de la tragédie écologique du sol et de notre environnement global. L'annonce de la vie, et de la vie en plénitude, doit continuer d'être notre horizon pratique. J'assume pleinement les paroles lucides de l'épiscopat brésilien dans son Document no. 54, des Directives générales de l'action évangélicatrice, § 196: "À la lumière de

l'analyse de la situation actuelle socio-économique et éthico-politique, il nous semble que les services les plus urgents que les communautés chrétiennes puissent rendre à la société brésilienne soient l'engagement dans la lutte contre la pauvreté et l'exclusion et la contribution à la création d'un nouveau sentiment de responsabilité dans l'éthique publique".

La crise éthique que nous traversons provoque une déformation des consciences (comme l'avaient déjà dénoncé les évêques dans la 31^{ème} Assemblée générale de la CNBB en 1993). Que faire pour structurer l'éthique afin qu'elle aide à une prise de conscience solide (qui ne se laisse pas corrompre) des personnes?

Mgr Paulo Arns: D'abord, réveiller les consciences endormies et manipulées par la violence et la peur. Ensuite sauver les vies et les corps là où les forces et les schémas de mort les détruisent, en étant des prophètes, organisés et fermes, dans la lutte non violente pour la paix.

Constituer chaque jour et chaque année, des milliers de petites communautés ecclésiales de base, ce véritable réseau de solidarité qui donne une base et confère de la fermeté aux gestes et aux luttes en faveur de la vie. Sans la force des pauvres organisés, il n'y a pas d'éthique, ni de nation qui subsiste. La constitution de la citoyenneté et la récupération des droits séculièrement ajournés sont une tâche ardue qui réclame de la persévérance. Être toujours en harmonie avec les principes éthiques fondamentaux, tels que la dignité de la personne humaine, le travail primant le capital, la solidarité et la liberté de chaque personne, la subsidiarité et surtout la charité.

Il faut que nous aussi, qui sommes d'Église, nous changions nos comportements et attitudes de vie et de solidarité, assumant davantage dans notre propre existence ce que nous proclamons aux autres comme valeur. La cohérence est une exigence éthique de l'actualité (...).

Durant la réalisation du synode des évêques sur "La réconciliation et la pénitence dans la mission de l'Église", vous avez fait une intervention sur le péché social. Plus de dix ans ont passé depuis la réalisation de ce Synode. Que diriez-vous aujourd'hui sur le péché social?

Mgr Paulo Arns: La principale lutte de notre Église est et sera toujours de sauver des vies, des cultures et des corps meurtris par le péché structurel, social et personnel. L'information et la solidarité rapides et urgentes continuent d'être des mécanismes nécessaires et efficaces pour affronter l'injustice institutionnalisée. Sauver des vies qui courent le risque de disparaître exige des chrétiens des attitudes solidaires et collectives audacieuses et une charité organisée, quand ce sont des millions d'êtres humains qui dépendent de ce geste et de cet amour politique.

Le dépassement de ces structures se présente comme un impératif évangélique. Ce dépassement ne peut être réalisé que par des actions politiques qui, avec leurs moyens spécifiques, transforment les structures et provoquent la création d'une société plus juste et fraternelle.

Aujourd'hui, les droits des pauvres, menacés par le système néolibéral, exigent de nouveau que l'Église prête sa voix, ses espaces religieux et sa propre vigueur évangélique en faveur de la vie de tant de petits.

Comme l'affirme le texte de base de la Campagne de fraternité 1996: Il existe dans le monde des structures sociales et économiques qui peuvent être appelées des structures de péché. Elles sont la présence de ce qui peut être appelé un mal objectif dans le coeur du monde et, en tant que telles, constituent un contresigne du Règne, ou son contraire" (no. 145).

Et le texte de la Campagne de fraternité 1996 continue encore: "Le dépassement de ces structures se présente comme un impératif évangélique. Ce dépassement ne peut être réalisé que par des actions politiques qui, avec leurs moyens spécifiques, trans-

forment les structures et provoquent la création d'une société plus juste et fraternelle" (no. 147).

Durant ces dernières années, nous avons aussi essayé de mener ces actions pour édifier une réelle citoyenneté au Brésil. Des chrétiens mûrs et engagés sont d'excellents citoyens et des témoins vivants contre tout péché.

L'encyclique Evangelium vitae (mars 95) souligne la valeur et l'inviolabilité de la vie humaine. Nous rencontrons ici la préoccupation de "la multiplication et l'aggravation des menaces contre la vie des personnes et des peuples". Partant de cette constatation, que faire pour rompre ce cercle anti-évangélique de la culture anti-solidaire actuelle?

Mgr Paulo Arns: Celui qui se dispose à défendre et à visiter les prisonniers, les pauvres et les exclus - comme le Christ l'a fait et exigé dans son Évangile - sera calomnié, persécuté et traité de "pauvre malheureux" dans le Brésil actuel.

Dans l'histoire coloniale, les massacres contre les petits ont été très nombreux et sanglants: Canudos, à Bahia, la guerre du Contestado aux frontières du Paraná et de Santa Catarina, la Cabanagem au nord du pays... de grands crimes contre l'humanité ont été pratiqués. Des personnes qui voulaient terre et dignité ont été assassinées et détruites d'une manière barbare. Il y a déjà, dans l'histoire brésilienne, un péché originel immense et lourd qui doit être rappelé et constamment regretté.

Nous ne pourrions jamais oublier la fin du Quilombo de Palmares par un génocide et la mort, sous le fouet et dans l'esclavage, de millions de noirs amenés comme esclaves sur notre terre et, jusqu'à aujourd'hui, non reconnus dans leur dignité de fils privilégiés de Dieu.

Récemment les crimes et les persécutions commis contre les enfants de la rue dans toutes les capitales brésiliennes, particulièrement à São Paulo, Rio et Recife, sont des clameurs qui atteignent les cieux et tourmentent non seulement notre société mais le Dieu Créateur lui-même.

Qui touche et maltraite un enfant, touche et maltraite le Dieu Créateur. C'est un péché imprescriptible et qui doit être aboli d'urgence. Un enfant de la rue, n'importe quel enfant de la rue de n'importe quel coin pauvre de cette planète est une image unique de Dieu et ce n'est qu'elle qui pourra sauver

et préserver l'image belle et digne d'un monde nouveau et vrai.

Faire cette mémoire, en rachetant l'histoire de douleurs de notre peuple et en défendant les enfants, c'est la tâche primordiale de n'importe quel citoyen dans le Brésil actuel. Nous n'avons pas de temps à perdre, ni d'excuses à présenter. Rappelons de nouveau saint Augustin: "Dieu ne condamne pas celui qui ne peut pas faire ce qu'il veut, mais celui qui ne veut pas faire ce qu'il peut" (Serm. 54,2).

Notre société vit en accentuant le relativisme des valeurs. L'encyclique Veritatis splendor (août 93) recommande l'importance de retrouver la vérité dans la vie chrétienne. Comment le faire aujourd'hui sans nuire à la liberté de la personne ?

Mgr Paulo Arns: Le critère qui doit toujours nous animer c'est l'amour et la pratique concrète de cet amour. Vérité et liberté boivent à cette fontaine inépuisable. Quelqu'un pourrait-il penser, dans l'horizon chrétien, à une vérité sans amour et à la liberté sans amour? Jamais. Ce serait impossible. L'amour est le grand vote de confiance de Dieu dans l'humanité. Il ne passera jamais, car c'est la même grâce de Dieu offerte gratuitement.

C'est de cette manière que le cher père rédemptoriste Bernhard Häring, professeur de morale de renommée internationale, nous présente le défi quotidien de la morale. Le P. Häring dit: "Dans ma théologie morale et pastorale, la doctrine sur la grâce par laquelle Dieu nous devance, le vote de confiance qu'il dépose en tous et en chacun de nous pour nous encourager, c'est la pensée la plus profonde qui pénètre le coeur".

La recherche de la vérité qui nous motive tellement doit être faite avec une pédagogie semblable à celle du Christ incarné, avec la délicatesse, le respect et la tolérance de celui qui sert la vérité. Jésus révèle le Père par l'action et la parole vivante de son témoignage. Jésus présente le Règne et envoie l'Esprit sanctificateur pour nous rendre libres et vrais devant nous-mêmes et devant Dieu.

Ainsi, unir vérité et liberté est la tâche actuelle. Les Pères conciliaires nous le rappellent ainsi, dans le texte sur la Révélation divine, de Vatican II: "Ainsi donc, par la lecture et l'étude des livres sacrés, que la parole de Dieu se répande et resplendisse' (2 Th 3:1), et que le trésor de la Révélation, confié à l'Eglise, remplisse toujours plus les coeurs des hommes" (DV 26).

Présenter la vérité en touchant les coeurs et proposer une libre adhésion au Christ par amour et sans autoritarisme d'aucune espèce, c'est le "comment" toujours si difficile, mais toujours nécessaire.

A partir de votre longue et infatigable recherche pour la défense des droits humains et de la paix, pourriez-vous dire que, de fait, nous pouvons affirmer aujourd'hui "Brésil: plus jamais"? L'oppression n'aurait-elle pas pris d'autres chemins actuellement? Quels sont les défis posés?

Mgr Paulo Arns: Comme je l'ai écrit, le 3 mai 1985, dans la préface du livre *Brésil: plus jamais*: "Nous espérons que ce livre, écrit par des spécialistes, nous confirme dans notre croyance dans le futur". Jusqu'à présent, je continue de garder cette espérance et cette fidélité au Christ et au peuple que j'aime tant.

Présenter la vérité en touchant les coeurs et proposer une libre adhésion au Christ par amour et sans autoritarisme d'aucune espèce, c'est le "comment" toujours si difficile, mais toujours nécessaire.

De fait, nous avons d'urgence besoin d'un système judiciaire plus impartial et indépendant, avec une justice effective et rapide; une police bien équipée, préparée et sélectionnée professionnellement, évitant ainsi la contamination et la manipulation par le pouvoir parallèle du trafic des drogues; une éducation pour la citoyenneté et pour les droits de l'homme à tous les niveaux de la vie publique et privée, particulièrement dans les écoles et les communautés de tout le pays; une réforme agraire faite avec vigueur et courage par le gouvernement fédéral et dans chaque État de notre Fédération, pour promouvoir la vie, la production abondante d'aliments et la qualité de vie; une économie tournée vers l'homme et ses besoins vitaux et non ce système d'exclusion néolibéral qui est en train de détruire l'emploi, la santé et la dignité de notre peuple; une Eglise toujours plus fidèle au Christ et à son Évangile, dans le respect des autres croyances et cultures.

Dans le dialogue, nous construirons la paix et la vérité.

Durant cette année, l'Église de São Paulo a commémoré les 250 ans de l'histoire diocésaine, les 50 ans de votre vie de prêtre et vos 25 ans d'épiscopat. Quel est le message que vous aimeriez

enregistrer pour les prêtres et les agents de pastorale, à partir de ces événements importants pour l'archidiocèse de São Paulo?

Mgr Paulo Arns: Durant ces 25 ans comme pasteur de notre grande et aimée ville de São Paulo, je peux dire, en tant que pasteur jubilaire, que beaucoup a été fait grâce aux laïcs, religieux, prêtres et évêques avec lesquels j'ai travaillé. Ce fut cet effort quotidien qui m'a rendu et continue de me rendre heureux et épanoui.

C'est au service des pauvres que la technologie et l'évolution doivent exister. Dans les rêves de Dieu, la dignité humaine occupe la place centrale. Aujourd'hui, la fidélité aux valeurs les plus sacrées, telles que l'honnêteté, la solidarité, la justice et la paix doivent assumer une place prioritaire dans notre vie politique et ecclésiale.

Entendant les clameurs du peuple et organisant les forces et les moyens pour y répondre, je compte sur des gens généreux et intelligents, capables de

grands gestes d'amour et de tendresse. Dieu m'a donné l'immense grâce de pouvoir travailler avec une Église tellement vivante et pleine de l'Esprit Saint, une Église qui lutte pour la vie et sait louer le Père Créateur dans son infinie miséricorde. Nous avons essayé de faire beaucoup de choses, avec la grâce de Dieu, et nous le ferons encore, assumant aujourd'hui de nouvelles causes en faveur de l'espérance, spécialement auprès des retraités et des porteurs du sida.

Avec la protection de l'apôtre Paul et de Marie, notre mère, nous chanterons le Magnificat, dans la recherche constante de devenir toujours plus les serviteurs de Dieu et les témoins du Christ ressuscité, avec une foi vivante et libératrice.

Comme les anciens Pères de l'Église, je demande que notre image de l'Église et de la personne humaine (*imago creationis*) puisse se transfigurer chaque matin, par le baptême et la table eucharistique, à la ressemblance du Christ (*imago recreationis*), par la grâce du Saint-Esprit de Dieu.

Ref. *Dial*, Sept. 1996

AROUND AFRICA

Reshaping Africa: Effects of Economic Globalisation

Economic Justice was the theme of the AFJN Annual Meeting, Advocacy Day and Justice and Peace Workshop held in Washington from 15 - 21 June. Below is an abridged copy of Carole Collins' presentation on Globalisation to the Justice and Peace Workshop.

Carole J.L. Collins

The purpose of this presentation is to focus our attention on one of the most powerful and complex processes reshaping the lives of Africans and people in all the regions of the world: globalisation.

Globalisation in its many forms social, political, technological, cultural, educational, environmental but especially economic globalisation is not a new topic for you as AFJN members and church activists. But its effects are often more subtle than we realise. IMF austerity and global debt have sparked not only suffering but major political debates in many African countries. You yourselves in all your marvellous diversity also reflect one form of globalisation: the globalisation of Christianity and of that strand of it known as the Roman Catholic Church.

WHY FOCUS ON GLOBALISATION?

Why focus on globalisation? Will it make a difference to your work on justice and peace? It is increasingly clear that the answer is "yes". In this presentation I hope to:

1. Highlight some key global social forces and processes, economic, social, political, technological, cultural which are reshaping Africa (the region from which some of you come and which is your primary concern as AFJN members), at macro and micro levels.
2. Analyse how these global social forces, processes and trends are affecting Africa and Africans, especially youth, today. For example, to what extent is there such a thing as "global youth culture"? In what ways has it spread to Africa (or not), and why? What values are embedded in it? How and by whom has it been created (or 'marketed')?

Global processes affect people similarly / differently, depending on what regions they come from (North vs. South, industrialised vs. under-developed; rural vs. urban). Its effects are also different on: those from different social and economic classes;

different genders; different ethnic groups; (sometimes) those from different religions, when some religious groups are privileged or restricted to certain occupations.

Which people in Africa are being empowered or disempowered by these global dynamics? How are African attitudes, consciousness, morality and worldview being affected by these global dynamics and the local conditions and realities they generate?

3. Help build a common vocabulary and conceptual framework on globalisation which will help AFJN more effectively raise global issues within the Church and in public, governmental and international arenas. At the heart of much of AFJN's work is solidarity with the poor in Africa. A deeper analysis of globalisation and its many facets can strengthen AFJN advocacy and solidarity with the peoples of Africa. Where can you best focus your efforts to challenge the negative, exploitative dimensions of globalisation?

APPROACHING THE TASK

In looking at a topic as broad as globalisation, it is easy to over-generalise. But identifying variations in the effects of a global economic trend on people is as important as identifying commonly experienced effects.

It is also important to realise that globalisation is neither all bad or all good. It can empower and help liberate, as when cellular phones and the growing use of new communication technologies have enabled human rights NGOs in Zaire (and elsewhere) to collaborate more closely and publicise rights abuses rapidly in 'real time' rather than having information trickle out slowly. Now NGOs and social movements around the world can quickly share analyses and breaking events using the Internet, e.g. allowing them to co-ordinate

campaigns to mobilise aid for famine-stricken Somalia, or to halt the French Government's resumption of nuclear testing in the Pacific, or to protest the Nigerian Government's execution of Keno Saro-Wiwa. The UN's Department of Humanitarian Affairs now has a website (Relief Net) which posts the latest information on humanitarian crises around the world, as well as background material. Perhaps some of you have examples of globalisation's positive effects from your own countries or regions?

But globalisation can also disempower, as when other new technologies enable transnational corporations (TNCs) to bypass scrutiny and regulation of their operations by national governments, or to abandon whole communities and relocate elsewhere if underpaid workers demand improved wages and working conditions. Globalisation poses unique and unprecedented moral and practical challenges to all of us, because it increasingly undermines the effect of personal and government decisions on social and cultural as well as economic issues.

Global markets have weakened governments' ability to guarantee the value of their own national currencies and to ensure economic stability, as recent financial crises in both Mexico and Britain have underlined.

Although democratisation has become a highly popular buzzard and policy focus around the world in the political sphere today, this is not reflected in the economic sector. Economic globalisation has not proceeded democratically, by and large. Rather, it has been imposed on most developing countries from outside. Indeed, Jamaica is the only country in the world to have asked its citizens to vote on whether to accept an IMF loan (and its conditions) or not.

After providing some background and framework for discussing these issues, I want to sketch out some aspects of this process called globalisation and how it erodes or reinforces or, to borrow a term from Ivan Illich, modernises social and economic injustice and poverty.

This presentation is intended to stimulate your thinking about your own lives and realities, and the lives and realities of those you either minister to pastorally or build solidarity with through public advocacy. It obviously grows out of my own experience and background. (As it happens, many of my examples are drawn from Africa, the part of the world outside my own that I know best though obviously

not as well as many of you (perhaps most of you, especially those of you who come from that immense continent).

At the end, I outline some possible approaches to countering the negative effects of globalisation. What "pressure points" institutions and strategies might AFJN best focus its energies on to greatest effect in the next few years? I conclude with a list of dilemmas, issues and challenges posed by globalisation for Africa and the world that you may want to explore further.

In doing this, I argue:

- that the negative effects of economic globalisation are not merely a matter of poorly implemented policies: the problem is the dominant economic model itself.
- that one of the most overlooked statistical facets of this globalisation is that of gender.
- that the transparency and accountability of transnational corporations (TNCs) need to become a greater focus of the struggle for social and economic justice.
- that we need to explore the possibility of developing a "grassroots internationalism" to counter the corporate-controlled globalisation we are all affected by. How can we create "international regimes from below", i.e. ways to hold both governments and transnational forms of governance (like the UN or IMF and World Bank) accountable to the people they govern? How can we build genuine partnerships of solidarity? This is what many NGOs have been exploring in Rio, Cairo, Copenhagen, Beijing and Istanbul.

WHAT IS GLOBALIZATION?

What do we mean by "globalisation"? To use one definition, it is that world-wide process of accelerating economic and other linkages and interdependencies, intended and unintended, that are intertwining and transforming the everyday lives and destinies of people from East and West, North and South, you and I, in profoundly new ways. I would like to lay out some of the statistical signposts and metaphors of this process (and in particular economic globalisation, which propels other forms and facets of globalisation) its immense scope, magnitude, and complexity, and some of its directions.

Globalisation, especially economic globalisation, oft seems difficult to grasp fully because of its very complexity. When staff from AFSC (American Friends Service Committee) discussed this topic a

year ago, one noted that “economics often makes me feel stupid”. I and many others have felt similarly. Many economists compound this sense of helplessness by comparing economic processes to immutable natural laws. Why try to change what cannot be changed?

It is important to realise that much of economics is a matter not of science but of ideology, of faith — dare I say religious faith — in certain concepts and models (May I draw your attention to an excellent book written by John Mihevc of Canada’s Interfaith Task Force entitled *The Market Tells Them So: The World Bank and Economic Fundamentalism in Africa*).

Take the belief that free enterprise and free trade will benefit all people. The World Bank, e.g., has with the backing of major Northern industrial governments pushed policy reforms that reduce government involvement in regulating the economy. This has often worsened the plight of poor people and failed to help — some might even say prevented — developing economies become self-sustaining. Rather than question its policies or basic assumptions, the Bank almost invariably argues that “it is the result of poor implementation”.

In recent years, however, even the Bank has recognised the failure of many of its own projects. Some Bank officials, as at a meeting last summer on global communications, admit that global economic change is now so rapid and complex that even they no longer understand all its ramifications. The Bank has recently begun to reach out to NGOs and set up a special office to liaise with them (though whether to genuinely solicit new ideas on possible alternatives or to coopt NGOs to the Bank’s perspective is a matter of debate).

More and more, the religious community is beginning to question the worldview of the World Bank and IMF and to seek alternatives to the basic economic model on which the global economy is currently based. For many Churches in the South and some in the North, they have been motivated by the need to help Church members to survive. Some have joined the 50 Years is Enough Campaign, which is actively challenging the IMF/World Bank model of development (it has linked together over 150 U.S. groups with an international network of NGOs in over 40 other countries). Others have joined coalitions critical of NAFTA, or of the newly established World Trade Organisation.

But it is not easy. Especially in a world where the economic alternative of socialism has been so discredited by the past political repression of the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Economists also frequently couch their arguments in specialised, oft arcane language, inadvertently or deliberately mystifying issues. When I met Rev. Frank Chikane, a leader in South Africa’s Apostolic Faith Church and long-time anti-apartheid veteran, last August, he told me he spent a year at Harvard studying neo-classical economics just so he could challenge the thinking of the IMF and World Bank and business community with confidence, using their own conceptual language. A task AFJN may want to undertake is to expand the basic economic literacy of people here in the U.S. on international economic issues, so they could be more effective advocates for more just policies to reshape the global economic system which increasingly determines where and how well or ill they and their communities (as well as Africans) will live.

PARAMETERS OF ECONOMIC GLOBALISATION

Richard Barnet of the Washington, DC-based Institute for Policy Studies wrote a small pamphlet on *The Global War Against the Poor* for a local religious group. It provides a very useful overview of different facets of economic globalisation. It also asks some basic questions that people around the world are asking: “Why is good news for the economy so often bad news for people? [or the reverse, as when the Dow-Jones fell when there was a rise in the number of jobs announced a couple months ago]. Why is accumulation of wealth spreading poverty? Why are the “engines of growth” becoming “engines of poverty”?

Barnet suggests the need for new conceptions, new paradigms of this newly globalised world. During the cold war, we divided the planet into thirds: communist, capitalist and “other” (either the contested Third World or the Non-Aligned world). On economic issues, we have divided the earth in half: the rich North and impoverished South. But reality is more complex, Barnet suggests: islands of wealth within developing economies (as I so vividly saw on a recent visit to Zaire), and growing poverty within the industrialised Northern nations (as we can see by driving around the District of Columbia).

Barnet describes globalisation in terms of our intersecting “webs” of global commercial activity that are effectively replacing the patterned colour crazy quilt of politically demarcated nations on a map.

Only a minority of the world's people are caught up directly in these webs, as producers, consumers, owners or shareholders. But most lives are changed indirectly nonetheless. These webs are altering our sense of time, of community, end of memory, as well as the distribution and meaning of poverty.

The four "webs" are: 1) the global cultural bazaar; 2) the global shopping mall; 3) the global financial network; and 4) the global workplace.

Barnet notes that two-thirds of the world (including the bottom 20% of people in rich countries and 80% of people in poor countries) are effectively left out, marginalised or hurt by these webs! For most people they provide a window on what is now a global marketplace, but no door. New technology has been central to creating all four webs. Let us take a closer look at them:

1) The global cultural bazaar

A vast globe-spanning network of media has spread more uniform cultural values and products largely "made in the USA" across the world. These packaged dreams of life influence billions of people (particularly youth). They shape people's goals and homogenise their tastes and attitudes toward money, consumption, what to aspire to in life. TV, radio, films and other mass media project a desired fantasy lifestyle (e.g. via *Falconcrest* and *Dallas* on Zimbabwe TV, soap operas on South Africa TV) which instils self-blame or despair among those unable to escape poverty and achieve that dream. The global cultural bazaar proclaims the myth of equal opportunity: those who fail economically often believe that is proof of their personal failure, their worthlessness (dare we say damnation?).

The West-centred cultural imperialism of this global bazaar shapes many people's perception of what development is and how you "become developed". As one active Zairian Christian recently asked me: how do we get Zairians to realise that economic development does not necessarily mean becoming like the West, living like the West? Yet how many people today believe that is the key?

Gender is the 'stealth' factor of this bazaar: women and their sexuality are a primary dimension of the packaged dreams being sold (as they also are of many products being sold in the second web, the global shopping mall). Men, as the primary possessors of money in the world, are also the primary consumers of these media products.

2) The global shopping mall

The unprecedented rise in global trade, the buying and selling of goods and services among countries, has created a planetary supermarket. But of the world's 5.6 bn people, 3.8 bn are only window shoppers. Only 1.8 bn have the actual money or credit to actually buy anything in the mall.

The cultural bazaar and shopping mall intersect through the vehicle of advertising: one study indicated that in 1988, every U.S. consumer was exposed to 3,000 advertising messages per day (today it may be closer to 5,000). In Africa, one of the most visible symbols of the global shopping mall is the Coca Cola sign. Do others come to mind? And can you guess what is the most widely distributed (and profitable) global product? It is the cigarette!

What can we say about the global trade that undergirds the global shopping mall?

- More than 40% of world trade is "counter-trade" or barter (where no money changes hands).
- Denying workers their rights is becoming a central tool in creating a trade advantage and remaining "competitive". The prime means for TNCs to cut costs is increasingly to cut wages, benefits and jobs but never to cut the wages of CEOs (corporate executive officers). For TNCs, workers and communities have become "disposable" in the economically liberalised, highly competitive world of today.
- Trade is also ever more highly concentrated in fewer firms: 200 of the world's largest corporations control a quarter of world production of all commodities.
- And up to a third of world trade is now "intra-firm". Corporations are far from exemplifying the "free market" they tout when arguing for less government regulation: many set the prices of these 'internal' commodity transactions according to what is most profitable to them.
- "Free trade" has effectively devastated international commodity agreements, which once set minimal prices for many poor countries' primary exports (the main source of many African Governments' budgets). This has worsened the economic situation of much of the developing world and particularly Africa. From 1985-1993, real prices of primary commodities dropped 30%! We have seen what that did to the national budgets of

most African countries, and to their education and health budgets as well.

- Women have become the most disposable of workers, the most susceptible to intimidation and denial of workers rights. Many of you can give examples from your own regions of the world. Free trade zones in Asia (or Mauritius or the former *bantustans* of South Africa), Maquiladores along the U.S.-Mexican border: all of these hire mostly women, because they have the least resources for resisting low wages and oppressive or unsafe working conditions.

3) The global financial network

Using new computer technology, banks have created 24-hour, round-the-world interconnected markets for repackaging and selling money (or debt). There is now, in effect, a global running crapshoot based on currency speculation. Money races around the world as financiers bet for or against whether local currencies, commodities or bond and share prices will rise or fall in value.

The tragedy is that this search for quick profits is siphoning off funds desperately needed for long-term, productive investments in both the North and South. Today, only 10% of the trillions of dollars flowing through the world's foreign exchange market has anything to do with producing goods and services for people.

Relatively few in the South participate in this financial network and almost no one from Africa (though there are some notable exceptions in Asia and Latin America). But participation can be highly risky:

- Orange County, California, a large wealthy U.S. community went bankrupt and had to suspend most social programmes and fire most staff after its investment adviser speculated in “derivatives”.
- Britain's Barings Bank collapsed due to speculative trading by one of its bankers on the Singapore market.
- In 1990-91, the UK-based Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI) collapsed for similar reasons. In this case, Northern banks unilaterally imposed the solution that best met their interests: an assets freeze on BCCI, so they could seize remaining assets first on the developing world. This freeze effectively impounded assets of several African Governments (e.g. Zimbabwe)

on deposit in BCCI European branches, using them to pay off the claims of BCCI's Northern creditors, creating severe difficulties for many Third World economies. As one of the few banks to extend letters of credit to Third World businessmen, BCCI's shutdown all but halted exports in several major African ports like Douala.

Today, virtually all development discourse and most political discourse takes for granted that, with the “collapse of socialism”, capitalism is “the only game in town”. Yet increasingly, its systemic failures are becoming more obvious. Are there no alternatives? Can socialism's best elements of social concern be salvaged and joined with the social concerns of the Church as a tool for improving people's lives? How?

Global markets have weakened governments' ability to guarantee the value of their own national currencies and to ensure economic stability, as recent financial crises in both Mexico and Britain have underlined. And the fact that so many international transactions take place in U.S. dollars, which have become a *de facto* global currency, has placed most local currencies at an unfair disadvantage, making them vulnerable to the vagaries of the valuation of the dollar.

The 1990-91 Gulf War is an excellent example of how globalisation has made Africans particularly vulnerable to the effects of events and policies far away and beyond their control. Thirteen African countries lost over 1% of their gross domestic product (GDP), a magnitude of loss defined by the UN as equivalent to suffering a major natural disaster, due to the sharp upward spike in oil prices in the three months after the crisis began. Many African Governments spent an entire year's budgeted funds for oil imports in that 2-3 month period, and had no money to purchase it later in the year, when oil prices had declined.

The result: in countries like Zambia, tractors and taxis ground to a halt, affecting agriculture and other broad sectors of the economy. Manufacturing (including of plastics made from petroleum products) declined. The Gulf War also cut off the flow of remittances, the money that migrant workers working in the Gulf countries sent home to their families or, in some cases, governments. (Flows of remittances around the world now amount to about

\$70 billion a year, and in countries like Sudan and pre-1990 Somalia, have accounted for well over 40% of GDP).

In 1993, poorer countries owed \$1.5 trillion in foreign debt, more than all their combined resources. This debt has been growing at about \$100 bn/year. But half of all new investment (via loans) in the South in 1992 flowed out by the end of the year in debt repayments.

Again, gender is a stealth factor here. This global financial network is the web women are most excluded from. Can you guess the percentage of the world's income controlled by women? One percent! And the percentage of the world's land owned by women? One percent!

4) The global workplace

This term refers to corporations' globalisation of production, or the global assembly line, a result of new technologies which are making capital more mobile. We now live in an era of runaway shops. Direct production of commodities is being shifted to the South, often leaving only service jobs behind in North. (One cannot relocate a hospital or restaurant in the same way one can a clothing factory....) Jobs are increasingly offered on a part-time, "as needed" rather than permanent basis, and workers are increasingly competing for jobs with workers (or the unemployed) elsewhere in the world. 820 mn people (1/7 of the world's population) are now unemployed or under-employed. Some speculate that as China is integrated into the world's markets, their wage levels which are very low will become the new global baseline for compensating workers. What does that mean for us?

The effects of these changes in the global workplace include:

Growing migration: The increasing mobility of jobs in this type of global economy has boosted international migration (temporary or permanent) as people follow jobs wherever they go. Migration is now at a level of 75 mn people per year, and people are now some nations' number one export. Because educated workers are in demand (and can command higher salaries) in the North, many of Africa's most educated and competent have become part of this migration. Families and national economies 'left behind' by such migration are often increasingly dependent on the remittances sent by those working overseas. It should also be noted that while migrant workers are denied an 'international right to travel',

capital (investments) have largely won the freedom to cross national boundaries with minimal regulation or hindrance.

Declining wages: The result of the global assembly line is declining wages, and the reality is that more and more families are finding those wages unsustainable; they cannot survive on them! Zimbabwe's health minister pointed out that low wages also contribute to the spread of AIDS, because male workers cannot afford to live with their families in urban areas. Their loneliness tempts them into a more promiscuous lifestyle.

Subcontracting: Technology is creating more "cottage industries". Take, for example, writers like myself who now work at home on a portable computer. It is difficult for me to organise with other writers for better wages, as I do not work side by side with or even know fellow writers of the publication that employs me. Most such workers get no benefits. They need to supply their own tools for work, not the company. The trend to subcontracting rather than directly hiring workers helps transnationals obscure their social accountability for the conditions of workers as it erodes what it pays for their wages and health and other benefits.

Arguably the largest industry is can you guess? tourism! \$3 trillion a year is spent on tourism, and it employs 1 of every 15 workers (and the vast majority of these are women). Yet tourists make up only 8% of the world's people (and only a minuscule fraction are African).

New information technologies themselves form a fifth web. These are developing so fast that even major TNCs at a World Bank meeting last summer said they were not in control of the pace of events. The Internet is changing things dramatically. Some of these changes can potentially create greater leverage for social activists (e.g. facilitating investigative journalism and public exposure of corporate malfeasance). Or they can further disadvantage specific groups (the poor, women) and regions (Africa) lacking access to, or money to buy access to, these new technologies.

GLOBALISATION'S PROFOUND EFFECTS:

The effects of globalisation over time are profound and diverse, economically but also spiritually:

— on our sense of self (of identity, self-worth) and of community. Workers and their families must move more frequently to find jobs just to survive. Over a decade ago, the typical American family

moved on average once every four years. This accelerating mobility has fragmented and undermined families and communities, and the sense of mutual responsibility towards one another. Local towns and regions watch their economic base disappear overnight, and national governments are powerless to prevent “stateless” TNCs from investing or disinvesting at will, with no concern for the people and problems of their home or host countries. Are religious fundamentalism and growing ethnic intolerance now on the rise in great part because people and communities are desperate to find some sense of identity and the greater security that comes with identity in a world of increasing flux?

— on our sense of history, of memory. Such mobility has fragmented our collective sense of history, of memory. At the same time, the global cultural bazaar is projecting a “homogenised” version of history (since in a sense history belongs to those who write it), obliterating or obscuring other views, other experiences of history. In Africa, I was struck by how CNN’s “World Report”, its focus tailored for African viewers, was presented by newscasters with a ‘made in America’ view of life. It also crafts cultural products to meet specific “sub-markets” (such as youth, the “Baby Boom” generation, the elderly). How does this erode the bonds and relations between generations?

— on our sense of the possible. Options and alternatives are being foreclosed as the dominant capitalist world economic system becomes perceived as “the only game in town”. Africa is the last major world region now being more fully integrated into this system. During four years in Southern Africa, my work with production or workers’ co-operatives was focused on exploring whether an alternative form of economic development was viable. I should be curious to know whether (and where) you feel space for thinking through and testing out economic and social alternatives still exists in Africa.

— on our primary social institutions, like the family, and on our governments: As the UN Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) notes, economic globalisation has “transferred power to institutions [TNCs] that have consistently ignored the social implications of their actions while passing responsibility for absorbing the damage either to non-governmental agencies or to communities and families that have themselves been so weakened that they are in no position to respond”. (UNRISD, States of Disarray: The social effects of globalisation, 1995). As families and communities

are weakened, so is the social solidarity essential to peace and minimal stability.

One result has been a rise in violence in the home as breadwinners come under greater pressure; in the streets as more people compete against each other for jobs to survive; among youth who feel there is no future for them; between nations as they compete for land and markets to feed their growing numbers of people. Globalisation has made demilitarisation more difficult: without secure livelihoods, many former soldiers are reluctant to give up their guns. Banditry has become a major way to survive in many parts of Africa.

The sense of space and time that have underpinned our individual lives and communities is being profoundly reshaped by the pace of communication and economic change. Many of us (or our parents) once lived in a “home town” or “home village”: people often spent their whole lives there. If they moved, they moved along set annual cycles of migration. Much of that has been lost. Today in the U.S., families now relocate on average once every four years. Many in the Third World now migrate regularly just to survive (e.g. Mexican workers who work seasonally on U.S. farms, Filipinos who work in the Gulf, Africans who seek jobs in other African countries or Europe). What does that do to community relationships, the sense of identity with (and of belonging to) one’s community when membership in a community constantly shifts?

Those of us who have long protested human rights abuse by unaccountable governments are sometimes happy to see their power weakening. We have been slower to see the down side of this weakening of government powers by globalisation. In fact, governments are far weaker in power than TNCs (whose economic resources often outstrip even major national economies of industrialised nations; GM until recently was the fifth largest economy in the world).

In recent years, however, even the Bank has recognised the failure of many of its own projects. Some Bank officials, as at a meeting last summer on global communications, admit that global economic change is now so rapid and complex that even they no longer understand all its ramifications.

The erosion of governmental capacity, a combined product of growing TNC power, the push

to privatisation and greater reliance on NGOs to deliver services is threatening to erode public accountability of governments and TNCs for responding (or failing to respond) to the crisis of peoples marginalised by globalisation. (Zaire is perhaps the most extreme example in Africa today of the effective disappearance of the State, and many say it will have to be reconstructed). Public policy advocacy is becoming increasingly irrelevant in an era of rampant privatisation. These are not abstract issues. Without public mechanisms to redress economic and political marginalisation and redistribute resources, societies have been left defenceless to counter rising ethnic disputes, themselves symptoms of marginalisation.

DISTRIBUTIONAL INJUSTICE:

At the root of the negative effects of globalisation and the economic model and policies on which it relies is a failure to address their distributive injustices: the growing gap between rich and poor. In fact, they have increased the “upright sharing of resources” and made stewardship of the world’s resources increasingly difficult. Perhaps the problem is not that ‘the poor are always with us’, but that ‘the rich are always with us’!

A 1994 issue of Forbes noted that the world’s 358 billionaires had a combined net worth equal to the combined income of the bottom 45% of the world’s people. And this gap is within the South and North as well as it is a gap between them. Ninety-nine of those 358 billionaires were from the South. For example, about 24 Mexican financiers’ wealth equalled the income of the bottom 44 mn of Mexicans, or almost half the population. Michael Jordan’s contract to promote Nike shoes demonstrated that gap as well: his pay last year for this activity was more than the combined annual payroll of all Indonesian plants that made such shoes.

Our current economic system is characterised by the fact that productivity gains are not equitably shared: the CEOs of 23 of 27 U.S. corps announcing the largest worker layoffs in 1993 received an average pay increase of 30% during the same year! The average U.S. CEO brings home a salary 149 times the average factory worker’s pay. This gap is mirrored by that between rich and poor countries. Nine of ten new babies are born in developing countries, yet one U.S. baby will over its lifetime consume three times the resources an Italian baby will over the same period, and eight times the resources an Indian baby will. And this U.S.-born baby

will produce 280 times more rubbish than a Rwandan baby over a lifetime.

MOVING FORWARD/DEVELOPING LEVERAGE

Countering the negative effects of globalisation will require a number of things.

1) Holding the right parties accountable, particularly transnational corporations, or TNCs. TNCs are the most dynamic and powerful economic actors in the world today. They, not governments, largely determine the operations of the four webs described. As TNCs become ever more global and mobile, governments local and national have less and less ability to ensure the economic security of their peoples, including youth. TNCs are not legally held accountable for the social effects of their investment decisions on people’s lives.

The “culture of impunity” that allowed genocide to be carried out in Rwanda may reflect the lingering effects of the “culture of impunity” brought to the continent by colonialism and the current impact of the “economic culture of impunity” allowing TNCs to walk away from any moral, ethical responsibility to their workers and the communities where they operate, or to youth, all in the name of the “free market”. Corporate officials often praise “downsizing” or laying off workers, or paying below-poverty level wages, as “profitable”. All of this feeds the ‘culture of impunity’ represented by the spread of corruption which Rev. Frank Chikane has called the next great challenge facing South Africa. The Church needs to speak out prophetically on this, and speak truth to corporate power.

2) Organising transnationally: It will take transnational organising especially by civil society (popular movements, NGOs and especially the Church) to counter TNCs’ lack of accountability as a global phenomenon. This is important both to impact entities that plan and operate globally, but also to convey to local communities and groups negatively affected by TNC operations that “they are not alone”. A recent example of such organising is the anti-NAFTA Coalition. This has joined groups from Canada, the U.N. and Mexico, including many religious groups, in long-term strategic planning on how to defend working and environmental standards in the face of weak monitoring and accountability structures set up under the NAFTA free trade agreement. Another example are the various anti-IMF and World Bank

coalitions, which also involve many religious groups. Still other groups have organised “alternative trade” movements on a transnational basis. In Zimbabwe, I worked with worker co-ops set up mostly by youth who could find no wage jobs in the economy after they graduated from high school.

- 3) Beginning to challenge the underlying economic model: We need to challenge those underlying assumptions underlying the dominant economic model today as false or insufficient. And to explore how we might create the equivalent of “liberated economic zones”, where experiments in ethical/alternative investment and economic relationships can be tested out.
- 4) Demanding that economic decision-making be democratised, and empowering women and youth in that process: Privatisation too often has been little more than a means of ducking social responsibilities and protecting private wealth (as in the push by White businessmen to privatise public sector entities in South Africa and Namibia prior to elections). In countries like Zaire, it has become one means of rewarding thieves (the ‘dinosaurs’ or ‘*les gros légumes*’ of the regime) who have bankrupted the public sector to begin with. An irony of this ‘era of democratisation’ is that we have less, not more, control over the economic institutions and entities that control our lives. How can we in the Church create ways to ensure that economic structures including TNCs as well as the IMF and World Bank become more accountable to grassroots people in Africa and around the world, to the communities and nations in which they and we live.

There are some exiting experiments in trying to hold such institutions accountable in Africa. In South Africa there is perhaps the freest debate on the role of the government in directing the economy in the world. In Zambia, the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace has embarked on a project to involve people in parishes in measuring the impact of Structural Adjustment on their own lives. In Mozambique, a government agency has, since the late 1980’s, measured the impact of Structural Adjustment on nutritional levels of Maputo residents.

THINKING AHEAD

I hope you will have opportunity to share in greater detail the effects of globalisation on the countries and regions from which you come and on the

lives of those you have worked with and for around the world. How globalisation affects people as students, and the education sector generally. How it affects unemployment and working conditions, inside and outside the Church. Or people as readers, as moviegoers, as buyers of consumer goods and listeners of music. Or people as voters. And especially youth as Christians. In reflecting on these questions, you may also want to reflect on some of the following issues and questions:

Capitalism as ‘the emperor without clothes’: We know the many political, economic and ethical weaknesses of those regimes that called themselves socialist or communist. Socialism’s strength lay in its moral and analytical focus on social inequities (which it shares with the religious community), on the reality of class differences, on its exploration of alternative economic models. We often forget that it once created political space for Third World countries to explore alternatives. Kenyan Prof. Ali Mazrui, who noted that the existence of the socialist bloc had speeded up the pace of decolonisation by at least a generation, once told a Soviet academic ‘if the USSR had not existed, we might have had to invent you’. Socialist ideals were sufficiently popular that they even moved rulers like Sudan’s Numeiri to apply them as a sort of fig leaf to essentially colonial and capitalist regimes, eventually undermining its credibility. In Zimbabwe, we used to joke that Zimbabwe was capitalism with a socialist face.

Today, virtually all development discourse and most political discourse takes for granted that, with the “collapse of socialism”, capitalism is “the only game in town”. Yet increasingly, its systemic failures are becoming more obvious. Are there no alternatives? Can socialism’s best elements of social concern be salvaged and joined with the social concerns of the Church as a tool for improving people’s lives? How?

Challenging fundamentalism: Fundamentalism often reflects a desperate search for greater moral security, for a conceptual stability of worldview if you will, in an increasingly uncertain, conflicted and confusing world. But it often brings increased intolerance of theological or other differences (not just on the left-right spectrum but also the rich-poor, urban-rural, young-old, male-female spectra). How is this linked to the increasingly unstable economic basis of people’s lives, in turn linked to greater global economic interdependence hence beyond ordinary citizens’, and even governments’ control? What role can we as Christians play in addressing this?

Human rights, democratisation and 'civil society': While many nations are struggling to become more democratic, this is less advanced within global institutions like the U.N., IMF, World Bank which are increasingly handling global economic, political and environmental impacts. How can AFJN help democratise decision-making about the global economy? or help expand the definition of human rights to include economic rights? or work with Africans to get governments to affirm a process of development that is driven by people's desires and needs, not corporate imperatives?

Empowering the marginalised: Women, youth and racial and ethnic minorities have been most marginalised by the process of globalisation, as they were in most societies prior to recent global changes. Globalisation is often doing little more than modernising poverty and oppression and powerlessness. How can these groups be empowered by globalisation, not marginalised or more thoroughly exploited?

Science, technology, communication: These are rooted in and sustained by the academic community, by research labs and departments. Too often they serve solely corporate rather than social and community goals.

Ecology and sustainable development: Corporate-dominated globalisation generally treats ecological damage as an 'externality' — something whose social or health costs are not its responsibility. How can the concept of 'right stewardship' over God's creation at the heart of which lies the notion of sustainability be developed as part of community, national and trans-national development models and corporate strategies?

The Church as a base for organising: Churches are uniquely placed to help build a grassroots internationalism, as they are transnational themselves. But to what extent do our churches 'model' an alternative to the global economy or merely reflect its inequities? How do we treat and compensate our workers? Our women? Our youth? Do they get a liveable wage?

Thank you for your patience, your time and your attention, and I hope this will contribute to AFJN's reflections.

Ref.: *AFJN*, July 1996.

ECCLESIA IN AFRICA

UNE INVITATION A PASSER A L'ACTE

René De Haes, SJ.,

Depuis bientôt trente ans la pratique synodale est redevenue une tradition dans l'Église catholique romaine. En effet, depuis la fin du Concile Vatican II, les synodes ordinaires, extraordinaires, spéciaux, particuliers, régionaux, locaux et diocésains se succèdent et représentent à eux seuls un effort gigantesque d'application des intuitions doctrinales et pastorales du Concile ainsi qu'une lecture attentive et prospective des signes des temps.

Dans cette liste déjà longue des Assemblées synodales, l'Assemblée spéciale pour l'Afrique du synode des évêques a été "un moment historique de grâce, comme le dit Jean-Paul II: *le Seigneur a visité son peuple qui est en Afrique. En effet, ce continent vit aujourd'hui ce que l'on peut appeler des signes du temps, un moment propice, un jour de salut pour l'Afrique. Il semble qu'est venue une "heure de l'Afrique", une heure favorable qui invite instamment les messagers du Christ à avancer en eau profonde et à lâcher les filets pour la pêche*" (cf. Lc 5, 4) (6).

Le synode "qui s'est voulu manifestation d'espérance et de résurrection, au moment même où les événements semblaient pousser l'Afrique au découragement et au désespoir" (1), a été intensément désiré par les Églises d'Afrique. Certains, entre les années 1977 et 1983, avaient même exprimé le vœu d'un Concile qui aurait pour tâche de faire une évaluation de l'évangélisation en Afrique en vue des grandes options à prendre pour l'avenir du continent. Après consultation des conférences épiscopales et de tous les évêques d'Afrique et de Madagascar, le Pape Jean-Paul II décide la convocation d'une Assemblée spéciale pour l'Afrique du synode des évêques dans le but de favoriser une solidarité pastorale organique dans tout le territoire africain et les îles adjacentes (5).

Trois de ses réunions préparatoires se sont tenues sur le sol africain, avec la participation de Jean-Paul II, dans le respect des trois zones linguistiques du continent: à Yamoussoukro en

1990, à Luanda en 1992 et à Kampala en 1993. Et pour bien montrer qu'il s'agit d'un "synode en Afrique et destiné à l'Afrique" (homélie du 10 avril 1994), le Pape a toujours annoncé que la "phase romaine" des travaux serait suivie d'une "phase africaine" de célébration des fruits du synode, avec la présentation de l'exhortation apostolique postsynodale. C'est pendant son 11e voyage en Afrique que Jean-Paul II a effectivement présenté au Cameroun, le 14 septembre 1995, l'exhortation apostolique "*Ecclesia in Africa*", par laquelle le Pape renvoie à l'Église en Afrique son profil évangéliste, fruit de quatre semaines de session à Rome, du 10 avril au 8 mai 1994. Au coeur de trois grandes villes africaines, Yaoundé, Johannesburg et Nairobi, Jean-Paul II a parlé de la foi chrétienne engagée, cette foi qui n'est pas évocation du réel, mais grâce et force d'en haut pour la prise en charge d'un continent qui connaît de grandes souffrances, par une nouvelle génération de croyants, prêts à assumer l'avenir politique, économique, social et religieux de l'Afrique.

Le 8 mai 1994, les évêques ont présenté au Pape le fruit de leur travail: soixante quatre propositions, dont beaucoup se retrouvent littéralement dans *Ecclesia in Africa*, ainsi que le message final de 16 pages pour tous les Africains, mais aussi à l'intention de l'Église du monde entier. "*La culture qui donnait son identité à notre peuple est en crise profonde ... Notre identité est comme broyée dans l'étau d'une histoire impitoyable ... L'Afrique a besoin de saints prophètes*", déclaraient les évêques.

1. Une parole de foi et d'espérance

Ecclesia in Africa est d'abord une formidable parole d'encouragement, de stimulation à l'ouverture, au dynamisme de la foi et à l'engagement.

Contre toute forme d'afropessimisme et

En dépit du panorama en majeure partie négatif que présentent beaucoup de régions de l'Afrique aujourd'hui et malgré les tristes expériences que connaissent de nombreux pays, l'Église se doit d'affirmer avec force qu'il est possible de surmonter ces difficultés. Elle doit aujourd'hui affermir chez tous les Africains l'espérance en une vraie libération (14).

Voulu par le Pape comme un synode authentiquement africain et célébré en pleine communion avec l'Église universelle, ce synode a souligné en même temps l'engagement de tous les fidèles en faveur de l'Afrique (19).

La première exigence à laquelle l'Église en Afrique doit faire face consiste à dire le plus clairement possible ce qu'elle est et ce qu'elle doit accomplir en plénitude afin que son message soit pertinent et crédible. "Église, que dis-tu de toi-même", la question posée par le Cardinal Montini au début du Concile Vatican II se repose à tout moment à chaque Église locale pour qu'elle manifeste la pertinence et la crédibilité du message de l'Église ainsi que du porteur de ce message. Les hommes, les jeunes surtout, tacitement ou à grands cris, nous demandent:

Croyez-vous vraiment à ce que vous annoncez? Vivez-vous ce que vous croyez? Prêchez-vous vraiment ce que vous vivez? Plus que jamais le témoignage de la vie est devenu une condition essentielle de l'efficacité profonde de la prédication. Par ce biais-là, nous voici, jusqu'à un certain point, responsables de la marche de l'Évangile que nous proclamons (21).

L'histoire de la mission en Afrique, dont le Pape retrace l'évolution en trois étapes, est à elle seule une merveille de la grâce de Dieu. Cette histoire remonte à l'époque même de la naissance de l'Église. Les premiers siècles de la chrétienté virent l'évangélisation de l'Égypte et de l'Afrique du Nord où la vie chrétienne fut très intense et occupa une position d'avant-garde, aussi bien dans le domaine de la théologie que dans celui de la littérature chrétienne et de la sainteté. Une deuxième phase, concernant les régions situées au sud du Sahara, eut lieu aux XVe et XVIe siècles mais s'acheva au XVIIIe siècle, à cause de difficultés de divers ordres, par l'extinction de presque toutes les missions de cette région. Une troisième phase, caractérisée par un effort missionnaire extraordinaire, a commencé au XIXe siècle. La gloire et la splendeur de cette période sont illustrées de manière admirable par les saints que l'Afrique moderne a donnés à l'Église. "D'autres causes mûrissent. L'Église en Afrique doit

veiller à rédiger son propre martyrologe, ajoutant aux magnifiques figures des premiers siècles,(...) les martyrs et les saints des époques récentes" (34).

La croissance et l'enracinement de l'Église en terre africaine est un fait et l'évangélisation continue à promouvoir nombre des valeurs essentielles qui font tellement défaut au continent africain: espérance, paix, joie, harmonie, amour et unité. Car comme l'Assemblée eut le regret de constater:

Une situation commune est, sans aucun doute, le fait que l'Afrique est saturée de problèmes: dans presque toutes nos nations, il y a une misère épouvantable, une mauvaise administration des rares ressources disponibles, une instabilité politique et une désorientation sociale. Le résultat est sous nos yeux: misère, guerres, désespoir. Dans un monde contrôlé par les nations riches et puissantes, l'Afrique est pratiquement devenue un appendice sans importance, souvent oublié et négligé par tous (40).

Le continent africain aujourd'hui saturé de problèmes a un extrême besoin de bons samaritains qui lui viennent en aide.

Malgré son état actuel de pauvreté, l'Afrique est toutefois dotée d'une vaste gamme de valeurs culturelles et de qualités inestimables qu'elle peut offrir aux Églises et à toute l'humanité, comme le profond sens religieux, le sens du péché, le rôle de la famille et de la vie, la vénération des ancêtres, le sens de la solidarité et de la vie communautaire (42-43). Même si les ombres et le tragique pèsent encore lourdement sur l'Afrique, les peuples africains se sont engagés courageusement dans quelques options pleines de promesses pour l'avenir: la mise en route du processus démocratique, la mise en place d'un Etat de droit, le respect des droits et des libertés de l'homme. En dépit de faibles moyens dont elle dispose, l'Église en Afrique joue un rôle de premier plan en ce qui concerne le développement humain intégral et se situe résolument du côté des opprimés, des peuples sans voix et marginalisés (44-45).

2. Problèmes et défis

Comment l'Église d'Afrique doit-elle faire avancer sa mission d'évangélisation à l'approche de l'an 2000 et comment les chrétiens africains pourront-ils devenir des témoins toujours plus fidèles du Seigneur Jésus? La réponse se trouve

dans l'évangélisation en profondeur, dans l'approfondissement de la foi.

En tant qu'évangéliste, l'Église doit commencer par s'évangéliser elle-même par une conversion et une rénovation constante. Elle sera ainsi à même d'annoncer l'insondable richesse du mystère du Christ dans laquelle l'Église croit que toute l'humanité peut trouver, dans une plénitude insoupçonnable, tout ce qu'elle cherche à tâtons au sujet de Dieu, de l'homme et de son destin, de la vie et de la mort, de la vérité (47). Évangélisation en profondeur qui nécessite une inculturation véritable et équilibrée de l'évangile tout en regardant, non pas vers la soi-disant liberté du mode de vie moderne, mais les richesses des traditions africaines et la foi chrétienne vécue par le témoignage persévérant et fidèle d'une multitude (48).

Un autre défi est lancé à l'Église en Afrique par les diverses formes de division qu'il faut apaiser par une pratique honnête du dialogue entre groupes ethniques, religion et confessions chrétiennes (49). Les grandes difficultés sociales et politiques rendent ce dialogue encore plus difficile et font en sorte que les pays en voie de développement, au lieu de se transformer en nations autonomes, préoccupées de leur progression vers la juste participation aux biens et aux services destinés à tous, deviennent les pièces d'un mécanisme, les parties d'un engrenage gigantesque. Cela se vérifie en particulier dans le domaine des moyens de communication sociale qui, étant gérés par le Nord, ne respectent pas la physionomie culturelle africaine et imposent une vision déformée de la vie et de l'homme qui ne répondent pas aux exigences du vrai développement (51-52).

Pour accomplir cette évangélisation en profondeur, l'Église a besoin des agents de l'évangélisation solidement formés et crédibles, des laïcs, des prêtres et des religieux. La formation et ses exigences traversent toutes les pages de l'exhortation. Les passages les plus vigoureux concernent la formation des laïcs. Comment, en effet, ne pas s'interroger:

“L'Église en Afrique a-t-elle formé suffisamment les laïcs pour les rendre capables d'assumer toutes leurs responsabilités civiques et de réfléchir sur les affaires d'ordre socio-politique à la lumière de l'évangile et de la foi en Dieu”? Il faut une formation complète pour les laïcs. “Les chrétiens doivent être formés à vivre les implications sociales de l'Évangile de telle sorte que leur témoignage devienne un défi prophétique à tout ce qui nuit au vrai bien des

hommes et des femmes d'Afrique, de même que de tous les autres continents (53-54).

3. L'inculturation véritable et équilibrée

Pour que l'évangélisation atteigne “l'homme et la société à tous les niveaux de leur existence”, l'Église en Afrique, terre devenue “nouvelle patrie du Christ” selon le mot de Paul VI, est désormais responsable de la mission sur le continent et dans le monde. L'évangélisation s'exprime dans des activités diverses: annonce, inculturation, dialogue, justice et paix, moyen de communication sociale.

A plusieurs reprises revient dans *Ecclesia in Africa* l'importance particulière de l'inculturation pour l'évangélisation.

L'inculturation comprend une double dimension: d'une part “une intime transformation des authentiques valeurs culturelles par leur intégration dans le christianisme”, et d'autre part, l'enracinement du christianisme dans les diverses cultures”. Le Synode considère l'inculturation comme une exigence de l'évangélisation, l'un des enjeux majeurs pour l'Église dans le continent à l'approche du troisième millénaire (59).

La Bonne Nouvelle n'est pas d'abord un système ou une doctrine, mais d'abord une personne, Jésus-Christ, le Verbe fait chair, qui a habité parmi nous. Parce qu'elle a été intégrale et concrète, l'incarnation du Fils de Dieu a été aussi une incarnation dans une culture déterminée. Mais l'incarnation du Verbe n'est pas un moment isolé. Elle révèle toute sa signification et sa force rédemptrice et formatrice dans le mystère pascal et le mystère de la Pentecôte. Comme le Verbe de Dieu est devenu en tout semblable à nous, sauf dans le péché, ainsi l'inculturation de la Bonne Nouvelle intègre toutes les valeurs humaines authentiques en les purifiant du péché et en leur rendant la plénitude de leur sens (60-61).

La tâche est délicate et difficile, et doit respecter la compatibilité avec le message chrétien et la communion avec l'Église universelle afin d'éviter toute forme de syncrétisme. L'inculturation vise à permettre à l'homme d'accueillir Jésus-Christ dans l'intégralité de son être personnel, culturel, économique et politique, en vue de sa pleine et totale union à Dieu le Père, et d'une vie sainte sous l'action de l'Esprit-Saint. Aucun domaine de la vie de l'Église et de l'évangélisation n'est exclu et le document postsynodal encourage les pasteurs à exploiter au maximum les nombreux pouvoirs que

la discipline actuelle de l'Église accorde déjà à ce sujet. L'application concrète aux réalités africaines du moment de l'idée-force de l'Église Famille de Dieu prônée par le synode comme une expression particulièrement appropriée de la nature de l'Église pour l'Afrique, peut révéler toute sa pertinence dans le domaine de la liturgie, la vénération des ancêtres, du monde des esprits, du mariage. Le synode demande d'examiner à fond tous les aspects culturels des problèmes posés du point de vue théologique, sacramentel, rituel et canonique. Pour cela un dialogue permanent d'abord au sein même de l'Église Famille, à tous les niveaux, est nécessaire afin de favoriser une solidarité pastorale organique, mais aussi avec tous les frères baptisés des autres confessions chrétiennes afin de rendre témoignage à l'Évangile dans le continent, ainsi qu'avec les musulmans de bonne volonté. Le dialogue serein et prudent avec la religion traditionnelle africaine mérite une attention particulière afin de préserver d'influences négatives qui affectent la manière de vivre de nombreux catholiques et de permettre l'assimilation de valeurs positives qui s'harmonisent avec le contenu de la foi (62-67).

4. Le développement humain intégral

Les pages les plus nerveuses de l'exhortation sont consacrées aux problèmes du développement humain intégral, de justice et de paix. La matière à réflexion et à action ne manque pas dans ce secteur. S'appuyant sur le riche enseignement l'*Evangelii Nuntiandi* de Paul VI, le synode rappelle que la libération que l'évangélisation annonce vise l'homme intégral, tout entier, dans toutes ses dimensions, jusque et y compris dans son ouverture vers l'absolu, même l'Absolu de Dieu. L'Église avance donc avec les hommes et vit dans une solidarité totale et intime avec leur histoire, leur révélant leur dignité inaliénable d'enfant de Dieu qui ne peut se réaliser que dans la justice et la paix (68-69).

L'Église doit donc continuer à jouer son rôle prophétique et à être la voix des sans voix, afin que partout la dignité humaine soit reconnue à toute personne et que l'homme soit toujours au centre de tous les programmes gouvernementaux. L'évangélisation doit promouvoir les initiatives qui contribuent à développer et à ennoblir l'homme dans son existence spirituelle. Elle doit dénoncer et combattre tout ce qui avilit et détruit l'homme. Mais il convient de souligner en même temps que l'annonce est toujours plus importante que la dénonciation et celle-ci ne peut faire abstraction de celle-là qui lui donne son véritable fondement et la

force de la motivation la plus haute (70). En particulier, le monde des moyens de communication sociale, ce premier aréopage des temps modernes, qui fait de l'humanité un village global, a besoin d'être évangélisé. Les médias sont pour beaucoup de gens, le moyen principal d'information et de formation, ils guident et inspirent les comportements individuels, familiaux et sociaux. En Afrique où la transmission orale est une des caractéristiques de la culture, l'éducation et la formation en ce domaine revêtent une importance capitale (71).

Le contenu des "propositions" remises au Pape par les Pères synodaux est bien repris et parfois même amplifié. Ainsi le Pape affirme froidement:

Je dois constater avec une grande tristesse que de nombreuses nations d'Afrique peinent sous des régimes autoritaires et oppressifs qui dénie à leurs membres la liberté personnelle et les droits humains fondamentaux, tout spécialement la liberté d'association et d'expression politique, de même le droit de choisir leurs gouvernants au moyen d'élections libres et impartiales (112).

5. La force du témoignage

La tâche de l'Église en Afrique est immense, tous doivent y collaborer. Reste que l'élément central est bien le témoignage, fruit d'une profonde conviction personnelle suscitée par l'action discrète de l'Esprit. La préparation la plus raffinée de l'évangéliste n'opère rien sans la force de l'Esprit. Sans lui, la dialectique la plus convaincante est impuissante sur l'esprit des hommes. Sans lui, les schémas sociologiques ou psychologiques les plus élaborés se révèlent vite dépourvus de valeur. Jean-Paul II rappelle dans l'encyclique *Redemptoris Missio* qu'on est missionnaire avant tout par ce que l'on est, en tant que membre de l'Église qui vit profondément l'unité dans l'amour, avant de l'être par ce que l'on dit ou par ce que l'on fait (77).

L'inculturation par laquelle la foi pénètre la vie des personnes et de leurs communautés familiale, professionnelle et civile, est une voie vers la sainteté, dernier critère d'une inculturation réussie. Les agents de l'évangélisation à tous les niveaux ainsi que les structures indispensables d'évangélisation n'ont en réalité d'autre mission et d'autre finalité que réaliser le mot d'ordre du Seigneur: "*Soyez parfaits comme votre Père céleste est parfait*" (86-88).

Les communautés ecclésiales vivantes et les familles sont reconnues comme les lieux de prière et d'écoute de la Parole de Dieu, de responsabilisation des membres eux-mêmes, d'apprentissage de la vie en Église, de réflexion sur les divers problèmes humains à la lumière de l'Évangile. Les laïcs et en particulier les catéchistes continueront à recevoir une formation doctrinale, spirituelle et pastorale appropriée. Les décideurs chrétiens seront soigneusement préparés à leurs tâches politiques, économiques et sociales par une solide formation à la doctrine sociale de l'Église, pour être des témoins fidèles dans leur milieu d'action (89-91). Les hommes et les femmes consacrés ainsi que les ministres ordonnés se souviendront de la remarque de saint Grégoire le Grand qui dit que le pasteur est la lumière de ses fidèles, avant tout par une conduite morale exemplaire et empreinte de sainteté (94-98). Le synode se réjouit du fait que les laïcs sont de plus en plus associés à la mission de l'Église en Afrique et Madagascar grâce au dynamisme des mouvements d'action catholique, des associations d'apostolat et des nouveaux mouvements de spiritualité aussi bien au niveau des adultes que des jeunes et des enfants. Ce dynamisme pourra donner aussi une nouvelle vitalité aux paroisses, aux écoles et aux universités et instituts supérieurs qui constituent des forums publics qui permettent de faire connaître très largement, dans un dialogue créatif, les convictions chrétiennes sur l'homme, la femme, la famille, le travail, l'économie, la société, la politique, la vie internationale, l'environnement, et à collaborer efficacement à la croissance d'une société africaine nouvelle, en gestation (99-103).

Le tout est assorti d'un appel à faire diligence pour que l'autofinancement devienne de plus en plus effectif, grâce à la solidarité chrétienne des Églises soeurs et à la créativité et à la bonne gestion de l'Église locale. Il ne faut cependant pas oublier qu'une Église ne peut arriver à l'autosuffisance matérielle et financière que dans la mesure où le peuple qui lui est confié ne subit pas une misère extrême.

6. Construire le Royaume de Dieu

Évangélisation et témoignage sont au service de la construction du Royaume de Dieu, de sorte que l'Église doit continuer à jouer son rôle prophétique et à être la voix des sans-voix. Ce qui suppose qu'elle soit un témoin énergique de justice et de paix dans ses structures et dans les relations entre ses membres. Forte de la vigueur et de la cohérence du témoignage ecclésial, l'Église sera aussi

audacieuse dans son témoignage en paroles et en actes dans la construction de la société. En tant que corps organisé à l'intérieur de la communauté et de la nation, l'Église a en effet le droit et le devoir de participer pleinement à l'édification d'une société juste et pacifique avec tous les moyens qui sont à sa disposition (105-107).

Après avoir insisté sur le devoir de collaborer avec les autres, le document évoque la bonne gestion des affaires publiques dans les deux domaines connexes de la politique et de l'économie, en appelant surtout à la conscience et à la responsabilité des laïcs chrétiens compétents et engagés. Construire une nation est un processus ardu qui suppose des responsables politiques saints, dotés de grandes qualités dans l'art de gouverner, qui aiment leur peuple jusqu'au bout et qui désirent servir, plutôt que se servir.

Le synode affirme, avec le Pape Jean-Paul II, que la démocratie authentique, dans le respect du pluralisme, est l'une des routes principales sur lesquelles l'Église chemine avec le peuple. Le laïc chrétien engagé dans les luttes démocratiques selon l'esprit de l'Évangile est le signe d'une Église qui se veut présente à la construction d'un État de droit, partout en Afrique (108-112). Conscient de la dimension internationale des problèmes surtout économiques de l'Afrique, le synode en appelle à la communauté internationale mais stigmatise en même temps la malhonnêteté de certains gouvernants corrompus qui, de connivence avec des intérêts privés locaux ou étrangers, détournent les ressources nationales à leur profit, transférant des deniers publics sur des comptes privés dans les banques étrangères. Il s'agit purement et simplement de vol, quelles que soient les fictions légales qui les couvrent (113-114).

Des problèmes préoccupants pèsent lourdement sur l'Afrique, le fléau du sida, l'impact négatif de la situation économique de pauvreté sur les jeunes, les réfugiés et les personnes déplacées, le poids de la dette internationale, mais aussi des coutumes et pratiques qui privent les femmes de leurs droits et du respect qui leur est dû (115-121). La communauté ecclésiale cependant ne peut se dérober à sa mission de communiquer la Bonne Nouvelle, en utilisant les médias au service de l'évangélisation (115-126).

Enfin un appel est lancé aux Églises particulières d'Afrique pour la mission au-delà des frontières, jusqu'aux extrémités de la terre. Le monde est en train de s'unifier toujours davantage,

l'esprit de l'Évangile doit conduire à surmonter les barrières des cultures, des nationalismes, écartant toute fermeture, tout ethnocentrisme. C'est ainsi que l'Afrique s'intègre pleinement dans l'activité missionnaire de l'Église. Cet appel s'adresse en particulier aux évêques et aux prêtres. En tant qu'évêques catholiques ils ne peuvent pas ne pas partager le souci de toutes les Églises qui brûlaient le cœur de l'Apôtre. On constate par ailleurs qu'un nombre croissant de prêtres africains répondent à l'appel à être témoins jusqu'aux extrémités de la terre. Cela exige un renouvellement dans la formation des prêtres afin de préparer une solidarité pastorale d'ensemble en Afrique, une grande maturité dans la vocation, une capacité de dépassement et de détachement de leur patrie et famille, et une aptitude à s'intégrer dans d'autres cultures avec intelligence et respect (127-135).

Pour témoigner de Jésus-Christ il faut être saints. Jean-Paul II répète à l'intention de tous les fidèles du Christ les paroles écrites dans *Redemptoris Missio*: "Tout missionnaire n'est authentiquement missionnaire que s'il s'engage sur la voie de la sainteté. Tout fidèle est appelé à la sainteté et à la mission. Les chrétiens des jeunes Églises d'Afrique sont l'espérance de l'Église qui a deux mille ans: étant jeunes dans la foi, ils doivent être comme les premiers chrétiens et rayonner (sic) l'enthousiasme et le courage, en un mot il faut se mettre sur la voie de la sainteté et témoigner de l'universalisme chrétien qui prend sa source dans la paternité de Dieu qui appelle tous les hommes à former une seule famille dans la solidarité universelle et la joie chrétienne. 'Le Seigneur est notre force et notre bouclier. En lui, notre cœur est en joie. En lui, notre cœur a foi'" (Ps 28, 7) (136-143).

7. Passer à l'acte

Le titre du document postsynodal *Ecclesia in Africa* est sans équivoque. Il s'agit de l'Église catholique en Afrique. Le contenu s'efforce de résumer la richesse des interventions et des travaux du synode en reprenant la plupart des 64 "propositions" votées par les Pères du synode et soumises au Pape.

Partant de l'événement ecclésial historique qu'a constitué le synode, le texte navigue constamment entre les défis présents et futurs et les réponses à y apporter. Il manque un plan rigoureux et les mêmes thèmes reviennent plusieurs fois, et surtout ceux de l'inculturation et de justice et paix sur lesquels le texte revient avec insistance.

Le document postsynodal est une exhortation vigoureuse au courage. Il invite à envisager

l'immense travail à accomplir avec foi et espérance à la lumière et dans la puissance du Christ Ressuscité. Le texte prône et réclame une Église prophétique, résolument située du côté des opprimés, des sans-voix et des marginalisés. La démocratie authentique est présentée comme une des routes principales sur lesquelles l'Église chemine avec le peuple. La promotion de la justice, de la paix et du développement est traitée de manière concrète et stimulante. La responsabilité et la complicité des grands et des décideurs politiques sont abordées sans complaisance.

Le dossier de l'inculturation est traité avec plus de prudence et de timidité. Pourtant les attentes dans ce domaine en Afrique et Madagascar sont grandes. Malgré le fait que le thème revient à plusieurs reprises, l'exhortation en reste aux principes généraux, aux fondements théologiques, avec la seule évocation de "l'Église Famille de Dieu". Doit-on s'en étonner? Après un travail immense de survol de la problématique générale pastorale en Afrique et Madagascar accompli par le synode, il était difficile de s'attendre à des directives précises de la part des instances romaines. Après ce survol général, le Pape dit: Afrique, passez à l'acte, la balle est dans votre camp!

Pour passer à l'acte, l'exhortation invite à créer des commissions d'études, notamment pour ce qui concerne le mariage, la vénération des ancêtres et le monde des esprits. En réalité, en beaucoup d'endroits, ces commissions ont déjà travaillé et livré les fruits de leur recherche avec autorité et compétence. Plusieurs évêques, dans leurs interventions dans les assemblées plénières, ont fait écho aux divers travaux des instituts de recherche et des facultés de théologie d'Afrique. Dans les domaines cités, le synode avait même formulé des "propositions" substantielles, mais qui ne sont pas reprises, ou bien partiellement, dans le document postsynodal. Pourquoi cette timidité à aborder l'inculturation concrète? Le texte, sans vouloir empiéter sur ce terrain des responsabilités pastorales des évêchés locaux, aurait pu baliser la route d'une pratique pastorale inculturée en prenant position sur certaines pratiques au niveau du continent et en dépassant ainsi le discours abstrait qui à la longue risque de détourner les bonnes volontés vers d'autres horizons.

Enfin, il y a aussi quelques silences regrettables comme l'écologie et la démographie, la recherche de nouvelles formes de ministère et la façon d'aborder la question du mariage en Afrique. Un prochain synode ou un Concile africain ne pourra

pas éviter de donner des vraies réponses à de vraies questions posées par la situation de l'Église de Jésus-Christ en Afrique.

Entre-temps, l'exhortation est une forte impulsion à une action audacieuse et prophétique dans la perspective du 3^e millénaire. L'avenir de l'Afrique est entre les mains de Dieu et de chrétiens bien formés et crédibles capables de construire une Église pleinement catholique et pleinement africaine.

- Les chiffres entre (...) réfèrent aux paragraphes du texte.

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I WILL SPEAK TO THEIR HEARTS

These past weeks have been marked by a series of terrorist attacks both on the international and national scene. In Israel, Ireland, Colombia and in Peru these crimes carried out in the name of political projects and ideals which subordinate the value of human life, challenge us to affirm that the path to peace is through justice. This article was published in April 1996.

Manuel Diaz Mateos

“NEW MEN, CREATORS OF HISTORY” OR THE END OF HISTORY?

For many of us the words of the song “New Men” are familiar and for me synthesise the spirit of the 1970’s, which was more triumphal, utopian and full of dreams. It expresses the religious version of the euphoria that existed in those years for the advances and progress in history and faith in the ability to change the world. The great powers of the time and even the United Nations had two lofty dreams: putting a man on the moon and eradicating poverty, the results of which we all know.

The Latin American Conference in Medellin echoed this euphoria when the Bishops stated: “Latin America (is) a promising reality and full of hope (...) we believe that we are in a new historical epoch (...) we call on all peoples of good will to collaborate in this transforming task of our society, the threshold of a new era”. The message ended with these words: “We have faith in God, in men and women, in their values, and in the future of Latin America”. This same faith energised the historic processes in the sense of the Christian presence in the world, which was supported by the recent ecumenical council.

The years have gone by and much has changed in the world, but the quality of life of our peoples has not improved. What’s more, poverty has become more generalised and the painful experience of the “lost decade”, bloodied by terrorism, left too many dead and wounded in its path. The wounds to the heart are very profound and scepticism, fear, lack of confidence, insecurity and the lack of faith and hope for change are felt everywhere. Proof is found in the proliferation of iron bars, gates, walls, alarms and intercom systems that protect us and isolate us.

In the 1990’s, we are breathing a different air and there have even been some visionaries who have pro-

claimed “the end of history and the last man” as an invitation to leave behind utopias and commitment. There are no projects, there is no history because it dissolves in the labyrinth of individual histories that are unconnected. Discontent invades us and the individual, as a way of protecting himself, turns inward in order to save what is fundamental. It is a move from the objective to the subjective, from commitment to intimacy, euphoria to discontent. To put it graphically, it is the move from Prometheus to Narcissus.

It needs to be made clear with what has been said that we are not passing a negative judgement on the present and do not believe that “anytime in the past was better”. The disenchantment of post-modernism is not completely negative. There is a strong prophetic criticism that development and progress have not made us happier and that the commitment to changing history should not sacrifice the individual for the sake of the present or the hope of the future. Present and future, individual and cause each have their own value and demand the difficult task of integration without exclusion. Commitment and celebration need not be at odds with each other.

Discontent is seen in post-modernity as a fact and the young people of today do not have the same ideals and idols as the young people of the 1970’s. At that time there was a real mystique about commitment and today there is a mystique around individualism, “without neighbour and without history”. The individual relies upon himself and on his intimacy as a way of protest against a kind of progress that has not made him happier, against excessive rationality and a drive for efficiency that threatens to turn him into a robot. We can state that we have moved from the famous axiom of Descartes “I think, therefore I am”, to one that is more intimate and homely, “I feel, therefore I exist”, and now, having been bombarded by publicity and the market

to “I buy, therefore I exist”. The violence of poverty and terrorism is dehumanising, but so is the violence of the market. With the passing of the years it seems as though all of us are walking down “the boulevard of broken dreams” and we want to feel the “healing hand” that will “teach us how to live again”.

It is undeniable that people today, particularly young people, have a different sensibility that is manifested in many different ways. “After the loss of confidence in the project of social transformation, the only thing left is to concentrate forces on personal realisation and there is an unnatural concern for health that is manifested through the obsession with group or individual therapy, exercise and massages, saunas, macrobiotic diets, vitamins, bioenergy, etc.” The individual may renounce his or her commitment to society but not to being happy or to personal realisation. The horizon is smaller, but what is being saved cannot be seen as insignificant. We are invited to save the subject, the person, as something fundamental. This would explain the success of Gregorian music that has entered that market not for any spiritual reason, but which allows people to feel at peace and related to the world of mysticism and mystery. The subject is not only action and rationality, it is above all a subject with the ability to feel fear or happiness, to dream and to be afraid. The world of feelings is the most important. Even science seems to confirm the intuition of today’s men and women. In the face of the tyranny of reason, science no longer talks about the intellectual coefficient as the determinant of personality, but of the emotional coefficient, not ones’ IQ but ones’ EQ.

As a confirmation of the rebounding of the subject toward what is essential within as a way of helping the subject from within and making the future possible, we have the publication of the Third Essay Contest for Young People, “Imagine your Future”, in which they express how they see the future. It is a future of fear and hope, of heroism and daily routines, of affective relations in which money is not the most important thing, it is almost absent. One of the essays, “Waking up in Lima in the Year 2025”, speaks for the rest. At the end of the essay, the protagonist recognises that with the passage of the years “some things seem to have improved, others have gotten worse and many stay the same... I always thought that the future would be marvellous, but Nancy (his wife) says that what is marvellous is making the future, little by little building on the present... How wonderful it is to be awake”. The essay concludes with several verses from Javier Heraud: “*I have returned. I slept a long year, I rested*

and I was dead, but I enjoyed the month of April and the white flowers”. The seriousness of the commitment cannot make us forget the need to enjoy “*April and the white flowers*”. The ability to dream will always mean the ability to be reborn and to start again.

A CHALLENGE TO THE CHURCH?

In these circumstances it is not wise to condemn, lament or repeat plans, but admit to the differences with other times in history and face the challenges of the present. In the 1970’s, the Church assumed the spirit of the day and knew how to inspire and energise the processes of liberation and commitment of Christians because they found there the cause of mankind that God wanted to save, but warned that the kingdom is grace and that salvation, although it also involved politics and economics, is the most magnificent gift from God.

The question we ask ourselves is if, as Church, we know how to offer a word of hope to those “*who die without faith because they are tired of struggling*”. As we are reminded in the words of another well known song: do we know how to re-animate the hope of so many of our brothers with wounded hearts, who are tempted to close in on themselves in a spirituality without neighbours and without history? These are times in which the religious is revived, but times in which religion cannot be used to justify evasion of egotistical and closed individualism. Confronted with a generation that is disillusioned and afraid, the Church must show that it is the bearer of the word of hope and comfort for the people, that the “good news” is at the heart of its pronouncement, that at its essence it is capable of connecting with these people who are looking for affection, personal realisation and happiness. As Church we should cultivate a new way of communicating the Gospel, the Good News, because it is what the people of today need. But we cannot do it from the rationality of a doctrine that is thought of and is transmitted without context, but through the sensibility of the Samaritan, who drew close to tend the wounds and cure the ills of the people. If it wants to be “good news” for the world and announce the kingdom, the Church, as Christ did, should shoulder the ills of mankind.

Our generation, despite its disenchantment (or maybe because of it), because of the discovery of the heart and affection has the foundation to connect with the Gospel. Perhaps the only thing that we are lacking is a prophetic sensibility to connect to the world in which we live that has the right to be saved,

as it did in the 1970's. This takes us to a current issue that is not always well understood: how do we evangelise and what does "evangelise" mean, that is, transmit the Good News and not only good doctrine.

FROM AMOS TO HOSEA

We said earlier that the change in our time can be characterised by the move from Prometheus to Narcissus, two figures from Greek mythology. But if we look at the world of faith and our way of transmitting it we can talk about a movement from Amos, the prophet who was a champion of justice, to Hosea, the prophet of mercy and affection, which does not exclude the commitment to justice but integrates it into a higher vision. In this way we see that the prophets have always been great educators of hope because they knew how to read in history the signs of the will of God among his people. Amos and Hosea, were two prophets who spoke different languages, but who are witnesses to God the Saviour. And their new language for a new situation can illuminate our pastoral and evangelical creativity.

a) The context in which Hosea lived

Hosea lived during a very difficult time, 753 to 720 B.C., the year in which the Israelites were expelled from Nineveh. This entire period was dominated by the Assyrians, the super power of the time, and the demands for servitude that they placed on conquered peoples. The policies of this Empire are synthesised in the text of Isaiah:

I have pushed back the frontiers of peoples and plundered their treasures. I have brought their inhabitants down to dust, and overthrown their leaders from their pedestals. As if they were deserted eggs in a nest, my hand has seized the riches of the people, not with a wing fluttering, not a beak opening, not a chirp (cf. Is 10:13-14).

The last king of Israel, who took his name from the prophet, was named by the King of Assyria, Tiglatpileser III.

In Israel, the presence of the Assyrians made everyone progressively poorer because of the "demands of the sovereign king" (cf. Hos 8:10) and in a very sharp phrase, the prophet tells us "they have devoured Israel" (cf. Hos 8:8 and 5:7). The gold statue of their God, the shepherd (calf) that Jeroboam I placed in Bethel and of which the Israelites were proud, had to be used to pay this kind of "external debt". "The inhabitants of Samaria are

trembling for the calf of Bethel, that they brought to Assyria as a tribute to their god" (cf. Hos 10:5-6). As a consequence of this poverty, violence overtook the country. In those last 30 years there were six kings in Israel, four of whom were killed by others who usurped their power: "All of their kings have fallen", says Hosea (cf. 7:7). One example is enough. From Menahem, a usurper of power, the Book of Kings tells us that he "seized Tappuah and killed its inhabitants, devastating its territory from Tirzah onwards, since they would not open the gates to him. And he ripped open all the pregnant women" (2 Kgs 15:16). The prophet confirms that "fights flourished like the weeds in the furrows of the fields" (cf. Hos 10:4) and "there is neither truth nor goodness nor knowledge of God in the country" (Hos 4:2-3). There is too much blood being spilt for God to take count (cf. Hos 1:4).

To make things worse, even religion is contaminated by syncretism with the religion of the Baals, the Canaanite deities of fertility, allowing practices such as sacred prostitution: "your daughters turn to prostitution and your daughters-in-law to adultery" (Hos 4:13). In addition to the references to prostitution in the temples, the language of Hosea reveals a society in which everything is prostituted because of the loss of respect for truth and loyalty. In this context, an invitation is extended to Hosea (the same invitation that was extended to Amos) not to visit the temples because they are centres of sin (cf. Hos 4:13,15).

Hosea lived through a time of crisis that we could consider to be like "the end of history". The prophet is aware of the difficult reality his people will live through in the desert when he says: "There is neither truth nor goodness nor knowledge of God in the country; only perjury, lies, murder, theft and adultery, with continual bloodshed. This is why the country is in mourning and all who live there wasting away" (Hos 4:1-3). God does not recognise Israel as his son or people because the Covenant was broken (cf. Hos 6:7). The great dream or utopia of God that began with the flight from Egypt was now threatened with total failure: the return of Israel to Egypt, that is, to slavery and exile (cf. Hos 8:13; 9:3; 11:5). It is at this time that his message comes to Hosea. God decides from his heart the fate of his son or his wife: "My heart is troubled within me and I am moved with compassion. I will not give vent my great anger" (Hos 11:8-9). In stead of a merciless punishment that a poorly interpreted justice demanded, the prophet chose a different path and language because he was interested in showing that God always saves. "I will heal their wavering and

love them with all my heart for my anger has turned from them”, even if they are undeserving (cf. Hos 14:5), is what the prophet has God say, becoming the announcer of grace in a time of disgrace.

b) I will speak to their heart

He encouraged a people who are disenchanted, wounded and broken with his language filled with affection, forgiveness, grace and with the conviction that “he who tore us to pieces, will heal us as well; he has struck us down, but he will bind up our wounds. Two days later he will bring us back to life” (Hos 6:1-2), because neither the idols nor the powerful King of Assyria can “cure you or heal your sores” (Hos 5:13). God decided to “cure Israel” (cf. Hos 14:5) with caring and affection, for this “I will talk to their heart” (cf. Hos 2:16).

Hosea, like Amos had more than enough reasons to talk about the demands of the people of the Covenant. But he opted to take a different path and talks to us about “hesed”, as the essence of the Covenant with Yahweh. “Hesed” is one of those words that cannot be translated, but like the word knowledge in Hebrew (*da'at*), it comes from the heart, from what is most profound and authentic in the person. It is, then, caring, affection, love, mercy and grace. It could be that in Israel there was a lack of “hesed”, but Yahweh wanted to lavish it on his people because “this is how the Lord loved the Israelites” (cf. Hos 3:1). Hosea holds many of the Paulist convictions that “where sin increased, grace abounded all the more” (Rom 5:20).

The vocabulary and the images that he uses to talk about God lets us into the world of human relations and affection of the Israelites. God is the husband, father and even mother who teaches the child to walk, carries the child in his arms and gives him to eat because “it was I who cared for them, I led them with cords of human kindness, with leading strings of love” (Hos 11:3-4).

Faced with the revolt of his wife, Yahweh, like the impassioned lover, does the unspeakable to win back the wife who has been unfaithful. In tempting language, the prophet says that God “is going to allure” (2:16) Israel with the power of his unconditional affection and forgiveness. Talking heart to heart in the desert, that is, alone without the distraction of anyone else, is how to stir affection, confidence, and the desire to respond from the bottom of the heart without fear and in a state of pure grace.

We could continue to talk about Hosea, but that is not the case at this time. The prophet gives us a new prophetic language for those who want to reach their people and, like God, win over their wife. It will not be through ideas or well known doctrine, but from the ties of love and caring that heal the person from within, although the demands for justice are pressing for us. Hosea was not uninterested in justice, but goes to the heart of injustice among us, which stems not from the lack of laws or documents but from a lack of heart.

The new evangelisation, which is talked about so often today, should be less doctrinal and moralistic and should take the wounds of the hearts of men and women in serious and heal them. For this we need a conversion to grace, that is, the gratuitous love of God and the joy of feeling loved, wanted and valued. It should not be insistence on “duty” but on “being” that should motivate men because the human being is not defined only by “doing” or “having” but by “being”. The first truth about being is not “I think, therefore I am”, which is based on reason, but “I feel, therefore I am”, which comes from the heart and is the most profound and authentic essence of the human being. I am capable of feeling because I have received my existence as a free gift, because others thought of me before I existed. This not only comes from human parents, but also from God in relation to the child. As Jeremiah said, God has thought of us even before we were born. And to all of us, like God and his Son, Jesus, he says, “I have called you by your name, you are mine ... you are precious in my sight, and important — for I have loved you” (Is 43:1,4). The truth on which our lives should rest is that someone loved us first (cf. 1 Jn 4:19), with eternal love (Jer 31:3), and blessed us from before the creation of the world (Eph 1:3-4).

Perhaps one of the greatest traumas of the human being is feeling unloved or unvalued, which is why the person of today needs us to talk more about the original blessing than original sin, although this is an undeniable reality. The most profound decision of our God, however, is that where sin abounds grace will abound even more. This is also an undeniable aspect of our faith. Existence is a marvellous gift of love, from God and from our parents. It is opening up to grace, to gratitude and the joy of living by discovering that we are loved, valued and blessed as a way of counterbalancing and healing the conscience that is plagued by indignation caused by being undervalued, which leads many of our brothers to have low self-esteem. On the other hand, in a mercantile society, where everything is bought and sold and we are all tempted to value the human being

for what he has, converting to the grace and gratitude that come from the heart is one of the convictions that needs to be strengthened today in order to develop the ability to contemplate, thank and marvel at mystery and beauty. In the face of so much insecurity experienced in our existence, only the overwhelmed heart, which in Ignatian spirituality is known as “so much good received”, is capable of doing everything with the spirit of “do as you will Lord” and with the unconditional availability for service. Talking to the heart revives the best of the heart, which is love and giving of oneself.

As an application of the practice of “talking to the heart” of today’s men and women, I see the difficult problem of the sects and their spread. Personally, I am not concerned about them spreading, what concerns me is why they are growing, what are they offering that we do not know how to offer as Church. I think the answer is that while we talk more to the head and of duty, they talk more to the heart and the person. They are not convincing people with the doctrine they preach but with the human feeling with which they preach. The difference is clear from the moment you enter the temple: in the sects the person is received from the minute he enters the door, while in our churches the person goes unnoticed. Undoubtedly, they talk more to the heart, which is why they are winning. Our liturgies talk more about power and reason. It is an urgent pastoral task to invent a new language that reaches the heart and heals it, and, as in the time of Hosea, the people “will respond like in the days of their youth” (cf. Hos 2:17).

c) *“She will call me my husband, and never again my Baal” (Hos 2:18)*

The problem, however, is much more complicated than a simple change in language. It means “changing” God, discovering a different God that is closer to what Paul calls “the God of Christ Jesus our Lord” (Eph 1:17). This is what is expressed in Hosea’s phrase you will call me your husband, you will not call me your idol (cf. Hos 2:18). It is a different way of relating to God because it is a different discovery of God.

In the time of Hosea, religious syncretism allowed for a confusion between Yahweh and the idols of fertility, the gods that offered security because they provided well-being and abundance. These were the Baals (idols). The Baals survived even if they changed their appearances and their names. It is about faith in power, in money, or strength that makes us feel safe. In the time of Hosea

there were alliances between political, economic and military powers, which the prophet says cannot cure us or heal our wounds (cf. Hos 5:13). Our people have had the same experience with the inability of the poorly understood “progress” to save. What we need to do is abandon the idols and convert to the only true God who can save. That is, we need to discover that progress is not only economic, having more, but means being more, and there are also other values at play. The hunger of the human being is not satisfied by bread alone. There is much to be done to convert the economy and politics to the service of life. This will always be the task of prophetic criticism, which has a lot to do with counterculture because it is interested in saving people.

The prophet’s phrase, however, has another meaning which we would like to highlight. He tells us that not only did the idols disappear (wars are one of them, (cf. Hos 2:19 and 2:20), but that God stops being an idol. God converted into an idol is one of the worst things that can happen to mankind. God is an idol when he becomes an oppressor through fear, guilt, or an obligation out of duty, that is, when he no longer speaks to our hearts and moves us, but when he terrorises us.

This is what the prophet says through a play on words in the phrase that we have already used: You will call me your Ish, you will not call me your Baal. Baal is an idol, but it also means husband in terms of being the owner and lord of the wife. The relationship between husband and wife is one of despotism and submission because they are not equals. On the contrary, Ish means husband in the terms of companion, of equal, when the two can speak heart to heart and there is affection and love. And this is the relationship that God wants with his wife, with his people. He does not want fear from obligation, duty or guilt, but caring and confidence in unlimited love. It is not about being a lord but about being a father (mother and husband). What God wants is a wife or a child, not a slave.

The new evangelisation has much to do in this field because our “baptised” people have not been capable of discovering the joy of the Gospel and of having an experience of talking heart to heart with God. Proof is in the widely held conviction that God punishes or the sensation of guilt and unworthiness that is felt when getting close to God. For many Christians, receiving the sacraments, particularly the Eucharist, is a gift for the dignified. Once again we can look at the sects to illustrate this point. Our way of preaching is more moralising and laden with guilt (you have to comply to merit) than Christ centred

(the Lord saves and forgives). Christians, educated in a tradition of merit and effort, are not convinced of our belief in the God of grace. The words of the prophet are important: Do not call me idol, but husband.

d) The valley of Achor will become a way to hope

The language of the prophet Hosea talks to the heart, but not as a way of forming a spirituality that avoids reality. The language of the heart ends in marriage. "You will be my spouse forever", says Hosea (2:21) and the belief of being won over by the gratitude of love opens the hearts of others to the future, to history and to hope. The discovery of the sense of life in the security of love comes from God. To experience God in this way ("to know", according to Hosea) opens us up to the commitment to justice and right, but also to caring, affection, tenderness, faithfulness and the "joy of April and the white flowers", to quote J. Heraud. And experiencing these things is experiencing God, "to know God". I will marry you forever, I will marry you with integrity and justice, with tenderness, love, and faithfulness and you will know your Lord. (cf. Hos 2:21-22).

This is why the prophet dares to say that the "valley of disgrace" will become a way of hope (cf. Hos 2:17). The valley of disgrace is an allusion to the Israelites arrival to the promised land through the valley of Achor, which means disgrace. The Israelites baptised it with this name as a way of remembering their entrance into the promised land by a difficult path (Jer 7:24-26). The new entrance that God proposes for the future will have a different name because the situation is different. We have an admirable example of what the prophet tells us in what was Tarata Street in Miraflores, (destroyed by a Shining Path terrorist attack in July 1993) a symbol of the decade of terror in Peru that is now called the "Walk of Solidarity". When man experiences a God who talks to his heart, the "boulevard of broken dreams" or the "valley of disgrace" become a "way of hope".

The magnitude of poverty is not the only thing that motivates our commitment to liberation and the option for the poor. We are motivated further when we discover the gratuity of God's love that moves us to commitment and dedication, and when we experience this sensibility in our own lives. Talking heart to heart transmits to us something of what afflicts the heart of the common Father and invites us to dream, what he dreams that will always be a door to hope for our people.

CONCLUSION

In these lines we have let ourselves be guided by the prophet Hosea, but the Bible as a whole is an appeal from God to win over the hearts of men and women, change them and save them. The New Testament is the birth of this appeal. The mystery of the incarnation, God with a human face, talks to us of God's ability to speak heart to heart, face to face and look to look. That is, he invites us to discover the sacrament of salvation through the sacrament of touch, look or smile. Jesus announced the Kingdom, but not only as doctrine: he did so mainly when he cured the infirm, hugged children, touched the sick, looked, cared for and returned confidence and dignity to human beings. St Matthew tells us that Jesus "took away our infirmities and took on himself our diseases" (Mt 8:17). And the invitation of Jesus for us to become children, to be born again to enter the Kingdom (cf. Mk 10:14-16) is an invitation for us open ourselves to the world of grace, tenderness, caring and affection, like children. For this reason nearly all people remember childhood as a happy time. By becoming children we can enter the heart of the Father, we feel secure and the doors to hope are opened. People of today need a word or a gesture that will reach their hearts and they will find their God.

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SOWING HOPE FOR THE WORLD'S POOREST

Jo Marie Griesgraber

Since 1982, the poorest countries of the world have struggled under an impossibly large debt burden, with enormous human costs. For less than is currently spent on debt payments, it would be possible over the next four years to make social investments which would save the lives of 21 million African children (Oxfam International). However, the current system ensures that the poorest simply get further behind in debt repayment and continue to loose ground in economic and social development. A spark of hope that now exists for a comprehensive debt solution must be fanned into flame by popular support, so that World Bank and IMF Finance Ministers make the necessary, bold decisions to turn around this destructive cycle.

THE PROBLEM

The total debt of the world's 31 poorest countries was nearly \$210 billion in 1994, 4 times greater than in 1980. While the amount owed to the multilateral agencies (the World Bank, IMF, and major and minor regional development banks) is about 22% of that, nearly 50% of the debt payments of the severely indebted low-income countries (SILICs) goes to these multilaterals (The SILICs can only pay about half the debt payments they owe each year, and thus keep paying interest, not principal).

In addition to the multilateral debt mentioned above, about 60% of SILICs' debt is owed to donor governments (bilateral debt); about two-thirds of that is owed to the US, Western Europe, and Japan; the other third to the Former Soviet Union or the Arab States. The reason for the discrepancy between the low proportion of debt to the multilaterals and the high amount of debt payments paid each year to the multilaterals is their "preferred creditor" status. They provide no debt relief and must be paid on time and in full. If they are not, all other credit to the borrowing government stops.

The SILICs are only able to remain current on their multilateral debts because they do not pay their other creditors. While they receive additional foreign

assistance, it gets recycled to the multilaterals, or they use concessional loans from one multilateral to pay the debt of another or to pay off earlier debts to the same creditor. In short, a shell game operates so SILICs appear current in their multilateral debt payments — and can keep borrowing, with no real hope in sight.

The shell game's economic costs to SILICs are great. Because of profound insecurity about their future, they cannot attract foreign investment nor retain domestic investment. Government revenue services the debt instead of being invested in social and economic programmes benefiting their citizens. Limited government talent is wasted on short-term re-scheduling instead of working on long-term growth projects. Oxfam estimates there were 8,000 debt re-scheduling meetings between 1982 and 1990.

HUMAN COSTS

One in five Ugandan children does not reach its fifth birthday due to preventable diseases, yet only \$3 per person is spent on health, compared to \$17 on debt repayment.

Between 1990 and 1993, the Government of Zambia spent \$37 million on primary school education. Over the same period, it spent \$1.3 billion on debt repayments. Repayments to the IMF alone were equivalent to ten times government spending on primary education.

In Tanzania, spending on external debt is double the level of spending on water provision. Yet more than 14 million people lack access to safe water, exposing them to the threat of water-borne diseases, which are the main causes of premature death and disability.

In Honduras, total public spending on debt represented more than spending on health *and* education. This is in a country where over half of the population

lives in abject poverty (“Multilateral Debt: The Human costs” Oxfam International Paper, Feb. 1996, p. 1).

SHARING RESPONSIBILITY

The Catholic Church, in its many statements on debt, is one of the few institutions to recognise that both lender and borrower are responsible for the present debt morass. The Church also has sought to remind the parties involved that there must be limits on what can be demanded of debtors in terms of the suffering debt repayment causes (Debtor prisons for individuals were abolished in the last century, but extreme punishment for entire countries still exists).

While current heads of state may have inherited the mistakes of earlier regimes (such as in Uganda and Brazil), in most cases debtor governments bear a large share of responsibility through boondoggles, corruption, military budgets, and prestige items. One prime example is the one teaching hospital in Zambia that absorbs a full third of the national health budget. The creditors for their part have not been cautious about lending to foolish projects or shameless governors. Because money saved by any projected debt relief could go to more foolishness, there must be provisions that any such relief will be targeted for basic health and education.

A TIME OF HOPE

While the situation in the poorest of countries is desperate, this is a time of considerable hope for resolving not only multilateral debt, but also of providing an exit strategy for these countries from their total debt burden. Beginning at the fall Annual Meetings of the World Bank and the IMF in 1994, the Bank and Fund staff were told to study this debt crisis. This was a critical breakthrough: given the preferred creditor status of these institutions, it had been taboo even to suggest there was such a problem. However, the initial studies were rejected as based on improbably optimistic assumptions.

Then, the G-7 group (the world’s richest countries) at the end of June 1995 boldly insisted that the Bank and the Fund must find ways to reduce these outstanding debts. Just before the Annual Meetings of the Bank and the Fund in 1995, a draft Bank staff paper was leaked to the press. The paper acknowledged the extent of the problem, argued for a comprehensive debt solution to stop recycling of commercial, bilateral, and multilateral — and thus stop the shell game, and proposed creative ways to

reduce the debt burden of the poorest countries using Bank resources. This was a great step forward.

However, the momentum has slowed for three reasons. First, the leak both politically embarrassed and weakened new Bank President Jim Wolfensohn’s support for the issue, since many of the member governments knew nothing about the pathbreaking paper’s existence prior to the leak. Second, the U.S. Congress failed to appropriate funds to pay its full commitment to the tenth International Development Association (IDA) replenishment (for loans to poorest countries). This not only stalled future IDA negotiations, but also weakened U.S. financial leadership and support for multilateral debt relief.

The third brake on the momentum developed shortly after the 1995 annual World Bank and IMF Meetings, where another study and recommendations were commissioned on solving the debt problem. But the IMF, with the collusion of many finance ministries and central banks, is showing reluctance to admit a real problem for the poorest countries. (Should there be a problem, of course, it would not be the Fund’s problem — it is a monetary institution, not a development bank. Thus the Fund acts as the greatest Free Rider, wanting all other creditors to reduce debts, so it can be paid in full).

NGO INVOLVEMENT

Meanwhile, many non-governmental organisations have been working to ensure that member governments of the Bank and Fund provide a debt exit strategy for the poorest countries and avert further human tragedies. In order to do so, they have developed a set of criteria to be included in any official debt proposal:

1. Debt stock (principal), not only debt service, must be reduced substantially within a short time period, such as by the year 2,000.
2. The relief must be sufficient so the **poorest countries** will be able to pay the remainder without harm to their people, environment, or to present and future economic possibilities.
3. To end the shell game, there must be a comprehensive multilateral debt reduction plan including all the multilateral creditors (the World Bank, the IMF, and the relevant regional development bank), improved terms from bilateral creditors (both the OECD and non-OECD countries), and any commercial creditors.

4. Additional money, not money from IDA or collected by recycling other overseas development assistance (ODA) funds, should finance debt reduction. The majority of the additional money must come from multilaterals — bilateral and commercial creditors have already covered much of the debts owed them.

Funds can come from a variety of sources, such as the Bank's future net profits, and by reducing present loan loss reserves, by committing less future profits to this category (from the Bank's and Fund's currency adjustment funds, as well as from sale of IMF gold or a new IMF Special Drawing Rights allocation). No proposal can require bilateral contributions — this would enable an anti-foreign aid Congress to veto the proposal.

5. The eligibility for determining which countries qualify for debt reduction must incorporate **the country's social needs**, its general liquidity, its balance of payment situation, as well as the standard debt-to-export ratios. In addition, countries should be evaluated in terms of their responsible economic behaviour, which is not to be confused with adherence to the Bank and Fund's orthodox economic adjustment programmes, and, most important, **in terms of their record of commitment to poverty reduction.**

ACTION FOR ECONOMIC JUSTICE

The issue of multilateral debt reduction has generated considerable public response around the world. Many people have become educated to the issue since the debt crisis erupted in 1982. Now we have a moment of hope when there is world-wide acknowledgement of the severity of the problem and the political will to take significant action. In the Washington area alone there are two coalitions of NGOs working on the issue: the *Religious Working*

Group on the World Bank and the IMF as well as a secular coalition working on MDB debt.

The Religious Working Group developed educational materials for Lent, with two actions: 1) an Economic Way of the Cross, with suggestions for a public pilgrimage, praying at institutions tied to the globalised economy that benefits the few and impoverishes many; and 2) letter writing on the MDB debt. The U.S. Catholic Conference, through its monthly mailing and annual convention, has urged diocesan Justice and Peace Co-ordinators to encourage letter writing on the MDB debt issue. These U.S. Church actions are taken in collaboration with the Catholic development agencies of Europe, Canada and Australia, and with *Caritas Internationalis*, the umbrella organisation of over 150 national Catholic Charities.

In addition, A Bread for the World Action Alert calls for similar supporting letters. MDB debt is the top action priority for the 9 Oxfam national organisations (Oxfam International's Position Paper "Multilateral Debt: The Human Costs" is an excellent tool for gaining a deeper understanding of the issue). Many of these groups are also co-ordinating direct lobby visits with countries' Finance Ministers preparing for the April Bank and Fund Meeting, as well as with the corresponding Washington-based Executive Directors at the World Bank and the IMF.

However, the advocacy efforts of all groups and all individuals committed to social justice are necessary to change the face of poverty in the world today by working for comprehensive debt reduction. Such debt relief will offer new hope for human development in the world's poorest nations and create new hope for the entire world community.

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